

EDITORIAL

The perennial theme of this Journal, namely the questioning and discussion of the relevance of psychological theories and practices in South Africa, emerges strongly in this issue. There has been an important shift in this debate in recent years, as the emphasis has moved from producing critiques of mainstream psychology to constructing (both theoretically and in practice) viable alternatives. Despite this shift and its important gains, the need for ongoing criticism remains. The hegemony within South African psychology has not been noticeably shaken in recent years and the alternative movements remain relatively weak in 'psychological politics'. Thus it is appropriate that this issue of Psychology in Society includes both examinations of possible new orders and practices in psychology and critiques of the mainstream.

Dawes' account of the Harare conference on children serves as an important reminder that psychologists are lagging behind in an area where they should have much to contribute. Straker et al., however, both in the article included here and the article recently published in PINS (No.8), show that psychological research and therapies are being valuably applied in this area. The implication of these first two articles of course is that far more needs to be done by psychologists. Freeman's article on mental health care planning in Zimbabwe follows usefully as it points to models for the expansion of effective practices. Although these models are likely to be effective in a 'liberated' society only, the issues presented by Freeman may contribute to the construction of 'pre-liberation' services as well as guide planning for the longer-term future.

In the field of critiques of mainstream psychology, Cloete and Pillay provide an illuminating example of the ways in which the neutral 'professional-scientific' stance of much psychological practice serves to camouflage biases and the pursuit of specific interests. It is worth noting here that since the events described by Cloete and Pillay, the camouflaging ideology of professional-scientific neutrality has been re-affirmed and further entrenched by the Society of Student Counsellors at their 1987 annual conference.

The next article, by Louw, also deals with camouflaging of bias and interest, as well as with the tension between 'venal' aspects and genuinely useful aspects of professionalism. Finally, Moll's review of a supposedly 'relevant to South Africa' primary Psychology textbook reveals the extreme difficulty many mainstream psychologists experience when trying to become 'relevant'. If one draws from the discussions of Cloete & Pillay and Louw, one might conclude that this difficulty arises in part from the nature of professionalism : the coded knowledge of psychology is so carefully formulated to appear culture-free, value-free and politically neutral that many psychologists may well be at a loss when asked to contextualise this knowledge and demonstrate its relevance to one specific political-economic-cultural situation.

we would like to apologise to some of our readers/subscribers who received NUMBER 8 with pages 36/37 transposed with pages 96/97, or worse still with pages 36/37 missing. This was due to a collation error which affected about 25% of the copies. We will happily rectify this inconvenience if readers/subscribers contact us.