



The Activist Practitioner



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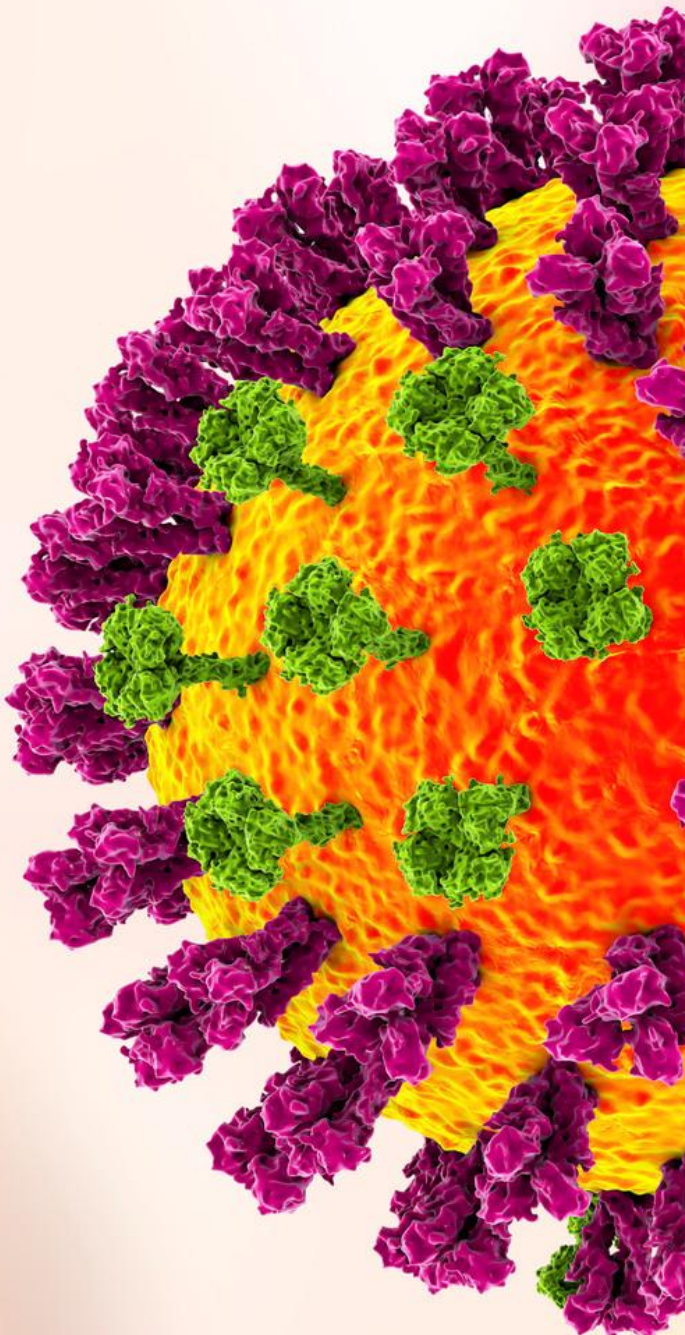
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ALONE TOGETHER





EDITORIAL

Welcome to our third edition of The Activist Practitioner, one dedicated to issues related to healing and justice in the Covid-19 pandemic. Activism has never been more important than now, in a time where collective distress is underpinned by social and structural inequalities, accentuated and revealed by this virus.

We pride ourselves on being a magazine that can publish articles of direct relevance to current events and we are very grateful to all of our contributors who have written intelligent, moving pieces with relatively short notice. This issue will provide you with much food for thought as you negotiate the myriad of personal, justice-oriented and cultural issues involved in living and working in the pandemic.

We begin with a wonderful collective article by Ruth Nelson, Racheal Munro, Ann-Marie Melito and Leah Pearson on healing in the pandemic, including aboriginal ways of reconnection to Creator and The Mother.

There is then an edited transcription of a slow dialogue held with two Italian colleagues, cultural psychologists, Luca Tateo and Raffaele De Luca Picione and the Psychologists for Social Justice Group. This dialogue along with a piece by scholar Jesse Ruse provide important insights about what we might learn from cultural psychology as we negotiate the new reality of the pandemic in our lives and work.

There is also, importantly, a personal piece by Djory Charles on Black Lives Matter, given racism has been cast into profile by the pandemic and events on the USA including the murder of George Floyd. We punctuate the issue with a beautiful poem by a member of our editorial group, Miranda Cashin. Meanwhile we are working on our last issue for the year, guest edited by Holly Kemp, Christina Kenny and Ruah Grace, who are consumer activists and scholars. This issue is dedicated to the issue of Sanism and will focus on critical perspectives to 'mental health,' due out by the end of the year.

Paul Rhodes (Editor)

We pay our respects to the traditional owners of the First Nations on which this issue of The Activist Practitioner was written and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

THE STORY OF THE COVER ART

NEW LIFE BY RACHEAL MUNRO

*This issue's cover art is by
Racheal Munro.
It symbolizes new life.*



TRADITIONAL HEALING METHODS VS 2020 PANDEMIC ISOLATION BARRIERS

RUTH NELSON, RACHEAL MUNRO, ANN-MARIE MELITO, LEAH PEARSON

Imagine having a place of love and acceptance, support, guidance and understanding without fear of judgement over anything. A place that provides connection, grounding and practical tools to do life different.

What if life threw obstacles at you creating feelings of uncertainty and/or insecurity...Then you found a place that provided relief from those feelings instead filling you with reassurance, strength and possibility. A place of belonging.

Imagine finding a place where you could just be... no matter what was going on or how you were dealing with it, you could go to this place and literally just be without judgement or added pressure.

For us at Baabayn, that's our place. Your place too.

The worldwide 2020 pandemic isolation enforcement suddenly halted people gathering everywhere. As businesses and communities closed their doors in uncertainty many barriers quickly appeared. For Baabayn, this meant we could no longer gather culturally to do what works. It became an urgent matter to figure out how we could continue to nurture the weaving of connection without physically gathering.

A group of us put our heads together, we connected with each other over telephone conversations, text messaging, emails and video calls. Luna and Wanda-Mill also strengthened their spiritual connection the

way they do to connect, receive and give. Together we brainstormed.

We all had genuine concerns for people.

We found possibility coming together as one.

We recognised responsibilities.

We shared humility, passions, ideas and support.

What began as an urgent project became one with the present situation quite quickly. Forced ideas which we had to act on the matter disappeared as we naturally weaved what we already had into an unnatural world of technology which was beyond all our skills and knowledge. We found ourselves falling into the culturally traditional hierarchy of responsibility to each other; taking it upon ourselves to use and expand on the skills we already had. We guided, supported and encouraged each other through a self-taught process of creating resources that could 'easily' be shared via Facebook with the hopes of helping people feel connected in a similar way to how our healing circles provide this. We wanted to give people hope and possibility, to avoid the stressful depressive effects of isolation as much as possible, while still trying to manage our own feelings and hard new realities.

Despite the barriers of isolation making our way of sharing completely unnatural and uncomfortable, we knew we had a cultural and spiritual responsibility to make this happen, to make this possible for people.



Our cultural connection is special, it is our responsibility to share it, to pass it on, to help people and keep each other going. So, in our own homes, in a liquid flow of what we call 'in our own time', we held 'Asynchronous Healing Circles'. We began with the theme of 'belonging'. Creativity was weaved within groups through many forms of art, communication and sharing to continue providing practical and useful resources within community. Together we made several resources available for public use.

On one of Luna's regular visits to her river place on Dharug land, she did something she had never done before. She asked a stranger to record her connecting to the land and ancestors with her clapsticks.

"In these uncertain times, Creator and The Mother have always been certain."

With this recording and many awkward attempts at video editing, we released a simple video shared on Facebook. Recently we released this video on YouTube as well. We were surprised to see that so far, about 2.7k people have watched it.

We later added to the river video by connecting words and art to it. Rachael Munro created an art piece to add to the video called 'Mother Protector'. The painting is of a snake protectively wrapping itself around its eggs. The words chosen to add to the video said, 'I will always protect my little ones from harm'. The spoken words heard in the recording are of Luna's comforting voice.

Luna simply reminds us of our roots to guide us back to stability when she says, "In these uncertain times, Creator and The Mother have always been certain."

As the isolation restrictions began to ease, four of us involved met at the river in an awkward awareness of physical distancing. It is a weird feeling knowing one thing and forcing yourself to not act naturally in order to remain connected. Here we spent time reconnecting with each other through body language, expression and knowing. We enjoyed the free movement of our bodies being in mostly natural surroundings. Wanda-Mill was feeling deeply connected being home on Dharug lands with her Creator (Baiami), her Mother (the earth) and ancestors (spirit and living things). She felt peace, comfort and reassurance. Luna felt the same way being directly connected with what is a natural state of being. The land and everything it provides is their direct support network. It is without question a very necessary and essential need for wellness. We all feel deeply settled within as we show our respect, honour and gratitude to the cultural and spiritual connection that gave us what we needed to create these resources which helped not only us, but many within community to cope with the new realities of isolation.

Another short yet simple video was released from this meeting to make another resource available to a wider audience with the intention of inspiring another coping tool to help manage stress and tough feelings. This video consisted of still images from our day at the river, original music by Timothy Hay and the words, "Connection to earth, connection to water", as these words seemed to most appropriately reflect the spirit of this healing circle.



With healing circles, it is important to exercise our genuine respect. When you exercise respect, honour and appreciation without want, you receive calm and centredness. Being familiar with a way of life run on times and deadlines, it can be easy to forget the true difference of need and want. We want to be on time, we want to be somewhere else by a certain time and we want our own time all at the same time. When you begin to let that go and just go with it, you begin to understand the natural liquid of flow of this thing we call 'time' and how it can work for you not against you.

Our healing circle at the river was on a natural flow of time. You cannot walk down and say I have X-amount of time for this. You do not demand what you want. The flow will not wait for you, you get up and go find it in a different mind. If the mind you are in isn't working for you then you need to reconnect and put yourself back on the right path. You release the urge to control everything, instead you accept it as you become one with your roots again.

That is where majority of mainstream is tripping up, they focus on the mind only when it comes to mental health. They label it and diagnose it. They medicate it with a closed mind and no connection to self. They do not see that if your body and spirit are healthy, you will climb over mental health problems. You will have the tools you need to heal, for example the value of respect. To not see a person in whole is disrespectful. It is giving that person a crappy bandaid to temporarily make them feel okay. It does not address the person or anything within them contributing to their mental health. If medication is needed, it is needed; however it is not the main or permanent solution.

Aboriginal people that practice and share this knowledge have got the right mind. It is an open mindedness to be able to see what non-Aboriginal people cannot see, which is that the whole person is connected physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. They recognise that when something is not right, it is within you on one of these levels. They know what you need and they know how to provide you with those resources in a way that gets you doing it for yourself properly. That is true empowerment, true appreciation, true validation and recognition. They eliminate judgement and incorrect intentions. There is no stronger or more reassuring love, support, connection or understanding. Everyone is welcome to just be and it really is that simple.

Resources

Down at the River:

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

Mother Protector:

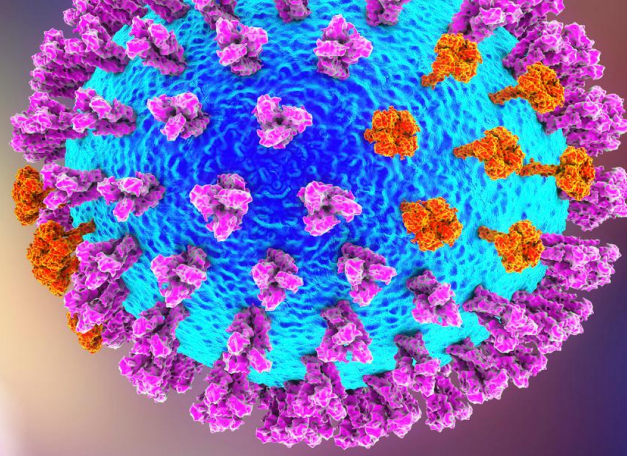
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yHK0zJ1-IM>

Healing Circle May 2020:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GH_nfEGp68

If the mind you are in isn't working for you then you need to reconnect and put yourself back on the right path. You release the urge to control everything, instead you accept it as you become one with your roots again





PANDEMIC DIALOGUES

This is an abridged transcript of a dialogue held on zoom called Pandemic Dialogues. The conversation was conducted as a series of slow dialogues, and dialogues about dialogues. It started as a conversation between two Italian academics and three Australian scholars and activists regarding Covid-19, culture, social justice and psychology. The audience, consisting of members of Psychologists for Social Justice then reflected on this conversation, while the previous group of five turned off their mics. After an extended conversation the audience then turned their off and the group of five reflected further...and on we went.

Ruth Nelson (Editorial Committee, The Activist Practitioner, Clinical Psychologist, Baabayn

Aboriginal Corporation): Okay, so hello. Greetings to everyone. My name is Ruth and I am on Wangal land which is the First Nation here in the modern nation state of Australia. And that's enough, isn't it? I'm Ruth and I acknowledge that the sovereign lands of the Wangal people.

Paul Rhodes (Editorial Committee, The Activist Practitioner, Associate Professor, Clinical

Psychology Unit, University of Sydney): So I'm Paul and in Open Dialogue, we don't really introduce ourselves professionally, but as a whole person. I am a whole person. I really enjoy - I'm learning at the moment about how to plant things how to grow things, how to I'm really engaging with nature for the first time in my life, which is very exciting. I'm raising, I've got two kids are adults and two kids, two step kids, and I'm

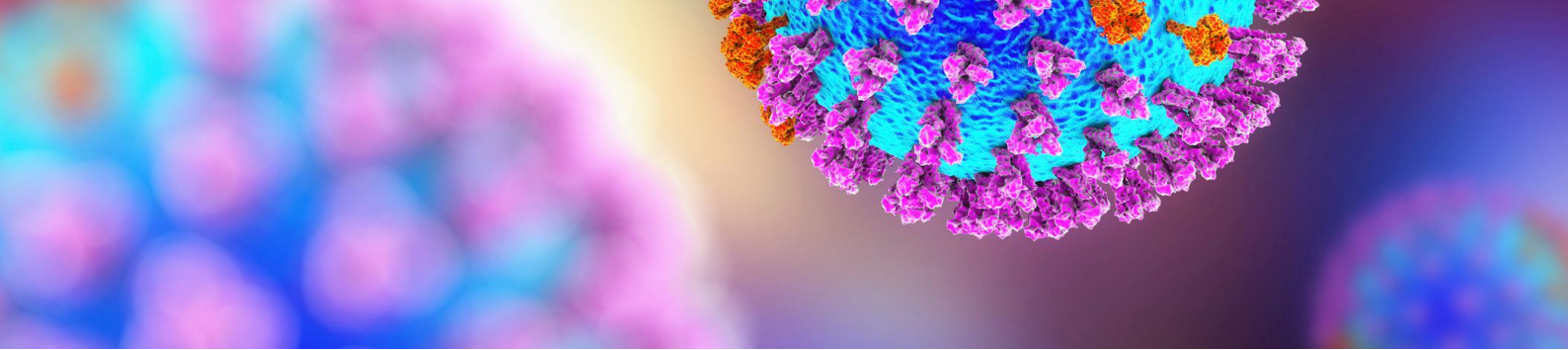
enjoying the complexity of all of that, actually, I am enjoying it now. I'm also a therapist, an active therapist, which I do tomorrow, eight sessions on Zoom, which is very exhausting. And I am an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology but I don't really belong there. Anyway. So, you understand the spirit, Luca, of the introduction? Yes, maybe you can go next.

Luca Tateo is Associate Professor at the University of Oslo and Visiting Associate Professor at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil: 'I'm Luca Tateo. Now I am in, in Italy, in South Italy. But I spend my life in between places, like Norway, Brazil, sometime Asia, not yet Australia. I'm really looking forward to that.

And what else? My job is Associate Professor in Cultural Psychology. But these days are particularly interesting because I'm in a big transition. I just move out from my old apartment that I sold. And because of the pandemic, I couldn't buy a new one yet, because everything is stopped here. So I'm experiencing this very awkward transition in my life. I'm closing a book and I'm spending, waiting to open a new one, I'm spending some days in my parents' house.

So this is a room of my parents' house, which is really awkward, coming back after 20 years that you're out of this house. So, and I really don't know how long this will last. So that's the kind of floating periods. That's it.

Raffaele De Luca Picione is Associate Professor of Dynamic Psychology, University Giustino Fortunato, Italy: I'm Raffaele De Luca Picione I am an Associate



Professor of Dynamic Psychology, and I am a psychoanalyst as well, I have a Lacanian psychoanalyst training. Firstly, I got a degree in Political Science and then in Psychology. So, I try to be not too dogmatic in my perspective. I try to keep together in an interdisciplinary way many many topics, many things, and I have a passion for semiotics, cultural psychology, with my friends. Luca and Pina and I have a special thing. Thank you, thank you for them. And I live in countryside. Some years ago, I was with my wife. We decided to live in countryside.

If you really want to act something, you just take yourself outside and do something in the real world

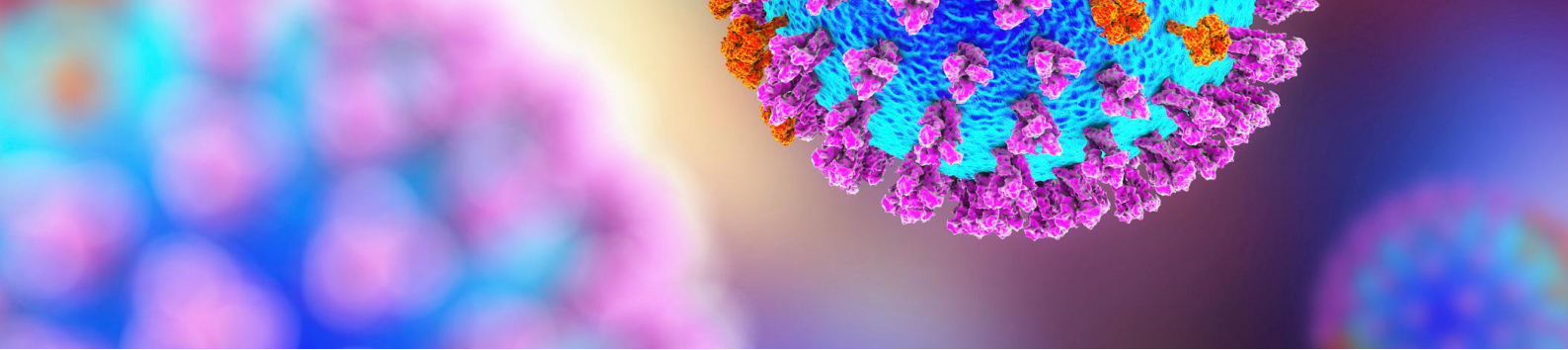
This was very important mostly in this period because we have a ground, we have a lot of space.

Paul Rhodes: So let's begin. Whoever wants to talk, of our small group, can begin and the others will listen and then we will see what happens. Usually something new happens. Something unexpected.

Luca Tateo: Oh, okay, I will start. And I will start by - two things that that happened this morning actually. One thing was, this morning I opened my Facebook page and among my contacts, I have a professor, university professor, a doctor. He used to be the Head of the Faculty of Medicine. And this morning, I just saw one of his posts, and this post was a reposting of a guy that was writing something against vaccines, against the COVID vaccine. So I went there, and I tried to figure out who is this guy that an academic doctor was reposting against vaccine. And of course, this guy is a completely unknown guy.

He has no reference, no profile, no background, no job on his Facebook page. So I couldn't help writing a comment to this medical doctor and say, how can you? How can you do this? I mean, how can you repost something, you as a medical doctor, you as an academic as a scholar? And as a public person, because I mean, people read your Facebook page and know that you are a doctor.

So they probably will trust you. So how can you disseminate something which has no reference, no background, no justification, from an unknown person? So you're legitimizing something. And you yourself, you don't provide any form of justification or support or evidence or whatever or reference to what you say. Probably this guy will no longer be a contact of mine anymore. But the point was I couldn't help doing. And I know of course that this is a minimal and probably useless response to a huge problem. I mean, my action, because I think when you do something on Facebook is like doing nothing. We just dream that our actions on Facebook have some effect in real life. But I don't think so. If you really want to act something, you just take yourself outside and do something in the real world. So I'm aware of this. But I couldn't help doing this small action. And I was thinking why I reacted in this way. And this made me think and resonated with one of the comments just few moments ago, when he said, oh, wow, you are allowed to meet up to six people. And we are counting now day by day after day. Oh, today we can meet six people, maybe tomorrow, we can have 20 people meeting. So on and so forth, but actually no one of us really has a reason for that. And I don't even know to what extent there is a scientific reason for that. I mean, why six and not eight or 10 or five or 20 people. So, all these pieces resonate to me.



And I felt kind of dis-created or uncomfortable with that trying to figure out okay, how we as human beings, in this moment are dealing with what is happening. How we are dealing with this kind of - how, I will say, partially imaginative and partly non-imaginative understanding of reality, and how this this affects our capability of understanding or reflecting or looking for solid justifications, as a human beings I mean. How do we take our decisions as citizens? And when it comes, when you are a scholar, it becomes even more an ethical problem. So, what I will never write in a paper, probably I will do that in real life, making decisions that are not really justified. Or, you know, just following some some ideas, writing something on Facebook, or some rumors, and in this moment, I think we are very fragile in this respect. And I feel the urge to do something with this. Probably a kind of pedagogical drive that I have in this moment. But I think this is crucial. This is a crucial moment. In a certain sense, this is a crucial moment because we are at a crossroads. How we will deal with the reality in the future is very important. It can be decided now, and this is beyond the pandemic, I mean, this has to do with the way we will, we will deal with the future challenges, of the future issues that will be, of course, more and more because it has to do not only with the health, it has to do with the environment, for instance. You can imagine the same scenario, okay, a guy that is, is posting something like you know, carbon energy is clean. Don't listen to this guy that say that it's not environmentally friendly and people will start to say Yeah, yeah, that's true, that's true. So I'm really uncomfortable with all this in this moment. That's, that's how I started to feel this morning. That's it.

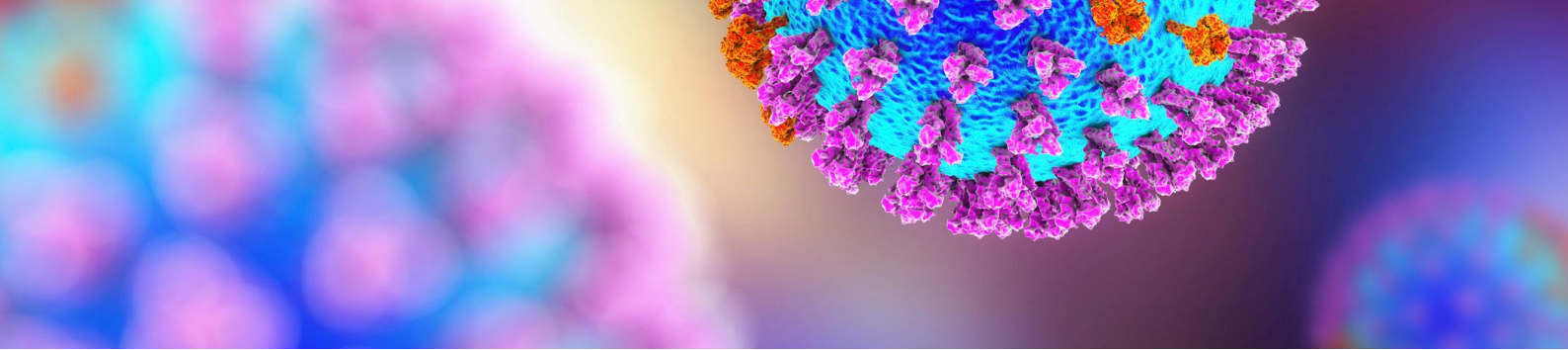
Jesse Ruse: Luca, that kind of reminds me of something that I think Ian Parker was saying at the Global Crisis

Conference about how to deal with conspiracy theories. I can't remember exactly what he said. But my interpretation was something like that we can't create a culture in which people don't feel comfortable saying what they think because then that kind of boils up and stays hidden and then someone like Trump or Bolsanaro or someone comes along, and they're the embodiment of saying what they think. And then people are attracted to that because they haven't been given the chance to debate their ideas in a more local public sense. I don't know if that's exactly what he's saying, actually. But that's something I remember

We can't create a culture in which people don't feel comfortable saying what they think because then that kind of boils up and stays hidden

from it. But I don't know. I wonder if there is a sense in which something is so far out there and so obviously wrong or vile or something, that it's not worth debating in a local sense, either.

Paul Rhodes: I had a very similar experience to Luca as well. And I had a colleague who I've been working with, a psychologist, a leader in another country, who's been harassing me on Facebook to watch 5g Bill Gates's China conspiracy videos, and telling me, when I rejected her, that why don't I want to listen to the truth, she's seen it you know, and this is someone who runs practices and is an entrepreneur and I've taught for, who I respected and I'm really deeply shocked by it and I try to understand what's going on. Why is the trust broken down where somebody that intelligent, like Luca's doctor, is willing to to entertain these crazy ideas.



Ruth Nelson: I was hearing it thinking about where I was today, which was out in the western suburbs of Sydney, which is a much poorer area, sitting with a family of Aboriginal people while we watched on the TV for many hours, the riots in the USA. I'm thinking about one about my privilege where I felt this urge to just turn off the TV. And how as a Settler, as a white person, I can do that, I can switch off from these issues, I can switch off from COVID, I can switch off. But it's also then, watching the news, we were watching Fox News and it the the racism - the perspective of the reporting was entirely from the perspective of government and police.

The ways that things are said in the media, the ways that the structures are run, all of this collapses right down to the people on the bottom

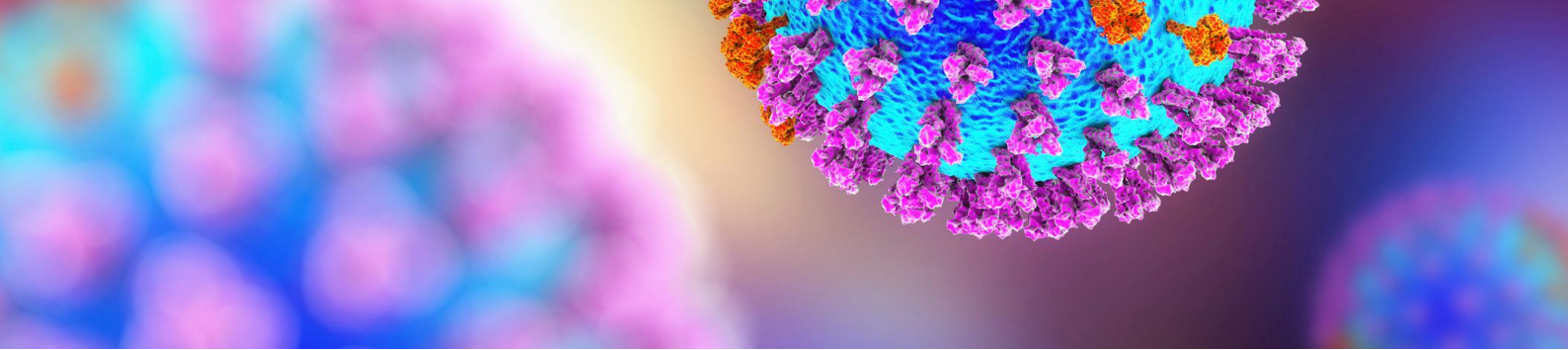
And we're sitting just listening to that and kind of down at the bottom of the pile are these people sitting here who cannot escape from any of these realities. The ways that things are said in the media, the ways that the structures are run, all of this collapses right down to the people on the bottom. I feel really angry, right now I feel really angry and kind of sick just thinking about that. It's crushing.

Luca Tateo: Yeah Ruth I completely - you just named it. I think that the feeling, I share this feeling, is exactly kind of - I will say even anger for this and I questioned myself what I can do. Actually what I will say is that of course, I think about the political use of this. So, I will see conspiracy theories as a political use, kind of manipulation of something which is more profound or general. So, how we deal with reality, how we will justify our beliefs, which is not a matter of, again, it's not a

matter whether you are a scholar or you are a businessman or you are a working man doesn't really have anything to do with it. We know that today it doesn't have to do with education, for instance, everyone is falling into this. So how we justify our - because this is crucial - how we justify our beliefs and act accordingly. And then you have the political manipulation of this, and it's paradoxical. I mean, Aboriginal people, as you say, watching, watching Fox for being informed. It's paradoxical.

Paul Rhodes: It's very interesting. I like this word paradox, you know, because the twisted logic, it's not just misinformation. It's much worse than that. It's take the fact and make it the complete\ opposite. It's incredible. I remember, I used to work with pedophiles, right? To do assessments for the police and for community services. And their logic is, oh my god, poor me, all these children seduced me and I couldn't help it. I'm a victim, you know. They have this opposite logic that allows them to be pedophiles. And to me, it's the same logic of Trump, you know, the same logic of climate denialism, the same logic of COVID denialism. It's not just misinformation. It's the reverse of the information. You know, it's actually taking and doing the exact opposite, in the same pathology as a pedophile. And I think that's why it goes to the abuse that Ruth's talking about, but the effects of that are as horrific, you know, as forms of power and abuse. They're the structures of society built on these conspiracies. like Trump, no, who only tweets, doesn't do anything, Luca, he just tweets right? He doesn't act, you know, he's a classic epitome of our situation.

Raffaele De Luca Picione: I think that the pandemic is showing the other - the weakness of our social links, the weakness of our Western societies.



About this topic of information and communication, I am reflecting about that there is a sort of schizophrenia, a sort of cognitive schizophrenia of information. So, when you hear news or information, you can be sure that after that, you hear another opposite news and there is a sort of splitting in the society, in the community between a narrative logics and the scientific logics. We know that in the human experience is fundamental the might, the story, the narration and that at the same time is fundamental the scientific epistemic. The problem is not which one we choose to accept, which one do we want to support or we want to defend? The problem is the total splitting between them, maybe listening to your very useful and inspiring reflection, I was thinking about the three notions of Lacan, three registers of experience: the imaginary the symbolic and the real. Real is not reality, real is the impossible, real is something that we cannot define, we cannot symbolize. So, when we ask this when we live in rupture, a breakdown of real in our lives, we will live a sensation to be without words, to express what is happening. Science is in sphere, in the cycle of the symbolic but the real breaks the symbolic. So, when we have the eruption of the real in the symbolic, the register of imaginary as it shows an hyper production of fantasies, of stories and we are assisting that, the increasing number of fake news. There is a polyvocality, a strong polyvocality that is not dialogue. It is not dialogical for to increase our cultural background. It is a sort of splitting in this polyvocality. For this reason I use schizophrenia of our cognitive process.

Paul Rhodes: That's incredibly fascinating. And what I would like to do now is for all of us to turn our mics off, the five of us, and to open it up to the audience to have a talk and then we will come back and we will keep folding it like dough between the two groups as we go.

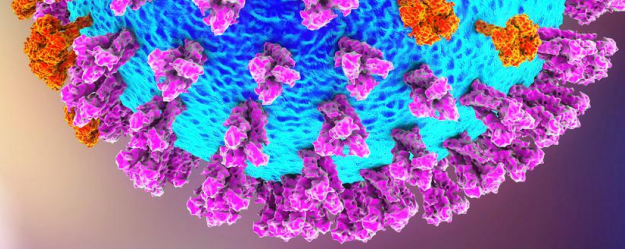
Audience

Giuseppina Marsico: First of all, hello, everybody. It's Pina here. I would like to start by keeping picking up something that has been first discussed by Luca in the very first initial statement of him and then I think is something that is going on in between the discussions of the people here and this is about a tension in between ignorance and knowledge. I mean, we are living a sort of life, a situation in which there is this kind of two forces at stake, the knowledge and the science and the medical discourses, and everything is about COVID-19 but not only COVID-19 I mean, in general, there is the other side in which is sort of, you

We live in rupture, a breakdown of real in our lives, we will live a sensation to be without words to express what is happening

know, this goes without foundation or you know, people are feeling the right, I would say, to say something even without any previous understanding or previous knowledge on that. So we are living these tensions in between ignorance and knowledge. This is something that, you know, we have to reflect as scholars first but even before as a humans. We are living in this in between things.

Heather Gridley: It's Heather here. I was wondering when we talk about science and, you know, just relating back to Luca's first question that, you know, for a long time, certainly in poststructural psychology and postmodernism and such, we've been questioning science and being critical of science and then with debates like climate change, and such where we find ourselves being fierce defenders of "the science," and the same with COVID. I wonder to what extent we

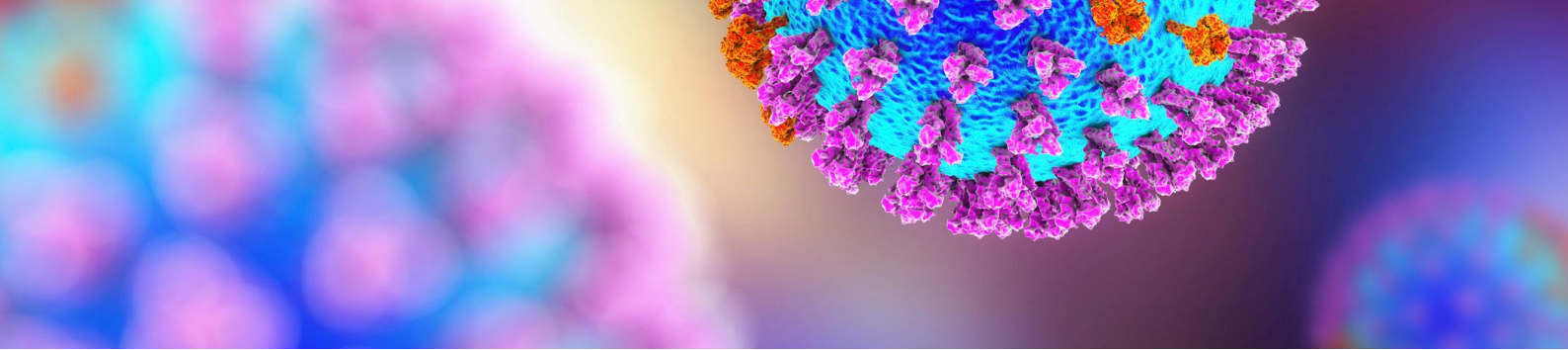


ourselves might be responsible, and I think rightly responsible, for opening up some of those spaces that question absolute truths, and such. But as this led to some of the problem - people have been saying, oh, well, you can't believe anything you hear. I'm thinking and this is a bit of a leap, but it's the same as the media, people are so mistrustful of the media, that that morphs into attacks on the media. And we've seen several quite violent attacks by police on media at some of the demonstrations, which seem to be almost urged on by Trump and talking about fake news and such. And yet there is a lot of fake news.

we have a culture that's borne on systematic violence, violence towards women, violence towards people of color, violence towards the earth, and yet we don't actually have anything within our psychological descriptors that talk about such a central epithet

There are always kind of paradoxes of what is truth, what is news and such that I find myself an aging feminist, a bit confused, because I spent a lot of time criticizing male-dominated science that wasn't terribly helpful to women's lives and now feeling I need to defend science, whatever it is, against the, you know, the barbarians or whatever, you pardon the expression. So I just put that out there as something's that's been going around in my head in recent months and even years and as to where I kind of want to position myself in that, so I wonder if your doctor who is also an anti-vaxxer and posted that post may have been sort of subject to some of the same.

Merle Conyer: I might add a little bit to that. I'm eager. My thoughts aren't completely formed. I wasn't sure if I was going to contribute. But there's a couple of threads that have come together. The one was the mention of schizophrenia. And then there was Heather's comment which really resonated with me around the discourse of critique of science and then relying on science as part of the work of solidarity around climate change. And so where my thoughts are turning to is around the DSM as a representation of the cultural norms that we're potentially seeing in these kinds of ways of behaving. And it takes me to an Algonquin word of Wetiko, which was when the first Native Americans from that community encountered the settlers. Wetiko was their word which meant something like a profound lack of empathy. They couldn't understand how people could rob and mutilate and destroy the earth and other people. It was kind of outside of their cultural norms. And yet we don't see - that's so endemic in our culture, we have a culture that's borne on systematic violence, violence towards women, violence towards people of color, violence towards the earth, and yet we don't actually have anything within our psychological descriptors that talk about such a central epithet. And so I'm wondering if some of it might be in the cracks. So, if you think about the idea of schizophrenia, rather than than using it as - I don't use pathologizing labels in my practice unless it's intentional as a way to access services for someone and then we only will use that term when there's been deep consultation as to why those terms have been used. But I'm wondering if there's something useful because - suicidality, we are on the brink of - we have suicidal ideation with the way we are destroying the biosphere, which keeps us and others alive.



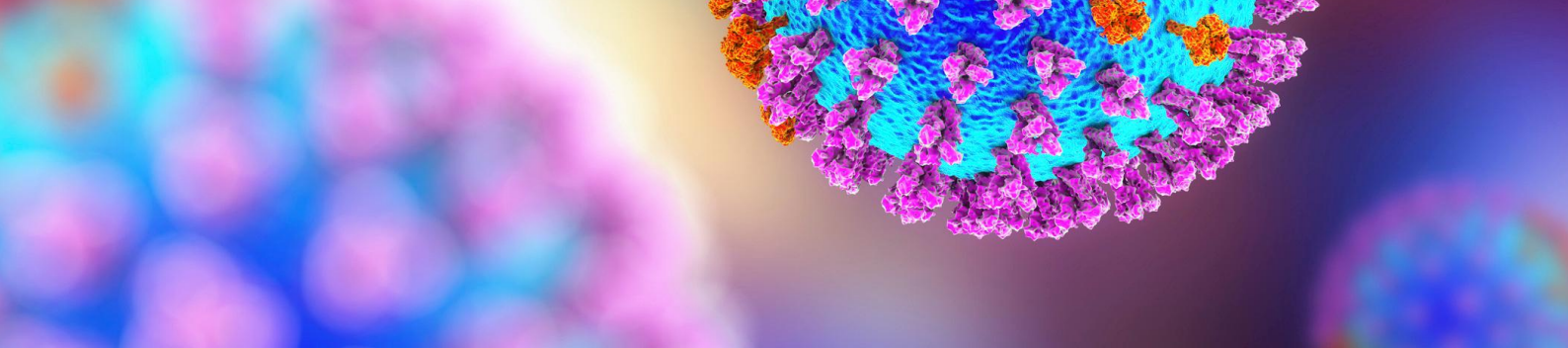
We have schizophrenia tendencies, in terms of our relationships with each other, with nature, in some of the kind of discourses that have been shared here. Some of the descriptors of paranoia come to mind, even of being absent to being empathic to the cries of nature, the cries of groups that have been subjected to marginalization and oppression for so many years. So whilst I've tended to be quite rejecting of the descriptors within the DSM, I'm wondering if there's something within it that is actually describing, and may help us to understand, some of the questions and contexts that have been raised in the conversation today. That's it. Early thoughts.

Annaleise Robertson: I really liked what Pina said about the tension between ignorance and knowledge. And I feel like this idea is something that I think permeates probably how most people approach new information. I felt that, for me, living in London this year - so I moved from Sydney to London originally for a year, although I'm likely to stay longer at this point. I went from working clinically in a particular model to having to totally change the way I thought about how I did my clinical work. I went from one setting to a completely different setting, even though I thought they were going to be the same. I am studying and learning new things over here. And then COVID happened and I remember when it started I, I was initially feeling like it wasn't relevant to me as as such I wasn't as scared of it. There was a time when things seemed humorous about the panic about it, then it became very serious and then I suddenly felt myself panicked. And it was like, the access to information and knowledge felt more painful than ignorance did. And I kind of wanted to be ignorant rather than have the knowledge of what was was happening around me. And the same has happened with George Floyd and the riots that are

happening in America and the absurdity of Trump and how I find myself watching, like looking at Trump tweets or watching videos about him and I'm shocked and I'm horrified. I kind of don't want to know but I do. Interestingly, so the work I do is in predominantly with people that are afflicted with eating disorders in different ways, and I also this week made myself watch What the Health, which is a documentary on Netflix that I've avoided watching for years, but often people who prescribe to a more vegan lifestyle watch that show, and I think there's something about trying to expose myself to new knowledge that might actually be painful or difficult, but I'm feeling like I've got to step up a little bit, but actually, I don't want to at the same time.

There was a time when things seemed humorous about the panic about it, then it became very serious and then I suddenly felt myself panicked. And the access to information and knowledge felt more painful than ignorance did

Adam Dickes: I've just been reflecting on how the people in the circle at the beginning all seem to have something like a question about something that was mystifying, you know, Luca was talking about the doctor that had shared this post. And Paul was talking about pedophiles who are seeing themselves as victims and another colleague who was talking about 5g and Ruth was also reflecting on on this idea of incredibly marginalized people being fed information from a very marginalizing source, you know, that seems to just embed that marginalization even more. And Raffaele used this word schizophrenia and talked about how, sometimes, when the real can't be symbolized anymore, we all must get pushed into the imaginary.



I think that's how I interpreted that. I was just reflecting how working with very paranoid people, or people who have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, that sometimes that paranoia can be inverted the way that Paul was talking about. Things can be turned back to front. But there can also be a seed of something in that paranoia, that very much reflects their reality or what their experience is. And somehow, if you can get to that level underneath, you stop engaging with the actual content somehow, but try to get to what's going on underneath. That paranoid vision of the world represents something about a much deeper experience, it might be isolation, or feeling like you're marginalized completely or whatever it is, but it's

people take on those medicalized labels or psychologized labels, to give them more agency to get help as well or to legitimize what they might be feeling, whether it's in response to climate change or the riots or COVID or anything

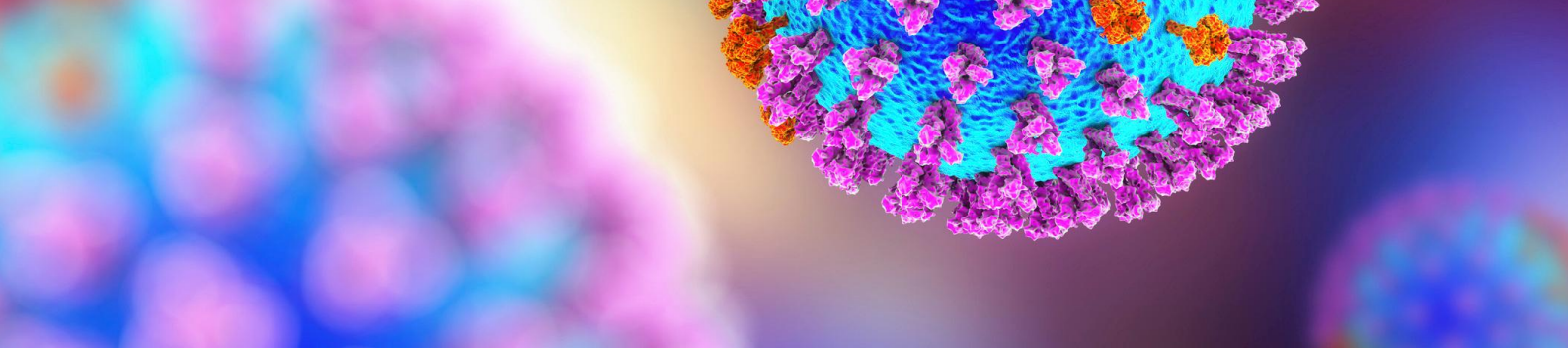
searching for that internal reality underneath. So that provides some opportunity for reconnecting to reality. So I'm just wondering, I guess, when it does go back to the circle and your reflections on that idea of how, how we could kind of get to what the meaning of that craziness is, of that, for instance, a 5g conspiracy or something and resolve it in any way.

Maya: I might say something about what you just said. I do research with people who are in a methadone clinic or people who use drugs. And they have some quite interesting ideas about, I guess, the treatment

- it's hard to make sense of, in a way that they have the - they call them the methodonians. And the way I have made sense of it is that in such a low trust environment, where they're being asked to come and offer an awful lot of things when they're really in a vulnerable position, they, in a way, gain a sense of agency by having these stories that they have, that they know, which is kind of against the treatment service. So in a way, as an expression of agency, if you make sense of and you resist, despite the scenes, this is obviously a bit of a slippery track, that they end up perpetuating some ideas that might not be helpful for them. But I think you could see like that as well. That you're trying to make sense of something and regain some power in a situation where you have very little.

Group of Five

Jesse Ruse: I found what you were saying then, Maya, very interesting, about a resistance to some narrative and then an attraction to another that gives the person more agency. And in my experience, obviously working in a very different setting to you in a different country and place and with different people. I found that people seem, and I think I was talking to Luca about this today over email, that people take on those medicalized labels or psychologized labels, to give them more agency to get help as well or to legitimize what they might be feeling, whether it's in response to climate change or the riots or COVID or anything, taking on a mental health label gives them agency to get help and to discuss it with someone who they see to be an appropriate person to discuss their concerns with rather than making it a political or social matter in which their concerns can easily be pushed away. If they're not conforming to like a mainstream agenda.



That's just in my experience, I suppose, in a mild to moderate, as they call it, mental health clinic for young people. And perhaps the fact that they're young as well is also quite, you know, important because younger people might be more open to those narratives as well, narratives of health, mental health.

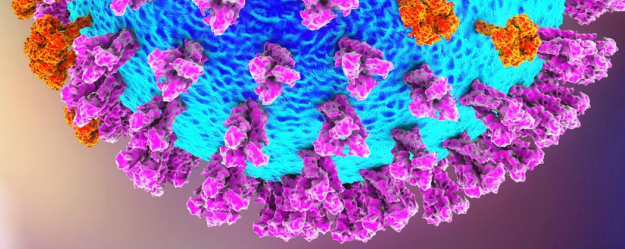
Ruth Nelson: I noticed when Adam, I felt initially provoked by a sense of alarm, about what do you mean answers? I mean, I have fewer answers than I've ever done at any other point in my life probably. And I noticed that in sitting in this space together, I'm feeling this enormous fatigue, that it's still here, that all of this is still here, and I'm noticing, you know, like, it's almost like palpitations, like heart, but it's not an anxiety. It's probably anxiety, but it's just tired. I'm so tired with all of this. And, you know, I've been doing some work myself on trauma with Jane Clapp and, you know, she was saying, is it despair? It's like, it's not the right word. Because my job - I'm a clinical psychologist. My job is the bulwark against despair, right? That's kind of our job to help hold despair at bay. But there's this sense that do we change? How do we change through this? How do we help Aboriginal people survive this? How do we help ourselves survive this? You know, I mean, as a woman on my own with children, you know, my job, I spend my days supporting people who are really struggling through this, but I also have to survive myself through this, you know, through lockdown, I've lost most of the accesses I had to supports, you know, the pants have started falling off my kids, like, Ramona, one of the people in this group, is one of the people who's been feeding me and my children. So I feel like we are carrying so much, each of us and I don't think - it's about - I'm coming into contact right now with just like how heavy that burden feels when it feels like it comes from all directions.

Paul Rhodes: To me, it's very interesting that we seemed to be talking about, you know, using psychological principles to understand the madness of society and its effects, so horrific, versus describing, you know, we're trying to say, you know, if society's sick, what's the treatment? No. And, is it accepting, you know, the real - for example, Merle has helped me to accept the reality of climate change and sent me on a very painful journey. Thank you, Merle. But you know, it was very healing to accept the dread, the reality of it, and then come out the other side and try it, you know, a little different. Although, it seems to me, that's what we're struggling with - how are we supposed to act? You know, and with a collective madness? How can we

I'm a clinical psychologist. My job is the bulwark against despair, right? That's kind of our job to help hold despair at bay. But there's this sense that do we change? How do we change through this?

act? And the answer is, you know, oh my god, how overwhelming and hence why, I guess I feel this same as you Ruth, exhausted, you know.

Luca Tateo: Paul, sorry, I like this, the state of society is sick. But the problem with when society's sick is that once one is always on the edge, is always doubting, okay, whether it's if I feel sane, and the rest of society is sick, or I am sick and the rest of society actually is right. I think that's a kind of very, very old existential dilemma. I actually I would like to point out just one one thing. Well, when I was talking, on purpose, I never mentioned science. I never used the word science.

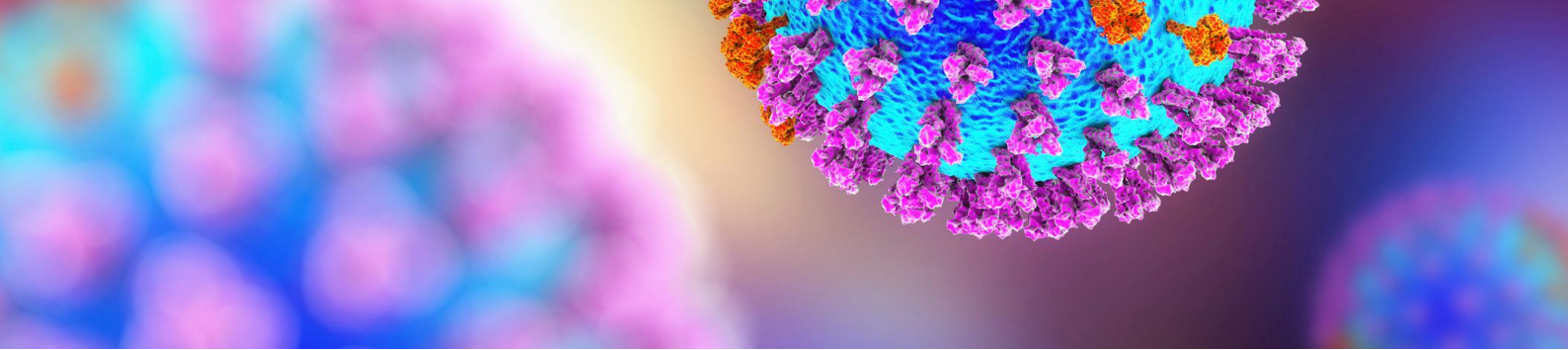


And there was a reason for that. And the reason is that I think that science is only - what the complex of institution and practices we call science is only one of the form of knowledge. But it does not mean that science is the only one that has the problem of justifying its own beliefs. I think that any form of knowledge is valid, or is acceptable, to the extent that is, it is accountable and justifiable for its beliefs. And it can be anything, I mean, I can - just imagine food, okay? Of course, science tells us somehow what we can eat or what we should eat. But I can purposefully decide to eat something different, because I have my justification to do that. And I am aware, I can account for my trade-off, say, okay, you say that's healthy, that's healthier.

People like Trump, like Bolsonaro are so disconcerting because you can never tell whether they are lying or whether they are believing something to the extent that it becomes true for them.

Okay, I want to go less healthy because I want, I know I want something else. So the system of justification of beliefs can be very different. And I think that it's very important to acknowledge all of them. That's why I never use the word science also, because science too can fall into this problem of unjustified beliefs. So what I was trying to point out is what is beneath this issue, which is a more fundamental, existential epistemological problem, that the pandemic has only brought to surface more clearly. People like Trump, like Bolsonaro are so disconcerting because you can never tell whether they are lying or whether they are believing something to the extent that it becomes true for them. So, how do you deal with a person who is not diagnosed, is the president of a State, and is believing

something to the extent that this is actually true for for him or her, okay? So, this is actually a bigger problem and what I find from how - I could somehow elaborate from all this discussion is that, you know, usually the problem that, as in this discourse about belief, is that you actually you have two directions - when seeing is believing, which is the basic empirical position and when believing is seeing, which is what one will say the dogmatic or the even religious position. But here, we are, today actually, it looks like we are in a kind of short sequence. So, seeing is believing is seeing. So there is no longer this kind of two direction, you see something, and you see something because it already matches your beliefs, and then you start believing that what have you seen is true. It's really a short sequence. And the problem I think, for all of us is not - there are two problems. One is, okay, what is the entry point to break the cycle? This vicious circle. Exactly, because that's why it's so hard to talk with people like Trump, because you have no entry point, there is no creep. For the system, seeing believing seeing. And the other problem, I think it's kind of narcissistic for us in a certain sense, which is - okay, I know how, why I'm so helpless in breaking the circle. So, how - I cannot do that and this, this somehow - this is part of the anger, I think, that is going on. The importance to break this, but actually this is - and this is paradoxical again - because we have learned that this doesn't have to do with information. Paradoxically, information is reinforcing this seeing believing circle. Even when apparently you have like in the case of the environmental crisis, it's so clear before us, it's so clear, so how how can you not see it? That's one position. The other position is waterproof in a certain sense. So what is the entry point? Where is it and how to create the creep? So each one can access the process going on. I think that's what comes to me after this discussion.

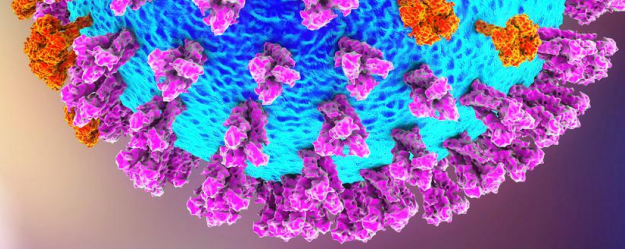


Raffaele De Luca Picione: In the last two months during the lockdown, I reflected often, you know, about the way to use some psycho pathologic labels in semiotic terms. Not in order to pathologize some behavior, or to make a diagnosis, but to connect some affective dynamics. And beyond schizophrenia, there is a sort of paranoid wedge in the society. There is a counter-phobic as well, the manic phenomena and the very depressive. But I don't want to use these to indicate a single individual and say they are sick. But I want to use this to try to understand it, reflect about the social dynamics and this is our expression of a social malaise, social suffering. The explosion of a pandemic shows the lack of a safety net in our society, the lack of trust in social links, the lack of generational link and that paranoid attitude was a process to, to try to cope with the uncertainty and the rupture of frame, of the weak frame of our daily routines and paranoia is a process of hyper-simplification of the reality, of the complex reality, and there is a sort of a way to point out a single problem and to define a linear cause-effect relation. So, in the complexity of our society, paranoid is a very adaptive (non-adaptive), but in contingent in present time, is an adaptive form to manage the explosive effect, effective process. At the same time, counter-phobic attitude is a way to create an illusion that I am omnipotent. I am, I don't feel fear about what is happening. And the manic, it's the same. But there is also a depressive, very huge depressive phenomena in these moments, because the social discourse is about - never it will be anymore as before. The future is dangerous. Another pandemic will follow. My future aspect that you are negated in social terms, these have a strong depressive effect. So, when I proceed to work with my patients during the last few months in the Skype version setting, we work to try to connect subjective experience in terms of a collective

communitarian experience, because the problem is not psychopathology as in individual sickness, but is a psychopathology as an expression for the whole humanity, for the whole community. We find these notions very clear in many many psychotherapy and psychological disciplines in systemic and family therapies, in interpersonal psychoanalysis, in the group analysis. We are in a matrix, we are in a social matrix, in a deep social matrix. So, my symptom is not mine, but it is over the the structure, over the whole system. I am just a ring of the chain. My psychopathology is not just my mechanism, my defensive mechanism, but is a sort of effective strategy to manage something that it's not clearly easy to manage for the whole community. So in my reflection I was trying to how to do and I followed the reasoning over Luca - what is the

We work to try to connect subjective experience in terms of a collective communitarian experience, because the problem is not psychopathology as in individual sickness, but is a psychopathology as an expression for the whole humanity

breaking point in the vicious cycle. I'm not sure that the breaking point is within the vicious cycle. But maybe we need a huge frame to recontextualize what is happening and to understand for example, we have to recognize a very strong and an intensive affective symbiosis in what is happening. We have to recognize, we have to acknowledge that the affect, emotion, try to translate in acting out, in acting the form when they are not expressing the words when we are not processing by reflective processes. How can I distance it from my - I can oscillate between this



dancing and the connection with my feelings, with my social feelings, in this process of grief over the flux and reflux that we need as a society, we need as a community. Sorry for the confusion but it taught that I am elaborating with you, listening to your reflection.

Paul Rhodes: It's so wonderful to hear you talking, thinking out loud, Raffaele, because the culture of psychology in Australia is so incredibly intrapsychic, individualistic, that to hear what you're saying is liberating. You know, I'm a family therapist, so I understand, but you know, the idea of sitting with a patient and helping them make links between their intrapsychic experience and the wider mosaic of sociological processes that are going on, you know, is

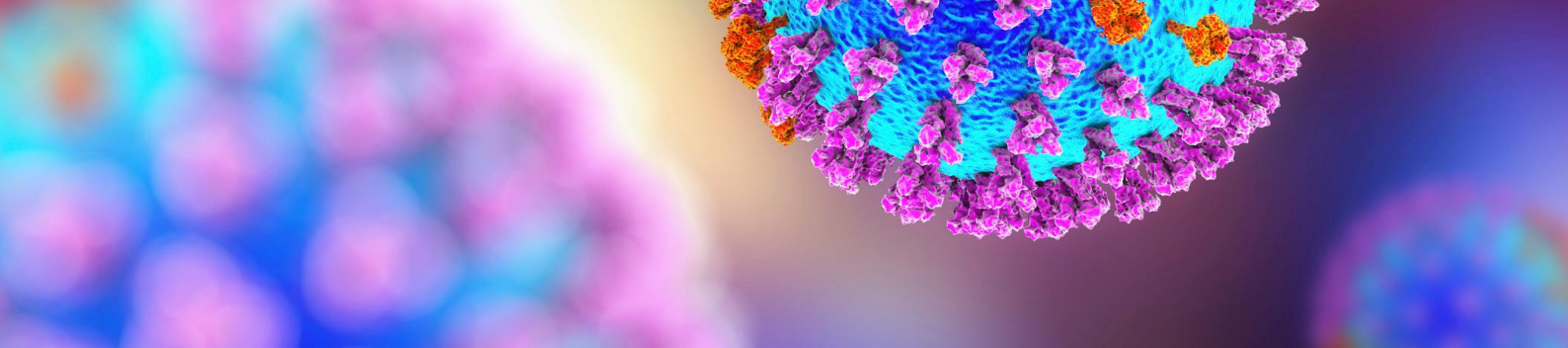
we're weaving these different stories from academia down to the dirt, we're weaving a new knowing that comes from ancient First Nations practices as we listen with respect to them

dangerous talk, you know, dangerous talk, maybe you have your registration taken away here. Not really, but, you know, at least we're asking the question in the right place when we think in those incredibly large systems. I think it's very important that we learn as psychologists, not just to think systemically like family therapy, but to think so sociologically.

Ruth Nelson: But more than that, because the conditions since the Industrial Revolution that have brought us to this point is that exportation of the dominant paradigms of Northern Europe through, you know, through patriarchy, through colonization,

through religion, through psychology that we've planted over the entire world. And so part of that entry point is from taking epistemologies that - what they know from outside this paradigm, so to go back to First Nations and say, to learn about what they know. You know, Raffaele, I was thinking then the link in the chain metaphor that I've used quite a lot. But actually where I work out at Baabayn, I've been pulled up on that to say "you need to stop saying link in a chain because chain is part of that colonizing practice, that's part of slavery, that's part of oppression. That's part of the prison system that keeps us down, you know. We're a weaving, come back to the circle." Come back to the community, come back to the connection. And that's the richness in what we're doing here, we're weaving these different stories from, you know, from academia down to the dirt, we're weaving a new knowing that comes from ancient First Nations practices as we listen with respect to them, that comes from the beauty and the goodness that is in Western academia. You know, we're going to bring that together to move forward, to move with terror, with despair, to not push those things away, to bring them within the circle - all those ways of knowing and of being.

Luca Tateo: Yeah, that's an interesting combination, Ruth, because I was trying to think about where Raffaele said we have to change the frame, it's not a matter of entering the circle, but changing the frame. Actually from an epistemological point of view, it makes sense because of course, the principle is that you cannot change a system from within the rule of the system itself. So, you have to change the frame and I was actually - okay, how can you do that, in practice, and I found Ruth's comment very interesting because actually it's exactly what you mentioned.



So, for instance one way of breaking the change is exactly going out of the metaphors that are related to that cycle. That could be for instance, you make the example, okay, chain is a metaphor which is strongly related to the colonial history. So if I change the frame from chaining to weaving, yeah, this completely changed the frame. So the fact itself that you have to engage with this metaphor is somehow breaking this cycle. I think that's very, that's very smart. And I was immediately thinking, for instance, about the metaphor of war for the pandemic. That's exactly the same point, or the metaphor of riots for what what's happening in the United States now. And in the Fox narrative. It's actually probably the breaking of frame is - I don't really like the idea that everything happens on the level of language, but it's undeniable that the first breaking of frame is the breaking of the metaphorical field of something. So like, let's stop talking about war on virus. Because war, as I - actually this was the topic of what I talked about at the conference, is let's break the metaphor of war. Because if you don't realize that you are caught within this metaphor, you will continue to cultivate the same cycle so people will feel entitled to continue thinking in terms of okay, we are in wartime. What you do in wartime is you fight against someone, and the other is the enemy and anyone can become an enemy or a traitor and so on and so forth. So I think, yeah, thank you. That was really, really insightful for me.

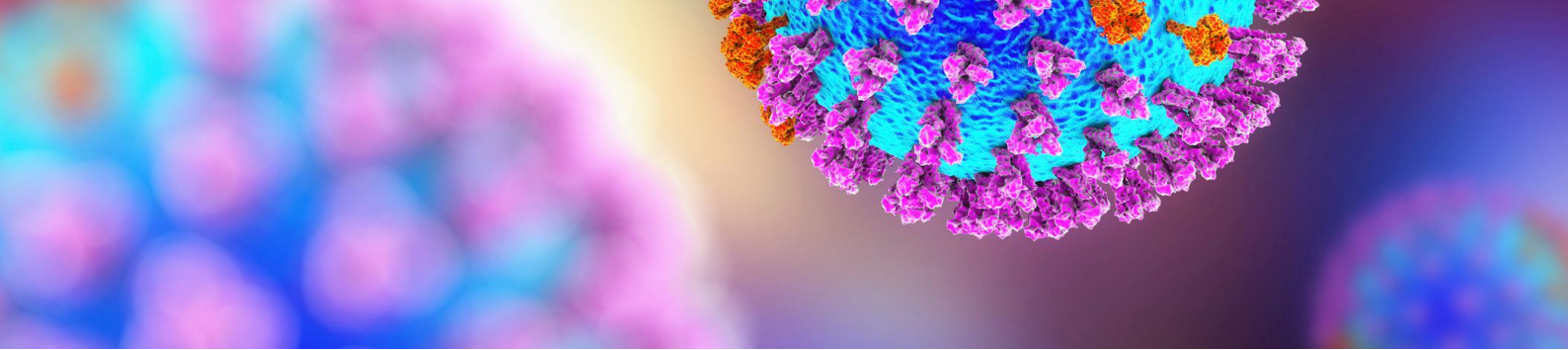
Audience

Merle Conyer: My own journey has been that deconstructing the frames of language has been completely liberative, both for me personally, and as a therapist in therapeutic context. I've personally found that getting underneath language has been a real source of liberation and to acknowledge a lineage.

What took me on this journey was the folk in Canada, such as Alan Wade, who work in the area of response-based practice. And so when I think of that you use the word of "riots." Well, you know, you know, it's been described as looting riots, or it could be described as resistance to generational oppression. So what the language is doing, it's either revealing or obscuring who holds the power, how the power is exerted, who is authorized to own the narrative, and who is being silenced, victimized and marginalized. And you know, I think I've certainly as I've become more aware of examining language, I think it's really helpful to uncover the systems of oppression into which we are all recruited. And I come from very personally, I grew up in the apartheid system. So I've had the lived experience of being recruited without my consent as an infant into a racialized system of oppression.

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I am still continuing to deconstruct the influence of that, to redress the way that I was complicit and inevitably complicit. And I do think that when we deconstruct language, we find places of our complicity in shame. But we also find places of our renegotiation from a place of dignity, from ethics, as well as from redress. So, you know, an example here a few years ago in a small New South Wales town, a young woman was brutally raped on the way home from work. And the mayor's response was women should not walk in a public park in the early evening, else they have things coming to them.



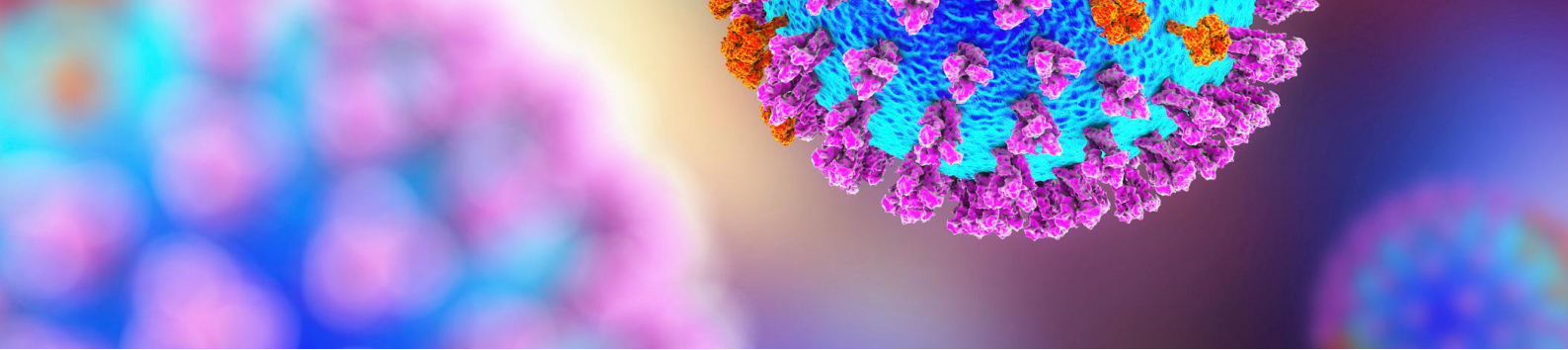
What he was effectively saying was that women are responsible for their own violation, and they are not welcome in public spaces. There was never a dialogue around "we need to have a conversation about why men are raping women." You know, those two conversations, and I hope I haven't triggered anybody by bringing this topic in, but I do think we find the obscuring of responsibility through how we position our language. And for me too, as a therapist, revealing language has been critical in my own practice. In terms of, because I think that if we as therapists collude with that discourse that says women shouldn't be able to walk alone at night, we will run the risk of supporting our clients to become complicit in their own oppression. And so personally, I do think a lot of it comes to down to language. Certainly there's a par for which language is really important.

Resisting that temptation to simplify and to provide, in the language of war, to hold on to the nuance, hold on to the complexity, hold on to our own internal conflicts and the macro conflicts around us in a sort of weaving

Ramona Hewitt: I agree with so much of what's just been said, by Ruth, Luca, Merle. I mean, I really feel like there's something really important here in what you're speaking about in terms of language, but also in what we're representing, in the way that we use language. I think I've been noticing through this conversation that some of us, some people who've been speaking have been also observing this urge to simplify, you know, to sort of eliminate the nuances in our previous positions, you know, to kind of pick a lane, right?

When the forces that are in power are so demonstrably dangerous and when the other, whoever it might be, has so much power and it feels like they have so much power over us, or over the powerless, the temptation to get in our lane and stay there feels quite strong, and I feel it in myself. And I feel like I've had threads of it as well. And I think that part of the solution is not just in the language that we use, but in the resistance that we have. Resisting that temptation to simplify and to provide, in the language of war, to hold on to the nuance, hold on to the complexity, hold on to our own internal conflicts and the macro conflicts around us in a sort of weaving, the kind of weaving that you've mentioned, Ruth. Being able to hold it all together somehow feels more important now than ever.

Heather Gridley: I was relating to the things people were saying about, you know, the limits of therapy, I suppose, and what, you know - I used to kind of think that we see ourselves as the main player as therapists, and yet we're just bit players in our clients' lives, even though hopefully important players at a certain time, but a little bit like in a hospital drama, you know. It's the staff who are the big characters and the patients come and go. But actually, in real life, it's the other way around. The client's not in therapy for very long. They live their lives outside of that. And we're just the bit players in their lives who may be useful at a particular time and some of that can be helpful. But I wanted to give a little bit of a plug for community psychology because I'm a community and a counseling psychologist, although I haven't actually done any therapy for a long time, but I've done a bit of supervision. I came that way via family therapy. So I guess that was my pass into systems theory.



The other thing, was also the notion of working from the inside or the outside. And because I worked for the Australian Psychological Society for 12 years up until two years ago, I've obviously opted to work from the inside for a lot of my career, and actually found that remarkably satisfying, although I constantly had to be aware of what I wasn't able to do. And I'm a little bit freer to do some of that now, but also I have a lot less actual power. And I think we shouldn't shirk from the power of some of the systems we're working within, like universities or whatever. If they're important enough to exist, they're important enough to have some rolling change or an obstructing change. For me, community psychology has been a way of finding, along with feminist psychology, a kind of homeplace where I can sit within psychology, but also on the edge and take a sort of critical conception as well, if that makes sense.

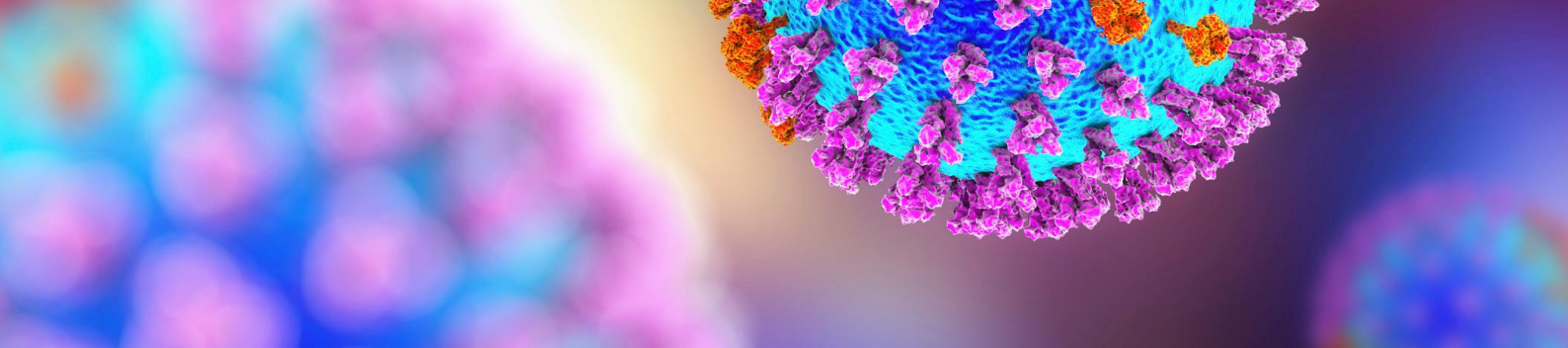
Adam Dickes: I'd just like to reflect that I loved Raffaele's idea of connecting subjective experience to collective experience. It's certainly something that I've witnessed being incredibly healing for people who have become isolated from any sort of collective experience. I think it's a really fantastic way of putting it.

Luca Tateo: I actually have a question rather than reflection. Is this. I am not a therapist. I'm not a clinical psychologist. I'm not even a psychologist actually. And I was wondering, for me, it has always been - sounded awkward somehow, the stress on healing. This idea of healing. I was questioning myself about what it means when a lot of branches of psychology talk about healing and what means healing in this kind of situation. And I think that this is a big underlying motif for both the practitioners or the psychologists and the society, this idea that we can heal from something like this and what we expect.

Okay, what it means healing? Forgetting all this? Or pretending that things go back to some kind of normality? Or that we go back to the status quo or that we change - we become new persons? So all these can be meanings of healing, but I don't really think that we need healing in the sense. I think that we need all these to become part of us, in a certain sense. I heard people talking about healing even today. And this was a big question. In a certain sense, this seems to me like another metaphor that we cannot escape and that can become somehow dangerous because it's similar, it sounds similar to the way we use wellbeing or happiness. So it's really a question. Because actually why I think it's dangerous, it's something that you cannot oppose. You cannot say - it's a kind of big value, that you can never say healing is bad, or wellbeing is bad, or happiness is bad. But when you

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open the box and see okay, let's look what it means in practice, happiness. I think that you find out that this leads to an unachievable because it's not an existing condition, and that becomes the source of further problems. So I'm really - and naturally, this happens both at the individual and collective level. In a certain sense you can interpret the backfiring of extreme right or the success of extreme right and populist movements in the middle class exactly in the sense so, like the fear to lose a kind of happiness that they never had. That actually they never had.



So, if you push people to become happy or to be happy or to pursue happiness, wellbeing or wealth, of course they will be afraid of losing it, even though this such a condition will never exist. So, somehow this discourse was going around in my head also in this discussion, so, I don't know maybe it's a bit off topic, but it resonated in this way to me.

Ruth Nelson: My older brother is so much not a psychologist that he's an actuary. But he said, there's something about our society is just so hellbent on intervention and treatment. We're obsessed with intervention and treatment. And we don't have these ideas of letting something be, just letting something run its course. And I think what I was hearing in what you're

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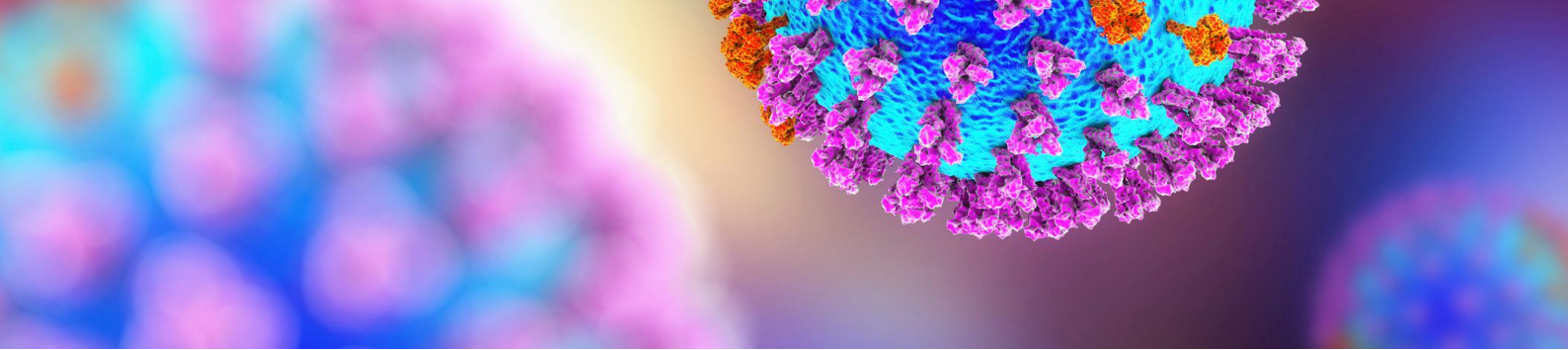
saying, or what I was taking from it, is that healing is still part of that desire, that urge that we have to be doing something, we've got to do something about that. So for me, then I try to sit in that dialectic of what does it mean to participate in collective action, collective action about standing as an ally, of being part of a resistance and at the same time, to just hold life lightly enough to just let it be, And if you want to heal, maybe that's how healing happens. But hey, you're just alive. Just be. Just be here.

Entire Group Join Together

Adam Dickes: Luca, when I used that word, I did pause

for a microsecond. And I was running through other words I could use, and I think out of it was that I used to use this word recovery, and I was kind of rightly schooled on the fact that recovery had become this colonized word, which the health system was using there to tell people they had to get back to the place that they had been before they become sick, you know, mentally ill. And that for people who could, who had defined their own recovery, it was so rarely anything to do with the idea that they were being fixed and made into a functional, you know, member of a capitalist society where they could be productive. And it was nothing to do with something that could be defined outside of them. So this word recovery has become quite toxic for a lot of people, and I guess I'm still searching for something better. But thank you for helping me to reflect on that word and what that can mean as well, because I'm still searching, and that's definitely helping me on my journey.

Unknown Speaker: I think it shows the importance of language yet again. I really resonated with what you were saying, Merle, about your use of language and your practice and the importance of that. I was writing an essay just last week about - that in the title was like a treatment for anorexia nervosa or an adolescent with anorexia nervosa. And I went back and changed it to therapy with an adolescent and it felt so much more - what I actually was doing and wanted to be doing and that idea of just, you know, experiencing something with either a person or a population of people, which I think is partly why it feels necessary to expose ourselves to these things that are confronting. I was a bit nervous to be honest about coming to this group, because I thought I'd - Paul you often share things on Facebook where there's like multiple words in the abstract or something that I'm like, I don't know



what that means, I don't know what that means. But at the same time, I feel like I want to learn things and so even just like being in a group like this, I feel like it's me trying to expose myself and certainly making myself talk as well, to be part of it.

Paul Rhodes: Well, I'm glad you are. It reminds me of somebody that we had talk in last meeting, Glenn Albrecht, who talked about, climate change. And his book, *Earth Emotions*, is basically a book of words he made up, you know. He makes up words, and he makes up a lexicon of climate change and climate renewal, because they're free of all of these associations. And, you know, people think he's crazy because he makes words up, but maybe that's part of what we need to do. Make shit up, make new words because all the other ones have been taken.

Merle Conyer: I think, that, to me, talks to how words can imprison us because they can limit what we think and they can limit our capacity to articulate experience. And I really appreciate what Glenn's doing because he's creating words for lived experience that don't exist in the English language. So you know, to share with folk who may not be aware. One of his words which still very deeply affects me when I hear it is *solastalgia*, which comes from *nostalgia*, looking to the past, and *solace*, places of comfort. So *solastalgia*, in the climate context, is when you're feeling homesick while still being at home. So you're at home, but your home is leaving you, because of fracking or because of destruction of the soil, because of the heat, or whatever. So that word of homesickness in your own home because the world is leaving you. To me, when we can name that, we welcome it into the lived experience, and we don't marginalize it with limiting descriptors such as pessimistic, dark thoughts, but it's actually a lived embodied experience of longing, loss and care.

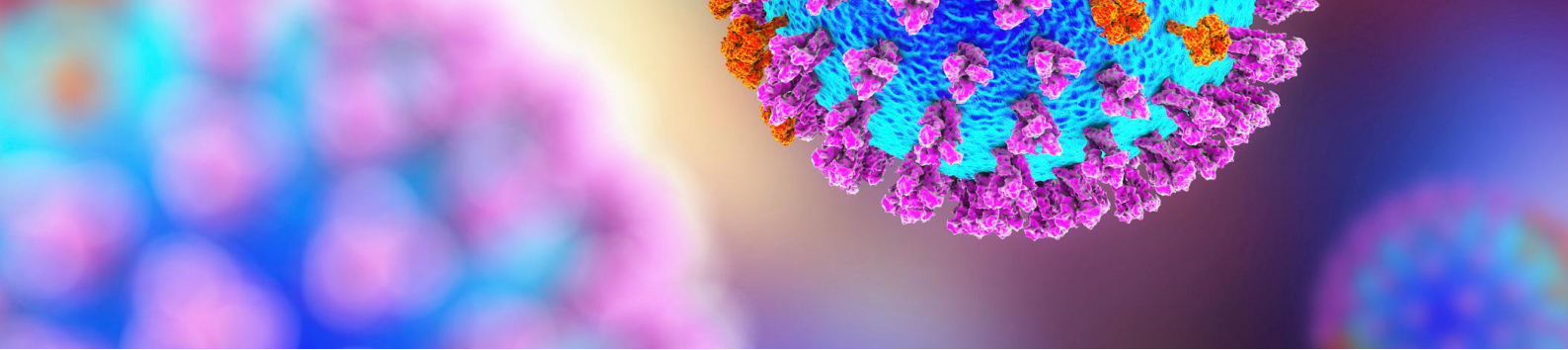
So, I'd be interested if the growth was to think about how our conversation started, which was around so called conspiracy theories and totalitarian practices, which are using the manipulation of language. Can we find a couple of new words to try and state our essence of some of those things?

Luca Tateo: Actually, we usually, very often, we need to go back and find words in our dialect, actually. Me and Raffaele, we have the same dialect. Sometimes there are not even, not even Italian words, but I think we need the dialect words. Which in Italy is a completely different thing from the Italian language. It's really a different language.

Ruth Nelson: Well, I was just thinking, isn't there a process now in Italy, of reclaiming those dialects, of rebuilding your relationship with the dialects from the places you're from?

words can imprison us because they can limit what we think and they can limit our capacity to articulate experience

Luca Tateo: It's always been there in a certain sense, you must consider that in Italy, the creation of a national culture is very quite new. I mean, it has like one century, something like that. The dialects are still really strong but since the end of 1970s, the cultural use of dialects is no longer associated with backwardness and poverty, as it used to be. So, and we have a tradition of dialect, theatre and poetry for instance, that has been - we appreciate it. Unfortunately, this has been appropriated by the people like Lega Nord and Salvini. They actually built on, unfortunately, they built and misled this regional tradition. But I'm really proud of my dialect because it's a mix of Latin,



Greek, Arabic, Spanish, French words. So I'm really proud.

Paul Rhodes: But tell us the word for healing in your dialect.

Raffaele De Luca Picione: We are a bastard language.

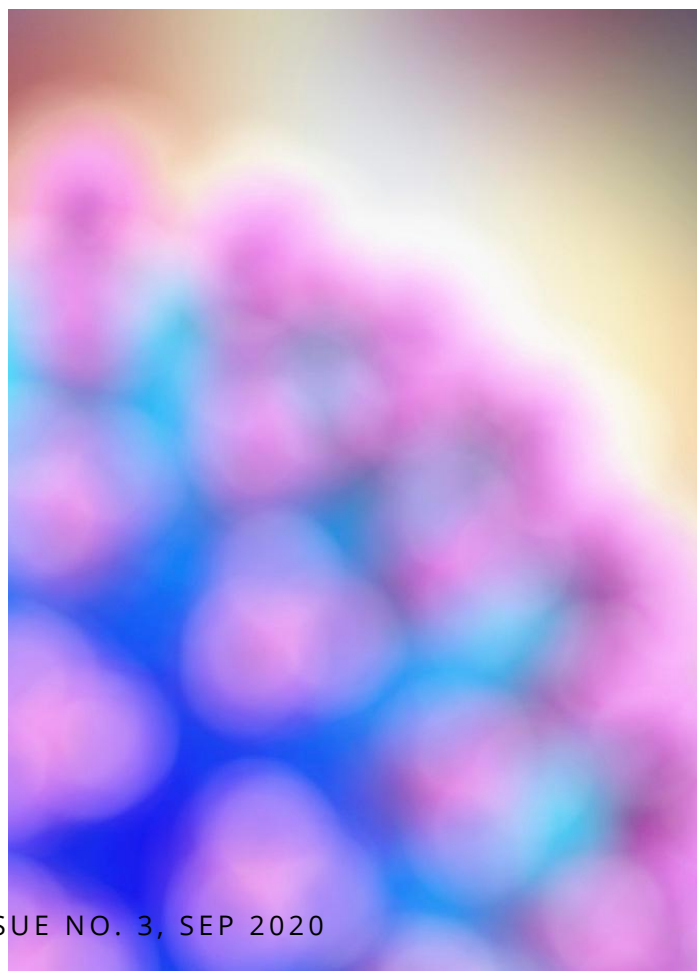
Luca Tateo: Yeah, actually, it will be in the dialect, it's very similar to the Italian because comes from Latin, from curare, it will be curare. To cure, basically. But I don't know if we have another word for that one.

Ruth Nelson: Do you have a word for weaving?
Weaving is very ancient practice.

Paul Rhodes: What's an Aboriginal word for healing?

Ruth Nelson: Dadirri a little bit applies to that idea. I've been trying to learn some words in different Aboriginal languages.

Paul Rhodes: We are coming to the end of our talk. And what an amazing talk it was. So I do want to thank everybody for joining in. Everybody was a guest, everybody is to be thanked for coming, but especially to thank Luca and Raffaele for their involvement, much appreciated. It was a really wonderful conversation. So, we will say thank you.





ON THE WEIGHT OF BLACKNESS

IDEAS THAT CHANGED ME

DJORY CHARLES

The protests of today are the result of centuries of discrimination against black people. While different nationalities, creeds, and ethnicities have been largely accepted in the past century, black people have continually been disadvantaged and targeted by socioeconomic and sociopolitical discrimination. We have been and are being lynched, we have been excluded from voting, we have been forced back into slavery through prison, and we have been targeted by law enforcement. Because of this, black people have become second-class citizens who are statistically more likely to end up in prison or live in poverty. This has affected the way others view us, as well as the way we view ourselves.

From the perspective of others, we are seen as lesser; we are seen as degenerates to be avoided. This is why people clutch their purses at the sight of us. This is why people will not hire us when they see a non-traditional European or biblical name on our resume. This is why we are unable to follow romantic interests of another skin color. This is why I have gotten sneers, glares, and been pushed around in predominantly white, affluent neighborhoods despite living within those neighborhoods. This is why the police have been called on me in those neighborhoods; neighborhoods in which I lived. This is why other minorities are socially encouraged to deprecate us as well.

Our internal perspective is a struggle between resilience, pride, and fear. We have had to develop

a thick skin against the injustices that we face daily. Most of us have developed a resilience to racism; we have consistently inoculated ourselves against racism because the alternative is death: death of ourselves and death of our worth. Those who have created strong antibodies against racism go further and will celebrate being black as much as possible, not just because it isn't celebrated, but specifically because it is denigrated. So much of black culture is being proud, because others do not want us to be proud. Lastly, in each of us, we fight an internal hatred of ourselves. It often manifests in depression and anxiety; sometimes it manifests hate for one another. When everyone treats you as if you're unworthy simply because of your skin color, sometimes you begin to believe it. Racism is a sickness that destroys hope and happiness.

I once read online that "being black is exhausting." It's exhausting to fight every day to not be treated as a second-class citizen, as a monster to be hated, as less than human. It's exhausting seeing others hate you before they know you. It's exhausting to constantly look for ways to prove people wrong. It's exhausting to see others who look like yourself and your family lynched in 2020 C.E. It's exhausting to realize that the only time people really care to say they hate racism is when a black person dies. Being black is exhausting because we've been fighting for centuries just to have our natural right to live.

Some may call us hypocrites as we protest for our lives during a pandemic. Even despite the fact that we march

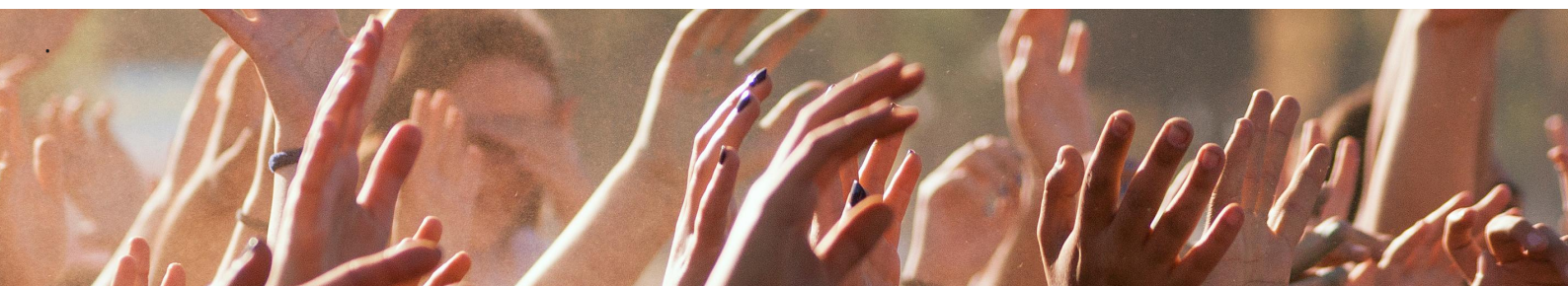
under the CDC guidelines of social distancing and mandated face coverings, there is never a wrong time to fight for one's right to live. If we had been allowed to live and survive in a continent we were unwillingly enslaved to centuries ago, we would not be out marching during a pandemic. It's actually quite unfortunate that we were led to this breaking point, because those who were ignorant of the hate we receive are finally forced through nationwide quarantine to see what happens to us on a daily basis.

With or without quarantine, I'm at risk of losing my life to the society I live in. Why should I let myself be shot down when I can not only keep others safe from Covid-19 transmission but also keep fighting for my rights as a human being? Imagine if Martin Luther King had waited to march after an epidemic; how worse it could be for black Americans. Or if the United States had waited longer to enter the Second World War; think of how many more lives we would have lost to the Holocaust. Would you have told them it was selfish to fight for their lives during a pandemic?

For us, black people, the fight is passed down generation by generation, because it has never ended. My Haitian ancestors were the first and only self-freed black republic in the world. Even then we have been punished for it through the implementation of embargoes, forced treaties, and being sued to avoid re-enslavement. All because we fought for our natural right to be free; all because we made it financially and politically inconvenient for the privileged majority at the time. This is what's happening today. Black people in the U.S. are tired of being slaughtered for the color of our skin. We are tired of being treated like less compared to our lighter-skinned neighbors. We are tired of being punished just because we are born into this world.

there are people who protest, because it has become life or death for them. If we do not stop racism here; there will only be countless more deaths. It should not take rioters and looters joining in to be heard. It shouldn't take martyrdom to have our pain felt. Things should have changed a long time ago. We fight now because we must be the change that should have come long ago.

"I once read online that 'being black is exhausting.' It's exhausting to fight every day to not be treated as a second-class citizen, as a monster to be hated, as less than human. It's exhausting seeing others hate you before they know you. It's exhausting to constantly look for ways to prove people wrong"



HOW CAN CULTURAL SEMIOTICS HELP CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DURING COVID-19

JESSE RUSE

Our understanding of the nature of 'mental health' and 'mental illness' has never rested on solid ground. Foucault, most famously, showed that "madness" has been considered many things, from mysterious to immoral to irrational to medical. Moreover, he suggested that these changes were not brought about by new epistemological discoveries but by real institutional, political and practical changes that swept the societies of the time. If we are to believe Foucault, as I think we tentatively should, then what are we to expect during a global event that has been called the greatest change in society since WWII?

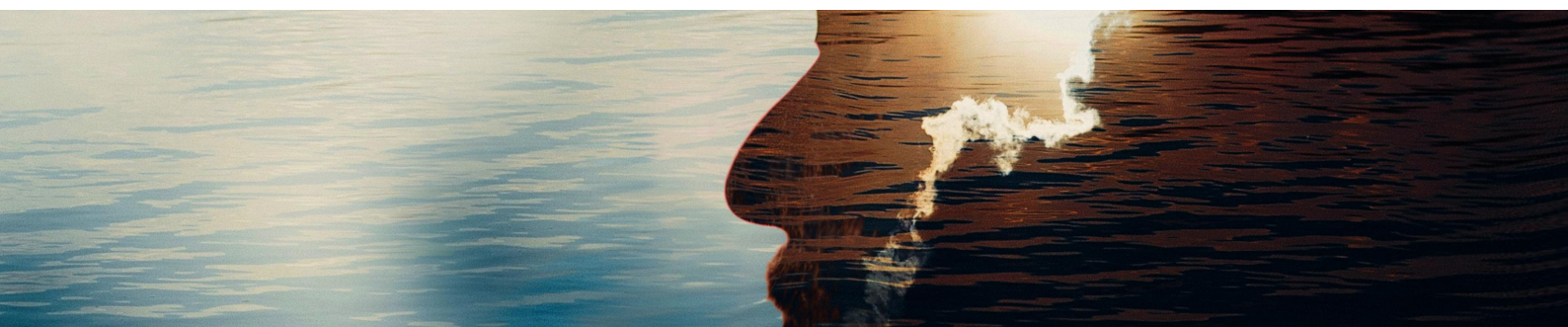
Psychologists who are called on to support those who are suffering are in a unique position to help others navigate and discover this new shared reality under COVID-19. We are also called, as professionals, to continually refine our toolkit of methods, meanings, and solutions to best suit the contexts and situations we find ourselves in. When we are confronted with persons who, as we may have already seen, are scared, anxious, saddened or angry as they make their way through this new world, how do we choose to make meaning of madness?

One approach to this meaning making process might be to take refuge in the maps that have been handed down from institutions and professional organisations which easily provide diagnostic categories and construct psychopathological subjects. These maps, free from the uncertain and uneven terrain of the actual geography they represent,

abstract persons from the material and social circumstances they are in and, in doing so, present us with uncomplicated individual management strategies to alleviate suffering.

Such a model, so useful in an age defined by the neo-liberal corporate power, may be coming to the end of its life. Although we can only speculate at such an early stage, it would not be inconceivable to think that we may be entering a world where individual and collective life are no longer so estranged. After all, those of us (the majority) who are neither elderly nor at-risk do not isolate in our homes and restrict our activities for our own health, but for others'. And, despite those small number of cases of people defying mandates to socially distance, the overwhelming majority of us followed community guidelines in order to not overwhelm our health and social infrastructure. Perhaps these examples show a move towards an understanding of humans as collectively conscious actors, rather than self-interested individuals?

If we do enter a new age, there may be a need to rethink the clinical tools that are appropriate for the job at-hand. After all, to what extent does it make sense to say that an individual who buys up bulk toilet paper when there is no national shortage, has made an individual cognitive error? I propose that what we need in this new age is an understanding of the shared construction of reality based on cultural semiotics. In this theory, what we call 'reality' is not a stable foundation but is shifting sands. The theory of cultural semiotics proposes that individually, each of



our realities is mediated by 'signs' that are co-constructed by the other members of our culture. The signs we use are not stable, but changing, and only make sense in an unending referential system of other signs.

A semiotic theory espouses that each individual's reality is always-already mediated by signs, these signs are made and used by our fellow cultural members, and signs act as tools to translate meaning from one person/s to another. E.g. the red light means stop and the green light means go; a suit means expensive and jeans signify casual and so on. 'Culture', then, is an organising structure that makes communication possible through shared sign

is it still possible to locate the meaning of distress inside the individual's mind? Or would it be better if we understood the mind as extended into the socio-cultural world?

system. With regards to perception, culture acts as a filter which allows for some phenomena (e.g. baking bread) to be understood as meaningful (e.g. isolation hobby), whereas phenomena that don't fit the system are interpreted as 'noise'.

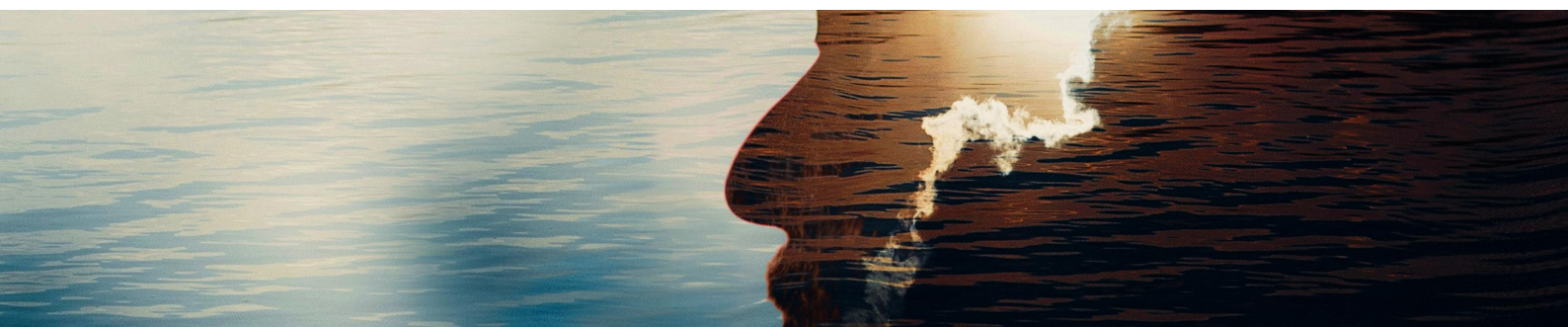
A system of signs provides a canon of culturally available meanings to interpret the world. Without a system of signs, classification would not be possible and communication could not happen. However, with a system of signs, standardizations, distortions and partial losses of meaning are also inevitable.

Such a theory holds for affective (emotional) reactions. A person must ask herself (subconsciously) how to make sense of what she feels at such a bizarre time as this by reaching into the cultural pool of available meanings. As always-already culturally embedded beings, we are constantly consulting a kind of 'feelings rulebook' to help understand what it is that is going on.

Knowing this, is it still possible to locate the meaning of distress inside the individual's mind? Or would it be better if we understood the mind as extended into the socio-cultural world? And, taking this extension seriously, what sense does it make to dive deep into the annals of the psyche as opposed to look outward into the cultural semiotic universe?

We are already seeing macro-cultural meanings being generated and entering into the feelings rulebook. We might argue that capitalism offers a fairly impoverished set of meanings to understand our feelings during this time. Life as a productive member of society requires a strict emotional etiquette, as we are reminded by the constant advertisements reminding us to stay emotionally and mentally healthy during this unprecedented time. While is it obviously important to support and care for one's self and others during this time, the extent to which this is understood as 'mental health' has interesting semiotic consequences.

Mental 'health' is often constructed with the same architectural elements as physical health, such as interiority, biologism, having a stable and universal cause and effect logic, and reductive reasoning. 'Mental health' as a sign carries with it a host of connotative and denotative connections which operate somewhat



outside the strict academic technical definitions that they assume in medical journals and case conferences. 'Mental Health', again as a sign, is being asked to do a lot of heavy lifting in the collective consciousness with each passing crisis.

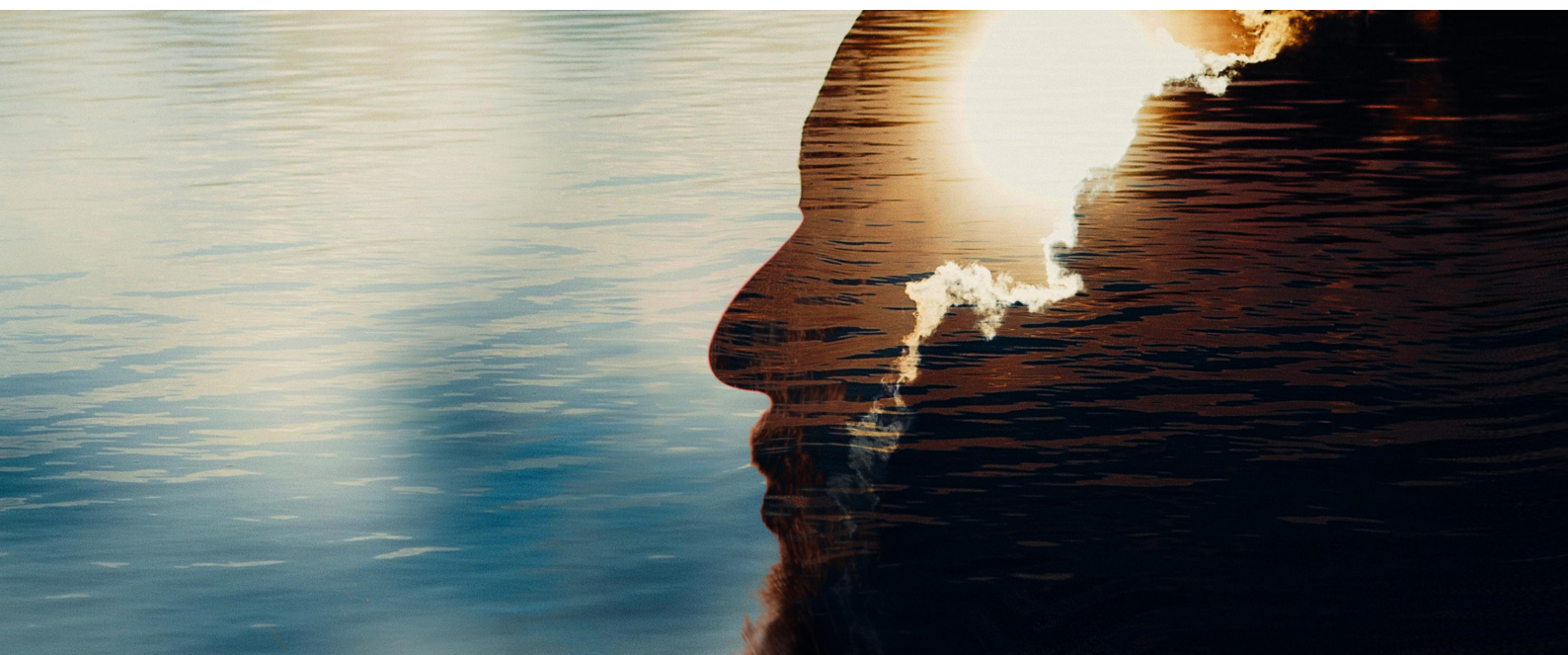
The hyper-generalised notion of (poor) mental health is increasingly used to make sense of a broadening set of behaviours and feelings. Having a lot/too little energy, sleeping too much/too little, ignoring the news/watching too much news, working too much/taking too much time off. Any feeling might prime the 'mental health' semantic network, where otherwise benign thoughts might be understood as cognitive errors, affects understood as in need of emotional regulation.

Consequently, the use of a 'health' metaphor for social problems gives us little capacity to solve the problems that don't fit within this understanding, such as ethical and political issues. Indeed, one might argue that the use of the 'health' metaphor has the potential to turn otherwise active political persons into quiet and passive 'sick' subjects. Those who are 'distressed' are cast as 'in need of help', rather than empowered agents able to offer help themselves. The language of recent events as 'traumatic' or as causing 'anxiety' constructs us as subjects to be passive victims of the epidemic, rather than creators of change under new institutional conditions created by it.

An affective semiotic view of 'mental health' draws into question the pre-packaged categories that clinical psychologists can so easily use as stand-ins for a universal reality. Such an understanding might open the door to exploring other meaning-making structures in clinical encounters.

It may allow for the structured reality that we as clinicians use be broken down (i.e. 'de-constructed') and for the links between collective and individual understandings to be questioned. We hope that in a time where individual psychologization is more attractive than ever, a semiotic understanding can at least expose the inter-connectedness of meaning making schemas across culture.

The language of recent events as 'traumatic' or as causing 'anxiety' constructs us as subjects to be passive victims of the epidemic, rather than creators of change under new institutional conditions created by it





ALONE TOGETHER


MIRANDA E. CASHIN

I sit in the presence of the absence of you
Alone together
In front of a portal of connection
Physical disconnection
The screen a reflection
Redirection
Of affection
Click
And I am alone
They say distance makes you fonder
But I wonder
They say silence makes things louder
But it is too loud
Loneliness dressed in a shroud

The news yells
At times information feels more painful
An ostrich feels safe head in the sand
Supported ignorance
A break from the belligerence
They say we are at war
But how do you fight what you cannot see?
The quicksand of the uncertain
The beginning, the end, no way to determine
Beware
The stronger the struggle
The deeper the sink
Entangled and murky
Squelchy and sticky
Remember
Try to lie still
Let it pass over and under
Around
Don't let it stick



How do you grieve something
We have collectively lost?
How do you accept the worst
When it has not yet knocked at the door?
Wipe the sand from your ears
Dust the sentiment from your eyes
Unbutton your coat
Alone together
Together has no distance
Together in persistence
Together our resistance



NEXT ISSUE

ISSUE FOUR SANISM

The next issue of The Activist Practitioner takes a deep dive into Sanism. Sanism encompasses the oppression and discrimination against people with a mental health condition. We have a diverse range of voices, experiences and perspectives that explore this concept from many view points. We look forward to sharing it with you.

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