

EDITORIAL

This issue of **Psychology in society** focuses on the psychology of repression. There might be some surprise from our readers about our carrying these articles when it seems that the "season of repression" is over since the F W de Klerk speech in early February this year. We need to remind ourselves that there have been no changes in security legislation and the current State of Emergency is still in operation. Furthermore there are well over a 100 people being held in detention under the Emergency Regulations, and a handful of Internal Security Act detainees. While it is true that the State has eased up on its use of formal repression, it is equally true that a complex web of repression - both formal and informal - still exists in South Africa. It is the wider implications of life under repression that the two articles by Adrian Perkel, and Shirley Spitz, Ruth Eastwood and Paul Verryn explore as they uncover some of the psychological hardships experienced by people in their struggles against oppression and exploitation.

Perkel continues the investigation (that started in **PINS - 11**) into the complex psychological processes involved in psychotherapeutic work with ex-detainees. He discusses the (technical) psychological notion of "locus of control", and uses this notion to argue for a different and complementary explanation regarding the emotional trauma experienced after release from detention. He also shows how the concept of locus of control can be used in the psychotherapy with detainees. Spitz, Eastwood and Verryn extend our knowledge and compassion into an as yet unexplored terrain of the "psychology of restrictions". Their article on restrictions focuses on the psychotherapeutic process, and does so through the interesting presentation of a case study. While their analysis of the psychology of living under a restriction order investigates a specific form of repression (Restriction Order), much of what they say would apply to political activists who feel that their safety is continually at stake because of the web of "informal" pro-State repression that currently abounds. These right-wing human rights abuses not only abound at the moment, but are very seldom acted upon by the state. This is all too clear in the rather disgusting manner in which the David Webster and CCB "investigation" is being conducted. It is one year since David Webster was brutally murdered. David Webster's murder last year on 1 May shocked the people who knew him and saddened those who knew the kind of political work he was doing in trying to achieve a democratic, non-racial and happy society in South Africa. We are fortunate to publish a tribute by a

friend and comrade of David Webster. Lloyd Vogelmann reminds us, from the perspective of a personal tribute to David Webster, that we must **not forget** the ideals David stood for and the manner in which he went about trying to achieve them.

We continue our concern to critically deconstruct some of the received "truths" of psychology. Both Isemonger and Kottler are concerned to "deconstruct" the seeming rational discourse of much psychology that purports to deal in a politically fair way with "deprived" communities (Isemonger, and community psychology) and racially oppressed people (Kottler, and the discourses of psychology and anthropology). Isemonger presents a different theoretical perspective on the critique of community psychology to much of that which has appeared in many previous issues of **Psychology in society**. He criticises the lack of an adequate theory of power in the debates about the politics of community psychology from a post-modernist (Foucault) perspective. He raises some interesting questions around the operation of power in the practice of community psychology which should extend the debates about the psychology of working with oppressed communities. In a related but more specific area, Amanda Kottler discusses the two discourses - the similarities discourse and the differences discourse - which characterise the anthropological and psychological literature concerning discussions about "race", "culture", "tribe", "ethnicity", and so on. One of her fundamental criticisms of both these discourses is that they lack an adequate theory of identity formation. They both fail to understand the way in which multiple subjectivities are formed in South African society. She uses the work of Henriques et al (1984) to offer the beginnings of a theory of "subject formation".

The book reviews focus on three texts that have to do with the impact of social relations on the social wellbeing of the majority of the population, varying from poverty to primary health care to the relation between cognition and society. Alan Flisher's review of David Ben-Tovim's book **Development psychiatry: Mental health and primary health care in Botswana** (1987) gives health workers an insight into some of the workings and problems of the health system in an independent southern African country. While Flisher is critical of Ben-Tovim's book he does admit that there is much to be learned from Ben-Tovim's account of psychiatry in Botswana for those currently thinking through some of the implications for mental health practice in post-Apartheid South Africa. Moving from a mental health perspective to one which concerns itself with the socio-psychological world of black children growing up in South Africa is the review by Anita Craig and Lauren Witz of Pamela Reynolds book **Childhood in Crossroads: Cognition and society in South Africa** (1989). While Craig and Witz are appreciative of Reynolds' account and portrayal of a sample of seven year olds in the squatter township of Crossroads, they take issue with the epistemological problems of her

argument. In their review they present a tight theoretical argument for the centrality of certain epistemological considerations for social science researchers working in the area of the psychological and the social. They raise issues about how we comprehend the relation between psychological attributes and social relations that have an affinity with the argument presented by Amanda Kottler in her article. The review of Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele's **Uprooting poverty: The South African Challenge (Report for the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa)** (1989) by Alastair Bentley presents a useful summary of the findings of this inquiry. Bentley however questions the lack of a psychological investigation into the effects of chronic poverty, in the Carnegie Inquiry. He concludes his review with the important point that "... while we must participate in long-run attempts to democratise our society, to redistribute wealth more equitably, we also have to deal with the immediate problems of the chronic poor. It is the strategies for this enterprise that should serve to focus the attention of professionals in the social sciences". All three of the books reviewed present social researchers and psychologists with many specific and important practical and theoretical points for discussion and debate in their work of combining rigorous research and intellectual reflection with a commitment to promoting a democratic, non-racial and free society (through scholarly work).

PSYCHOANALYSIS. We advertised in **PINS - 10** (1988) that we were wanting to focus a whole issue of **Psychology in society** on psychoanalysis, psychodynamic theory and its relation to social theory and practice in South Africa. Contributions have been slow in coming on this issue, but a beginning will be made when we publish **Psychology in society - 14** (1990) which will be our "psychoanalytic issue".

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