

Episode 232: Reflecting on Two Years of Trauma

Lizzy: I'm Lizzy Ghedi-Ehrlich.

Lisa: And I'm Lisa Hernandez.

Lizzy: And we are your hosts for Scholar Strategy Network's No Jargon each month. We'll discuss an American policy problem with one of the nation's top researchers without jargon. And this month, we're focusing on the concept of traumatization, how it's affecting us, how the pandemic, how racial unrest, how a host of traumatic events – though of course, I think we'll problematize that term a little bit, um – are affecting our lives.

Lisa: Well, I don't think we're strangers to national crises at this point.

Lizzy: I mean, no one is, is what I think is maybe the most interesting thing about this moment in history, you know, because I think, uh, what we know from looking at other traumas of the past is that they visit themselves unequally upon people. And I think when we're talking about this pandemic, one of the interesting narratives that have emerged is how, you know, this is affecting everyone.

But then you can take that a step further and say, well, actually it's affecting people really unequally. I don't know if you saw that a Atlantic article, but everyone's talking about, um, that was posted this week about a person writing from rural Michigan saying, you know where I live, no one cares about the pandemic.

Like life is continuing completely. As it was where we are really sneering at you all talking about, I have to wear a full face mask when I look at my child. Like it was really kind of skewering what it saw as like not actual public health concerns, but sort of more identity based concerns. Um, and there's been a lot of pushback about it.

So different perspectives for different folks.

Lisa: Hmm, that is very interesting. And I think like just the unequal burden on some people is really like reflective of just disaster capitalism and how it just heightens different disenfranchisement among people, like people of color, low-income people. And it's just – that's been interesting to witness through the pandemic and how truly it's like all of us are living in very different worlds.

Lizzy: Yes. Yes. And I think some of it is literal. Like we do have people who are absolutely more affected by the pandemic than other people. And then we also have people who are willing to put in more work to closing themselves off, to feeling the effects and people who just have less time for that, you know, like that adds another interesting layer.

Lisa: I mean, there's like untreated traumas going on everywhere. Some people are just like, let me conceal it. Pretend it's not there. And maybe everything will be fine, but then it affects other people as well. It's like,

Lizzy: It is right. It's well, it's a very human response. Um, and actually I think that's something that we're definitely going to get into. And this week's episode, when I speak to Dr. Maurice Stevens, a professor of comparative studies at the Ohio state university, Dr. Stevens uses critical trauma theory in their research and overarching themes in their work include examining how individuals and communities create an enact sense of self and liberative capacity in the aftermath and in the midst of overwhelming events...here's our conversation.

Lizzy: Dr. Stevens. Thank you so much for joining us.

Maurice: I'm happy to be here, Lizzy. And you can just call me Maurice.

Lizzy: Sure. So, you know, a big part of your research is looking at how global or national catastrophes are affecting human beings. Um, so you are a busy person. I suspect these days. Let's talk a little bit about this most recent history that we're still living in right now. Can you tell us a bit about, you know, the specific major events that have had a psychological impact on society?

Because I think they're, they're different for different people.

Maurice: They absolutely are. And one thing I love about the question that you just asked is that it allows me to already say, I want to kind of disrupt a little bit how we think about trauma as sort of specific events, you know? When I think about trauma, I think about how events come to develop over time.

So when you asked me, what are the specific events of the recent past that have caused harm? I would want to say there have been things going on over time that have produced a context out of which some things have emerged and look like they're sudden in their new, and there are, specific recent events.

Um, so obviously the, you know, the kind of racial upheaval of 2020 and before and ongoing, and the impact of COVID and how it's disrupted all of our usual structures and patterns of relating those things have been shaken up for sure. and that shakeup has definitely kind of made it difficult for all the intensities of our feelings that are usually managed by regular structures.

You know, the regular relations that people have with each other, those things have been disrupted by these events. And so all of a sudden 10 cities are all over the place, right. And

people, feel overwhelmed. But I do want to say that these recent events, I don't want to think of them as simply recent events.

Right. I don't want us to think of trauma as a thing that just happened, but as a process, the development of a context out of which, injury emerges.

Lizzy: Yeah. Tell me a little bit more about that because you know, in reading your work before talking with you today, I really focused on the part where you explained the difference between trauma and what you call traumatization.

Maurice: Yeah. You know, trauma is such an interesting concept by itself, right? Um, it's a word, you know, that we all feel, we understand, we say something was traumatic or that I was traumatized by this or that. there's a trauma over there, but it's the fact that it means so many different things.

It also makes it so tricky. So typically I'll say there's an event over there that have. Some people are using the word trauma to describe it. I want to look at well, what's the particular definition of trauma that they're using because people have different definitions. And then what is the specific injury

People are meaning to talk about. And then why would people use that particular definition of trauma to describe that event? You know, and usually it's because when we say trauma, it has other effects, you know, people think something really important has happened, that there's been some serious injury and that they, there needs to be some kind of response or repair.

So usually that's why we're using the language of trauma. So instead of thinking of trauma as a specific, like an object or a specific event, I like to think of traumatization. I use that word mainly to me. The way that we come to think of something as being important enough to be called a quote unquote trauma.

So I want to move away from thinking of trauma as a particular event or a particular instance of injury or harm to thinking about the context of the kind of various kinds of relationships that set the seam for events that we then think of a sudden or surprising.

Right? The benefit of that is that, when we think about trauma, we can think less about an individual person's experience, in their individual response and sort of putting the responsibility on that individual to heal themselves or repair themselves in some kind of way.

And we can start thinking about the structures that are creating, you know, creating the context under which injurious emerging.

Lizzy: So let's talk about then the traumatization of the pandemic. you know, here I am thinking, we, we just recently got the announcement that we've surpassed 800,000 recorded deaths. This is only in the U S so even that number that I'm using to try to like put a locus on this is, is bounded by a single nation.

And so I'm leaving other people out of that. And we know all sorts of things about what the research shows about, who else has may be left out of that number. And so even though. At this point, you know, I'm already hedging and saying this name that I'm trying to put to this trauma is already sort of not, uh, accurate.

And even with that, I just, how are we processing this? You know, when things get that, that large and that abstract and that collective, and yet we're still trying to, I think, process it on an individual level. Um, I don't know if my question is, so how's that going from your view? That seems like an inadequate question,

Maurice: Yeah. Um, so there's a couple pieces to that. So from my perspective, let's call it the traumatization perspective. I would want to look at something like the emergence of COVID as being nestled in, or being part of a much longer history of global relations, right? Where resources are not being, you know, dispersed evenly where, the medical focus is in certain areas where vaccine accessibility is, you know, usually riding other patterns of power relations that I want to look at the much broader kind of eco perspective to say, oh, how is it that our broad ecosystem is being stressed in certain ways, such that this thing that we have called, you know, this particular version of COVID has emerged right?

Or. Pandemic over there emerges at that place at that moment in time, looking at these broader structures of relation number one, that's what the traumatization focus would ask. Or it would look at the, you know, the murder of George Floyd. And instead of saying, what was the action of one particular person or the impact on this other individual would want to look at much broader relationship relations of say racial capitalism across time, such that certain kinds of relationships emerge.

And, you know, we have events like this happen. It's number one. That's how I look at the events themselves. But in general, to your question about, you know, how are people, kind of responding, right? What are the psychological kinds of response. I don't like to say general things, right.

That it's all very specific to, you know, groups of people, but in, in some general ways, um, I think that I tend to think of kind of responses to stressors in relation to what the stressors are themselves challenging. Right? So in particular, I'm interested in things like safety, belonging agency, enoughness, dignity, a sense of mattering when these kinds of things are challenged by let's say damaging stimuli or, harmful events.

People tend – not everyone all the time in the same way – but people tend to brace and I'm talking about internal responses, right? They tend to brace or to numb, or to sort of fight against something or to dissociate. They kind of go somewhere else and watch the event as if it's happening to someone else, or they comply, or most often some combination of those things.

Right. So coming from a kind of energetic perspective, I think of these responses, bracing, numbing fighting against dissociating complying all of those. I think of them as adaptive to the stressor, they're trying to restore some sense of safety or restore a sense of belonging or agency or enoughness and dignity.

Lizzy: Hm.

Maurice: I see those responses as adaptive. So I don't want to have a real judgment about them, uh, you know, evil or not evil right or wrong necessarily, but that's just what they're doing. but the problem is that those adaptive responses we'll call them for the moment they're depleting, right?

They don't provide authentic safety. They don't provide authentic belonging or authentic agency or not this or dignity. They just give you the sense of that in the moment to help you survive through that, the stimulus or the, you know, the moment of the upheaval.

Lizzy: Right. Because they're adapting to the conditions that have been set by the bad thing, not looking at the cause of the bad

Maurice: Right, they just adapted. And they do promote survival very often. They're about survival, but they're not about thriving and they're not actually, you know, nourishing in any way because they're not producing the real safety or belonging, that kind of thing. So that's part of what I see when I look at, all the many things that people are doing in response to this, the the intensity of really being forced to view.

And this is, you know, from my perspective, you know, this isn't about research necessarily, but. I believe that part of what people are being forced to, really come face to face with in this country is that the benefit of some requires the exploitation or the injury of others. And the repair of the injury of others.

It's felt like an injury to the folks who've been benefiting from their harm. And that is, uh, to my mind, that's kind of the crux of what we have to work with and figure out if we're really going to be thinking about what liberation might look like. We have to stop disavowing that truth. And by disavow, I simply mean like, it's not like, sometimes people will suppress an idea, but this Val is more like, I know that something's not true, but I'm going to act as if it is right. So we can plainly see that our benefit requires the harm of others, but we'd spend a lot of energy. Acting as if it's not true.

Lizzy: Can you explain a bit more about what disavowal, you know, this concept that you've brought up looks like in the context of, of the pandemic, uh, and the traumatization there, how is that?

Maurice: You know what bubbles up immediately to me when you said that not enough, this is actually gonna work. But, this thing that I heard, we heard, I think a lot where people were saying, you know, people were, were not, uh, kind of abiding by CDC guidelines or people not wanting to give vacs know, saying that I will not live in fear, and I feel like that particular statement or something I heard the other day from someone who said, oh yeah, cope. It's basically killed all the people that's going to kill.

You know, I'm like, okay, what uh, only a particular position of privilege allows that to be something that gives you some sense of like, things are getting better, whatever. but both of them. Both of those positions require a kind of this disavow, which is to say, I know very well that I am interrelated, that what happens with regard to the first one, I will not live in fear.

It's based on this idea that people are not connected with each other. So I know very well that I am connected and related to all the other folks who are getting ill, but nevertheless, I'm going to act as if I'm not. And I'm going to act as if what's going on here is really about me making an individual choice about what's happening to me.

And that's it. the other one that I heard about, you know, everybody who's died is going to die. The massive, I mean, almost it almost hurts to just to face the massive disavowal there where a person has to –

The, I know very well that life is precious. And nevertheless, you know, a million people act as if a million people don't matter, you know, or other people are continuing to burn at the hands of this and other diseases. Um, so I think that's part of the disavowal. Um, I think it's also so overwhelming for folks and folks who have been so, so many people have just been so depleted by what our responses to COVID has meant for people in their lives that they, really want to, um, at this point kind of believe that we're, that we're being.

And that's the disavowal piece.

Lizzy: Right.

Maurice: We are not playing on it, but I want to act as if we are. Yeah,

Lizzy: Yeah.

Um, I actually want to paraphrase you a bit here. I had written down a quote from your recent article in oppositional conversations where you talk about how this idea that those of us who are

benefiting from some of the more harmful systems that are in place. You know, we feel a sense of protection and comfort.

That's not afforded to people who. You know, are being sacrificed to keep those systems going. So the people who are, you know, whether it's the lower wage workers or people who are caring for children, like the people who sorta keep it all running on time, um, and how unfair our good life can be for them.

And that being confronted with that truth, having to acknowledge that the benefits we're receiving are. Caused by, you know, or inflict pain on someone else necessarily just because they exist. That's really difficult, um, to confront and acknowledge and that when people are made to confront and acknowledge it, they get extremely uncomfortable.

and you know, so I understand why we're addressing some of those systemic issues on an individual level, because that's how we survive. You know, if you can figure out how to take your role in something and feel better about it, about just your role. You know, I think of myself not buying things from Amazon.

I know that that doesn't affect Amazon at all, or the people that are working in the, in their warehouses. You know, it's, it's, it's about me and about my feelings about myself. How do we then make that better way possible. How do we help people have those confrontations and then make actual systemic change as opposed to individual change, to deal with it.

Maurice: Well, I think in the first instance, we have to tap into what you would, what I feel like you were just expressing, which was a real longing for something else, like a real longing for the more that's possible number one. And that might sound esoteric. I don't mean it in an esoteric way, but there's, you know, we know that there's something more possible and we long for it.

So number one, that's tapping into that. I think what we kind of in practical terms, what we have to do is we have to get in rooms with each other and, and we have to learn to practice sitting with the discomfort of facing those hard truths. Right? That's the work that disavowal is doing the work of kind of looking away to use that sort of Southern term or that song.

You look away, look away, look away. The work that that does is it helps us feel less uncomfortable, right. Less discomfort. So part of what we have to do is actually just get better at sitting with this comfort when we look at heart truths and when we feel destabilized a little bit, and when we feel like we don't know, you know, so in some ways we have to decouple our sense of like, if you imagine two trains click together, you know, and, and one on one, at the cars is the sense of certitude.

Like I am certain about my being and then the other car that's connected to it is being correct. Those two things are so coupled that it's difficult for people to feel a sense of wholeness when

they're wrong about something. So we avoid being wrong, you know, at all costs. But if we could decouple that a little bit by practice, literally.

And when I say practice, I mean, literally practice like sitting with my discomfort.

Lizzy: Yeah. You, uh, you described it in the article. I cited already as liberative and highly unpleasant, which also really stuck with me.

Maurice: Absolutely. So many people think, you know, that liberation is supposed to feel good or that, you know, they use the use things like meditation or mindfulness as a way to sort of bypass the painful truths of, you know, of oppression and systemic oppression. And so we have to build our capacity to sit with the discomfort because that's also an intense thing.

You know, and if we can't sit with that intensity, then we're not going to be able to really sit with the intensity of just plain old vitality living. That's the vibrancy of life itself. Right. And if we can't sit with that, we can't be nourished by it. We keep running away from it. So I guess what I'm saying is we have to get in rooms.

We have to also in our own work, it's kind of like this internal work that we do. Yes. I alone can do this work, but I don't have to do it by myself. I can do it with others. Right. I don't have to be isolated. So then we can use that to decouple the sort of certitude, the certain penis with correctness so that we can actually still feel whole, even while we're not right about something.

And then we can hear from others,

Lizzy: Yeah, no, that's an excellent point and well taken for this moment. let's try to work out some of what you're saying about how, how this liberative, but unpleasant work is actually done. You know, this, this uncoupling with, the example of our nation's reaction to the murder of George Floyd, to police violence in general, and then reactions to those reactions, to those events.

Maurice: Yeah.

Lizzy: I'm interested in your take on, you know, the events of the past summer when there was so much, you know, unrest and when those conversations were made very public and what the tail of that time period has looked like, and what I hesitate to say recommend, I hate to ask that of our scholars, um, because I know they don't often like to make prescriptions, but if at all possible I'd love to kind of workshop through with you what you think might some remedies look like for

Maurice: Yeah.

Lizzy: That's still-

Maurice: Well, first I want to say that in my, in my work. So the critical trauma theory work early on, it was really a kind of theoretical thing. Like how did this concept of trauma emerge? When was it invented? What were some of the other – frameworks for knowing the world? What were the other ones that emerged at the same time, they happened to be things like photography and, race as a biological thing that all grew up at the same time. My investigations early were kind of theoretical, you know, like how did the concept develop?

How does it get used in different spaces like psychology or the, the ER, or in politics, and just sort of thinking about meaning sort of, and more recently, I've really turned to thinking about how people get together to make knowledge together and to do work together, to make change together. So a lot of my more recent engagement has been about process design, like, oh, what's a good process.

When you get people together who are kind of talk about X, whatever they think is important. So I want to say that practically speaking in this is part of my scholarly quote, unquote scholarly work is when people get in the room because they want, let's say you have a community where's been a recent event like, police brutality.

We'll take that as an example, cause that's pretty familiar in common. And it's also a big deal in Columbus, which is where I am getting a group of people together who have different positions on what happened to have very powerful because the stimulus, the negative stimulus is very intense, have very powerful, mental, emotional, and embodied all three of those layers, embodied responses to what happened, getting folks in a room and then creating an engaging in a process where people can have different perspectives on something.

And also feel their feelings about that, something. And I mean that emotionally and physically, and engage with each other to try and find the places of, I'll just say temporary commonality. So we talk about this as having multi partial conversations. It's one of the, the terms that people use for this, where people get together and they're able to have different perspectives.

And also because they're holding the dignity of the other folks in the room at the same time, they're also able to, feel some interrelatedness with people who have a very different perspective from them. And then they sit with the feelings. So that's a part of the prescription is there are actual methodologies out there that people are using to have conversation across difference and across differences of experience where people can have a sense of unification that is big enough.

And the container that's, that's strong enough to hold everyone's differences, but also have the differences matter, right. Where it matters that your experience of let's say pain is what it is. And I'm actually allowing it to touch me and to be moved by it and maybe be wrong without having

my sense of self be disrupted because we've been working on decoupling, you know, certainty from correctness.

Lizzy: I'm hearing that and I'm struggling to see how it would work in a situation where the different beliefs held by people in the room were about the dignity of the other party. I think, I mean, I feel like that's the big question that I hear a lot in circles that are trying to figure out, you know, what restorative justice would look like for, you know, for things like police brutality, we can keep using the same example that we've been using.

You know, have you witnessed what you've just described? Are there some, are there success stories that you've seen?

Maurice: Yeah, that's a great question. I did. Um, so first I want to say that this does not happen in a single conversation

or, you know,

Lizzy: You did say multi partial conversational

Maurice: Right.

Lizzy: Multi was there.

Maurice: Multi, multi partial conversation. Yeah, for sure. That where it has to be about relationship building over time. I did something a couple of years ago here in Columbus. hosting a conversation with some folks that this might be a good idea.

I didn't come up with the idea, but I was part of the group that came up with it to have, um, some police officers who were in the academy. So they're in training still to get together. And there are also folks who are from Columbus to get together with some new up and coming newer, I guess, uh, social justice activists around, community police issues in Columbus to have sort of the youngsters, you know, get together and

Basically, we just got the first few meetings. Really. It was just about coming together, eating some food and everybody talking about, I think the first question I had people kind of dive into was, um, you know, what they love about Columbus and why they're here. And then it was why they chose to come into the room.

And then it was things that have been hard, you know? So it was about building relationships over time. Now I'm not saying that that was completely successful. I do know, from what people said about their experiences with, you know, you hear, you hear things like, I never looked at it this way. I had no idea that you, you actually grew up over here on the east side, you know, one

of the, when the police officers, like, yeah, I grew up there and that's why I'm, that's why I'm a police officer, because I want to be in my community.

I want to support safety and my committee. So yes, I've seen things happen and it's not, uh, I'm not offering a panacea. Like, you know, it's something that takes relationship building and it's hard work and people have to also be doing their internal work and facing their hard feelings. I think they ended up learning more about each other and I think that's part of where the multi partiality gets to develop.

But, but I also totally agree. Like I, I do have a boundary, my boundary is I will not be abused.

Lizzy: Hmm.

Maurice: And if I'm experiencing somebody as not honoring my dignity, then that's an abuse. But I can have a neutral boundary where I say I will not be abused. My, my not being abused has nothing to do with you.

You know, it doesn't have to. I can hold you in dignity. I can value your mattering while also having my back.

Lizzy: I think that's difficult for people.

Maurice: It is.

Lizzy: How do we start knowing that, you know, when we're speaking to individuals here, there's people listening to this podcast they're taking, in your words, they're thinking about the self, because that's where we always begin. You know, what, what can I do? We, of course, SSN, we're a policy organization.

So we're often trying to think about you know, how do we institutionalize a response to something, how do we take a best practice that research shows has a certain effect and make it scalable so that, you know, people in a, in a group can experience it This one sounds hard to me, you know, with the knowledge that you have about what can work and the types of, you know, the mentality that people have need to have to address these problems.

Maurice: Mm.

Lizzy: What do we do with that knowledge?

Maurice: Yeah. So I'm just going to offer an opinion about it. and well also say that I'm involved in various spaces where I think we're trying to take this notion I'm about to describe and scale it.

I think that one of the biggest obstacles we have to working to solve these complex problems is that we have made a habit of a way of dealing with problems as if we are operating in an ordered system which has to say.

I'm in an ordered system. Here's a problem that emerges and there's a manual somewhere that has a bunch of best practices in it. I can flip it up and find that page for, you know, X and I can do that and that's going to fix it. Or maybe it's slightly more complicated and I don't have a manual for it, but Hey, there's an expert out there.

If I find the right expert, they have the manual that works with ordered systems in order, you know, machines and stuff, you know, fix this, that works. But if you're dealing with a complex system and that is what we are more and more aware that we are dealing with, you have to have another strategy of problem solving that is not based on best practices.

That doesn't mean we ignore information from the past, but rather we shift from thinking of what's the best practice for X to let's engage in a kind of experimentation here to create practice-based knowledge as opposed to. Well, let's draw on the best practice. Practice-based knowledge in the moment by bringing all the people who are the, you know, I think stakeholders is one word, but whoever's on the ground.

The people who are on the ground around that particular issue, that you're engaging, bringing a bunch of those people together in a very diverse group. And then starting to come up with experiments. Let's try this. Let's try that. Let's try the other thing. You try the experiment. If it produces something that the group desires, then amplify it, scale it up.

If it produces something that we do not desire, don't get stuck on it. Just stop doing that thing and try another experiment so you're able to do lots of quick experiments. You have to set up systems where you're getting feedback pretty quickly about what's happening.

And then if it's, you know, desirable, you've scaled up a bit, you amplify it and you kind of work in that it takes a lot more adroitness, a lot more interaction and a lot more diversity of perspectives. So you can't just have a homogenous group of experts trying to decide what should happen in a sitting, in a context.

So you have to have folks on the ground being involved, experimenting, and then amplifying what works, treating it like a complex system.

Lizzy: Humans just love the imagined orderly universe. I really run up against that problem when you're trying to convince people to. Address things the way you're inviting them to, with your research. You know, we love being able to look at an effect and say, oh, well then this must be the cause. You know, and have that be something that maybe absolves us of whatever discomfort we would have had to deal with if you know, and had is so difficult.

Like we love it. Our brains love-

Maurice: But you know, I wonder too Lizzie, like, and I'll go on a limb again. I feel like that's such a Western thing. Like, I'll even say that this sort of scientific method, it's idea of scientific method – this particular kind of, um, research protocol approach is very Western and that people in other contexts or people who've been having to, you know, who've been under the boot of oppression.

Who've been having to figure stuff out, figure out how to make a way out of no way that this is exactly what they've been doing. You know, they've been having to figure out, okay, what's what's happening here. What's the context I'm in. I'm gonna experiment with this thing. If it works, I'm going to do it more.

If it doesn't work, I'm going to let it go and keep on moving. I might not see liberation myself or my kids, but here's a pocket. You know, here's a little bubble of liberation within the context of a broader system. That's only getting worse,

Lizzy: That's that's hopeful, honestly, because, you know, I, I think when I was using the term, we, I was even thinking like specifically American, you know, that's, that's my context. And I see that. And not even, you know, owned by a certain political party or demographic, I S I see it. So thoroughly in our culture.

And I think part of this also comes from, you know, most of the work I've done over my career is with working with researchers, looking at reproductive health and rights. Um, and I see so much evidence, you know, from the research about how people who are directly oppressed, you know, by policies that are really limiting their autonomy.

And, you know, the, the quality of their lives very easily still are like, well, I deserve this. Like, there's all this justification that folks use. And I get lost in that sometimes about thinking, how do we break out of this? If the folks at the top and the folks at the bottom are equally invested in saying, well, the harm that's happening to me has to be my fault.

Maurice: Yeah.

Lizzy: You know, how do we break out of that? It gets overwhelming sometimes.

Maurice: Yeah. Yeah. And it's so overwhelming that, you know, for me, it's like, wow, it's doing this work of suppressing change toward liberation. So there must be something in it. Like it's almost like it's a tool of repression, you know, even these, these models that we use for, you know, trying to address disparity or you like the, even like the trauma informed model, a lot of it's everywhere, right?

It's trauma informed this and in a certain moment, it was like, yeah, I love the idea that folks are starting to say, oh, well – let's take kids in school, for example. Well, what's going on for this kid at home, such that what we're seeing in the school is a manifestation of something else.

Initially, I really liked this sort of move to thinking beyond just an individual minute or moment of action. But even then, so many of these traumas methods are still reproducing this thing that it's about an individual or it's an individual.

Now it's an individual in their home and whether or not they're getting enough food or whether they're, you know, being abused at home, still not bringing the attention to the broader system, right? With the broader forces that are producing that context. So even that great idea ends up reproducing similar structures.

Lizzy: So when we talk about healing, collectively trying to heal from the effects of traumatization while seeing different groups, reacting in derivative ways, do we, can we break through the disavowal first before the healing can begin or can these processes kind of be going on at the same time?

Maurice: Yeah. I think it's processes going at the same time and happening in lots and lots of different spaces that sort of start to network together, right? So it's like, oh, there's this group of people having this conversation over here, they're outliers, but we get enough outliers doing their outlier thing, and then they start connecting with each other then you have a network.

And then that network connects up with this other network over in this other location. That's also doing similar work. And then now you have two networks, maybe three and you have a network of networks, you know? So it's gradually, I think that's how it gets to the big “we” that you said. And it has to be piecemeal. And yeah, I, I think one of the ways this gets disrupted is being in the “and”. Right? I believe this “and” I also know that – or I believe this other thing that they're contradictory and they're both true. And then sitting with the discomfort there with others.

Lizzy: Well, it is a difficult process for sure, but we so appreciate your being with us to explain it today. Marisa, it's really been great to have you on this.

Maurice: Yeah. Maybe you feel vibrant all day

Lizzy: Yes. May you feel vibrant all day! What a wonderful send off.

For more on Dr. Stevens, this work, check out our show notes at scholars.org/no-jargon. No Jargon is the podcast of the Scholars Strategy Network, a nationwide organization, connecting journalists, policymakers, and civic leaders with America's top researchers to improve policy and strengthen democracy.

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