

EDITORIAL

PINS launched itself, in September 1983, with the following editorial briefing: "**Psychology in society** is a journal which aims to critically explore and present ideas on the nature of psychology in capitalist society. There is a special emphasis on the theory and practice of psychology in the South African context". This was followed by a 20 page editorial article outlining the context of the formation of this new journal and the role it saw itself fulfilling. This briefing was minimally, yet significantly, altered two years later in **PINS 3** (1985), by the inclusion of the term "apartheid" as a central defining feature of our society, and to register psychology's complicity with this form of racial oppression. The editorial masthead now read: "**Psychology in society** is a journal which aims to critically explore and present ideas on the nature of psychology in *apartheid and* capitalist society. There is a special emphasis on the theory and practice of psychology in the South African context".

The social changes of the early 1990s, culminating in the first democratic elections in April 1994, necessitated a re-thinking of our editorial masthead. Apartheid was officially no more, and South Africa had legitimately become part of Africa, notably southern Africa. **PINS** reflected these changes in its editorial by making two slight, yet telling, "additions". The masthead in **PINS 18** (1994) now read: "**Psychology in society** aims to critically explore and present ideas on the nature of psychology in *post-apartheid* and capitalist society. There is special a emphasis on the theory and practice of psychology in the *southern* African context".

These changes might strike some **PINS** readers as insignificant and trivial, and yet upon reflection attest to some important new developments. In the early 1990s **PINS** had published a few articles on, and from, Zimbabwe, documents from the health conference in Maputo (Mozambique), and had received a number of enquiries from southern African countries. Acknowledging this wider southern African context, and also offering **PINS** as a forum for debates about psychology and related issues in the region, was the rationale behind the change from "South" to "southern" Africa. The change from apartheid to *post-apartheid*, might be seen as the more problematic alteration. The editorial reasoning behind this modification pertains to the impact of nearly 50 years of apartheid on ordinary people's lives, and the continuing effect that this is likely to have well into the years of the post-apartheid society.

The past two years have witnessed many substantial changes and re-alignments in all spheres of social life, ranging from the macro-economic to the minutiae of civil society. Legitimacy and credibility has come to the most unlikely of social actors,

and even erstwhile foes of the anti-apartheid forces! Psychology has also had its day, with the formation of **PsySSA** in January 1994. The task now facing psychology is to build a national "society", "association", "movement" from the ruins of the divisions sown by apartheid. The beginnings of the re-constitution of psychology were evident at a **PsySSA** Publications Committee meeting held on 14 September 1995. The purpose of this **PsySSA** meeting was to discuss publishing in South African psychology in general, and more specifically the existence, support, and creation of journals.

Two important issues emerged from this meeting that have a direct bearing on **PINS**. Firstly, a commitment was made to encouraging a vibrant writing culture in South African psychology, while at the same time developing and assisting "new" writers. **PINS** has always sought to do this, but with varying success. The second issue relates to the support and strengthening of viable journals and other publications. Currently, neither academic psychology, nor **PsySSA** have the capacity to support a whole range of journals, and hence careful consideration needs to be given to the launching of new journals, or other publishing ventures. The **PsySSA** Publications Committee is presently trying ascertain what range of publications - journals, newsletters, in-house magazines - exist, so that a coherent response can be forthcoming about what kinds of publishing projects to support, given anticipated overlaps and omissions. Clearly, this information has significance for **PINS** as it continues to define and refine its intellectual focus.

Thinking of a time when South Africa is no longer "new", but just plain, ordinary South Africa, when all the post-apartheid euphoria and rainbowosity has died down, and the serious realities of social reconstruction become our regular political and intellectual fare, the **PINS** editors realised that the "editorial tinkering" of the last few years would not secure the long-term direction of the journal. Spurred on by the need to locate **PINS** in the future-oriented concerns of the society, and the context of re-alignment evidenced in the formation of **PsySSA**, **PINS** has, *yet again*, refined its editorial masthead to read:

Psychology in society (PINS) *aims to foster a socio-historical and critical theory perspective, by focusing on the theory and practice of psychology in the southern African context.*

It is contended that this new editorial statement captures much of our publishing history since the journal's inception in 1983, as well as adapting to changing social conditions in the society broadly, and within the (re-) organisation of psychology nationally. The "socio-historical" focus allows us to concentrate on the historical determinants of psychological realities *post* apartheid, while at the same time casting the net wider than locating everything within the framework of apartheid. We maintain and re-affirm our critical and theoretical stance in the analysis of psychological issues and practices, while welcoming empirical work that bears on these concerns. We consider these editorial changes as necessary "fine-tuning", rather than as major revisions.

The articles in this issue of **PINS** all question various aspects of the *practice* of psychology. We open with Bob Young's carefully considered, and yet provocative article on "perversion". At a time when the influence of postmodernism forces a certain relativism upon us with regard to our accounts of human experience, it might seem outlandish to invoke a moral dimension in discussions of sexuality and the practice of psychotherapy. Young has never been one to shy away from tough and unpopular questions, and hence he is not prepared to settle for the easy way-out of "one person's kinky, is another's boring" type of anything-goes rationality. Instead, he takes us to the heart of matter in his discussion of "perversion" and morality. Regardless of whether readers agree with Young's formulations or not, we cannot ignore the debate about morality in psychology and psychotherapy, for much longer, on the pretext that we are pursuing and practising "science". These are crucial and difficult questions, and hence we would like to encourage readers to respond to Young's ideas by debating these issues through the submission of short discussion pieces to **PINS**.

Professional psychologists are often disdainful of what is derogatorily called "pop psychology", where the "pop" stands for bad, rather than popular, accessible, and jargon-free psychology. The negative attitudes to "pop psychology" tell us a great deal about psychologists' arrogance, insecurities, and protectionism, than they do about the inherent problems of "pop psychology". Lindy Wilbraham subjects a popular magazine's advice column to a detailed discourse analysis. Her concern is less with the "pop psychology" of the advice column, and more with the kinds of psychological discourses that are identifiable in the substantive details of the advice given. Wilbraham is interested to interrogate the view(s) of relationships that emerge from the advice column. There are many other avenues where psychological knowledge is given popular expression that could well bear analysis along the lines suggested by Wilbraham in her critique of an advice column.

Moving from the "pop" to the popular, the article by Sehlapelo and Terre Blanche presents the results of their interviews with a range of ordinary people on the question of psychometric testing. It is clear that the "formal face" of applied psychology that most people experience is in being tested. It would be interesting to know what percentage of the population have *not* encountered a psychometric test of some sort by the time they reach adulthood. Sehlapelo and Terre Blanche didn't set out to address this question in their interviews, but rather to see what views people do have of tests, and being tested. The critical perspective in psychology is frequently dismissive of psychological testing for reasons varying from the unreliability of many of the instruments to the dehumanising experience of being "tested". There are some unexpected responses from Sehlapelo and Terre Blanche's interviewees, which force us to question some of received views about the testing movement.

The final article in this issue of **PINS** discusses some of the recent documents and official reports on mental health policy. Yogan Pillay and Melvyn Freeman - two central figures from the ranks of psychology involved in mental health policy - contextualise the debates pertaining to policy formulation over the last five years. They discuss, in detail, the range of organisational inputs to the debates about what kind of mental health policy and planning guidelines would best cater for the needs of the majority of people. Their article is a kind of "everything you ever

wanted to know about what is happening, or not happening, in the sphere of mental health policy, but didn't know who to ask". Pillay and Freeman don't only provide a useful guide to quite confusing debates, but also suggest ways in which some of the problems facing mental health policy formulation might be overcome.

An elaboration of some of the detail and context of mental health policy is contained in the first of the two brief conference reports, included in this issue of **PINS**. This is the report, by Yogan Pillay, on the launch of the African Report on World Mental Health, and on the Regional Conference on Mental Health Policy, held in Cape Town, 23-25 October 1995. The other conference briefing, by Martin Terre Blanche, is the one-day conference on qualitative methods organised by staff and students from the Department of Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand, on 20 October 1995, in Johannesburg. This event seems set to become an annual "happening", as the *Second Annual South African Qualitative Methods Conference - THE BODY POLITICS*, is being advertised for 3 & 4 September 1996, in Johannesburg (see advert in this issue).

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND SUBSCRIBERS. With the continual rise in printing and postage costs, independent journals are particularly hard-hit to keep the price of their copy down. Unfortunately, **PINS 21** sees a rise in the cost of institutional subscriptions, and from **PINS 22** a rise in the subscription rates for individuals. We would like to encourage our readers to subscribe, and appeal to our current subscribers to become **DONOR SUBSCRIBERS** by contributing as much as they would like to afford beyond the regular subscription rates so as to support the continued publication of what we consider to be an important contribution to psychology and related discussions. We thank those subscribers who have generously responded to our call for "donor subscriptions".

BACK ISSUES. We are able to supply the following back numbers: **PINS 9** to **PINS 20**.

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