

**ADPH SYMPOSIUM:
WHAT CAN PSYCHOLOGY CONTRIBUTE TO THE
PANDEMIC RESPONSE**

**The wrong psychology?
From individual frailty to collective
resilience**

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March 15th 2022

THE IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGY – AND OF GETTING IT RIGHT

Before the development of pharmaceutical interventions – and even more with them – it was clear that behavioural interventions were critical to a successful pandemic response.

That makes it all the more critical that we have the right psychology (and the right structures to ensure that the right people are providing the right advice to decision makers).



THE WRONG PSYCHOLOGY? INDIVIDUAL FRAILITY

“There is a risk that if we go too early, people will understandably get fatigued and it will be difficult to sustain this over time” Chris Whitty, 9th March 2020

Used to delay the imposition of measures.

According to Neil Ferguson, doubled the death toll in the first wave (i.e. cost 25,000 lives)



WRONG IN SUBSTANCE

Bobby Duffy (KCL) shows 91% compliance, with nearly half (44%) suffering, in April 2020.

Over Christmas 2022, 85% take a LFD at least once weekly, 47% at least three times weekly.

Polling consistently shows the public ahead of Government in supporting measures and not supporting relaxations.



WRONG IN CONCEPTION

Ignores the fact that when people fail to comply, it is more to do with lack of support than lack of motivation

Ignores the fact that motivation and resilience is rooted in groups and social relations more than individual will and cognition.



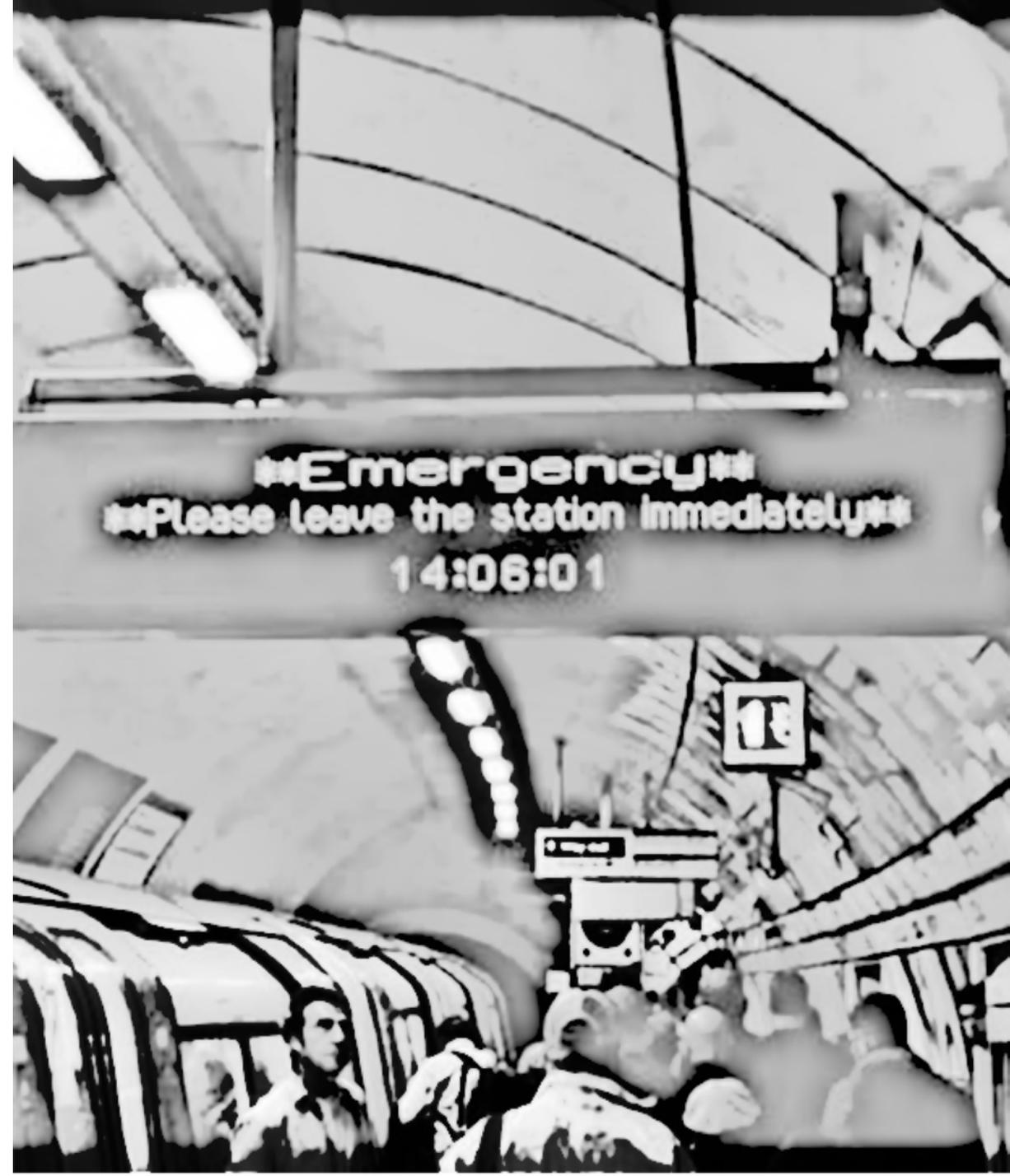
THE RIGHT PSYCHOLOGY – COLLECTIVE RESILIENCE

Emergencies give rise to a sense of common fate, which in turn gives rise to a sense of shared identity.

Shared identity gives rise to empathy and helping for fellow ingroup members – and also to the expectation of receiving help.

The expectation of help increases coping and resilience – and well-being

Resilience isn't a quality which resides in us but an emergent property which develops between us.



CONSEQUENCES OF SHARED IDENTITY

Trust and influence

Resilience and adherence

Solidarity and helping

Mental and physical well-being



NURTURING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY

A key priority of Government in a crisis must be to create community both in word and action.

The UK Government failed to understand this, and instead acted in many ways to undermine and fragment community.

Breaking links between authority and community

Breaking links within the community



CONCLUSIONS

Psychology matters – and getting it wrong therefore matters too.

We need to shift from a psychology of individual frailty to a psychology of collective resilience.

We must understand and treat the public as the solution, not the problem, in a pandemic.

We must involve the public as a partner.



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