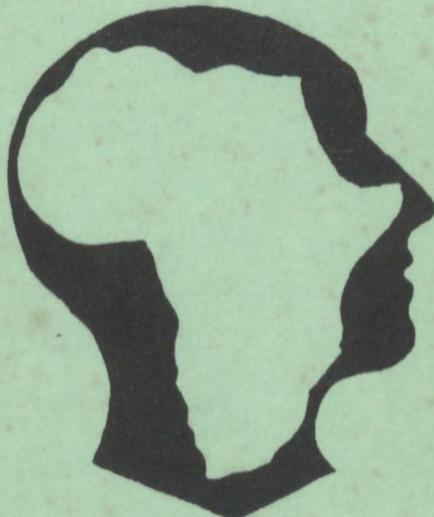


# PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIETY



13

1990

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.

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## 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 Vogelman 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".

Grahame Hayes

## **Psychotherapy with detainees: A theoretical basis**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

This article will examine various aspects relating to detention. Firstly, detention may be viewed as incorporating a systematised process of Assault, Invasion, and Deprivation (AID). It is aimed at undermining psychological resistance and the political resolve of detainees and may be designed to induce pliability and the extraction of information. A distinction is argued to exist between the characteristic process of AID and the notion of Dependency, Debility and Dread (DDD)(Farber, Harlow & West, 1957). The latter may rather be viewed as part of the consequence of the AID process.

Secondly, the article will present a brief review of empirical findings that demonstrate the role locus of control plays in mediating detention trauma. Those internal in their perceived locus of control appear to experience reduced post-detention trauma compared to those external in their perceived orientation.

Thirdly, the incorporation of the locus of control construct into psychotherapeutic strategies will be examined. Employing locus of control in pre-, and post-detention intervention is argued to improve the efficacy of treatment outcome by re-orienting the perceived internal-external dimension.

### **THE DETENTION PROCESS**

The process of Assault, Invasion and Deprivation (AID) (Perkel, 1988) has been integral to the system of political detention in South Africa for decades.

The process of AID provides the framework whereby systematised abuse of various forms may flourish. Assault refers to the direct and indirect attack on the beliefs, moral principles, personality, spirituality, defences, and physicality of a detainee. Invasion refers to the invasion of body space, personal belongings and private boundaries whereby the control exerted over every aspect of a person (from reading and confiscating personal letters to dictating how someone may dress and toilet) is manifest. Deprivation refers to the process of sensory and social isolation, and intellectual, emotional and physical deprivation that characterises detention.

Such a process has reportedly included various facets, each of which has been documented to be potentially pathogenic. Indefinite confinement has been argued to be far more stressful than captivity where termination time is known (Zuckerman, 1964; Schultz, 1965; West, 1982). Solitary confinement has been argued to impose sensory deprivation conditions (Zuckerman, 1964; Gendreau, Wilde & Scott, 1972; West, 1982) as well as social isolation (Zubek and MacNeill, 1967), inducing of a range of psychological and psychiatric sequelae (for example, Smith and Lewty, 1959; Zuckerman, 1964). Psychological abuse has been reported in South African studies (Foster and Sandler, 1985; Foster, Davis & Sandler, 1987), creating conditions which may induce significant stress and a sense of loss of control (Ames, 1982). Finally, physical torture has been alleged by countless numbers of detainees (Davis, 1985; Marcus, 1985; DPSC, 1987; Foster, Davis & Sandler, 1987), the psychological consequences being well known.

It has been argued that each component of the AID process of detention, including indefinite solitary confinement, psychological and physical abuse, is pathogenic in itself. Some authors have explained the detention-interrogation-torture process as leading to a syndrome of Dependency, Debility and Dread (DDD)(Farber, Harlow & West, 1957). This model, although limited in the South African context since these mechanisms do not always occur, helps explain the consequences of the process incorporated by AID. AID, rather, refers to a systematised process that may affect different people in different ways and which does not presuppose a consistent pattern of response. It is this process that includes the elements outlined above.

Since the AID process of detention includes all these aspects, each of which has pathogenic potential, it may create psychological consequences that are severe. Reports of post-detention sequelae confirm this. Various reports derived from both South African detainees and others in various countries around the world exposed to the AID process, indicate a pattern of severe post-stress sequelae (Rasmussen and Marcussen, 1982; Foster and Sandler, 1985; Manson, 1986; DPSC, 1987). According to Davis (1985), some of these sequelae are characteristic of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)(APA, 1980).

## **PERCEIVED LOCUS OF CONTROL AS A MEDIATOR OF TRAUMA**

It has been argued that personality variables may interact with a stressor in determining severity of its effects (Allodi, 1984; Somnier and Genefke, 1986). An important aspect of this, is the perception the victim has of his or her role in the experience and whether an active or passive self-perception in response to the stressor is exhibited. According to numerous research findings, perceived locus of control may mediate the consequential effects of stress with those internal in their perceived locus of control experiencing reduced post-stress effects compared to those external in their perceived locus of control (for example, Johnson and Sarason, 1978; Kobasa, 1979; Rotter, 1979). This notion of a perceived locus of control has been argued to apply in the detention situation as well (Tyson, 1982).

In a study designed to test the mediating capacity of perceived locus of control in detention (Perkel, 1988), post-detention scores from a Detention Locus of Control Scale (DLOC)(Perkel, 1988) were correlated with combined results from a variable PTSD Scale (Friedman, Schneiderman, West & Carson, 1986) and an Index of Well-Being Scale (IWB)(Ochse, 1984). The study was based on a sample of detainees varying in age, sex, race, educational level, length of detention, solitary confinement, assault, previous detentions and geographic location. Combining all subjects, the correlation was significant at a coefficient of 0,46 ( $n=22$ ,  $r=0,46$ ,  $p<0,05$ ). Multiple regression also revealed that locus of control was the only significant predictor of traumatic "symptoms" over assault and length of detention ( $F=6,18$ ,  $df=1,24$ ,  $p<0,05$ ).

Translated, those internal in their perceived locus of control appeared to suffer reduced post-detention effects compared to those external in their perceived locus of control in the detention specific situation. The apparent role of locus of control in determining stress effects following detention suggests that its capacity to mediate and thereby reduce such stress may have important implications.

It is a construct that is not typological in form (Rotter, 1975; Phares, 1978) and can vary across different contexts so that a person external in one situation may be internal in another. This implies that it is not a static variable that cannot be altered. Objective external circumstances also do not dictate perceived control experienced. A person objectively out of control (such as when in detention), may still perceive him or herself to retain control (Glass and Singer, 1972). Thus, although objectively out of control, the internally oriented subject may, for example, re-interpret events as contingent upon his or her mediation, thereby engendering the subjective perception of control.

According to attribution theorists, however, locus of control is only one dimension of perceived causality (Weiner, 1985). Other dimensions

investigated in research have been controllability, stability, globality and intentionality. Whilst a more nuanced investigation into these dimensions would enhance the discussion around mediational variables, space only permits the extraction of the most potent ones in perceived causality around the specific detention context. Nevertheless, a cursory glance at some of these concepts appears to indicate that control remains central. "Stability", for example, is engendered through re-attributing events as enduring or transient. Perceived capability to alter this dimension rests on cognitive attributions which may be derived from perceptions of empowerment to change (perceived internal locus) or helplessness to change (external locus). Perceived "stability", like other concepts such as controllability and globality may, therefore, be subject to causal attributions derived from an internal or external perception of control. In addition, proposed personality constructs such as "hardiness" (Kobasa, Maddi & Courington, 1981) despite arguing for the inclusion of a component of "control" have been criticised on methodological grounds (Funk & Kent Houston, 1987). Hull, van Treuren & Virnelli (1987) further argue that "hardiness" should not be considered a unitary construct and that research should examine the independent contributions of the hypothesised components. A major factor in this regard is control.

Central to the AID process of detention is control. In this sense, despite the possibility that other dimensions of causal attribution may play a more prominent role in other contexts, perceived locus of control appears to weigh more heavily in detention. This may occur because cognitive attribution of capacity to adapt and survive depends on one's ability to control even minor events.

If perceived locus of control can mediate stress effects, and it is a variable that is not typological or unchangeable, its usefulness as an intervention construct requires examination. Applied as a thread that is woven through the post-detention psychotherapeutic process, re-orienting a detainee's perception of his or her experience at different levels in an internal direction may serve to reduce the consequent traumatisation. In this way, detainees may be better equipped to deal both with their "symptoms" and their functional capacity to re-invest in their organisational structures - an energy that may be affected by the psychological complications induced by detention experiences.

Clearly, this would vary from individual to individual as with any therapeutic process. Some individuals may be strengthened by detention, or may experience "symptoms" that are uncomfortable but not incapacitating. Nevertheless, whatever the level of traumatisation experienced, it may be assumed that most people will benefit to varying degrees from intervention in this regard. Such intervention may also be applied in both the pre- and post-

detention phase either in anticipation of detention or following release.

In anticipation of detention, orienting a person's locus of control in an internal direction may help reduce the stress of the AID process. After detention, although the trauma itself may have ceased, its effects may remain psychologically active. This may have conscious and unconscious effects. Therapeutic intervention that re-orientates locus of control, despite applying it retroactively, may still provide a major factor in reducing detention effects. This is so because the perception and meaning of the trauma, as with any memory, can be internally changed and resolved even when the external factors that induced them are no longer operative.

### **ASPECTS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY**

It is worth noting that research does not appear to exist which demonstrates that interventions aimed at changing locus of control perceptions have therapeutic efficacy. Studies have simply demonstrated its mediational function. The present article, drawing on these findings, has aimed to replicate this link in the South African detention situation. Showing the mediational capacity of perceived locus of control in detention, does not in itself, however, provide conclusive evidence for its efficacy as a **psychotherapeutic** construct. Further, beyond evidence drawn from existential and other psychotherapeutic models, and from psychotherapeutic intervention in South Africa, no empirical evidence can be claimed which demonstrates that this construct does or does not work therapeutically. Nevertheless, at the theoretical level a foundation can be argued to exist for employing it in psychotherapy.

Given these limitations, what follows is a framework for using the perceived locus of control construct in psychotherapeutic intervention. Including it in the psychotherapeutic process may involve various components at different levels. These include: i) "symptom" reduction and control; ii) normalisation; iii) cognitive reframing; and iv) experiential reorientation. Each component would serve the purpose of inducing a sense of perceived control where such control has been lost in the objective situation. By so doing, the helplessness engendered by detention would be reduced and control increased. In this endeavour, standard therapeutic approaches would not necessarily be discarded but rather enhanced by employing this construct.

It is important to note that several authors have written on the subject of detainees (for example, OASSSA, undated; OASSSA-DACOM, undated; Manson, 1986; Foster, Davis & Sandler, 1987; Friedman, 1987; Straker, 1987; Solomons, 1988). Solomons (1988), for example, has provided a psychodynamic account of the mechanisms related to PTSD in detainees, with Straker (1987) proposing specific guidelines for intervention with this population. In this regard, different aspects of the four component model proposed in this article are not new. Rather, the method attempts to make use

of an eclectic approach that synthesises different psychotherapeutic modalities in a structured way. According to various theorists, different models of therapy are not incompatible with each other at the practical level (despite being built upon different theoretical frameworks) and may be used to supplement one's overall strategy (McCaffrey and Fairbank, 1985; Fairbank and Nicholson, 1987).

It is also informed by the notion of locus of control as the foundation upon which the psychotherapeutic model is built. This construct, therefore, is used as a basis to deciding which techniques are employed and how they are applied.

Each stage will be discussed in turn:

**i) "Symptom" reduction and control**

Somnier and Genefke (1986), argue that even in totalitarian environments such as concentration camps, some choice and spaces for decision are left. They therefore propose that the subject needs to be brought out of his or her victim role. In this regard, Goldfried (1986) has argued that treatment interventions that emphasise training in self-control achieve greater anxiety reduction than those that rely on a more passive lessening of anxiety. Such changes are enhanced if the subject believes they have an active role in bringing about such change. Many of the PTSD "symptoms", such as sleep disturbance, intrusive recollections and hypervigilance, may create a spiral of further helplessness because the "symptoms" are experienced as beyond conscious control. Therefore, assisting the subject to "take control" of these "symptoms" may help reduce the spiral of increasing helplessness that is sometimes experienced.

It is important to avoid a therapeutic bias that insists on repeated catharsis without adequate "symptom" control as this may actually increase the intrusive "symptoms" and create depression or reactive numbing (Kinzie and Fleck, 1987). This arises because a victim of traumatic stress may have defences that are already acutely overwhelmed and the use of insight may be burdensome (Simon and Blum, 1987). In a similar vein, analysis of transference phenomena may exert a further regressive pull.

The initial object of psychotherapy should therefore be to restore the subject to a pre-trauma level of functioning through reduction of target "symptoms". Behavioural strategies that assist in stress management (such as with sleep disturbance, hypervigilance, re-experiencing of the trauma, etc), may include relaxation training, anger control training, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving, pleasant imaging, assertiveness training and other techniques that increase mastery. Since intrusive memories may play an adaptive psychological role in assimilating the trauma, techniques such as flooding may

be problematic. Management procedures therefore remain preferable in the initial phases of intervention.

### **ii) Normalisation**

Normalisation may involve a dual role of a) controlled catharsis, and b) assisting in the realisation that the subject's response to the trauma is a common one. The function of catharsis, maintained in the subject's relative control (Kinzie and Fleck, 1987), needs little elaboration. Experiences in detention may lead to a build up of affect since there may be little opportunity for emotional outlet prior to release. Repressed affect and introjected feelings (such as anger), may increase a sense of helplessness and loss of control and make post-detention adaptation more difficult. Controlled catharsis may assist the detainee to regain a sense of control over feelings and overcome possible fears of losing control of intense built-up affect.

The latter aspect allows the person to realise that their response remains a normal one to an abnormal situation (despite being unique in some respects) (Manson, 1986). This insight allows the unknown, unpredictable and often frightening "symptoms" to become more predictable and less overwhelming. Research has demonstrated that life stress may demand of a person to assess and predict chances of achieving acceptable levels of control (Fisher, 1984). Predictability and achieving perceived control therefore appear to be linked. Assisting a detainee to achieve greater predictability and insight into their response to detention, may help reduce the sense of helplessness that may otherwise be induced. In this way, a sense of control is increased as the person becomes able to grasp the "normality" of his or her "symptoms".

### **iii) Cognitive reframing**

This aspect involves two components: a) explaining the process of AID, the procedures employed during interrogation and their purpose (such as how the person may have been placed in a "double-bind" situation where no choice was actually possible); and b) reorienting the person's cognitions of self as helpless victim to self as active participant who may be able to "find" meaning in the experience.

a) In this regard, it may be pointed out that whatever decision the detainee was forced to make, the outcome of the interrogation and torture would not have been altered. Impossible choices that induce the person to act or react against their ideology and ethics; attacks on the identity and dignity of the person that are linked with feelings of guilt, loss of self-esteem etc; false promises; the use of alternating friendly and hostile interrogators are amongst techniques that can be explained. This helps demonstrate how normal psychological mechanisms were distorted and manipulated. Mastery may thereby be increased over events that previously rendered the person helpless. Predictability may also be improved since given such particular

circumstances, the outcome remained predictable. Such "rationalisation" facilitates increased control.

b) Cognitive reorientation can also involve the process of encouraging a cognitive grasp of the meaning of the experience. This derives from an existentialist framework that aims to induce a sense of meaning and personal satisfaction with his or her role in the context of the traumatic experiences (Allodi, 1982). Kobasa and Maddi (1977) have made the point that "people tend, through the active use of their cognitive capabilities, to reflect on and invest perceived events with meanings" (p. 251). Perceiving detention as part of fulfilling one's political commitment is one way of achieving this. Further, by perceiving the fact that the detainee actually controlled the detention (such as length held, and even whether assaulted or not) by deciding at the time how, for example, he or she answered questions during interrogation, may be another. Thus by choosing to withhold information, the person can be shown to have been in control of that particular situation.

Deciding on the nature of events experienced, as well as infusing them with a sense of personal meaning, allows the ex-detainee to take the trauma in hand and develop a perception of control that is internally rather than externally located.

#### **iv) Existential reorientation**

This aspect may be included where warranted in terms of the level of functioning of the person and the depth of psychotherapy. It should, however, only be used if psychotherapy progresses over time and warrants in-depth work.

Some detainees appear to internalise a sense of helplessness derived from their experiences in detention where they may have felt powerless to affect change. Although the concrete conditions which induced this will no longer be operative, the sense of a state of helplessness may remain. Mastery over it may be increased by "acting out" elements of helplessness through "becoming" the feeling and exploring subjective experience of this state. Gestalt techniques may also be used. "Dialoguing" with interrogators for example, may allow the person to internalise control over the memory of interrogation and experientially alter the basis upon which the actual experience occurred. Further, previously repressed hostility towards interrogators may be safely ventilated in role-play type situations. Through these procedures affect and the memories of detention experiences may be safely integrated.

Further, paradoxical approaches that exaggerate the state of helplessness may assist in evoking control over it. Prescribing exaggerated helplessness assists the person to actually begin to control the state since such exaggeration is under conscious volition.

A person having been through detention may carry with them memories of the power of interrogators and the capacity they had to control and manipulate. Regaining a normalised perception of these internalised "introjects" can assist in a deep sense of regained control. The techniques outlined above may go some way towards achieving a cognitive and affective change in this regard. In this way, an existential re-orientation towards the self and the environment generally can be gained.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have explored the inherent stress integral to the AID process that characterises detention (in South Africa). Whilst each aspect remains stressful in itself, it is important to consider the fact that these various dimensions tend to operate together, thereby creating a situation that is potentially pathogenic. Findings indicate that this is indeed so with released detainees reporting between 80% and 100% of PTSD, as well as a range of other somatic and psychological "symptoms".

However, common sense indicates that not all people react the same way even where the stressor is similar. It can be assumed that amongst the variables mediating trauma, aspects of personality will play a role. In this regard, perceived locus of control has been found to mediate between different stressors and consequent sequelae, a finding that has been replicated on South African detainees. The implication of such a finding, is that perceived locus of control may be pliable in such a way that a person's orientation may be redirected in an internal direction to reduce the effects of the AID process. Whether applied pre- or post-detention, the potential of this construct to inform therapeutic intervention as a way of mediating stress effects, remains significant.

Perceived locus of control can be integrated into the psychotherapeutic process in order to induce a sense of perceived control in a situation where objective control has been stripped away. It is, therefore, the subjective perception of control that remains primary rather than the objective reality of control. Whilst other factors of causal attribution have been explored, control appears to remain a central factor in the detention context.

This in no way implies that all detainees are severely incapacitated by their experiences, or that detention is capable of weakening or destroying peoples' political commitment and trustworthiness. What it does imply, however, is that where psychotherapy is indicated, no matter the level of traumatisation, this component may be usefully employed to remedy the consequences and provide the impetus for re-empowerment. Used in anticipation of detention, the pathogenic potential of the situation may be markedly reduced.

Further research into this area is, however, necessary. Firstly, the mediating role of locus of control and other causal factors requires further empirical investigation. Although this article provides some preliminary results of such exploration, wider investigation would be useful. Secondly, this article provides some theoretical points regarding intervention strategies. Their clinical application has yet to be systematically tested and would benefit from an investigation in this regard.

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# **WOMEN AND GENDER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

The Gender Research Group at the University of Natal is organising a conference from 30 January to 2 February 1991 on

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- encourage new research
- provide a forum for debate
- advance our understanding of the dynamics of gender relations, more particularly as these affect women, and their significance in shaping our society and women's experience of it.

It is being planned as an **inter-disciplinary event** and we invite papers with a bearing on our very broad theme from all interested people. A 500 word abstract must be in by 30 June 1990.

**The workshop** is envisaged as an opportunity for those engaged in teaching in the area of women's studies at a tertiary level to meet and discuss curricula, funding, standing within the university, and other issues confronting us in this work.

If you would like to be kept informed about either or both events, and have any suggestions or comments about them, please contact the **GRG**, c/o Department of Sociology, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban 4001.

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# **WOMEN AND GENDER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

# **The torture goes on: The psychology of restrictions**

*Shirley Spitz, Ruth Eastwood and Paul Verryn*

*Detainees Counselling Service*

*Johannesburg*

## **INTRODUCTION: REPRESSION AND RESTRICTION ORDERS**

In South Africa, many psychotherapists have been working with released detainees over a number of years. More recently we have had to broaden our treatment to include people suffering under the latest form of repression: restriction orders.

In this paper, we aim to describe some of the problems encountered by restrictees in South Africa, and the psychic damage visible to psychotherapists working with this population. To clarify the origins and nature of these problems, it is important to situate the treatment within the political context existing at present.

The country is now in its fifth State of Emergency. Among the many psychologically destructive aspects of emergency legislation, is the set of laws relating to detention without trial and more recently restriction orders.

Since June 1986 over 30,000 people, including 10,000 children, have been held under these conditions. Some detainees have been interrogated, some have been tortured (Foster et al, 1987), and most have been released without having been charged. Although detention without trial is continuing to be used as a repressive measure, restriction orders have taken over as the preferred form of psychological torment.

The hunger strikes of late 1988 and early 1989 were an unqualified victory for

the detainees. They forced a reduction in the indiscriminate use of detention without trial. Many detainees simultaneously had gone on hunger strike as the last available avenue to protest against their detention. The hunger strike spread to many detention centres over the next months. This was an attempt to force the state's hand to release political detainees who were in danger of becoming permanent political prisoners.

The hunger strikes created a serious dilemma for the State. The securocrats pressurized the government to ignore the hunger strikers but, perhaps for the first time in its history, the government overruled the recommendations of State Security. Presumably the authorities had been influenced by their fears of international outrage and contempt should a political detainee, jailed without trial, die of hunger while in custody. Many of the hunger strikers were released.

Now a new phase of repression was introduced. Many of the released detainees were placed under restriction orders. The state hypothesized that the use of these restrictions would bring about a more muted national and international response while still achieving greater atomisation of individuals and their communities. Unfortunately these suppositions have been supported by the mistaken belief, even among the politically aware, that the present form of suppression is preferable to detention without trial. However, Amnesty International itself suggests: "many restrictees may be regarded as prisoners of conscience because their freedom of movement and other basic freedoms are limited." (Amnesty International, May 1989.)

We believe that, in some significant ways, this form of "imprisonment" is worse than detention without trial. Many ex- detainees who are now restricted, reach a point when they begin to wonder if they were not "safer" and less vulnerable while in detention. (What a reflection on our society that being incarcerated without recourse to the courts, should be regarded as preferable to being "released and free".) This paradox emerges as it becomes clear that restrictions are creating considerably more severe and potentially longer-term psychological damage to restrictees than that which resulted from the experience of indefinite detention.

Details of restrictions placed on individuals differ from person to person, but the object is to impose severe limitations on freedom of movement, of association, of occupation and of political activity. The restrictee is often obliged to remain within a specific magisterial district and to be at a specified address between certain hours. In addition all restrictees have to report to a police station at least once and often twice a day between specific hours. Restrictees are also usually prohibited from taking part in political activities, associating with restricted organisations, teaching or publishing. Thus, although restrictees are being "returned to their families

and communities", they are being prevented from returning to anything remotely reflecting "normal life".

It has become widely acknowledged in South Africa that the psychological effects of detention without trial can be categorised under the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. However, psychotherapists working with ex-detainees over extended periods of time discovered a more complex set of problems. Many ex-detainees did not respond to treatment in the way one would have anticipated from the literature on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Kelly, 1985; Somnier and Genefke, 1986). These ex-detainees often appeared unable to work through the traumatic experience : psychic numbing and concentration difficulties persisted. Nightmares and events of traumatic re-experiencing continued beyond the expected period. It became clear that the environment in which the ex-detainees were living and to which they were returning after each therapy session was exacerbating the problems. Ex-detainees often felt threatened with re-arrest and re-detention. In fact they appeared to be living in circumstances which could not correctly be defined as those of post-traumatic stress but more accurately as a situation of on-going or continuous stress. This necessitated subtle changes in treatment. Therapists had been anticipating similar results to those obtained by professionals working with traumatized populations in other places in the world. However, what was not immediately realised was that victims of torture and imprisonment in Argentina, Chile and Cambodia, who were being treated as refugees had found some safety in an adopted country. They may have had the added problems of being immigrants in strange surroundings, but they had been removed from the real dangers, threats and reminders of their abuse. This was not the case with the individuals we were seeing in the South African context.

This provides the background for our present treatment of detainees and restrictees.

### **PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH RESTRICTEES**

Psychotherapy usually helps clients to explore painful feelings connected to traumatic experiences and through this process to minimize the emotionally detrimental effects of such experiences. Therapy does this, in part, through enabling clients to let down their protective defences and it is in this vulnerable state that the therapeutic process takes place. Theoretically, narcissistic defence mechanisms evolve in the normal course of infantile development to protect the infant from the vulnerability of annihilatory inner impulses. These defences continue to protect individuals from the potentially overwhelming anxiety of facing their own mortality. Two significant narcissistic fantasies, which protect individuals from this exposure, are the belief in their own grandiosity and the omnipotence of someone else.

One of the major difficulties experienced by local therapists arises from the fact that our clients live under a repressive regime. They have to return to a hostile and threatening environment after each therapy session. It could be destructive for clients to be too vulnerable when they return to the dangers of life under restrictions.

Restriction orders, by their very nature, leave restrictees exposed to the real threat of assassination. They are confined to set areas at specific times and any would-be assassin can easily discover their routine. The visits to the police station bring constant reminders of past detention and of the lack of true freedom. These visits also curtail the number of hours available for to travel to work, for hours at work and for the return home with sufficient time to report once again at the police station. Those restrictees who used to work for progressive organisations are usually prohibited from continuing such employment and are often unable to obtain other work because of the limits on their time. Economic impotence is profoundly debilitating and increases distressing feelings of emotional and financial dependence on family and friends. Without economic independence, it is extremely difficult to maintain a sense of worth and self-esteem. Restrictees are left with few ways in which to maintain their confidence as productive individuals. The meaning with which they have previously endowed their lives (usually some form of community activity or political involvement) is crushed.

Restriction orders create a paradoxical environment with which the individual has to struggle. Inversions are made of accepted concepts such as freedom, independence and safety. Such inversions lead to confusion and destabilisation. The restrictee is supposedly free and in the "sanctuary" that is home. This concept of home incorporates images of privacy and security; a place in which to relax and let down one's defences in the knowledge that the surroundings are protective and sacrosanct. But for restrictees, home becomes a prison in which they have to monitor their own activities and become their own probation officer. They are unable to protect their privacy or that of the family because the home is open to routine police checks at any hour of day or night. The decisions they are able to take and the amount of independence that they have is severely limited. Even their leisure activities are limited and their freedom to avoid anxiety-provoking situations in their environment has been removed. There is additional stress because restrictees see themselves as being co-opted into the very system they are fighting to change, having "to police themselves" in abiding by their restrictions.

Feelings of impotence, isolation and depression begin a process of inner disintegration. This is promoted by a real threat to physical safety. In our daily lives, few of us have to contemplate the possibility of our own mortality. As described above, we have developed defence mechanisms to protect us from such traumatic exposure. These defence mechanisms are difficult to

maintain under conditions of severe stress. Restrictees are constantly aware of their inability to protect themselves and of the helplessness they experience in the face of overt and hidden dangers. Homes have been petrol bombed and activists have been assassinated in daylight. Furthermore, the powerful authority figures of government and police are anything but benign and family and friends are unable to protect the restrictees from harm. To live with the daily knowledge of possible death with no way of escape, is to experience annihilatory anxiety. There are few satisfactory ways of coping with such extremes of trauma.

Suicide may seem for some individuals to be an option. Psychotic distortion of reality may be another. Enormous quantities of psychic energy may be used to deny the presence of all danger. These alternatives affect the psychological functioning of the person to the extent that intra-psychic structural change may occur. The risk of permanent damage is increased by the cumulative nature of the stress and the absence of ways to gain emotional relief. Restrictees may not leave their neighbourhoods nor may they go into hiding. On even the simplest level they may not go out in the evening with friends nor be in the company of more than a set number of people at one time.

Therapists are no longer treating people who have survived traumatic experiences. Indeed, we are working with individuals in the process of being destroyed. We are witnessing the psychic effects of cumulative stress and are referring to this as Cumulative Stress Disorder.

#### **A CASE STUDY**

A brief case study is offered to illuminate some of these "symptoms" and effects of restriction orders, and the difficulties encountered by therapists. The insidious and intentional damage being perpetrated on individuals simply because of their political beliefs will be clearly visible.

Certain details in the following case have been altered in order to protect the identity of the restrictee and maintain client confidentiality.

The restrictee is a 21 year-old male student who was detained for a period of six months allegedly because he was a member of his Student Representative Council. Prior to his detention he worked on week-ends to earn money to put towards the support of his family. His father died a few years previously. He has an older brother who earns a low salary. He has a wife and young baby to support. His sisters are both still at school and his mother is in domestic employment. Her earnings are insufficient to cover all the family expenses.

J. was deeply concerned about his family during his detention, but gained support from fellow detainees and reassurance from his mother on the few visits she was allowed. His comrades encouraged him to continue his studies

while detained. He persevered throughout his incarceration, although he had difficulty concentrating at times.

J. was referred to our service for medical and psychological treatment. He arrived at the offices a few days after his release from detention. He had been served with a restriction order on his release. He presented with difficulties in concentrating and complaints of poor memory. These upset him greatly because he had been allowed to return to school and was eager to make up the work he had missed while in detention. He said he found himself "thinking of other things" while in class. He had heard that it was helpful to talk about the detention as one way to recover from it. During detention, he had even fantasized describing his experience to the press. He felt frustrated by the prohibition against talking to the press as well as his personal restriction from addressing groups of people.

He spoke with surprising ease of his feeling and seemed to feel reasonably good about himself. He was confident that he would cope with his restrictions, although they were burdensome. He was simply relieved and happy to be home. He was sure that he would find another weekend job with which to supplement the family income. He was highly motivated to achieve at school and was willing to give himself time to recover from his ordeal.

J's response was typical of clients coming so soon after their detention. There is a sense of euphoria in being back with family and friends. The therapist recognized this as a transitional phase and allowed J to go at his own pace without interpreting the possibility that J may be blocking out painful memories and anxieties about the future.

On his next visit, one week later, his concentration and memory were improving and he was thinking of writing the school tests within the next three weeks. He mentioned that he felt as if he had become his own jailer and often was extremely anxious, particularly when he looked at the time. He explained this by saying that he then became aware of his enforced trips to the police station, and the curfew that prevented him from participating in after-school activities, or making use of the school's library. The latter made his study problematic because he could not afford to buy the books.

He also alleged that he was being harassed when going to the police station to sign and felt angry about this. He was trying hard to abide by all the restrictions and was irritated when unnecessary hurdles were placed in his way. He had not had time to search for employment that week.

In spite of these stresses, he said he was feeling stronger and that his family and teachers were understanding and supportive. He wished he could go out at night with his friends and missed this form of relaxation. Nevertheless, he

appeared to be handling his situation extremely well and was making productive use of his time.

The therapist reflected that he felt he was making progress but also encouraged him to explore his angry feelings. One of the problems for the therapist was to discern whether the complaints about harassment were "realistic" or whether they were an indication that the defences were loosening and his anxiety was increasing.

In his third session he reported that during the previous week, he began to wonder if someone was setting a trap to push him into breaking his restrictions. He claimed that the police at the station were suggesting that he didn't have to report to them; they said they had no record of his name on file. He felt that someone was following him home from school.

It was now becoming clear that he was, indeed having difficulty in sustaining his defences. It appeared that the daily visits to the police station re-activated his detention experiences and acted as environmental cues triggering intrusive thinking. He was being confronted with the real nature of his distorted "freedom" and fake "independence". He began to realise his helplessness in many areas of daily life. He felt angry. He spoke anxiously of the police intrusions into his home at night to ensure he was obeying his restrictions. He was not only upset for himself but angry that these calls woke his sleeping family, often at midnight. His guilt towards his family was growing because he had been unable to find a weekend job and realised that few would employ him because of his time restraints. Now that he was no longer in jail, he felt responsible for his failure to find employment. He was free. He believed he had no excuse.

Despite these worries he reported that he had written and passed the class tests. He was proud of his achievement. However he was restless and tense throughout the session and often seemed to interrupt his own flow of thought.

The next session saw a marked deterioration in his behaviour. He fidgeted and often stopped mid-sentence. He complained that he was not sleeping at night and had lost his appetite. He was depressed and frightened. The events he then described could well have been the sole cause of his deterioration.

He had been followed by a stranger on his way home from the police station. The stranger had called to him by name, "So, J?" and then driven away. Someone kept phoning him at night to enquire if he was there. He began to fear that his house might be petrol-bombed and his family burnt to death. Theoretically, the defence mechanisms with which he had protected himself, were being severely tested and had begun to crumble. He obviously was not omnipotent: he could not keep himself or his family

safe. There was also no-one in his life who he could idealise and with whom he could merge to gain a sense of security. He could not rely on remaining alive from moment to moment.

The final shattering of these defences occurred when he was told of the death of another young comrade who had been shot on his way home after signing at the police station. J. stuttered through the entire session. He expressed fantasies of "going into hiding" and "escaping". Each time he would come close to the terror of his possible death, he would yawn and change the subject. He expressed anger at the teachers who now complained of his lack of concentration and involvement during class. He was angry that his lawyer could not protect him. He was angry that his therapist was not helping; wasn't making him feel better. He had thought he could trust her and rely on her and yet she could not alter his situation. It seemed as if she too had become one of his enemies. J expressed the wish to withdraw physically and psychologically from his environment and stated that he thought he might be re-detained. He had in fact packed a suitcase to be prepared. He finally admitted to fantasies of disobeying his restriction orders in order to get himself re-detained. It was strange that he was thinking of jail as a place of safety and security. He was extremely depressed.

The therapist experienced the projective identification of J's helplessness. But she also experienced her own impotence and this was accompanied by a strong need to "do something". She too was being confronted with the disturbance to her narcissistic fantasies. Her skills and abilities to explore J's inner world and his transference reactions seemed irrelevant in the face of his truly aggressive and life-threatening reality. She offered to write to his principal and teachers explaining the impossibility of concentrating under the present conditions. J. agreed with some relief. She asked the school to be supportive and allow him to sit in the classroom, where he felt momentarily safe in company, even if he was mentally "not present". She also referred him to one of the doctors in the Detainee Service for sleeping pills and to assess the presence of clinical depression. (The doctor prescribed a mild anti-depressant.)

J returned the following week feeling slightly better. He was now sleeping and less depressed although he was still unable to eat much and was behaving self-destructively. He was challenging the authorities at the police station and being aggressive when they made house "visits". The therapist interpreted this as a wish to be re-detained and explored the dangers in his behaviour.

J avoided talking about the possibility of assassination and the therapist refrained from pushing him. He had strongly resisted her gentle acknowledgement of his avoidance. He had begun to re-repress his internalized bad objects and was attempting to deny the presence of the real

persecutors.

He asked if there was a way of learning how to relax and the therapist took him through a relaxation exercise. She was surprised at the ease with which he closed his eyes and allowed her to lead him through the exercise and a following guided fantasy. Perhaps her attempts to give some concrete help the previous week had re-instated her as a trustworthy person.

When he returned the following week the change in J was surprising and disconcerting. He appeared relaxed and unconcerned. He had decided to write the exams over the following two weeks and had been studying well and consistently. His appetite had returned and he had practised the relaxation exercise daily. He avoided all anxiety-provoking topics.

The therapist was in a dilemma. To confront or interpret the defences would open J to his terror and pain; would make him vulnerable to his real environment and his inner world. To follow his lead would be to collude with what could be termed "pathological defences" and perhaps prevent any working through of the trauma. She chose to follow his lead. In exceptional circumstances, so-called pathological defences may be the only ones that enable an individual to survive and cope. To increase someone's vulnerability when there really are people "out to get him", is uncaring and possibly unethical.

The therapist made another appointment with him for the week after his exams. Two days before his next appointment, J visited the offices to report that the exams seemed to have gone well and he was coping with his life. He had a meeting with his lawyer at the same time as his next therapy appointment so he had come in to cancel it. He said that he would make another appointment when he needed to. The therapist was not in the office at that time and the arrangement was left that J would make the next contact. For several months he made no further contact with the office.

Did J cancel because the therapist had colluded with him? Did he cancel because he was afraid to re-open his wounds? Perhaps he wanted to continue the relationship, but did not know how to do this without having to explore the traumas he wished to repress? Or did he cancel because he was feeling that he was coping, that travelling to the city from his home in the township was burdensome and exposing and that he was no longer that desperate for help?

The therapist could console herself only with the knowledge that he was alive. Had he been assassinated, the office would have been informed through the grapevine.

## CONCLUSION

The real situation in which continuing cumulative traumatic stress is being treated, presents therapists with clients who are in the process of disintegration and not at the end of a traumatic experience. The therapists are confronted with existential helplessness and the cruelty and sadism of powerful others. These objective problems have necessitated the use of wider environmental networks to provide support for the clients as well as for the therapists. Therapists are being sharply confronted with their own limitations which seem more overwhelming in this area of work than in any other therapeutic endeavour.

There is a danger in a paper like this one, that because the damage to the sufferers is stressed, a picture may be created of a future generation of irreparably damaged citizens. This is not the case. There are obviously differing responses to being restricted. These are influenced by a number of interacting factors, including: the nature and severity of the restriction orders; the pre-detention (restriction) personality structure with its ego-resources and internalized object relationships; the support systems in the environment; the amount of damage caused during the detention; and the availability of therapeutic assistance.

Nevertheless all restrictees suffer abnormal amounts of stress that accumulates as the conditions persist or deteriorate. This stress can be expected to result in the occurrence of at least some symptoms eventually. The limitless nature of the trauma and the variety of dangers inherent in being restricted to a confined area have a cumulative psychological effect.

With prolonged and cumulative traumatic stresses serious intra-psychic changes may occur in some individuals. This change could lead to the development of chronic psychological disorders which could prove resistant to therapy, even in a post-apartheid society.

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# South Africa: Psychology's dilemma of multiple discourses <sup>(1)</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper examines, on a political and a psychological level, two central and contrasting South African discourses. Both are particularly evident in the anthropological literature of the 1980s, especially that which focuses on the issue of professionalization of "African" medicine (Kottler, 1988). This paper identifies the **similarities** discourse as the dominant anti-apartheid discourse and notes that it takes little account of the psychological factors which are identified in the **differences** discourse. The **similarities** discourse therefore leaves the **differences** discourse in an awkward space, suggesting as it does that those who are positioned within it aid the Government in its quest for separate development and inequality. This paper argues however, that the **similarities** discourse is also politically untenable leaving out, as it does, important psychological considerations. Since the **differences** discourse is frequently regarded as the progressive political stance outside South Africa important contradictions are apparent and the dilemma of difference is introduced. This paper attempts to tease out some of these contradictions and argues for further psychologically informed research in this direction.

### **The Similarities Discourse**

The **similarities** discourse is evident in for example, Alexander (1983), Boonzaier (1985, 1986, 1988), Boonzaier and Sharp (1988), Sharp (1980, 1985), and Sharp and West (1982). Each paper focuses on similarities; where differences are acknowledged they are ascribed almost wholly due to material factors. Little, if any, space is given to psychological considerations. In

discussions about the professionalization of African medicine the similarities between the two types of healing practices are emphasized. Boonzaier (1985), Janzen (1978) and Last (1981) argue that what patients do and why they do it is important. They point out that any divisions are in the eyes of the dividers: the practitioners. Patients do not see two clearly bounded "systems". They use them (and others) serially and simultaneously and professionalization will not change what the patients do. Patients' and healers' practices and beliefs in the various systems are not as different as is suggested in the literature. If differences are evident researchers must ask why. Failure to do so misleads; it plays into the hands of apartheid ideology and the socio-political disparity is not exposed; there are fewer practitioners of "western medicine" in less affluent areas and a lack of availability and high costs of transport (Westcott and Wilson, 1979). Different practices and belief systems therefore do not occur along the divide of Western / African as is suggested by the differences discourse. "(D)ifferent races and ethnic groups, unique cultures and traditions, do not exist in any ultimate sense in South Africa, and are real only to the extent that they are the product of a particular world view" (Sharp and Boonzaier, 1988, p.1).

### **The Differences Discourse**

This second view is found in the work of Last and Chavunduka (1986), Ngubane (1988a, 1988b and 1988c) and Setiloane (in Lye and Murray, 1980). These authors argue from a position of an "insider", acknowledging similarities but explicitly stating that we are different. They name a range of different kinds of healers and argue that professionalization of African medicine must acknowledge them. Ngubane (1988c, p.11) points to "certain diseases of the African peoples' (whose) .. causes can be understood by indigenous healers only .. (who) may however be from any African people". She argues that "at a certain depth what is called "Zulu culture" is essentially continuous with other indigenous African cultures, more particularly in this part of the continent - the differences notwithstanding" (1988c, p.11). The focus of this discourse then is on the differences between "African" healers and others. Material factors are given little, if any place in the analysis but what appear to be psychological factors are evident, in references to "levels" of culture and similarities between African people.

### **MULTIPLE AND CONTRADICTORY DISCOURSES**

Many of the arguments expressed from the differences discourse have been strongly criticized by the similarities discourse (e.g. Sharp and West, 1982; Sharp, 1985). Paradoxically, however, criticism has been levelled at "outsiders" who are also positioned within the differences discourse but who, unlike the "insiders" have pointed to differences in a negative sense: the backwardness of those about whom they write (e.g. du Preez, 1984, and Leatt, 1982). This differs from the way in which e.g. Ngubane (1988c) and Setiloane (in Lye and Murray, 1980) refer to themselves as "insiders"; point to

differences in a positive sense and indicate that this "inwardness" cannot ever be captured by an "outsider".

The **similarities** discourse argues that "insiders" have not remained untouched by "outside" influences. Setiloane writes in English (an "outsider's" language) and does so after years of exposure to social practices which are different to those experienced by the "insider" about whom he writes. But, such criticism does not allow for the possibility that for the individuals who express them, their difference is real. Attempts to decide whether these beliefs are right or wrong, false or real, are futile because the authors are ignoring the reality of subjective experience, being clearly positioned within different and contradictory discourses. The psychological "investment" each has in positioning themselves in one or the other needs to be more closely examined.

### **POSITIONS, SUBJECTIVITIES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INVESTMENTS**

The conceptual framework offered by Henriques et al. (1984) introduces the notion of constructed subjectivities. The authors argue that the character of the subject is neither rational nor is it unitary. It has been socially and historically produced and has been exposed to existing power relations and the re-production of the system. This does not arise as a consequence of a passive subject as may be implied by the **similarities** discourse. There is always an active agency at work. It involves "emotional commitment" or a "psychological investment" (Hollway, 1984, p.238) in taking up a certain position in particular discourses and in relation to other individuals and groups of people. There is some pay off or reward for the individual's choices although satisfaction may not be apparent to the observer. While choices might not be rational or conscious, there is a reason for taking up any particular position, and it is this which is left out of the "political" discourses. Unless these ideas are taken into account, the **similarities**' discourse proponents will continue to be unable to understand how those who have not supported apartheid appear to have lent it intellectual support.

Using these ideas in order to understand the investments of the **similarities** / differences authors, the theoretical orientations informing each discourse should be located. Within a hermeneutic framework our historical positions and our investments cannot be transcended. Thus, the best that can be done, faced with such a dilemma, is to interpret in such a way as to give access to our past and continually open up new possibilities for the future (Reason and Rowan, 1981). Both the **similarities** and the **differences** discourses attempt to do this. This makes their differences difficult to understand. A semiotic notion of a "landscape" might help to clarify this. Sless (1986, p.31) argues that although researchers and the object of study are always located within the same landscape it looks different depending on the position from which it is viewed. When the position occupied changes "so does the scene, and as certain views become visible, others disappear". The authors mentioned so far

have come from different backgrounds, have trained at different universities at different historical times, and have been schooled within different theoretical frameworks. Consequently different experiences and personal qualities have been projected (2) into the landscape, a process which has considerable influence on the manner in which it is perceived and described. This helps to explain the different pictures painted by, e.g. Boonzaier and Ngubane.

The **similarities** discourse, apparently informed by notions of political economy (e.g. Sharp, 1980) and critical theory, actively attempts to unveil and debunk beliefs, looking not only to analyse the surface but the deeper structures as well. The aim of critical theory is to reflect upon the systems of constraints produced by humans and "in these terms purports to be guided by emancipatory interests". It has a political reference in that it is concerned with power relationships and does not merely involve disinterested observation (Foster, 1983, p.52). The **similarities** discourse is extremely persuasive but disappoints because whilst it focuses on material social factors it fails to consider intra-psychic structures and processes.

The **differences** discourse does not involve disinterested observation either. Seated within a humanist framework, such researchers aim at promoting human development. Their research looks at innovative concepts and aims for maximum co-operation between researcher and researched. The researcher is free to admit and know her biases, may be highly personal, speculative and holistic (Reason and Rowan, 1981, p.48). These characteristics are particularly obvious in Ngubane (1988c, p.14) whose paper also illustrates a dilemma of "relevance" similar to that which has faced psychology over recent years and which is discussed later. Ngubane (1988c, pp. 9-10) demonstrates powerfully how invested she is in the **differences** discourse. She describes her personal path into the anthropological discipline and the problems of being an "indigenous" anthropologist, explicitly bringing herself into the landscape:

"(She is frequently asked what she is) doing among Europeans and Americans who regard peoples like (her) own as primarily of exotic interest.. What (is she doing) .. in the company of these former colonialists whose forebears conquered and oppressed (hers)? ... (Is she) not contributing to the intellectual support for apartheid by emphasizing indigenous cultural differences and backwardness on the part of the majority population?" (1988c, p.12).

The future of anthropology as a discipline lies in

"encodement, a need which reflects and springs from the morally integrating power of culture at these deeper levels ... The system of

concepts and values embodied in a culture, although usually implicit and open to change, nourishes a sense of identity and of possession of a heritage. This endows the people belonging to that culture with self-confidence and the kind of pride that makes for collective survival despite conquest and ensuing deprivations" (1988c, p.12).

She also asserts that:

"the demand for anthropological research will come from the people themselves rather than from the European and American middle-class intellectuals who formerly provided its public.. (and that there is a need for) ..painstaking assessment of the effects on the traditional cultures of the long years of apartheid, and the direction of resulting change" (1988c, p.13).

Ngubane (1988c, p.14) argues that this must be carried out by the "indigenous practitioner" who is more accountable and less readily able to "leave the field of research behind for academic discussions back home in the comforts of the Common Room, or in the affluent South African suburbs".

It is noteworthy that humanist research is not value free but is a political enterprise (Reason and Rowan, 1981). However, Ngubane (pers. communication) sees politics as a separate issue. This is unexpected because there is a strong flavour of Black Consciousness in much of what she says and it is inconceivable that any research can be apolitical.

For the similarities authors, politics is not a separate issue. However, it is problematic to presume that if differences are ignored because they are assumed to be untrue (or politically unsound) they will go away. For political reasons, the argument of the **similarities** discourse is extremely important: change will not come from little pockets of differently positioned groups with different aims, psychological investments etc. but from a coherently organized movement. However, differences do exist and because there are psychological variables involved, change will not come about by simply introducing a new discourse which trivialises these differences. Paradoxically then, whilst the intention might be to "force people's consciousness in order for them to free themselves from complexes and prejudices so as to become simply, we repeat, simply people" (in Alexander, 1983, p.11), the similarities idea as it stands will not bring about change. The psychological variables need serious consideration because those individuals who feel and perceive themselves as different, but who incidentally do not see themselves as having "complexes" nor any "prejudices", will not position themselves in the **similarities** discourse. In denying the existence of the different subjectivities pointed to, the **similarities** discourse assumes that the **differences** discourse is about being "black and inferior" or "white and superior". Yet this is not so, those

subscribing to the **differences** discourse are not in favour of apartheid ideology nor do they feel "inferior":

"..it is irrelevant if the Government is telling Zulu people that they are bounded by their own special culture which is peculiar to them. They know who they are essentially, so at one level can indeed be Zulu, yet at a deeper level are Africans with a world-view or orientation common to Africans in general; while in a more external sense they are also South Africans" (Ngubane, 1988c, pp.11-12).

### THE DILEMMA OF INTRODUCING PSYCHOLOGY

This paper has argued that the **similarities** discourse ignores psychological factors. The question of how to include them in a manner which does not contradict the existing picture, however, poses a dilemma which has not been addressed by psychologists.

At first this seems remarkable but in fact it is not surprising; mainstream positivist psychology has been seen to play a powerful role in maintaining existing social relations. Talk of different perceptions between groups of people according to whatever is the current terminology (i.e. "race", "ethnicity", "culture") in South Africa, like the **differences** discourse, will have been seen to endorse the distorted philosophy and policies of the Government. Thus no politically minded psychologist has chosen to take this course. Instead, without challenging the **similarities** discourse, psychologists have raised problems within the discipline itself, asking how psychology might be made more relevant to present day revolutionary and post-apartheid South Africa (e.g. Dawes, 1986; Berger and Lazarus, 1987). Assumptions have been made that psychological practice and theory must be re-moulded (e.g. Perkel, 1988) or even abandoned (in Foster, 1986).

Some psychologists have discussed the South African crisis at various points in the mid 1980s and have noted that there are a range of possible theoretical frameworks to explore in order to "carve out the foundations of a practice which contributes towards the real, not imagined, social arrangements in which full human lives may be lived" (Foster, 1986, p.65). But there has been little attempt to apply these theories.

Foster (1983) demonstrated that by applying different theories interpretations of the data will differ and it would be useful to take up these ideas again. For example, whilst Tajfel fails to adequately address the notion of power (Foster, 1983), his ideas remain important and useful, particularly with respect to the different group perceptions and categorizations which have described. Whilst it is important to note that researchers should be brought into the picture, it must also be acknowledged that there exist multiple discourses, psychological investments and different positions that may or may not be taken up, for

whatever reasons. These factors must be considered and the issues at stake in the various discourses must be understood. But, to do so is likely to cause discomfort. "Relevant" psychologists who seem to be positioned within the **similarities** discourse have not been prepared thus far to tackle this kind of analysis because of the implications (but see Swartz, 1990). This has had important consequences and little benefit seems to have been derived from working with knowledge which is censored or based on particular "criteria from within the realm of political rhetoric" (Swartz, Gibson and Swartz, 1988, p.9). Ultimately, this has moved researchers in the social sciences away from two important aims of critical theory and hermeneutic enquiry to which, after all, many of the authors mentioned seem to subscribe. First, from the standpoint of the critical theorists there is a need to change society but also a need to be reflexive about "its own status and that of its interpretive categories.." (Harre and Lamb, 1984, p.62). Secondly, such a discourse does not allow for a worthwhile hermeneutic interpretation which seeks to "critically examine any fore-knowledge of the world and the phenomena we encounter there.. with the aim of coming to a deeper comprehension of these phenomena ..." (Harre and Lamb, 1984, p.133). We have yet to achieve this kind of deeper comprehension of the psychological phenomena we are confronted with in present day South Africa.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to understand and to challenge the "political line" put forward by the **similarities** discourse (and the dominant anti-apartheid discourse), arguing that it needs serious and competent psychological input of the kind put forward by Henriques et al. (1984). It has also challenged and tried to understand an ideology which states that it is not political but personal, "factual" or "real". The logic of the first discourse appears clear - the false consciousness of the labeled must be removed. "Culture", "race", "nationality", "tribe" are all constructions and as such they have aided the State in its quest for separate development and inequality. But, such a view leaves the **differences** discourse in awkward spaces. For these reasons, the **similarities** discourse has also become politically untenable (particularly since the **differences** discourse is frequently regarded as the "progressive" political stance outside South Africa: Welsh/Basque/Irish "otherness" and difference) (3).

The dilemma of difference has been introduced in this paper while challenging the ideas of the **similarities** discourse which postulates the falseness for individuals of the very real (to them) existence of different categories and the strong sense of belonging. Psychologically speaking it seems obvious that a large proportion of the population is psychologically invested in being and feeling "Zulu" or "African" and different to "other" South Africans. Whilst it is not an enviable stance, those who position themselves within the **differences** discourse have re-introduced into the arena an

important variable that will not disappear. It is a variable which should be given more serious consideration both in constructing a "political line" and in research carried out by all social scientists - anthropologists and psychologists alike.

*Footnotes:*

(1) Thanks to Don Foster for his commentary on the first draft of this paper. Thanks also to Deirdre Moyle and Ann Levett for their editorial assistance and commentary on the final draft.

(2) The concept of projected readers indicates that the author has a preconceived idea of his or her reader and refers to the way in which authors project into anticipated readers aspects of themselves. These are influenced by the position from which the author views the landscape (Sless, 1986).

(3) Don Foster (pers. communication).

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## **A post-modernist critique of community psychology**

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Community psychology in broad essence is an attempt to re-situate the therapeutic process from the individual to the community at large, therapy addressed to the alienated subject is addressed rather to the alienated community. Implicit in this attempt is the recognition that we cannot uncouple the individual from his/her world, that resources directed at the individual are often misguided treating only the manifestations of some environmental failure. To illustrate this in more concrete terms we might refer to the issue of alienation and delinquency amongst coloured people, in this instance most would endorse the view that efforts directed at individual delinquents do not meet the issue at hand, that the high incidence of alienation and delinquency amongst the coloured people must reflect a shortcoming in the community at large. Although this recognition is a welcome departure from the individualism that has characterized so much of psychology there are consequential intellectual difficulties in shifting this focus from individual to community. One of these is that the concept of community is itself enigmatic there being few objective criteria for the identification of a community. I would like to argue in this article that this is not a worthwhile problem, that if we take the community in the spirit of Anderson (1983) as a mental construct, then we will see this as a resource for the creation of new communities an activity which I will argue is itself therapeutic. I would also like to pursue the idea that the targeting of an existing community for intervention, will in itself lead to the importation into the programme of the ideological and historical precedents to its alienation, and that the more productive means of limiting alienation is the formation of new communities.

I have implied above that there might be some difficulty in providing a definition of the community in which the psychologist would like to intervene. Before rushing into any discussion as to how one could resolve this supposed difficulty it may be more productive to examine just why we see this as a difficulty. My intuition is that it is because we assume that there are objectively existing communities and were we only to have the right method at our disposal we could discover them. More than this however it is because we assume that if we do not discover them our intervention will be the poorer. These assumptions are to my mind fundamentally misguided and serve only to confound intervention effectiveness rather than promote it. Benedict Anderson (1983), in his book "Imagined Communities - Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism" has pursued ideas which are particularly helpful in this respect. In tracing the origins of nationalism one of the issues Anderson finds particularly striking is that members of a nation state will never meet the vast majority of people that constitute that state and yet at the same time will share a strong feeling of unity between them. It is in view of this observation that Anderson talks of the imagined community, the community as a mental construct rather than an objective phenomenon. Whilst we do not want to take Anderson's ideas too naively (although communities can be taken as mental constructs these mental constructs have direct bearing on the form and nature of our objective practice) we should recognize that communities are contingent upon our perception of ourselves. The direction of my argument thus far is that it is misguided to preoccupy oneself with rigorously and objectively defining a community since the nature of the community is in conflict with this endeavour. In the ensuing argument I would like to illustrate why this is not a problem but rather a resource for community psychology.

In a BBC documentary entitled "We are so poor" (1980), part of a series on intervention programmes in debilitated communities called "Wheels of Fire", there is evidence of these ideas at work. The documentary concerns a project in India that was an attempt to empower self-employed women in the informal sector. These self-employed women had been victims of prevailing political and social structures that ignored their needs. One of the most striking features of the video was that the effectiveness of the program seemed largely a function of the emergence of self-employed women as a demarcated and self perceived group. The aggregation of self employed women did not prior to the project constitute a community, the women did not clearly perceive themselves as part of a women's community until they were bound by the SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) organisation. Furthermore it was the emergence of their self perception as a group that was particularly therapeutic in instilling a sense of autonomy and assertiveness in each one of their personal lives, as evidenced in their interaction and bargaining with customers and suppliers. The importance of this observation is that the simple

provision of structures (eg. building, common meeting place, common and explicit agenda, an informed co-ordinator, and criteria for membership) created the members self perception as a functioning community that was in itself therapeutic. In other words the creation of communities in the minds of target individuals should be the essential component of community psychology, rather than a pre-occupation with identifying objective communities into which people fit and then applying therapeutic techniques to them.

What has been suggested above is that a certain degree of creativity in the redistribution of individuals into new communities considerably undermines the alienation and feeling of powerlessness that afflicted those members who were at the receiving end of the former distribution. In the above example an aggregation of self-employed women located in discriminatory households and occupations subsequently became members of a dynamic and pragmatic women's consciousness group. Their redistribution into the new group engendered feelings of autonomy and self assertiveness which they had hitherto not had. I venture this has something to do with the colonisation of power by certain groups or communities that is an ongoing social process. Certain groups for a variety of reasons will assimilate more power for themselves than others, in other words there is a particular distribution of power across the multiplicity of imagined communities in a society or social unit. By changing those communities, by creating new communities with new identities, the foundations for the prevailing distribution of power between communities is undermined and power has to relocate itself. Using the above example power has to relocate itself to accommodate the newly formed community of self employed women.

These ideas on power, communities and alienation raise the second issue I set out to explore and expand upon, that the targeting of an existing community will result in the importation into the intervention programme, of the ideological and historical precedents to its alienation. My point here is that the identity and existence of a group albeit imagined is a function of a range of power relationships (power relationships that are more than likely the source of the communities alienation) with other groups; more simply, there is no identity outside of a power differential. These relationships are historically and ideologically grounded and often well entrenched in practice, thus when we target a community we cannot but help importing all these relationships and associations. The response here might be that this is stating the obvious and that it is precisely these relationships and associations which the community psychologist aspires to break down. I do not want to advance the negative point that operating within existing groups precludes the alteration of the distribution of power across those groups, I would only like to suggest the positive point that it is more productive to actively create new groups with new identities, which will successfully spoil the profile and identity

of the communities that the power distribution assumes. In doing this we curb alienation not so much by empowering a target community as by forcing power to redistribute itself across a different profile of communities.

What are the concrete implications of these ideas in an example such as alienation amongst coloured people referred to in the introduction. One of the first implications is that the intervention would be essentially political. Constitutional and political structures that have enforced and facilitated a profile of communities that is fundamentally racially based would have to change. These structures would have to change in such a way as to actively promote the emergence of new communities along non-racial lines forcing power to redistribute itself along new dimensions. The second implication is that for the most part the intervention will be on a much larger scale, in this case a national level. The final implication I would like to point out, one I regard as important for the success of the intervention and on which psychology is prone to weakness, is that the intervention should emanate from and focus on political not theoretical concerns.

Before concluding there is a conceptual difficulty hidden in my proposal that is worth pursuing. I have proposed in this article that the relocation of power across new and different communities or groups is that process which would curb alienation. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that the relocation of power leads similarly to the relocation of alienation rather than its curbing. I am not sure what exactly one can do with this problem. My assumptions are that alienation is integrally connected to power and that power will always concentrate itself in some communities rather than others. If these assumptions hold then clearly alienation will always relocate itself concomitant with a relocation in power, we cannot get rid of alienation altogether. One may on the other hand choose to question my assumptions, particularly the assumption that power will always consolidate itself in some communities rather than others. If this seems a little optimistic and my assumption is sound then perhaps we can do little more than look to a continuous promotion of the emergence of new communities, in an attempt to destabilize the foundations across which power distributes itself. In this way we at least dissipate alienation and power preventing unhealthy and alarming concentrations in particular groups.

In conclusion the core idea in my argument is that the activity of creating communities in the minds of target individuals is itself a therapeutic process. Once target individuals perceive themselves as members of a new group power is forced to redistribute itself and accommodate the new community, the concomitant effect of this being a reduction in alienation (or the relocation of alienation). This activity also has an advantage in that, by omitting to focus on existing groups with entrenched identities it avoids importing associations that could undermine the effectiveness of an

intervention programme. Consequently we should be more concerned with creating new communities than with objectively defining and treating old ones.

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## TRIBUTE

### Remembering David Webster one year later

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At approximately 12.00 pm on May Day 1989, I heard the news that Dave Webster had been shot. Nearly an hour later his shooting was confirmed and I was also informed he was dead. "Impossible" was the only word that rang true to me. Dave Webster could not die. He was too much part of life. He was too much part of progressive life in South Africa. He was too much part of mine, my friends and colleagues' history. Dave had been around when we were in the student movement. He was one of the few academics we could consult. His dedication, loyalty, gentleness, knowledge and expertise ensured that we were at his door frequently. He listened for many hours of his life to our worries and plans. In time David became a role model for how we would like to be when we graduated. He probably never realised the influence and impact he had on us then and how he influenced a whole generation of students and student leaders.

My personal contact with David remained long after I left the student movement. And by 1985 I was again seeing David often. Now in connection with the Organisation of Appropriate Social Services in South Africa (OASSA). By then David was central in the Detainees Parents Support Committee (DPSC) working with both zest and calm. Looking back, there seems to be so few occasions that I remember David voicing complaints, despite the pressure of his work. For those in OASSA at the time, David was there to assist and help in our attempts to initiate projects and structures. He did not need persuading in seeing the value of mental health services.

Since he took subjectivity and the personal plight of all humanity seriously, his interest in psychology was obvious. Furthermore David had a keen interest in psychotherapy, particularly regarding its application to torture victims.

David's great strength was seeing himself beyond his membership of a particular organisation. His vision was always broad. For David, dedication to a new transformed South Africa meant all progressive organisations and individuals were important. Much of (Transvaal) OASSA's development and the work of the Detainees Counselling Service in the Transvaal can be attributed to his support and encouragement.

David Webster was a man of integrity. His words were truthful. Never once did he involve himself in rumour mongering or petty bickering. His sense of self and commitment to political struggle was too secure for that. In articulating his views he always left room for debate. His dedication to justice and human rights was total. On these issues there could be no compromises for him. Never once did I hear Dave not challenge a racist remark for strategic reasons.

David Webster was not a cynic - his patience and love of people were too great. If you needed time, he found it. I remember the numerous people at David's funeral who said the same thing. How he managed to find the time and not show his exasperation with myself and all those who consulted him, still remains a puzzle. It is even more perplexing considering his work as an anthropologist, his political activism, his dedication to social history, involvement in sport and music and his love of the outdoors particularly if they were away from Johannesburg.

The current revelations of the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) make David's death even more tragic. Besides the successful assassinations documented, there are numerous reports of botched operations. Gavin Evans, End Conscription Campaign (ECC) activist and Weekly Mail reporter, escaped being murdered (the plan was to stab him and make it appear as if it was done by burglars) because the death squad's agents had his wrong address. David like so many others both inside and outside the country were not so fortunate. There was no mistaking his death, his slim body riddled with bullets outside his Troyeville home and in front of Maggie Friedman - the woman he loved and with whom he shared his life.

David Webster's assassination occurred a few months before the De Klerk government's reform initiatives. He would have dearly loved to have been an open member of the African National Congress. David's contribution to the development of a new South Africa will never be forgotten. We should also never forget how much more he could have given to our country and how much we need him. Holding the memory will mean his killers (whoever and

wherever they are) will never escape our anger. It will mean our tears will never fully pass. For those of us in the world of psychology who were fortunate enough to know him, his life provides us with a continual challenge to our everyday conduct. David's life tells us that we do have a responsibility to confront the evil and the harsh, but that we should never forget our humour and take pleasure in the parts of our world which are filled with goodness.

We must never forget.

## Book review

Development psychiatry: Mental health and primary health care in Botswana (1987)

by David Ben-Tovim

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Several recent contributors to this journal (e.g. Freeman, 1988; Shefer, 1988) have highlighted the importance of examining the organisation of health services in other countries in attempting to formulate proposals for the organisation of social services in a post-Apartheid South Africa. This book comprises a worthwhile contribution to this debate. The author attempts to apply what he refers to as his "orthodox British Psychiatric training" during his almost three year sojourn in Botswana commencing in 1980. His principal responsibility was to co-ordinate the large scale integration of the previously highly centralised psychiatric services in Botswana with the existing primary health care (PHC) network. During this period the mental health professional complement was at most two psychiatrists, nine psychiatric nursing sisters, one psychiatric social worker (who was stationed full-time at the only mental hospital) - and no psychologists whatsoever! Their duty was the provision of mental health services to the population of 930 000, in the second least densely populated country on earth. It is thus quite obvious that if any meaningful impact was to be had it would have to be via the existing PHC services.

The book is divided into five parts, and in the first part the author expresses the sentiment that Black African countries are too poor to attend to problems that are rare or trivial. He claims that it is necessary in establishing the credibility of psychiatric services to be able to answer the following questions:

firstly, do psychiatric conditions as first identified in Europe and the West also exist in Africa; and, secondly, if they do exist, are they common and are they burdensome? Not altogether surprisingly, Ben-Tovim does indeed manage to provide affirmative answers to these questions. He does this by means of a concise yet comprehensive review of the limited literature that does exist. True to his training, he limits his attention to the physical disease model of mental disorders in which the incidence and prevalence of various symptoms and syndromes are compared between African and Western contexts. This model has come in for a considerable amount of criticism, and it is not clear of the extent to which the incorporation of work derived from other perspectives would have modified his conclusions.

In part two, background information about Botswana as a country is provided; more specifically, there are short accounts of its geography, history, economy, social organisation and dominant religious beliefs and practices. It is disappointing that there is only one short paragraph in which the current political arrangements are discussed. In this paragraph it is stated that "Botswana is not a welfare state. Nevertheless, successive post-independence governments have pursued a policy that could be described as paternalistic capitalism" (p.50). However, the programme that the book describes has many characteristics that are generally (although not necessarily accurately) associated with a socialist political economy. It is an omission that the author does not locate the programme in its broader political and social context by explicating and accounting for this apparent contradiction.

After a brief description of the traditional health care available in Botswana, the state-provided health care system is described. This consists of a pyramidal structure with various tiers, viz. (a) village health posts, staffed by Family Welfare Educators who are elected by their villages to undergo a brief training programme before commencing practice; (b) regional clinics, staffed by nurses; (c) curative referral facilities, i.e. district health centres and hospitals, staffed by doctors and nurses; and (d) one national referral hospital and one mental hospital. It is thus quite clear that the Botswana government has a practical commitment to the principles of primary health care as formulated at the 1978 WHO/UNICEF conference at Alma-Ata. This then is the framework onto which the psychiatric services were grafted.

It is noteworthy that no attempt was made to incorporate the existing traditional healers into the PHC system. Two explanations are offered for this: (a) they "worked from a set of beliefs..., and used a variety of healing practices, that would have been incompatible with the concepts that lay behind modern health care" (p.64); and (b) "the individualistic nature of traditional healing, and its lack of central organisation...made the health administrators weary of trying to incorporate traditional healers into a bureaucratically organised state-run health system" (p.64). Notwithstanding

this, the author's own research has demonstrated that the two systems do operate in parallel, but with the traditional tending to be the preferred mode of treatment. This did not however result in harmful delays in presenting for "Western" treatment if the initial treatment had failed. The conclusion is that the two approaches are **complementary** in the sense that they attend to different "patient" needs.

Part three commences with a short history of psychiatry in Botswana in which it emerges that the Mental Health Division of the World Health Organisation (WHO) exerted a major influence in facilitating the transformation of the Botswana psychiatric services from an asylum based to a community based enterprise. It is tempting to speculate on the potentially far-reaching alterations that future involvement of the WHO in the South African mental health services apparatus could inspire.

The structure of the new community based services is then presented. The country was divided into six psychiatric catchment areas to each of which was allocated a psychiatric nurse. These nurses then set about establishing a framework for psychiatric work in their catchment areas involving regular visits to the health posts and regional clinics under their jurisdiction. The predominant context for training was the **joint consultation** in which the visiting psychiatric nurses saw patients with the PHC workers. Occasionally, a psychiatrist was also present. In addition, more formal instruction took place at the regular refresher courses organised by the Ministry of Health. It is unfortunate that there is a dearth of information regarding the day to day psychiatric experiences of FWEs and nurses, and how they experienced the programme. It would appear that the author has not evaluated this aspect.

Part four contains an examination of some theoretical and practical issues encountered in day to day practice. This consists of a focus on certain conditions that had been identified as priority conditions viz. psychiatric emergencies, alcohol related conditions, epilepsy, schizophrenia, depression, and what the author labels "non-psychotic distress". Patients suffering from non-psychotic distress appear to have challenged Ben-Tovim's ingenuity and psychological resourcesfulness. They almost always presented with somatic complaints and would, in Western contexts, have been more likely to benefit from psychotherapeutic as opposed to pharmacological intervention. A simple five-stage assessment and management scheme is presented that includes a blend of crude common-sense psychology and the cautious use of a handful of psychotropic drugs. There was no attempt to engage the sufferers in psychotherapy in the sense of helping them to work through their conflicts. There is a bold attempt to link some empirical data with theoretical speculation regarding the somatisation aspect of non-psychotic distress, and Ben-Tovim's conclusions are not inconsistent with those of Kleinman (1977).

The fifth and final part of the book contains an assessment of the impact of the new services. Ben-Tovim is quick to admit that his research methodology is not very sophisticated; nevertheless he is able to conclude on the basis of a crude analysis of routinely available data that: (a) access to psychiatric services became available throughout the country; (b) the majority of consultations took place in community facilities and not in the state mental hospital; (c) the total number of in-patients dropped substantially in the period he was working in the country; and (d) a wide range of patients were seen in the community services. He goes on to state that: "it was possible for a poor, majority-ruled, independent, remote, black, sub-Saharan African country to re-organise its existing psychiatric care-delivery system and, in a short space of time, provide a nation-wide, dispersed, psychiatric service. It was possible to do that using, almost entirely, existing financial and human resources. It was possible to do that not as an experiment, or as part of a prestigious multi-national demonstration project, but as a result of a conscious national choice" (p.205).

Certainly, there are elements of the programme that could be criticised; these include the apparently low priority given to preventative psychology and the popularisation of psychological knowledge. Notwithstanding this, the efforts of our colleagues in Botswana serve as a reminder of what could be achieved by mental health workers given a favourable political dispensation.

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## Book review

**Childhood in Crossroads: Cognition and society in South Africa (1989)**  
by Pamela Reynolds

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### Protest literature and post-Apartheid society

#### INTRODUCTION

There is, supposedly, a Chinese curse in which "to live in interesting times" is wished upon the victim. The interesting times in which many, if not most, black children in South Africa have lived since about 1976 could certainly be made into the stuff of curses - or books about growing up in a society in crisis. One such book is **Childhood in Crossroads: Cognition and society in South Africa (1989)**. The author, Reynolds, writes in the introduction to her book, "...two themes that run through the study (are): the relationship between individual and society, and change as a continuous individual and social occurrence. A third theme describes and analyses situation and context specific to the nature of cognitive processes" (p.3). This focus is not only of interest to those working in the theoretical domain demarcated by Vygotsky (1978), but also promises to throw some light on the lives of children caught in the eye of the South African socio-political storm. Reynolds characterises the book as "the result of an ethnographic study of 7-year-old children in a South African squatter settlement" (p.1).

Our immediate reaction was to scan the bibliography for Luria (1976), Ong (1982) and Vygotsky (1978) - to find that none of these names appeared. Not only the themes which run through the work but also the author's interest "... in tracing links between child thought and the states of consciousness

represented in adults' formulations about society" (p.4) seem to demand attention to these milestones in the (psychological) study of the very object of knowledge the author chose.

## VERBS AND NOUNING

"Mind" and "culture" as nouns are misleading; both mind and culture are woven into and underneath (in a causal or productive sense) the actions of people. Such actions "show" mind and/or culture to an observer from a different space-time-rule configuration to that of the actor. Moreover, what may count as evidence for mind and/or culture - in the actions observed - are "decided" not only prior to the transaction between actors but also on grounds other than those which make action possible. In more general terms, therefore, and prior to discovering culture or mind in the actions of another, it is already one's own "mind-ing" and "cultur(e)-ing" that determines what we will look at and see, or listen to and hear, and so on (as every anthropologist certainly knows!). Whether we "see" culture or mind, therefore, seems to have less to do with the actions observed or the mind-in-action and culture-in-action, than with the level of our analysis. Phrased differently, mind and culture are not to be read off from the same epistemological level. Imagine a face-to-face transaction between two actors, one that involves an analysis of the other's facial topography. On the other hand, imagine one of these actors being on top of a skyscraper, looking down onto the other actor. In this case the analysis includes the topography of the area below the building which includes the other as one feature. These two imaginary situations are analogous to the two different (epistemological) levels of analysis which will yield, in the first case, mind and in the second case, culture. Human action may, therefore, be read as the text of mind's constraints, and/or culture's constraints. The one does not determine the other but both produce action which is typical of an individual or a (cultural) group, and both - in action - are what makes people uniquely historical in their psychological and social constitution.

For actors, "minding" or "culturing" are really the unity of being that we come to take for granted. Reynolds like others before her, falls into the trap of the spurious question: Does culture determine mind (or vice versa)? It has become a rather tired, if popular project, to repeat Piagetian tasks from Geneva to Toronto and back to Crossroads in an attempt to answer this question and to locate specific groups/individuals within the cognitive stages described by Piaget. Some of these studies are of interest theoretically (see Miller, Pascual-Leone, Campbell & Jukes, 1989) while others lack attention to the crucial issues which make the interface between the psychological and social domains of analysis an area of interest.

The relationship between mind and culture is, on the one hand, not a relationship between two separable "things"; this makes the study of it more

complex than merely adapting tasks from one learning history, eg. Piagetian tasks, to the needs or conditions of another learning situation, eg. the children studied in Crossroads. On the other hand, and depending on the level of analysis, the very same action or performance on a task could be understood as a manifestation of culture or mind. Miller (1984) laid down the ground rules for a project which acknowledges this difficult intertwinedness of "mind" and "culture": ground rules in the sense that one could not enter this domain without at least addressing the important issues which he highlights. Since this work, a number of other projects in the same tradition have followed (see Craig, 1985; Craig, 1987; Craig & Miller, 1984; Miller & Craig, 1985; Miller, 1987; 1989; ). We, therefore, read Reynolds as fellow scholars but with a very particular approach to the study of the interface between the psychological and the social. Our reading may, therefore, do Reynolds' work an injustice, but then, that is the nature of the dialectic of social science and academic debate.

Reynolds "borrowed from the psychologist" (p.1) "tests" which would have been better off in a project which does not turn Piaget upside down **theoretically**. In other words, the author's reading of Piaget's genetic epistemology is suspect, while her empirical use of his tasks is finely executed. The children's performances, however, are under- and also mis-interpreted given Piaget's theory of cognitive development (see Kitchener, 1986). It will be an enormous and thankless task to go through Reynolds' report on the tests, one by one, to support this criticism. Suffice it to point out a set of frequent conceptual moves (albeit often implicit) that she makes in this regard: When the children are given Western tasks, they either (i) under-perform, (ii) perform the same as children in the West or even (iii) over-perform. This she explains as indicative of (i) their limited access "to the props of Western society" (p.201), (ii) the innate creativity and resourcefullness of children, and (iii) her "adaptation" of Western, Genevan tasks for Xhosa speaking children in a squatter settlement (or to the marvel of "naturalistic" (p.125) field procedures ?). These manoeuvres would have irritated us less if she had not written of her own book, "The book does more (than merely record the impact of apartheid on the children's lives). It documents the impact of the system on the children's fantasies, dreams and play. It links current social mores to the children's ideas (for instance about birth and the origin of dreams), their use of kinship terms, and their behaviour. It documents the inequalities of poverty as it affects children's opportunities for learning. Some psychological tests have been shown to be culturally biased in small particulars so that not only are the children deprived of a sound learning environment but the development of their cognitive abilities cannot be reliably traced" (pp.199-200). Thus does Reynolds review her own contribution to a field of study where angels like Vygotsky tread many years before! And from Vygotsky (1978) she could have obtained a theory-method for research and a theory of the relationship between the individual and society that would not violate the

central tenets of the Piagetian opus but rather add substantially to it. Whereas Piaget addresses the knowing subject's capacity for constructing knowledge/reality through praxis, Vygotsky focusses his theoretical work on the internalization of social communication. Phrased differently, the psychological mechanisms driving praxis are, according to Vygotsky, social in origin. Vygotsky's empirical focus was on the process of instruction between the cultural guide (eg. mother or more capable peers) and the neophyte (eg. child). This process is, for Vygotsky, the key to psychology as a whole, much like the concept of "value" unlocked, for Marx, the door to an understanding of social history. Had Reynolds not cheated Piaget and had she been familiar with Vygotsky's work (which is rather closer to her intended project than Piaget's) she might have moved closer to an answer to the question she poses for others after her: "How best can children be introduced to the structures of mind that are valued and rewarded in current society?" (p.201). Furthermore, Piaget's focus on the epistemic subject could have grounded her data which support the notion that even children in the most abysmal circumstances can be innovative, resourceful, clever, creative and so forth.

Readers, perhaps those unschooled in the Piagetian and Vygotskian traditions of doing research, interpreting and explaining the data may, however, find the book a veritable basket of data on "childhood in Crossroads". This alone makes the book worth reading; the many earnest descriptions of the author's and children's activities, and events during the study period (and after), the quoted utterances/verbal exchanges between the author, the children and other significant figures in the stories of their lives, as well as the other (dated) references to children's "passage through time, and their notions of space, kinship, dreams and order" (p.9) are certainly interesting. The book contains some telling photographs. We found the one entitled, "A mother and child selling chicken feet" a rather stark reminder of the differences between the worlds of the "Xhosa children living in 1980 in an urban squatter settlement on the dunes of the Cape Flats" (p.199), and white middle-class suburban children's introduction to what may be regarded as economic activities. The illustrations depicting the construction of games and toys, "Houses in the sand" (p.57), "Wire cars" (p.61), "Games" (p.66) and other "Items Created by Children for Play" (p.69) will be eye-openers for those unfamiliar with the creativity of those children who live away (and excluded) from the toys and games that money can buy. The author also records some very interesting data in the appendices to her book; "Pondoland herd boys' comments on the learning of the names of things (Appendix F)" (pp.226-230) is notable in this regard. Reynold's record of the songs "children in Crossroads sing" (pp.72-86) give the reader some insight into the children's construction of, and access to, culture and consciousness. We would have appreciated some "thick description" (Geertz, 1973, p.100) of these songs and children's enactment of them as we would have of most of the data included in the main text and in the appendices. Phrased differently, the book seems to fail in luring the

reader into the richness (if traumaticness) of the lives recorded, the data being portrayed too "thinly" - perhaps in an attempt to be "scientific"? For example, the author gives the following description of a song: "One song was particularly moving. It had a chorus of "turu rurururu turu..." that sounded like doves in the bluegums. The children would bend low from the waist as they sang the chorus and shuffle their feet in quick, fancy rhythm. The meaning of the song contrasted sharply with its gentle sounds and steps:...[We have no nanny (comforter), our nanny is burnt. Send us Lazarus and where is God?]. And so it was with many songs. Behind the harmony, hidden in the beat of the little fat thighs of the girls and the quiet foot shuffle of small boys would be words of anger and loneliness and despair" (pp.72-73). The point we would like to make regarding the absence of a rich interpretative account in the text as a whole ("thick description"), relates to what appears to be an interesting observation - the dysjunction between the "appearance" of the song and dance of children (perhaps adults too), and the import of the words of the songs. And the movement of the dance. If the author is serious about recording "experiences in detail and in relation to a socio-historical moment" (p.199), we would suggest that the data that she records demands analysis which not only describes the "said and done" but that also attempts to "rescue the meaning of the unsaid" (Geertz, 1973, p.100). The author's handling of the data in general, especially given that "... their (the children's) families are forced to build shacks in the sand; that their shacks are demolished before their eyes; that their parents are imprisoned for being in white man's territory; that their education is grossly inadequate; that their mobility and opportunities are rigidly confined" (p.199), is disappointing. Moreover, her statement: "Mind does not determine culture; therefore, the constraints of a particular culture cannot be taken as representing the limitations of mind" (p.210) deserves comment. Luria (1976) and Vygotsky (1978) who operated in a "socio-historical moment" (p.199) very similar to that which Reynolds attempts to confront, made it their business to address the complex nature of the link between mind(-ing) and cultur(e)(-ing). They could not produce an easy algorithm for theories focussed on the effect of mind on culture, and culture on mind. Reynold does not vindicate her claim that "mind does not determine culture", unless of course this is to be found in a relatively uninteresting observation regarding fourteen 7-year-old children confronting pre-existing social forms (see Bhaskar, 1979). We would suggest that Reynolds (re-) considers the differences between individual (psychological) development, such as is accessible through the Piagetian and other tasks she included in her study, and social (institutional) development, and the transaction between social and psychological history (see Ong, 1982), before closing her book on "...the relationship between individual and society."

## CONCLUSION

Events in South Africa over the last few weeks necessitate a closer look at that body of literature (academic or otherwise) which has as its basis for existence, "the struggle". We have to state immediately that we certainly do not regard De Klerk's speech on 2 February 1990 as heralding the end of transformative politics and academics nor do we think that protest has no place in this stage of transition or in post-apartheid South Africa. (Nor, of course, do we think Reynolds ought to have waited with her work until the momentous events of the last weeks.) The point we would like to stress, however, is that mere catalogues of the sequelae of oppression or knowledge about "the real impact of discrimination, migration, re-location and repatriation ...on children" (p.201) may be an insufficient analysis if the aim is to enter the era of constructive politics, nation building and progressive research. In other words, we need - each from his/her platform and/or constituency, academics included - to engage in what is, in order to help bring about what all people desire and what some have died for. Reynolds certainly engaged admirably in the lives of fourteen "7-year-old children in a South African squatter settlement" (p.1) over a period of eighteen months, but the introduction and conclusion to her book notwithstanding, she does not say or show clearly what is the case with the children's cognition (perhaps she protests too much ?). In order to begin to unravel the issue of what can be done in those cases where children, like the ones Reynolds studied, fail to be interested or competent in the tasks and demands of modern industrial and schooled society, researchers (even politically aware ones) must describe, interpret and explain their data precisely, rigorously and conceptually coherently. The informal and formal educational needs of the young for the present and the future in this land is, an immensely compelling domain of study. The kind of society and nation which might develop here depends on close scrutiny of the needs in this regard. Reynolds correctly assumes that questions and answers about the educational needs of children will be informed by the study of "the relationship between individual and society, and change as a continuous individual and social occurrence" but she fails to describe and explain the cognitive constraints which any future education system - which will and must include children like these - must address if it is to be fair and empowering to all. Our quarrel with Reynolds is not that she intended to add to the protest literature on "the impact that apartheid has on each child's life" (p.199) - even though such projects seem to contribute little to projects or desires aimed at building a better future for all - but that she did not actually achieve this modest aim. Reynolds' failure to address the possible interface or link between the appalling circumstances that the children she studied were forced to live in (and which she does record), and their performances on the tasks she set them (where she is at pains to defend the case that their performances do not illustrate "the inferiority of children in non-Western countries" (p.4)) is academically painful. These are harsh words which should not obscure our

shared concern for children, and interests in cognition and "links between society and the individual" (p.2).

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## Book review

**Uprooting poverty: The South African Challenge (Report for the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa) (1989)**  
by Francis Wilson & Mamphela Ramphele.

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One of the consequences, albeit unintended, of the publication of the First Carnegie Enquiry into the effects of poverty in the early 1930s, was to generate a political response from the government of the day to alleviate the dire poverty of poor whites in South Africa. Using labour legislation as the thrust of their activities they focussed on entrenching white privilege at the expense of black labour. The consequences of this process are highlighted in Wilson & Ramphele's account of the migrant labour system and its catastrophic effects on the social structures and family life of millions of black South Africans. It is the economic forces entrenched in racial capital that serve as the underlying focus of much of the Second Carnegie Report.

**Uprooting Poverty** provides the most comprehensive account of the causes and consequences of poverty yet available to readers concerned with South African issues. It details the economic foundations of the process of impoverishment and the political system which maintains it.

The book is divided into three parts: The first deals extensively with the manifestations of poverty, the second with the causes of poverty and the third with suggestions for action against poverty.

In their account of the manifestations of poverty the authors provide us with a comprehensive analysis of its effects in a number of areas of human activity: work, unemployment, health, housing, and education. Drawing the

briefest summary of these data we find that the average wage for a black person employed in the mining industry in 1985 was less than R350 per month, and thus below the minimum living level. Of this monthly wage remittances to their families varied between R15-R38 per month. Given that many in the rural areas depend on these remittances as an important source of income the consequences of low wages in the mining sector become a critical factor in poverty in these areas. Similarly, in the arena of health the statistics on the incidence of tuberculosis, a disease almost entirely associated with poverty, reveal the gross discrepancies between living conditions of the different race groups in South Africa, 81% of all reported notifications being African. In the field of education the statistics are no less favourable to the majority of black people. The oft repeated discrepancy in the amounts spent on black and on white education belies a number of other equally critical findings presented in the report. Less than 1 in 20 African children who begin Standard 1 matriculate out of the school system. This finding is correlated with those on the poor qualifications of black teachers, the huge classes with which they are expected to deal and a lack of morale stemming from the conflict in schools. As the authors point out "there can be few more urgent and immediate political tasks in South Africa than rethinking the role of teachers in an oppressive structure so that they may play their full part ... in the long march to liberation", (p.144).

The wealth of statistical information which supports their analyses is amplified with illustrative case studies and respondents accounts of the effects of impoverishment on their daily lives. As one respondent notes "Poverty is just people not paid enough for what we done". This technique of interspersing the statistical basis for their argument and individuals' responses to the situation brings an immediacy to the book's message. This is further amplified with a series of photographs which poignantly precede each chapter.

One issue which arises consistently in the tables of data presented are the wide fluctuations that occur between neighbouring localities on many of the indices of poverty. For example, discrepancies between unemployment rates in various Durban township and squatter areas are substantial but do not elicit more than passing comment from the authors. While this may be appropriate given the authors intention to paint a broad canvas, these discrepancies also alert the reader to a situation that requires considerably more detailed analysis of the problem in the event of intervention programmes being initiated.

In the second part of the book the authors trace the roots of poverty to essentially two sources - an employment system based on migrant labour and a fundamentally undemocratic political system that creates a sense of powerlessness and stifles individuals at every turn as they make efforts to escape from the trap of impoverishment.

In examining the historical antecedents of the present situation the authors note the exploitation of labour in the earliest days of the Cape up to the pre-Nationalist period together with the development of the early labour movements among black workers and their suppression. In a later section of their book it is the re-emergence of the black labour movement in the 1980s that holds greatest hope for the authors as a vehicle for mobilisation of workers in the fight against poverty. As they note "power lies at the heart of the problem of poverty in southern Africa". Although they are unwilling to explicitly outline how power is to be obtained the authors differentiate between what they call "short-run" and "long-run action plans" which move in that direction. They suggest that the actions of independent organisations such as trade unions, collectives and cooperatives may provide enduring effects on the nature and quality of the future, but only once a fundamental shift in the distribution of political power towards democratisation of society has taken place.

In the short run the authors suggest that one of the most important consequences of these activities is the sense of achievement and power that people experience over the circumstances that affect their daily lives. It is the knowledge that their actions have consequences, that they themselves can control events, that provides the psychological boost to self-esteem and feelings of worth often absent in the very poor. Wilson and Ramphela also make the cogent point, often made before and equally often forgotten, that this sense of power and control over life circumstances cannot simply be handed out by the well-meaning to the impoverished. The conditions must be created which allow people to find ways to help themselves.

It should be noted that one of the roles of the community psychologist has been to facilitate the development of strategies for self-reliance. It is equally notable that a report which deals with fundamental issues of the human condition is characterised by little or no reference to research in this area. Whether the absence of any psychological input stems from deliberate omission or a perceived paucity of relevant psychological research is an issue that is no longer productive to debate. One can only hope that these issues and others of a psychological nature will form a significant part of research programmes which will grow out of the report. A case in point is the recently initiated Birth to Ten Project in Soweto coordinated by the Medical School at the University of the Witwatersrand where long-term follow-up studies of growth, health and psycho-social development of all children born in a particular month are planned.

In the final chapter of *Uprooting Poverty* the authors pose several questions that stem from their preceding analysis. These include the issue of sanctions, the nature of land tenure and redistribution of land, and decisions about the reallocation of resources in some future democratic society. While the authors

attest to the need to confront these questions with rigour and honesty, to avoid the over-simplification of half-truths, they themselves suggest that it is beyond the scope of their report to do so. The final and critical question that the authors pose is the following, "Is it really correct to argue that political democracy is a fundamental prerequisite of the long term struggle against poverty?", (p.355). Their answer is, guardedly, yes. However, they acknowledge that the history of Africa is not one replete with political democracy and the dawning of a new age where poverty is substantially reduced, and in political democracies, where they do exist, poverty is still extant.

What is clear from the analyses presented in *Uprooting Poverty* is that massive poverty exists on our very doorsteps, and 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.

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**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 editorial collective welcomes contributions which will develop debate on psychology and psychological issues in South Africa. In addition to articles and book reviews, short discussions on previously published material or on issues of the moment will be encouraged. Authors are required to use non-sexist and non-racist conventions in their contributions. Articles should not normally exceed 6000 words in length. And book reviews, unless they are review articles, should not exceed 1500 words.

## **FORMAT**

The APA or the Harvard system of referencing is preferred. The list of references, in alphabetical order and **not** numbered, should follow immediately after the end of the article. Footnotes should be kept to a minimum and where possible each should appear on the same page as its reference. Prospective contributors should send three copies of any piece, including a clear original. Authors are encouraged to submit their work on an IBM compatible disc, and then only one printed copy will be required. These will not be returned.

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