

EDITORIAL

The purpose of **PINS** editorials is to communicate with readers about the material in each issue, and to do this in a way that highlights certain aspects in the articles rather than merely offering summaries. The point of doing this, seeing as many journals don't have editorials, is to reinforce some of the concerns raised by our authors, and to encourage our readers to think and write about these very concerns. **PINS** is also aware of the decline of critical thought, in many spheres of society and not just in psychology-related matters, as the new post-apartheid consensus takes hold. Many of the anti-apartheid critiques were exactly that: anti, against, negative. The ideas and practices that prefigured the post-apartheid era during the late 1980s were not well formed by the time the demands of the new democratic society were upon us. And now there is a danger within certain circles that "we have arrived" as a country, and hence any critique is interpreted as anti-government, and therefore (*non sequitur*, by the way) as pro-apartheid! It is a difficult and complex task to shift our critiques from what were predominantly very clear targets - the immorality and barbarism of apartheid as a social order - to the much murkier terrain of the *continually and dynamically changing* practices, policies, institutions, and laws of millennial South Africa as it tries to transform into a decent and democratic society. This is not to deny the range of accomplishments of the post-apartheid government, but this is not the point, for at the same time nobody doubts the extent of the problems facing the transition, and how far we still have to go.

It is **PINS**'s view that the challenges facing South Africa demand substantive research contributions to urgent social and psychological problems, as well as independent critical thought that *thinks* the "big picture", that asks difficult questions, and that dares to hope for optimistic and utopian outcomes. There is no inherent link between political realism, and societal pessimism! In this regard **PINS** commits itself to the broad project of critical theory in psychology, and a critical theory of psychology, that at the same time is not divorced from the urgencies and imperatives of social practice(s). An account of how **PINS** would (like to) position itself in relation to critical theory in / of psychology, will be developed in an extended editorial article in the next issue, **PINS 26** (1999), which we hope provokes criticism, comment and debate.

This issue of **PINS** opens with Andrew Favell's thought-provoking article on violence. Violence is so pervasive in many spheres of our social life, and at the same time confounds researchers attempting to explain this troublesome phenomenon of everyday life. This is exactly Favell's starting point: *violence is a phenomenon of everyday life*, and does not need to be explained as aberrant, and as "external" to social relations, or discursive contexts, as he puts it. Our identities are structured or formed by the discursive contexts "set-up" by language. It is this *social* gloss which dominates Favell's argument as he sets out to explain interpersonal violence. It is heartening to see work in the field of psychology which does not find easy explanatory reclusion in the reductionism of individualised accounts, but rather attempts the more difficult task of moving between the individual, the interpersonal and the social. **PINS**

would be keen to publish further work that explains the social dynamics of violence, and / or documents the more recondite psychological effects of living in violent social relations.

Motherhood is certainly not an under-researched area, and yet surprisingly little qualitative work has been directed at the voices of mothers themselves. Frizelle and Hayes use interviews with four mothers as an entry point to discuss certain aspects of motherhood, namely, the notion of the maternal ideal, maternal ambivalence, and motherhood as natural and instinctual, rather than learned. What is particularly interesting about these interviews is how the mothers struggle to find "their own voices" given the social embeddedness of what it means to be a mother. In other words, these middle class women live with many of the negative (psychological) effects of the uncontested ideological construction of motherhood. These discursive accounts of motherhood reveal the nuanced and richly textured nature of everyday lived-experience.

One of the many unsavoury effects of positivism and scientism in psychology, has been the excising of any talk of values, or talk of what it means to live a good life. By thinking that we can exclude moral questions from the theory and practice of psychology, we at best become "technologists of the mind", and at worst, unwittingly complicit in the immorality of our times. One hardly has to be reminded of the history of "organised" psychology under apartheid to acknowledge this point. Moral concerns don't only involve avoiding evil, but, to use Anita Craig's phrase, saying how we (want to) "live for a future". According to Craig, living well and reasonably (as well as informed by reason) in the future, means that we must be able to say something intelligent (as researchers and thinkers) about our present - our times, the nineties, as she calls it. This is of course the disputed issue: how and what we say about "our times"; how should we characterise South African society of the nineties? That we must do this seems beyond dispute, and yet there is little agreement about the "*nature of our times*", if Craig and her critics are anything to go by! Besides the substantive nature of the disagreements between Craig and her critics (van Deventer, and Terre Blanche & Hamber), it could also be suggested that their disagreements point to the necessity for a "common vocabulary" to address the moral questions of everyday life. It is hoped that this debate about "living for a future" can stand as an instance of the type of critical thought that **PINS** would like to encourage, in our times, so that we can live well in a better future.

PINS 25 ends with book reviews by Steven Collings, Bruce Gillmer, Grahame Hayes, Anne McKay, Tholene Sodi, Gill Straker, Sue Tilley, and Lindy Wilbraham.

Another special issue of **PINS** is being prepared (due out in 2000), and is on the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. The deadline for submissions was **30 June 1999**, and the editor of this issue is Lindy Wilbraham, Department of Psychology, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 6140.

Grahame Hayes