

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON PEDAGOGICAL  
CONSIDERATIONS OF VIOLENT CONTENT IN THEIR  
CLASSROOMS AND INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

By

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Abstract: This project aims to investigate the connections between faculty members' pedagogical strategies when utilizing violent content in classrooms and when handling student disclosures of trauma within a Midwestern university. Twenty-one faculty members were interviewed for this project. From the data gained in these interviews, this document focuses on how faculty construct their pedagogical praxis, how faculty navigate classroom dynamics, and how faculty understand university resources designed for themselves and students. Faculty members expressed the lack of training on pedagogy, as well as a lack of resources on campus for them regarding pedagogical practice. This translated to over half of the respondents having students presenting concerns about the class. Those professors who had students come to them focused on validating concerns, apologizing, suggesting university resources, and utilizing preemptive strategies to try and mitigate future concerns. The resource most utilized by faculty members for students is mental health services. In assessing these dynamics faculty members were asked for suggestions on solutions that would be most impactful for them and their colleagues which are discussed further in this text. Understanding what faculty need for support in these matters will help both faculty work environment, as well as, creating a more trauma informed campus for student survivors of violence.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION

This project aimed to investigate the connections between faculty members' pedagogical strategies when utilizing violent content in classrooms and when handling student disclosures of trauma within a Midwestern university. Violent content in classrooms is operationalized as any content within a post-secondary education classroom including PowerPoints, media, readings, recordings or audio, or photos that depict violence done to humans, living thing, or objects denoted in connection to/representation of other humans (Bartsch et al 2020; Grizzard 2017; Hrehor 2018). This project also interrogates how power dynamics can potentially lead to a discrepancy in the faculty member's utilization of pedagogical strategies designed to help trauma survivors on campuses, as well as how teacher/student power arrangements impact professors' ideologies of such pedagogical strategies. Some of the research questions to be explored are: If faculty members within a post-secondary university setting, do not see themselves within the framework of trauma-informed feminist discourse, is the utilization of these pedagogical practices even possible? Could the ideology of the post-secondary faculty member impact whether or not they desire to be or learn to be trauma-informed? Is there a gap in resources for those post-secondary faculty members within universities who desire to be trauma-informed? Through 21 in-depth semi structured interviews with faculty members of a Midwestern university, this project aimed to explore university faculty perspectives of the violent content in their classrooms broadly and specifically how they pedagogically address these topics of violence, how they



mitigate any concerns a student may bring them about classroom topics, and what resources they feel are available for themselves and their students within their university regarding trauma in the classroom.

It is well-documented that trauma impacts the educational process in post-secondary students. Trauma, more thoroughly discussed in the literature review, will be defined using Caruth's (1995) connection of personal lived experiences (histories) and the psychological, physiological, and behavioral reactions (short term or long term) to said experiences. Trauma affects memory regulation by creating memory gaps for those in heightened trauma response (Amir 2008; McNally 2013), ability to focus (Ness et al 2014), and retention (Amir 2008; Boyraz 2013; McNally 2013). Trauma histories can affect the student's ability to socially interact (Alexander et al 2004), make them hyper vigilant or on edge (Boyraz et al 2013; Herman 1992), lead to decreased self-worth (Carter 2007; Fast et al 2010; Hardy 2013; Herman 1992), and diminish one's autonomy (Carter 2007; Fast et al 2010; Hardy 2013; Herman 1992;). Trauma can lead to problematic behaviors that affect survivors in the classroom, such as use of substances to cope with the physiological and psychological symptoms of trauma (Marx and Sloan 2003), emotional dysregulation due to an overstimulated or hyper reactive to environmental stimuli (Carter 2007; Herman 1992) or displays of violence when presented with real or perceived threats (Herman 1992). Research from Johns Hopkins University showed how trauma can lead to students dropping classes, a decrease in students' grades (also see Jordan 2014), and increased participation in risky behaviors (Neber 2016; also see Marx and Sloan 2003).

Universities are now researching the ways to best serve communities of student-survivors of trauma<sup>1</sup>, specifically survivors of sexual assault. For example, in 2014, President Obama and Vice President Biden created a task force to advocate for research on sexual assault on college campuses. This work produced numerous research projects ranging from "victim service resources" to climate

surveys (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault 2014). One such research project, the National College Women Sexual Victimization study was one of the many climate surveys assessing rates of victimization on college campuses (White House Task Force 2014). This survey described specific examples of victimization (including rape, attempted rape, sexual contact with force, sexual contact with threat of force, and threats of the aforementioned acts) and asked respondents to discuss the frequency of these experiences along with questions regarding their response in the moment and after these experiences (White House Task Force 2014). Other climate surveys discussed events such as stalking, sexual harassment, and intimate partnership violence. From these research projects and growing awareness on college campuses, many resource programs have been started, changed, or evaluated (White House Task Force 2014). A few examples of the results that came out of this federal initiative:

- Justice Department developed a training for campus officials in the investigations and adjudication of sexual assault cases, provided online technical support for campus officials, and helped Tribal College and Universities in secure funding for culturally varied services for survivors (White House Task Force 2014:13)
- The University of Texas at Austin developed trainings for law enforcement on campuses and evaluated existing trainings (White House Task Force 2014: 16).
- The University of New Hampshire Preventions Innovations Center developed training programs for students on student conduct and sexual assault prevention (White House Task Force 2014: 16).
- Created NotAlone.gov website where data and resources for students and universities was made publicly available (White House Task Force 2014:17).

- Amending the Clery Act to include domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking (White House Task Force 2014:38).

Administrations and advocacy centers are not the only part of the educational system that have responded to the growing understanding of trauma in the classroom. A content warning is a written or verbal warning to readers/viewers of content that could be potentially reflective of traumas experienced by the viewer that could cause an unwanted or harmful response (Carter 2015). There have been vigorous debates<sup>2</sup> more through academic disciplines regarding the use of content warnings when displaying violent content (Brown 2016; Carter 2015; Rae 2016). Pedagogical strategies in feminist classrooms and amongst critical race scholars advance the connections between trauma histories and course content by recognizing trauma as part of the lived experiences of the students in their classrooms (hooks 1995; hooks 1994; Noddings 1984; Noddings 1992). While understanding multiple intersections of oppression that lead to violence as part of their students lived experiences, trauma-informed faculty members seek to engage in practices that acknowledge how their course content can relate to possible trauma experiences. These frameworks and critical reflections led academics to produce trauma-informed classroom trainings for faculty members, and universities more broadly, which have led to an expansion pedagogical strategies and acknowledgements of the way trauma histories impact students' academic success (Davidson 2017; Meerdink 2019).

Even with the growth in resources, understandings of how trauma affects the student, and trauma-informed practices, there is still work to be done. Amongst administrators, advocates, and professors, there is still a wide array of buy-in for these programs. Because debates surrounding content warnings and other trauma informed pedagogy have been centered around debates of free speech of the professor or a context of “coddling” (see note 2), there are many professors who do not support the idea of trauma informed pedagogy. For example, some of the classrooms that are affirming and legitimizing

sexual assault survivors simultaneously delegitimize and invalidate the trauma related to displays of race-related violence in the classroom (Alvarez et al 2016; Hardy 2013), displaying the need for an intersectional approach.

### **Broader Impacts:**

Carter (2015: 1) asserts, “whether or not we consider the affect and efforts of trauma on pedagogy is a choice only for those whose lives are not already shaped by trauma. For us (survivors), there is no choice; our experiences of trauma shape how we move through the world.” Understanding the lived experiences that are carried into classrooms and how those impact educational accessibility is vital to rebuilding autonomy for student survivors and for creating equitable educational spaces for students. Rae (2016: 100) asserts that for professors who have not experienced trauma, “checking your privilege to not know what it may feel like to suffer trauma is essential and requires your own research and empathy.” Part of this research is about knowing that in academia we can never fully understand the personal histories and biographies of every student, but with empathy and the acknowledgement of diverse personal histories and the traumas they can contain, we can allow growing space for a truly multicultural environment that allows a wider range of students to fully reach their academic potential.

Better understanding of what disconnects survivors from their education will help develop solutions that can positively change the lives of student survivors of violence. This project can help student survivors and those that run resource-driven initiatives to identify possible disconnects in the communication of resources. These resources, when operating effectively, can help universities to retain student survivors and help them obtain accessibility to an educational experience that sometimes trauma can impede. Having empirically-based research that shows disconnections and explores a wider lens of possible barriers can help these resources succeed in their missions. This research project will empower the voices of faculty members whose wisdom could help guide any problem solving, from institutional

barriers to the resources/training tools they desire that could affect their student's education, retention, and their pedagogical practice. Given the current pedagogical challenges to online formatting and the restructuring of in-person classrooms due to Covid-19, assessing the relevance of this topic as teachers engage in ever-changing pedagogical practice can further develop literature on how a global pandemic is changing academic environments. This project aims to assess faculty concerns within this Midwest university, as well as the faculty-proposed solutions in order to foster a conversation on the campus that aims to create a more accessible campus experience for students who have experienced trauma. Through this project the research aims to help advocate for the support that the faculty felt they lacked and that were lacking for their students.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Key terms and Concepts:**

Caruth (1995: 5) defines survivorship as an affirming term for the process of surviving violence and trauma, which is why throughout this proposal the terms survivor and survivorship will be utilized<sup>3</sup>. Definitions as to the term trauma will be given by Caruth (1995). Caruth explains that trauma, explaining that it “is not a pathology, that is, of falsehood or displacement of meaning, but of history itself. If PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) must be understood as a pathological symptom, then it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a symptom of history.” Carter (2015: 5) defines trauma and its relation to disability studies pedagogy: “as such, traumatized individuals are dis-abled by a society that cannot comprehend, or make room for such affective or psychosomatic responses that do not adhere to the assumed stability of able-bodymindedness.” Carter (2015) asserts that the classroom cannot be subject to rigid ideologies surrounding whose trauma is worthy of acknowledging and whose trauma should be subjected to a standard of proof. Due to this understanding of trauma, survivorship should not include a hierarchy of trauma experience; rather, applying theory from a disability studies model can best allow for a fuller acknowledgment of how trauma impacts students in the classroom.

Similar to Carter, Knoll (2009: 122) explains, “Feminist disability studies theory and pedagogy urge us not only to take into account the many and varied bodily, mental, and psychological differences, but also to consider how race, class, sexuality, religion, nationality, and so on, can intersect with the disability experience.” Through a disability studies lens, survivorship includes intersecting symptoms of

trauma developed from a survivor's own history and the relationship of that history to course material. The usage of disability studies frameworks allows the research process to be more mindful of the intersection of trauma, survivorship, and race as one example of intersecting identities student survivors may face. These intersections demand the critique of colorblind racism defined by Bonilla-Silva (2018: 3) as an ideology that justifies "contemporary racial inequality as an outcome of nonracial dynamics" in an effort to erase the ways one continues to perpetuate the racial oppression of their actions through the support of systems that continue to oppress people of color, in such that personal histories are impacted by the delegitimizing of personal experiences of people of color when colorblind racism is utilized in the classroom (Alvarez et al 2016; Kohli 2009; Milner 2015; Milner 2010).

Herman (2012) describes complex PTSD as containing alterations in affect regulation, consciousness, self-perception, perception of perpetrator, relations with others, and systems of meaning. This diagnosis is reserved for individuals who experience "subjection to totalitarian control for a prolonged period of time" (Herman 1992: 121). It is important to recognize that the severity of this prolonged trauma would greatly impact their education and, more importantly, limit their ability to possess the autonomy necessary for self-advocacy. Self-advocacy is again called into question when one becomes "othered" in society by not only disability but the intersecting identities of race, gender, sexuality, class, and so on. The need for self-advocacy of student survivors has been used by some faculty members as justification to push against the use of trauma-informed pedagogical practices (Rae 2016). If this notion of student self-advocacy is employed by faculty members within this study, how is it used?

Carter (2015) explains, "thus, individuals who live with the effects of trauma are socially constructed as an Other, and like other disabilities, trauma is 'experienced in and through relationships' with the un-traumatized norm" (p. 5). This Otherness has allowed for the conflation of survivors'

symptoms, the disregard of their autonomy, and the discredit of their voice. Through the intersections of these other identities, further othering occurs. In academic environments where race is discussed with no acknowledgement to the current, generational, or historic trauma associated with the racisms experienced by persons of color, these students' trauma histories are ignored, delegitimized, omitted and invalidated (Alvarez et al 2016; Brave Heart 1998; Carter 2007; Danieli 1998; Fast and Collin-Venzina 2010; Milner 2015).

Fast and Collin-Vezina (2010) reviews how these more unrecognized traumas can impact indigenous individuals, while Alvarez et al (2016) applies these effects on the individual to educational settings. Fast and Collin-Vezina focus on the ways resilience and coping remain frames in the cultural ideologies of white governing bodies (2010). What Fast and Collin-Vezina call for is an acknowledgement of how cultural variation affects trauma resilience with emphasis on community (2010). Thus, it can be assumed that indigenous student trauma survivors may have needs that institutions such as education are not accommodating. Professors then perpetuate these enduring traumas by continuing to frame discussions of indigenous persons as abstract and distinctly separate from the students in their classrooms. Alvarez et al (2016: 27) explores the connections between current/historic classroom topics and trauma survivorship by stating "trauma connects past experiences to the present through the trauma victim's symbolic representation, interpretation, and imagination." Framing anti-racist education practices, such as calling into questions the ways current educational practices/lessons/historical accounts perpetuate or reinforce single-lens white dominant education, as the trauma-informed practices legitimizes the multifaceted trauma endured by immigrant students and students of color in the classroom (Alvarez et al 2016).

The erasure of trauma experiences is not just linked to race. Trauma can be multifaceted and intersectional within many overlapping identities. Sexuality, gender, immigrant status, ability status,



veteran status, socioeconomic status, age, and geographic regions (specifically those with enduring natural disasters) can not only change the likelihood of enduring traumas and cause of traumas but can also impact your access to and within resources for trauma survivors and post-secondary education more broadly. LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual or Agender) persons face not only their own sets of personal traumas, but also the enduring impacts of homophobia within post-secondary schooling, and society more broadly (McCormack 2020; Edwards et al. 2016; Travers et al. 2020). It has been long documented that LGBTQIA+ persons face high levels of interpersonal violence (Coulter et al. 2017; Edwards et al. 2016; Travers et al. 2020). In fact, in Edwards et al (2016: 24) national survey of LGBTQ+ (the term that was used in their study) people, 46 percent reported experiencing interpersonal violence (as denoted by dating violence, sexual violence, or physical violence done to them) in the previous two years before the study. Travers et al (2020) also found that rates of depression, PTSD, anxiety were higher in LGB persons than heterosexual trauma survivors, signifying that queer sexual identity, and the societal injustice attached to these identities, is shaping these students' trauma symptoms (also see Coulter et al 2017). McCormack (2020) compared 10 advocacy research projects on homophobia, mainly anti-bullying, within post-secondary education and found that the framework for the majority of these projects was to acknowledge the ways trauma, such as bullying, can negatively impact the individual. Further complicating the issue, when individual experiences with bullying are framed as community trauma, it can leave the individual less centered in their own trauma experiences or the resources aiming to mitigate such experiences (McCormack 2020). Bridging the dichotomy of individual versus community trauma helps to understand the ways both individuals and communities can be impacted by structures of injustice. As with how we depict race in our classrooms, how we depict or omit depicting gender, sex, and sexual variation can impact students

in harmful ways and can elicit trauma experiences (Coulter et al 2017; Edwards et al 2016; McCormack 2020; Travers et al 2020).

This study aimed to acknowledge how trauma varies within different life histories and acknowledge how varying structures of oppression intersect to impact trauma survivors in various ways (Crenshaw 1991; Hill-Collins 2019). This study also aims to acknowledge the ways trauma histories are put into hierarchies and examine if faculty members also prioritize certain trauma narratives while possibly rendering other trauma histories invisible or delegitimizing a need of accommodations and different pedagogical practices in those cases. Because academic structures prioritize research on some collegiate trauma survivors over others, there is a gap in literature on some of these varying intersections of student identities trauma and their links to educational outcomes. Veteran status, race, and gendered outcomes are reviewed in the next section, and inferences can be made about how similar outcomes are probable, or at least possible, for other intersections of identity. However, it is important to note the lapse in trauma research and the critical review of accommodations praxis or pedagogical consideration for some trauma experiences as a limitation of this literature review and research more broadly. When doing this research project, my goal is to acknowledge this gap and the power that invisibility has in reinforcing the delegitimizing processes for student trauma survivors within other intersections within pedagogical considerations. Thus, sparking up continued examination of the research gaps that need to be filled moving forward.

### **Trauma and Educational Outcomes:**

Trauma has immense implications for a student's educational accessibility, academic success, and the way survivors experience academia. In academia, a student relies on their memory, ability to process new information, ability to socially interact, and autonomy to actively engage in educational settings. In reference to trauma survivors, all of these qualities are called into question or actively

combated by their attempts to survive their own trauma histories. When post-secondary student's survivorship includes trauma symptoms, these symptoms impact the processes necessary for academic success creating are lower test scores (Pereira 2018: 511; also see Neber 2016), lower GPA (Jordan 2014), dysregulated sleep patterns (Ness et al. 2014: 152), and higher dropout rates (Boyratz et al. 2013; Boyraz et al. 2016; Neber 2016). Ness et al. (2014: 152) write about the effect of survivorship containing trauma symptoms on combat trauma survivors and identify the highest rates of self-reported symptoms among combat survivors in the classroom: irritability at 22 percent, sleep disturbances at 20 percent, concentration problems and mood swings at 17 percent. Notably, these symptoms were reported without the added stress of a triggering event. For example, if a combat trauma survivor has to watch a graphic movie about war in a history class or a rape survivor had to watch a documentary with a depiction of rape within one of their classes, these triggering events can cause student survivors to contend with the active mental health crisis while also requiring them to contend with the educational requirements in a given setting. This distress can cause additional mental health outcomes along with the educational outcomes described above.

Understanding how trauma affects students' learning processes better contextualizes why pedagogical strategies acknowledging trauma challenges of students by faculty members are necessary for student success. How then does trauma impact a student's learning? Neber (2016) has been researching the impact of violence on survivors' education by comparing negative impacts of sexual assault on undergraduate students. Impacts include "was unable to work on or complete assignments," "grades dropped," and "had to drop a class." These results were separated by gender, signifying a possible difference in how male-identifying and female-identifying victims are impacted by sexual assault. Neber's team found that 20 percent of female respondents and 12 percent of male respondents reported a drop in their grades due to traumatic event(s). 19 percent of female respondents and 10

percent of male respondents reported that they were unable to “do or complete assignments.” Pereira et al. (2018: 510) found that, among 2,213 Brazilian students, those presenting with PTSD showed significantly lower scores on both their first semester entrance exams and final semester evaluation exam. The given results show “there is functional impairment in their university life,” due to the trauma they experienced (Pereira et al 2018: 511). Jordan et al (2014) supported the claim that GPA lowers after women have experienced sexual assault.

Amir et al. (2008: 55) concluded that those with trauma histories (with or without PTSD symptoms) were more likely to have enhanced implicit memory (memories that illicit trauma responses) with regards to images depicting trauma; however, those with PTSD symptoms were more likely to have negative associations with those pictures which commonly resulted in “maladaptive cognitive strategies such as depression.” The same phenomenon occurred when the survivors recalled the memory of words that they associated with particular trauma moments (Amir et al 2008: 55). McNally (2003:191) explores the interactions between memory and trauma and explains that while forgetfulness of items, dates, and everyday life activities is common in trauma survivors, forgetfulness differs greatly from traumatic amnesia or the repression of trauma. Moreover, in educational settings, a student relies on their ability to recall certain facts and events. In the symptom-active trauma brain, the ability to recall can be incredibly difficult if not impossible because the brain is already focused on relating the influx of visceral imagery to the unconscious ideas of the trauma memory (McNally 2003: 122).

University students of color face not only the individual violent traumas such as domestic violence, rape, gun violence, and assault at higher frequencies, but they also face the traumas associated with the legacies of colonialism and racism in America (Brave Heart 1998; Carter 2007; Danieli 1998; Fast and Collin-Vezina 2010; Milner 2015; Alvarez et al 2016). They face historical racism, trauma that accumulates through generations or across a lifetime that is experienced by an entire group such as

indigenous persons or Black people in the United States (Brave Heart et al 2011). Students of color face generational trauma which is the trauma associated with the legacy of violence done to groups of individuals that have lasting effects on cultural dominance generations to follow (Schwab 2010). Generational trauma can include the destruction of traditional knowledge ways, destruction of language patterns, the genocidal practices of dominant groups on others, and the transfer of brain patterns that stem from living with large amounts of personal violence due to historical processes such as slavery (Schwab 2010). These students also face the daily microaggressions associated with colorblind racism ideologies, which Alvarez et al (2016) assert have effects similar to impacts of interpersonal violence. These students sometimes face more overt interpersonal racism in the form of hate crimes. Hate crimes are defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as “a traditional offense like murder, arson, or vandalism with an added element of bias” (FBI 2018). The multilayered effects of trauma for students of color, as well as the ways in which faculty members and university systems more broadly fail to recognize these traumas as legitimate, creates classrooms where students’ lived experiences are discussed as abstract ideas and thus cannot impact current trauma survivorship.

### **Trauma and Pedagogical Practice:**

There are many ways in which classrooms can become more trauma informed, thus more accessible and inclusive for survivors of violence (Flintoft and Bollinger 2016; Noddings 1984; Noddings, 1992; Owens 2005). Angela Carter (2015) centers her research on survivors from both an emic and etic focus, as she herself is also a survivor. Carter (2015) reflects on how symptoms of distress can become an accessibility issue for student survivors of violence. Flintoft and Bollinger (2016) write about how useful an overall trauma-informed perspective can be on the topic of violence is in education from the view of educators. Trauma-informed perspectives and pedagogical practices aim to acknowledge and help mitigate trauma symptoms of the student’s in their classrooms (Flintoft and

Bollinger 2016). Examples of strategies include critiquing systems of oppressions that perpetuate violence (hooks 1994; Alveraz 2016), using content warnings (Carter 2015; Owens 2005), acknowledging subjects and imagery that can evoke trauma responses (Carter 2015), and being strategic about the imagery, personal accounts and videos displaying violence that are utilized within classrooms.

Flintoft and Bollinger (2016) also expressed an ethic of care model for teaching that is not dependent on content warnings, with several other examples of learning strategies to help approach students who could be sensitive to trauma related material. Those strategies include communication with students and forming bonds within classroom spaces to facilitate harder conversations, gradually increasing intensity of subjects or themes, utilizing wider ranges of material options, and responding to active trauma responses students have in the classroom (Flintoft and Bollinger 2016). Nel Noddings (1984; also see Noddings 1992) developed the ideal of a moral framework in teaching using feminist perspective, in the acknowledgement of intersecting oppressions within the identities that students may carry and the trauma those oppressions can create within the lived histories of the students in the classroom. Ethics of care teaching was then expanded into the idea that professors have not only an academic obligation to their students and institutions but also an ethical obligation to be trauma informed while teaching (Flintoft and Bollinger, 2016; Noddings, 1984; Noddings, 1992; Owens 2005). All of these pieces inform the importance of trauma in the classroom and will advance the feminist perspective of my research, in that all of these focus on education systems acknowledging trauma and the effect it has on the individuals on college campuses. My research aims to discuss what, if any of these strategies are being deployed by the faculty members in this study and the rationale behind their decisions.

Much research has been done on the current resources and the barriers that exist for student survivors in utilization of resources. Walsh et al. define a barrier as “any factor that serves as an

impediment to disclosure, reporting, or help seeking and that makes it less likely that a survivor will tell someone else about his or her victimization or seek formal services for help in the aftermath of the victimization” (Walsh et al 2010:137). Researchers express examples of barriers to accommodations:

- physical placement of resources (Walsh et al 2010; Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010)
- knowledge of resources (Walsh et al 2010; Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010),
- feeling their situation is not serious enough or question their worthiness of receiving resources (Walsh et al 2010; Sabri et al 2019)
- fear of repercussions (Walsh et al 2010; Sabri et al 2019)
- not wanting anyone to know about their trauma (Walsh et al 2010; Sabri et al 2019)
- fear that the perpetrator will receive either social or legal sanctions (Walsh et al 2010; Sabri et al 2019)
- not feeling that anything will come out of reporting an event (Sabri et al 2019)
- worried that they will not be believed (Sabri et al. 2019)
- concerns about confidentiality (Sabri et al 2019)
- concerns about living up to gendered self or social expectations (Allen et al 2015; Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010).

These barriers lead to a severe lack of the utilization of resources among student survivors.

Survivors regularly experience these barriers in secondary educational spaces. Smith and Freyd (2013) report that 21.5% of student survivors reported they felt like the institution treated their experiences as “no big deal.” In a study by Hayes-Smith and Levett (2010), students reported only knowing 4 out of the 9 resources<sup>3</sup> on campuses, and only 54% of students reporting receiving any information on sexual assault related resources. Walsh et al (2010) surveyed not only survivors but also those peer supports (such as friends, teammates, or classmates) who had had trauma disclosed to them

about their knowledge of resources. They found that the highest frequency of reasons to not utilize resources were when individuals “felt it was a private matter” and “didn’t think the incident was serious” across both survivors and their peer supports (Walsh et al 2010). Allen and Swan (2015) draw attention to how gender intersects with perceptions of support for survivors stating that students perceived females as the more supported survivors in campus resources. They also showed that male rape myths help to continue ideologies surrounding who is worthy of resources (Allen and Swan 2015). Hayes-Smith and Levett (2010) also discuss how these gendered assumptions translate to females knowing where resources are and receiving information about resources at a higher rate than male students.

Smith and Freyd (2013) discuss the impact of institutional failure or perceived failure on student survivors. Their study asserts that student survivors who have been through the reporting procedures or sought help in a traumatic situation have experienced negative interaction with institutional practices, which they call institutional betrayal (Smith and Freyd 2013). If faculty members’ reaction to student survivors’ disclosures of trauma or struggles with their trauma symptoms are negative, it will likely increase and expand institutional betrayal. The students who reported experiencing institutional betrayal saw heightened levels of negative impacts such as sleep problems, dissociation, depression, and anxiety than student survivors who had not reported institutional betrayal (Smith and Freyd 2013). This would suggest that administrations and resource offices play a role in the symptomatic responses survivors experience in academic settings, but also that faculty members can impact these responses. Amar et al (2014) claim that administrators help to create and facilitate campus environments surrounding trauma responses, and thus they impact the lived experiences of survivors and the utilization of resources of these groups. If we understand faculty members as part of the institution, can faculty members help alleviate feelings of institutional betrayal? On the other hand, could institutional betrayal be expanded to



include the role faculty members play in perpetuating broader institutional practices that shape feelings of betrayal?

In some studies, researchers asked student survivors for their feedback on how they felt resources and prevention could better suit the student survivors (Sabri et al 2019; Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010). The students gave responses that address some of the barriers students face in reporting to and utilizing resources on campuses. These suggestions included campus events regarding prevention, advocating for survivors, or collaboration building (like Take Back the Night projects) (Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010). There were also suggestions for resources such as: bringing up resources in a course or having a separate course for this topic (Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010), having resource information easily found on internet sites for the university (Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010), having offices with extended hours for help or hotlines (Sabri et al 2019), campus based support groups (Sabri et al 2019), and trauma-informed professionals interacting with them in these resources (Sabri et al 2019). This project aims to explore the ways faculty members can perpetuate universities' problematic resource failures for survivors, can facilitate trauma-informed spaces on campuses, or some variation of both.

### **COVID 19, Trauma, and Pedagogy**

The Covid-19 pandemic (also referred to as Coronavirus) reached the United States early in 2020. With it came changes to university procedures and pedagogical practices. In February and March 2020 (within the spring semester), universities cancelled classes, moved students off campus, and fostered remote learning through a variety of means: canceled finals, closed buildings, moved student resources online, or in some rare cases changed very little about their in person learning format (Smalley 2020; Supiano 2020). The summer semesters mostly moved to virtual as the United States response to the pandemic shifted and varied across and within state borders. Proceeding the fall 2020 academic semester, faculty members, administrators, students, and the general population across the United States

weighed in on the now-heavily politicized debate surrounding the safety of school reopenings and procedures surrounding those reopenings (Kelderman 2020). At times, many faculty members within universities felt expendable or were at odds with administrations on upcoming procedural decisions (Kelderman 2020). Researchers began studies to show how reopening campuses impacts the spread of Covid-19 (Mangan 2020). Mangan (2020) found that when several major universities reopened in-person, their counties' Covid -19 infections cases rose by an average of 3,000 per day. This research line is still ongoing and will be, as the scientific and publication process takes time.

The Midwest university where this study takes place decided to reopen campus with mask policies, reduced classroom settings, and HR and accommodations procedures for at-risk faculty and students. However, these policies and procedures left flexibility for departments to make some decisions on faculty's ability to move completely to online learning and who would be teaching the classes with required in person components. Thus, while some shifted pedagogical practice to include mostly online learning, others returned trying to balance new in-person policies with the stress and fear of in-person exposure to a pandemic and existing trauma within their classrooms.

These dynamics have fundamentally changed pedagogical practice. But in what ways? And is the community trauma of a pandemic allowing for a discourse in trauma-informed pedagogy? Supiano (2020) explains how professors who lacked a desire or initiative to learn about online pedagogical praxis were thrust into training and self-research by the uncertainty of a fall semester within a global pandemic. Further noting that assessments and links to broader areas of social concern, such as the racial discrepancies in higher education as linked to broader social movements for change, became places where shifting pedagogical praxis garnered much needed pedagogical consideration (Supiano 2020). Whitaker (2020) wrote an article discussing the ways in which administrators and faculty can be more trauma informed in lieu of the current pandemic. These measures included putting people first, staying

informed, reaching out to students, communicating, advocating, taking care of oneself, and encouraging others to take breaks (Whitaker 2020). Supiano (2020b) also writes an article chronicling the academic challenge of compassion and the use of flexibility as a pedagogical project within one professor's pandemic classroom. In this text, she describes both the ways in which this professor had challenges with feeling taken advantage of and feeling morally torn in a plagiarism situation while also discussing the benefits the students had in flexibility of their schedule, less lecture intensive classes, releasing her slides ahead of classes, and maintaining good communication with students (Supiano 2020). These narratives suggest that pedagogy is changing within the context of a pandemic and that those changes are directing some faculty towards engagement with pedagogical praxis that they may not have before. Research is needed to further explore the links between pandemic pedagogy, faculty ideology, and trauma-informed praxis in higher education. This project aims to address this gap by prioritizing faculty perspectives on pedagogical practices and their possible changes due to an unprecedented global pandemic. This research is not only during a critical time for scholarship surrounding educational changes from a pandemic, but also how understandings of trauma may be tied to understandings of community trauma linked to pandemics.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **The Study**

Emma Smith-Stover (2005) writes about how research and literature on domestic violence has, over the last twenty years, given us a plethora of valuable information and helped to guide research in more appropriate ways in obtaining data on this vulnerable population such as sexual assault survivors. This research aimed to maintain a perspective of student survivors that allows for them to be both survivors of violence and also successful students. If the focus remained on all the negative effects of the trauma on the survivors, it would fall into the all-too-common habit of “damage centered research,” a concept written about by Eve Tuck (2009). In her article, she discusses that focusing on the negative or oppressive experiences of a community can lead to a community-wide feeling of “broken” (Tuck 2009). To try and stay focused on the multilayered experience of student survivors, this project focuses on student experience from the angle of faculty members, whose pedagogical practices directly impact a student trauma survivor’s access to their education. This will allow for the research on trauma-informed practices without mandating the further exhaustion of a vulnerable student population during a global pandemic that could likely be exacerbating trauma (Corbin and Morse 2003). However, faculty members can also be trauma survivors and allowing them to approach this topic with as minimal distress possible is also incredibly important. Making sure that faculty members do not have to share personal trauma histories with the researcher helps to minimize the distress within this project (Corbin and Morse 2003).

For this project, twenty-one faculty members from a Midwest university were interviewed using a range of question formats outlined in an interview guide. The questions analyzed for this thesis are the following primary guiding questions from the interview guide (Appendix A):

1. How have you learned strategies and practices about addressing violent content in your classrooms?

[If applicable] Follow-Up/Probe: *If yes.*

- A. *What do you feel like OSU, as an institution, offers any resources for addressing violent content?*
- B. *What might help you learn more about these strategies and practices?*

2. How have you navigated your work with students who have been negatively impacted by violent materials covered in your or other classes?
3. What on and off campus resources do you access in addressing students who may have experienced trauma? What resources do you wish you could access to help these students?

Within the larger project, the respondents were also asked about their own course material and pedagogical practices, as well as some generalizable student-faculty scenario vignettes regarding disclosures of concerns related to student trauma histories and content felt by students. This project used an interview methodology to best examine the themes and codes. Interviews allowed more exploration/exploratory processes (Babbie 2016; Aspers and Corte 2019). This process also allowed the participants a source of empowerment and self-reflection, lifting their voices on a topic surrounding their pedagogical philosophies (Wolgemuth et al 2015). These interviews became a way for faculty members to explain their praxis in connection to a broader lens of student success thus, providing a way to promote healing of student survivors and lessening institutional betrayal (Wolgemuth et al 2015; Smith and Freyd 2013).

The interviews were virtual, using Zoom, to ensure the physical safety of the researchers and participants during a pandemic of an infectious disease (Archibald et al 2019; Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Gray et al 2020). Virtual interviews came with their own challenges, including making sure only

audio of interviews are recorded, making sure that the virtual meeting space allows for confidentiality, and selecting the right virtual platform to conduct the interviews with (Gray et al 2020). However, Archibald et al (2019) found that when asked about their experiences the participants in their study preferred Zoom to face to face interviewing for its convenience of time and space. To ensure best practice, I created a multilayered process of security measures which were approved through the IRB process. In order to create a connective virtual environment, the researcher practiced active listening through verbal and body language cues to help to keep connections to participants to foster relationship building (Corbin and Morse 2003; Brinkman 2016). Acknowledging that interview flow and engagement may be more challenging in virtual environments, the researcher had to be mindful of how this environment can limit engagement of both the interviewee and the interviewer (Brinkman 2016).

Email recruitment went out to all the faculty members within the university to ensure inclusionary practices. The recruitment email was sent out twice, with a four-week gap between emails. Because a large net was cast for recruitment, the range of participants became diverse, as shown in Table 1 and expounded on in the population section. By acknowledging that faculty members who may not cover topics the researcher would have considered violent, the faculty were allowed to make their own assessment of their course material. This practice also allowed faculty members who did not feel as though they were part of this overarching pedagogical debate space to center their responses around student concerns and broader university resources. Several of the participants discussed their engagement with the project was helpful as a reflexive process.

The interview guide was an adaptation (for the inclusion of COVID-19 related themes) of a previously used interview guide. The original guide had twenty questions with five scenario vignettes. This guide was used in a research project by the researcher as an undergrad project. This previous usage at another university can be justified as a pilot study, and the feedback from that usage can be used as

guidance for any clarifications within this studies interview guide (Babbie 2016). The interview guide contained expansive edits before being used within this project to ensure less fatigue of the interviewee, a concern that was brought forth. The interviews ranged between 35 minutes and 2 hours, though the majority of the interviews lasted around an hour. There were 21 participants interviewed for this study.

The interviews were recorded with the Zoom software and then only the audio files and transcription text were extracted from Zoom and saved to the researcher's computer. These files were saved on an encrypted computer that only the researcher had access to. After the files were saved using only an interview number the original files were deleted off the Zoom software site. Once the transcription texts were edited to adjust for any errors the audio files were deleted from the researcher's computer. Only the transcription texts remain with numerical files names to ensure the most confidential storage of the data.

## **The Population**

The sample size in this study was 21. Demographics of this sample were acquired at the end of each interview. When asked how the participants identify their gender, 14 responded female and 7 responded male. One participant who identified as female also identified as cis, while the rest did specify or were asked to clarify whether they were cisgender or transgender. This makes the sample more heavily female leaning than the overall faculty demographics which report 41% women and 59% men (Institutional Research and Information Management 2021). This is not surprising, as researchers have shown women to be more engaged with research projects than men (Smith 2008). The interview question on racial or ethnic identification was answered by respondents (n= 21). All 21 respondents identified as white or Caucasian. However, two expounded on their race/ethnicity as also including Native American and Ashkenazi Eastern European Jew respectively. The racial demographics are not representative of the faculty population more broadly, they are reported as 71% white/Caucasian

(Institutional Research and Information Management 2021). However, the institution is predominantly white faculty members and thus this sample size is representative of a larger gap in racial/ethnic diversity amongst faculty. Respondents in the study were asked to identify any other marginalized status (n= 21). Within the answers for this question statuses of sexuality, disability, religion, and socioeconomic were disclosed. The combined (42%) of the respondents that identified themselves as marginalized: lesbian (14%), queer (10%) gay (5%), disabled (10%), Jewish (5%), and one having a background of low socioeconomic status (5%). These categories are not mutually exclusive. The demographics on sexuality also seem to overrepresent queer faculty given the general population demographics.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics of Respondents (n=21)

Gender	Female	66(%)
	Male	33
Race/Ethnicity*	White/Caucasian	100(%)
	Native American	5
	Ashkenazi Eastern European Jew	5
Survivorship	Yes	66(%)
	No	33
Academic Focus*	Social Sciences	57 (%)
	Education	14
	Business and Mathematics	14
	Humanities	14
	Art and Theater	10
	Life and Physical Sciences	10
Job title	Associate Professor	19(%)
	Assistant Professor	46
	Visiting Assistant Professor	5
	Instructor	5
	Head Professor	5
	Lecturer	10
	Professor	10

The number of years the faculty had taught at this particular institution ranged from less than a year to 35 years. The average number of years a professor taught was 7.3, though the median number of



years was 6. The respondents were also asked for their job title. As displayed in Table 1, respondents identified their rank as Associate Professor (19%), Assistant Professor (46%), Visiting Assistant Professor (5%), Instructor (5%), Head Professor (5%), Lecturer (10%), Professor (10%). The respondents were also asked to categorize their area of academic focus and could answer as Life/physical sciences, Humanities, Social sciences, Mathematics and Business, Language and Education, Art and Theater, Health sciences, Social Work. Note: the respondents could pick multiple categories. The responses were 12 reporting their area of focus as social sciences, 3 as education, 3 as business and mathematics, 3 as humanities, 2 as Art and Theater, and 2 as Life and Physical Sciences.

A sample characteristic of utmost importance within this study was acknowledging faculty as possible trauma survivors when discussing the roles of trauma informed pedagogy and violent content in the classroom. Respondents were asked if they self-identify as someone who has experienced trauma or violence. 66% of respondents self-identified as someone who has experienced violence. In response to this question, respondents were asked if they felt their answer to the question regarding survivorship impacted their pedagogical practice. Of the 19 respondents that answered this question all of them, regardless of whether they self-identified as someone who has experienced trauma or violence said that this status impacted their pedagogy. While only few expanded on this, however those who did expressed similar insights. For example, an interviewee who identified as not having experienced trauma or violence described the impact on their pedagogy as, “I think it probably reduces my ability to be sensitive to situations where trauma may have occurred or people who have experienced trauma.” Whereas an interviewee who did identify as having experienced trauma or violence explained how it impacted their pedagogy as “Hopefully it’s made me more empathetic.... particularly how people can get triggered. And how difficult those issues can be for people. That is why I’m pretty adamant about you’re trying to make sure people get help and support. Those are the main things.” The themes

expressed within this interviewee's explanation were also expressed in others who expanded on their answer. Further research could provide deeper understandings of how faculty members are connecting their trauma histories to their pedagogical practice.

### **Data Analysis:**

During my interview process the researcher took field notes to help the coding process and to start the process of organizing main points from each interview (Saldana 2013; Babbie 2016). This also allowed the researcher to practice reflexivity (Charmaz 2004). The field notes reflected on the body language within the interview, verbal pausing, and/or emotional fluctuation within responses that direct translations would not reflect (Charmaz 2004; Saldana 2013; Babbie 2016). These notes helped provide context and a fuller picture of the interview experience from both the researcher and respondent (Charmaz 2004; Saldana 2013; Babbie 2016). As part of creating an open and trust building space, the research disclosed my note taking in the consent questions and allow space for participants to express concerns with this procedural element (Brinkman 2016). No concerns with this practice arose.

Throughout the transcription process an inductive approach was used, as this research is more exploratory in nature (Babbie 2016). By examining the relationships between the questions about how one learned pedagogical practices and ideologies of professors surrounding student trauma along with the resources for these students, this thesis aims to explore a solutions- focused lens on faculty concerns. Within these concerns a wider context of power relationships in faculty/student interactions, as well as, faculty/institutions interactions will be used to help frame the context. In looking for consistencies among the respondents and evaluating for common threads, these common threads became the themes. Interviews continued until responses and themes were saturated (Babbie 2016). While themes appeared as early as the first ten interviews, the researcher continued for another ten interviews

to confirm those themes. The twenty-first interview resulted from the research not wanting to be exclusionary to any faculty who wanted to participate as opposed to keeping the interval of ten.

Babbie (2016: 384) describes grounded theory as “an inductive approach to research introduced by Barney Glaser and Anseim Strauss, in which theories are generated solely from examination of data rather than being derived deductively.” Grounded theory is utilized to resist the production of fixed preconceived assumptions about data obtained using qualitative methods. Walker and Myrick (2006) explain the differences between these two founders’ assumptions on how to code inductively. Glaser’s techniques are described as more of an “art” involving deep engagement with the data collected and acknowledgements of self in the process of data collection (Charmaz 2004; Walker and Myrick 2006). Whereas Strauss emphasizes the use of systematic analysis in the wording and examples used by the participants claiming the science roots within grounded theory (Walker and Myrick 2006). However, grounded theory is not an either/or approach, but rather the connection of these two techniques in tandem, acknowledging both the systematic operations in coding and our own connections to the findings as researchers (Walker and Myrick 2006).

Charmaz (2004: 985) discusses grounded theory as an examination of our “starting points” in the background knowledge of a subject we hold and allowing the “ending point” or data to derive from these “starting points” without assuming they be the same as the conclusions (also see Charmaz 2017). This allows participants to carry conflicting and/or complimentary constructions of the topics at hand; providing the analytic space to confront these constructions gives validity and authenticity to our research projects and respect and continuity with our research participants (Charmaz 2004; Charmaz 2017). Charmaz and Belgrave (2019) conclude that through the examination of our own language, assumptions, and critical reflections both in data collection and coding, the researcher helps to construct more reliable and valid data and also contends with the inherent subjectivity within the positionality of

researchers as a whole. In order to maintain a self-reflective strategy, the researcher took notes during the interview on body language, reflected on their own feelings after the interviews and made sure to note when participants felt like the wording of the interview needed expanding on. During the coding and reporting the findings, the interviewer really focused on making sure the themes represented the totality of the faculty perspectives in attempts to paint the most reliable and valid data possible. By structuring the findings in their terms, the researcher aimed to take her own feelings about the faculty perspectives as secondary and focus on them.

While coding using grounded theory, the researcher looked for themes using memoing notes as the transcripts were read and reread. Memoing allowed reflexivity in the coding process, the “site of conversation with *myself* about *my* data,” and provided space for the acknowledgement of researcher positionality (Saldana 2013:41 also see Charmaz ). This method was chosen over computer software as it allows for a more in-depth knowledge and familiarization with the interview transcripts. Walker and Myrick (2006:552) discuss the way one of the founders of grounded theory describe the necessity of familiarizing yourself with your own data: “Glaser believes that theoretical sensitivity is attained through immersion in the data, line by line, comparison by comparison, memo by memo, and code by code” (also see Charmaz 2004). By identifying patterns and connections, the researcher looked for frequency of ideas and also the magnitude of importance denoted by the interviewees. Again, this is exploratory so there may be some trends that are unexpected or perspectives that vary widely.

As the researcher worked through the data, it became clear that the focus for the thesis document should remain on institutional resources, concerns of the faculty, and the university-specific suggestions that the participant proposed. This not only fulfills the research goal of being centered on making a more trauma informed space for students, but also facilitates an activist leaning, solutions-focused document that benefits the participants directly. This information can then be given to the

appropriate university offices and can activate larger scale change within the university. Understanding that there is much more information within these transcripts, future documents should engage in other themes as there are also valuable and insightful. These themes were chosen to best promote active results from the research campus wide.

### **Reflexivity Statement**

Part of my reflexivity process is to acknowledge the ways my own positionality can and does influence my objectivity. I am a student survivor with PTSD who has, in previous educational settings, had to have accommodations due to her own trauma symptoms. I started this project at another university to raise awareness and create conversations on that campus surrounding the need for better pedagogical strategies and institutional practices regarding student trauma survivors. I intend to use the data in this project to establish similar conversations at my current academic institution and any other I become a part of in the future. I have also already given one lecture on campus on the topic of trauma informed practices and if any participants attended, my perspective in favor of trauma-informed practices will be known. I was mindful of this in my body language and responses within interviews. I am also a white, female, queer student with disability status that influences how I perceive the world and the ways in which others perceive me. In sum, I had to understand gender dynamics, dynamics surrounding a grad student interviewing faculty members who hold a higher rank than I hold, and all other power dynamics as they are perceived in a situation. During the interviews, several of the faculty members sought to challenge their assumed perceptions of me by fishing to see if their comments belittling trauma informed pedagogy could goad me into debates and it became my responsibility to find ways to mitigate my own negative feelings within an interview and find ways to navigate space in a professional manner. At times, the

faculty also asked for my perspective and knowledge in this matter to bounce their own questions surrounding their pedagogical practice.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

In order to focus on practical change to create a more trauma-informed campus, the themes that will be focused on directly call attention to critical opportunities where change can be achieved. By focusing on how pedagogy is shaped, how concerns from students are navigated, and what are the current resources acknowledged by faculty for both themselves and students, this section aims to challenge how universities can critically reflect on ways to become a more inclusive and welcoming place for those who have experienced trauma. Not only will this create gains in student retention, it will also help to shape a faculty that feels more valued and invested in, thus creating a more inclusive work environment for faculty members who also identify as having experienced trauma or violence like many of the faculty within this study. In examining the faculty perspectives from this university, a broader understanding of core barriers to trauma informed pedagogy can be broached and solutions can be presented. First, this section will focus on how faculty obtained their strategies on addressing violent content in their classrooms. Next will be an examination of faculty perspectives on how they navigated student concerns. Lastly, there will be discussion of what resources the faculty feel available on campus for their students who have experienced trauma and themselves for their pedagogical understandings of such students.

### **Constructing Pathways to Pedagogy:**

*“I don’t know. It’s probably trial and error……, I don’t think that I’ve actively search(ed) for ways to talk about it. It’s been more of one my own personal style, and beliefs and then student reactions probably”*

In this quote from my second interview, the participant describes the disconnect between pedagogical discourse on trauma informed practices and the majority of campus faculty. This section of the project explores the participants responses to the question “How have you learned strategies and practices about addressing violent content in your classrooms?” Participants consistently expressed that most of their pedagogical practice was acquired through “trial and error,” as professor 2 previously discussed, and their own personal experiences. Of the 57 % of faculty who discussed experiences, 83% referred to teaching experiences and 33% referred to undergraduate or graduate student experiences (note the categories are not mutually exclusive). Because these professors had a wide range of years taught, for some participants, their links to academia were still resonating as a student experience. The professors who had less teaching experience reflected heavily on the lack of teaching training within their graduate school programs. The professors with less teaching experience also reflected on their own negative experiences as a student regarding the violent content in the classrooms. They utilized these experiences as students to frame what pedagogical practices that they wanted to keep out of the many modeled by the faculty members they had interacted with as students.

Other faculty members discussed their experiences in the context of interactions with their current students: “Trial and error. Honestly, I don't think that there's a lot of really great resources on this, which I think is unfortunate, especially because dialogue about violent content is already challenging enough. So, a lot of it has to do with, I tried this and I horrified my students and I was like, well that was too far past the educational versus violent thing. I need to maybe pull back. I think I only had one of those that was really impactful for me and I was like okay we're changing this.” This example



encapsulates how a lack of training on such a topic led to a negative student experience that warranted change in the faculty member's pedagogical practice. 33% of faculty members expressed a lack of training on these topics. Overarchingly these faculty members expressed a desire to learn trauma informed strategies but noted that this gap resulted from a broader lack of teaching training, as well as a lack of time to be able to facilitate their own in-depth review of the literature on pedagogy.

When faculty members did employ specific strategies for addressing violent content in their classrooms, they expressed multiple ways of finding those pedagogical strategies. These learning pathways included having mentors (current colleagues and academic mentors within graduate programs) that modeled strategies, conferences, reading scholarship on pedagogy, or self-reflective practices. When discussing a conference they attended, professor 8 described the links to their pedagogical practice as, "It was really kind of people sitting around the table talking about what they do. With good ideas and bad ideas and you just adopt the ones you like or the ones that resonate with you." Professor 4 described how readings from black feminist educators helped reshape their practice: "I mean that. It really was like finding thought leaders that were doing the work that I could follow.... April Baker-Bell and Bettina Love were key thought leaders for me." Professor 3 discussed how mentors for them were professionals that were seeking change through advocating these practices and embodying them: "I learned them from y'all, from the younger students, from the younger teachers, and the younger professionals, that's the bunch that seems to have put feet on it, given it words, and really highlighted the value of it... but I think it's the codification of language that's come about in the past couple decades. I think it's really really been beneficial."

Having behaviors modeled for them (both ones they wanted to do and ones they did not want to do), reading and listening to others in conferences, and reflecting on one's current practices were equally discussed, having 6 participants mention each. The faculty members who discussed these pathways also

suggested further use of similar strategies in continuing education of faculty members more broadly on a range of topics concerning equity and inclusion. Because a lack of opportunities in trauma informed practices and consistent messages of “trial and error” informing pedagogical praxis, the majority of the faculty suggestions regarding solutions were continuing education directed towards addressing this gap in knowledge/training.

### **Navigating Classroom Dynamics:**

Faculty members from this project were asked, “How have you navigated your work with students who have been negatively impacted by violent materials covered in your or other classes?” Of the 21 respondents, 11 said they had not had students present concerns; however, 3 of those then followed up with examples of stressful classroom dynamics for students. One respondent answered yes, then said they did not wish to expound past that point. Of the rest of the respondents who did give examples, 80% of the student concerns were discussed in person, 20% in an email.

Three faculty members, two that did not have any concerns presented to them and one that had a concern come to them, expressed that they had in place specific pedagogical practices in place to address these concerns. While a few of the professors utilized content warnings, these strategies were different. The strategies included pre-semester surveys, decompression practices after harder lectures, and maintaining an open line of communication. Professor 8 explains their practices and the effect they think it had on student concerns: “I haven't had a student have that conversation, we have had preemptive conversations about avoiding particular material, but I haven't had students say that they were negatively impacted... But I think a lot of it comes back to the kind of relationship that you foster from the first day of class with your students. Because if I had been the professor that said that they had no choice and they had to watch it and I kind of convey any compassion or understanding. I don't think

they would come to me and talk to me about how it harms them later so they, they wouldn't have told me anyway.” The faculty in this group understood that there was a direct correlation between trauma-informed practices and student harm, they sought out strategies to mitigate the harm. Of the 13 faculty members who expressed their experience with student concerns, 38% expressed that they felt the student could come to them because of having these preemptive conversations surrounding approachability.

Other professors who chose to use content warnings or adjust their content did so as a direct result post an incident with a student. Even as the interviews took place, the professors were reflecting on their practices. Multiple professors explained that they did the interview as a reflective practice or to seek advice on this topic for their own subjects. These professors expressed gratitude for having a place to work through their thoughts on their own material and pedagogy. Professor 3 provides an example of this: “But now as we've talked and I realized I need to probably do better in the presentations about giving people a heads up about it. I should incorporate some of these resources for finding solutions to, you know, like they are experiencing harm. Say hey I hear you.”

This interviewee also explained the process by which they mitigate student concern/harm that has resulted from/ happened within their classroom: “And if there had been done harm done just stay in communication as much as much as possible and connect them with the supports that were most helpful, but also saying that their feelings are real. I think it's important to like when they come and say this this hurt me, saying, Man, that I believe you, and that's real and I'm super sorry, and when I have been the one responsible for it to own that and say I shouldn't have done that. And you shouldn't have to experience it and this is how I'm going to do better in the future. And how can I help now, you know” This quote was provided because is best shown all of the themes that were reflected in the answers of the faculty. An astounding 92% stated that the first and primary thing they felt was necessary in addressing student concern was validating the student and actively listening to them. Also, 69% of those

faculty members expressed that they would apologize and take ownership of their part in any harm the student felt resulted out of a classroom setting. It was interesting that two faculty members mentioned that their students were most shocked by this ownership, due to what the faculty felt was a preconceived notion that if they acknowledged wrong doing they may be liable in an age where universities wanted to expel as many liabilities as possible. Faculty felt that listening, validating, and apologizing were the keys to finding successful resolutions to these concerns.

When addressing student concerns professor 12 explained, “Both the universities I've worked with had outstanding counseling services for students. So, I was able to just listen, I think that's the best thing you can do. And then, and then direct them to, to the counseling services and make sure they know that it's available to them.” 38% of faculty suggested resources and primarily the resources they suggested were mental health services. The services utilized by the faculty for themselves and students is valuable insight into the student/faculty relationships.

### **Understanding Institutional Resources:**

#### *Resources for faculty:*

“Nothing. If they're offering it, they're not talking about it. I haven't gotten that email yet.” Here, Interviewee 19 expresses the sentiment that was expressed by 53% of the faculty members interviewed. Overarchingly the faculty, when asked what they felt the university was doing as an institution to offer as resources for addressing violent content, stated that there were no to minimal resources for them on this topic. Accordingly, many of the faculty expressed a lapse in training on pedagogy and teaching prior to becoming a professor. This lapse left many of them feeling as though they were not equipped to properly manage concern or that they had to learn through trial and error.

Faculty members explained that they did not know if there were resources out there. Out of the professors, the perspectives on whether there were resources to access within the university and how to access them varied. Some felt it was a lapse in attention to the topic: “I imagine there's resources out there. They have not been presented to me. That doesn't mean it's not my responsibility to go find them, but there are, you know, I got a lot of trainings” (professor 13). There was also a concern from the faculty about what content is deemed as critical or mandatory: “But as far as University at large, I think there are there's just a plethora of resources and opportunities to educate yourself, but also people need to take the steps to educate themselves I think they're probably... If I weren't aware of these questions and concerns through my own practice and experiences and study and research, there's not been a point that I'm aware of, where I was forced into interacting with these practices in order to be a professor at [this university]” (professor 3). For most of the interviewees, like number 3, who had actively sought out the information and change within their practice, it came at the expense of their time and energy to hunt down the material. The lapse in attention to the resources and/or support of the resources that dealt with students with trauma or trauma informed pedagogy did not feel prioritized or supported by the university as an institution.

Other faculty members discussed resources currently available and how they can utilize those to best serve their pedagogical practice. “I think the best think someone can do is contact ITLE and have them come and watch the class and open up their treasure trove of resources. I really do want to be the best teacher I possibly can be. And I spent a great deal of time with splitting headaches, engaging in these things” (Professor 11). As interviewee 11 suggests, the only two faculty resources the faculty could point to were the Institute of Teaching and Learning Excellence (ITLE) and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Only 20% of faculty mentioned a resource. All other mentions of resources were

geared toward what is available for the students. So, despite the question being geared for the faculty, 53% mentioned resources they could direct students to as opposed to resources for themselves.

*Student Resources:*

Faculty members were quick to answer the question of resources available for students who have experienced trauma with primarily positive feedback. Interviewee 16 expressed the experience of trying to find resources as, “I availed myself of this is really was my introduction and foray into the services that are available to this university and I was quite pleasantly surprised with what I found.” This respondent discussed finding access to the mental health services center. Only 3 faculty members said that they have never had to access any services for students and 78% of faculty said that the resources that were consistently used or they had experience with were the mental health services.

Of the other resources mentioned: 2 mentioned campus police, 2 mentioned title IX, 3 mentioned a national hotline, 1 mentioned the Mental Health First Aid Class, 2 mentioned mental health off campus, and 1 mentioned the Office of Women’s and LGBTQ Affairs. It was clear that mental health services were the primary source of student engagement and the one that was pushed most by the university, especially during the pandemic. The professors who utilized other resources usually had academic ties to those resources via participation or through research interests.

Some expressed how accessing the resources had changed with the current changes in academia during COVID. They mentioned not being able to walk students to services, not having the same physical advertising around campus, and having to rely on virtual spaces for resources that a student might need. Professor 3 describes how their physical office spaces were different now: “I've got magnets so like when they've got the magnets of the this and that. The other thing so that when you're in this

conversation say you know you look. Oh, yes, and then it's right there so I don't carry a lot of it around in my head, but I do try to, especially in the physical office and I'm glad you're saying that because I haven't replicated that here in my space at home, but in my physical office, I do tack the things to the bulletin board so they're on the wall.” These changes were felt in exasperation by the professors, and the physical expression was noted in the field notes of many of the interviews. It was apparent that they felt that there was a lapse in ability to help the students from the distance in the ways they were used to helping them.

While a majority of the faculty did express positive outlooks on the resources the university had to offer, there were 23% of the faculty who had concerns surrounding the mental health services in particular. One telling recount was from Interviewee 17, who explained, “It's just, it's not reasonable, this was this was a kid who was. I mean he was in, in real distress. And I could not get him in with a counselor not quickly enough and I didn't like it, so I took him to Oklahoma City, but, you know, but that's, that's not okay we need we need to do better on that, like, and especially in our last semester we have three suicides, like this COVID thing is bearing down really heavy on a lot of people.” This professor was very concerned about the wait that there was for services and the amount that student in immediate crisis could not receive. Other professors mentioned the cost of the services as being economically exclusionary for some of their students. Others also mentioned that their students had mentioned bad experiences, though they did not want to go into details to protect the students. Lastly, there was a specific concern about the students within the psychology programs and their access to care while at time being part of/or working with the mental health services on campus. This same professor expressed a need for services for graduate students and faculty more broadly that were separate from students to ensure privacy.

By addressing how faculty gain their knowledge about pedagogy, how they interact with student concerns, and what resources they are utilizing, a picture is formed of student experience from the faculty perspectives. When faculty do not have training on teaching and trauma informed pedagogy, they are left to learn by trial and error. This can lead to unintentional harm and students needing to raise concerns before these harms are addressed. When students are raising concerns, according to faculty, they are met with overarching support where measures are taken to actively listen, engage in pedagogical reflection, and elicit resources when felt to be necessary. The resources for them on pedagogical practices were explained as lacking for faculty unless they engage in time intensive hunt for themselves. In contrast, the faculty felt that resources for the students, through mental health services, were accessible and met with primarily positive remarks. This project and its findings will help to find gaps in their resources and allow the faculty's perspectives to guide what they need moving forward.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This project aimed to investigate the connections between faculty members' pedagogical strategies when utilizing violent content in classrooms and when handling student disclosures of trauma within a Midwestern university. Twenty-one faculty members were interviewed for this project. From the data gained in these interviews, this document focuses on how faculty construct their pedagogical praxis, how faculty navigate classroom dynamics, and how faculty understand university resources designed for themselves and students. Faculty members expressed the lack of training on pedagogy, as well as a lack of resources on campus for them regarding pedagogical practice. This translated to over half of the respondents having students presenting concerns about the class. Those professors who had students come to them focused on validating concerns, apologizing, suggesting university resources, and utilizing preemptive strategies to try and mitigate future concerns. The resource most utilized by faculty members for students is mental health services. In assessing these dynamics, faculty members were asked for suggestions on solutions that would be most impactful for them and their colleagues which ranged from seminars on the topic of violent content in the classroom to ITLE teaching tips documents. Some professors delved into broader systemic concerns that the university could address in making the campus more inclusive or student driven. The faculty had positive things to say about many of the services available to them and looked to expand those services, such as the mental health services on campus. The faculty expressed a number of creative solutions that challenge the establishment to expand and reflect on the current resources while working to provide solutions that are sustainable and plausible. Understanding

what faculty need for support in these matters will help both faculty work environment, as well as, creating a more trauma informed campus for student survivors of violence.

Of the 21 faculty that were interviewed for this project, 15 gave solutions they felt would benefit them in their pedagogical journey in response to the question, “What might help you learn more about these strategies and practices?” Those responses focused on some form of continuing education for faculty members. ITLE is a resource already doing work on continuing education for faculty and graduate student on this campus. This program was mentioned throughout the solutions the faculty presented. As interviewee 19 explains, “creating ITLE workshop with multiple people working together on this issue not one person, not person have people from different programs or different disciplines, come together and have them talk,” there was also a focus on interdisciplinary pedagogical conversations. This interdisciplinary focus continued as faculty worked through the multiple ways ITLE, or the university more broadly, could present material on addressing violent content in the classrooms. Professor 16 discusses some of the alternate ways to transfer a wider range of faculty perspectives if a panel was not possible: “I think something like that where other people have contributed, either in little video clips, or written word like a repository, or a database could be quite helpful.”

The major barriers to participating in these programs were time and motivation. It is important to note that of all the faculty involved in this project, only 2 expressed that they had no interest in future expanding their knowledge on pedagogy related to violent content in the classroom and both of those respondents explained that as they were too far into their career to change now. The majority of faculty expressed a desire to continue to progress and evaluate their own pedagogy, even the ones that described themselves as having no content that is violent in their classrooms. With a system that already has faculty members managing research or professional projects, with teaching and professional development, many found the idea of continuing education necessary but struggled with how they would

find time. Several respondents discussed shorter and more digestible material that they can engage with on their own time, as expressed within Professor 10's suggestion: "I've been really enjoying some of ITLE's Teaching Tips. And I think a format like that with some digestible kind of practical suggestions could be really great." Another faculty member expressed a desire for the continuing education to have a system where those inquiries or modules were considered when awarding someone tenure or on yearly evaluations, expressing the need for acknowledgement of the effort faculty puts into bettering their pedagogical praxis. This faculty member even proposed a reward or credit system that could be employed for continuing education.

Other faculty members said that doing their own research and having material they can read is the more important to them. These faculty members focused more on materials outside of the university, such as peer-reviewed journals or national conferences. Some of the newer faculty expressed a need for more classroom experience and they consistently expressed a need for more broad focus on teaching within graduate programs, especially for those geared toward academic jobs. The newer faculty members also expressed a desire for more faculty groups on campus and even ones that directly were linked to collaborative connections on examining pedagogy with both newer and more tenured faculty.

Along with examples of faculty-gear solutions, the faculty were also focused on what solutions could address concerns they had about student resources and broader university inclusion. These solutions included a more expansive mental health services with economic considerations and separate services for those graduate students that are part of the consoling services as practitioners. The faculty also suggested group-based services for varying forms of trauma that students could experience related to the pandemic and oppression felt within current society. Continuing with economic justice, the faculty suggested more connection to off-campus resources for economic insecurities.

Lastly and most broadly, the faculty instigated several conversations that focused on more systemic issues within the academic institution. The faculty that engaged in these conversations saw anti-racism work and queer inclusion vital to structurally supporting students and faculty. One faculty member expressed this sentiment in their desire to create a women's and queer safety center on campus and challenging the university to reconfigure legacy admissions that promote notions of white supremacy. Professor 19 explains that "this wouldn't be the most radical part, but if the administration would make as one of its goals to move towards not being known as a PWI (Predominately White Institution) that would... That's the culprit. And we talked about them on a diversity, equity classes that you know we don't have affirmative action but we have legacy admissions. I said these universities were built for white people. And so what we're trying to do is preserve that legacy of whiteness. Give it privilege, more privilege. And so that's problematic too but if they cut the legacy missions, then you're cutting your donor dollars and yeah, it's money and privilege. It's a very problematic thing and I think there has to be a real effort to hire faculty of color." Examining the structural roots to university wide interactions with students who have/ or are currently experiencing trauma, will help to break down the barriers experienced by many trauma survivors of color, who are queer, who have disabilities, or have any intersections of these identities.

By centering the voices of faculty and their suggestions this university could implement a number of strategies to mitigate the concerns the faculty expressed regarding lack of training in pedagogy, lack of resources for faculty on the trauma informed practices, and more resources for students who have experienced trauma. By creating continuing education for faculty that they can access around their schedules, (i.e., an ITLE module) that they get some form of acknowledgement for doing the university could help mitigate the concerns of faculty and help them be better equipped to help students who have experienced violence. This research also indicated that there was a high rate of survivorship among the

faculty, some of whom expressed a desire for the university to acknowledge that trauma through mental health resources were accommodating to diverse populations (student, grad student, and faculty alike). Through more inclusive and expansive resources for faculty and students the university can help to create a safer and more accessible campus.

#### Limitations:

This research project is a representation of the geopolitical climate and hiring practices of the Midwest. Because of these practices the opportunity to include voices of faculty of color was limited. The absence of voices of color is a limitation of the work, even if it is representative of the overall university depicted. In future research these voices need to be included, as well as the scope of universities that are part of these projects. This document also is limited in the reported findings from the overall data collected. The added stress of a pandemic could have led to limits on who participated in the study as well. However, I do not have a way to measure this effect for this study.

#### Future Directions of the Research:

Further research could provide deeper understandings of how faculty members are connecting their trauma histories to their pedagogical practice. Extending this research to other universities that include a more diverse faculty is essential in completing a more inclusive picture of pedagogical practice. These research projects would be beneficial in understanding how the identity of the professor, geopolitical region of the university and pedagogical practices might intersect. Additional future projects need to examine other extents of the research data collected in this project and their connections to various part of these findings. For example, the data collected on from the faculty responding to student vignettes should be examined with how they expressed the navigation of their own student concerns. Future research could include interviews with faculty done by a grad student and faculty member to see

if there is a difference in communication or disclosures based on the power differential of academic rank. Lastly, expanding more broadly on how pedagogical practices are learned for those teaching at a collegiate level could provide insights into the overarching theme of a lack of training on teaching that was discussed by professors in this study.

## NOTES

1. I will discuss student survivors of trauma as a group, though trauma histories are not homogenous and student survivors encompasses a wide variety of trauma related experiences. I am intentionally not drawing a line about which kinds of trauma the student survivors need to have experienced in order to be student survivors because I do not want to reinforce the validations of certain traumas while negating others. For the purpose of this research, survivorship will be defined as discussed in key terms in concepts and is utilized as a form of affirmation (Caruth 1995). While not all persons who have experienced trauma consider themselves victims or survivors, the term “survivor” has been positively correlated to increased mental health and autonomy driven language practices (Williamson and Serna 2018).
2. When content warnings are the topic of conversation, much debate arises, especially among faculty members. At such a conversation, Rae (2016) reflects that there was no voice of a student survivor to attest to a student perspective (p. 95). Instead, Rae asserts that all but one on the panel “conflated trigger warnings with the notions of ‘political correctness,’ ‘coddled millennials,’ and a ‘threat to academic freedom’” (Rae 2016:101). These labels seemed to be the reoccurring themes in the argument opposing content warnings. Hardy (2015) has argued against content warnings stating that student survivors need policy changes instead of content warnings due to the negative implications about sexual assault survivors: “a need for ‘trigger warnings’ enforces the stereotype of rape victims as helpless, hysterical and permanently damaged.” Hardy makes several suggestions, including increased mental health resources and the enforcement of policies that have consequences for perpetrators of violence, as well as research and medical

facilities associated with universities. Still, Hardy acknowledges that “during classes it is appropriate to tell students the material to be covered is difficult—but that doesn’t necessarily mean only for rape survivors.” Alerting students that the material is difficult is exactly what a content warning does. Hardy continues by saying that listing hotlines and resources after the distressing material would be also be beneficial. Filipovic (2014) reiterates the claim against content warnings, that these warnings shut down conversations on hard topics and thus become censoring. Filipovic’s claim illustrates the misconception that those in favor of content warnings also wish to censor the topics that are discussed. Censoring material is not the goal. In fact, content warnings keep these discussions in the forefront of the educational process while acknowledging that individuals in their classrooms possibly have trauma histories that mirror these topics. With warnings, student survivors are encouraged to utilize their own resilience strategies and remain a critical part of these conversations.

Content warnings are not the only way in which educators can accommodate student survivors. Manne (2015) expresses “it’s not about coddling anyone. It’s about enabling everyone’s rational engagement.” Abadi (2014) asserts the difference between a desire not to be offended and the consequences of triggering in public: “Trigger warnings have never been a way for people to avoid ‘uncomfortable’ arguments; they’re a way for people posting content to have empathy for trauma survivors who, without proper warning, may be sent into a debilitating (and often embarrassing, if it’s in a public space) panic attack.” Often the justification for arguments against using content warnings relies on the scientific benefits of exposure therapy on trauma survivors. Manne (2015) explains the irrationality of this idea within education using this example: “exposing students to triggering material without warning seems more akin to occasionally throwing a spider at an arachnophobe.” This example exemplifies the idea that



educational settings provide exposure only in uncontrolled ways in erratic moments. Exposure therapy, on the other hand, is based in controlled environments, with the knowledge that the exposure is coming, and allowing the individual to use coping mechanisms in these moments of exposure. In other words, these exposures are prefaced with a warning that the exposure is coming, and exposure continues only as tolerated by the individual. This justification seems more in line with the ideologies of those supporting content warnings. Moreover, educational settings cannot be controlled settings, which is why they are not places for therapeutic exposure.

Filipovic, (2014) claims that content warnings are merely about inserting feminist agenda into civil conversation and the act of using these warnings is attempting to shame professors into awareness about the social justice issues that matter to feminists politically. In fact, there is validity in the content warning conversation because it offers a recognition of the flaws in the current pedagogies whose understanding of trauma in the classroom are limited or consist of intentional avoidance. Filipovic (2014) argues that content warnings are “perceived” to support women, persons of color, LGBT individuals, and those with mental illness and reinforces the view of these individuals as “weak, vulnerable, and ‘other.’” In actuality, this perception stems from an academic understanding that these groups are most likely to experience acts of violence against their personhood. Filipovic (2014) goes on to assert that the acknowledgement of these traumas in content warnings leads to a hierarchy of traumas and simultaneously a hierarchy of trauma survivors, which could be handled by including other kinds of trauma in content warnings, which Filipovic claims becomes excessive. In the current political climate surrounding content warnings, it primarily remains up to the professor to decide what events are “worthy” of warnings. This is a topic that will need to be discussed further if a university plans on mandating the use of content warnings.

One of most prevailing arguments is that the educators who use content warnings “do students no favors by pretending that every piece of potentially upsetting, triggering or even emotionally devastating content comes with a warning sign” (Filipovic 2014), implying no difference between an educational setting where graphic content is present and other contexts in survivors’ lives. Educational settings focus on the idea of attainment of new knowledge or new thought processes to examine information and are not a form of entertainment like a movie that a student can turn off or an interpersonal interaction with others where the student can remove themselves from the situation or talk through the trigger. Educational settings require a formality of impersonalization and active measures of performance that cannot be maintained while a student is triggered. When a student survivor becomes out of touch with their consciousness in an academic setting as a result of a triggering event, they are not learning. When a pedagogical method is shown to be ineffective, generally new methods of teaching are encouraged. In the case of student survivors, research has consistently shown that in these moments educational attainment is not occurring for these students. Abadi (2014) asserts the necessity of survivors’ voices within the debate on content warnings: “No matter the opinion you form from these debates, don’t make the mistake of ignoring the voices of the very people you’re debating about” (2014). It is time for a new pedagogical practice that demands an understanding that student survivors are a growing portion of the student population who should no longer be ignored.

3. Hayes-Smith and Levett (2010: 341) describe the nine resources as “(a) sexual assault victim advocates; (b) an office of victim services; (c) sexual assault counselors (d) a “safe place” for victims of sexual assault (e) a “Take Back the Night” rally (f) a sexual assault crisis hotline (g) a women’s resource center (h) a policy on sexual assault; and (i) a facility to get a forensic medical exam” in their 2010 study. Of these nine resources 58 percent of the students knew about 0-4 of

them, though these varied on which four depending on the respondent (Hayes-smith and Levett 2010: 345). The resource that was most widely known was the crisis hotline (Hayes-smith and Levett 2010: 345).

4. LGBT2sQIA+ is an acronym used for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-spirit , Queer (sometimes this also stands for Questioning), Intersex, Asexual (also sometimes stands for Agender) and the plus signifying that these letters do not complete the complex and fluid ways in which gender and sexuality can be queered. I recognize that this acronym also renders some forms of human expression as invisible and has led to hierarchies of visibility within queer communities. I also recognize the ways in which some members of these identities, such as some individuals with intersex traits, wish to differentiate or remove themselves from any connection to queer communities. I use this term because broadly it is the language used broadly within these groups. I use LGBTQIA+ instead of the more common LGBT because it is the most inclusive acronym for the broader community of queer persons. This does not mean that the identities within this broad community experience trauma or access to resources in the same ways. I want to reiterate here that no trauma narratives are homogenous. However, barriers to resources and structural injustice are obstacles all of these groups face systemically (McCormack 2020).

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Data Collection Materials

#### *Faculty Perspectives on Violent Content in OSU Classrooms*

##### **Pre-Interview Script**

My project goal is to acquire faculty perspectives surrounding violent topics in a classroom. I want to understand how professors use certain strategies to discuss violent content, how professors handle potential and real negative student impacts, how pedagogical and administrative strategies might have changed given the global pandemic, and how to further a discussion on campus about the mental and physical safety of all college students. I will also be gathering demographic data that could be analyzed later to expand on this topic and help continue the discussion on this and other campuses. Your responses will be collected and processed with the use of limited identifiers and only the researcher will have access to any data, thus ensuring confidentiality with all responses.

I also want to assure you that your responses are confidential. Your identifiers will not be linked to your individual answers. I want to create a safe place to allow for this discussion on campus. You may take as much or as little time as you need to answer each question, however the more details given, the more impact the response can have in answering my research questions. You can choose not to answer any question or end the interview at any time. References to your name and/or students' names will be redacted in the transcribed document and replaced with a pseudonym.

I want to ensure that this process becomes a source of both data collection and creates an empowering experience for faculty who take part in the process. I want this to be about your voice as well. I understand how violent topics can be incredibly hard for people to discuss. This becomes even more uncomfortable, and sometimes triggering, for individuals who have personally experienced trauma (possibly causing feelings of extreme unsafety, flashbacks, severe anxiety, etc.). For these faculty members, the topic can harm success in their classroom and in their recovery. Due to the sensitivity of this topic, I want to ensure that no faculty member will be asked to disclose any trauma narratives and that this interview will be focusing on pedagogical and administrative strategies as response to these more sensitive topics. If at any point in this interview you wish to leave, for any reason, you may do so without any negative consequences.

If you have any questions about this research or if you have any comments or concerns about this interview, please contact Annie Bowen at [annie.bowen@okstate.edu](mailto:annie.bowen@okstate.edu). My advisor Dr. Rachel M. Schmitz can be reached at [Rachel.schmitz@okstate.edu](mailto:Rachel.schmitz@okstate.edu)

##### **Interview Guide**

[Thank you again for taking part in this interview. Would you like to continue this interview? Do you consent to being audio recorded?](#)

1. How do you define violence?
2. How does “violence” appear in your classroom? What types of violence are addressed in your classes?
3. More specifically, how do you engage violent topics in your assigned readings, videos, and other course materials?
4. What teaching strategies and pedagogical practices do you use to address violent content in your classroom?

[if applicable] *Follow-Up/Probe:*

- a. *give examples*
- b. *How do you consider these subjects in your Syllabi construction?*
- c. *What subjects are noted/acknowledged with content warnings, content notes, or trigger warnings?*
- d. *What format of educational materials do you use in presenting these violent topics?*

5. Are there violent topics that are discussed in your classrooms that do not garner pedagogical considerations? Why or why not?
6. How do you use content warnings, content notes, or trigger warnings in your classroom?

[if applicable] *Follow-Up/Probe: If yes,*

- A. *Was this warning verbal or written?*
- B. *How close to the presentation of material was the warning given?*
- C. *For what materials and subjects did you utilize content warnings?*

7. How have you learned strategies and practices about addressing violent content in your classrooms?

[If applicable] *Follow-Up/Probe: If yes.*

- C. *What do you feel like OSU, as an institution, offers an resources for addressing violent content?*
- D. *What might help you learn more about these strategies and practices?*

8. How have you navigated your work with students who have been negatively impacted by violent materials covered in your or other classes?

[if applicable] *Follow-Up/Probe:*

- A. *In your opinion, how did these situations inhibit the student’s ability to learn the material?*
- B. *How did the student discuss this issue with you?*
- C. *What measures did you take to make the student feel more comfortable sharing their concerns with you?*

*D. How did the situation resolve?*

9. What on and off campus resources do you access in addressing students who may have experienced trauma? What resources do you wish you could access to help these students?

The next series of questions are actual responses given by students in a previous study about concerns regarding violent content. I would like you to describe how you would respond to a student voicing these concerns. If they are not applicable to your classroom, answer as if a student came to you to advise them on their concern surrounding another class they are taking.

1. Student A: In regards to negative impacts a student felt because of violent content in a classroom, a student replied “I began panicking and felt trapped in the classroom. I was disruptive when I was leaving and the professor told me that I was.”
2. Student B: In regards to why students are not voicing their concerns over violent imagery depicted in texts required for class they responded “I did not feel comfortable because I did not feel it would change the fact I had to do it for class.”
3. Student C: In regards to why students are not voicing their concerns over the personal narratives of trauma survivors used in a classroom they responded “I didn't feel as if it was a valid claim, and chose not to discuss with the professor.”
4. Student D: In regards to content warning, a student responded, “No warning was given,” before a violent movie?
5. Student E: In regards to content warning given by another professor after showing a video with a rape scene a students expressed the professor actions as: “Kinda like ‘oh here is rape’ they didn't specify how violent the attack was,” and “I think that there was a trigger warning but they didn't tell how bad of a trigger it was.” The students came to you seeking advice on how to broach feelings of dismissal that resulted from the situation, with this other professor.
6. How would/have your answers differed due to changes in academics/procedures surrounding COVID-19?

Lastly there are a few demographic questions we will use strictly in analysis. (Again, these will not be used in conjunction with your answers in a way that could identify you to your answers.)

1. How would you identify your gender?
2. How would you identify your race/ethnicity?
3. Do you self-identify in any other marginalized status?
4. Do you self-identify as some who has experienced trauma or violence?

Follow up: If yes, do you think this impacts your pedagogical practices?

5. How many years have you taught at OSU?
6. What is your academic title?

7. What category would you place your area of academic focus?
  - a. Life/physical sciences
  - b. Humanities
  - c. Social sciences
  - d. Mathematics and Business
  - e. Language and Education
  - f. Art and Theater
  - g. Health sciences
  - h. Social Work

## Appendix B: Findings Chart

Table 2: Additional findings quotes by theme (n=21)		
Constructing Pathways to Pedagogy	“Modeled Behaviors”	Interviewee 18: “So I think both I mean, watching people do it well. And then, certainly in my master's clinical program, having lots of experiences where people didn't do it well and thinking, we can do better.”
	“Reading and Conferences”	Interviewee 1: “No, the only the only times I would have learned something is reading.”
Navigating Classroom Dynamics	Multiple themes	Interviewee 19: “Accountability, working to change, affirming student concerns, giving space to process.”
	“Resources for the Students”	Interviewee 7: “For me it's critical that I tried to make sure that they get connected to any professional support that they need. or provider support I mean, you know, that they, you know, have family or friends, if they need it.”
	“Preemptive Strategies” and “Apologizing”	Interviewee 5: “You know just discussions if things happen in class, just having classroom discussions, more personal examples like when the student came to see me. responsibility to make sure you know to clear the content of anything that was presented so I apologize for that. And I think sometimes they're just surprised when faculty like apologize.”
Understanding Institutional Resources (for faculty)	“Suggesting Student Resources instead”	Interviewee 18: “...certainly know that there's like counseling services and then the like reboot Center and the Student Union, but those are necessarily aimed towards violent content in class so much especially if a student struggling on campus.”
	“Suggesting Student Resources instead”	Interviewee 16: “You know I'm not terribly familiar with that. I know we have a very comprehensive and free counseling service for a variety of other ailments.”
	“No Resources for faculty”	Interviewee 11: “Well, you know the funny thing is I was department head from 2013 to 2018 and I, nothing that I know of, came down the pipeline. I find OSU to be

	“I don’t know” and “Student Resources”	embarrassingly underdeveloped in some ways.” Interviewee 10: “I’m not really sure to be perfectly frank. I’ve done the title nine training, and I obviously have been in contact with like the title nine office because of what I do, right, like, I don’t know about specific pedagogical strategies. I know ITLE exists, and I’m sure they would be lovely if I had reached out to them. But I haven’t yet. It’s 2020 so there’s been other things on my mind.”
Understanding Institutional Resources (for students)	“Mental health services” and “Campus police”	Interviewee 20: “Well campus police or the campus psychological health resources. Sometimes I’ll link those in my syllabus, and then I’ll link them in my slides.”
	“Concern”	Interviewee 18: “So like next week is the student wellness day we’re off on Wednesday and we have class on Wednesday, so I may decide on Monday at the end of them, like PowerPoint to remind that we don’t have class on Wednesday to wellness day, and we’re trying to think of resources that I could put on that side to just give them in the intent of like, honoring student wellness day and outside of like the two campus clinic phone numbers. I wasn’t sure what else to give them.”
	“Concern”	Interviewee 10: “Because most of my students are involved with the health services on campus in some way. So figuring out ways for them to get their needs met, is just really challenging. So, one thing that I have offered is just kind of a couple hotlines like the Suicide Prevention hotline. And there’s a national rape crisis center hotline.”



VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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