

Viva critical independence, but the struggle continues

Thirty years and 46 issues of **Psychology in society (PINS)** is indeed “something to acknowledge”, and “even celebrate”. I congratulate Grahame Hayes, his fellow editors and his various contributors through this brief collegial reflection. I do this as sometimes contributor and, more relevant, as co-editor of related journals over the years.

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The first point to make is that **PINS** has survived from the early-1980s. This means that it continued through some of the most intense years of repression, as apartheid faced increasing resistance, employing desperate measures to stave off its demise – states of emergency, troops in townships, and doomed attempts at reform within the parameters of its own nightmare world. Such journals, as Hayes points out, are few and far between. It would be an interesting research project to assess each, those who survived (and then how), and those who closed down, and then why and at what cost to intellectual life in the country. Remember, too, that production of these journals, as independent, pre-dated for a number of years the electronic age in the multiple forms we now take for granted. Comparison of the typefaces and the general layout – limited by the technology available then, in the 1980s – reveal the so-different processes. So recent, and yet so far away in technological terms.

Second, the subject matter of **PINS**: to have started a journal aimed at psychologists and psychology, in 1983, in South Africa, was a brave and imaginative step. The first editorial in 1983 defined the intended role of the journal for the “Editorial Group” (with six members in Johannesburg and three in Durban; there is now, probably more manageably, one editor and eight associates). The initiative was motivated by several factors, summarised in calling for a “meaningful contribution” to “overcoming our crippling apartheid society”. Such critical re-examination was the case with several other disciplines at South African universities since the late 1960s. The call was then given context by examining each of clinical, industrial and education psychology, with an exploration of “production of knowledge”, beyond the “forms of practice associated with mainstream psychology”. The editors say, in conclusion to this last aspect, “that mainstream psychology in South Africa is far from moving

away from [an] orthodox (and false) conception of science. There is a tendency to glibly equate research with doing experiments ... The positivist image haunts South African psychology". The first article in this first issue appropriately deals with additional "Constraints on research in sociology and psychology in South Africa" (by Michael Savage). He notes that state constraints on research, through such measures as extensive censorship or the prevention of dissemination of ideas, are severe but are not, alone, to be blamed. Researchers themselves are "limited and restricted by the norms, values and socially determined perceptions of the South African social structure ..."

Third, the immense difficulty of remaining "independent" of the surrender of important aspects of the reason for its existence to large global (and hence first world) publishing houses, is noted in the editorial in **PINS 45**. The usual argument made for selling publishing rights to one of the big companies are that it ensures financial security (but, surely, then only while it is a marketable product to the holding company). In addition it is felt that enough of the burdensome tasks are removed from the editors to ensure continuity through avoiding burn-out; but, again, it means losing control of the processes that demand real engagement with what the journal is about. Finally it is said that editorial independence is not lost. The last point is the most worrying – large companies see "their" journals as each adding complementary value to the "stable". That means no overlap. Each one, in its own uniqueness and specialisation, must become a must-have for libraries, the only real lucrative market for such centralising initiatives. Editorial independence, yes, but then with parameters set by the buyer of the rights.

And, finally, **PINS** has remained a critical voice. The challenge remains, demanding reflection on the past and the present. Grahame Hayes correctly refers to this aspect in his editorial in **PINS 45**: "Maybe ... we should re-visit how we articulate our post-apartheid critique". He then brings it back to the major contribution left thinking made to understanding apartheid – the race-class debate. How do we research, analyse and understand these two core components in their pre-1994 existences and changing articulation; and how do we take that debate into the present, in their relevance in a democratic society? An added complexity for **PINS** and its readers and contributors, is how to relate such a debate to the psychological effects of race and class on citizens in their (our) everyday lives. Race has remained at the forefront in post-1994 South Africa – not that we fully understand its place – but that focus has also removed, to a large extent, an examination of capitalism and its consequences (such as gross inequality, unemployment and poverty), never mind capitalism in articulation with race in its new expressions.

I look forward to following the journal's "possible future direction".