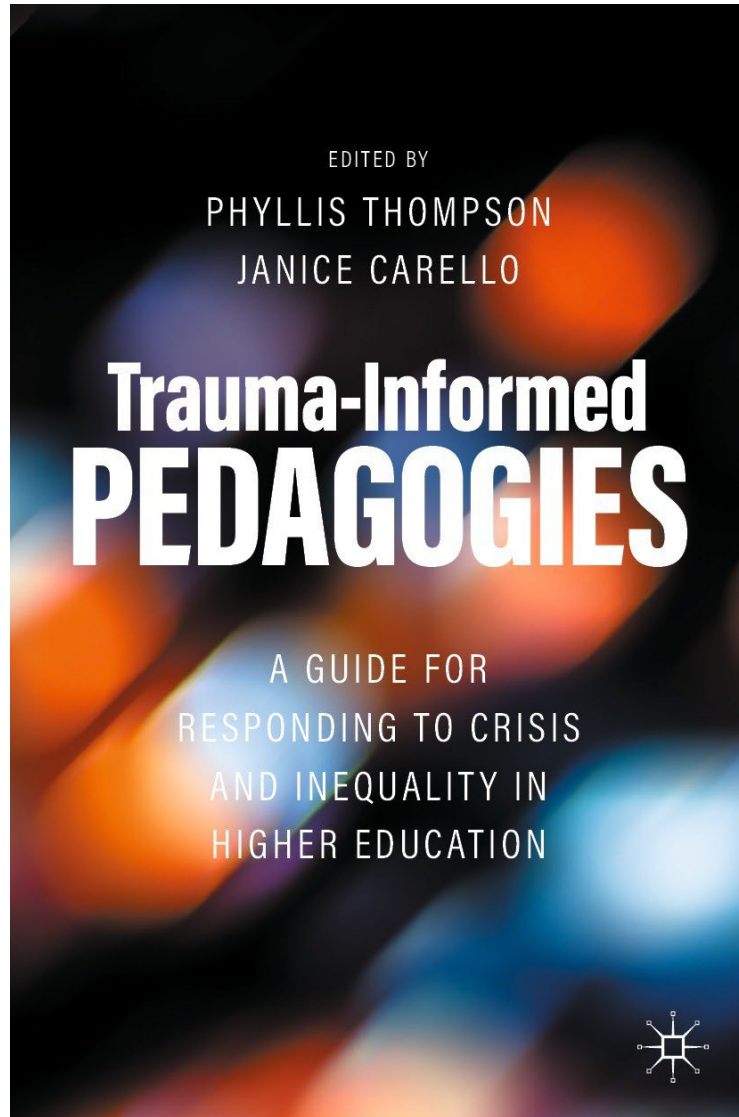


Not a Hero and Not a Stranger: Serving Veterans in Higher Education

JAY A. BRENEMAN, MSSA



Thompson, P., & Carello, J. (2022). *Trauma-informed pedagogies: A guide for responding to crisis and inequality in higher education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Book link: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-92705-9>

This book centers equity in the approach to trauma-informed practice and provides the first evidence-based guide to trauma-informed teaching and learning in higher education.

- I. Part I grounds the collection in an equity approach to trauma-informed care and illustrates one or more trauma-informed principles in practice.
- II. Part II describes trauma-informed approaches to teaching in specific disciplines.
- III. **Part III demonstrates trauma-informed approaches to teaching specific populations.**
- IV. Part IV focuses on instruments and strategies for assessment at the institutional, organizational, departmental, class, and employee levels.

A collection of examples of evidence-based and field-tested trauma-informed teaching tools and other resources are also included in the books' Back Matter which is available as a *free* pdf download: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bbm%3A978-3-030-92705-9%2F1>

Chapter 11

BRENEMAN, J.A. (2022). NOT A HERO AND NOT A STRANGER: SERVING VETERANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION. IN: THOMPSON, P., CARELLO, J. (EDS) TRAUMA-INFORMED PEDAGOGIES. PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, CHAM.

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1007/978-3-030-92705-9_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-92705-9_11)

SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

TRAUMA DEFINITION

Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and **responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization



What Makes a Veteran?

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Role of community

- Established being or belonging (a shared history)
- Prospective being or belonging (a shared future)
- Influenced by a person's ideal or self-orienting purpose
- Community defines, is defined, builds, unifies, and separates

Veterans: A Community of Identity in Transition

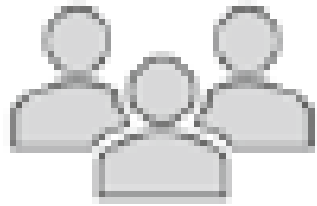
- The veteran community originates from some sort of a shared experience, beginning with one unifying experience of having served in the Armed Forces, and varying considerably thereafter by countless other experiences and demographic considerations
- This community shares one other common experience: that of transition and reintegration to a civilian society upon completion of their duty
- This transition experience can shape both the externalized and internalized identity and the well-being of the veteran
- Military veterans face many of the same barriers and traumas as other populations and non-traditional students
- Veterans may simultaneously encounter problematic—and even contradictory—societal expectations and stigma around perceptions of heroism and trauma

Modern Presence of Veterans in Higher Ed

- Veterans experience a loss or thinning out of their community capitals, as the experience of the veteran community is that of a diaspora.
- Where can a student veteran go to leverage the relationships, connections, and resources once all around them, other than to start again?
- Re-building of social and other capitals—or at least a bridging—necessitates an interactional relationship with the institutions that are at the forefront of the veteran's reintegration.
- All too often, however, they are met with transactional solutions, often in the form of benefit counseling.
- Veterans need more than a connection to resources: they and we as educators need a connection to one another and to recognize that reintegration is a shared journey



Broken



Peer



Hero



Between the Pit and the Pedestal:
Challenges to Community Integration



Principles for Change



Fostering an Environment of Mutuality and Belonging

CHALLENGE:

Overcoming identity conflict and marginalization from unfair and unrealistic portrayals (such as a broken hero), and past-oriented stereotypes.

APPROACH:

Develop a community which fosters veteran-civilian identity amalgamation, focusing more on similarities in present and future oriented interests through the physical and social environments.

- **Physical environment**—design spaces which do not segregate veterans or overemphasize symbology of militarism and armed conflict; keep memorial events separate from veteran-oriented events.
- **Social environment**—focus on interactional engagement, events, and programming which emphasize belonging and an openness, striving for exchanges informed by cultural humility.

Supporting Student Veterans in the Co-discovery of Their Future Selves

CHALLENGE:

Student veterans are often anchored in the past because of the social or physical environment on campus and maybe encouraged or feel obliged to stick to academic programs or social events that are aligned with their military experience; student veterans may find themselves unsatisfied with their field of study, or disinterested in the social activities, and thus alienated from the campus environment.

APPROACH:

Encourage and support student veterans in exploring broader educational and career options as well as social and cultural experiences, enabling a more holistic civilian-veteran identity transition that might not even be related to their military occupations, experiences, and expertise

Bridging Communities Beyond the Campus

CHALLENGE:

Student veterans experience a loss or thinning out of military community capitals as they reintegrate into civilian life; approaches to ameliorate this are largely transactional, consumer-oriented, or focus on referring student veterans to health or educational benefits, rather than meaningful interactional opportunities to build new capitals.

APPROACH:

Develop a purposeful exchange with student veterans that stresses community self-examination, exploration of social networks, social structure, modes and elements of community membership, and opportunities for community engagement. Think beyond veteran-only organizations, such as pathways to civic and board service, wellness and recreation, housing, and family-oriented opportunities.

Discussion

About the Author



Jay Breneman (he/him) joined the US Army after 9/11, serving two enlistments, and three tours overseas, including two deployments to Iraq.

He was honorably discharged at the rank of Staff Sergeant (E6) in 2009. Since then, he has earned his bachelor's and master's in social work specializing in macro practice, and is currently pursuing his doctorate, focused on racism and housing inequality.

Jay served in elected office for four years on Erie County Council where he created the county's Department of Veterans Affairs, having also served as veterans program manager at two area universities.

Jay teaches social work, political science, and policy courses, and he lives in Erie with his wife and their three children.

Email: jaybreneman@gmail.com