

The power of collective social action on well-being

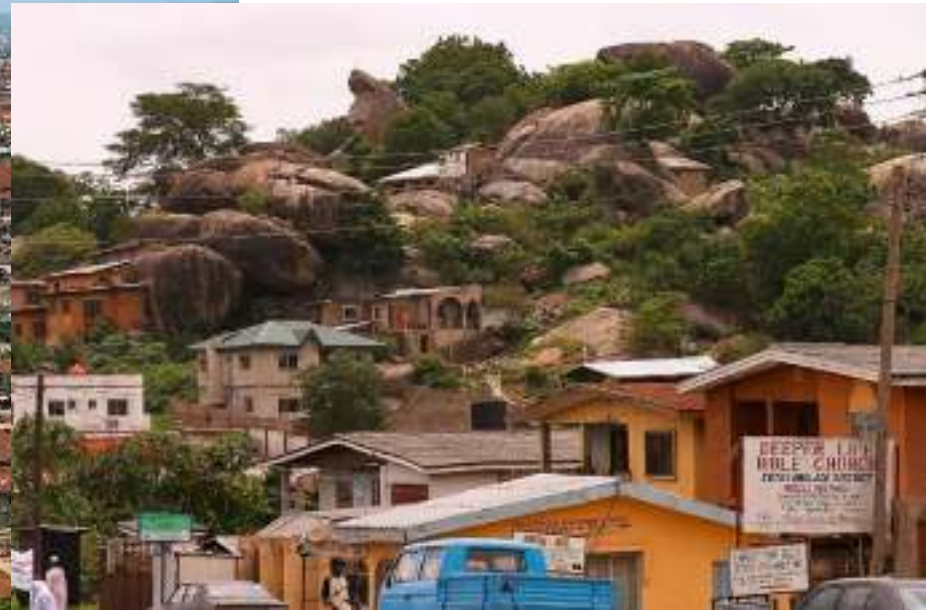
A Liberation Psychology Approach



Taiwo Afuape

drtaiwoafuape@yahoo.co.uk





From “cockroaches” to campaigns: how the UK press u-turned on the refugee crisis



Calls to anti-sexual assault helpline up by 21% after Harvey Weinstein allegations

Helpline at Rainn, the biggest US organization of its kind, says it has received more calls than usual as allegations against film producer make headlines

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Morning Mix

#MeToo: Harvey Weinstein case moves thousands to tell their own stories of abuse, break silence

By [Samantha Schmidt](#) [@samschmidt](#)



Police officers cleared over death of black mental health patient they restrained with 'excessive force'

'After a seven-year wait, this is a bitter outcome for Seni's family. We are a lesser society for a system that fails to hold to account police action leading to these preventable deaths'

Michael Roberts | Friday 6 October 2017 22:00 GMT | [314 comments](#)

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Grenfell Tower tragedy shows social housing system has failed UK citizens

In the housing system, cost-cutting and reckless decisions were made with little fear of anyone being held responsible



Activists remove a statue of Belgium's King Leopold II in Brussels days after another one was taken away in Antwerp due to anti-racism vandalism

exploited the Belgian Congo with slave labour, leaving millions of people dead



Forgetful something?

BLM protesters topple statue of Bristol slave trader Edward Colston

If anyone does not believe that structural racism exists – look at the Covid-19 body count

View 54 comments



FIRST PERSON

Dawn Butler (Sunday 7th Jun 2020 12:21 pm)

rs on

Saddam Hussein statue toppled in Baghdad, April 2003 - video

Sarah Reed: Woman who had been victim of police brutality found dead in prison cell

Ms Reed died at HM Prison Holloway more than three years after an alleged incident of police brutality

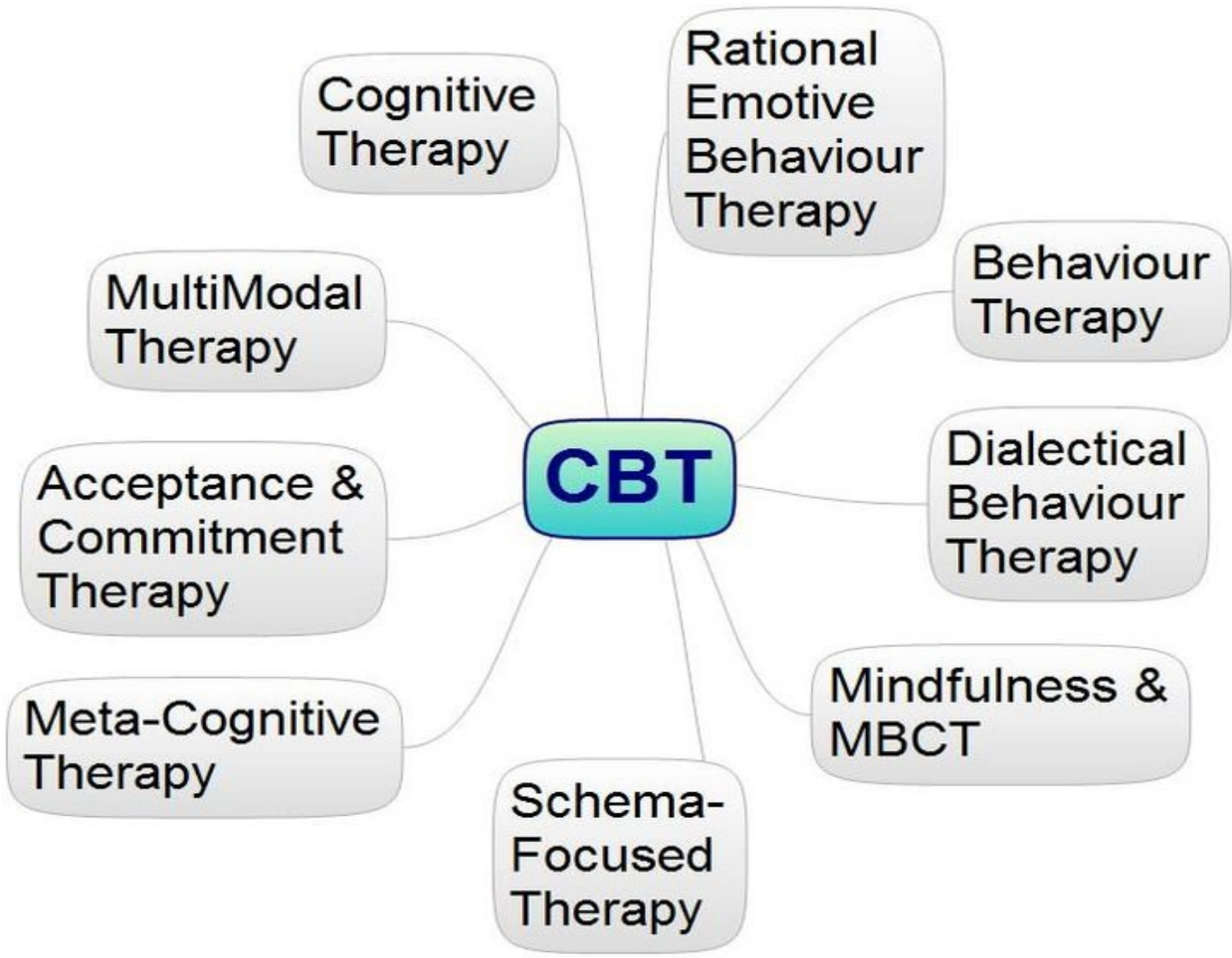
Sarah Reed (Sunday 7th Jun 2020 12:21 pm)



Domestic violence 'reaching crisis'

by ALEXA BARACAIA, Evening Standard

Domestic violence against women in the UK has reached "crisis" proportions, according to a hard-hitting report released today.



Traditional psychology/therapy

(Personal consciousness/awareness)

Identity or Insight - understanding of ourselves in relation to the world

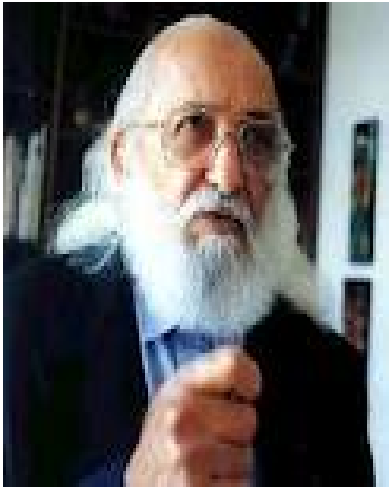
- “*What does that action say about you?*”

(Social consciousness/awareness)

‘Outsight’ (David Smail) - understanding of the world in relation to ourselves

- “*What does that action say about the world?*”

Liberation Psychology



From Liberation Theology & critical theory.
WEB DuBois, Paulo Freire and Ignacio Martin Baro

Paulo Freire's 'conscientização'

Freire (1972):

- learning to read and write involves '*conscientização*' - gaining a critical understanding of oppression
- making links between individual distress and social, cultural and political context
- challenging oppression and therefore enhancing our well-being

Concientização' and Levels of Consciousness

Freire described each stage from oppressed consciousness to liberated consciousness with respect to the ways in which a person

- (a) names the problem,
- (b) reflects on the causes of the problem and
- (c) acts to resolve the problem.

Magical Consciousness - conforming

Naïve Consciousness - reforming

Critical Consciousness - transforming

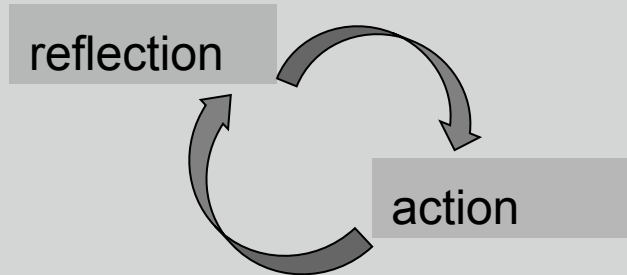
Consciousness and Action

Paulo Freire

- ‘true dialogue’ occurs when people critically reflect on mechanisms of oppression **and** new possibilities for action become visible.
- This process does not happen through the transfer of knowledge from one person to another, but only through ‘true dialogue’.

'True dialogue'

- 'True dialogue' requires **Reflection and Action**
- Without *action* words are 'idle chatter', 'verbalism' or 'blah blah blah'
- Without *reflection* actions are 'action for action sake' or 'activism'

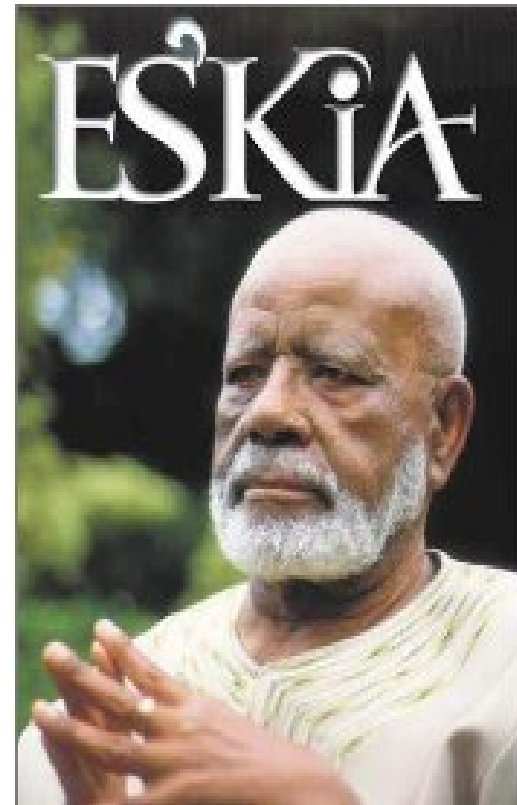


- Both verbalism and activism make true dialogue impossible.
- *Praxis* is the interaction between reflection and action!²

The importance of dialogue

Es'kia Mphahlele

(December 17, 1919 -
October 27, 2008) spoke of
how the White South
African community first
oppressed Black people,
then researched them then
wanted to save them.



Martín Baró: 'Liberation Psychology'



Influenced by Paulo Freire, Martín Baró argued that:

- Our approaches are not universal and impartial, and we should critique Western methods and dominant discourses
- We should address the social conditions and aspirations of ordinary people
- Mental health interventions should be a force for transformation rather than conformity
- We should work across disciplines

Martín Baró: 3 tasks

1. **De-ideologising everyday experience** - making direct links between emotional distress and social circumstances, given that oppression operates by concealing these links
2. **Recovering historical memory** - rather than individual responsibility for wellbeing we need to connect to a social, collective history of how we have challenged oppression in the past and can utilise those knowledges today
3. **Utilising the people's virtues** - such as creativity, resilience and hope, which are not individual characteristics but relational processes (Martín Baró, 1994)

Martín Baró: 3 tasks

1. De-ideologising everyday experience

- *Who has power in this situation? Why do you think these problems exist? Why are things happening this way? What powerful ideas make this possible? Who benefits? Who loses?*
- *What impact does the problem have on you? People you know? Your school? Your family? Your community? Wider society?*
- *What will happen if this problem continues?*

Martín Baró: 3 tasks

2. Recovering historical memory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgxIMJnxUI4>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08hvws1/fighting-the-power-britain-after-george-floyd>

- *What is the history in your culture of these problems? How was this problem tackled in the past? and now?*
- *What has helped you to survive, - skills, knowledges, talents, beliefs, relationships?*
- *From whom did we learn these abilities from? family? ancestors? allies? peers? Similarly oppressed people from the past?*
- *How might we pass down these skills, values etc onto future generations etc?*

Martín Baró: 3 tasks

3. Utilising the people's virtues

- *What does your ability to live life even during hard times say about you? And your community?*
- *What can/do we do to try to ensure our actions do not create more of the problem?*
- *What are you doing right now, to challenge and resist the problem? How do you use/draw on creativity?*
- *Who are the people we should be working with to address these issues further? When? Where? Who? Who else? How?*
- *How can these people be brought into the conversation and join your creativity so that solutions can be found collectively?*

Creativity and resistance

- Allan Wade (1997) - professional and social discourses tend to focus on what negative life experiences do to people (effects-based perspective).
- He argues that we should also be curious about people's responses to their experiences of harm (response-based perspective).
- Because **Whenever people are harmed they resist.**

Creativity and resistance

Oppression is not just a site of domination but a place of *resistance*.

“There is much more to the experience of oppressed people than their oppression. If this is the sole emphasis, we do little more than substitute one deficit orientation toward human beings for another” (Watts et al, 2003).



Creativity and resistance

- Recognising and exploring people's **resistance as creativity**
- Recognising and exploring people's **creativity as resistance**

Resistance as creativity

- point to capacities, qualities and abilities
- show how we take a stand and respond to our experiences rather than being passive recipients of adversity
- are founded upon what we give value to and has been violated
- comment on the social world and clients' experiences and conditions
- challenge us to contribute to a social world that does not harm, oppress or abuse anyone

Resistance as creativity

Responses to oppression may be:

- physical, mental, emotional and/or spiritual
- open and direct but are most often disguised, indirect and/or confined to the privacy of the mind
- based on protecting oneself or caring for the dignity of others
- spontaneous, tactical, improvised, individual or collective (Todd & Wade, 2003)

Resistance as creativity

- Resistance can be
 - **creative and expansive** – opening up possibilities and embracing difference
 - **restrictive and destructive** – closing down options and creating more oppression
 - **A combination of both**: it might open up possibilities whilst creating more oppression

Creativity as resistance

Creativity is enabling because it:

- is individual and relational, and links the depth of us to the depth of others
- involves being receptive and being active
- draws on and from a community
- creates choices
- holds tensions and makes new connections
- involves taking time to see
- gets us through, helps us (move) on
- Connects us to **community**

Creativity as resistance

Creativity

- is energy
- transcends traditional boundaries, bringing into being new things that have not yet been
- enables us to have unique views on how life is and how life could be
- reaches deep into the core of us and intricately connects us to others

Creativity as resistance

Creativity is a:

- helpful metaphor for liberating ourselves from the constraints of our tradition
- useful metaphor for resistance
- guiding metaphor which honours people's inventiveness and agency
- search for understanding and new meaning
- resource for transformation

Reflection and Action combined

“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.” **Desmond Tutu**

“The proof that one truly believes is in action.”
Bayard Rustin

Thank you for listening

“Almost always the creative, dedicated minority has made the world a better place.” **Martin Luther King Jr.**

“When an individual is protesting society's refusal to acknowledge their dignity as a human being, their very act of protest confers dignity on them.” **Baynard Rustin**

