

Preface

It is a great pleasure to write a foreword to this *special issue* of the *South Pacific Journal of Psychology*, jointly published and sponsored by the University of Papua New Guinea and Massey University. By emphasising “*The Development of Psychology in the Oceania-Pacific Region: Theory, Research and Practice*” this special edition highlights the need for greater understanding of cultural impact upon thinking, perception and response to the physical and human environment. It identifies the need to establish both cultural similarities and differences, and to create paradigms that enlighten understanding across cultures as well as within them.

Oceanic and Pacific cultures most likely are not the same now as they were two hundred years ago and are unlikely to be the same fifty years on. The establishment of benchmarks for understanding the way things are now will be most important to the work of future research psychologists. Similarly, enhancing and clarifying what we know now, or have believed to know in the past, can only help our skills of contextual application and our sensitivity to difference and similarity.

The collapse of territorial boundaries through the increased ease and regularity of transport links and the implementation of sophisticated communications technology has promoted cross cultural contact and the merging of cultures. This, together with the general pressure for sameness that seems to be linked to increasing globalisation will undoubtedly have consequences for the psychology of people, regardless of culture. What these consequences are, how they emerge, and what changes they will generate will provide a fertile basis for understanding human psychology generally.

I applaud the work of the contributors to this special edition. I congratulate our UPNG editor. It is pleasing to read reports of PNG based research. It is a little disappointing that a UPNG contribution did not make it, but that is academic life!

I often wonder if the data analysis would be different if it were subject to (say) Melanesian consideration as compared to (say) Western? Would the conclusions and the explanations be the same? I guess this will be something for the future. Only time and a host of research by Melanesian psychologists will tell.

I look forward to further editions.

Professor L.R. Eastcott, Ph.D.

Vice Chancellor

University of Papua New Guinea

Editorial

This *special issue* of the *South Pacific Journal of Psychology*, volume 15 (1), 2004, on “*The Development of Psychology in Oceania-Pacific Region: Theory, Research and Practice*” is timely for the Oceania-Pacific region as the new millennium emerges on us. Many theoretical and practical questions remained unanswered or unaddressed, especially for the study of psychology in our region. The debate on the nature of psychology as a positivistic science continues while our region recently emerged into this discipline continues to follow the trend without serious assessment on its validity and reliability in relation to the application of this discipline in our region. Therefore, the papers in this special issue *directly* or *indirectly* in their own ways addressed some theoretical, research, and application issues in the areas of indigenous mental health, cognitive development, policy, indigenous education and behaviour therapy among the indigenous peoples of Oceania-Pacific region. What is interesting in all these papers is that the topics published here reflect the main recent areas of psychological research in the Oceania-Pacific region. Furthermore, and most importantly, these articles show a primary concern for the understanding of the Pacific indigenous peoples way of perceiving and making sense of their physical and psychological world. On a critical front, some of these papers (e.g., see Flett, Harini, Long and Millar, in this special issue) have questioned the validity of applying theories or models developed in the West up-front on the local population without serious consideration of cultural variability.

Without deliberating much on the content of the articles in relation to the topic of this special issue (which the readers can judge for themselves), the challenge upon us, (especially the indigenous psychologists), as experts in the field in our region and elsewhere, is to reflect on the *recommendations* as well as *questions* and *problems* raised in the issue and see for ourselves what we can contribute to the *development* of psychology in our region, specifically in defining an *appropriate* and *true* psychology for our peoples of the Oceania-Pacific region. This remains a task for us all!

Special Issue Editorial Team, 2004