

Episode 24: An Overview of Restorative Justice Principles

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Intro:

Welcome to the NCJA podcast. This podcast series explores promising practices, provides guidance on strategic planning, and discusses how the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program or Byrne JAG contributes to improving justice systems across the country. We hope you enjoy it.

Amanda Blasko:

Hi everyone, and welcome back to another episode of the NCJA podcast. My name is Amanda Blasko, and I'm a program manager here at the National Criminal Justice Association. Today I'm thrilled to have Dr. Lindsey Pointer on the podcast to discuss the fundamental principles restorative justice. This episode covers the benefits and importance of restorative justice, key pillars to consider, the process from beginning to end, and how the restorative justice model fits into larger discussions of equity within the criminal justice system. Thank you so much for being here today Dr. Pointer. Would you mind telling us a little bit about yourself?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Absolutely, and thanks so much for having me, Amanda. I'm really looking forward to this conversation. So, my name is Lindsey Pointer. I am on the faculty at Vermont Law and Graduate School, but the majority of my role is as principal investigator of the National Center on Restorative Justice, which is a partnership between Vermont Law and Graduate School, the University of Vermont, University of San Diego and the Bureau of Justice Assistants. We're funded through grants from the Bureau of Justice Assistance. And our broader mission is to improve criminal justice policy and practice in the United States through advancing restorative justice education, training, and research. So, we're really focused on these big questions of what difference can restorative justice make in thinking about reforming our criminal justice system.

Amanda Blasko:

Thank you. I'm so happy and excited to be talking with you here today. So, that's a good segue. I wanted to set the scene for our discussion or provide some context. So, big question just to start us out. So, what is restorative justice, and how does it differ from the typical experience that people have within the traditional criminal justice system, and why are restorative justice practices and models so important?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Absolutely. So, one thing to know is that if you talk to 10 different restorative justice advocates or practitioners, you'll probably get 10 slightly different definitions of restorative justice. There isn't one written in stone commonly agreed upon definition. It's viewed more as a broader paradigm shift, a collection of principles and practices. So, restorative justice, it's an approach to achieving justice that's focused on understanding harm, and the harm caused by a specific incident, or a crime, or an incident of harm, the needs of the individuals involved, and also the needs of the broader community. And the focus is really on putting things as right as possible.

So, that's in contrast to what we tend to see in criminal justice approaches that are focused instead on determining guilt, assigning punishment, oftentimes really staying in that more punitive paradigm of justice making. Instead, in restorative justice, we're asking a really different set of questions. So, we're asking what happened? And that includes what happened prior to the offense. So, understanding the needs that led to the behavior, led to the incident, and addressing some of those root causes, and then understanding who's been affected and what the needs and harms are following the incident with a focus on, again, making things as right as possible. And when you approach justice making in that way, you just get a really different outcome, because it's more responsive to the needs of the actual people and communities that are impacted by crime or incidents of harm.

Amanda Blasko:

Perfect. Thank you for that overview of restorative justice. And this might be a dumb question, so I might be showing my own lack of knowledge, but how long has restorative justice been around? How long has it been considered a alternative model for people within the criminal justice system?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Great question. Absolutely great question. So, in terms of that more fundamental philosophical approach to what justice is, how we do justice as a community, that has really been around forever. It has roots in indigenous communities around the world, and in communities where we aren't viewing anyone as dispensable, as being able to be pushed out, it's a really logical way to go about justice making, to talk about what has been the impact, what are the needs of the people involved. And so, this is something that's been around as long as human communities, and we still have that leadership in indigenous communities around the world today in terms of these restorative approaches.

In terms of restorative justice applications within the criminal legal system of the U.S. and elsewhere that really got started in the 1970s, gained a lot of momentum through the '90s, and now we're in a moment today where I would say the momentum is just growing exponentially. So, we have more and more familiarity with the term restorative justice, and more and more interest in implementing restorative justice in different spaces in the criminal legal context and beyond. I should say that restorative justice has also been applied elsewhere. It's quite common to see restorative justice programs in schools, in workplaces, in other community contexts, and the applications of this work are growing all the time.

Amanda Blasko:

That's a great point. I've also read articles about how to approach a situation with the lens of restorative justice practices in mind, so it's also kind of like a thought paradigm shift as well. So, is there a best practice model when it comes to restorative justice, or are there a few best practice models, or would you mind speaking to that?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Yes. So, in terms of best practice models, there are a lot of different models of restorative justice, and I'd say that ability of restorative justice to be really responsive to the needs of a specific community, to cultural context, to needs of individuals, it's one of the things that makes restorative justice quite powerful is that adaptability. And so, you'll see a range of different models depending on the programs that you're looking at, depending on the application. There are though I would say a number of key pillars, key principles that we're seeing across models. One being that restorative justice approaches

involve to the extent possible the people who have a stake in a particular incident of harm. So, I use the terms responsible party and harmed party instead of offender and victim. That's pretty common to hear restorative justice people using some terms that move away from offender and victim that tend to have a stigmatizing connotation and focused more on seeing this person as a whole person that just has this role as related to this specific incident.

So, responsible party, harmed party, as well as their more direct communities of support and the broader community within which an incident of a harm or a crime took place. So, involving the voice, the perspective, and really centering the decision-making power of those people who are the closest stakeholders to what happened, that's really fundamental to most restorative justice approaches. Having that focus on healing, on putting things right, we're not here to punish or to cause further harm in response to the harm that has taken place. We're here to focus on understanding, how can we make this better? Really inclusive collaborative processes that center the importance of equal voice, of hearing from everyone, and then really looking at root causes as well. So, again, understanding the needs that led to this incident, that led to the behavior. And those are often found in some harmful systems more broadly, which leads to more broad transformative justice aims in restorative justice oftentimes. And so, those are some of the things that we see as common principles, unifying approaches even across a wide range of different specific practice models.

Amanda Blasko:

Thank you. And I like how you phrased that as like, it's adaptable the restorative justice model and all the programs that can come out of that model. Because, from what you described it sounds like the intent or one of the primary intents of the model is not only to give back some agency to the harmed party, but also there's a intention to truly understand and comprehend in a more wide encompassing way rather than just a single isolated event, or incident, or whatever that goes beyond that. So, I think that's really unique.

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Definitely. I teach restorative justice in a law school context and it always, it's striking to me that students show up to our restorative justice classes and we're retraining people to ask these open-ended questions that you don't know the answer to, which is really different from how a lot of legal processes go and how people are trained to engage in these spaces. But, in restorative justice we're asking these big open-ended questions because we really want to understand for these specific individuals in this specific situation, what's happening, what are their needs, what are the obligations, what are some of their strengths that we can draw on in looking towards repairing harm and putting things right, and highlight and raise up in that process of focusing on strengths. And so, it really is a practice in approaching from a space of compassionate curiosity, and asking the questions that will help you understand what's going on for these people.

Amanda Blasko:

That's great. I like that phrase, compassionate curiosity. So, in terms of restorative justice programs or models, are there usually some restrictions on who can participate in that process in terms of, I'm thinking if it's a diversion based restorative justice program, if the responsible party has certain types of charges affiliated with them, would they be excluded or how does that work?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

So, this varies quite a bit depending on the restorative justice program that you're looking at. Different programs, different jurisdictions have different restrictions around the types of cases that they can accept. It is quite common, particularly in the United States, to see programs where they're applying restorative justice primarily or even solely to misdemeanor offenses in juvenile responsible parties. I would say that that is unfortunate that it has been mostly restricted to those groups, because when we look at the research, the research consistently indicates that we're actually seeing a more significant impact in terms of that healing, that positive experience impact on recidivism as well for more serious offenses and for adult responsible parties.

There are some programs that are really leading the way in making sure that restorative justice is accessible for these more serious offenses for adult offenders or responsible parties. And one way that I personally like to think about this is, to what person would I want to deny the opportunity of restorative justice, and in particular to what harmed party or victim would I want to deny the option of restorative justice, because it is always voluntary. That's a key aspect or principle of restorative justice is that it's something that people are choosing to do because they feel that it will help respond to the needs that they're experiencing after an incident of harm. And so, I think it is important to keep that agency largely with the people who are experiencing those needs to decide if restorative justice is helpful, of course, with the parameters of well-trained facilitators, making sure that we're pre-conferencing so that we're keeping people safe and not putting people in a situation that could cause further harm.

Amanda Blasko:

And to your point, it being always voluntary it also, having that option also adds agency as well for all parties, but I'm thinking particularly for the harmed party. I know you mentioned it varies widely depending on the type of model that a restorative justice program is kind of following, but is there any kind of consensus on what the process should look like from beginning to end? I know you mentioned the pre-conferencing phase, I know that's part of the process, but are there key elements that are kind of present?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Definitely. So, there's a wide range of different models, and so I'm sure anything I say right now probably won't be applicable to every single program model. And, yes, there are some common kind of common ingredients. One being, of course, the importance of preparation work. So, especially models that are bringing together a responsible party, and a harmed party, and their broader networks of support for a dialogue, there is extensive preparation work often called pre-conferencing or pre-meetings where facilitators are sitting down with each party talking through what happened, building that trust and relationship, understanding their impacts and needs, making sure that they feel comfortable and have a good understanding of what the restorative justice process involves. And it's voluntary for everyone, including the facilitators. So, facilitators also have to feel like it's the right decision for us to move forward for this group to be brought together for this dialogue.

And particularly depending on the, sometimes severity of the offense or the individual needs of participants, that can be one preparation meeting for each involved party or it can be many, even sometimes spanned over multiple years for some of these cases. And so, we see different approaches to that preparation, the types of other supports that are brought in either before or after the process. Most programs are mindful of the physical configuration of the space and of that dialogue group. So, participants often will sit in a circle or in some way on the same level as each other. That circle makes it so that everyone can see each other. It symbolizes that interconnectedness, represents that equal voice,

because we're going around the circle, we're hearing from everyone. And it's another way in which I think, my dissertation research was actually looking at restorative justice through ritual studies frameworks. And so, this is one thing that I think is really interesting about the process is the way that we're setting up chairs in a circle, it's already without saying anything, welcoming people into a really different way of justice making.

If you think for a moment about a courtroom, even just the configuration of that space is communicating a really hierarchical, really adversarial model of justice making just by how high or low different people are seated, the separation of different parties, who different groups are looking at, and restorative justice all of that gets leveled. It gets equalized. We put everyone in a circle, and that's meant to reinforce the sense that everyone is showing up as a human and we'll have equal voice, equal decision making power in that conversation. And, of course, there's different configurations within even that, but that's one way that you'll see restorative justice looking very different from what we're used to in those more conventional criminal justice approaches.

Amanda Blasko:

And I like what you said about the configuration of space being important, and that reminded me of the language frame that you said at the beginning like, this is how we're discussing the people that are participating. It's harmed party and responsible party. It's not offender and victim. I feel like that's important. There's a lot that goes into the framing of it before it actually even begins, which I think is really interesting.

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Definitely. I think sometimes those little symbolic indicators can be even more powerful than a lengthy description of what restorative justice is, what we're about to go through together.

Amanda Blasko:

For sure. One thing I did want to ask you about, is there always an agreement that comes out of these restorative justice programs once people agree to participate? Is there always some type of agreement about how people's needs can be met after the fact? And, if so, what can that look like? I know it varies depending on the individuals, but what can it look like, I guess?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Absolutely, and it varies. Usually there is some discussion of what's needed now to repair harm and some consensus around where do we go from here? How, I want to say, put to paper, that depends in part on where the restorative justice process is functioning. So, certainly when restorative justice is used as a diversion to the criminal justice procedure that would have otherwise happened, that agreement can become quite important for showing that the responsible party in particular has followed through on the agreements made in a restorative justice process in order to then close the case. Because, oftentimes when restorative justice is used as a diversion, it means that then the responsible party wouldn't have a charge on their record, that the case is fully resolved through restorative justice and wouldn't need to reengage with the standard criminal justice procedure. And so, in that case, you would see oftentimes a written agreement with a deadline, how the responsible party is going to show that they did these things that they agreed to that were named by the harmed party and others within the process is feeling important to ongoing repair of that harm.

One thing I'll say is, it is very common to hear from participants that what was most important in really repairing that harm was the dialogue itself, was the chance to hear from each other, to have questions answered, to meet one another, that kind of humanizing that takes place to take responsibility oftentimes to hear an apology. And oftentimes there's specific things on an agreement, but sometimes they just can feel less important to the participants than the dialogue. But, it's a good ongoing indication of that accountability of being committed to putting things right. And in terms of what's on those agreements, it varies so widely because it's completely dependent on what the needs identified by the individuals involved are. So, prior to doing my PhD and entering the academic space, I worked as a restorative justice practitioner, and the program that I worked with had a very intentionally strengths-based approach to agreement making.

And so, we ended up having a lot of really creative agreement items that would come through. So, things like someone is a songwriter and plays guitar, and so they decide to write a song about this experience, what they learned, and then that gets shared in different ways. A lot of really art space or strengths based agreements that feel meaningful to the people closest to the incident, and that's really what's important. We see a lot of agreement items around ongoing personal reflection and learning. I remember one sexual harm case that I was involved in facilitating where the harmed party ended up essentially assigning a couple of books that she wanted the responsible party to read and to write a report on. So, it's like an ongoing learning feminist theory books. Again, that's all coming from consensus from the people in the circle, including the responsible parties saying, yes, I see how this will meaningfully respond to the needs and the harms that we've identified here today.

Amanda Blasko:

That's really cool. And honestly, it just seems really beautiful that people can decide how they want to repair that harm and have it be something that's just very personal to them. I don't know, I'm just like, that's just on my mind. So, a lot of our listeners are state administering agencies that are tasked with receiving federal criminal justice system dollars and then distributing it across the state according to primary needs, gaps, and challenges. And so, how can we as system actors help to increase buy-in among stakeholders when it comes to funding or even considering funding different varying restorative justice programs?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Great question. Oftentimes when people are trying to increase buy-in to restorative justice, they'll look to some of the more common measures of success that we see. So, we do see a decrease in recidivism. We do see an increase in satisfaction with the justice process for a harmed party and responsible party. But, to me, I think more important than those measures even is the ways in which we see restorative justice being so responsive to the needs that people experience in the wake of significant harm. And that really comes from talking with people who have experienced, or have caused harm, or community members, what do they need in their community following incidents of harm? And so, really taking that time to listen to people, to think about how can systems be responsive to common human needs, or at least give that option, give that voluntary option, I think is one of the most powerful and persuasive ways that this can be accomplished.

One activity that I like to do when teaching restorative justice is to ask people to reflect on different times in their lives and the needs that they experience. So, I'll ask people to first reflect on a time that as a member of their community they became aware of a harm of a crime being committed or a significant incident of harm, and to share what their needs were in that moment, and you hear the same things

every time. It's needs for safety, needs for more information. They need to know that it's not going to happen again. They need to know that the people who are most directly impacted are receiving the care and the help they need. They need to know that the people who caused the harm are receiving the help they need, but really safety information. And then, next I'll ask people to reflect on a time that they experienced significant harm, so they were maybe a direct victim of a crime or something in their interpersonal life. What were your needs then?

And we hear, again, need to know that it won't happen again. Need to know why it happened. Was I being targeted? I have these questions that are unanswered. A need to hear that accountability, that responsibility taking, a need for something meaningful to be done, a need for apology. And then, finally, I'll have people reflect on a time that they caused significant harm. So, maybe they committed a crime, maybe this is something in their interpersonal life. What were their needs then? And you hear, again, the need to be seen as a whole person outside of this one offense. The need to have a chance to take responsibility for what I did, to make things right, to do something, to apologize, to take responsibility, and then also provide the context to be understood as a full person, something else that was happening in my life.

The need really to make things right, or the need for help because of that core need that I had that led to me causing this harm or doing this harmful behavior. In terms of that advocacy and that getting stakeholders on board, finding ways to recenter on what are these common human needs that we see in the wake of significant harm, and how can our justice systems provide options so that we're more responsive to the needs of individuals and have a focus on healing and putting things as right as possible, as opposed to these punitive outcomes that so often create further harm, certainly for a responsible party or offender, but also for harmed parties, victims and communities as well. We see the ways in which our communities are consistently fragmented by these punitive approaches.

Amanda Blasko:

You teach law students or grad students, so I guess it's one and the same.

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Both. So, it's a law school. Vermont Law School is a law school and a graduate school, and we have a master's in restorative justice as well as a professional certificate in restorative justice. And so, the classes I teach tend to be a combination of law students and people getting a master's or professional certificate in restorative justice.

Amanda Blasko:

That's interesting. So, for the people that are trying to get the professional certificate or even the master's, what is their end goal? I guess, are people wanting to become practitioners? Are they wanting to become lawyers who use restorative justice practices? I'm just curious as to what people's intentions are.

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Definitely. It's such a good question, and again, it's a really wide range. So, we definitely, we have students who are interested in becoming practitioners, so working with community restorative justice programs in some capacity, whether that's as a facilitator, or a case coordinator, or a director. We also definitely have people who are interested in more of advocacy roles, in policy change roles. We have a lot of students who are doing joint degrees, so like a JD and a master's in restorative justice. So, those

are folks that are going to be more interested in, I think I'm going to become a public defender or a prosecutor, and I want to be able to bring restorative justice with me, advocate for a program to be set up in the jurisdiction I'm part of, work closely with community-based restorative justice provider groups, or I want to pursue policy change in my state.

We also though have a lot of students who are planning to go into education or into other types of nonprofit work, different types of social change work, and see the applicability of restorative approaches more broadly. So, it's not all people who are looking to create change necessarily in the criminal justice sphere. It's also just seeing the applicability of this paradigm shift and how we think about community, how we address harm, and being excited to take that into more and more places.

Amanda Blasko:

That's super interesting. Well, and then as we discussed earlier, it is a paradigm shift. So, even if they don't end up going to actually practice as a practitioner, they can still take the model with them into whatever they do as you alluded to.

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Another thing that I'll often do with students when I'm teaching restorative justice or in community training, other contexts where we're introducing people to restorative justice is to just put up the word justice on the board or in some way bring that word to the attention of people and ask for different associations or images that come to mind when people see the word justice, and it's really interesting. You get a whole range of justice league superheroes. There's certainly the judges gavel, the handcuffs, the jail bars, and really what we're doing here is redefining that word, redefining what we mean when we talk about justice, to instead have justice be understood as relationship, as understanding harm and looking to repair.

Oftentimes we'll talk about the community as a web of relationships, and when an incident of harm takes place, there's that fracture that then impacts the strength of that entire web. And so, justice being about repairing the web, about putting things right, about reinforcing those fundamental community relationships where we know and ideally can trust that we will be good to one another. And so, it is, it's that, again, that paradigm shift, that really fundamental paradigm shift.

Amanda Blasko:

So, what does the word justice invoke in your mind?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

When I think about justice I think about repair. I think about the way in which we are all deeply interconnected, meaning that all of our actions impact each other. We rely on each other. When we are born we are born with this deep need for relationship, even just for survival, and that is very apparent in an infant, but it's true our entire lives. We need each other. We're connected to each other. We rely on one another. I think something that's really powerful about restorative justice is it opens up a space where that interconnected nature of our human experience is very apparent. We see the ways that we're connected to each other, that we impact each other, and that we need to support each other when things go wrong.

Amanda Blasko:

Is there a best way that restorative justice programs should be operated? Should they be completely community-based or do they work best when there's a connection to a system like a criminal justice system agency? I'm thinking like a diversion program that has a system actor associated with it and also a community-based organization running it. Is there a best practice there?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

This is another area I would say we need more research to understand these range of different models and different ways of connecting or not connecting to the conventional criminal legal system to understand basically pros and cons of all these different models. What I would say is that there are significant benefits to having restorative justice services. So, the people who are providing restorative justice be part of a community-based organization rather than fully within, whether it's a DA's office or a police department or something like that, because that degree of autonomy of being a really community-based organization just helps to deal with some of these risks of restorative justice being co-opted, or being diluted, or being called restorative justice but really it's a replication of something that was already happening. So, there's a lot of strength to that.

Of course, then funding is always an issue for community-based organizations, so there's challenges certainly too. There's a lot of push recently for restorative justice programs to do more accepting of community-based referrals. So, cases that come directly to restorative justice programs rather than through first a prosecutor, or a judge, or DA. So, I think that's great when it can work for the people involved, because then it's a full diversion. But then, oftentimes you'll see police departments, or judges, or other system actor groups that have referral arrangements with restorative justice programs where they say, we're going to send these cases. There's an agreement around what that means, what completion of those cases within a restorative justice process would look like. And so, you see a lot of diversion like that.

And then, of course, there's also programs that operate even within prisons. So, while someone is incarcerated, arranging a meeting between a responsible party and a harmed party and have maybe sometimes an impact on sentence, but oftentimes no impact on the punitive sentence, but it still has those positive benefits of going through this process, this dialogue, the self-reflection, getting questions answered, that opportunity for accountability, that opportunity for healing, even if it doesn't have an impact on the criminal justice outcome.

Amanda Blasko:

Thank you. So, from your perspective, does or can restorative justice reduce or address social and racial inequities within the criminal justice system?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

When we think of restorative justice as how I think it is now best characterized, which is as a social movement that has this aim of transforming the way that our communities go about justice making and transforming that criminal justice system to be more responsive and compassionate to the needs of individuals, a big part of that is focusing on decreasing incarceration, decreasing other punitive measures that we see being a big part of those racial and social inequities. And so, fundamentally, yes, restorative justice should have a big role to play and I think has a lot of potential in terms of making a more compassionate human justice system that is better for everyone and decreases some of these really awful negative impacts that we see on certain, especially racial groups. Now, the concern that I and others in the field have is that, because oftentimes restorative justice in the way that it's rolled out

by programs around the country is being made available to misdemeanor offenses, juvenile responsible parties.

It's also just completely a patchwork in terms of which jurisdictions even have restorative justice as an option. I remember facilitating a case at one point where the police officer who referred the case for making the referral was trying to figure out by even just a few feet where this crime had taken place to know whether it was in the city limit and could be referred to restorative justice or whether that wasn't an option where this took place. And so, we have a huge access issue, is what I'm trying to say. Restorative justice is not broadly accessible, both because it's not available in every jurisdiction, and because it's not available for every type of crime, for every age of responsible party. And the risk there is that if restorative justice ends up being applied mostly in affluent, maybe majority White communities for misdemeanor juvenile offenses, and then those are the responsible parties that are getting this better outcome in many ways, this opportunity for the process to be resolved through restorative justice case, we run the risk of exasperating those inequities that you're talking about.

And so, what we need is just, we need more research. We need to better understand how restorative justice is being applied across the country. We need to understand the impacts it's having in communities, and then we need that advocacy to push for restorative justice access in more places for more types of offenses for more people. And I think until we are really taking restorative justice seriously in that way, it won't have the full potential that I do think it has to be a powerful tool for change in addressing some of those broader racial and social inequities.

Amanda Blasko:

I know we're getting a little close to the time, but I'm just curious, is there anyone doing, and I'm sure there is, and you might even be doing it, doing research as to how to help avoid some of those pitfalls or replications of the existing inequities when it comes to race and other social injustices within the conventional criminal justice system? Has anyone determined any key ways in which we can avoid those pitfalls, I guess?

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

To a large extent research has lagged behind practice in the restorative justice field. And so, that's been one of our key aims of the National Center on Restorative Justice is to, one of our pillars of activity is restorative justice research. Our research endeavors are led by our partners at the University of Vermont. And one of the things that we've done is to establish a restorative justice research community. And the initial projects of that research community are doing a comprehensive literature review of what do we know about restorative justice in the U.S. criminal legal system? Where does the research stand now? Really getting very clear on everything we know now. And then, doing, one of the key projects of our research pillar is a core elements research project. So, we don't have a shared common definition, but we do have these core elements and looking, and working really closely with community-based restorative justice organizations with practitioners and provider groups to understand what are the core elements that ensure best practice of restorative justice that make it restorative justice, and really taking some time to work through all of those questions from a research perspective.

And so, stay tuned. There's definitely been a lot of great work. There's a lot of case studies in the restorative justice field from a research perspective, so people taking a deep dive into a specific program or a specific process type across a few programs that definitely start to answer some of these important questions. But, part of why we decided to establish the restorative justice research community was because in talking to restorative justice researchers, we kept hearing this feeling of loneliness and

isolation, of feeling like they maybe don't have an academic home within their own institution and feel like they're reinventing the wheel. And so, wanting to just carve out more space for restorative justice researchers to be in community, to be in relationship and the collaboration that that makes possible.

Amanda Blasko:

I will definitely be staying tuned for that. It is an interesting space though for you to be in as a researcher with so much, in some ways as a researcher I feel like it would be scary and also exciting to have so many unknowns.

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Yes, it's a great description of the restorative justice field. I think for everyone who's involved is it's so exciting. There's so much possibility and it's so daunting, and overwhelming, and a little scary how much unknown there is and how much work there is to be done to get restorative justice to a place where it is widely accessible, where we can feel confident that people who do engage in restorative justice are going to have a good, safe restorative experience. All of those things take work.

Amanda Blasko:

They definitely do. And I like what you said, seeing this as a transformation of the justice system or a transformation of the way that the criminal legal system operates and making it into something more responsive to individual's needs. So, I think that's just a really wonderful way to put it. And thank you so much for being on the NCJA podcast. I've appreciated our discussion and our conversation here today. And thank you for being here and sharing your wisdom and your knowledge with everyone.

Dr. Lindsey Pointer:

Thanks so much for having me, Amanda. I really appreciated this conversation.