ARTICLE

Teaching restorative practices through games: an experiential and relational restorative pedagogy

Lindsey Pointer and Kathleen McGoey[*]

Abstract

This article argues for the use of games as an effective and dynamic way to teach restorative practices. Grounded in an understanding of restorative pedagogy, a paradigm of teaching in alignment with restorative values and principles, as well as experiential learning strategies, this article introduces games as a way for students to experience and more deeply understand restorative practices while building relationships and skills. Personal accounts of the authors about the impact of using games to teach restorative practices in their own communities are also included.

Keywords: restorative pedagogy, games, teaching, experiential learning.

1. Introduction

When teaching students and new facilitators about forming an agreement in a restorative justice conference, we like to incorporate a game called 'Out of the Box'. This game is designed to help learners think of creative agreement items that use the responsible party's strengths to repair the harms and make things right. There is a lot of silliness and laughter involved in this game as students flex their creative muscles.

Once, when playing the game with a group of high school students, a student hollered playfully, 'Let's just google it! You never said we couldn't google it!' The

* Lindsey Pointer is a PhD Candidate at Victoria University of Wellington and Creative Director of Aspen Restorative Consulting in Wellington, New Zealand. Kathleen McGoey is the Executive Director of Longmont Community Justice Partnership, Longmont, USA.
Contact author: LindseyCPointer@gmail.com.
Readers are encouraged to reach out to the authors to share experiences or for further practical information and game instructions.
Acknowledgement: In sharing the ideas and games described in this article, we would like to acknowledge that they are the product of many restorative practitioners who have lent their creativity, wisdom and passionate commitment to developing ways of teaching and sharing restorative practices that are fun and meaningful. We would like to express our gratitude and indebtedness most especially to our colleagues, friends and teachers Laura Snider, Haley Farrar, Ken Keusenkothen and Lupita Chavez.

laughter continued as we discussed the results we might get from googling 'How-can-Jordan-who-likes-to-draw-cartoons-and-make-silly-videos-repair-the-harm-from-stealing-Alex's-longboard', referencing the scenario we were using for the activity.

In many ways, this failed Google search represents why restorative practices need to be taught differently from other disciplines. Whereas in other disciplines there may often be one correct answer to a question, in restorative approaches, the individuals involved and their distinct experiences are always at the core of the solution. Approaching a problem in a restorative way involves understanding the complicated world of individuals and our interconnectivity through listening, empathising, asking good questions and practising creative problem solving. These core skills and the grounding restorative philosophy cannot be imparted in a lecture format; they must be experienced to be learnt.

Experiential learning in the restorative practices field often takes the form of circles and role plays. These are great teaching tools but are sometimes intimidating to new learners. Games provide an experiential learning tool that is welcoming and playful, giving students a chance to experience and practice restorative tools and values in a low-pressure, engaging format.

This article begins with an overview of different conceptions of restorative justice within the field and the values that are at the core of restorative approaches. This is followed by a description of restorative pedagogy, a way of teaching that is grounded in restorative values, and the methods that are commonly used to teach in a restorative manner. Two overarching characteristics of a restorative education model are identified: the mode of teaching will lean heavily on experiential activities, and the classroom environment will be highly relational. The next two sections explore how games provide an experiential and relational learning experience. This is followed by personal statements by the authors on the impact of using games to teach restorative practices in their communities. Finally, the conclusion summarises the discussion and asserts the value of a greater use of games in teaching restorative practices.[1]

2. Restorative values

The exact definition of restorative justice has been a source of great debate and even contention within the restorative justice field. Broadly speaking, two general conceptions of restorative justice have been put forth: a process conception and a values conception (Braithwaite & Strang, 2001: 1). The process conception sees restorative justice as

> a process that brings together all stakeholders affected by some harm that has been done (e.g. offenders, their families, victims and their families, affec-

1 In this article, we do not conceptually distinguish between 'game' and 'play', as is done by Antony Pemberton in his article 'Time for a rethink: victims and restorative justice' in this issue of *The International Journal of Restorative Justice* (*IJRJ* 2019 vol. 2(1)). Elements of both concepts might be present in our approach.

> ted communities, state agencies such as police). These stakeholders meet in a circle to discuss how they have been affected by the harm and come to some agreement as to what should be done to right any wrongs suffered (Braithwaite & Strang, 2001: 1).

Other scholars argue that restorative justice represents a greater paradigm shift, a new way of thinking about our response to crime and conflict, with common principles and values as the unifying factor between different restorative justice modalities (Zehr, 2015: 48). Gerry Johnstone and Daniel Van Ness refer to this as the 'reparative conception' of restorative justice. In this view, restorative justice is defined by its assertion that the response to crime must seek to repair the harms resulting from crime, or bring about healing (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007: 17). It is not solely the process or encounter but rather this new way of understanding and approaching crime and conflict that is the defining feature of restorative justice.

Others take an even wider approach to the values definition of restorative justice, understanding it as a fundamentally different way of seeing the community as a whole, founded on common beliefs and a vision of a more ideal possible societal future. Johnstone and Van Ness (2007) refer to this definition of restorative justice as the 'transformative conception'. In this view, humans are seen as fundamentally relational beings, intricately connected to one another and to our environment (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007: 17). As Kristina Llewellyn and Jennifer Llewellyn explain, 'The human self is constituted in and through relationships with others' (2015: 16). It is the mission of the restorative movement to transform individuals and social structures to be in alignment with this world view. Restorative practitioners, therefore, must not only focus on individual incidents of harm on the interpersonal level but also cast 'our gaze in proactive, preventative and responsive ways to the range of institutions and systems that structure and impact our relations' (Llewellyn & Morrison, 2018: 347).

Kay Pranis (2007) similarly identifies underlying beliefs or assumptions about the nature of the universe and its operation that she argues are at the basis of restorative justice work. These beliefs include that there is a core human need to be in good relationships, all humans are connected and interdependent, wisdom resides in each person and justice is healing (Pranis, 2007: 65-66). Grounded in these beliefs, restorative justice operates as a wider social movement. This social movement seeks to transform not only the community's response to crime but also other aspects of contemporary society (Johnstone, 2008: 59).

This article will engage with this broad values-based understanding of restorative justice and will contribute to the effort to bring other aspects of society into alignment with restorative values. Specifically, these values include respect, accountability, participation, self-determination, interconnectedness, trust and transformation (Toews, 2013: 9). The article will explore the question of how teaching can be done in a way that is in alignment with restorative values, with a particular focus on the use of games.

The International Journal of Restorative Justice 2019 vol. 2(1) pp. 34-48
doi: 10.5553/IJRJ/258908912019002001003

3. Restorative pedagogy

As restorative practices and the teaching of restorative practices spread around the world, scholars and practitioners have begun to ask very important questions: How should restorative practices be taught? What teaching structures and methods are appropriate in forming a restorative pedagogy?

In the traditional paradigm of teaching, often referred to as the 'transmission model', the teacher transfers knowledge to the students, generally through lectures (Luckner & Nadler, 1992: 12). The instructor is normally situated at the front of the classroom, delivering knowledge to a group of students who take notes, recording the transmitted information. Ken Bain notes, 'If you ask most academics how they define teaching, they will often talk about "transmitting" knowledge, as if teaching is telling' (2004: 173). Paulo Freire has referred to this method of teaching as the 'banking' concept of education, 'in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits made by the teacher' (1970/1993: 53).

From the viewpoint of a restorative framework, there are a few problems with this education model. The first is that it is hierarchical. Whereas restorative approaches prioritise equal voice and emphasise the facilitation of a space where all voices are valued, the traditional classroom values and creates space for the teacher's voice above all others (Gilbert, Schiff & Cunliffe, 2013: 49). Additionally, the traditional classroom structure encourages a passive role for students, a conformist approach to learning and sometimes an adversarial sense of competition resulting from the grading structure of the course (Noakes-Duncan, 2017). All of these qualities contradict the participatory, individualised and collaborative nature of restorative processes. It is interesting to note that this approach to teaching shares many similarities with the dominant criminal justice system, in which a punishment is assigned to a passive offender within a court ritual marked by hierarchy and adversarial relationships (Toews, 2013: 11).

Because of this contradiction, restorative practices courses (regardless of context) are particularly unsuitable for traditional instructor-centred teaching strategies (Gilbert et al., 2013: 44). Restorative practices classrooms or training spaces should instead seek to build and engage community, while modelling the values and principles central to the restorative justice process (Gilbert et al., 2013: 44). As Belinda Hopkins notes,

> The restorative mindset inevitably impacts on pedagogy. A restorative teacher who works with her students ensures that how she teaches simultaneously models her own restorative values but also develops restorative values, aptitudes and skills in her students (2012: 125).

Restorative educators must ask themselves, What learning structure would communicate and reinforce the restorative values of respect, equal voice and relationship? How can we better value the perspectives of the students in the room in addition to the teacher? How can education encourage the development of empa-

thy in students? These questions guide educators in the development of a 'proactive relational pedagogy' (Noakes-Duncan, 2017). As Toews explains,

> This pedagogy, based on restorative values, aims to inspire individual and social transformation; build community among participants; give voice to the unique experiences of participants; offer opportunities for real-life problem solving; provide a creative learning environment that is co-created by students and facilitators; view students as practitioners, theorists, and educators; and invite instructors to view themselves as students and share in the learning process (2013: 6).

Restorative teaching methods have already been implemented in a range of contexts with great success. For example, the New Zealand curriculum for schools and early childhood education services includes restorative practices not only as a response to behaviour issues but also in guiding the approach to teaching (Margrain & Dharan, 2011). The curriculum states that through their learning experiences, students will learn about their own values and those of others. More specifically, they will develop their ability to express their own values and explore with empathy the values of others (Margrain & Dharan, 2011). This commitment to integrating restorative values and priorities in the teaching method has also been made in restorative schools in the United States (Hopkins, 2004), university classrooms (Carson & Bussler, 2013) and restorative justice education in prisons (Toews, 2013).

There are a few experiential and relational exercises that are commonly used to teach in a way that is in alignment with restorative values. Perhaps the most common of these is the circle. Belinda Hopkins explains how an entire lesson may be structured with the circle framework, giving students the opportunity to reflect on their learning in the circle and providing the teacher with valuable feedback about the students' current needs (2012: 125). As Barbara Carson and Darrol Bussler explain regarding their use of the circle process in university classrooms,

> Rather than allowing the confident students to monopolise the discussion, the Circle process, as practiced in restorative justice, ensures that every class member has an opportunity to speak and to listen, and to practice the responsibility to speak and to listen (2013: 140).

Pair, and group, work is also often used to encourage open dialogue between learners (Hopkins, 2012: 126). This can serve to build relationships within the class and also provides an opportunity for learners to share their own experiences with the material and how it applies to their lives (Toews, 2013: 24). This group work also often includes opportunities to apply material to case studies, in order to gain a real-life understanding of restorative justice (Toews, 2013: 24). This may be done through role plays such as restorative justice simulations.

Students are often also encouraged to engage in self-reflection and implementation within their own communities. Carson and Bussler report asking stu-

The International Journal of Restorative Justice 2019 vol. 2(1) pp. 34-48
doi: 10.5553/IJRJ/258908912019002001003

dents to identify and examine their own values as they relate to justice, design new means of implementing restorative approaches in troubled areas in their communities and practice restorative processes in their communities (2013: 142).

Games are used in restorative pedagogy approaches, but often only as a way to break the ice and build relationships and trust before beginning a lesson or circle process. As Carson and Bussler explain, 'Starting a class with an activity where students interact with each other creates an excellent learning atmosphere for the remaining of the daily session' (2013: 148). Hopkins remarks, 'Never forget the games! Laughing and playing together builds trust and a sense of belonging' (2004: 135).

Games are certainly an effective means of breaking the ice and forming relationships, but their use as a restorative teaching method need not end there. Games may also be used as pedagogical exercises designed to deepen students' understanding of restorative justice and develop specific skills related to facilitating and participating in restorative processes. Skills include building relationships, asking open-ended and affective questions, reflective statements, brainstorming creative ideas for repairing harms and understanding structural injustices that contribute to wrongdoing. Games can be used in facilitator and community trainings, with youth in schools, in universities, as well as in prisons, workplaces or other organisations as a way to create an accessible and meaningful learning environment to develop and encourage new skills. The element of play creates a safe experiential learning environment for students to take risks and learn from mistakes while also building community within the group.

The next two sections will examine how teaching restorative practices through games fulfils two key characteristics of restorative pedagogy: it provides an opportunity for meaningful and enjoyable experiential learning and generates a highly relational learning environment. This, in turn, contributes to an educational experience that builds community among participants, creates space for each person to bring his or her unique experience and perspectives to the classroom, empowers learners through opportunities to meaningfully engage with the material and provides a feeling of equality between teacher and students. Games contribute to the creation of an educational experience that is in alignment with restorative values.

4. Experiential learning through games

A key characteristic of restorative pedagogy is an experiential mode of teaching. It is important that students not only learn about restorative practices, values and principles but also experience them directly (Gilbert et al., 2013: 46). The field of experiential learning is well developed and offers a wealth of insight for the enhancement of restorative pedagogy. Many of the central values and principles of experiential learning are in clear alignment with restorative ideals, making the integration of experiential approaches into the teaching of restorative practices a clear choice.

Experiential learning is learning through doing. 'It is a process through which individuals construct knowledge, acquire skills, and enhance values from direct experience' (Luckner & Nadler, 1992: 3). Facilitated experiential learning generally involves a few distinct phases. Students engage in some activity, reflect on the activity, derive useful insights from that analysis and then incorporate the new learning into their understanding and behaviour. Games provide a highly effective mode of experiential learning that can be less intimidating to learners than other more direct experiential teaching methods such as role plays.

The benefits of experiential learning are numerous. Increasing the involvement of learners leads to an increase in interest and ownership of what is being learnt. It also encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, rather than assigning that responsibility to a teacher or other outside person (Luckner & Nadler, 1992: 3-4). This way of learning also encourages a more complete integration of what has been learnt with the learner's perception of self and thoughts and actions moving forward.

In experiential exercises such as games, the role of the teacher more closely resembles the role of a facilitator, creating a safe space for the experience and helping to facilitate a meaningful discussion following the activity in order to reflect (Gilbert et al., 2013: 55). The instructor is no longer the 'expert', imparting her knowledge to students. She is instead a facilitator of the learning experience (Toews, 2013: 20). This allows for a more even distribution of power and voice between teacher and students, bringing the classroom further into alignment with restorative values.

In her role as facilitator, the instructor is responsible for creating and maintaining a safe space for the learning game. As Rohnke and Butler explain,

> From the start, if you model openness, encouragement, sensitivity and competence people will feel safe with you. They will also feel safe with and may open up to others in the group. Your job is to create an encouraging blanket of trust so that group members can learn to rely on each other (1995: 9).

In order for any type of experiential learning to be effective, the facilitator must create a safe and respectful learning environment (Toews, 2013: 12).

In addition to modelling trust and positive relationships, the instructor is responsible for structuring the experience of the game, setting boundaries and supporting learners. The instructor facilitates the learning process, largely through guiding a debrief of the game that supports reflection, analysis and synthesis (Luckner & Nadler, 1992: 4). The debrief also allows the instructor to assess the needs of the students and make appropriate modifications to subsequent games and activities (Toews, 2013: 19).

As an experiential learning method, games rely on the wisdom of the group to make learning happen, just as restorative processes rely on the wisdom of the circle. Learners are involved in posing questions, being curious, being creative, drawing connections and constructing meaning (Luckner & Nadler, 1992: 4). They are co-creators of the learning experience (Toews, 2013: 19). The instructor sets up a

The International Journal of Restorative Justice 2019 vol. 2(1) pp. 34-48
doi: 10.5553/IJRJ/258908912019002001003

game and holds the space for the learners' engagement with the activity, but is not in control of the exact outcome. That is up to the students.

One of the challenges in experiential learning is knowing how far to push participants out of their comfort zone. It can be difficult to know what game or activity will present the right level of challenge for the group. Luckner and Nadler (1992: 47) suggest being intentional and picking experiences that are right at the edge of unfamiliar territory for a group's comfort level. There will be feelings of discomfort or risk. At this edge space, learners can go for it and have an experience of success or a breakthrough. Finding this 'edge' by reading the group and maintaining an appropriate level of challenge throughout a class or training is yet another skill that must be carefully honed by those teaching restorative practices.

A final and supremely important characteristic of learning experientially through games is that it is fun. Playfulness and laughter create an invitation towards active involvement, creating a sense of togetherness and community that aids the learning process, while also being in alignment with restorative values. Through incorporating fun, energy is high, attention is focused and the drive to learn is enhanced through sheer enjoyment of the process (Rohnke & Butler, 1995: 12-13).

5. Building relationships through games

A second key characteristic of restorative pedagogy is a highly relational classroom environment. 'A restorative approach to education demands relationality in all aspects of teaching/learning' (Llewellyn & Parker, 2018: 401). Relationship building helps to establish trust between students and build a more connected learning community (Gilbert et al., 2013: 59). As Llewellyn and Llewellyn explain,

> At its core … a restorative approach is relationship focused. Learning cannot focus only on individuals; it must also direct attention to the relationships between and among the people involved. The experiences, needs, and perspectives of all learners, including educators, matter and are central, not in contract to or in competition with one another, but in relation to one another (2015: 19).

Games contribute to creating a fun, safe and relaxed atmosphere, which aids in relationship building (Hopkins, 2004: 137). However, beyond that conducive atmosphere, games may also contribute to relationship building on a deeper level, in the same way that the restorative justice process itself impacts relationships between participants.

Restorative processes often have a positive impact on relationships. Whether those relationships are being built through a circle process or repaired through a restorative justice conference, often practitioners see a shift in participants towards a more connected and caring way of being together through the course of the restorative process.

What exactly causes this shift in emotions and relationships is a relatively new area of inquiry in the restorative justice field. Meredith Rossner (2013) has argued that interaction rituals present in the micro-dynamics of the restorative justice process strengthen feelings of solidarity and create a rise in emotional energy. John Braithwaite (2000) has noted the importance of repentance rituals to transform shame. Jane Bolitho (2017) has put forth the idea that the restorative justice meeting parallels the sequence of memory reconsolidation, allowing participants, especially victims, to reactivate an emotional experience while providing some degree of dissonance through hearing another person's story, and ultimately updating the memory of the emotional learning. Kelly and Thorsborne (2014) have used Affect Script Psychology to explain the change in emotions and the emergence of empathy in the restorative justice process. Affect Script Psychology claims that we can understand each other because of our shared biological inheritance. During a restorative justice conference, participants experience affective resonance with the emotions shared by others and develop empathy (Kelly & Thorsborne, 2014).

Elsewhere, Lindsey Pointer has sought to answer this question of what makes the restorative justice process relationally transformative by drawing a connection with Victor Turner's theory of ritual (Pointer, 2016). She has argued that the restorative justice process, like transformative rituals, creates a liminal space, where normal social rules and roles are suspended and a radical equality exists. In this liminal space, communitas, or the revelation that all people are connected in one community, emerges. Through this revelation, participants experience greater connection, empathy and an impulse towards kindness.

Wherever they are found, liminal spaces create connection and strengthen relationships. This may work towards reconciliation, as in restorative justice, or towards building and maintaining relationships, as in other restorative practices such as the circle process.

Games also have the ability to create a liminal space. Turner uses the term 'liminoid' to describe experiences that have the characteristics of liminality, but are not part of social or religious ritual as liminal experiences are. The liminoid is less serious, but is similarly a state where participants can step outside of normal social rules and roles, playfully bending structures (Turner, 1982).

Through generating liminal space, games are able to facilitate interaction between people across social boundaries (ethnicity, gender, nationality, political party etc.) (Crist, Voogt & Dunn-Vaturi, 2016: 179). Play takes us out of the ordinary and allows us to interact uninhibited by social norms and hierarchies. Games can be such a strong social lubricant that under the right circumstances they can even transform animosity to amity (Crist et al., 2016: 181).

In theories of play, this liminal space is often called the 'magic circle' (Harviainen & Lieberoth, 2012: 529). Within the magic circle, there exists a self-referential social system with its own frame of behaviours, goals and values (Kristiansen, 2015: 157). 'Inside the circle of the game the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count. We are different and do things differently' (Huizinga, 1949: 12). In this liminal space, participants may experience a profound engagement, equality and connection akin to the communitas Turner describes in ritual experiences

The International Journal of Restorative Justice 2019 vol. 2(1) pp. 34-48
doi: 10.5553/IJRJ/258908912019002001003

(Harviainen, 2012: 523-533). Feelings of trust and belonging increase, further feeding the sense of liminality and communitas. Turner notes that the emergence of communitas carries with it a moral imperative. When communitas surfaces, the resulting sentiment is human kindness. This is because the recognition of this deep connection leads the ritual group to endorse behaviours that express interconnectedness (Turner, 1969: 105). Through this ritual mechanism, games, like the restorative justice ritual, are capable of building relationships founded on the restorative ideals of respect, equality and connection.

In addition to feelings of connection and kindness, the magic circle of the game also creates a feeling of safety (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004: 94). Within the game space and time, participants are free to try something new without worry of judgement or negative repercussions. The feeling of trust and safety makes games an ideal learning space.

In ritual, the revelation of communitas in liminality needs to be intentionally carried forward (often through symbols or repeated experiences), or else it risks being lost by participants after leaving the ritual experience. Similarly, in games, acquired information needs to be anchored, or it may be lost when participants leave the magic circle. Debriefing the experience offers a good start, allowing participants to further internalise the feelings and lessons learnt. However, long-term and more holistic change requires a community that reinforces the learning and values established within the game (Harviainen, 2012: 518). Participants will seek to revivify the sensation and the learning through repeated experience. To this end, it is ideal for communities using games to teach restorative practices to offer ongoing opportunities for experiential and games-based learning for experienced facilitators and practitioners as well as for new recruits.

6. Ideas in action: the impact of using games to teach restorative practices

What follow are personal statements by the authors on the impact of using games to teach restorative practices to facilitators and other practitioners in their own communities: a non-profit restorative justice provider in Colorado and a university in Wellington, New Zealand.[2] In these communities, games are used with both youth and adult learners as well as with beginner and more advanced-level practitioners.

6.1 Longmont Community Justice Partnership (LCJP)

Longmont Community Justice Partnership (LCJP) has been collaborating with law enforcement and schools to provide restorative justice as a diversionary pro-

2 Both authors are involved in designing and delivering restorative practices trainings in the communities discussed. Lindsey Pointer currently designs and delivers trainings for Victoria University of Wellington and Aspen Restorative Consulting. She previously designed and delivered trainings for Longmont Community Justice Partnership as the Community Restorative Justice Bilingual Program Manager. As Executive Director of Longmont Community Justice Partnership, Kathleen McGoey oversees the training curriculum of the organisation and is involved in the design and delivery of trainings.

cess to address crime and conflict in Longmont, Colorado, USA, since 1994. Longmont police refer both juvenile and adult cases directly to LCJP in place of issuing a summons or making an arrest for a criminal offence. LCJP, a non-governmental organisation, trains volunteers to facilitate dialogue through a community group conference model that brings together harmed and responsible parties, their support people, community representatives and police to address a wide range of misdemeanour and felony-level offences. Successful completion of the reparative contract results in the responsible person avoiding a criminal charge on his or her record for that incident. Similarly, LCJP works with schools to utilise restorative practices as alternatives to suspensions, expulsions and other forms of punitive discipline.

LCJP has developed a robust training curriculum to meet the evolving needs of its clients, volunteers and stakeholders as its programmes have grown and changed over time. In 2014, trainers recognised that volunteers – both adults and youth – can easily settle into a place of stagnation with skills development once they reach familiarity with the process and an *adequate* skill level. The problematic outcome of this scenario was that staff would assume responsibility for facilitating higher-complexity, higher-impact cases, based on the assessment that volunteers were not ready (i.e. did not have the skills) to handle such cases. This led to staff overwhelm and also to frustration on the part of dedicated, seasoned volunteers, who noticed that they were not being considered for facilitating more difficult, and often more interesting, cases. LCJP set out to improve training methods that would revivify the learning experience to engage all types of learners, while prioritising alignment with the organisation's commitment to restorative values and a culture of fun.

The first guiding principle in LCJP's training revitalisation was to create safety in risk-taking. Many of the seasoned adult volunteers and experienced youth volunteers expressed resistance at the idea of being challenged, or being placed in the 'hot seat', where they might feel vulnerable or tested despite their years of practice. Trainers met this challenge by deliberately designing experiential trainings that included games throughout the session. The first game in a training session focuses on establishing trust and connection within the group and does not involve too much risk. Laughter is key. The second game pushes participants to try new skills and take risks. The third game offers the opportunity to apply those enhanced skills within the trust and fun of team play, resulting in a sense of accomplishment and success. LCJP adapts the challenge level of the games based on each training group, with one consistent goal: never let the games be *too* easy. In a safe learning environment, both youth and adult learners benefit from a gentle nudge – or shove – towards the edges of their comfort zones.

The second essential aspect of LCJP's training is to establish trainers as learners, as opposed to trainers as experts. LCJP recognises that, in alignment with restorative principles, all experiences and voices have value, and while trainers need to define structure and learning objectives, it is key to recognise and create space for the wisdom of all present. This has also been vital in acknowledging that some volunteers have more years of experience than staff members, and trainers hope to highlight volunteers' knowledge, not diminish it. Utilising an elicitive

The International Journal of Restorative Justice 2019 vol. 2(1) pp. 34-48
doi: 10.5553/IJRJ/258908912019002001003

teaching style and intentional debrief process with open-ended questions offers a solution to this need. Trainers seek out opportunities to pause a game to spotlight or ask more questions about a participant's response, bringing emphasis and value to diverse approaches. While debriefing using open-ended questions, trainers reflect and validate participants' observations and constructively reframe or redirect responses as needed. This affirmation and reflection encourages participants to bring deeper meaning to their own experiences and helps them to integrate new information and skills.

Finally, LCJP training aligns with the organisation's culture of fun. The trainers model having fun while leading and playing games, as well as through their interactions with each other. This modelling of playfulness invites participants to let go of a certain amount of rigidity and attachment to being right and encourages everyone to take themselves a little less seriously. By using games that focus on play and experimentation instead of knowing the most, LCJP successfully supports healthy participant vulnerability and stepping into discomfort when trying something new.

While this more nuanced approach to training felt experimental and risky for the organisation, LCJP staff and trainers were delighted and surprised by the response from participants. Some of the most resistant volunteers left training saying that they felt more confident to try their new skills and requested assignment to more challenging cases so they could practice. A year after this training redesign, LCJP reached a benchmark when it handed over a high-impact case involving seven harmed parties and one responsible person to a pair of volunteer facilitators, who led the process successfully with minimal support from staff.

6.2 Victoria University of Wellington and Aspen Restorative Consulting

In recent years, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, has begun a journey towards becoming a Restorative University (Pointer, 2017). In 2013, the Diana Unwin Chair in Restorative Justice was established, and Professor Chris Marshall was appointed as the inaugural holder of the chair. Since then, the chair and the surrounding team have provided research, consultation and leadership in restorative practices for public sector agencies and civil society organisations. The chair has also had a large impact on operations within the university, making strides towards more restorative approaches to conduct issues, communication and community building.

This effort has involved both the implementation of restorative justice on campus as a response to student misconduct as well as the use of restorative practices for proactive culture building in the university community. The residential halls have taken the lead in this wider implementation of restorative practices. At the beginning of each year, Aspen Restorative Consulting (ARC), an agency specialising in restorative practices training and facilitation, trains residential advisors working in the halls in how to facilitate a circle process with their residents to build relationships, establish group norms and restoratively address conflict and misconduct. Residential advisors also learn how to hold a restorative conversation with residents and colleagues one-on-one.

Facilitation and conflict transformation is generally a new area of skill development for most residential advisors and, as such, can initially involve some feelings of nervousness, resistance and insecurity. Games are used to bring the group together and teach essential skills such as asking open-ended, affective questions and how to find creative solutions to repair harms. The use of games helps to relax and engage the students and creates a safe and fun space for learning to occur. The liminal space created by the games also helps to form relationships of trust and safety within the residential advisor staff groups, relationships that will serve them throughout the year.

In order to manage the restorative justice caseload on campus, each year 'restorative justice facilitator training' is offered for professional staff, with many attendees subsequently facilitating cases of student misconduct. Both in the initial facilitator training and in follow-up skills development sessions, ARC uses games to instil restorative values, practice and cement essential skills and build connections and trust within the group.

Feedback received from all groups of training attendees indicates a high level of satisfaction with the experiential and playful mode of learning provided by the integration of games. The resulting inside jokes, shared stories and meaningful learning create group cohesion and fuel participant commitment to restorative values and the use of restorative practices on campus.

7. Conclusion

Being part of the restorative justice movement involves critical reflection on the part of each practitioner to determine our degree of alignment with restorative values. This reflection includes considering the way restorative practices are being taught. Developments in restorative pedagogy point to two key factors that guide teaching modalities in a restorative direction: the incorporation of experiential learning techniques and the cultivation of relationships. The use of games to teach restorative practices fulfils both of these criteria by providing a meaningful learning experience and generating a liminal space in which community connections are strengthened.

Games can be used alongside other common experiential and relational teaching methods such as circles, group work and role plays. The intention is not for games to replace other teaching methods, but rather to serve as another tool in the restorative educator's toolbox. What sets games apart from other common restorative teaching methods is their ability to push participants to develop new skills and try out new ways of thinking in a playful and safe way that is less likely to be met with initial fear and resistance by learners. Games cultivate skills development and relationship building simultaneously, while feeling fun and accessible.

Using games to teach restorative practices also opens the door to further practitioner-and-instructor creativity as we continually design experiences and activities that will help students to absorb the restorative tenets and practice necessary skills on a deeper level. The expectation that teachers continue to push an

The International Journal of Restorative Justice 2019 vol. 2(1) pp. 34-48
doi: 10.5553/IJRJ/258908912019002001003

edge with their own openness to learning and teaching in new ways helps to revivify the mutual learning process and avoid the distancing power dynamics found in traditional lecture-style teaching.

Further research and development is required to understand the ideal balance between more traditional, lecture-based methods of teaching and experiential or games-based engagement. Likely, the balance point is different across various contexts, age groups and learning formats. Regardless of context and audience, this article urges those involved in the teaching of restorative practices to think critically about their mode of delivery and to consider incorporating dynamic activities and games that help surface individuals' experiences and encourage playful risk-taking and fun.

References

Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bolitho, J. (2017). Inside the restorative justice black box. *International Review of Victimology*, 23(3), 233-255.

Braithwaite, J. (2000). Repentance rituals and restorative justice. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 8(1), 115-131.

Braithwaite, J. & Strang, H. (2001). Introduction: restorative justice and civil society. In J. Braithwaite & H. Strang (eds.), *Restorative justice and civil society* (pp. 1-13). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carson, B.A. & Bussler, D. (2013). Teaching restorative justice to education and criminal justice majors. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 16(1), 137-149.

Crist, W., Voogt, A. & Dunn-Vaturi, A.E. (2016). Facilitating interaction: board games as social lubricants in the Ancient Near East. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 35(2), 179-196.

Freire, P. (1970/1993). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Gilbert, M.J., Schiff, M. & Cunliffe, R.H. (2013). Teaching restorative justice: developing a restorative andragogy for face-to-face, online and hybrid course modalities. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 16(1), 43-69.

Harviainen, J.T. (2012). Ritualistic games, boundary control, and information uncertainty. *Simulation & Gaming*, 43(4), 506-527.

Harviainen, J.T. & Lieberoth, A. (2012). Similarity of social information processes in games and rituals. *Simulation & Gaming*, 43(4), 528-549.

Hopkins, B. (2004). *Just schools: a whole school approach to restorative justice*. London: J. Kingsley Publishers.

Hopkins, B. (2012). Restorative justice as social justice. *Nottingham Law Journal*, 21, 121-132.

Huizinga, J. (1949). *Homo ludens: a study of the play element in culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Johnstone, G. (2008). The agendas of the restorative justice movement. *Sociology of Crime Law and Deviance*, 11, 59-79.

Johnstone, G. & Ness, D.V. (2007). The meaning of restorative justice. In G. Johnstone & D. V. Ness (eds.), *Handbook of restorative justice* (pp. 5-23). Portland: Willan Publishing.

Kelly, V.C. & Thorsborne, M. (2014). *The psychology of emotion in restorative practice: how affect script psychology explains how and why restorative practice works*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Kristiansen, E. (2015). Game space: on liminality and the magic circle of games. In E. Kristiansen & O. Harslof (eds.), *Engaging spaces: sites of performance, interaction and reflection*. Copenhagen: Museaum Tusculanum Press.

Llewellyn, K. & Llewellyn, J. (2015). A restorative approach to learning: relational theory as feminist pedagogy in universities. In T.P. Light, J. Nicholas & R. Bondy (eds.), *Feminist pedagogy in higher education: critical theory and practice* (pp. 11-32). Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Llewellyn, J. & Morrison, B. (2018). Deepening the relational ecology of restorative justice. *The International Journal of Restorative Justice*, 1(3), 343-355.

Llewellyn, K. & Parker, C. (2018). Asking the 'who': a restorative purpose for education based on relational pedagogy and conflict dialogue. *The International Journal of Restorative Justice*, 1(3), 399-412.

Luckner, J. & Nadler, R. (1992). *Processing the experience: strategies to enhance and generalize learning*. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Margrain, V. & Dharan, V. (2011). Connecting curriculum. In A. Macfarlane & V. Margrain (eds.), *Responsive pedagogy: engaging restoratively with challenging behaviour* (pp. 64-82). Wellington: NZCER Press.

Noakes-Duncan, T. (2017). *Lecture: pedagogy for restorative thinkers*. Paper presented at the Critical Issues in Restorative Justice Practice, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Pointer, L. (2016). Understanding transformational space: an analysis of restorative justice conferences through religious studies theoretical lenses. *Restorative Justice: An International Journal*, 4(2), 148-167.

Pointer, L. (2017). Building a restorative university. *Journal of Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 49(2), 63-70.

Pranis, K. (2007). Restorative values. In G. Johnstone & D.V. Ness (eds.), *Handbook of Restorative Justice* (pp. 59-74). Portland: Willan Publishing.

Rohnke, K. & Butler, S. (1995). *Quicksilver: adventure games, initiative problems, trust activities, and a guide to effective leadership*. Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co.

Rossner, M. (2013). *Just emotions: rituals of restorative justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Salen, K. & Zimmerman, E. (2004). *Rules of play: game design fundamentals*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Toews, B. (2013). Toward a restorative justice pedagogy: reflections on teaching restorative justice in correctional facilities. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 16(1), 6-27.

Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Turner, V. (1982). *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications.

Zehr, H. (2015). *The little book of restorative justice* (revised and updated). New York: Good Books.

The International Journal of Restorative Justice 2019 vol. 2(1) pp. 34-48
doi: 10.5553/IJRJ/258908912019002001003