



Welcome to:



Supporting Undocumented Students & Marginalized Student Groups

April 7, 2025
3:30-5:00pm

Esther Villegas-Sandoval, College of the Sequoias
esthers@cos.edu

We will begin shortly → Please grab a cup of **tea**, coffee, or **water** as we wait.





- Sociology professor & researcher - *not a mental health professional*
- Area of research is experiences of undocumented college students



UCS → Trauma & Stress → Trauma Informed Practices →
Love, Joy, & Resiliency

Today's Roadmap: ↓

- Quick Review: Trauma
- Responding to Trauma
 - Trauma Informed Practices
 - Compassionate Praxis
 - Critical Theory of Love
- Case Study, COS (TW)
- Conclusion: Q&A



Important

The purpose of this workshop is to:

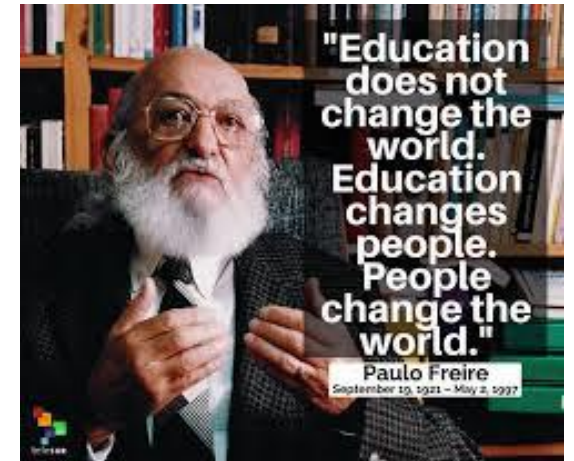
- To understand ways in which we can respond to trauma in our relationships.

Additionally:

- We will not romanticize trauma, survivors, or undocumented students.
- We will acknowledge that suffering, oppression, resistance, and resilience exist *and taking accountability for each other's well-being can mitigate the effects.*
- We ALL benefit from understanding how to respond trauma (in ourselves and in others). ♥

Personal Warning from EVS:

- We are going on quite the journey today! We are exploring A LOT. Take in what you can.



PART ONE:

Quick Review of Trauma

Stress & Trauma

- **Several student populations** can experience **stress** and **trauma**.



Stress ≠ trauma ≠ PTSD

Keep in mind:

- **The college years can be a challenging transition** into adulthood (*undocu & foster youth**)
- **Students deal with homelessness, poverty, food insecurity,** and more.
- High levels of untreated, prevalent, and often *persistent*, **mental health issues & disorders** are prevalent in college student populations (including trauma: 84-85% have exposure to trauma; 9-10% have PTSD)

- **Stress** is a physical or mental (emotional) response – typically to a change or a difficult/challenging situation. Stress is often defined as experiencing a state of worry or tension.
- **Trauma** is not the specific event, condition, or circumstances — it is the individual's response to these things and the lasting effects on the human body. It results from stress that overwhelms our ability to cope.



Stress & Trauma

“Trauma results from an **event**, **series of events**, or **set of circumstances** that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” –Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, 2020



Stress & Trauma

- Stressors and trauma can happen at any point in our lives (childhood, adolescence, adulthood (including old age).
- For undocumented individuals, this can happen *before, during, or after* migration (Franco 2018; Lee 2018; Ornelas et al. 2020):
 1. Pre-migration
 2. In-Journey
 3. Post Migration



Trauma: Effects on the Body

Somatic Symptoms

- Bodily symptoms or dysfunctions that express emotional distress, such as: headaches, dizziness, fainting, pain, constipation*

Sleep disturbances

- Insomnia
- Night terrors
- Narcolepsy
- Learn more [here](#).

Various disorders:

- gastrointestinal (IBS, constipation)
- cardiovascular (heart disease, stroke)
- neurological (epilepsy, migraines, movement disorder)
- musculoskeletal (arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis)
- respiratory (asthma)
- dermatological disorders (acne, psoriasis, eczema)
- urological problems (UTIs, kidney :)
- substance use disorders.



Trauma (especially in childhood) . . .

- **Impact:** cognitive and emotional growth.
- **Result in:** cognitive delays, learning and behavior impairments, anxiety, depression, attention difficulties, disrupted attachment process (excessive help seeking OR dependence and isolation).
- **Lead to:** disassociation (zone out, shut down); impulsive behavior; individuals being hyperalert (focus on environment for danger) or hyper-aroused (quick to react to nonthreatening cues).
- **Create difficulty in:** processing information; memory (retaining/recalling); one's ability to interact positively, identifying and regulating emotions (ability to use serotonin); executive functioning skills.
- **Set the stage for PTSD**



Keep in Mind: Resilient Responses to Trauma

Many people find healthy ways to cope with and respond to trauma. Such resilient responses include:

- Increased bonding with fictive kin, friends, and community.
- Redefined or increased sense of purpose and meaning.
- Increased commitment to a personal mission.
- Revised priorities.
- Increased charitable giving and volunteerism.



<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>

Keep in Mind: Trauma in Professionals

- Deeply care and are interested in the lives and success of our students.
- Practitioners can experience satisfaction AND compassion fatigue.
- Professionals who work with marginalized populations, including undocumented students, are not always well trained for all of the responsibilities they are given.
- Often have to balance administrative and advocacy roles with limited resources.
- Exposed to the experiences and trauma of undocumented students.
- Deal with anti-immigration sentiment and practices in your campus or society.
- Practitioners can feel incompetent when they cannot give students the help, resources, or results they need.
- Practitioners can feel a level of responsibility and guilt for being able to get ahead while others cannot.

(Hoy and Nguyen 2020)



Keep in Mind: Trauma in Professionals



- Part of being trauma informed is understanding and honoring the fact that we, as professionals, might have trauma as well.
- Meaning: acknowledging that there have been adverse experiences, conditions, events that have impacted how we function.
- Why do you think its important for staff and faculty to understand and honor our own trauma as it relates to teaching/working with students?



PART TWO:

Responding to Trauma

Approaches for Responding to Trauma

1. Trauma Informed Practices (in and out of the classroom)
2. Compassionate Praxis
3. Loving Practices (Critical Theory of Love)



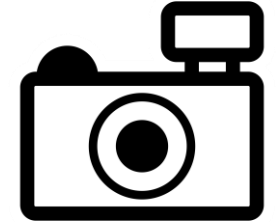
There are A LOT of tips and strategies

Know: You don't have to do all of it- start small!

Consider:

- What do I connect to?
- What jumps at me immediately?
- What do I need to think about more?
- What can I implement and how?

Shared Themes



These practices take a *similar approach* to teaching and interacting with others and share similar themes:

1. Improving learning, working spaces → improving & optimizing learning
2. Attending to the needs of students, colleagues, community members (*and our own*)
3. Taking an interest in others
4. Being creative and using multiple modalities to reach individuals
5. Offering choices and flexibility (*where possible*)

Any examples of how you are already engaging in these practices in the areas below? Or, what ideas or things would you like to do or explore in the future?

In Teaching: Five areas where compassionate, trauma informed, and equitable action *can be embedded*:

1. Teaching strategies:

- How do we teach, interact, and respond to others (including our students)?

2. Content/Materials

- What materials do we use or select for our tasks/classes?

3. Assessments

- How do we create assessments? What tools do we provide for our assessments?

4. Grading/Feedback

- How do we grade and what feedback do we give?

5. Policies/Syllabi

- What shapes our campus and classroom policies? Syllabi> How are these created and communicated?

Teaching doesn't only happen in the classroom or provided by instructors. What other campus positions teach others and what do they teach? 4 examples.



Ideally:

1. Teaching strategies

- Foster connection (check in; have them interact); draw on people's/students' experiences and/or interests; be responsive to current events (what's happening in the "real world"); how do we teach and respond to others?

2. Course Materials

- Accessible (multiple formats), low cost, OER material; use of inclusive and diverse language and content

3. Assessments

- Provide clarity, options and flexibility when possible; low stake/risk assignments; use rubrics and samples; opportunities to resubmit

4. Grading

- Use transparent rubrics, Be mindful of tone/amount of feedback; add warmth/personalize; encourage self-compassion and growth mindset

5. Syllabi and Policies

- Be clear, welcoming, equitable, and transparent; provide resources; ensure resources and policies are updated.

Case Study

- Responding with Trauma Informed and Compassionate Practices
- Example from COS, Week of 3/31
- ***TW: Homophobia, Abortion, Sexism***

College of the Sequoias, Week 3/31/2025

Over three days, various groups came to our campus to spread certain messages in our quad area. There were graphic, altered images of deceased fetuses/babies; individuals proclaiming the need to “find Jesus”; and an individual urging individuals to repent or “be ready to burn in hell.”

These events give us a real-life example of how TIP and CP are needed beyond the classroom.



Consider

- How could the values in Trauma Informed Practices, Compassionate Praxis, and Critical Theory of Love help us guide a response to such free speech events?
- As we review the rest of the slides ... please think of this example as we will return to it at the end of the presentation.

We will explore ...

Share themes:

- How can we improve this space while adhering to Freedom of Speech policies?
- How can we attend to the needs of others, especially those who are targeted and marginalized?
- How can we be creative to mitigate harm?
- What flexibility and choices might we be able to offer?

Trauma Informed Practices:

- How can we foster predictability, structure, choice, safety, and connection? What might we be able to do?

Compassionate Praxis:

- Can transparency, appreciation, curiosity, connection, and inclusion be incorporated somehow? How can we use this as an opportunity to foster compassion?
- How can colleges maintain warm and encouraging settings that focus on treating each other when there is stigmatizing content?

Loving Practices:

- How do these images and messages traumatize individuals?
- What systems of oppression are present in these demonstrations?
- How can we use this event to resist oppression?
- Whose humanity is in jeopardy?
- Who might we “call in” to lead efforts of responding?
- How might we meet the emotional, tangible, and intellectual needs of our staff, and students?
- What resources might we need to provide?
- What kind of networking might be helpful here?
- How can we help people make sense of these experiences?
- How can we foster joy and healing?

What is our responsibility?

TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICES

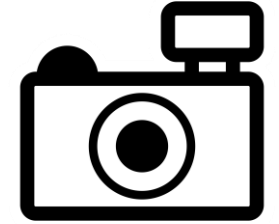
Responding to Trauma, Part A

Trauma Informed Practices

- ***Trauma informed educators and practitioners ≠ mental health professionals***
 - **Aware** that trauma exists and can **impact** well-being, functioning, and learning.
 - Take **accountability** in creating settings where **people** feel safe, empowered, and connected.
 - Are **open to understanding** how current and historical systems of power, privilege, and oppression impact stress, experiences, and trauma (self-aware).
 - *For the COS case study, understanding how this is a product of colonialism, sexism, heterosexism (!).*
- ***Being trauma informed is a continuous practice, not a check off list.***

(Imad 2020; UCI Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation; CDC)

Trauma Informed Practices: Guiding Principles



- Predictability
- Clarity
- Structure
- Empowerment & Choice
- Collaboration
- Safety
- Connection & Community

How can we foster these through our interactions, relationships, assignments, course designs, and campuses?



Trauma Informed Practices prioritize, design for, fosters these principles! A main difference is the emphasis on actively building community and trust (including healing; more explicit notion of care)

Trauma Informed Practices

(overall)



Provide:

- Routine, outline, agenda
- Clear + consistent rules & processes
- Content in advance (slide presentations)
- Clear expectations for behavior, work such as rubrics, outlines, or samples
- Disclaimers for distressing topics (willing to provide flexibility and/or alternate assignments)

Incorporate:

- Multiple modalities (discussions, videos, slides, etc.)
- Stories that relate to content
- Reminders
- Flexibility*
- Scaffolding practices^
- Different types of assessments^
- Low risk assignments^

Offer:

- Sufficient time to process questions/information
- Choices/freedom when possible
- These strategies can be implemented in events, district governance, classrooms, taskforces, centers, etc.

Trauma Informed Practices, continued.

Canvas/Websites/Content:

- Make shells, content, platforms clear, simple, and easy to navigate.
- “Chunk” (breakdown) content.
- Consider assignments due earlier (5pm vs midnight) to encourage sleep and rest.

Additional Support:

- Hold office/support hours or optional “Zoom Meetings”
- Create rituals: with authentic reflection, gratitude journal, self soothing exercise (box breathing)

Additional Support:

- Send 1:1 or group messages reminding students and individuals that you care for them, not only as students & staff but as people.
- Email students, especially if they are falling behind.
- Remind students that their grades do not define them.

COMPASSIONATE PRAXIS

Responding to Trauma, Part B

Compassionate Praxis

CP explores and embraces **compassion** and **self-compassion** on our campuses!



Compassion: being aware that people are experiencing suffering & distress and wanting to take actions to alleviate suffering & distress.

Self-Compassion: is essentially treating yourself with care, kindness, and concern.

It includes:

1. Self-kindness (vs. Self-Judgment)
2. Common Humanity (vs. Isolation)
3. Mindfulness (vs. Self-Identification)

(Neff 2023)

Compassionate Praxis

CP is about *supporting* the well-being of individuals (instructors, staff *and* students) ... *in a model of education and work that* → *is sustainable, rigorous, and respects growing diversity.*

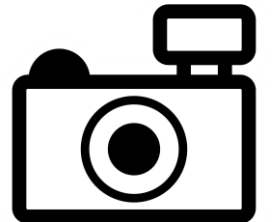
In supporting well-being, CP attempts to alleviate suffering (others and our own).

Key to sustainability:

- must be sustainable for everyone - students, faculty, staff, community members (!)
- Courses (content, assignments, & assessments); requests; and campus conditions should be flexible and equitable*

Values in Compassionate Praxis/Pedagogy

1. **Transparency:** explaining why in clear language
2. **Appreciation:** building on strengths; recognizing the learning process in others
3. **Curiosity:** for others and for self - asking questions when confronted with new or unsettling information; self-reflection: reflecting on actions, learning, deciding on next steps
4. **Connection:** building belonging and co-constructing meaning through collaboration; developing connected lived, learning experiences (between students; between student and instructor; between learner and content)
5. **Inclusion:** hearing, making space for, and valuing multiple perspectives, cultures, identities



Areas to Integrate Compassion:

1. We can be more compassionate to others in our classrooms/on campus
2. We can practice more self-compassion for our own well-being
 1. Including making work sustainable
3. We can teach and integrate lessons, workshops, professional development, and/or assignments on compassion (including self-compassion)
4. We can develop compassion into our educational programs
 - Specifically relevant in disciplines and careers with high burnout, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma (policing, fire technology, nursing, social work, education)

Implementing Compassion Pedagogy

- Be a role model for compassion:
 - Be kind, listen for understanding, encourage self-compassion in students, "be with suffering" - acknowledge it and don't invalidate.
- Explicitly keep compassion on the minds of others:
 - Integrate lessons, workshops, PD, and assignments on compassion when possible; notice and bring explicit attention to suffering and compassionate behaviors
- Include other related skills:
 - Coping skills; boundaries; personal well-being; mindfulness
- Create opportunities for students to practice compassion:
 - Integrate opportunities (community work, community projects) for students and staff to receive credit for compassionate actions as well as broaden their personal experiences and growth in compassion

Compassionate Praxis: Actions to Take

- Be intentional in your everyday choices
- Prioritize meaningful and lasting learning
- Rethink longstanding practices, policies, and beliefs
- Revisit your own pedagogical/work values ... is there alignment between your values and practices/policies?
- Prepare for and be open to "the unexpected"
- Practice and think about handling discomfort: uncomfortable conversations & requests; display of emotions; uncertainty
- Validate your own experiences
- Be open to student and staff identified solutions & requests
- Balance the needs of others with your own
- Remember that your students, community, and staff are resilient and have resources (!)

FOSTERING LOVING PRACTICES

Responding to Trauma, Part C

(Longest section, FYI!)

Positive & Loving Environments

Share similar themes and values to TIP and CP:

- Flexibility
- Effective communication
- Accountability
- Conflict Resolution*
- Forgiveness*
- Treating others well*
- Warm & Encouraging*



Positive (& Loving) Environments



Settings:

- **Engage, support,** & check-in on others
- Provide little to no shame and embarrassment
- Offer **flexibility**
- Have behavioral **norms** (social contract)
- Practice and maintain **privacy**: don't "out" others
- Promote civic engagement, **networking**, critical hope, critical thinking

People:

- Are **trustworthy, transparent,** and **empathetic.**
- Build relationships with others.
- Practice accountability and apologize
- Show **enthusiasm.**
- Add **humor**
- **Encourage** others: offer praise, recognize areas of strengths, mentor

Educators & Administrators:

- Navigate discussions carefully, use humanizing language.
- **Value student and community input** (show appreciation and praise).
- **Design** your courses and campuses for **learning**
- **Allow things to be messy**: embrace mistakes, avoid shame

In this section

We specifically explore

- Critical Theory of Love (Brooks 2017)
- Compa Love (Hannegan-Martinez 2019)

Critical Theory of Love: Brooks 2017

This approach ensures the needs of others (especially those who have been historically marginalized) are the “ultimate concern.”

See individuals as complex, diverse human beings with strengths and needs.

Understand: historical, systemic, and external forces impact people’s lives.

Understand: language, stigmas, & policies dehumanize, create stress, and traumatize.

Center experiences and co-create practices that *heal*.

Educate for wholeness and completeness.

Measure and assess the effectiveness of our practices in ↓ barriers and ↑ wellbeing, resources.

Critical Theory of Love *in Practice*

(3) Understands how power and systematic oppression *dehumanizes* and *traumatizes*.

Understands that racism, xenophobia, classism and all systems of oppression:

- ***attempt to strip people of their humanity*** by constructing using language, labels, stigmas, stereotypes, and meanings
- Beyond language, foster practices that creates ***stressful, traumatic experiences*** even when people ***resist*** oppression.

**Language, labels, and meanings like “illegal,” “alien,” “criminal,” “unworthy” ...

Critical Theory of Love *in Practice*

(4) Centers their experiences and co-creates rehumanizing practices that *heal*.

Academic settings “pass the mic” and invite others (especially those who are marginalized) to speak; serve on panel discussions; lead efforts and conversations; ... and allows for *healing*.

*Centers and focuses on the experiences and voices of students who are undocumented but **also** the professionals (“agents of change”) who work with them. ***



Pause: Healing in the Academic Setting

Healing can *absolutely* be fostered in academic and professional settings. **How??**

By leaders (professors and administrators):

- Building trust; being consistent, reliable, & supportive; withholding shame and embarrassment; allowing people to express, showing people respect → *this can repair trust in others + foster feelings of safety and community.*
- Taking accountability
 - In order for intergroups, community healing to occur people (members) must acknowledge that they (we) bear SOME responsibility in creating a climate of warmth in the spaces that they (we) occupy.

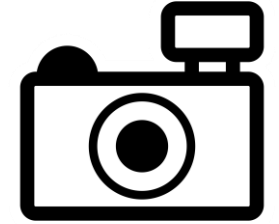


Healing in Academic Settings



- Healing can only truly be achieved in the context of relationships.
 - Only in the context of a relationship can we actually experience, feel, and practice: care, interdependence, vulnerability, trust, commitment. In relationships, we can put theory into practice.
- Recent educational and trauma informed literature suggests that young individuals must be around loving adults in order to heal from trauma and develop higher levels of resiliency (Hannegan-Martinez 2019).
- Perry (2007) argues that “the more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive” (p. 230).

Compa Love (Hannegan-Martinez 2019)



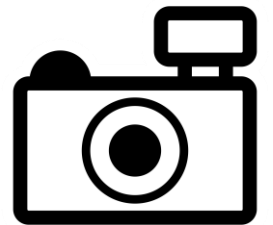
- Is the **choice** and the **practice** of meeting the emotional, tangible (physical), and intellectual (cognitive) needs of **all** of our youth, students, and community members; *hoping that it will lead to individual and collective (community wide) actualization and growth.*
- It is holistic care and creates classrooms and settings **all** students need to thrive and **deserve**.
- Including students and individuals we do not like or do not like at the moment.

This love is radical and political.

- *It is not empty nor perpetuates hopelessness (punk love)*
- *It is not self-serving nor used to "save people" (colonial love)*
- *It is not only reserved for those who perform well or are "worthy" and "deserving" (conditional love)*
- *It does not blame people for their shortcomings (tough love)*
- Compa = Spanish word of endearment.

Emotional, Tangible, and Intellectual Love

- **Emotional love:** entails commitment; feelings of community and solidarity; understanding; as well as *cariño*, honesty, vulnerability, and the willingness to deal with: trauma, grief, pain, and challenges (Hannegan-Martinez 2019).
- Enables healing; love towards self, others, and the broader community; the ability to see and treat people as humans; and tolerance towards things that may be seen as challenging or uncomfortable.
- **Tangible Love:** provides for material resources needed to meet physical needs. Allows for academic settings where students' most basic needs are met and resources are readily available.
- Involves networking and collaboration with CBOs and other resources.



Intellectual Love



Entails being committed to the intellectual and cognitive growth of students and adults **while** using culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogical approaches.

- Intellectual love fosters deep thought among students and community members and allows them to explore the systems of oppression and larger structural conditions that influence their lives and potentially cause them harm or distress.
- Allows individuals/students to make sense of their experiences and gives them the skills and opportunities to be able to read, write, and talk about these conditions/structures and experiences (space is given).
- Intellectual love allows for self discovery, exploration, the development self esteem, and cultural/racial/ethnic pride.
- It recognizes that students, staff, and community members are co-creators of knowledge who have valuable, rich experiences.
- Centers the idea that students and people are the experts of their own experiences and have the ability to problem solve and be resilient (fosters agency and returns power).

Connection and Joy

- Human connection can bring *joy* and joy can *reduce stress* and allow us to *cope* with the inevitable challenges of life.

Keep in mind:

- Joy is not a superior emotion. All emotions are valid and functional.
- Joyful emotions may not occur for all.
- Some youth and adults who have experienced trauma may not be able to savor (enjoy) nor benefit from the creation of “positive” emotions (Brunzell et al. 2015).
- That’s ok – shoot for joy, love, and connection anyway.



Let's explore and find some answers

Share themes:

- How can we improve this space while adhering to Freedom of Speech policies?
- How can we attend to the needs of others, especially those who are targeted and marginalized?
- How can we be creative to mitigate harm?
- What flexibility and choices might we be able to offer?

Trauma Informed Practices:

- How can we foster predictability, structure, choice, safety, and connection? What might we be able to do?

Compassionate Praxis:

- Can transparency, appreciation, curiosity, connection, and inclusion be incorporated somehow? How can we use this as an opportunity to foster compassion?
- How can colleges maintain warm and encouraging settings that focus on treating each other well in these cases?

Loving Practices:

- How do these images and messages traumatize individuals?
- What systems of oppression are present in these demonstrations?
- Whose humanity is in jeopardy?
- How can we use this event to resist oppression?
- Who might we "call in" to lead efforts of responding?
- How might we meet the emotional, tangible, and intellectual needs of our staff, and students? What resources might we need to provide?
- What kind of networking might be helpful here?
- How can we help people make sense of these experiences?
- How can we foster joy and healing?



Recap & Reflection

Incorporating trauma informed, compassionate, loving practices enable people to feel:

- Seen
- Celebrated
- In control
- Safe
- Like they matter
- A sense of community (which can be a protective factor for resiliency and well being)
- *Our classrooms, campuses, and relationships may be the only source of stability.*



Part 3: Q&A

- Questions or Comments?

