ACJS

Dear Restorative & Community Justice Section members;

I hope that 2023 served you well and that 2024 is going to be even better for you. 2023 was a good year for the section. We have noted the section's activities in the annual report, which you will see on pages 2-5 of this issue of The Dialogue. We have some exciting things planned for 2024, and hope that you will be a part of our activities. Let's start with the conference.

There are currently six restorative justice events scheduled in Chicago, four of which will be presented by section members or held by the section itself. You can find full details by going to the conference program at

(https://s5.goeshow.com/acjs/annual/2024/conference_program_sessions.cfm)

and searching for the program codes of each session. The annual section meeting (session code 368) is scheduled for Thursday @ 3:30 pm in the Lake Ontario room. The other events include a roundtable by section executive members on Doing Restorative Justice Right (session 312; Thursday, 12:30 pm); a presentation by member Rachel Cunliffe on Capacity building and a paper on RPs with youth (session 337), an analysis of RJ's impact on the school-to-prison pipeline (session 355); and an open workshop from section Executive Counselor Rebecca Sarver, two of our students, and me on Restorative conferences (session 387).

We're hoping to have an informal breakfast, lunch, or assorted food goodies available for section members at this year's conference. Come to the business meeting if you want to weigh in on how we can make that happen.

The 2024 quarterly member meetings will be held by Zoom on:

June 27, 2024, 6:00 – 7:30 pm
September 25, 2024, 6:00 – 7:30 pm
November 19, 2024, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Some of the meetings will be held as a short general membership meeting followed by a circle. By doing this, we are hoping to help members build a strong web of connection with each other and to help those interested in building their own circle keeper skills. We plan to host a general discussion where we will post a topic and then break attendees into smaller rooms where they can listen to others and speak their own perspective and experiences on the topic. The circles and symposiums will be open to anyone interested in attending. If you have a circle topic of interest for a circle, or if you'd like to sign up to be a "lead circle keeper" or a "keeper trainee," please reach out to me (jao@psu.edu) or to Tim Holler (thj67@pitt.edu) and let us know.

We also want to continue our section symposium's by offering up to two symposiums this year. If you are a speaker with a topic or project of interest to RJ followers, or if you know of a speaker who would be interested in offering a symposium, please let me or Tim know so we can reach out to discuss further details.

More to follow in Chicago. I hope to see you all there.

Jeremy Olson
Vice Chair/Interim Chair

Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
Restorative and Community Justice Section
Report to Members, December 2023

Executive Board

Chair
J. Renee Trombley, PhD, Metropolitan State University of Denver
890 Auraria Parkway
Denver, CO 80204
jtromble@msudenver.edu
Term Ends: 2025

Vice Chair
Jeremy Olson, PhD, Penn State Wilkes-Barre
44 University Drive
Dallas, PA 18612
jao5358@psu.edu
570.675.9255
Term Ends: 2025 – Assumes Chair Position

Executive Counselors (3)
Brandon Stroup, PhD, Vermont State University
Lyndon Campus
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Lyndonville, VT 05851
brandon.stroup@vermontstate.edu
Term Ends: 2026

Jessica Visnesky, M.A., Vermont State University
Lyndon Campus
1001 College Road
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Jessica.Visnesky@vermontstate.edu
800.225.1998
Term Ends: 2025

Rebecca Sarver, PhD, Penn State WilkeBarre
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Dallas, PA 18612
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Term Ends: 2025

Secretary (Appointed)
Tim Holler, PhD, University of Pitt-Greensburg
150 Finoli Drive
Greensburg, PA 15235
tjh67@pitt.edu
724.836.7151

Recognition of Service to the Section

John Wilt and Martha Hurley

The section would like to recognize, and thank our Editor of *Dialogue*, John Wilt. John does an amazing job at putting the section's work out into the world, and we appreciate you and your willingness to take on this role.

The section would also like to recognize Martha Hurley for her service to the section as an Executive Counselor. The section benefited greatly from your service and expertise, and we are deeply grateful for your efforts toward supporting our members, and in bettering our section.

Accomplishments

The Restorative & Community Justice Section continued to increase our presence throughout ACJS, and in the community, in a number of ways. We have made strides in engaging student members, providing outlets for our members to share their work, and in working with the other sections to increase our prominence within the larger organizational framework of ACJS.

In 2023, the section held a Symposium Series Event which were open to the public. A presentation about Circles of Accountability and Support (CoSAs) was offered by a practitioner, a volunteer, and an essential person. Students, academics, and practitioners from across the globe attended the events. The networking opportunities and

dialogue we generate in these events will hopefully carry over into collaborative efforts between section members, and function as a membership recruiting tool as well.

It has proven difficult to meet our goal of streamlining the conference process to save our members time and money. We were able to ensure that restorative & community justice panels, workshops, and roundtables, were not scheduled for the same times on any given conference day. Our goal was to, if possible, have all restorative and community justice-related events on one day during the annual conference. While we were not able to have all panels scheduled in one day, they were condensed to three consecutive days for 2024's conference. We will continue to work towards this goal.

Our social media presence continues to be a source of difficulty for the section and 2023 was no different. Though our student membership has increased recently, we still have not been able to secure a stable social media coordinator nor to establish a consistent social media presence. We will revisit hiring a social media coordinator for 2024.

Awards

The Executive Committee approved the creation of two section awards and continues to work toward defining the award criteria. They are separated by years of service to the section. The first is the RCJ Rising Star Award, for a new member who is most engaged in the section and who is establishing a reputation for work in restorative justice. The second is the Hal Pepinsky Lifetime Achievement Award, for a member who has provided multiple years of service and who has a firmly established national or international reputation in restorative justice. We will seek ACJS board approval when the award criteria and amounts are defined and agreed to within the section.

Plans for the Coming Year

- Continue to expand the reach of *Dialogue* by soliciting entries earlier and more frequently.
- Develop a more robust and streamlined conference plan for the section in 2025 that reduces the cost and time that members have to dedicate to the conference.
- Establish a partnership with NACRJ on various projects including the development of guidelines for restorative justice programs in higher education.
- We are continuing talks at the annual meeting regarding the development of a journal in partnership with ACJS. There continues to be a lack of dedicated restorative justice peer reviewed publishing outlets which are shared between, and accessible to, both practitioners and academics.

Vol. 9, No. 1

DIALOGUE

Winter 2024

**Restorative Justice Section
of the
Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences**

- **Important Dates for the Section - 2024**
    - March 18 - ACJS Conference Week - General Membership Meeting
    - Early May - Call for *Dialogue* submissions
        - TBD - Executive Board Meeting & General Membership Meeting - Virtual
    - August (TBD) - Executive Board Meeting - Virtual
    - Early September - Call for Proposals for Student Scholarships & Nominations for Section Awards
    - Early October - Call for Nominations for upcoming vacancies on Executive Board
    - October – General Membership Meeting

International RJ Conference

The Centre for Excellence in Criminal Law, ICFAI Law School, Hyderabad, in collaboration with the "Restorative Justice International," is organizing a Three-day International Conference on "Restoration and Reintegration of Victims and Families with Restorative Justice" in hybrid mode from 4th-6th April 2024. For this event, the knowledge partner is the "Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh."

We request your kind cooperation and solicit your participation. Kindly, share it with your colleagues, students, and friends for maximum outreach.

Centre for Excellence in Criminal Law, ICFAI Law School,

ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, Hyderabad

in Collaboration with

Restorative Justice International

Organises

Three Day International Conference

on

Restoration and Reintegration of Victims and Families with Restorative Justice

KNOWLEDGE PARTNER

04th - 6th April 2024

THE ICFAI FOUNDATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, Hyderabad, is a deemed to-be university established under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956 and accredited by the UGC NAAC with "A++" Grade. IFHE has evolved as a comprehensive student-centric learning approach consisting of several stages, designed to add significant value to the learner's understanding in an integrated manner, covering relevant knowledge, practical skills and positive attitude. IFHE offers Management, Engineering and Law Courses.

IFHE provides world class, innovative, career-oriented professional programs through inclusive technology-aided pedagogies to equip students with the requisite professional and life skills as well as social sensitivity and high sense of ethics. The university strives to create an intellectually stimulating environment for research, particularly into areas bearing on the socio-economic and cultural development of the state and the nation.

THE ICFAI LAW SCHOOL

The ICFAI Law School, IFHE, Hyderabad is a promising destination for the students desirous of making law as their dream "Career". The ICFAI Law School is a significant segment of the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, a deemed to be University, and its programs are recognized by Bar Council of India. The ICFAI Law School, Hyderabad offers BBA. LL.B. (Hons.) and B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) integrated five-year programs, LL.M. Program in ADR, Corporate and Commercial Laws, Criminal Law and Tax Laws, Ph.D. Program (full time and part time) and Ten Certificate Courses in different contemporary law subjects. ICFAI Law School had launched Six Centres: Centre of Excellence for Environment and Forest Laws, Centre of Excellence for Corporate and Commercial Law, Centre for Excellence in Intellectual Property Rights, Centre for Excellence on Cyber Law and Data Protection, Centre for Excellence in Criminal Law and Centre of Excellence for Management Studies.

It is ranked as 1st among the Best Promising Law School in India - Higher Education Review 2018 & 2019 and ranked 2nd among the Top Law Schools of Southern India by CSR. The School has been ranked 29th in the NIRF rankings of 2021 in the law category. The ICFAI Law School is a member of the International Association of Law Schools, USA. ICFAI Law School has collaborated with the School of Law, University of Pittsburg, Delaware Law School, Widener University, New Castle University, Australia, Asian Law Institute, Singapore.

THE CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN CRIMINAL LAW

The Centre for Excellence in Criminal Law was formed in January, 2020. The Centre for Excellence in Criminal Law forms the pedestal to create awareness about the forgotten issues concerning crime and criminal law. It is seeking to involve all stakeholders including professionals, academic and non-academic member and students to immerse them to undertake extensive research and allied activities for contributing towards various issues pertinent to the criminal justice system. It aims to provide a viable forum for discussion on the modern approaches to criminal law. The ultimate philosophy of the Centre remains promoting thoughts seeking to make the world a humanitarian place where crime prevention is the ultimate goal and offenders being tackled in a wise manner. The Centre strives to extend its philosophy both to the individual and institutional level as their involvement and insights will be pivotal towards the betterment of means of control mechanisms in our society.

Restorative Justice International

RJI is a national and global criminal justice reform association and network with over 7000 members and affiliates (to date) advocating for the expansion of victims-driven restorative justice. Victims-driven restorative justice is a new vision for systemic reform of our justice systems which puts the needs of crime victims first while stressing offender accountability. Restorative justice recognizes that crime is not a crime against the state but a crime against a victim, a real person. Restorative justice principles must guide all needed reforms of our criminal justice systems. Restorative justice is the ultimate response to nations that depend only on mass incarceration to address crime. Restorative justice starts with the premise that our criminal justice systems are broken. We need a new vision for reform of our system that benefits crime victims, transforms offenders and heals communities also injured by crime and violence. RJI is accessible at https://www.restorativejusticeinternational.com/

RJI's Global Advisory Council (GAC) is comprised of influential and esteemed global leaders in restorative justice, justice reform and human rights efforts. Meet the team here: https://www.restorativejusticeinternational.com/gac-team/

RJI's focus is to educate and advocate for restorative justice on the cutting edge. We know that every day robust changes are taking place in the field of restorative justice. RJI tracks those advances and shares them publicly. We highlight and showcase restorative justice leaders and organizations doing restorative justice in a robust manner through RJI's podcasts.

RJI has launched its hub project enabling affiliate GAC members to share their experiences in different areas of restorative justice. RJI presently works in the following areas:

- Death Penalty and Restorative Justice
- In-prison Restorative Justice
- Victim's Right to Restorative Justice
- Political Extremism and Restorative Justice
- Restorative Policing
- Sexual Violence, Sexual Offending, Sexual Assault & Restorative Justice
- Wrongful Convictions and Restorative Justice
- Environmental Justice & Restorative Justice
- Restorative Justice and Faith Communities
- Hate Speech, Hate Crime and Restorative Justice
- Legislation, Public Policy and Restorative Justice
- Youth Justice / Juvenile Justice

Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh

Registered under Societies Act, (XXI of) 1860,
Under the overall
control of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, India.

The Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh is a Society registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860 and was established under the overall administrative control of the Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi. The Institute receives a grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Home Affairs. All its affairs are being regulated by the Board of Management and thereafter its approval from the Government of India. The Board of Management is headed by Special Secretary/Additional Secretary Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. The Institute at Chandigarh started functioning from the year 1989. Since February 1999 the Institute has been functional from its campus.

Institute of Correctional Administration, Chandigarh imparts training in Correctional Administration and allied subjects; promotes and provides for the study of Correctional Administration; undertakes, organizes and facilitates training courses, conferences and lectures and research in matters relating to Correctional Administration. The Institute also conducts workshops, seminars and conferences on the issues of prison reforms and provides policy inputs to State governments and BPR&D, MHA, New Delhi.

The Institute imparts training to Prison Personnel from all over India as well as to Police Personnel of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and U.T., Chandigarh. The Institute since 2000 has conducted more than 647 training programmes, wherein more than 6,829 prison officers and 6,008 police officers of different ranks participated.

The Institute has been honoured by the visit of Hon'ble Judges of the High Court, Chairpersons of NHRC, PSHRC, and senior officers who have graced various training programmes as Chief Guests and Guest of Honour. The Institute invites distinguished speakers and experts. Eminent subject experts from Punjab University, Doctors from PGI / Govt. Medical College, Serving officers of Police and Prison Department, Advocates of Punjab, and Haryana High Court at Chandigarh and Eminent Trainers share their knowledge and experience with the trainees.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The conference on the 'Restoration and Reintegration of Victims and Families with Restorative Justice' serves as a crucial platform for professionals, scholars, and advocates to converge and explore innovative approaches to healing and rebuilding communities affected by harm. Restorative justice, at the core of this gathering, emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior and facilitating the reintegration of victims and their families into society. Participants engage in dynamic discussions, sharing insights into best practices, research findings, and case studies that highlight the transformative potential of restorative justice processes. The conference fosters collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including legal experts, social workers, psychologists, and community leaders, all dedicated to creating a more compassionate and inclusive justice system. Through this collective effort, the conference aims to contribute to the ongoing evolution of restorative justice principles and their application in promoting healing, understanding, and meaningful reconciliation for those affected by crime.

MODE OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference will be conducted in **hybrid mode**. Participants may opt to participate and attend the conference in person at ICFAI Law School Hyderabad or participate and attend online. The web platform will be notified in due course.

THEMES & SUB-THEMES OF THE CONFERENCE

1. Restorative Justice: A Holistic Approach

- Understanding the Principles of Restorative Justice
- Philosophical and Ethical Underpinnings of Restorative Justice
- Standards and Values of Restorative Justice
- Restorative Justice and Its Impact on Victims' Healing
- Restorative Justice in the Context of Human Rights

2. **Restoration of Victims and Families**

● Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services for Victims
● Access to Education and Vocational Training for Reintegration
● Ensuring Physical and Emotional Well-being of Victims
● Victim Healing through Restorative Justice
● Voice for Victims
● Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Livelihoods for Victims
● The Role of Family and Community in Victim Empowerment

3. **Restorative Justice: A Global Perspective**

● Comparative Analysis of Restorative Justice Models Worldwide
● Cultural variations in restorative justice
● Restorative Justice Movements
● Restorative Justice and Indigenous Communities
● Challenges and Opportunities for International Collaboration in Restorative   Justice Initiatives

4. **Legal Frameworks and Policy Innovations**

● Legal Mechanisms for Victim Protection and Support
● International Human Rights Standards and Restorative Justice
● Restorative Justice in National Legal Systems
● Challenges and Opportunities in Legislative Reforms
● Restorative Justice and Juvenile Justice Systems
● Right to Restorative Justice in our laws

5. Community Involvement and Empowerment

● Building Strong and Supportive Communities for Successful Reintegration
● Role of Communities in Reintegration
● Offender's Accountability and Transformation through Restorative Justice
● Restorative Justice and Social Cohesion
● Grassroots Initiatives for Victim Reintegration
● Restorative Practices in Schools and Educational Institutions

6. Restorative Justice in Diverse Contexts

● Restorative Justice in post-conflict situations
● Restorative Justice in the Digital Age: Challenges and Solutions
● Wrongful convictions and restorative justice
● Cultural Sensitivity in Restoration and Reintegration
● Gender Dynamics and Restorative Approaches
● Restorative Justice in Cases of Gender-Based Violence

Call for Papers

The conference invites original research articles on the above themes and sub themes from academicians, researchers and students in law and allied subjects, and also from criminal justice professionals, advocates, NGO practitioners.

An abstract of 300 words maximum should be submitted on or before **15th January 2024.** Acceptance of abstract will be communicated within 10 days of submission. After the acceptance of the abstract, the full paper should be submitted on or before 05th Mrach 2023. The abstract should be submitted through https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeeu21jB-SNQ9R1EeVBOCxBOVtCRGwr7AeFbzTb7fHEm7x5vQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

Submission Guidelines

- Submissions for paper presentation at the conference are to be mailed in the form of an abstract of 300 words and full research papers (Not more than 6000 words) with footnotes in bluebook 20th edition format.
- The Abstract has to be submitted via google form, link of same is https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeeu21jB-SNQ9R1EeVBOCxBOVtCRGwr7AeFbzTb7fHEm7x5vQ/viewform?usp=sf_link
- The research paper is to be typed in font Times New Roman with font size 12 and line spacing 1.5, headings to be typed in font size 14 Bold, and footnotes in font size 10.
- The abstract should be 300 words with a minimum of five (5) keywords and must be accompanied by a cover page consisting of the author's/co-author's details.
- The maximum of two co-authors are allowed.
- After acceptance of abstract the full paper has to be submitted via google form link which will be provided after acceptance
- Selected papers may be facilitated for publication with a reputed publisher.

Payment Details

For students and research scholars - INR 1000
For Academicians/Professionals - INR 2500
For any International academicians/ professionals - USD 50
For international students/research scholars - USD 30
Payment link - https://www.ifheindia.org/conference/RRVFRJ-April2024

Register here

Last date for Abstract submission: 15th Jan 2024
Intimation of Abstract acceptance: 25th Jan 2024
Last date for registration: 20th March 2024
Last date for full paper submission: 28th Feb 2024
Conference date: 4-6th April 2024

SAVE!
THE DATE

How To Reach

Hyderabad can be reached by different modes of travel- bus, flight, and train. The venue of the conference is one hour away from the Secundarabad Railway Station and 40 minutes away from Mehdipatnam Bus Stop and fifty minutes away from the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad. Cab services are also available to the conference Venue.

Location of the ICFAI Law School, Hyderabad in Google Map: https://maps.app.goo.gl/51ZRD88MZi2j3K1X6

Accommodation

The ICFAI Law School has arrangements with few hotels and accommodation will be arranged on request.

Tourist Attractions

Charminar

Golconda fort

Shilparamam

Ramoji Film City

Birla Mandhir

ORGANISERS

Conference Convenor

Prof. A.V. Narsimha Rao
Director, ICFAI Law School, IFHE,
Hyderabad

Conference Director

Dr. K.S. Rekhraj Jain
Coordinator, Centre for Excellence in
Criminal Law,
Associate Professor, ICFAI Law School,
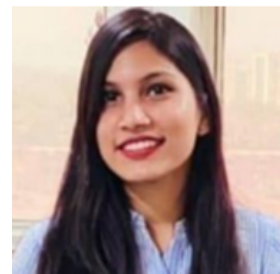**IFHE, Hyderabad, Mob - 09704093588**

Organising Committee

Ms. Anwesha Panigrahi,
Assistant Professor,
8763709315

Dr. Sumanta Meher,
Assistant Professor,
9563665770

Ms. Priyanka,
Assistant Professor,
7533049963

Student committee

Mr. P. M. Arun
Mr. Pranav Dubey
Ms. Yashika Dixit
Ms. Reethamshi K
Ms. Shreya Reddy

In case of any query we can be reached out at
cenexcrime@ifheindia.org

Launch into Restorative Justice Capacity Building
By Rachel Cunliffe

Cuts at my university with an incentivized "retirement" scheme enabled me to launch my nth career out of academia and into the field in June of 2022.

I explored the notion of capacity building for restorative justice at a ACJS conference several years ago. Based on that theory, I now work with folks who are justice involved, prior to sentencing, to help them reconcile with their criminalized actions, accept the harm they have done, develop an adequate account and apology, and imagine reparations and restitution appropriate and practical in their individual circumstances. Since my cases tend towards the very serious (sex crimes against minors, murder, vehicular homicide, aggravated robberies etc), there is no question of diversion. So my work runs adjacent to the criminal legal process. I contract with the state which pays me to do this work at the request of defense attorneys.

Lawyers tell me that clients who engage in their legal processes in good faith with realistic goals and humility about their life's course promote better outcomes for everyone. In rare cases, I may be invited to prepare people and then to facilitate dialogue between those harmed and those responsible. Due to the severity of the crimes, these dialogues will make no difference to the disposition of the cases, but they do support movement along paths of recovery for all parties.

Finally, people who are sentenced have a right to speak on their own behalf at sentencing. At this time, they may offer apologies and accountability statements which include explanations of their decisions, and assertions of their regrets and intentions. Observing the effect of these statements on people in the court; both the public and court workers, I believe that cogent, responsible statements humanize offenders and challenge the status quo. It is my hope that when these folk speak for themselves, they teach us what periods of incarceration should look like, and what our places of imprisonment should be designed to do – allowing us to imagine a very different – and less punitive – even, dare I say it, a more restorative future. If you are interested to learn more, I am presenting at ACJS this spring and will be around at the section meeting. I'd be delighted to tell you more. Or reach out to me at cunliffe@restorativejusticesolutions.org.

Rooted in justice: one Black woman's unique, intersectional educational leadership journey

Natasha N. Johnson

ABSTRACT

Historically, there remains an underrepresentation of Black women in and en route to the highest levels of organisational leadership. The divide is all the more pronounced in the field of education, one in which women represent a large share of the community. Particularly relevant for Black women is the incongruence between their heightened educational attainment levels compared to their lower status in the organisational pecking order. To advance both theory and research in this domain, social justice leadership theory (SJLT) serves as the framework for this paper, rooted in the context of the United States. This paper explores the multilayered journeys of Black women aspiring to and operating in senior-level leadership roles (i.e. executives, directors, and CEOs) in US-based education, highlighting the unique and intersectional experiences of one Black woman educational leader. Indeed, there is a need to increase collective consciousness about the impact of leadership cultures on Black women, their experiences, their personal and professional choices, and the ensuing ramifications. In addition, the education leadership sector can benefit from the advancement of more research and theory development relevant to the progression of Black women educational leaders in the United States.

Among other sectors, higher education has been at the forefront of the push for more inclusivity of women and racial minorities, especially in the context of leadership. Research tells us that a diverse leadership team is an asset for organisations that provoke constructive conflict integral to achieving better outcomes (e.g. less turnover and improved performance and attendance). Corpuz, Due, and Augoustinos (Citation2020) critically reviewed culture and gender in leadership literature from 2000 to 2020, finding an absence of culturally and linguistically diverse women in the leadership literature, information describing the obstacles they face, and illustrations highlighting how they view and manifest their roles. Previous leading studies, including one conducted by Watson, Kumar, and Michaelsen (Citation1993, 599), concluded that diverse leader groups 'became more effective on the task elements of identifying problem perspectives and generating solution alternatives' than did White homogenous groups. However, despite this popular discourse in education around disrupting these marginalising cultures (Gunnarsson Citation2017; Ladson-Billings Citation2023), barriers to educational leadership, reflecting the intersection of race, gender, and professional cadre, remain problematic.

Organisational cultures, policies, and processes tend to echo mainstream values, beliefs, and customs that often create or reinforce non-inclusive practices, adversely impacting employees not belonging to predominant institutional groups. Consequently, a guiding framework is needed to inform culturally responsible and sustainable protocols for recruiting, promoting, and retaining employees from historically ostracised groups (Fuller et al. Citation2021; Paris Citation2012; Showunmi Citation2020). This paper, therefore, makes a case for an intersectionality paradigm to critically explore power, privilege, and inequity issues in education and educational leadership.

Critical race feminist theory, a precursor to social justice leadership

Critical race feminist theory

Critical race feminist theory seeks to provide African-American women with sound knowledge of themselves, crucial for self-understanding and recognising their differences and shared experiences as a collective (Ngwainmbi Citation2012). Intertwined into critical race and feminist theories, a third element – power relations – is a core component in the ongoing dialogue around gender, race, and class and the role these elements play in the social sphere (Verjee Citation2012). More specifically, it involves the examination of the intersections of colonial oppression, identity, and development in the context of inequity and how these combinations converge in various settings (Delgado and Stefancic Citation2023). Researchers in this arena, myself included, contend that this involves Black women's right to define themselves, find their place, and assert their own rights.

The juxtaposition of critical race, coupled with feminist theory, examines the intersections of race, gender, and power, all embedded within America's political, legal, and socioeconomic systems. Numerous scholars concur that critical race feminism can – and should – serve as a framework to transform public policies, educational opportunities, leadership development, and, more importantly, the lives of women of colour (Horsford Citation2016; Pratt Citation2023; Citation2024). Specific to the Black female, class, gender, and race are intricately and undistinguishably interconnected. Thus, previous theories and studies focusing on subgroup homogeneity are lacking because they fail to address the varied differences among and within those subgroups (Chance Citation2021). Critical race feminist theory argues for the analysis of Black women's experience coping with the matrix of racism, classism, and sexism, understanding that race does not exist without class nor class without race or sex.

Through the continued development of critical race feminist theory, Black women – as a whole – have the potential to become more equipped to perceive and express who they are as an exclusive group. In a society that sees as powerful both Whiteness and maleness, Black women possess no characteristic associated with power (Brassel et al. Citation2020). As such, CRFT is a substantial step toward forming an empowered collective – a group that is prepared, able, and likely to understand, define, and determine who, what, and where they are and whom they wish to become (Ngwainmbi Citation2012). The juxtaposed tenets of CRT and FT are paramount to building the current framework (Crenshaw, Citation1989, Citation2013). Critical race feminism expounds upon these principles in the large-scale effort to bring forth an empirical voice that accurately reflects the needs and experiences of the Black female population (Horsford, James-Gallaway, and Smith Citation2021).

While there is a scarcity of extant works that speak directly to the lives and encounters of Black women, there is an even greater need for literature concerning the paths of Black women in and aspiring toward senior-level leadership positions. Further, Black women in educational leadership represent unique and complex experiences that have been underexplored for far too long. Given its androcentric nature, CRT alone does not encompass aspects pertinent to womanhood. That is, CRT has historically and overwhelmingly emphasised the experiences specific to the Black male. On the other hand, while grounded in Gynocentrism, the origins of FT do not always

speak to matters regarding race and racial differences. Put another way, the FT frame overwhelmingly reflects the voices and perspectives of White women. The notions that CRT is 'male' and FT is 'White' justify critical race feminist theory as the theoretical foundation of this paper. Critical race feminism, then, indubitably speaks to the challenges and successes experienced by Black women in and through their work as educational leaders.

The belief that education is a 'great equalizer' for upward mobility and acceptance within society (Marcucci and Elmesky Citation2016) remains a feature for Black women pursuing roles in education, leadership, and educational leadership. Therefore, examining the interactions between gender, race, context, and occupational level coalesced with identity and perceptions of identity within education is necessary. These elements are intertwined to develop and advance a framework that better encapsulates the complex, multifaceted experiences unique to Black women in the United States of America. Given that every day, women successfully carve their leadership paths despite all odds, I emphasise the responsibility of all connected stakeholders, especially educational leaders, in deliberately upholding the tenets of equity and social justice on behalf of all constituency members.

Critical race feminist theory

No one label will ever serve as a 'blanket for all.' The constructs 'race' and 'gender,' for example, in no way account for the many entrenched interconnections that subsist within and between groups (McCall Citation2017). All homogeneous grouping is, at best, limiting and overreaching. Critical race feminism responds by fusing two unidimensional constructs (CRT and FT) into one (CRFT). This step aims to utilise extant literature to highlight the factors relevant to Black women, intersectionality, and the interconnection of multiple identities. Moreover, as representatives of educational equity and attainment, this paper explores the experiences, perceptions, and implications, all relevantly and directly connected to the paths of Black women and those aspiring towards educational leadership positions.

The trifecta that is equity, diversity, and intersectionality remains under-resolved in the ongoing effort to increase representation, especially in the realm of leadership, of groups that are reflective of all the members of the general population (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis Citation2010; Tang and Wang Citation2023). Again, critical race theory is androcentric, as it speaks on behalf of the Black race as a whole entity, irrespective of gender. Feminist theory (FT), on the other hand, is gynocentric. It expresses gender-specific matters and concerns whole-scale, irrespective of race and ethnicity. Each of these frames independently overlooks the intersecting impacts of race, coupled with gender, on the lives, journeys, and experiences of Black women.

Therefore, the mounting need has emerged to characterise and represent the perspective of Black women in a myriad of capacities within the societal, educational, and organisational realms. This need is only further exacerbated as Black women aspire and advance toward leadership positions. Studies of this nature provide rich contexts illuminating the human condition pertinent to leadership. Yet, unfortunately, insights about the leadership experience of people of colour from context-rich research within education, communications, and Black studies remain marginal in the field. For this reason, the ensuing frames – critical race feminism and its connection to Black women and social justice leadership theory – serve as the crux of this piece.

Intersectionality and social justice leadership

No one label will ever serve as a 'blanket for all.' The constructs 'race' and 'gender,' for example, in no way acIntersectionality is the idea that we live our lives not just as gendered people but also as racialized, classed, able-bodied, or otherwise. By emphasising multiple and simultaneous dimensions of social inequality – most commonly gender, race, class, and sexuality – intersectionality reveals the unique experiences of individuals who occupy multiple marginalised social categories. This perspective exposes how socially constructed identities, such as race and gender, interlock and intertwine to render unique experiences in various contexts (Sales, Galloway Burke, and Cannonier Citation2020). However, this frame's guiding principles have not fully taken hold in policy and practice, as Black women continue to lack full-scale representation at the highest levels of educational leadership (Fuller et al. Citation2021; Johnson Citation2021).

While this underrepresentation ultimately reflects the broader effects of institutional racism and sexism, conceptual and analytical shortcomings of prior research have not helped matters. Most prominently, higher education researchers have historically treated race and gender as mutually exclusive constructs. By doing so, studies have, unfortunately, ignored how the intersection of these constructs renders unique consequences for those facing double marginalisation like Black women or double privilege for White men (Bridges Citation2019; George, Milli, and Tripp Citation2022; Logan and Dudley Citation2021). They thereby restrict our ability to develop evidence-based frameworks designed to improve equity in education, recruitment, development, advancement, and retention (Thomas Citation2023).

Black women, intersectionality, and social justice leadership

These realities and the compounded effects of the patriarchal and racialized structures in the USS are why I specifically focus on Black women. I take this approach because research reveals that Black women's intersectional identities present unique personal and professional barriers (Collins Citation1990; Citation2004; Collins and Bilge Citation2016; Citation2020). Studying the experiences of this group can illustrate the importance of considering the nuanced complexities of race and gender and how identifying and examining these factors can dually advance science and practice. For example, these women have also taken up space in the modern workforce and are leading the pack in growth rates in educational attainment (Maylor et al. Citation2021). Illustrating the complexities of their lived experiences, Black women have made gains in these areas despite a considerable share of single-handedly managing households. This quandary is owed largely to mass incarceration and other social policies in the USS that separate far too many Black men from their families (Western and Wildeman Citation2009). Additionally, although Black women in the USS have achieved higher levels of education in recent years than any other race-gender group (Bartman Citation2015; Gunnarsson Citation2017; Johnson Citation2021), they represent the group most likely to be strapped by student loans (Jackson, Colson-Fearon, and Versey Citation 2022).

Nonetheless, they have yet to attain equal access, pay, and leadership opportunities across industries (e.g. Galea and Abdalla Citation2020; Hegewisch and Mefferd Citation2022; National Committee on Pay Equity Citation2020). These gaps are even more salient when looking at the leadership profile of organisations. For instance, Black women comprise eight percent of the personnel in the private sector and less than two percent of all leadership roles (Cohen and Huffman Citation2007; Mattis Citation2004). These statistics become starker when concentrating on institutions of higher learning (Alexander Citation2010; Davis, Reynolds, and Bertrand Jones Citation2011; Jean-Marie Citation2008; McConner Citation2014). Adding to this, predominant cultural forces impacting Black women's experiences in the workplace often prevent them from feeling like they truly belong and receiving the pay they deserve. For example, Melva LaJoy Legrand, founder and CEO of a national event planning firm, revealed that she felt she had to 'shrink' herself throughout her career. She noted, 'I was told to straighten my hair, to speak "White," to be more feminine, to be assertive but not too aggressive' – experiences unique to Black women (Corbett Citation2021, 2).

These assertions around inclusivity have important implications for strategies promoting diversity and equity in the workplace. Moreover, this and other related discourse around pay and opportunity equity involves much more than simply 'talking' about gender, all while ignoring race and class (Jordan-Zachery and Wilson Citation2014). Numerous scholars in this arena assert that relevant conversations among academics include confronting the dangers of attempting to separate that which is 'inseparable' (Ghavami and Peplau Citation2013; Pullen and Vachhani Citation2018; Travis Citation2016; Zerai Citation2000). In light of this, how, then, can the matter of equity and intersectionality be responsibly addressed and applied within the context of educational leadership?

This question serves as the impetus for this article, considering the historical underrepresentation of Black women in and en route to the highest levels of organisational leadership. The divide is all the more pronounced in the field of education, one in which women represent a large share of the community. Particularly relevant for Black women is the incongruence between their heightened educational attainment levels compared to their lower status in the organisational pecking order (Ijames Citation2022). This paper explores the multilayered journeys of Black women aspiring to and operating in senior-level leadership roles (i.e. executives, directors, and CEOs) in US-based education, highlighting the unique and intersectional experiences of one Black woman educational leader.

Rooted in justice: one Black woman's unique, intersectional educational leadership journey

This paper examined the intersecting identities and relived experiences of one Black woman educational leader. Dr. EnniaFootnote1 was purposively selected because of her position as a veteran (i.e. Instructional Leader, Founding Principal, Doctor of Education, Graduate Program Director, and Faculty Member, to name a few) within the US educational sphere.

Interview method: data collection

I employed the interview method, as it is widely used for collecting data in various education and social science research disciplines. The interview method allows researchers to gain in-depth information, insights, and experiences from respondents, which can provide a valuable understanding of social realities. Thoughtfully enacted interviews can generate unique leverage for describing and explaining complex phenomena in international relations research (Broache Citation2022). Pertinent to qualitative research, in-depth interviews are particularly beneficial for collecting detailed information and have widespread acceptance and popularity as a data collection method (Golam Azam Citation2022). Interviews also offer the opportunity to directly engage with personal data, allowing participants to interact with their data in real-time and providing researchers with valuable insights regarding a particular phenomenon (Hussein Citation2022; Moore et al. Citation2021). However, interviews are subjective and often time-consuming, reinforcing the importance of researcher caution regarding bias and confidentiality matters when conducting interviews (Krämer et al. Citation2021).

Participant selection and guiding questions

Dr. Ennia was purposively selected based on her status, rank, and position as a longstanding justice-centered educator and leader. When presented with the prospect of spotlighting her unique, intersectional educational leadership journey, she was immediately and positively responsive to being included in the furtherance of this work. Given her now almost three decades as an educator and leader, I was particularly interested in her unique insights and perspective, with the following five guiding questions framing this study:

What factors do you believe can, should, and do contribute to the number of Black women in educational leadership?

What challenges do you believe Black women aspiring to careers as educational leaders face?

What strategies for success have been shared with you along the way?

What advice and strategies for success do you have for Black women aspiring towards careers in educational leadership?

What concluding remarks do you have for those seeking to more fully capture the experiences of Black women serving in and aspiring towards careers in educational leadership?

In the sections below, I unpack the five guiding questions that were asked and the insights that emerged as a result of our progressive conversations.

Results
Rq #1: factors contributing to the advancement of Black women in education leadership

When asked, What factors do you believe can, should, and do contribute to the number of Black women in educational leadership?, Dr. Ennia reflected on her transition from K-12 administration to academia and said:

My experience has been I felt like I had more opportunities in K-12 than I have in academia. I feel like academia, you know, I'm a staff member with a doctorate and experience. Right? But I feel like there's not a lot of opportunity. You know, I've interviewed … I wasn't offered the position to be a professor, assistant professor. You know, academia is very White. It's different. I just feel like there are a lot more barriers and restrictions – or less opportunity for Black women in academia than there are in K-12.

Reflecting further, she then said:
I feel there's not a lot of opportunity, or I haven't been getting the success that I want from different types of opportunities in higher education. I was like, well, maybe I should just go back in a district and start as an assistant principal and work my way up again. Because I feel like that would be easier if that's what I really wanted to do. It's not really what I want to do. I really want to teach at the higher education level. I started out as an adjunct … and they've been giving me opportunities, so I've been enjoying that … but I really would like to research. I miss the research.

Based on Dr. Ennia's experiences, she posits that there are more explicit paths to advancement in P-12 and more apparent barriers in higher education regarding promotion and advancement. Black women, she says, are consistently seeking a roadmap. This sentiment is evidenced by the fact that Dr. Ennia was willing to consider leaving academia to assume the position of assistant principal to regain admission and advancement in the world of P-12 education.

In alignment with RQ1, Factors Contributing to the Advancement of Black Women in Education Leadership, Dr. Ennia pointed to the fact that while there is – and continues to be – much diversity in the student body, this, unfortunately, is not the case once those who enter academia begin moving up the ranks. This same point is underscored in other relevant research on the extant gaps that remain between men and women in the workforce (Rose and Hartmann Citation2018), in the academy (Slay Citation2023), and in academic leadership (Johnson Citation2023).

Rq #2: challenges facing Black women in and en route to education leadership

In response to the question, What challenges do you believe Black women aspiring to careers as educational leaders face?, Dr. Ennia replied with the following example:

Our new district contact is a Black woman. [A] former principal who's now been given responsibility over leadership development, our work with principals with this district. Well, our consultant is having problems taking directives from this Black woman, and it has become a major problem … because she's all in her White fragility. I mean, it's that kind of stuff; I'm just like, you know what? I don't really have time for this, but because of the dynamics, and because you know, she's kind of been given reign of things because she's good friends with [a higher-up], it's just, it's race related.

Doubling down, she continued:
It's a race issue. It is. There's no way to sugarcoat it because she had no problems taking directives or input when the person who was over before was a White woman friend of hers. So it's just, it's interesting to watch, and I'm not on the teaching side … I run the [program], but it's just, it's interesting to watch the dynamics of so many different things. It's just, it's interesting.

Moreover, Dr. Ennia expressed that as much as she desires to continue advancing in her current sphere, problems remain in how they 'treat Black people, Black women.' She said, 'Why would I subject myself to that? I'm not, not gonna be your token Black, cause that's what it is. I didn't want to be the token Black'.
Aligned with Dr. Ennia's sentiments, RQ2, Challenges Facing Black Women in and en route to Education Leadership, is supported by extant research on the racial stereotypes Black women educational leaders face (Aaron Citation2020). Further considerations include Black women educational leaders' complex, intersectional, racialized, and gendered experiences (Peters and Miles Nash Citation2021). In addition, it is important to note how challenges and adverse experiences influence the leadership development of Black women in senior-level educational leadership positions (Chance Citation2021).

Rq #3: strategies for success for Black women on the path to educational leadership

I asked Dr. Ennia, What strategies for success have been shared with you along the way?, and she emphasised the importance of aligning with the right mentor:

It's hard to live, you know? I mean, the struggle, I think it's just a different type of struggle, and I guess I'm at the point now; honestly, there are struggles everywhere, challenges everywhere we go as leaders. You know, I really believe in the proverb, 'To whom much is given, much is required.' I kind of feel like if I'm going to struggle, I'd rather be struggling for some students. I've had the conversation with [my mentor] because she's in a professor role, and she has stayed. I really believe she has stayed because of students like us [who] needed [her]. I can't imagine having gone through [my doctoral] program. I may not have gotten through that program if I didn't have [her].

Extending her train of thought, she added,

I had other professors making underhanded comments to me, like, 'Are you going to graduate on time?' You're supposed to be my [professor]. They weren't really trying to support me. Honestly, I felt like they didn't want me to graduate on time, but I had [this mentor]. Thankfully, … she was very supportive … because their support's not there. It's not. …

Thinking about her own strategies for success as she embarked on her leadership journey, Dr. Ennia concluded, 'I define success – or one way I define success – is winning. You know, achieving your goal; and so, with that definition, I've had a lot of success'.

The ability to define, create, and establish one's successes is supported by the work of Johnson and Thomas (Citation2012). The authors point to 'persisting challenges of inequity in higher education [that] often position Black women as outsiders within their academic environments' (Johnson and Thomas Citation2012, 156). As a result, say the authors, Black women's leadership styles remain unexplored in human resource development. Thus, 'being at the margins domestically or internationally, likely means that Black women everywhere engage in strategies in order to achieve power, identity, and voice' (156). Similarly, and connected to RQ3, Strategies for Success for Black Women on the Path to Educational Leadership, Grant (Citation2012) asserts that future research should 'more closely examine the importance of mentoring relationships for African-American women to better understand the ways in which specific emotional support and career development mentoring contribute to successful job outcomes for those aspiring to the professoriate in educational leadership' (114).

Rq #4: strategies for success for Black women in educational leadership

Considering Dr. Ennia's tenure as an educational leader, I then asked, What advice and strategies for success do you have for Black women aspiring towards careers in educational leadership? She thought about her time as a K-20 leader and answered,

When students go to class, how many Black professors do they see? The people of color are not Black; you know what I mean. The majority of people that they would encounter that are people of color are not Black. Not African-American, nor Black-American, you know? So, I think that subliminally sends the message that there are no opportunities for them in education.

Highlighting the importance of support in this regard, she continued:

I wasn't given [a particular] opportunity because there was no support from the department. But I know now, from working here and being in faculty meetings enough, there would have been money to support me for that, but it wasn't a priority. But then I sit in these same faculty meetings where they talk about, 'We can't find people of color who are strong.' Well, you're not [supporting] programs for minorities, you know, graduate students, you're not supporting that? It's like you want to tout that a program is majority-minority, but programs or initiatives for minorities you don't support. Right? Okay. Sure.

In response, according to Dr. Ennia, 'For those who don't practice the same release that I have, I say, you need a strong support team, village, you know? However you identify them.'

Relatedly, Townsend (Citation2021) speaks to identity politics and the need to address the absence of black women in administrative leadership. Townsend (Citation2021) contends that 'giving voice to African American women can be done through a review of hiring practices, parity in promotion, time considerations in support of non-mandated mentoring of students of coloru, and funding for professional development and mentoring experiences' (596). In this context, RQ4, Strategies for Success for Black Women in Educational Leadership, emphasises occupancy within senior-level leadership spaces. After the journey to securing an educational leader (theme #3), theme #4 is specific to the lasting power required to stay in one's role, maintain a high standard of excellence, and remain relevant, all while still having the capacity to prepare and pour into the lives of current and burgeoning leaders (Davis, Reynolds, and Bertrand Jones Citation2011).

Rq #5: capturing the experiences of Black women serving in and aspiring towards careers in educational leadership

In summative fashion, I asked Dr. Ennia this final question (RQ5): What concluding remarks do you have for those seeking to more fully capture the experiences of Black women serving in and aspiring towards careers in educational leadership? Her immediate response was,

I'd just say, remember who you are. Remember who you are and whose you are. Those would be my final comments. Cause that's something my mom would always say to me. When I would share different situations with her, she would just say remember who you are and remember whose you are. And those things have really helped, you know, not by any means to say that I'm perfect and have always got it right. But there have been times I've had to just say, 'This is not me. This does not reflect me; this is not who I want to be' … and I have to make that expressly clear to the people that I work with and work for … and if our views don't align, then it's time for me to do something different, you know? I'm not going to do things that I don't feel are the right thing to do.

Going further, Dr. Ennia then said,

It [self-care] is so important. What I've learned is people will let you run yourself into the ground, especially when it makes them look good … so learning how to set healthy boundaries is so important. That's definitely another piece of advice, and being comfortable with saying 'no.' And I think that falls under healthy boundaries … at different times, I actually used to practice … saying no, I'm not gonna do that. … saying no with a smile so that when I kept getting asked, I'd say, 'No, I'm not going to be able to do that.' … I could be pleasant, and then they'll walk off like, 'Did she just tell me no?' I did. Yup, for my own well-being because there's that (Maya Angelou) quote … that we teach people how to treat us, and I've learned that is so true personally, professionally.

'I think one of the things that I've learned that just amazes me,' said Dr. Ennia, 'is the conversations that I have with grown people in the same way I talk to grown people; that's how I used to talk to my students in my classroom.' Still, she affirms that even in the most difficult – or downright egregious – circumstances, particularly when facing any authority-related pushback, remember what is and is not within your control. At the end of the day, 'maybe the person shouldn't have responded that way, and I can't control their response … they're a professional adult just like I'm a professional adult'.

Discussion

As highlighted here, Dr. Ennia's lived experience is resonant. Her story represents a collective experience, one that is unique and intersectional, one that undoubtedly resonates with other women educational leaders across continents and contexts. Connectedly, Fuller et al. (Citation2021) documented the collective experiences of a heterogeneous group of women leaders in education, accounting for the similarities and differences among these women and their leadership stories. Nevertheless, there was much collectivity among their stories, including 'accounts of challenges faced and overcome; of resistance enacted and agency exercised against the backdrop of institutional, systemic and societal misogyny and racism. Importantly, there are accounts of abundance in their cultural and leadership capital' (421).

The discourse regarding capital is particularly relevant to and for Black women, considering the incongruence between their heightened levels of educational attainment (Corbett Citation2021) compared to their current status within the organisational leadership sphere (Cohen and Huffman Citation2007; Sanchez-Hucles and Davis Citation2010). The path to leadership is even more complex and nuanced. For example, Showunmi (Citation2020) found that different from White women leaders – who also experienced challenges due primarily to matters of gender or class,

The challenges were considerably more numerous and severe among Black women leaders – many of whom felt they had encountered racial prejudice and discrimination at work, which hampered their progress as leaders. They felt that the general organizational culture of their employers was not friendly to Black women in leadership positions, such that the large majority of them saw the need to abandon their own culture and assume the dominant culture of their organization (Showunmi Citation2020, 58).

For reasons such as these, Dr. Ennia reminds us of the importance of remembering – and never straying away from – who we are and the path that led us here in the first place.

This awareness of self is significant, given the connection between memory and self and the multisensory experience of remembering, rooted in a first-hand experience (Simons, Ritchey, and Fernyhough Citation2022). Dr. Ennia graciously gave us a vicarious look into her multilayered educational leadership journey. Her story underlines the need to increase collective consciousness about the impact of leadership cultures on Black women, their experiences, personal and professional choices, and all ensuing ramifications.

Conclusion
How to best support Black women leaders: the role of support networks

As Black women increasingly seek leadership roles in education, assert Grillo et al. (Citation2022), 'it is critical that efforts to prepare, develop, and support them, as well as to evaluate their performance, consider the ways in which they lead as cultural markers and essential aspects of their leadership identity' (48). More, 'observing the specific ways in which Black women lead expands and deepens our current understanding of leadership as a collection of relational experiences between leaders and followers' (48). Thus, by highlighting the unique journeys of Black women in and en route to educational leadership via Dr. Ennia's story, I 'champion justice' (Balven et al. Citation2018; Cowan Citation2016; Jessie Citation2020). In this way, I seek to offer fresh insight into how social justice leadership theory and intersectionality theory can respond to the needs of Black women in and en route to senior-level leadership roles in education. Though not exhaustive, these frames are primed to speak to Black women educational leaders' distinctive 'double whammy' experiences (see George, Milli, and Tripp Citation2022; Logan and Dudley Citation2021; Smith-Woofter Citation2021). On a larger scale, they are potential gateways to inform policy through conceptual 'bridging' (connecting research to practice) and reconciliation (creating safe, equitable, and inclusive spaces). Together, the best way to support Black women leaders across all spectra is by being allies and uplifting their voices, journeys, and lived experiences.

In sum …

As we advance, says Dr. Ennia, 'the journey continues. I'm excited … I'm trying to focus on doing the best work while I'm here … and I'm excited about whatever the future holds.' In this same vein, and following the tradition of critical scholars in this arena, a goal of this paper is to 'end some of the abstract debates about what intersectionality can and cannot do and encourage more scholars to push the theoretical boundaries of intersectionality rather than disciplining and policing them' (Carbado Citation2013, 841). For example, the ability – and need – to be resilient remains a common, interwoven theme among Black women leaders (Ijames Citation2022; Weatherspoon-Robinson Citation2013). This is an area that is undoubtedly worthy of further investigation. While more work is needed to advance intersectionality in educational leadership, this piece seeks to critically review and distill available knowledge on existing conceptualizations and assessments of the effects of race, gender, and other identities in educational leadership literature.

I reason that greater empirical attention must be paid to intersectionality to better craft policies and practices to foster more equitable cultures, as this is a matter of justice. The journeys of Black women in and en route to educational leadership positions are unique, multiplicative, and relevant in all equity, leadership, and justice-based contexts (Johnson and Fournillier Citation2021; Citation2022; Thomas Citation2023). In addition, the education leadership sector can benefit from the advancement of more research and theory development relevant to the progression of Black women educational leaders in the United States of America.

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Disclosure statement

Additional information
Notes on contributors

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Dr. Natasha N. Johnson is a Clinical Instructor of Criminal Justice and Criminology in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. A career educator since 2001, her research focuses on critical theory, equity, and social justice leadership, particularly within the K-20 sector. Her other research areas include intersectionality, educational law, policy, and governance, and curriculum development. Dr. Johnson holds multi-state reciprocity and has previously worked as a teacher, guidance counselor, assistant dean, instructional leader, and curriculum developer domestically and abroad. She is a David L. Clark scholar, a CET-LOE Faculty Teaching Fellow, and her work is published in JSTOR, SAGE, the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Taylor & Francis, the Routledge Focus series, Psychology of Violence, the popular press, and several highly acclaimed educational leadership journals.

Notes

1 The study participant's name was replaced with a pseudonym to protect her identity and anonymity.

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Expanding Restorative Justice Education:
Vermont State University Faculty Announce New Restorative Justice Degree

Brandon Stroup, Vermont State University – Lyndon
Jessica Visnesky, Vermont State University – Lyndon

With much gratitude and excitement, criminal justice and restorative justice faculty at Vermont State University share the news of their upcoming Bachelor of Science in Restorative Justice degree. The creation of this degree program was supported by a $500,000 state appropriation to VTSU during the fiscal year 2023. The degree proposal was officially approved by the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees in January 2024 and will begin being offered to students in fall 2024.

Previously, VTSU students interested in restorative justice credentials were required to major in criminal justice with a restorative justice concentration. In our views, a criminal-legal academic silo for restorative justice studies has not reflected the expansive realities of the restorative justice paradigm and the diverse settings in which people engage in restorative justice practice. While we have much appreciation for the potential of introducing restorative justice to undergraduates through a criminal justice curriculum, this model can also be conceptualized as constraining. For example, we struggled to formally add coursework covering restorative justice in education settings when confined to the criminal justice course designator. Our students have had difficulty in gaining internship placements in school-based settings under the status of "criminal justice internship." These are just a few of the challenges we experienced while trying to expand restorative justice education and student opportunities within a criminal justice degree program. In advocating for and designing the curriculum, we utilized our own research of restorative practitioners' perceptions towards competencies and curricular items that would benefit future restorative practitioners. We also utilized our research on restorative practitioner job postings for the Northeast region, examining employer requirements for new hires. While this research is still being prepared for publication, it was extremely beneficial for contextualizing restorative justice within our proposals to university leadership. We built upon our previous concentration curriculum which included coursework on restorative facilitation, peacemaking criminology, and trauma, resilience, and restorative justice. While the restorative justice curriculum is currently going through the governance process, we have proposed coursework in circle processes, principles of restorative justice, restorative justice in schools, and several other restorative justice electives. A hallmark of this curriculum is an emphasis on experiential and practice-based coursework. Through "learning lab" courses, students will gain additional exposure to restorative processes and engage in mock restorative processes.

We look forward to being present with the next generation of restorative justice students as we collectively work towards building a more restorative future.

Chapter 4
Faculty Vulnerability:
A Restorative Experiential Learning Activity for Academically–Disengaged College Students

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ABSTRACT

Academically disengaged college students are often judged as detached, alienated, and uncommitted to the rigors of learning. While these assumptions are sometimes true, academic disengagement is a multi-faceted phenomenon consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. A restorative approach to disengagement requires faculty to demonstrate vulnerability in telling their own stories of success and failure to foster learning and change of behavior. This chapter is a case study outlining the steps of a restorative experiential learning activity conducted in a criminal justice course in response to 71% of students failing an examination. Using scholarly personal narrative methodology and a qualitative content analysis of open-ended questionnaires from students, this chapter focuses on the need for faculty to be vulnerable to connect and build trusting relationships with students as both prevention and intervention to academic disengagement.

INTRODUCTION

Vulnerability is my superpower! Through trial and error, I, Dr. Cottrell, have learned that the way in which I develop student learners in a relational context has a greater positive influence on their learning and development than my course curriculum (Adamsom, 2020). Brene Brown (2012), a shame and vulnerability researcher, defines vulnerability as "uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure" (p. 34). My decision to be vulnerable with my students stems from nine months of clashing with disengaged students, complaints to my Chair and Dean that I was "too hard," and crying in my office because I was tired of fighting with students and administrators. I even prayed to God to just give me the students that wanted to learn. To no avail, as I was approaching the end of my first year as an assistant professor in the Spring of 2018, I was desperate to leave academia. However, submitting to my mentor's wise counsel, I declined an offer for a government position and returned to the University the following year motivated to change my approach to teaching. In desperation to increase student interest and ownership of learning, I embraced vulnerability.

Academic disengagement has generally been viewed as a character flaw, seeing the student as the problem (Chipchase et al., 2017; Trout, 1997). However, based on decades of disengagement research, it is clear that a wide range of factors, both intrinsic (low motivation, psychological distress, inadequate preparation for college) and extrinsic (financial instability, institutional structures and processes, academic staff issues), influence student detachment and disconnection in the academic rigors of higher education. According to Brown (2012), a solution to connect with disengaged students is to take risks and cultivate change and trust by engaging in vulnerability. In fact, Brown argues that the absence of taking risks and trying new things is disengagement. This means that if faculty are not sharing personal stories, experiences, and ideas with student learners, they are missing opportunities to support academic achievement.

Embracing vulnerability emerged for me out of dire need to connect with my students because my efforts to restructure lectures and assignments were not improving overall exam grades as I had hoped. My moment to take a big risk of sacrificing my legitimacy as a university faculty member came in the Spring of 2020 when 71% of students enrolled in a criminal justice course failed the first exam despite my efforts to prepare them well. As a Black woman faculty member with a doctorate degree and teaching predominantly Black students from underserved communities, I realized that it was important for me to share my story of academic failure and success in college. This is supported by Black feminist scholars who acknowledge the courage necessary for transparency in the classroom and the rewards of more meaningful relationships, deeper understanding, and application of theories and concepts by students (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1989; Page, 2020).

The restorative approach to student academic disengagement is to view every instance of wrongdoing or conflict (i.e. missed class, failed exam, complaints about course workloads) as an opportunity for learning (Wachtel and McCold, 2000). Restorative justice is a subset of restorative practices (Watchel, 2016). "Restorative justice is reactive, consisting of formal and informal processes that precede wrongdoing, those that proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing" (p. 1). The classroom is a unique space to build relationships and solve problems; therefore, faculty play an active role in addressing disengagement (i.e. wrongdoing) and supporting students in making things right (Adamson, 2020). Using Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) methodology (Nash & Bradley, 2011), I share my story of academic failure and success as it was told to my students in a restorative experiential learning activity. SPN allows researchers to frame and share their personal experiences in clear, contextual, first-person language with the goal of encouraging others to share their stories. Following a restorative experiential learning activity facilitated to build trust and cultivate a connected learning community, I distributed an open-ended questionnaire that prompted students to self-reflect on their own values, thoughts, concerns, dreams, and academic performance. These strategies were used to address the following question: What factors are influencing student academic disengagement? The answer to this question will address the importance of faculty vulnerability in building trust and strengthening relationships with students, which will aid in gaining an understanding of factors that influence academic disengagement.

THE PROBLEM OF ACADEMIC DISENGAGEMENT

Academic disengagement is a growing concern in higher education (Chipchase et al., 2017). Common complaints among faculty at American universities are that students regularly miss classes, arrive late, do not participate in class discussions, do not submit assignments, avoid making eye contact with faculty, and generally do not care about the pursuit of academic inquiry (Pennington, 2020). This lack of engagement in the classroom is not a new phenomenon. In 1996, Peter Sacks described disengaged students as uncommitted and unteachable. Trout (1997) contends that the growing problem of disengaged college students puts tremendous tension on the traditional student-faculty mentoring relationship. He warns faculty that the rigor of academic standards will decline because of a lack of support from the administration and relentless pressure from entitled-minded students to lower expectations and dumb-down standards.

Twenty-five years later, the problem of disengaged college students persists, suggesting this is not merely a generational problem, instead, each generation has

its unique political, social, and economic challenges (Felton & Lambert, 2020; Levine & Cureton, 1998). Steven Mintz (2022), a faculty member at the University of Texas Austin, described the current state of higher education post-COVID as "an epidemic of student disengagement." Hotez et al. (2021) surveyed 242 diverse groups of college students during the COVID pandemic and found that almost all experienced challenges coping with the stressors of the pandemic including massive stress on families, food insecurity, household disruption, financial hardship, social and political unrest, and social isolation. Moreover, minority students are at a higher risk for experiencing mental health challenges because their symptoms are often undiagnosed and untreated. Similarly, in-depth interviews with 14 science faculty revealed that their students were experiencing challenges with child care, taking care of younger siblings, financial difficulty, lack of technological access, isolation from friends, and an overall increase in stress and anxiety because of the abrupt transition from in-person learning to online learning during the COVID pandemic (Cloclasure et al., 2021). In my experience, it is not surprising that faculty reported an increase in student disengagement and a decline in academic performance.

The specific impacts of COVID-19 on college student academic engagement is nuanced. Though universities have returned to in-person learning post-COVID, high rates of student disengagement persist (McMurtie, 2022). The Center for Collegiate Mental Health (2022) surveyed a network of nearly 700 college and university counseling centers to evaluate trends in psychological distress both pre- and post-onset of COVID-19. Notably, social anxiety and academic distress significantly increased between Fall 2019 and Fall 2021. Other factors of concern are depression, general anxiety, eating disorders, family distress, and overall distress increased moderately in the Fall of 2021 juxtaposed to the pre-COVID Fall of 2019. Thus, academic disengagement is a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Britt, 2014).

This case study relies on Chipchase et al.'s (2017) definition of academic disengagement derived from a synthesis of the literature – "academic disengagement is a multi-faceted, complex yet fluid state, which has a combination of behavioral, emotional and cognitive domains'' (p. 35). There were eight factors identified as influencing disengagement:

1) ***Psychological distress*** was related to difficulties managing coursework and financial obligations (Baik et al., 2015).
2) ***Low motivation*** was associated with academic disengagement (Kraus, 2005; Hunter-Jones et al., 2012) when more than a third of college students reported difficulty in motivating themselves (Kraus, 2005).
3) Most universities enroll high school graduates that are ***not prepared for college-level coursework*** (Baldwin and Koh, 2012). For example, first-year college students struggle with academic demands because college courses

move at a faster pace, requiring more reading and studying time outside of the classroom, and generally do not acquire the depth of analytical thinking and writing required for higher education pursuit (Baldwin & Koh, 2012; Wickli, 2018).

4) ***Unmet or unrealistic expectations*** became a reality for first-year students due to distress, disengagement, and increased dropout rates (Hassel & Ridout, 2018; Smith & Wertlieb, 2005; Yorke & Longden, 2004). For example, students with childcare responsibilities, the first generation to go to college, and underrepresented minority students tended to experience the most challenges in transitioning to college (Briggs et al., 2012). Additionally, unrealistic expectations include the amount of contact with faculty (Smith and Hopkins, 2005), class sizes and course workload (Lowe & Cook, 2003), and an underestimation of the amount of independent learning required (Murtagh, 2010).

5) ***Competing demands and financial distress*** among students working an excessive amount of time in paid work and other non-academic activities are at increased risk for disengagement and low academic achievement (Kraus, 2005; Baron & Corbin, 2012; Brint & Cantwell, 2014).

6) Students struggled with ***navigating institutional structures and processes*** because of their lack of understanding of the organizational culture within universities (Kraus, 2005).

7) ***Academic staff factors*** such as actions, attitudes, and behaviors in teaching methodologies and enthusiasm for the subject, or concern for students and their learning (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Osterholt & Barratt, 2016); contributed to student dissatisfaction because of their expectations that faculty should bear most of the responsibility for student learning (Killen, 1994), whereas faculty tend to hold students primarily responsible for learning.

8) ***Online teaching and learning*** decreased face-to-face interaction with other students, staff, and faculty (Chipchase et al, 2017). Baik et al. (2015) found that 35% of first-year college students did not participate in online discussion groups compared to 19% of students enrolled in face-to-face courses.

The Restorative Approach to Disengagement

The restorative approach to student academic disengagement is to view every instance of wrongdoing or conflict as an opportunity for learning (Wachtel & McCold, 2000). Faculty have an opportunity to model and teach behaviors conducive to growth and development. A faculty member can turn a failed exam or submission of a late assignment into constructive learning activities, such as establishing clear expectations, fair consequences, accountability, setting achievable goals to

improve behavior, and taking ownership. According to Adamson (2020), it is the responsibility of faculty to diligently build relationships with students that can create opportunities to grow and learn while dealing with conflict directly. In this case, academic disengagement is the conflict to address.

Faculty tend to find themselves trapped on a punitive-permissive continuum when dealing with disengagement (Wachtel & McCold, 2000). On the left end of the continuum are the punitive responses, strict and harsh, and the permissive responses are on the right end, which is often nurturing and supportive (Costello et al., 2019). Today's universities limit authorities to two options: to punish or not to punish. Faculty must decide whether to fail or not to fail their students. How many points should be deducted? University administrators must decide whether to suspend or not to suspend. To expel or to readmit? Faculty presume that deciding not to punish will lead to more disengagement and is therefore permissive. Restorative justice practices expand the single axis of the Punitive-Permissive Continuum by observing the interaction between two axes known as control and support. Control represents limit setting and discipline, while support signifies encouragement and nurture.

The Social Discipline Window is the cornerstone of restorative practices demonstrating four combinations of control and support. The punitive approach is high control with low support and permissive is high support with low control, representing the simplistic nature of the Punitive – Permissive Continuum. Restorative practices add two additional responses to wrongdoing (i.e. disengagement). The neglectful choice provides low control and low support where the faculty has surrendered their authority and responsibility. The fourth response to wrongdoing joins both high control and high support. Costello, Watchel, and Watchel (2019) argued that this is the most crucial choice missing in the Punitive – Permissive Continuum. This is when faculty "exercise their control, refusing to accept inappropriate behavior, but do so in a caring and supportive way" (p. 49). Thus, the restorative approach is about human interaction and building community. The fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices is that "human beings are happier and more cooperative and productive and more likely to make positive changes in behavior when those in positions of authority do things WITH them rather than TO them or FOR them" (Costello et al., 2019, p. 47).

The Punitive Approach

The punitive approach characterizes authoritative faculty as ones who have high limits and boundaries but do not provide the support for students to reach that high level of expectations (Costello et al., 2019). Hobson (2021) described the punitive approach of teaching as a strict disciplinarian that emphasizes law and order. The punitive faculty would say to a student, "you don't measure up to standards. Deal

with the consequences;" as a result, creating fear and resistance in students, rather than inquisition and desire for learning. Strict grading policies are another example of the punitive approach. The student submits a "strong essay," but the faculty deducts ten points for each comma splice. The faculty ponders whether or not to score the student a 0 or -20 on the essay for twelve comma slices (Sprenkle, 2018). A punitive attendance policy states, "miss six or more classes (Tuesday and Thursday) during the semester and the student receives an automatic F. No questions and no exceptions, except (presumably) those that are formally authorized disability accommodations" (ADE & ADFL Connected Departments). The outcome of the punitive approach is that students will likely be anxious and resentful, offering short-term compliance but rarely any lasting behavior change or little ownership (Costello et al., 2019). Consequently, this faculty is stressed out because students are not truly engaged in the learning process.

The Permissive Approach

The permissive approach describes faculty that focus on effort while watering-down quality (Costello et al., 2019). Trout (1997) considered the permissive approach to disengagement when faculty,

Refuse to apply codes of conduct to students 'overwhelmed' by college, relax standards to accommodate different learning styles, redefine slackers as 'learning disabled' and then exempt them from requirements, lavish praise on poorly performing students to shore up self-esteem, earn the 'support' and gratitude of students by assigning fewer books and papers, give students the exam questions days before the test to improve scores, permit students to retake tests or rewrite papers until they get the grade they want, try to inspire and engage students by giving high grades for mediocre work (p. 51).

Larson (2016) warns that students view permissive faculty as "nice and easy" but do not trust the faculty's ability to manage the classroom. The outcome of the permissive approach is that faculty will create dependent relationships with students, allowing them to feel liked and supported, but producing poor quality work (Costello et al., 2019).

The Neglectful Approach

The neglectful approach is not concerned about the quality of students' work and ignores inappropriate behavior (Costello et al., 2019). The American University School of Education describes neglectful faculty as those experiencing burnout,

such as not adapting curricula to a variety of learning styles and failing to attend to special needs (American University, 2021). The outcome of the neglectful approach is to miss warning signs of academic behavioral challenges, leading to students withdrawing and feeling worthless. Overall, limited meaningful learning is occurring (Costello et al., 2019).

The Restorative Approach

The restorative approach resembles a collaborative learning environment, in which faculty provide engaging content delivery and set high standards with clear instructions (Costello et al., 2019). Felten and Lambert (2020) explored ways faculty foster educationally meaningful relationships in and out of the classroom. For example, Mays Imad, a Professor of Biology at Pima Community College, uses personal stories to build trust and connect with her students (p. 81). Bryan Dewsbury, an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Rhode Island, required his students to write brief stories about their purpose for studying Biology to help him craft a teaching method supportive of their goals and needs. Dewsbury uses proactive teaching strategies stating, "If I notice a lot of low confidence among students one semester, I can do things that research shows will inspire confidence and will build a sense of belonging" (p. 82). Arminio et al. (2012) stressed the need for faculty to go beyond diversity and inclusion initiatives and take ownership of establishing classroom environments that foster meaningful relationships with and among students. In Rendon's (1994) study of low-income, first-generation college students, she conceptualized *Validation Theory* as a new way to help disengaged students succeed in college. She argued faculty play an important role in *validating* students in the classroom to help them trust their intrinsic ability to learn and develop confidence in being a college student. Examples of academic validation are:

Professors who demonstrated a genuine concern for teaching students; professors who were personable and approachable toward students; professors who treated students equally; professors who structured learning experiences that allowed students to experience themselves as capable of learning; professors who worked individually with those students needing extra help; professors who provided meaningful feedback to students (p. 33).

Rendon-Linares and Munoz (2011) believed validation helps students acquire an "I can do it" attitude that is essential for students taking ownership of their learning experience. Felten and Lambert (2020) coincide with the restorative approach proposing that "building personal connections and communicating both

challenge and support" are crucial elements for academically effective student-faculty relationships (p. 85).

In conclusion, the social discipline window is best thought of as a relational system. If faculty were to be neglectful in light of student disengagement, they would NOT do anything in response to failing grades. If permissive, faculty would do everything FOR the student and ask little in return, making excuses for failure. If punitive, faculty would respond by doing things TO the student, such as scoring failing grades without intervention. Responding in a restorative manner requires that faculty work WITH students and engage them directly in the process of building trusting relationships, holding them accountable for high standards, and engaging in changing behavior (Watchel and McCold, 2000).

WHY DOES FACULTY VULNERABILITY MATTER?

A pedagogy of vulnerability is particularly relevant for educators in contexts where they want to build a climate of trust with students. As defined by Edward Brantmeier (2013), the concept of a pedagogy of vulnerability is simple - "open yourself, contextualize that self in societal constructs and systems, co-learn, admit what you don't know, and be human" (Brantmeier, 2013, p. 2). Teaching through vulnerability is a process of "mutual disclosure" and can lead to deepened learning for both instructor and students (Koppensteiner, 2020). When faculty open themselves up for examination as part of the "lived curriculum" in the classroom, students will model that self-examination and delve deeper into their own learning, which has value beyond the classroom. The lived curriculum is the content of our lives that becomes the foundation of learning new concepts, skills, and values (Brantmeier, 2020).

Educators can demonstrate vulnerability and use self-disclosure in ways that empower students and inspires in them a desire for deeper understanding and engagement in academia and society (Brantmeier, 2020). In teaching a course on social foundations at a historical black college and university, Theodorea Berry (2010) notes it became necessary to resist the status quo by facilitating class discussions that allowed students to interject elements of their complex lived experiences into the curriculum. "From this position, students and faculty/teachers can free themselves into an engaged pedagogy that is holistic and progressive, incorporating passion, dialogue, and interaction" (Berry, 2010, p. 21).

Facilitators of vulnerability must actively participate and cannot exclude themselves from the process of vulnerability (Brantmeier, 2013; Koppensteiner, 2020; Moulton and Leonard, 2020;). Research has demonstrated that students yearn for connected relationships with faculty and with student peers. For faculty, this

Experiential exercises include games and activities that create a highly relational classroom environment because they require a high level of engagement. Given that relationships are fundamental to restorative justice, it seeks to uncover the needs of students. These unmet needs could lead to negative behavior or could be the outcome of being harmed (Pointer et al., 2020). Therefore, identifying student needs might explain academic disengagement and provide a roadmap for prevention and intervention efforts.

Background

In preparation for their first examination, students were given a study guide to organize their lecture notes and textbook material to help increase their comprehension and memory of three chapters of information. After grading the exams, I discovered more than two-thirds of the class scored below a C grade. Concerned that students were not acquiring the skills necessary for career readiness, I wanted to understand their level of preparation, achievement expectations, roadblocks, and aspirations to succeed in their undergraduate studies. Therefore, I began the following class using a restorative practice technique called storytelling to connect with my students before introducing new textbook content. Students were enrolled in a criminal justice lower-division course at a small Liberal Arts University in the Southeastern region of the United States. The study population consisted of 43 juniors and seniors who identified as either African American or Caucasian.

Table 1. Participant demographics

	Black Males	**Black Females**	**White Males**	**White Females**	**Total**
Sophomores	2	1	2	0	5
Juniors	5	8	2	3	18
Seniors	2	6	1	0	9
Total	9	15	5	3	32

Twenty-eight percent (n=9) of participants were Black males, forty-seven percent (n=15) were Black females, sixteen percent (n=5) were White males, and nine percent (n=3) were White females. With this in mind, I decided to facilitate a restorative experiential learning activity by sharing my story of academic failure and success, and guiding students in reflecting on the first exam and as well as their values, needs, and goals. I began class by telling students that we were not going to move on to

chapter four, instead, we would be discussing their career plans and reflecting on barriers to success, given the majority of students were juniors and seniors.

Step 1: Connect and Cultivate Students' Willingness to Learn

I began the activity by orally asking open-ended questions to connect and cultivate students' willingness to learn. I asked the first student sitting in the front row on the left side of the room to provide an answer, and then go to the next student until all students participated. Each student verbally answered two questions regarding their career aspirations and strategies necessary to meet those goals. The first question asked, "**What is/are your career goal(s)?**" Their responses were:

- Masters in cyber security
- Police officer
- Probation & parole officer
- Social worker
- Correctional officer
- Wildlife officer
- State Senator
- Human trafficking officer
- Detective
- Prosecutor
- Forensic scientist
- Defense attorney
- Forensic psychologist
- Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent
- Drug Enforcement Agency Special Agent

The second question asked, "***What do you need to do to reach that goal(s)?*** In essence, the question wanted students to address the process of qualifying for or being accepted to graduate school or a specific agency. Their responses included:

- Self-motivation
- Excel
- Internships
- Dedication
- Take the LSAT
- Take the GRE
- Written exams
- Physical agility test

- Polygraph exam
- Drug test
- Build your resume through extracurricular activities

Step 2: Demonstrate Vulnerability through Sharing a Personal Experience

The second part of the experiential learning activity consisted of sharing the cumulative class examination grades on the projector in order to allow students to reflect on the contradiction of their career goals and their present academic performance, which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Cumulative grades for exam 1

Letter Grade	Number of Students	Percentage Totals
A	1	2.3
B	3	7
C	8	18.6
D	14	32.5
F	17	39.5
Total	43	100

Out of 43 students who took the exam, there was one A, three Bs, eight Cs, 14 Ds, and 17 Fs. Thirty-one out of 43 students earned a C or lower, which is roughly 71% of the students earning an average, below average, or failing grade. This was a profound finding considering that students unanimously voted to have a 50-question multiple-choice exam instead of short essay questions. It was my opinion that students assumed they have a greater chance of passing the exam if they could choose the correct answers from a list of options rather than writing an essay. Since a majority of the students did not earn their desired score, they were led through a process of thinking about performance indicators that are expected on various exams (i.e. LSAT, GRE, written exams for law enforcement) and minimum scores required to be considered for admission. Many students understood that their current level of performance would not grant them access to their desired careers or graduate schools. Therefore, I asked, "Do you really want it?" Students unanimously yelled, "yes." I asked, "Can you visualize yourself as a senator or an attorney? When you close your eyes, do you see yourself as a DEA agent?" A majority of students simultaneously responded, "yes," while others nodded their heads "yes." Their

eagerness and determination motivated me to embrace vulnerability in sharing my story as I had planned.

Sharing a relevant personal story about how I was suspended as an undergraduate student and reviewing my official transcripts showing the Ds and Fs that I earned in my courses was a moment of vulnerability and courage. I was able to remove the mask of being a 'perfect' person, by exposing the struggles that I experienced during my undergraduate journey. As a college student, I remember faculty members only sharing their brag sheet of accomplishments, while omitting the failures or setbacks prior to reaching their goals. Consequently, this gives the perception that we have to be "perfect" throughout our journey. I was hesitant at first because I did not want to be viewed as less intelligent or worthy of respect. Understanding that shame is something we all experience and it is not attached to our worth (Brown, 2012), I trusted that my silence would do more harm than good.

You see a college professor and think that I'm perfect. You know Dr. Cottrell who earned a Ph.D. from Howard University, the Mecca, which cultivates Black excellence, where scholars go on to be future leaders, innovators, entertainers, and even the first woman vice president. You know Dr. Cottrell who worked in prisons and courts and even interned with a United States Congressman. You know Dr. Cottrell who trains you to conduct research and pushes you to present at conferences, even when you think you're not ready.

But it wasn't always that way and I wasn't always this person. Before I became Dr. Cottrell, I was the Cicely that was confused. Cicely who was uncertain. Cicely who had challenges navigating college and loved other people more than she loved herself. I would go to class but wouldn't study. I was more concerned with hanging out with my friends and boyfriend than I was concerned with asking my faculty for help. And those friends and boyfriend hadn't even graduated from high school. As a consequence of failing several classes, I was academically suspended from the first college that I attended. That means they kicked me out!

I was the Cicely that had to learn to let go of people and things that were holding me back and to put my goals and dreams first. But, I didn't know how because I doubted myself and was easily distracted. I started to believe the lies that I had been telling my family: that 'the classes are too hard,' 'the faculty expect us to know more than we should know at this stage,' and 'I don't have time to study because I have to work.'

The Cicely that I am didn't recognize that I had gifts on the inside of me that I was hiding. I had to acknowledge that graduating from college was not only important to my family, but it was important to ME! I had to motivate myself. I had to encourage

4.   What are your biggest concerns?
5.   *What factors contributed to the grade that you earned?*

Data Analysis Plan

This study included a qualitative data analysis that involved the meticulous reading of the transcription (Creswell, 2007). This allowed the researchers to become well acquainted with the data and able to justify the patterns and important ideas contained therein. The study also consisted of preparing and organizing the data, reducing and summarizing the data through the process of coding, and presenting the data in narrative form, in figures and/or tables (Creswell, 2007). Once the data was thoroughly reviewed, it was organized and interpreted using the tagging text technique for sorting and counting categories of text (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011). Open coding of the transcripts involved a thorough review of the transcript.

The third qualitative analysis technique involved a process called narrative analysis. This is when interviews, field notes, and/or qualitative questionnaires contain a story that will help readers to understand the underlying events and the effect it has had on their life (Nasheeda et al., 2019). Extended quotes were used during this assessment to give more context to students' experiences in college. The fourth qualitative data analysis technique included Thematic Coding, which is a type of qualitative data analysis that located themes in the text by analyzing the meaning of words and sentence structure (Nowell et al., 2017). Through this process, the researchers discovered themes that were most frequent from the respondents' experiences. Additionally, this strengthened the researchers' understanding of students' goals, dreams, current academic performance, and factors of disengagement.

RESULTS

The findings were consistent with three of the eight factors of academic disengagement cited by Chipchase et al. (2017): 1) emotional and psychological distress, 2) low motivation, and 3) preparation for academic capacity. Additionally, fear of failure is a new factor that was a significant concern for academic disengagement. Table 3 demonstrates the four main themes with selected quotes. Although 43 students completed exam one, only 34 participated in the restorative experiential learning activity.

Table 3. Factors contributing to academic disengagement

Themes	Respectives Quotes
Emotional and Psychological Distress (n=10)	My biggest concern is feeling like I am not enough and feeling like I may not have what it takes to be who I actually want to be (Jerome, senior, 2020). My biggest concern is my mental health. I was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, anxiety, and PTSD. My biggest concern is that my mental health is holding me back (Adorya, junior, 2020). I can't reach my goal because it's not that I haven't tried because I do… I grind. I study harder than anyone else because I have to. School is not hard. It is challenging to have ADHD, be dyslexic, and suffer from depression. I just let life get in the way with the goals I have in life (Keenan, junior, 2020). When I get overwhelmed, I shut down and I am concerned I won't overcome that trait (George, sophomore, 2020).
Low Motivation (n=5)	My biggest concern is withdrawing from school. I honestly don't have any self-motivation or dedication. I don't apply myself (Sheridan, sophomore, 2020). I don't have self-motivation. I don't apply myself (Bernard, sophomore, 2020).
Preparation for Academic Capacity (n=14)	My biggest concern is not making it because I have a difficult time remembering. I don't want to fail because school is a little more difficult. I have issues with comprehension and my ability to take tests does affect me (Jena, junior, 2020). I'm in the category I am because I procrastinated with studying. Really I procrastinate with life. That's why I got a C (Timothy, junior, 2020). I earned a 72 because my time management is horrible. It was sad that I realized you picked the questions and I just didn't study enough. I didn't read the book enough. If I had did those things I would have easily got an A/B (Immanuel, junior, 2020). I feel I received the grade C because I was unprepared for the rigor of the test and underestimated it (Nautica, senior, 2020).
Fear of Failure (n=22)	My biggest concern is my ultimate fear and that is a failure (Damian, senior, 2020). My biggest concern is that I fail because I'm not smart enough (Kadine, junior, 2020). I don't want to fail myself. I'm tired of thinking I'm going to fail (Jena, junior, 2020). My biggest concern is failure and not making my loved ones happy and full of joy with an accomplishment we both know I should have accomplished (Stephen, junior, 2020). My biggest concern is failing myself as well as my family. My family is my biggest support and I do not want to upset any of them (Broady, junior, 2020). My biggest concern is that my brother won't see my efforts or that my life won't go exactly as planned and I'll end up failing (Dorya, junior, 2020). I won't live up to everyone's expectations and I will let them and myself down (Will, senior, 2020).

Number in parentheses represents the number of respondents who commented on this theme.

Emotional and Psychological Factors

Emotional and psychological health were reasons students (n=10) frequently reported

as a concern. While some students reported experiencing challenges with managing diagnosed mental illnesses, others expressed being stressed out with demands of school, work, and family.

Low Motivation

Low motivation was the least (n=5) reported concern among participants, yet a significant contributing factor to academic disengagement. Other students reported they were overwhelmed due to the number of courses they had to take each semester, financial aid, family demands, social pressures, and personal conflicts. For many students, once the feeling of being overwhelmed consumes their minds, they shut down and neglect their academic priorities. Each of these students who did not believe in themselves also earned a failing grade on the examination.

Preparation for Study and Academic Capacity

Nearly half (42%) of participants noted that they were not prepared for the exam because they did not study. Many of these participants attributed an ongoing problem with procrastination and time management. One participant even admitted that she has difficulty in reading comprehension, and another noted that he was not prepared for the rigor of the exam.

Fear of Failure

An overwhelmingly 65% of participants reported a fear of failure as a concern that is attributed to their academic disengagement. Sub-themes of fear of failure were fear of not graduating, fear of not attaining their dream career, fear of disappointing family members, and fear of not being good enough.

DISCUSSION AND LESSONS FOR FACULTY AND STUDENTS

Our findings highlight unique perspectives and experiences from a small sample of college students from a liberal arts university. The participants were predominantly Black and first-generation college students. Regardless of race, the majority of participants come from working class families. Students with childcare responsibilities, first-generation to go to college, and underrepresented minority students tend to experience the most challenges in transitioning to college (Briggs et al., 2012). Although there is no one size fits all way to support students, trying to better understand individual needs is key. Findings suggest a need for college

interventions addressing mental well-being, studying and time management strategies, as well as fighting negative self-talk.

Although participants were not specifically asked why they were academically disengaged, we examined any concerns they were having and the reasons related to the grade they earned. The multi-faceted and complex nature of academic disengagement, such as a combination of behavioral, emotional and cognitive elements, present barriers to academic achievement for all students. These findings emphasize the importance of shifting teaching approaches within the classroom setting to more effectively strengthen relationships and build a community of learners. Namely, faculty vulnerability is the first step to engaging college students.

Regarding concerns and exam grades, participants reported poor emotional and psychological health, low motivation to study, unpreparedness for the rigors of college, and fear of failure. Emotional health is defined as one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that make up both our inner and outer being (Brennan, 2021). When students are not in a positive psychological state, or even experiencing stress, it negatively impacts their academic performance. Mann (2001) suggests that students may disengage as a protective strategy for managing psychological distress. Hunter-Jones et al. (2012) found an association between the lack of motivation to learn or achieve academic goals and student disengagement. It is important for students to evaluate the root of their lack of motivation to properly address the issue. Another reason people lack motivation is because they do not believe they can accomplish the goal (Huber, 2018). Considering this, faculty understand that students may not be adequately prepared for higher education (Chipchase et al., 2017). College students have to adapt to less structured, less monitored, and less individually supported learning environments. This is a challenge for many first-generation students and students of color, who have been accustomed to more structure, intense monitoring from teachers or parents, and having a collective support system such as assigned counselors, mentors, or coaches (Briggs et al., 2012).

A factor influencing academic disengagement not found in Chipchase et al.'s (2017) synthesis of academic disengagement literature is fear of failure. Sixty-seven percent of students in this study reported a fear of failing the course(s), not graduating, or not attaining their dream career. In this context, the fear of failure is a "dispositional tendency to avoid failure in achievement settings because the humiliation and embarrassment of failure is perceived to be overwhelming" (Elliott & Thrash, 2004, p. 958). Stuart (2013) studied fear of failure, procrastination, and self-efficacy among first and non first-generation college students to determine if there were differences between the two groups. The only statistical significant difference she found was regarding a fear of having an unknown future, in which freshmen first-generation students had significantly higher scores. Balkis and Duru (2012) found fear of failure and procrastination were associated with self-esteem.

Importantly, when students with low self-esteem fail, they consider themselves to be completely defeated personally, and as a result, choose to take no action for fear of failure. Haghbin et al. (2012) found a positive relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among students who feel less deserving to be in college and successful. This finding further highlights how faculty vulnerability may be critical in combating fear of failure to promote academic achievement.

My goal for this chapter is to encourage faculty to be vulnerable with their students daily, whether planned or unplanned. Parker Palmer writes in *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, "teaching is a daily exercise in vulnerability" and "To reduce our vulnerability, we disconnect from students, from subjects, and even from ourselves. . . . We distance ourselves from students and subjects to minimize the danger—forgetting that distance makes life more dangerous still by isolating the self" (2007, p. 17, 18). There is little empirical research evaluating what vulnerability looks like in practice in the university learning environment.

Our findings provide support for faculty vulnerability in encouraging student accountability and problem solving. Not only did we find fear or failure to be a necessary point of prevention and intervention, we found that students reflected on their own behaviors after hearing Dr. Cottrell's personal experience with academic failure and success in college. For example, when asked *what are you thinking*, many students reported that they are thinking about how to make improvements in their grade, strategies to reduce procrastination, and even envisioning their graduation. A sign that I made the right decision to facilitate this activity instead of lecturing on the next chapter in the textbook is illustrated from student comments below:

Dr. Cottrell has read my mind today. I have to excel because I can. I'm more than enough and it will happen (Tisha, junior, 2020).

Everything Dr. Cottrell said today is right, true, and relatable. I cannot be doing nothing and expect to earn good grades. I need to put in the time, work, and effort (Warryn, sophomore, 2020).

Vulnerability is a sign of courage and that leads to progress (Brown, 2012). My students were the first people to view my undergraduate transcripts other than graduate school admissions staff. I shared secrets about myself that I had not told my best friends at the time. On this day, I modeled courage. In her TED talk "The Power of Vulnerability", Brown references the etymology of the word courage, coming from the Latin "cor," meaning heart. This means that modeling courage is literally as simple as showing your heart, your most inner, imperfect self (TED, 2011). Make no mistake, this can be scary. I was scared, but it gets easier with practice.

Brown (2012) counsels that demonstrating vulnerability is knowing that I am enough. I am grateful to have seized the opportunity to share my story with students on that day because it was, unknowingly, the last in-person class of the semester. The University had spring break the following week, and during that time, decided to resume classes fully online because of a rapid spike in COVID-19 cases and deaths in the state. At the end of class, several students thanked me for sharing my story. While many were shocked that I earned several Ds and Fs in college leading to suspension, students were more admirable of my perseverance and grit to be the best version of myself. Two Black female students even shared how they were more motivated to graduate law school putting them in a position to provide justice for Black people who are disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system. With this in mind, I hope that I have convinced you that your personal stories matter!

LIMITATIONS

Although this case study presented insight into factors that influenced student disengagement, I only assessed responses from students in one particular class, which is considered a methodological limitation. In future research, representative samples could be used to determine the generalizability of the results. Another limitation refers to the cross-sectional nature of the design. Therefore, longitudinal studies are recommended to deduce cause and effect from their results.

CONCLUSION

Restorative responses to disengagement create opportunities for learning (Adamson, 2020). Specifically, demonstrating vulnerability in the classroom is an effective way to promote trust, academic engagement, and learning (Romney and Holland, 2020). Exploration of vulnerability is part of the many ongoing attempts that seek different ways in which teaching and learning in higher education can become more meaningful for all involved (Koppensteiner, 2020, p. 115). Concerns about failure rates, reduced levels of conceptual understanding, and high absenteeism are additional reasons why colleges and universities have looked for alternatives to address the concern of academic engagement (Sawers et. al., 2016). Most approaches to disengagement are not only ineffective, but undermine trusting student-faculty relationships. Vulnerability must be a part of everyday life, and not just responsive to academic disengagement (Brown, 2012). Hopefully, faculty will view their demonstrations of vulnerability as a way to deepen students' learning and trust, rather than as a weakness.

A recommendation is for faculty to facilitate proactive circles. Schools are seeking additional ways to cultivate a positive school climate and culture, address problematic behavior, and increase the social-emotional behavior competencies of students (Evanovich et. al., 2020). The purpose of a proactive circle is to create belonging and connectedness (community) through intentional relationship building. Once trust is built within the circle, circles are an effective process to create class agreements, make plans and decisions, engage with the curriculum, and debrief incidents that impact our students, families, and staff (Evanovich et. al., 2020). Proactive Circles can be incorporated at the beginning of each unit in order to express expectations, answer questions from the previous unit, assign tasks, and address student issues. Including a more proactive strategy throughout the semester will improve student engagement (Adamson, 2020).

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Academic disengagement: A multi-dimensional set of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive attributes that is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors

Emotional health: The optimal functioning end of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that make up both our inner and outer worlds.

Fear of Failure: A dispositional tendency to avoid failure in achievement settings because the humiliation and embarrassment of failure is perceived to be overwhelming

Mental health: Emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps us to determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

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