

EDITORIAL

EDITORIALS IN PSYCHOLOGY
APRIL 1987

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Psychology in society is a term which explores and presents ideas on the nature of psychology. Psychology has not always been secure in its social articulation, and a number of contributions in this issue highlight the problems of psychology in society in the present political conjuncture in South Africa. Berger and Lazarus in their article, 'The views of community organisers on the relevance of psychological practice in South Africa', show in their research work with community organisers how invisible psychology is in working class areas. Of concern to community psychologists like Berger and Lazarus is the community perception, if not stereotype, that psychology is clinical psychology. And the perception of this clinical psychology is of a very individualised, socially disconnected kind: the treatment of mad individuals in psychiatric hospitals. It is an indictment on a psychology which sees itself as contributing to the alleviation of suffering of people in the ordinary experience of their lives, that it is so absent from the lives of communities that need it most. The Berger and Lazarus article also raises the problems which will be faced by any group of psychologists who try to intervene with community and working class groups for whom psychology is at best a foreign practice and at worst a mystified practice.

'The organisation of appropriate social services in South Africa' - OASSSA - has to a large extent engaged with the whole question of socially articulating psychological practice. In the article by OASSSA chairperson, Lloyd Vogelman, the development of OASSSA is presented in the context of simultaneously criticising the practice of bourgeois psychology. While the OASSSA criticisms are mostly focussed around 'applied psychology', they also have pertinence for research practices in psychology and the education of psychology students. The significance of the OASSSA criticisms is that they are responded to in the very important work that OASSSA has been doing with predominantly black working class communities. In other words, OASSSA has tried to re-conceptualise and re-structure the practice of health care in a more democratic way and in a way which consults with the community about what their needs are. The OASSSA article in this issue, which has been given in numerous forums around the country, can be considered as OASSSA's current position paper. OASSSA is a dynamic and self-critical organisation and hence this position paper must also be seen as work in progress.

There is a danger that in trying to develop a social articulation for psychology, an exclusive emphasis is given to oppressed and black groups. In other words, 'social' becomes over-identified with black, oppressed people, working class, etc. While this might be appropriate as a historical corrective it has the tendency to be patronising towards certain social groups and is furthermore theoretically incoherent in re-constituting

psychological practice. It is in this regard that work on the psychological aspects of conscription and 'National Service' becomes particularly important. Alan Flisher in a important article, 'Some psychological aspects of commencing "National Service" in South Africa', discusses from a developmental perspective the impact of commencing one's military training at the present time. This is not only an issue for those individuals who will fulfil their military call-up, but it is an important issue for all of us in a society hell-bent on militarist responses to social, economic and political crises. Flisher's work is especially needed at a time when severe repression and censorship allows for very little discussion about the effects of militarisation on individuals' lives and on wider social relations.

'Psychology in society' has not seen itself as only a 'psychology' journal, but rather as a journal in the human and social sciences. The focus is predominantly on psychological matters and not in a narrow sense, and hence the commitment of the journal to encourage contributions relating to broader issues in the human and social sciences. Mark Townsend's article, 'Open, repressive, or black education?' is an evaluation of a conference held at the Umlazi campus of the University of Zululand on the state of the social sciences in black universities, sponsored by ASSA and the Ford Foundation. However, his article goes beyond a mere evaluation, and further illuminates the problems faced by the social sciences in these universities. His point of entry to this latter task is by

situating the problems of teaching social science in black universities within the context of a debate that took place in the pages of the 'Times Higher Education Supplement' (21-02-86 & 27-06-86), between Christopher Forsyth, fellow of Robinson College, Cambridge and A.C. Nkabinde, rector and vice-chancellor of the University of Zululand. The thrust of this debate, which Townsend joins, is the characterisation of the white English speaking universities as being liberal, open and anti-government institutions of higher learning, while the black universities (or 'bush colleges' as Forsyth calls them) are repressive and controlled by government nominees and supporters. Townsend's discussion of these issues revives an important debate among social scientists and academics about the role of universities in contemporary struggles in South Africa.

Another arena where the struggles facing social science are particularly intense is the industrial sphere. The whole nexus of knowledge/power is brought sharply into focus in the intervention of social science in the struggles between capital and labour. In this issue Grahame Hayes reports on a one-day conference organised by the Natal Industrial Psychology Group in September last year. The conference was concerned to critically evaluate the role of industrial psychology in the context of the present crisis in South Africa, and to see how more appropriate responses could be developed.

This issue ends with two book reviews which deal with social groupings often ignored in psychological research. The first is a review by Joha Louw-Potgieter of Moscovici's book, 'The age of the crowd', and the second review by Jo Beall is on the local publication, 'Divide and profit: Indian workers in Natal'.

With this issue we welcome Jean Benjamin and Anna Stroebel to the Cape Town editorial group. By having editors from the University of the Western Cape we broaden our Cape Town base, as well as now 'feminising' the Cape Town editorial group. Gillian Finchilescu and Bruce Irvine are now both in England, and hence have left the Durban editorial group to hopefully become our 'foreign correspondents'.

This issue of 'Psychology in society' has come out later than originally intended. The first reason relates to a re-scheduling in production dates, and the second reason has to do with the political economy of the 'poor'! We hope the travails of 'independence' will soon be overcome and we can produce 'Psychology in society' as timely as our bourgeois colleagues manage with their journals. We would like to apologise to our subscribers, readers, and supporters for these production delays.