Disrupting Childhood Trauma with Holistic Health Practices in Low SES Elementary Schools

A senior project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology

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Chapter I: Introduction

It is evident that adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are a large challenge to tackle in the U.S., with 61% of adults reporting that they’ve experienced one ACE and 16% reporting four or more ACEs by age 18 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). ACE score items include, but are not limited to experiencing verbal, physical, sexual abuse, physical and/or emotional neglect, having a mentally ill family member, witnessing violence in the home towards a parent, and/or having a family member in prison. Such experiences serve as a public health threat that, without early intervention, bring about long-term effects biologically, psychologically, and socially; with this, an adequate comprehension of the lasting implications of trauma can enhance and serve as foundational knowledge in establishing potential interventions (Watters & Martin, 2021; van der Kolk, 2014). Fortunately, the effects of ACEs can be disrupted, and research shows that schools could be a primary resource for children to get the support they need. According to the National Center for Education, on average, children in the United States spend 6.64 hours daily in school, with 180 days (about 6 months) out of the year being school days (Xianglei et al., 2019). More than half of a child’s life is spent within the school setting, making elementary school settings a crucial candidate for preventing and treating mental health issues and disorders from a young age. Unfortunately, schools often lack the capacity to provide adequate trauma informed care, especially schools located in areas of low socioeconomic status.

Research shows that current education systems can be revised to support traumatized youth and improve emotional, physical, and academic well-being. More studies point to the association between holistic healing practices, a form of trauma-informed care that can be accessible to all communities, and effective biopsychosocial regulation (Bazzano, et al., 2018; Cozzolino et al., 2022; Eads, 2022; Mayer, 2019; Sarkissian Leadership, 2018). Hence, in order
to disrupt the effects of trauma on a child’s body, mind, overall wellbeing, and enhance success in school, elementary schools should implement strategic trauma informed protocols in order to holistically support their students. The purpose of this paper is to offer a review of the literature that studied accessible holistic health practices for low SES elementary school settings to support healthy development of children who have experienced and are experiencing adversity.
Chapter II: Synthesis of Literature

Addressing The Long-Term Effects of Childhood Trauma

The biopsychosocial model, more specifically, the applicable nature of this model in understanding childhood trauma, can be utilized to set forth foundational information regarding impacts and interventions. Researchers have taken advantage of this very model to uncover the relationship between reports of childhood maltreatment and various biopsychosocial outcomes. The correlational relationships between childhood maltreatment and indicators such as increased cortisol levels, depression, and decreased positive life events and subjective well-being have been highlighted based upon measures of biological, psychological, and social wellbeing (Watters & Martin, 2021). This relationship prevails in various forms, with other later life implication examples being increased risk to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and cardiovascular diseases. Evidently, early adverse experiences manifest severe impacts on the mind and the body. Understanding that adverse childhood experiences have empirical links to various negative health outcomes calls attention to the severity of this issue alongside the need for exploring modes of intervention; this literature review will utilize these findings as groundwork to a narrower focus on how particular outcomes are heightened for elementary aged students in low SES areas.

Low SES: The Heightened Experiences and Exposures to Trauma

A variety of risk factors contribute to the disproportionate rates of trauma faced by children residing in low SES areas, an example of this being heightened economic stress. One facet of economic stress linked to increased risk of child maltreatment is housing insecurity
Stress tied to housing has been found to increase parental depression and dramatically increases risks of neglect due to the inaccessibility of physical resources (Shanahan et al., 2022). Alongside housing, the correlations between poverty and inconsistent caregiving have been found to accumulate heightened toxic stress and a broad array of social and behavioral issues within developing children (Blitz et al., 2016). Low socioeconomic status proves to remain a pertinent risk factor in the assessment of adverse childhood experiences and trauma, highlighting the importance and rationale behind selecting this specific population to examine. In coexistence with low SES, this review will also narrow in on addressing trauma at the elementary school level.

**Addressing The Presence and Impact of Trauma in Elementary School Settings**

Alongside the extensive amount of time that children spend at their elementary schools during developmentally pivotal years, research also points to this period as one that takes on enhanced exposure and reports tied to trauma. Traumatic stress symptoms have been found to be at elevated or moderately elevated levels in 35.5% of elementary school students, making it apparent that students of this age are coming to school with exposures to traumatic experiences (Chafoulias et al., 2018). Early trauma and adverse experiences have direct links to negative social, learning, and behavioral outcomes in school settings. When examining the relationship between the number of ACEs and different socioemotional, learning, and behavioral outcomes, findings emphasized the direct correlation between increased ACE scores with lower social-emotional competences and higher reports of behavioral problems (Ray et al., 2020). Additionally, ACE exposure is positively correlated with poor school attendance and failure to meet grade-level standards (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018). Understanding that adverse childhood experiences and trauma has been directly linked to negative outcomes within school settings has
made it undeniable that there is a need to address and implement intervention to combat these disadvantageous effects children face. A holistic understanding of the pertinence of trauma at the elementary age, alongside the disproportionate impacts of trauma faced by those with low SES backgrounds, sets the necessary foundation in understanding the population of interest for this review.

**Low SES School Settings: Racial Injustice, disciplinary tactics, and trauma protocols**

*Effects of Racial Inequality in School Systems*

An examination of current low SES school system protocols for student success and trauma literacy for staff makes it evident that the state of the educational field has plenty of room to progress and reform (Jacobsen et al., 2019; Smolkowski et al., 2016). To understand what needs to change and be implemented for the disruption of trauma, it’s important to address the aspects of education that are currently offered to support students. However, one cannot discuss what is occurring in less funded schools without addressing the topic of race and racism in America and how that has influenced the U.S. public-school systems (Henderson et al., 2019). Due to a history of racially discriminatory federal policy, segregation and inequality within school systems based on location, race, and economic privilege or lack thereof still influences many elementary school students today. For example, black students are more likely to find themselves in underfunded classrooms with underfunded teachers, facing disciplinary protocols that exacerbate the physical and psychological challenges many are already experiencing due to the low SES living situations previously mentioned, and the racism still present in the U.S. via institutional racism that infiltrates into policy and social norms. These macro level influences pervade into micro level awareness, such as how black students see themselves and how the society portrays them (Henderson et al., 2019). Due to implicit biases that exist in our majority white American
teachers, black and minority students in elementary schools are, unfortunately, disproportionately receiving more disciplinary tactics that revolve around exclusion. This leads to less time spent learning and socializing (Smolkowski et al., 2016). Punishment that involves suspension or expelling a child, also known as “exclusionary school discipline”, was most prevalent for elementary school children in minority racial groups and was correlated with increases in aggression as a coping behavior to the disruption of normal life routines for both the child and their family. Unfortunately, this type of discipline and punishment is not solely reserved for major misbehaviors. It is found that much of elementary school administrations’ use of these tactics is reserved for even minor misconduct, such as behavior that stems from trauma and its effects on the body and mind. There is ample evidence that this type of tactic intended to discipline children is reinforcing racial disparities and increasing negative affect and behavior from students (Jacobsen et al., 2019).

Alongside the disproportionate use of exclusionary tactics for minority students in poor communities, low SES schools have responded to the economic inequality of institutionalized racism by establishing educational protocols based off B.F. Skinner’s behavioral conditioning techniques. Such approaches, often seen in rehabilitation programs and prisons, are prepackaged so that both experienced and inexperienced teachers can offer curriculum that focuses on boosting minority and economically disadvantaged students’ test scores rather than approaching and caring for students in a holistic, compassionate way. These approaches, based off reward and punishment, have made it so that students are looked at as either good or bad, negating the complexity of students’ intersectionality and likely history of trauma (Rothenberg et al., 2020). Schools cannot expect to foster academically and holistically successful children without
addressing trauma and its correlation to maladaptive behavior, low mental health, poor physical health, and scholastic achievement.

**Addressing Trauma in Elementary School Settings**

Although punishment has its place in fostering learning and a shift in behavior, schools should consider moving away from having that be the default model for discipline. Instead, low SES schools can cultivate a compassionate approach that trains teachers to stay curious as to why the student is acting a certain way and have resources available to help with their behavior (Avery et al., 2020). Due to the increase in awareness of trauma’s effects on all elements of the biopsychosocial model, there have been attempts to implement school wide trauma informed approaches (TIA) to shift the current state of school protocols and their effects on children’s health. Within these TIA’s, common elements proved to be important when implementing and integrating a trauma informed system. First off, fostering themes of interconnection, support, and empathy are vital in establishing safe and trusting relationships between staff and students. When this is developed, it is easier to encourage the essential elements of TIA’s highlighted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) - realize, recognize, respond, and resist (Avery et al., 2020). Realize and recognize refer to the importance of awareness and education about trauma. Responding is key when addressing trauma informed care and resources that low SES elementary schools can implement, and resist refers to the intention to eschew retraumatizing students. Furthermore, ensuring that school staff, students, and family can all contribute to the discussion and implementation of TIA’s helps to facilitate the introduction and maintenance of trauma informed, holistic interventions in a way that is both empirically based and respectful of unique cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Avery et al., 2020). More research must be conducted around this to provide more clarity on what elements of
different interventions are effective or not and how one can continue to better implement procedures that disrupt childhood trauma.

What’s clear is that trauma is prevalent for a large percentage of American students, especially in low SES elementary school settings and age groups. It is vital that schools become informed on the various empirically based, accessible resources and trauma sensitive protocols that can be implemented to begin disrupting the harmful effects of trauma on children and boost their physical, mental, emotional, social, and cognitive wellness (Avery et al., 2020). The following section provides an investigation of the range of accessible resources that low SES schools can begin providing elementary school students to impede trauma’s effects on students.

**Holistic Trauma Informed Care**

*Mind-Body Intervention*

Current research supports that holistic healing practices are both accessible and beneficial in facilitating emotional and behavioral regulation, as well as stress relief which further mitigates the impacts that trauma has on a child’s mind and body (Eads, 2022). Holistic healing focuses on the whole person, providing support for one’s physical, mental, spiritual, and social needs. Holistic interventions also take into account a person's subjective experience of themselves and their complex connection with their environment (Eads, 2022). Trauma-informed approaches take into consideration traditional trauma treatment, such as talk therapy and mind-body interventions, more specifically, mindfulness, art-based methods, and yoga in treating the negative effects of trauma (Mayer, 2019). Mind-body interventions teach one the ability to acknowledge and sit with difficult experiences, an important skill which helps one’s body process trauma. Mindfulness allows a person to focus on the present moment and shifts one’s focus of being caught in one’s thoughts into a metacognitive state.
Self-discovery and self-awareness play an important role in alleviating the effects of trauma (Mayer, 2019). Art-based holistic methods such as visual arts, music, dance, and drama utilize rhythm, movement, imagination, and creativity to provoke self-discovery, and an overall active awareness of one’s physical and emotional state. Stemming from mindfulness and movement based holistic approaches is yoga. Yoga is effective in mitigating trauma responses because it combines movement and breath to restore a mind-body connection (Mayer, 2019). It’s important to note that certain yoga approaches are more trauma informed than others. Although research highlights the benefits of mindful movement in general, some professionals argue that rather than just having kids move, emphasizing slow movements, autonomy, and feeling over simply doing yoga poses may be more beneficial for a child having a trauma response (Kline, 2023). Moreover, research shows that mind-body interventions are effective in aiding the nervous system's dysregulated flight or fight response to stressful situations by increasing parasympathetic, or rest and digest, response systems (Cozzolino et al., 2022). With improved physical functioning, improved emotional functioning follows, all of which supports a child’s well-being (Cozzolino et al., 2022).

Implementing Holistic Interventions into Elementary School Systems

With research pointing to a positive relationship between holistic healing and improved physical and emotional functioning, it is important to explore ways in which schools can implement such trauma interventions into their classroom structure. Mind-body interventions (MBI) can be used one-on-one with a single individual, with groups of students, during class time, at lunch breaks, or throughout the school day (Cozzolino et al., 2022). A holistic art-based mindfulness program revealed that there were many positive benefits to implementing this type of mindfulness group intervention into school systems. Among these benefits for both child and
caregiver were positive changes across domains of functioning including improved mood, emotional regulation, concentration, and self-esteem. The group setting created valuable opportunities for pro-social development and connection with peers from similar backgrounds and can be implemented effectively in a classroom setting with trained staff (Cozzolino et al., 2022).

MBI’s and their level of effectiveness is further illustrated through multiple effective yoga-based programs and mindfulness trainings that were implemented in schools ranging from elementary to high schools (Cozzolino et al., 2022). By analyzing different MBI programs that have been offered to school children, it’s clear that these programs equip schoolchildren with supportive skills to cope with emotional dysregulation in order to perform better academically. In urban inner-city schools where disadvantaged children at high-risk of behavioral and emotional problems were attending, the implementation of 10 weeks (about 2 and a half months) of yoga led to significant improvements in stress, affect, resilience, and reported well-being in the participants (Butzer et al. 2014). Additionally, a significant decrease in cortisol levels in second graders as well as an improvement in behavior, ability to control anger, and deal with stress and anxiety in second and third graders was found (Butzer et al. 2014). Students who partook in yoga displayed a significant improvement in psychosocial and emotional skills compared to their peers (Bazzano, et al., 2018). All those involved with yoga interventions - students, schoolteachers, and yoga teachers - agreed that a yoga program can improve students’ overall well-being (Sarkissian et al., 2018). The coping skills and tools gathered from yoga practices, when provided in the school environment, may assist students to achieve optimum physical and mental health. Thankfully, the implementation of yoga within the classroom has beneficial effects for not only students, but teachers as well (Bazzano, et al., 2018). On a similar note, it has been
found that a solution-focused body-mind-spirit (SF-BMS) approach in a group therapy format has also been shown to support elementary school aged children's mental health (Eads, 2022). The benefits of a SF-BMS intervention include a reduction in problematic behavior and emotional dysregulation through the practice of meditation, breathing, and exercise. Participants felt relaxation and calm, acceptance and balance, improved communication and relationships, and less reservation around opening on a deeper level with others (Eads, 2022). There are clear benefits of MBI in helping schoolchildren cope with stress-related and behavioral issues, as well as improving stress response and school performance (Bazzano, et al. 2018; Cozzolino et al., 2022; Eads, 2022; Sarkissian et al. 2018).

Trauma intervention needs to focus on how cognitive impairment and emotional dysregulation caused by exposure to trauma can be addressed and hence disrupted (Masia-Warner et al., 2006). Alongside implementing holistic healing workshops and activities, having a staff that understands what they’re looking out for is needed. Because psychiatric disorders and symptomology that stems from trauma often go unrecognized or are misunderstood as poor and disturbing behavior, it's important that school staff are educated on this topic to better understand children's comportment and offer them preferable support and resources (Masia-Warner et al., 2006). If staff and parents are educated on ways to identify mental health challenges, they will be better able to appropriately intervene and help the child disrupt the negative behaviors that come from trauma exposure. Hence, how adults respond rather than react to students having difficulties in the learning environment is crucial to trauma-informed care (Masia-Warner et al., 2006).

Responsive trauma informed care functions best when a safe and trusting environment is intentionally created. As previously discussed, trauma informed schools are ones where teachers
hold a trusting and responsive relationship with their students, which emphasizes feelings of safety and reliability (Cavanaugh, 2016). Fostering a safe environment is a key principle of trauma-informed educational practice because traumatized youth have had their security threatened through physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect, etc. (Cavanaugh, 2016). While looking into the benefits of embracing a TIA within elementary education, researchers find that such an approach can foster student resilience (Wells et al. 2003). TIA’s enable a safe and supportive environment that allows children’s physical well-being, emotions, and relational connection to influence the learning process. Trauma impedes holistic development and results in children struggling with emotional regulation and academic performance. However, the TIA approach combats these negative outcomes and has been shown to increase student scores, self-advocacy, confidence with relationships, and a decrease in emotional dysregulation (Wells et al. 2003). Researchers state that TIA seeks to interrupt trauma’s harm while maximizing student resilience. Hence, in developing a safe environment, staff can effectively avoid retraumatizing certain youth victims.

**Additional Holistic Resources**

Yoga, TIA, SF-BSM, mindfulness, and art based holistic approaches are all accessible resources that have beneficial factors that help disrupt the effects of childhood. The following are resources schools could consider implementing as well based on research that supports their validity. Access to nature can be a mechanism used as a protective factor, or buffer, from life’s stress and adversity that children face. Having access to nature and nearby vegetation can buffer or moderate the impact of stress on a child’s psychological well-being. When children are kept from going outside, they become distressed and throw ‘tantrums.’ Children that don’t have nature’s resources deal with more psychological distress which was paired with lower self-worth.
Children that did have access to nature were seen to have higher levels of cognitive functioning, self-worth, motor coordination, greater attention capacity, and more resistance to stressful life events (Wells et al, 2003). Therefore, having the implementation of a garden or giving children access to flora and time outdoors can help mitigate the overall stress that their bodies are navigating (Wells et al, 2003).

Another resource outside of nature and MBI that can be used to combat trauma is children interacting with animals. Animal assisted therapies have been shown to have positive effects on the child’s physiological, emotional, social, and physical support due to children viewing animals as non-judgmental within therapeutic or classroom environments (Friesen, 2010). Because of this, the animals can offer children valuable emotional and social support without there being any fear of possible discernment. Despite the animals not being able to directly communicate, children still see them as active and willing participants within the therapeutic session. It’s been shown that because of animals' neutrality, their interaction with children helps those that are shy, reserved, withdrawn, or even experiencing high levels of anxiety to 'come out of their shell’ (Friesen, 2010). This can be significantly beneficial for schoolchildren to not only have the benefits that come with interactions with animals, but also having the education about the classroom pet and how to take care of an animal. Having a classroom pet has also increased children’s attendance in class, empathy, academic performance, responsibility, self-esteem, and social skills engagement, while decreasing anxiety and teachers needing to use student disciplinary actions (Pets in the Classroom, 2019).

When discussing animals within the classroom one of the biggest questions that can arise is the cost of keeping them, especially within areas that experience low funding. Thankfully, there are numerous programs that provide grants to schools so that they have the money to
adequately take care of a pet within the classroom (Pets in the Classroom, 2019). These are prime examples of effective strategies that can be implemented within the classroom, even within low SES areas that can help mitigate the negative effects of trauma and stress on children and school staff (Friesen, 2010; Pets in the Classroom, 2019).

**Concluding Discussion**

It’s become increasingly evident that trauma affects a vast number of American children and families, especially those with a lack of economic privilege. Schools can have a potent effect on traumatized children's development and success. Unfortunately, the history of this country and the structures that affect its educational systems have been built off a foundation of institutional racism and economic inequality, but its story does not need to end with the same narrative. It’s time to move away from harmful exclusionary penalties, racial biases, and a focus on solely academic performance. To truly boost scholastic success, school systems must focus their efforts on supporting the long-term wellbeing of students by combating the prevalence and effects of trauma. Holistic health interventions are not only accessible and possible to implement in low SES schools, but they are empirically shown to be effective in disrupting trauma’s negative impacts on a child’s mind, body, and school performance. The children of this country will eventually be the providers and nurturers of this country. Schools can plant the seeds of support and nurture so that both this nation and its children can grow successfully; first in one’s body and mind, then in school, and later in greater society.
Chapter III: Method

The goal of the methodology behind creating a project from the research provided was to find a way to creatively spread awareness and education around the topic: providing trauma informed holistic practices to children in need within low SES elementary school settings. Before the team decided to create a project rooted in social media to promote and spread this paper’s research findings, there was ample time spent brainstorming what platforms would be accessible for the target audience, as well as easy for the entire team to use. Originally, the idea was to create a website; however, this would have required many skills that the team did not feel would be easy to develop in the timespan provided to complete a creative project. Additionally, creating and marketing for a social media page felt more accessible for the team, and Instagram (IG) was the platform that all felt comfortable using. IG is prevalent and popular, in that many go to Instagram for information, connection, and resources. As one is preparing to create a platform on social media, conducting market research is vital to get to know what’s already being covered and shared within the realm of trauma informed care and education. Looking up keywords that the IG page would be promoting and expanding upon, such as “trauma informed care”, “trauma informed education”, and ‘low SES trauma informed care” is helpful in observing what and how other platforms are already sharing and connecting with audiences about these subjects. The team did not see much content or IG accounts that spoke to the topic this paper researched. Upon this discovery, a document titled “Instagram Action Plan” (IAP) was created where the team could organize their thoughts and brainstorm everything regarding the informative, interactive IG account and page. It was decided that the IG should provide educational content for school systems and administration to be able to learn about and integrate trauma informed, holistic
health resources and practices. On the IAP, it was ensured that certain things were being taken into consideration, such as how the page could be shared with other groups to promote the posted information, such as through hashtags and marketing locally, as well as outside of local resources. Key aspects of the IG page were brainstormed - title (Kids_Educare_Awareness), biography, mission statement, the structure around weekly posts, and how to utilize the format of the research outlined in this paper to organize weekly topics and posts. For example, the first week’s informational post was taken from the introduction around ACE’s and their prevalence. The goal was to address it in concise, clear language within a creative format (see Appendix B). Originally it was thought that having a set, weekly posting schedule would be helpful in staying organized, yet with time, it was realized that many of the topics would require more than three posts a week or had more emphasis on informational and educational content versus interactive. Although structure is important to start, having a more organic flow each week was helpful to continue providing quality and complete information. The IAP document was crucial for this transition to happen smoothly so that the whole team was informed and able to contribute to the week’s posts.

With the use of Canva, research analysis was turned into eye-catching, yet professional, posts that would ideally grab the attention of the target audience, primarily teachers (however, after a discussion with Maggie Kline, there was more emphasis placed on the importance of making this knowledge accessible for all school administration, as well) while maintaining the integrity of this paper’s findings (see Appendix B). Once the page was created and the essential elements completed, the first week’s posts were workshopped to provide an introduction of who the team behind the IG platform are, a second post for the mission statement, and a third post for the weekly schedule (see Appendix A). By opening the IG page’s settings, it was simple to
convert it into a professional business account under the category, Education, so that the team could gain access to a Professional Dashboard. This dashboard offers insights and data regarding the number of accounts the page reached, who’s interacting with the posts, and what aspects of the page are gaining awareness in the public.

The team spread awareness for the IG page by following different Cal Poly clubs (PULSE, Psychology club, the Women's Network, Safer, Women in Business, Pre-health), as well as friends, family, and other prominent platforms that were aligned with the mission. It was found that more followers were gained by announcing the project in in person classes and telling peers to follow the page. As the page became more established, the team decided to follow more teachers and psychologists who specialize in trauma, therapy, and education. This helped them get in touch with specialists in the field. For example, an LCSW and employees at Family Care Network were interviewed. Another prominent person interviewed was Maggie Kline, an LMFT who developed a global movement to bring well-being to all school children, as well as trauma-responsive & preventive care (see Appendix B). Lastly, a team member interviewed and sent a survey to a variety of different teachers to see their perspective and experience with trauma informed care. It’s important to note that all these exciting connections and additions to the IG page were made because the team both worked together and divided and conquered. To have a successful teamwork experience and IG page platform, knowing one another’s skills, creating space for clear and open communication, and awareness of one another’s schedule is vital in ensuring that everyone can contribute, everything gets done, and there’s space to develop more opportunities for posting and community outreach.
Chapter IV: Results

The product discussed throughout this literature review is a continuously developing Instagram page that spreads relevant information from scientific research and professionals in the field of child education, trauma informed care, and holistic health practices. The IG page utilizes infographics, article spotlights, interactive highlights, video interview content from professionals, and feedback from teachers, specifically about their experience with trauma-informed care in school systems, all in order to supply teachers and caregivers with effective resources to mitigate the effects of trauma. The Instagram page, with continuous development, became a platform for professional insight, research, and information the team gained over the last year to be shared in an accessible and easy to implement manner.

Content Preference and Interaction

Instagram analytic features measured preference and interaction based on insight from four different categories: professional interview content, educational research content, highlight content, and introductory content. The professional interview category showcased multiple video and survey interviews between the kids_educare_awareness team and professionals in the field of psychology. The professionals highlighted LMFT, SE, Maggie Kline, LCSW Kristin Burns, and survey responses from thirty different teachers ranging from high school level to elementary level. Furthermore, the educational research content category focused on informative posts that highlighted important research articles elucidating trauma-informed practices in schools. The goal of this category was to educate the audience about ACE scores, trauma and its effects, background on trauma-informed care and holistic healing, and lastly, on how teachers and schools can effectively implement such practices. The introductory content category contained three posts at the beginning of the month that gave background on the four students behind the
Instagram page and their mission for the project. Lastly, the highlight content category utilized polls, outside links, resources, and videos in order to increase audience engagement and education in a fun and interactive manner.

Over the span of one month, data collected from the Instagram page showed that the audience favored firsthand insights from experts in the field as the video interviews were of top content. Top content was measured by likes, comments, accounts reached, and accounts engaged. The first video post with Maggie Kline received 24 likes, 4 comments, 3 sends, 236 accounts reached, and 26 accounts engaged. The first video interview with LCSW Kristin Burns received 22 likes, 120 accounts reached, and 23 accounts engaged. Following the video interview category in top content was the introductory content with the introduction post receiving 23 likes, 2 comments, 7 sends, 138 accounts reached, 25 accounts engaged and the mission statement post receiving 19 likes, 1 comment, 4 sends, 126 accounts reached, 20 accounts engaged. Additionally, users conveyed a keen interest in research articles, expressing gratitude for access to scholarly resources with an average of 15 likes, 1 comment, 70 accounts reached, and 15 accounts engaged. Although results show engagement was present in the highlight content category, fewer numbers were shown with an average of 45 accounts reached and 4 accounts engaged.

**Engagement Analysis:**

The IG page’s activity over the span of one month revealed notable findings concerning the engagement and interaction patterns. Since starting the page on October 25th, the average number of likes per post exhibited an upward trajectory. Similarly, comments per post displayed a substantial increase, with an average of 1 in the first two weeks rising to an average of 4 in the final months. Over a span of two weeks, the number of followers increased from 77 to 108,
accounts reached increased from 127 to 301, and accounts engaged increased from 47 to 56 (see Appendix A). Ultimately, the Instagram page under scrutiny demonstrated a significant increase in user engagement, as evidenced by a higher frequency of likes, shares, and comments on posts, all of which points to the project's success.

**Qualitative Analysis of Feedback**

The team was often received with excitement and feedback that this kind of offering to social media is needed and relevant to society. Through trial and error, the team learned that with Instagram as the platform, being mindful of the conciseness of posts was very important to keep the audience engaged with what was being shared. In order to draw more followers and increase engagement, the team created connections with people who are professionals in the field of psychology. Hence, the Instagram platform became a place for professionals, like Maggie Kline, to share their wisdom and knowledge (see Appendix B). Feedback also indicated a desire for more practical tips and case studies illustrating the implementation of trauma-informed practices within educational settings.
Chapter V: Conclusion/Discussion

The Instagram page, Kids_Educare_Awareness, has been used as a platform for disseminating trauma-informed care and holistic health practices through social media, with a particular focus on educators, administrators, and caregivers as the target audience. The decision to use Instagram to reach a larger audience was chosen, considering its accessibility and popularity. The Instagram's outreach was reflected in the increasing engagement and positive feedback, demonstrating that creating accessible and digestible information for the implementation of trauma-informed practices in educational settings through the social media platform were reaching the target audience.

Even though the Instagram page was able to get such positive interaction, there is still a larger audience that would need to be incorporated when wanting to implement such practices within an educational context. Although the team engaged with professionals, conducted interviews, and gathered insights from teachers through a survey, there is still a need to involve a broader spectrum that includes students, parents, administrators, and teachers outside the local vicinity. Their experiences and viewpoints are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing trauma-informed practices in diverse educational settings.

While there are people in the field making moves to implement trauma-informed care and holistic health practices within schools with the help of smaller outreaches like the Kids_Educare_Awareness Instagram, the implications of this project extend beyond the Instagram platform. There is a need for policies at the school and district levels that prioritize and support trauma-informed practices. Professional development for educators, resources for
parents, and systemic changes within educational institutions are critical components of a comprehensive approach. This project serves as a catalyst for discussions and potential actions to take, prompting a reevaluation of existing policies and practices in education. It is imperative to continue incorporating diverse perspectives and advocating for changes to incorporate these practices within the U.S. education system to prioritize the holistic well-being of every student.

In conclusion, the findings affirm the significance of trauma-informed educational Instagram pages as effective tools for engaging and educating diverse audiences and raising awareness for trauma responsive practice. While acknowledging its strengths, further exploration and research are warranted to maximize the platform's potential for delivering comprehensive trauma-informed education strategies.

**Limitations and Future Directions for Research**

As qualitative and quantitative insight is continually gathered in relation to the impact and effectiveness of the Instagram account during its more novel stage, it is crucial to highlight existing limitations that shed light on future directions of analysis and research. The primary constraint is tied to the newness of the page, which has limited access to more comprehensive statistics on user engagement and reach. Despite efforts to continually set forth a variety of content, including both informative outlines, video and podcast links, and interactive activities, the limited scope of time presented a challenge in fully developing and exploring the potential of the page. The newness of the page, although exciting, has brought about difficulty in data and feedback access; the lack of insights presents a challenge in holistically understanding the influence of the page and gauging appropriate audience response. As the account gains traction, overcoming this limitation will be essential in navigating new ways to establish and pose content
that tailors to the target audience. Whether that be through utilizing the ‘boost’ feature to heighten advertising initiatives, by continuing to act through outreach to local organizations, or by naturally utilizing time as a resource in account growth, it is evident that future insights can be made as the account itself develops.

Feedback, which serves as a crucial component to a resource that is rooted in being educational and informative, is limited due to the previously mentioned and discussed novelty of the account. With the time and resources presented, there has been success in tracking feedback through accounts engagement, as well as through word of mouth and direct commenting. Although this has been both insightful and exciting, future research might involve an expansion of this feedback with user surveys, a broader audience, and updates from those that have taken initiative in practicing implementation.

Looking ahead, there is also a tremendous opportunity to expand this media-based account towards in-person outreach and educational opportunities. Collaboration with local elementary schools can be initiated, as well as working with educators to implement various holistic healing health activities into practice; with this, there could be opportunity to work more broadly with school districts in areas of educator training. Not only would this future endeavor put the project into practice in a new and exciting way but could serve as an opportunity to gather more insightful data and conclusions. Whether that be through tracking the various ways in which educators implement practices that have been discussed, or through comparisons between different educational organizations, in person collaboration is something that could expand the direction of this project in an exciting and holistic way.

Alongside in person opportunities at school settings, another future direction for this project might be tied to in-person collaboration efforts between educators and other professionals
in various mental health and trauma-oriented professions. Through insight gained through the various studies and interviews that were explored, it is rather evident that there is immense intersectionality within the umbrellas of trauma informed care and holistic healing practices. In person discussions and forums, targeted towards community members or students hoping to pursue careers in educational or trauma-oriented settings, could be a tremendous way to initiate collaborative discussions on the accessibility and implementation of trauma informed practices. Consideration of future directions and expansions on this project shed light on how opportunistic the realm of trauma-informed care and holistic healing is in regard to educational settings.
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Appendix A: Instagram Insight
# Professional dashboard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insights</th>
<th>Nov 8 - Dec 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts reached</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts engaged</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total followers</td>
<td>107 +62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content you shared</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Post Spotlight
An ACE score is a tally of different types of abuse, neglect, and other adverse childhood experiences. A higher score indicates a higher risk for health problems later in life.

ACE SCORES

3 types of ACEs:

1. Abuse
2. Neglect
3. Household dysfunction

41% of adults report they've experienced one ACE and 15% report four or more ACEs by age 18.
Yes & thank you, Nadine. Please read Brain-Changing Strategies to Trauma-Proof Our Schools: A Heart-Centered Movement to Wire Well Being by trauma specialist Maggie Kline to see what educators can do to mitigate the effects of trauma.
It is with great excitement that @kids_educare_awareness releases their interview with Maggie Kline, SEP, LMFT school psychologist, teacher, therapist and author. What an incredible privilege and learning opportunity this has been for our team, speaking to a professional so well known and respected in the field of psychology, specifically trauma and how trauma effects kids and how to support educators and schools in offering trauma responsive care. In the video attached above, Maggie explains her profession and what has inspired her to help children cope with trauma and grief. Included are her three books she utilized to give tools to teachers and care-givers in order to prevent and heal the symptoms of trauma.

More to come!