



Psychology in

New Zealand

BACK in the 1960s a radio interviewer asked Spike Milligan what he thought of New Zealand. 'I visited there,' Spike replied, 'but I found it was closed!' Yet at around the same period Austin Mitchell (who later became a Westminster MP) titled his book about New Zealand *The Half-gallon, Quarter-acre, Pavlova Paradise*. Life was easy and there was a 'togetherness' helped by a generally egalitarian set of values and a paternalistic, social-welfare-oriented government.

But the times they were a-changing. A country the size of Great Britain, but with a population of no more than four million, could not remain closed to the world in this new age. The need to find new markets, to boost tourism, stop 'brain drains' and encourage immigration of skilled workers, together with an emerging awareness by the indigenous Maori people of their own *tikanga* (social practices and priorities), are all leading to the emergence of a vibrant, multicultural and anything but 'closed' society. It is in times like this that psychology can thrive.

Indigenous Maori psychology

In a report on psychology in Asia and the Pacific, Shouksmith and Shouksmith

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(1990) note that most of the countries surveyed lay claim to an indigenous psychology pre-dating the development of scientific psychology. To be relevant in these societies, scientific psychology has to take into account different philosophies from those of the British empiricists that underpin much of its theory. In New Zealand, however, the early development of psychology was almost entirely Western, with little or no input from the thoughts, values and traditions found in the indigenous people – the Maori. In part, this may well have been because Maori was an oral language with no written records to refer to, but Mason Durie (1997, p.32), assistant vice chancellor for Maori at Massey University, commented: '...if the definition of psychology includes the study of the human mind and human behaviour, then there were psychologists in New Zealand. Even before 1847' (the date of the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of colonial New Zealand under the British crown). This would not be the case, he added, if the definition included a need for

the studies to be 'scientific' in the modern sense.

A further reason for not including indigenous explanations in psychological studies carried out in New Zealand was the fact that for many years the colonial-oriented governments of the day attempted to suppress Maori development and culture. Human resources managers and organisational psychologists who might have noted differences seem to have been slow in responding to their new worker population's different attitudes and values. When the cushion of over-full employment began to disappear in the face of new 'market economies', however, Maori were not slow to adapt modern business and societal studies to their own needs. In Patea, for example, when the town's only major industry (its meat works) was closed down, local *kaumatua* (elders) showed a quick learning curve in adapting to the new situation and preserving the local community via joint activities and a trust setting up specialist industries making use of their skills.

The change in international concerns about the status of indigenous peoples which took place in the latter part of the 20th century, together with a resurgence of Maori activism in New Zealand and a strong feeling of 'togetherness' between Maori and *pakeha* (non-indigenous New Zealanders) over racist sports tours, led to both political and social moves to consider Maori needs and input into society, separately from those of *pakeha*. In psychology James Ritchie, who had been one of the few researching tribal Maori,

WEBLINKS

There are six main universities offering full programmes in psychology to doctoral levels:

University of Auckland (www.psych.auckland.ac.nz); **University of Canterbury** (www.psyc.canterbury.ac.nz); **Massey University** (www.massey.ac.nz/~psyweb/); **University of Otago** (psy.otago.ac.nz); **Victoria University (of Wellington)** (www.vuw.ac.nz/psyc); **University of Waikato** (psychology.waikato.ac.nz).

The Open Polytechnic (www.openpolytechnic.ac.nz) and the **Auckland University of Technology** (www.aut.ac.nz/faculties/health) also offer first degrees, the former through distance learning in association with the Open University in the UK.

was appointed to the chair in Waikato and began to offer a more New Zealand oriented psychology syllabus.

Community psychology

The more inclusive approaches to research and teaching in psychology introduced in Waikato led to the establishment of a broader-based cross-cultural and social psychology being developed in that university. Community psychology in New Zealand has traditionally been taught from either work or organisational perspectives, to look at the ways in which organisational cultures affect individual workers. Community psychology at Waikato, on the other hand, 'rests on a rejection of the basic assumptions of positivist science: that science is value-free and that there is an objective truth which can be uncovered by rigorous scientific research' (Hamerton *et al.*, 1995, p.23). The Waikato group accepted the principle that their views of the world were shaped by their own histories, ethnicities, genders and social classes. Being in a geographic area where there are a large number of Maori, it is not surprising that Waikato's community psychology has used the Treaty of Waitangi as a base reference document and concerned itself with rights of self-determination and empowerment affecting minority groups in New Zealand.

Other universities offering courses in community psychology are the psychology departments at Massey and Victoria and the Department of Psychiatry and Behaviour Medicine at Auckland. Community psychology in these institutes is more issue-based than distinctly bicultural. The Albany Campus of Massey University in Auckland, for example, attracts many Pacific islanders, notably Samoans and Tongans, but others as well. Many new and recent migrants with Chinese and other Asian roots have also come to live on the North Shore of Auckland's harbour, where the campus is based. Rajen Prasaad, a former race relations conciliator and a member of staff at Albany, points out that these various immigrant groups now form significant minorities and the community problems of the near future are going to be ones of multicultural integration.

At Auckland University the School of Behaviour Medicine has recently been concerned to research some of the problems of applying psychology in a bicultural community. Ogden and McFarlane-Nathan (1997), for example,

ORIGINS, RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Given the high value placed on education in Scotland, it is not surprising that the Scottish settlers of the southern city of Dunedin established New Zealand's first centre for higher learning, the University of Otago. The university's first Professor of Mental Philosophy, J. McGregor, had been a student of Bain's in Aberdeen and brought the associationist tradition of the Scottish school with him, introducing a course on 'psychology and ethics'.

One of McGregor's students was T.A. (later Sir Thomas) Hunter, who was undoubtedly the father of psychology in New Zealand. Hunter introduced courses in psychology at Victoria University College in Wellington, using Titchener's experimental and laboratory approaches. Hunter was followed in Victoria by Ernest Beaglehole, an eclectic scholar with a particular interest in cultural studies. He shared this interest with Ivan Sutherland of Canterbury University College, in Christchurch. At Canterbury, however, it was in the Department of Education that James Shelley and Clarence Beeby (who later became Director of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research and subsequently Director of Education for the country) opened a laboratory (or clinic) in educational psychology, so introducing an applied tradition into New Zealand psychology.

The tradition in New Zealand universities has always been that those who taught a subject would be major researchers in that discipline. This meant that the development of research in each university tended to be based on the interests and expertise of its senior staff. This is seen clearly in the University of Auckland. Here the first two heads of department were former doctoral students of Donald Hebb; they brought with them his strongly experimental and speculative approach to cognitive psychology. Psychology in Auckland was, therefore, founded as a biological science and remains so today, through the work of such researchers as Michael Corballis on memory and laterality and on environmental psychology.

A similar pattern was typical of the other 'foundation' departments, except that at the University of Otago the appointment of Graham Goddard as head of department switched the focus to studies of brain and behaviour. This neurological approach also changed the emphasis of applied teaching to that of clinical neuropsychology.

compared the performance of Maori and *pakeha* males with head injuries on standard neuropsychological tests. They found that the scores of the Maori group were adversely affected by the cultural content of North American sourced tests while those of the *pakeha* group were not. When a parallel test with New Zealand oriented items and themes was introduced, the Maori males were able to score equally well. Indeed, in some tests calling for oral responses the Maori, with their oral language cultural base, were able to attain even better scores. One further interesting finding was that the place and environment in which the assessment was carried out was a significant factor. Maori performed better if the assessment was made in a friendly but casual Maori environment with their own *whanau* (family) around. They were not happy doing the tests in an institutional or clinical environment, and any assessments made in such settings would be likely to draw incorrect conclusions.

Clinical and educational psychology

The first formal training in clinical psychology was offered at the University of Canterbury in the form of a postgraduate

diploma consisting of formal courses and supervised practice following a master's degree. I developed this programme when a personal friend was appointed Director of Mental Health, who assisted in obtaining formal recognition for the programme. Later I returned to the UK and joined Boris Semeonoff's group, who were formulating the model for the BPS's clinical diploma!

The largest single group of practising psychologists is those in clinical work, both child and adult. Editing a special issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, Ian Evans (2002) concluded that 'clinical psychologists are employed in all areas of the mental health service [and] play a vital role in the Department of Corrections and in the Department of Child, Youth and Family' (p.50). As well as work in hospitals, another major practice area for clinical psychologists is both general and specialist rehabilitation case work for the state-funded Accident Compensation Corporation.

Educational psychology used to be a separate discipline with psychologists employed by the Ministry of Education, offering primary and secondary schools proactive programmes to recognise problems early and provide help. The urge to 'privatise everything' in the 1980s and

1990s led to a significant reduction in these services. There are positive signs, however, that the Ministry of Education is again recruiting its own psychologists, and public concern is causing reappraisals of the efficacy of present child, youth and family services.

Organisational psychology

Early developments at Otago by Henry Ferguson and later by Leslie Hearnshaw, who established for the government an industrial work study unit in Wellington, were interrupted by the Second World War and Hearnshaw's return to the UK to take up a chair. After the war the University of Canterbury provided the major thrust in applied psychology and was joined in providing industrial/organisational psychology by the newer Universities of Massey and Waikato. Major employees of organisational specialists (and an excellent practical training base) have been the three armed services – Army, Navy and Air Force.

Until recently there were few organisations large enough to employ their own organisational psychologists in straight psychological roles. Students specialising in these areas tended to find jobs in human resources, or as consultants in specialist fields, like recruitment, selection or staff appraisal. In vocational psychology, concern for, and involvement in, career development has been replaced by mentoring and the use of 'assessment centre'-type group programmes for personal and organisational development.

Psychologists from New Zealand carry out unique research in Antarctica

Unique to New Zealand is the scientific research carried out in Antarctica from Scott Base. This has provided Professor Tony Taylor from Victoria University with a natural laboratory from which to study work patterns under extreme conditions. His work over some 30-plus years produced results which ranged from those improving the selection and training of Antarctic personnel to the post-traumatic stress reduction programme for those involved in and associated with the Mount Erebus disaster, when a commercial passenger jet flew into the mountain.

Looking ahead

Following concern about the bad publicity arising from a number of cases where staff in childcare agencies and mental health outpatients' services had failed to give appropriate assistance, the government determined to draw together all healthcare workers in one register. Unfortunately, the

government failed to understand that not all psychologists are 'health workers'! The bill to introduce the new procedures is still under discussion, but it has already raised negative comments from academics and practitioners not in the health/care fields.

The government has also followed the British pattern and decided to adopt a contestable funding process for part of its research grant to universities and other tertiary institutions. Unfortunately, the first report from the ministry charged with the task (and leaked to the press) made comparisons in terms of one set of funding indicators only, upsetting the vice chancellors of most universities! This change and the consequent need for universities to look to the private sector for research funding has led to a shift of emphasis from pure to applied research. Even here, psychologists see themselves disadvantaged by the new, stronger ethical codes imposed by the government and a medically oriented registration process. No doubt good sense will prevail in the end, but the immediate future is challenging!

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NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The New Zealand Psychological Society (www.psychology.org.nz) is the primary national body representing psychologists in New Zealand. The society, established in the 1950s as the New Zealand Branch of the BPS, is also the New Zealand member of the International Union of Psychological Science. Currently the NZPS has just over 800 full professional members and over 200 subscribers and student members. It publishes both the *New Zealand Journal of Psychology* and a bulletin as well as organising professional development programmes.

The New Zealand Sport Psychology Association (www.humankinetics.com/associations/nzspa) was formerly associated with NZPS and is now a 'Gateway Partner' with Human Kinetics, operating as a forum promoting research and professional development in the field of sport psychology. Involvement and interest in this field is high in New Zealand, and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority lists some 250 tertiary education diplomas associated with this area of study.

The Australian and New Zealand Association of Psychiatry, Psychology and Law (www.med.monash.edu.au/psychmed/anzappl/) has been in existence for about 25 years with the aim of promoting knowledge and research in the areas of study listed. It is Australian-based and publishes its own journal, *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*.

The New Zealand College of Clinical Psychology (www.nzccp.co.nz/) was established in 1989 to represent the needs of clinical psychologists only. In particular, the College aims to foster, provide and coordinate continuing education for clinical psychologists in New Zealand. Membership of the College and entrance to its programmes are restricted to New Zealand registered clinical psychologists.

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