



Silvia M. Dutchevici, MA, LCSW

*Psychotherapist,
Mental Health Expert,
Author & Founder of
Critical Therapy*

SHORT BIO

Silvia M. Dutchevici, MA, LCSW, is president and founder of the Critical Therapy Institute. A trained psychotherapist, Dutchevici (pronounced “doot-KAY-vitch”), created critical therapy on perceiving a need for the theory and practice of psychology to reflect how race, class, gender, and religion intersect with psychological conflicts. She is a founding board member of Black Women’s Blueprint and a member of the Physicians for Human Right’s Asylum Network, where she conducts psychological evaluations documenting evidence of torture and persecution for survivors fleeing danger in their home countries. She trained at the Bellevue/NYU Survivors of Torture Program, the Parent Child Center of the New York Psychoanalytic Society, and the New York Freudian Society.

Dutchevici has a master’s degree in social work from New York University and a master’s degree in psychology from the New School, and a bachelor’s degree in religious studies and political science from Fordham University. She has lectured and presented throughout the country on critical therapy, including at Fordham and NYU, and has been featured in the *Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Psychology Today*, *The Guardian*, *International Business Times*, and *Women’s Health*.

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LONG BIO

Silvia M. Dutchevici, MA, LCSW, president and founder of the Critical Therapy Institute (CTI).

With more than twenty years' experience in social services and a passion for psychotherapy, Dutchevici (pronounced "doot-KAY-vitch") created CTI when she perceived the need to expand psychoanalytic praxis to reflect how race, class, gender, and religion intersect with psychological conflicts. She has an extensive background in psychoanalytic theory and trauma, with a particular focus on torture. However, after seeing that traditional psychoanalysis was not able to adequately transform and heal her patients, she embarked on an extended period of research and training. Drawing on liberation psychology and critical pedagogy scholarship and combining them with her real-life experience as a practicing psychotherapist, she founded CTI in 2012; it focuses on teaching, research, and the application of critical therapy in advisory, consulting, and educational services.

Unlike traditional therapists, critical therapists work from the premise that the personal is political. To be more effective, psychotherapy must therefore interrogate the patient's as well as the therapist's worldview. Engaging in power analysis, critical therapists explore deeply how power affects the patient's and therapist's identities as well as their relationship to one another. CTI offers a four-year training program for psychotherapists, as well as workshops on various clinical issues.

In addition to her clinical work, Dutchevici is deeply invested in the communities she serves. An immigrant from Romania, she has worked on HIV+ initiatives with The Princess Margarita of Romania Foundation, a humanitarian organization that worked with orphanages throughout that country, providing technical assistance and educating staff on giving better care. She served as the executive director of Queens Pride House, the main service center for the LGBTQIA community in the Borough of Queens, New York City. She was also on the staff of Sanctuary for Families, the Arab American Family Support Center, the Ms. Foundation for Women, and the International League for Human Rights.

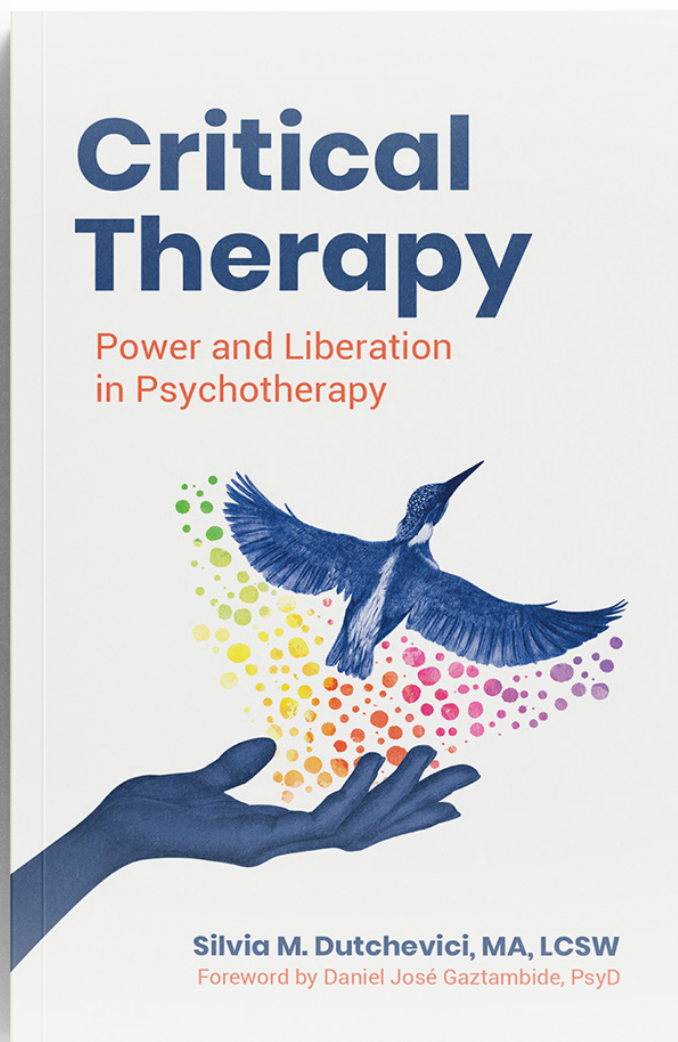
Dutchevici is a member of the National Association of Social Workers, Psychologists for Social Responsibility, and the Association of Women in Psychology. She is also a member of Physicians for Human Rights' Asylum Network, where she conducts psychological evaluations documenting evidence of torture and persecution for survivors fleeing danger in their home countries.

Dutchevici has a master's degree in social work from New York University and a master's degree in psychology from the New School, and a bachelor's degree in religious studies and political science from Fordham University. She trained at the Bellevue/NYU Survivors of Torture Program, the Parent Child Center of the New York Psychoanalytic Society, and the New York Freudian Society. She has lectured and presented throughout the country on critical therapy, including at Fordham University and NYU and has been featured in the *Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Psychology Today*, *The Guardian*, *International Business Times*, and *Women's Health*. She is the founding board member of Black Women's Blueprint and was profiled in the 25th edition of *Who's Who of American Women*.



Not all revolutions begin on the street.

Sometimes, they start in the psychotherapy office, on the couch. Psychotherapy needs a revolution. Historically, its goal has been to accommodate individuals to oppressive social systems. In this revealing and timely book, practicing psychotherapist, Silvia Dutchevici, provides a long-overdue social-justice model for therapy aiming toward liberation and personal agency. In *Critical Therapy: Power and Liberation in Psychotherapy*, patients and therapists are invited to look closely at ways power works in relationships. Drawing on liberation psychology scholarship and a decade of practice, Dutchevici examines how the therapeutic relationship itself is shaped by issues—such as money, race, class, and gender—often considered taboo. In offering more than comfort and insight, critical therapy supports patients as they awaken their own transformative power; create collaborative relationships, workspaces, and environments; and come to see themselves as agents of change in a still unfinished democracy.



Author: Silvia M. Dutchevici, MA, LCSW • **Foreword:** Daniel José Gaztambide, PsyD • **Illustrations:** @squiddysprinkle
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“This is the pathway to true individual and collective wellness. Crucial reading for therapists and patients alike.”

– **V (formerly Eve Ensler) Author of *The Vagina Monologues* and *The Apology***

“Training therapists to help people grapple with how power, systems, and politics affect our mental health is going to change many lives.”

– **Rinku Sen – Executive Director, Narrative Initiative, Author of *Stir Up* and *Accidental American***

“Inspiring book ...makes connections between worker rights, economic equity and mental health.”

– **Jessica Gordon-Nembhard, Ph.D., Author of *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice***

Critical Therapy: Power and Liberation in Psychotherapy

Summary

Psychotherapy needs a revolution. Historically, its unspoken goal has been to accommodate individuals to oppressive social systems. In *Critical Therapy: Power and Liberation in Psychotherapy*, practicing psychotherapist Silvia Dutchevici provides a long-overdue social-justice model for therapy, aiming toward liberation and personal agency. Critical Therapy invites patients and therapists to look together closely at the way power works in relationships. Drawing on liberation psychology scholarship and a decade of practice, Dutchevici examines how the therapeutic relationship itself is shaped by issues—such as money, race, class, and gender—often considered taboo.

By offering more than comfort and insight, critical therapy supports patients as they awaken their own transformative power; create collaborative relationships, workspaces, and environments; and come to see themselves as agents of change in a still unfinished democracy.

“Healing, mental health, and wellness cannot be achieved independent of political realities. Personal and political transformations are always intertwined.”
—*Silvia Dutchevici*

The Necessity of Critical Therapy in Practice

Traditionally, psychotherapists have been trained to take an apolitical, objective approach to therapy. This approach is naïve at best and harmful at worst, as it does not provide services that adequately treat patients holistically or account for the intersectionality of their identities. Critical Therapists invite the political into the therapeutic discussion because we believe that the personal is political and the consulting room is a space where we can analyze how politics influences and affects mental health.

Critical Therapy engages patients in power analysis. Therapists and patients talk openly about power in relationships and analyze how it affects and informs the dynamic in psychotherapy. Patients come to see how power manifests elsewhere in their lives, and therapists are challenged to check their own biases.

Critical Therapy sees the relationship between therapist and patient as one of partnership and collaboration. Acting as a blueprint and model, it enables patients to form more meaningful, fulfilling, and authentic relationships outside the consulting room. Critical Therapists practice a politics of equity. The Coronavirus pandemic has shown the vital need for mental health services; it has also shown how social inequality has blocked many from receiving them. Everyone should be able to access high-quality psychotherapeutic services. Putting equity into practice, our sliding-scale model asks those entering therapy to pay according to their income and resources. Everyone paying the same percentage of their financial resources for their session levels the playing field for patients while ensuring adequate compensation for the psychotherapist. The sliding-scale model also provokes meaningful conversations between therapist and patient about the otherwise taboo topic of money and can foster a critical inquiry into one's personal relationship to wealth.

Not all revolutions begin in the street. Sometimes, they start in the consulting room, on the couch.

“The goal of critical therapy is not just analysis or the adaptation and accommodation of the individual to oppressive systems and relationships. The goal is liberation.”

“The patient questions and analyzes how their perception of reality, while rooted in their lived experiences, is distorted by narratives and values dictated by a society that is invested in maintain the status quo and imbalanced power relations. In this process, both patient and therapist also examine and reckon with their own role in maintaining oppressive conditions.”

“Critical therapy aims at individual and social transformations.”

“As psychotherapists know well, how much we get paid per hour is not a reflection of the quality of care; patients pay for our time, not for our emotional investment in them.

“...[P]atients move from a victim outlook to a survivor framework and begin to see their own transformative power. Aside from offering therapeutic comfort and therapeutic insights, therapy also becomes a performative practice where patients actively reflect on their own power and their relationship to the ongoing project of an unfinished democracy.”

“Learning how to be with an Other in the therapeutic hour is the blueprint of the art of loving; the art of being with someone, of accepting the perfect imperfections of an Other, of being together.”

Possible Questions and/or Topics to Discuss

- What is Critical Therapy and how is it different than other psychotherapies?
- What inspired you to create critical therapy?
- You claim that psychotherapy needs a revolution. Can you speak more about that?
- You claim that your theory combines social justice with clinical practice. Should politics be a part of psychotherapy?
- In your book you talk about your unique sliding scale and practicing a politics of equity. Can you elaborate?
- How does power show up in therapy?
- What makes a good therapist?

APPROVED PHOTOS

Photos by
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