

Esther Cohen-Tovee

DCP Chair

Roman Raczka

DCP Chair Elect

Power Threat Meaning Framework

BPS DCP Subcommittee

August 3rd 2020

Dear Esther and Roman,

We welcome the statement by DCP Representative Assembly to the brutal murder of George Floyd and the recognition within it to change structural racism within the BPS and DCP. We would agree with the quote by James Baldwin you include in your statement:

“Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety.”

These are uncomfortable times and rightly so.

Within the profession and practice of Psychology in the UK there are many areas that have long been identified as requiring urgent attention : the whitewashed Eurocentric psychology curriculum at undergraduate and post graduate level; the unequal access to allied professional post graduate training courses; the power processes of white privilege within psychology professions; and the processes of white power and privilege within the BPS itself .

Within the BPS DCP Power Threat Meaning Framework subcommittee, we are conscious of the work that we have to do to address racial injustices within our own work. The Power Threat Meaning Framework <https://www.bps.org.uk/power-threat-meaning-framework> locates the understanding of Power, power processes and the negative operation of power at its core. We cannot therefore feel any comfort that our subcommittee is still largely made up of people of white heritage. We are aware that racial and intersecting inequalities need to be highlighted as we address the implementation of the Framework in practice across the UK and globally. We need to ensure that the PTMF has a rightful focus on intersectional power abuses of race, gender, sexual identity, class age and ability in training and practice. Towards this we are:

- committed to increasing the presence of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Psychologists on the subcommittee. We are linking with Black Psychologists and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Psychology networks to do so.
- adding Anti-racist resources, articles, podcasts blogs and writings on the BPS PTMF website as an ongoing resource for both ‘unlearning’ and re learning.
- ensuring that our training events include a focus on intersectional power processes impacting on the lives of Black and BAME women, men and families.

These are initial but essential acts at this moment.

As a BPS DCP subcommittee we are very aware of the public profile of Psychology in the UK and that the BPS has both the responsibility and the opportunity to speak out loudly and clearly on this matter. We are aware that the BPS and DCP put out early statements responding to George Floyd's death and that Sarb Bajwa has posted a recent blog on racism within the BPS. We very much welcome the recent position paper from the DCP Racial and Social Inequalities in the Times of Covid-19 working group and appreciate the considerable work that has gone into this paper.

What we feel is urgently needed from the BPS is a public statement that establishes with certainty that the BPS condemns racial violence, racial profiling and racial injustices in Britain and globally and that the BPS :

- is committed to addressing racism and racial injustices within the UK
- is committed to addressing racism within the BPS and the profession of Psychology
- acknowledges the need for action and accountability to tackle white privilege within the BPS and Psychology profession and to promote racial equality through:
 - urgently working with Universities to decolonise the whitewashed Eurocentric Undergraduate and Post graduate Psychology curriculum. This should include critical awareness about the use of decontextualized, individualising and pathologising language, both psychological (eg 'Abnormal Psychology') and psychiatric.
 - urgently working with the BPS Divisions to decolonise Allied Professional Psychology Training Courses, noting issues of content and language, and addressing white privilege within selection procedures
 - ensuring Black Psychologists are present at all levels of the BPS – on the Board, Executive committees, on all committees, special interest groups, sub committees and working groups.
 - urgently working to address white privilege within Psychology professions, actively promoting the voices of Black Psychologists and BAME Psychologists within Psychology and all Psychology professions

The BPS and DCP are in a position of leadership to make a difference to this now. We strongly urge that a public statement from the BPS, press released and kept on the front of the BPS website, would begin this public commitment to addressing racism within the Psychology and the BPS that is so urgently required. This statement could link to an ongoing window for Black Lives Matter/Anti-racist practice on the public front page of the BPS website with access to position papers, articles and resources, updates on changes being made by the BPS to curriculum, selection, and institutional barriers to racial equality and on the work and time frame of the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce. What Black Lives Matters has already taught us is that it is action and accountability

that count, not words alone. We have written to Sarb Bajwa and Hazel McGlauchlin suggesting this and inviting discussion.

We are aware that one of the biggest problems for Psychology and Clinical Psychology in particular has been the focus on Eurocentric psychology and individualised accounts of distress, both psychological and psychiatric. These have, by definition, tended to marginalise the social context and social justice, and have meant that Psychology does not acknowledge or account for the social, political and economic injustices that lead to emotional distress. We have long known about the social origins of distress, yet we continue largely to operate as if Psychology is independent of the profound injustices of poverty and discrimination, and unable to address them. The BPS has been until relatively recently unwilling to comment publicly on political processes and their psychological consequences. We welcome the commitment of the BPS to now speak out on poverty and the DCP's contribution to that process; there is an urgent need to do the same on racial injustices. The DCP position paper is an important step in this process.

Towards this, we believe The Power Threat Meaning Framework offers an important resource for Psychology, the BPS and the DCP to locate, formulate and act on the power abuses that lead to individual, family, group and community distress. The Framework enables Psychologists to work collectively to address the deep inequalities of racism, poverty, gender, class, sexual identity and age within our society. The PTM framework gives language and vision to the understanding of 'how ' the outside gets in' and offers pathways for intervention at individual, group and society levels.

The PTM Framework, we would suggest, is also a resource for thinking about the role of power, especially ideological power, in the production and dissemination of psychological knowledge. This includes White Psychology's role in producing 'knowledge' about non-White people and in producing and supporting individualised accounts of distress which especially disadvantage Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. Specifically, it offers alternatives to the dominant diagnostic narrative of 'mental illness' which has obscured issues of social justice in all groups, but has had the most discriminatory, damaging and silencing effects on BAME people in the UK and across the globe. The Framework draws on a wide range of multidisciplinary research and scholarship in exploring these issues. We believe a wider focus on power and knowledge creation is essential if fundamental and lasting change is to be achieved rather than, for example, simply adding modules to existing curricula or making existing mental health services 'more accessible' to Black and other minority ethnic people.

Within the DCP, we are aware that the Executive is actively working on Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-racism action plans. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you how we can contribute to the actions you are developing.

With good wishes,

Jan Bostock and Gilli Watson (Co-chairs)

On behalf of the BPS DCP Power Threat Meaning Framework Subcommittee