Trauma-Informed Integral Leadership: Leading School Communities With a Systems-Aware Approach

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Authors note

The authors would like to acknowledge that this paper was written on Wurundjeri Country and honour the strengths and resilience of First Nations people.

Abstract

The impacts of childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences can have devastating consequences on students' learning and wellbeing. Pairing this alongside the negative and vicarious impacts of secondary traumatic stress on teachers and school leaders, efforts towards whole school change are complex endeavours. The extant literature from trauma-informed practice for school leadership provides useful frameworks for leaders to understand their guiding roles within trauma-affected communities. However, trauma-informed practices require further enquiry and better integration with systems-aware perspectives. A systems-aware approach to school leadership positions leaders within the dynamic systems in which their schools are embedded. It helps leaders to navigate the networked patterns of relationships within their communities. Given impacts of intergenerational poverty, racism, childhood trauma and long-standing educational inequity, community devastation from natural events such as droughts and bushfires, plus the world-wide uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are many complex factors that now require systems-aware perspectives to address compounding systemic concerns. In order to contribute to the advancement of both trauma-informed leadership and systems-aware leadership, this paper makes the case for integrating these fields within school contexts. Predicated on a systematic literature review and novel theorising, this paper explores how a new practice framework for a trauma-informed integral response to bolster school leaders can be used to benefit whole communities.

Keywords: Trauma-informed leadership, school leadership, whole school change, systems-aware leadership, integral theory, school community.

The Need for Trauma-informed School Leadership

For schools in Australia and many others around the world, we currently face the impacts of multiple crises, from devastating bushfires and climate change induced natural disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, the events renewing urgency in the Black Lives Matter movement, and a deepened awareness of systemic racism. This has brought the compounding aspects of trauma into public awareness. What we understand is that these crises have affected us all, individually and systemically. They have highlighted our interconnectedness and interdependence, both in devastation and in the care of how we respond.

For many school leaders, particularly those leaders serving communities striving to mitigate educational inequity, these complex world-wide and community concerns heightened the already prevalent issues facing vulnerable children and young people. Childhood trauma is increasingly well understood by educators. Drawing on the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2014) study in the United States, and data available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), Doidge (2016) suggests approximately 40 per cent of young people have been exposed to some form of traumatic stressor in their lives. Research and practice demonstrate that traumatic experiences can dramatically change the way people learn and develop (Downey, 2012; Wolpow et al., 2009; Van der Kolk, 2005).

The school and classroom are often the most stable and consistent location in a vulnerable young person's life and can therefore be used as a therapeutic milieu to meet complex needs (Cole et al., 2005; Downey, 2012). As Brunzell, Stokes and Waters (2016) suggest, while teachers and school personnel are not mental health professionals, they can be therapeutically informed to redress the specific learning capabilities that trauma impacts and implement effective strategies that young people must develop for learning and wellbeing.

In response, whole school approaches to trauma have received increasing attention across a number of educational systems in Australia and internationally (Berger, 2019; Howard, 2019). Schools that engage whole school approaches to trauma have been referred to interchangeably as trauma-informed or trauma-aware schools (Stokes & Brunzell, 2019).

In Australia, one whole-school intervention featured in Berger's (2019) systematic review is the Berry Street Education Model (Brunzell et al., 2015). Our work at Berry Street has a foundation in trauma-informed positive education (TIPE; Brunzell et al., 2016) to increase student engagement designed as a whole-school learning journey. The TIPE approach is predicated on whole-school staff professional learning and support. Its aims are to expand the possibilities of trauma-informed teaching and learning by maintaining rigorous attention toward addressing developmental deficits, while simultaneously providing pathways toward psychological growth (Brunzell et al., 2016).

Internationally, much of the practice on trauma-informed whole-school approaches are drawn from the United States. Among the most influential is the Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS) program which aims to increase knowledge on the impacts of trauma, provide trauma-sensitive practices through professional learning for staff, parents and students, including small group interventions focused on at-risk students and crisis support (For more see Cole et al., 2005; Dorado et al., 2016; Wolpow et al., 2009).

Trauma-informed School Leadership

Theorising on trauma-informed school leadership began in the mid-2000s, arising out of the aforementioned lineage of psychosocial education and trauma-informed care applied to school settings (Hodas, 2006). To this day, much of the research on trauma-informed school leadership exists alongside studies into whole-school approaches to trauma as a

complementary focus, and not itself as a specific field of inquiry (Howard, 2019; Walkley & Cox, 2013; Wiest-Stevenson & Lee, 2016).

The Sanctuary Model was among the first comprehensive frameworks to include the role of leadership in research into trauma-affected systems (Bloom & Farragher, 2010). The Sanctuary Model supports leaders to understand how to counteract the impacts on whole-school communities of extended exposure to adversity and trauma (Bloom, 2010). Subsequent research has played an important role in positioning school leadership within expansive trauma-informed developmental frameworks, such as the Missouri Model and Compassionate Schools Model, in the United States (Carter & Blanch, 2019; Wolpow et al., 2009). Models such as these have helped leaders understand their schools as trauma-affected and therefore enabled a reorientation towards trauma-informed curricula domains and strategies, integrated school-community partnerships and policies, and a strong care and compassion ethics (Brunzell et al., 2016; Wolpow et al., 2009). The early success of the focus on whole-school approaches to trauma has resulted in a steady growth in schools engaging professional learning on trauma-informed teaching in Australia and internationally. Further, as trauma-informed educational practices gained momentum from both school leaders (e.g., ground up leadership within local communities) and administrators (e.g., top down leadership within governing bodies and departments of education overseeing many schools), researchers have initiated the call for whole-systems and cross-institutional responses (Chafouleas et al., 2016; Howard, 2019).

Calling for Systems-aware School Leadership

Systems research arises from a variety of streams of lineage and practice including systems thinking (Meadows, 2008; Senge, 2006), ecological and living systems theory (Capra

& Luisi, 2018; Wheatley, 2011), and awareness-based systems change (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2014). These fields of research and practice, which in this paper we refer to as systems-aware, are guiding important inquiries into the emerging body of research on the application of systems approaches in schools (Boell & Senge, 2016; Kern et al., 2019). Such developments have highlighted that there is not yet sufficient evidence on the effects trauma can have on whole school systems, how existing school culture can act as an enabler or barrier to embedding whole school approaches, and what that might mean for leading whole school approaches to address community and childhood trauma in the future.

Increasingly, systems researchers are calling to focus on context, particularly through an awareness of how systems can become constituted around trauma and adversely impact the way entire neighbourhoods, communities, schools and families interact together (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Kershner & Mcquillan, 2016). Whereas trauma-informed school leadership practices primarily rely on centring intervention on student outcomes (Brunzell et al., 2016; Dorado et al., 2016), this risks drawing attention away from the systems, structures and policies that can serve to entrench or reinforce trauma in schools, which can have the effect of exacerbating trauma exposure, particularly for marginalised communities (Ginwright, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; van Dernoot Lipsky, 2010).

There is a prevailing assumption that becoming a trauma-informed school means integrating effective practices, programs and procedures into all aspects of the organisation (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Yet, for instance, Hodas (2006) suggests that existing organisational culture can be a significant barrier to adopting and sustaining whole school approaches to trauma over time. There is still a lack of clear practice guidance around how school leaders can support systems change in trauma-affected communities. This presents an opportunity to integrate the research around trauma-informed leadership and systems-aware

leadership, in order to understand how trauma-affected schools can engage in the practice and movement of systemic change.

Therefore, the present paper addresses these research questions:

(1) In what ways do the two fields of trauma-informed practice and systems-aware practice for school leadership reinforce or diverge from one another?

(2) For school leaders who seek to be both trauma-informed and systems-aware, what emerging practices and perspectives can serve as pathways for effective and sustainable school leadership?

Methodology

The research design employed in this study was a systematic literature review (Green et al., 2006). The literature emerging from two streams (trauma-informed leadership in schools and systems-aware leadership in schools) was retrieved and reviewed to determine common themes. Guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA; Moher et al., 2009), papers meeting the inclusion criteria for this systematic literature review included empirical studies, conceptual papers, and meta-analyses if they were found within peer-reviewed journals published in the past 10 years.

The search terms for these studies included “trauma-informed leadership in schools”; and “Systems leadership in schools”, and these terms were retrieved within social science, psychology and education databases. Based upon PRISMA recommendations for inclusion in the review, studies were analysed and selected if the intervention and/or program model was published in the last 10 years in a peer-reviewed journal and (1) designed for a whole school or schools and not for an individual (i.e., therapeutic one-to-one setting), (2) appropriate for a school leader to deliver (i.e., a school leader could learn the principles of the approach through professional learning and would not require formalised or clinical training within a

certifying program), (3) adapted for either primary or secondary school settings, and (4) could be used with or was designed for culturally or socio-economically diverse populations.

Moher and colleagues forewarn of an important limitation within the PRISMA guidelines. Publication bias (when the outcome of an investigation influences the decision to publish and disseminate the research) is difficult to account for in the PRISMA sequence (Moher et al., 2007). However, the PRISMA guidelines suggest that researchers establish their (1) rationale for retrieval, (2) criteria for inclusion, and (3) supporting evidence in the form of references when possible.

This approach allowed themes to emerge from the review through a procedure for content analysis which includes a fluid and iterative sequence (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). The researchers collected 24 available publications for reading and re-reading. The researchers considered the key questions and purposes of the research. To reduce emergent categories to themes, the researchers (1) identified patterns and then (2) organised them into coherent categories in order to summarise and bring meaning to the data, while assigning abbreviated codes or symbols for each category. Patterns and connections were identified and forged between categories. Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) suggest grouping into three areas: larger categories, relative importance, and relationships. Following this process, the publications included were reduced from 24 to 19[1]. The findings are detailed in the following sections.

Findings

The literature review evaluated the two streams of trauma-informed leadership and systems-aware leadership. Arising separately out of those two streams were the same four

[1] Complete reference list available upon request from corresponding author.

themes. The four themes are (1) view of leadership, (2) support and safety, (3) organisational learning and (4) school culture. This section presents the way in which each theme emerged in the literature, highlighting how the four themes (detailed in Table 1) diverged between streams.

Table 1: **Themes from the literature**

Themes	Trauma-informed leadership	Systems-aware leadership
(1) View of leadership	Drive and design	Host and create conditions
(2) Support and safety	Meeting needs, 'support and protect me'	Building trust and shared responsibility, 'shift the context together'
(3) Organisational learning	Knowledge building and sharing, dissemination, 'bring in experts'	Knowledge creation, sense-making and collective inquiry, 'wisdom in the room'
(4) School Culture	Culture as outcome	Culture as process

Theme 1: View of Leadership

Theme one refers to the way in which the two streams of trauma-informed and systems-aware leadership specifically view school leadership. This is not striking, as this paper is an inquiry into leadership across disciplines. Nevertheless, it is helpful to draw on the literature to define leadership, both as a key term as the focus of this study, and to frame the diverging perspectives on leadership for the rest of this section.

In the trauma-informed leadership literature a view of *driving* a school forward emerged as a descriptive term (Middleton et al., 2015). Leadership qualities were described in trauma-informed schools as requiring *commitment* to create *buy-in* and *strive* to meet the

needs of students, teachers and the school community (Stokes & Brunzell, 2019; Walkley & Cox, 2013). Similarly, a sense of momentum could be observed in this description of a school principal as being influential because she would "make things happen" (Howard, 2019, p. 44). The capacity to create movement and rhythm in the school came through as important leadership attributes. This is consistent with somatic modalities arising in trauma-informed care matching the rhythms of the school day with the internal 'bottom-up' rhythms of a regulated body (Balu, 2017; Chafoules et al., 2016; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019). Leadership for forward momentum that reinforces the school's change agenda was evident across the research. Its opposite, a stagnant, stalling leadership that lacks enthusiasm is seen not just ineffective for change but as having the potential to create institutional betrayal and even exacerbate trauma exposure into the future (Carter & Blanch 2019; Howard, 2019).

In the systems-aware leadership scholarship, the pervasive term that emerged was that of leader as *host* (Wheatley & Frieze, 2011). Systems-aware leadership qualities are described as *creating the conditions* to address school climate by *forming networks* to *distribute leadership* across a school community (Kershner & Mcquillan, 2016; Sebastian et al., 2017). Harris (2011) describes a conceptual shift away from traditional hierarchy where leadership is a position to viewing leadership as interaction. The research consistently points to the complexity, ambiguity and adaptiveness of challenges that impact school climate. Leadership capacities to facilitate trusting relationships and shared decision-making were supported across the literature (Jones et al., 2013; Ainscow, 2012). This is reflective of living systems research, which draws lessons from the natural world to make meaning of complex social systems (Barlow & Stone, 2011). Viewing schools-as-a-whole, constituted of interconnected and interdependent relationships, places attention on the leadership potential of the collective. A collective leadership approach can respond to greater complexity across a

school system (Ainscow, 2012; Harris, 2011; Shaked & Schechter, 2013). In contrast, schools operating with a hierarchical and centralised point of authority create the illusion of control while causing a raft of unintended consequences, ranging from divisiveness to dysfunctional school climate (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Shaked & Schechter, 2013).

Kershner and McQuillan (2016) provide a comparative example of two principals using systems-aware approaches (e.g., complexity theory) as a framework for whole-school change, one that created change and one that did not. The key finding from their study was that school outcomes cannot be attributed to individual leadership capacities or behaviours, rather they must co-evolve with the values, beliefs, visions and educational needs of their community.

Theme 2: Support and Safety

Theme two refers to the way each stream explains support and safety for staff at school. Trauma-informed leadership privileges a view of creating support and safety for staff by meeting their needs. This perspective identifies that trauma and toxic stress create particular emotional demands on school personnel, making them vulnerable to secondary stress and vicarious trauma (Howard, 2019; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019). Blitz and colleagues (2016) identify a range of approaches to offset the impacts of vicarious traumatisation in schools, including: daily routines for stress reduction, peer support systems, mentoring and the availability of community-based mental health services. In addition to this, the research refers to the necessity of ancillary or support services, such as school psychologists, counsellors, social workers and occupational therapists. These allied education professionals provide specialist and targeted support to trauma-impacted students and in so doing, help teachers to cope with the heightened demands and responsibilities of teaching in such

environments (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016; Walkley & Cox, 2013). There is less mention of school personnel feeling unsafe due to the behavioural presentations of students and greater emphasis on the residual impacts of "anxiety and fearfulness projected by children" (Blitz et al., 2016, p. 535), which contributes to compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995). Perceptions of school as not being a good or safe place can arise without adequate support to meet the needs of school staff, which can have deleterious impacts on staff wellbeing and teaching efficacy (Howard, 2019; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019).

The systems-aware leadership literature views support and safety in terms of building the agency of staff to shift the context toward safe and supportive systems. This requires empowerment for school personnel to share their perspectives and self-organise to create change. It includes the creation of safe spaces where diverse and dissenting voices are heard wherein creative tension is nurtured through questioning and consensual decision-making (Jones et al., 2013; Kershner & Mcquillan, 2016). Jones and colleagues (2013) describe a teacher-led process toward inclusive education as developing shared vision, shared ownership and ultimately more inclusive opportunities for students. Unmet needs were consistently understood as arising from disconnection in the system, suggesting that people feel safe and supported when they can co-create a living example of a system that is reflective of their needs (Collinson, 2010; Sebastian et al., 2017). The context is described as one in which connection, communication, trust, and mutual care is proactively nurtured as an intrinsic function of whole and interdependent school systems (Barlow & Stone, 2011).

Sebastian and colleagues (2017) studied two approaches to addressing a school climate for safety and learning, one that included and one that did not include teacher leadership. Their research found that a healthy school climate relies on teachers being

empowered to collectively address and shape issues around school safety and expectations. Therefore, this becomes a collective responsibility not just the role for the principal.

Theme 3: Organisational Learning

Theme three refers to the way each stream expresses organisational learning. The trauma-informed leadership literature considers organisational learning as a means for building knowledge and sharing information throughout the school. The requirement to enhance staff understanding of the developmental impacts of trauma was consistent across every study. Stokes and Brunzell (2019) suggest that school leadership and teachers first must acknowledge the need for alternative pedagogical approaches in response to the impacts of unresolved trauma at school. Walkley and Cox (2013) recommend training, supervision, ongoing technical assistance and staff development. Developmental approaches begin with enhancing teacher efficacy through professional learning, promoting knowledge sharing and implementation and finally, embedding organisational change (Carter & Blanch, 2019; Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). School leaders who themselves have completed training are more likely to create learning opportunities and disseminate knowledge across a school (Brunzell & Stokes, 2019; Howard, 2019).

Systems-aware leadership is concerned with sense-making and the creation of knowledge within school context. It positions organisational learning as the social construction of knowledge through collaborative processes, such as action learning projects (Collinson, 2010; Frost, 2012). For instance, Ainscow (2012, p. 305) refers to realising the considerable expertise and untapped potential in schools through new working relationships

that help to "mobilise this potential". Lessening dependence on outside experts over time builds staff collective efficacy and school capacity to respond flexibly to changing conditions in unpredictable environments (Collinson, 2010; Kershner & Mcquillan, 2016). Developing communities of practice in schools arose as a key approach to embedding a culture of inquiry and collaboration (Kensler et al., 2011). Communities of practice enable groups of teachers to take their often-tacit knowledge and experience and make it explicit for their colleagues and wider professional community. Frost (2012) refers to this ongoing reflective process of making and re-making knowledge as action learning. This kind of reflective process distinguishes a shift from *downloading* knowledge (i.e., when a leader seeks out information that confirms their perspective).) to *co-constructing* knowledge (i.e., when a leader empowers the community to interact collaboratively and learn from each other's perspectives). Through systems practices, such as dialogue (Bohm, 2004; i.e., a group conversation in which participants attempt to reach a common understanding, experiencing everyone's point of view fully, equally and nonjudgmentally) organisational narratives can be examined collectively to generate shared vision and in so doing, break down silos of practice across a school (Barlow & Stone, 2011; Collinson, 2010; Frost, 2012).

Within a cross-cultural leadership project, Frost (2012) studied lessons arising across 15 countries to understand the potential of teachers to be leaders of innovation in schools. This study demonstrated that teachers can lead innovation and create new knowledge when the conditions are facilitated. Frost also outlined key barriers to teacher collaboration and innovation, including hierarchy in organisational structures and authoritarianism in leadership decision-making. This research demonstrates the imperative to support staff learning and collective innovation via constructive feedback cycles.

Theme 4: School Culture

Theme four refers to the way each stream explores school culture and change. The trauma-informed leadership literature positions school culture and change as an outcome that can be reached through effective implementation. A trauma-informed school culture integrates effective practices, programs and procedures into all aspects of the organisation (Howard, 2019; Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Walkley and Cox (2013, p. 124) recognise the challenge of existing school culture that is often "clung to fervently by long-time teachers and staff". The importance of measuring and evaluating school improvement using an evidence base was consistent as a way of iteratively moving a school community toward outcomes and benchmarks. Frameworks, such as the Missouri Model (Brown et al., 2013) and TIPE (Brunzell et al., 2016) are highlighted as developmental and multi-tiered pathways to change in school culture. These frameworks consistently include a focus on language, communication, implementation and evaluation (Carter & Blanch, 2019; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019; Walkley & Cox, 2013). It was observed that changes in school culture were broadly a result of committed leadership, identifying and meeting staff and student needs, and building organisational improvement developmentally through sharing knowledge across the school and evaluating impact (Chafouleas et al., 2016; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019).

The systems-aware leadership literature positions school culture as a process, in which change is complex, dynamic and collective. Culture is framed as a reflection of underlying beliefs, values and assumptions that are shared by members of a school, determining how people understand their context, act together and shape organisational identity (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Kershner & Mcquillan, 2016;). This resembles Schein's (1985) research on leadership and organisational culture. Barlow and Stone (2011) draw on living systems theory to highlight that a school community can be viewed as a system nested

within systems (see Capra & Luisi, 2018). Schools are comprised of networks of people who think, feel and behave in ways that form complex and dynamic patterns of relationships (Capra & Luisi 2018; Kensler et al., 2011; Kershner & Mcquillan, 2016). This illustrates that culture change can be initiated through inviting networks of people to organise around areas of importance and rearrange structures so that people can experience different perspectives from across systems (Barlow & Stone, 2011; Jones et al., 2013). Furthermore, school culture emerged in non-linear ways with commonalities around leadership creating the conditions for school communities to shift their context, engage in collective inquiry and knowledge creation across networks at multiple levels in the school (Ainscow, 2012; Harris, 2011; Kershner & Mcquillan, 2016; Sebastian et al., 2017; Shaked & Schechter, 2013).

Discussion

The systematic review revealed some clear polarities between the two streams of literature. In this section, we seek to explore how these polarities may emerge within a trauma-informed whole school approach to change as a contribution to the field. To illustrate our shift in thinking, the findings from the literature review were repositioned from a table of themes (Table 1) to a diagram (Figure 1).

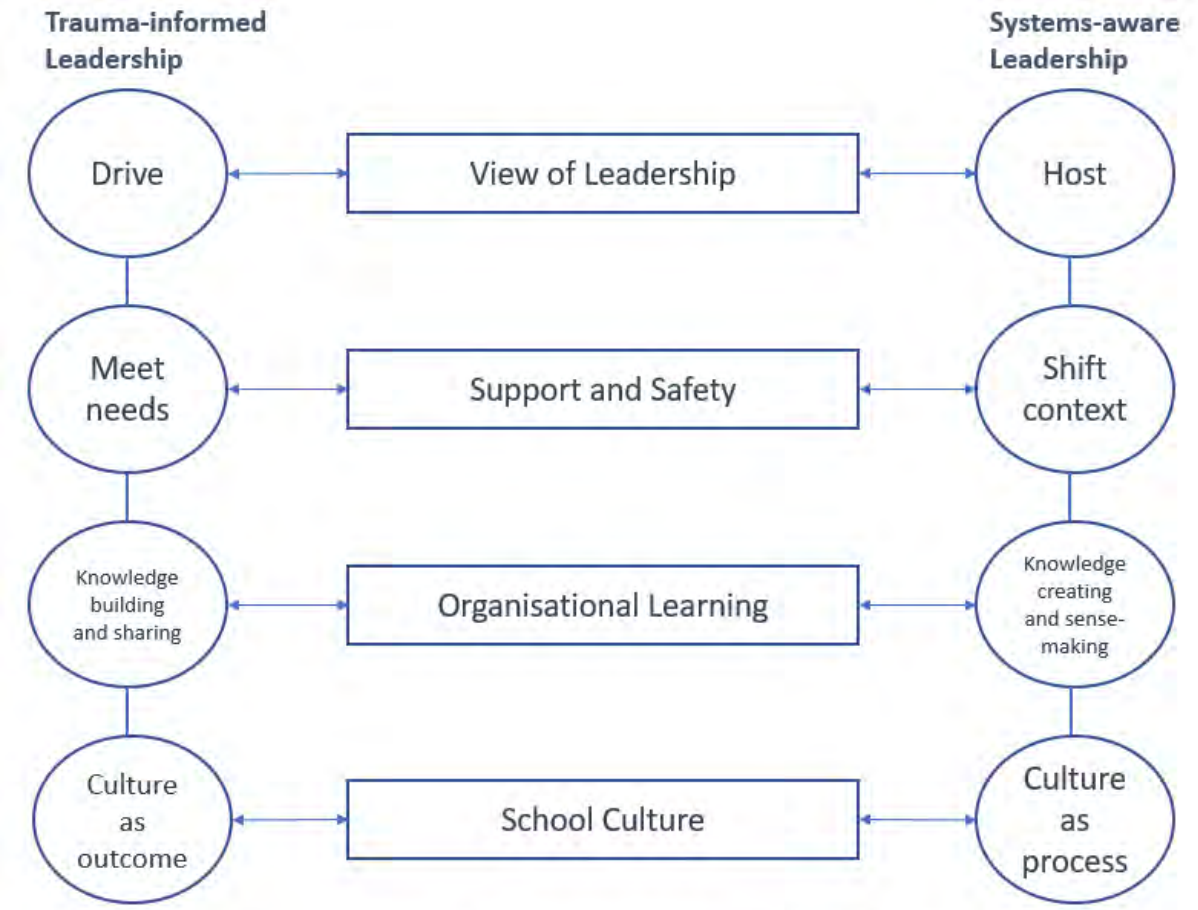

Figure 1: Polarities emerging in a trauma-informed systems-aware approach to whole school change

Emerging Polarities

Given the importance of our work emerging within the Australian context when envisioning the dynamic and emergent relationship between polarities, we refer to Aboriginal knowledge systems and in particular, Yunkaporta's (2019) portrayal of *kinship-mind*. As Yunkaporta (2019, p. 169) explains that in various Aboriginal worldviews "relationships are paramount in knowledge transmission… Those things that are connected are less important than the forces of connection between them". We propose that this diagram based on *kinship-mind* helps the reader to envision the tension and balance between each polarity, arising from within the four themes, while also highlighting their interdependence in a network of pairs (Yunkaporta, 2019). The diagram does not intend to present a list of static leadership qualities

in opposition to each other but rather a series of dynamic perspectives that school leaders will find themselves holding, and adapting, in response to constantly shifting contexts and relationships across a school system (Capra & Luisi, 2018). In addition to highlighting these polarities, we seek to initiate efforts toward testing their validity by unifying them into an integrated practice framework for school leaders using the four quadrants in Wilber's (2001) Integral Theory.

Towards Integrated Trauma-informed School Systems

According to Wilber (2003), an integral approach helps to assemble the most comprehensive overview available, without advocating for one particular value system over another. Wilber's (2001) four quadrant matrix (Figure 2) suggests that human knowledge and experience emerges within 'interior vs. exterior' and 'individual vs. collective' phenomena.[2] We suggest that using these four quadrants support school leaders by acknowledging the dynamic nature of their work and by positioning the future goals they have for their schools through an integral approach.

[2] Wilber (2001) uses the term AQAL (all quadrants, all levels) to comprehensively take into account levels, lines, states and types in Integral Theory; however levels, lines, states and types will not be included in the scope of this paper (For more see Wilber, 2003).

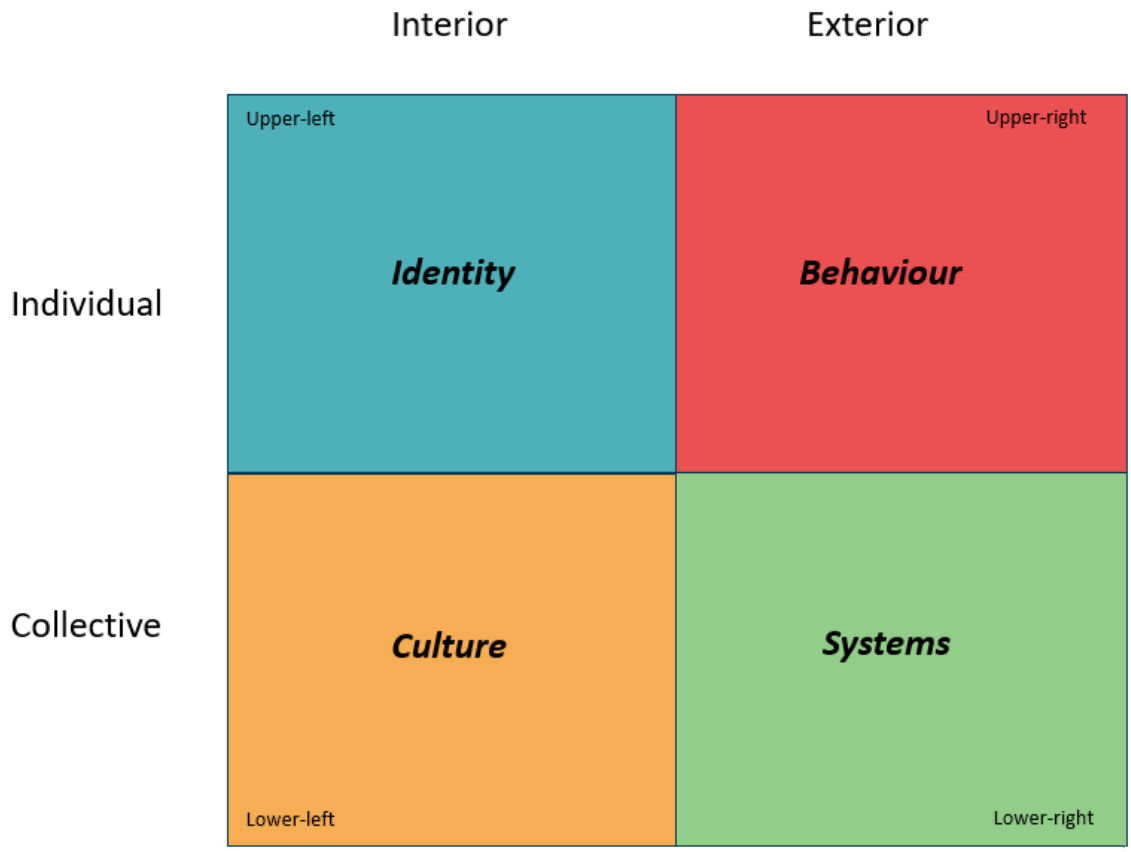

Figure 2: Representation of Integral Four Quadrants (Wilber, 2001)

A practice framework is a conceptual map that brings together a theoretically informed approach to practice in an accessible design (Connolly, 2007). When overlaying the polarities arising from our systematic literature review into the four quadrants, the octagonal shape arose (Figure 3). In this shape each polarity listed in both Table 1 and Figure 1 is situated opposite the other and within a different quadrant. It theoretically enables the polarities to be integrated, each serving a distinct purpose within the quadrant they inhabit while maintaining a complementary role from the vantage of the whole practice framework. We have named this new framework Trauma-Informed Integral Leadership (TIIL).

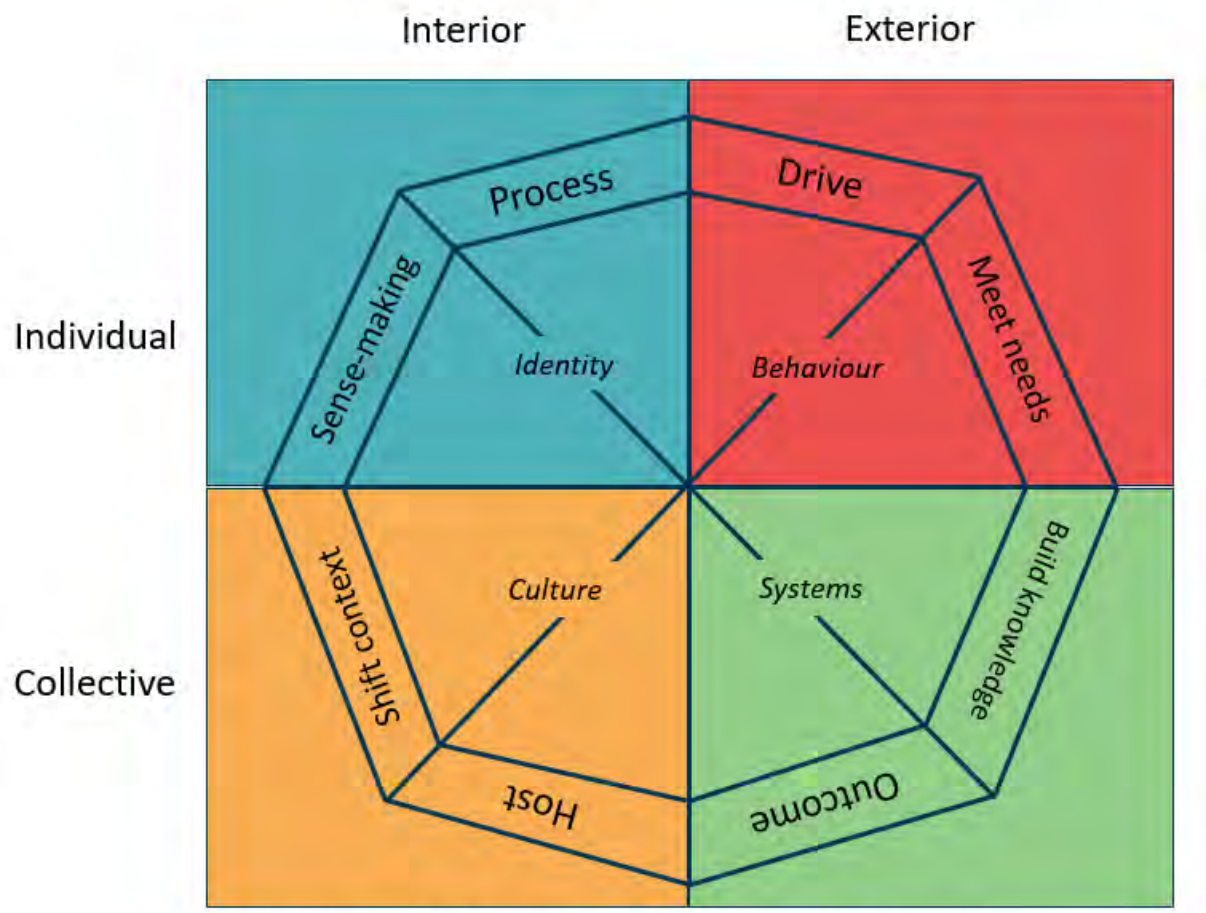

Figure 3: Diagram of the Trauma-Informed Integral Leadership framework

In the paragraphs below we explore the TIIL framework. We also reference various practice lineages to support leaders to observe and dynamically inhabit each part of this practice framework when enacting a trauma-informed whole school approach to change.

Shifting behaviour (individual - exterior quadrant). The upper-right, individual-exterior quadrant refers to the body (including brain) and what can be seen or touched, or observed scientifically, such as human behaviour. In the practice framework, this quadrant relates to the poles of *drive* and *meeting needs*.

Drive in the individual-external quadrant refers to the aims of trauma-informed school leadership to drive change within the school through trauma-informed principles. Foremost of these goals is to embed a sense of observable rhythm and movement in a school that is mirrored in the individual body. The body reacts with high levels of stress when it perceives the environment around it is unsafe or unpredictable. Within trauma-informed approaches, rhythmic routines that, over time, communicate safety to the body generate observable neurobiological benefits, and are particularly beneficial for trauma recovery (for more see Van der Kolk, 2005). Generating movement and momentum in a school can have the effect of reducing unpredictability and associated stress hormones in the body, opening possibilities for healing and growth in the present (Brunzell et al., 2016). Stokes and Brunzell (2019) suggest aligning the body's sensory integration with rhythmic routines throughout a school day, offering the examples of consistent ways of running daily learning activities and meetings, de-escalating or priming transition routines, and regular opportunities for patterned-repetitive rhythmic physical movement.

Meeting needs within trauma-informed practice is placed in the individual-external quadrant and refers to practices for observing and acting on signs that needs are arising in the individual body. Young people with a history of unresolved trauma have unmet needs that result in observable complex behaviours, which can be supported by a consistent practice of identifying signs of stress and sensation in the body (for more see Brunzell et al., 2016). Another area in which unmet needs are clearly visible in a school is through teacher burnout. Research to date has mostly focused on the impacts on school staff through the lens of secondary and vicarious effects of trauma (Caringi et al., 2015; Figley, 1995; Hydon et al., 2015; McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Stamm, 1995). Teacher burnout has a severe impact on schools, with over 30 percent of teachers leaving the profession in their first three years

(Gold, 1996). Up to 25 percent of teachers who leave the profession report that they do so due to problems arising from complex student behaviour (Fernet et al., 2012). As an adaptive mechanism, teachers can become accustomed to either dissociating from, or being hyper-vigilant toward, protecting their needs (Bloom, 2010). Under these conditions emotional distress escalates, tempers become short, decision making becomes impaired and driven by impulse, while pressures to conform reduce individual and collective efficacy (Ryan & Oestreich, 1998).

School leaders can gain a deeper understanding and become more responsive to needs by modelling an open-hearted presence. The term open-hearted presence has a long lineage and is used here to describe attention that is spacious, attuned and responsive (Brach, 2012). In short, an open-hearted presence can be accessed by connecting with the senses in the body while deeply listening to another, both verbally and non-verbally. As a practice example, Roffey (2020) suggests circle-based check-in routines can support staff and students to access their experience and share with the knowledge that they will be consistently supported to meet their needs in an open-hearted way.

Shifting systems (collective - exterior quadrant). The lower-right quadrant refers to the collective-exterior such as systems, networks, policies, and the physical or built environment. This quadrant relates to the poles of *building knowledge* and *culture as outcome*.

Within the trauma-informed recommendations, *building knowledge* refers to the ways in which learning and information is sourced and shared across networks to impact the school system. New knowledge, whether it be from outside a system, or sourced from within, requires networks to effectively integrate information into the structures and policies of a

school and be reflected in practice (Howard, 2019). Viewing a school community as a system nested within systems can support this endeavour (Capra & Luisi, 2018). Luhman (2013) suggests that social systems, such as schools, form networks that give rise to organisational structures, and this occurs through patterns of communication that maintain the flow of ideas, information and knowledge. In trauma-affected systems patterns of communication can become fragmented, leading to network breakdown, a lack of trust and isolated pockets of practice (Balu, 2017; Bloom, 2010). This limits the possibility of new knowledge integration into a school system and stifles collective efficacy. The practice of systems mapping can support school leaders to gain a visibility of networks within a school community. Systems mapping practices can reveal where knowledge and information might already be arising or stuck, and how structures and policies can change to reflect a networked-stakeholder ecosystem (for more on systems mapping see Scharmer & Kaufer, 2014 or Senge et al., 2012).

Culture as outcome relates to developmental frameworks and evaluating impact on the pathway to integrating change across a school. According to Carter and Blanch (2019, p. 52) developmental frameworks emphasise structural change in a school by providing guidance on measuring progress and "how far and fast to go". Such frameworks also assist to identify organisational readiness, highlighting the extent of trauma within a system, while offering a pathway to institutional change. Bloom (2010), as well as van Dernoot Lipsky (2010), observe that trauma-affected systems are often constitutive of hierarchical, controlling and oppressive structures and policies. Systemic oppression is the unjust exercise of power and authority that results in fragmented communities, compounding threats, and widespread toxic stress (Menakem, 2017; Treleaven & Britton, 2018; Herman, 2015).

The practices of dialogue through collective inquiry builds agency and brings the community into the centre of decision-making. Collective inquiry is a process of collaborative design from lived experience, which can contextualise developmental frameworks so that they reflect the reality of the impacts of systemic trauma and oppression on the school community (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010). Wheatley and Rogers (1999, p. 38) reiterate that "people only own what they create". Systems and structures are rooted in collective agreements that can change when groups are empowered to share what matters to them and take purposeful action alongside one another to make that a reality (Block, 2008; Wheatley & Rogers, 1999).

Shifting culture (collective - interior quadrant). The lower-left quadrant refers to collective, interior experiences that are often intangible or unquantifiable, such as culture, shared values, and interpersonal relationships. This quadrant relates to the poles of *host* and *shifting context*. *Host* refers to creating conditions for co-regulation and attunement between people by bringing awareness to the culture of a group, or 'relational field'. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory (1979) suggests that human development be understood within the layered systems of which they are a part. For instance, a student's central nervous system (micro-system) will be affected by their peer relationships, teacher interactions (meso-system), community relations (exo-system) living arrangements, and family and cultural values (macro-system) unfolding over time (chrono-system; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Therefore, trauma can exist both in the individual and the relational field between people, and within a school culture (Siegel, 2009). The term relational field provides a way to pay attention to the interpersonal dynamics that are collectively enacted in every human interaction (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2014). Decades of research into neurobiology and

attachment theory demonstrate how the central nervous system unconsciously modulates stress through caring and attuned interactions between people, otherwise known as co-regulation (Cozolino, 2013; Porges, 2011). This approach embraces the ontological worldview of interdependence, recognising that individual health and wellbeing is inseparable from the health and wellbeing of the whole community and planet (Capra & Luisi, 2018). Helpful is the focus on creating *containers* for interdependent relating, as defined by Isaacs (2006) as an atmosphere of shared awareness, consensually held together by mutual agreements and a sense of meaning or purpose. Explored further below, the practice of container building can create the conditions for co-regulation and attunement to arise between people.

Shifting Context means empowering groups of people to work on interpersonal dynamics and change structures in order to reflect a school culture that feels collectively resonant. Shanker (2020) describes collective resonance as a phenomenon in which peoples' limbic systems are communicating emotional states directly between each other beneath the level of active consciousness. Whereas a trauma-affected system creates fragmentation and disconnection between people, the practice of container building generates resonance between nervous systems and greater coherence within the relational field (Hübl, 2014; Siegel, 2009). Building containers can generate collective agency, from expecting school leadership to meet the needs of staff, to everyone within the container sharing both power and the responsibility for creating a context of mutual care, safety and support (hooks, 1994; Boell & Senge, 2016). Therefore, people who previously did not feel heard or were oppressed in a trauma-affected system become able to share experiences and reveal insights they just would not have been able to without a coherent container (Menakem, 2017). Due to this, containers enable groups of people in a school to make sense of available information in the

system, generate contextual understanding through dialogue, act with creativity, and ultimately enhance collective efficacy of practice (Bohm, 2004; Isaacs, 2006).

Shifting identity (individual - interior quadrant). The upper-left, individual-interior quadrant refers to intangible personal experience and expressions, such as identity, thoughts, worldviews, memories, and states of mind. This quadrant relates to *sense-making* and *culture as process. Sense-making* refers to the process of taking tacit subjective knowledge and individual experience and making it accessible so that it can be integrated. We define a community of practice when educators are collectively and collaboratively working towards sense-making through deliberate ways to lift theory into an action then reflection. When knowledge is learned, without the opportunity to practice, the understanding can become theory centred (Senge et al., 2012; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). As an analogy, a teacher might be able to 'talk' about wellbeing but may not yet be able to 'walk' wellbeing in their practice. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) refer to this common phenomenon in their research as a knowing-doing gap.

Furthermore, when working in trauma-affected schools, teachers will encounter daily barriers, setbacks and mistakes that involve young people's livelihoods, making this vulnerable, complex and emotional work (Brunzell et al., 2016). A community of practice is predicated on having (1) a safe-to-fail place to practice interventions and engage in ongoing reflective and dialogical feedback, and (2) compassionate and empathetic support systems that enable genuine sharing, deep listening and emotional resonance (Baldwin & Linnea, 2010). Communities of practice can provide educators with a space to show up, speak the truth about their experience and inquire into how they might enhance their practice and move forward together (Wheatley, 2011).

Culture as process refers to the way in which underlying individual beliefs, values and assumptions influence how people understand their context, act and shape identity. Wheatley and Rogers (1999) suggest a living social system is changed from within by introducing information that contradicts old assumptions and by demonstrating that things people previously believed could not be done, are being accomplished elsewhere. As Barlow and Stone (2011, p. 4) suggest, leaders can do this by "inviting new people into conversation. By rearranging structures so that people relate in ways they're not used to. By presenting issues from different perspectives". Communities of practice create space for people to be heard, challenges to be explored, for people to take ownership and share responsibility for their concerns and contributions (Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

According to Meadows (2008), a system can temporarily feel unstable while undergoing disturbance and change, as the old beliefs are let go and the system reorganises itself with new interpretations and meaning, leading toward a renewed sense of resiliency. People shedding habits and assumptions could be thought of as building the pressure toward a tipping point where a new perspective or approach can emerge. Leaders must stay the course and continue to extend sincere invitations, ask compassionate questions, and have the courage to use process, rather than authority, to bring awareness-based change (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2014). It is challenging to quantify the internal shifts that occur through engaging communities of practice at every level of a school. Therefore, as a consistent practice, the narrative of personal, collective and systemic transformation can be captured to form the foundations of a whole school approach to change.

Limitations and Future Directions

The contribution of this paper is both a current review of the extant literatures in trauma-informed and systems-aware school leadership and the proposal of a new leadership framework to aid school leaders toward enacting approaches to whole school change. However, our theorising leading to the TIIL framework has not yet been tested nor applied within a systematic, empirical research design (to value both qualitative and quantitative ways of knowing). Given this, we acknowledge specifically the inherent limitations of our placement of concepts inside each one of the TIIL domains. Although we strived to create the TIIL framework through a careful theme reduction and our prior praxis, other researchers may come to different conclusions, and we welcome this dialogue within our community of fellow researchers and practitioners.

As the field deepens its inquiry around the pathways to integration of trauma-informed leadership and systems-aware leadership practices, questions for the future stand out:

(1) How do we build a compelling and useful evidence base to apply the TIIL framework and tell the story of the transition toward trauma-informed and systems-aware practice for school leadership?

(2) How does this work grow from engaged action research towards wider systemic change?

To better understand sustainable ways to embed TIIL principles across school systems we need to see the impacts of this novel framework over time. In particular, school leaders need opportunities to learn about polarities existing within the extant literature and the ways in which they can successfully navigate within these polarities to meet the contextual needs of their schools. We suspect that upon further development, the ideas introduced within this paper can give rise to future researchers and practitioners' own creation of strategic

interventions to introduce within schools as participatory action research project cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

Conclusion

This paper seeks to increase the capacities of school leaders both through trauma-informed practice and systems-aware practice by making the case for integration. Predicated on our systematic literature review and novel theorising, this paper explored how trauma impacts school systems and puts forward the new Trauma-Informed Integral Leadership (TIIL) framework to bolster school leaders to benefit whole communities. Our fervent aim is to instigate change towards a new praxis which enables school leaders to meet the complexities within their communities, respond to the impacts of systemic crises, and lead through ethics of community hope, resilience, compassion and care.

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