

## Closing Plenary

**Richard Sawrey, Akanisi Tarabe, Dr Catherine Love, Mere Berryman,  
Leland Ruwhiu, Epenesa Olo-Whangaa, Dr Monique Faleafa**

*Chaired by Professor Linda Smith  
Pro-Vice Chancellor Māori, University of Waikato*

*The closing session of the symposium was a plenary session in which invited speakers were asked to make brief critical and reflective comment on the symposium theme and future directions regarding Māori and Pacific psychologies.*

### **Richard Sawrey**

It is an honour to be invited to be on this panel as a Pākehā psychologist. I would firstly like to pay tribute to the conference organisers for this very special gathering. Since my first involvement with the issue twenty years ago, there has been significant growth and development of indigenous psychologies through papers, presentations, symposia, conferences, workforce development and the emergence of agencies committed to indigenous psychologies in their workplace culture and clinical practice. This is something to celebrate and an opportunity to commend those who have been nurturing and encouraging people on this journey. A number of spaces in a wide range of places and contexts have been reclaimed in the years since I first attended psychology conferences.

This space has been reclaimed due to the commitment and energy of a number of people, and in particular here at the Māori and Psychology Research Unit at Waikato University under the leadership of Linda Waimarie Nikora. You and others here have nurtured, encouraged and contributed much to the blossoming and growth of indigenous psychologies over these years.

Have you ever been on a committee that was tedious and frustrating? My experience of the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues for the New Zealand Psychological Society was the opposite. Over a number of years the spirit, energy and commitment I experienced on this committee has made a difference and encouraged Māori

studying psychology to emerge into leaders in their particular fields.

These people have made significant contributions to the shaping and reclaiming of Māori psychologies. In later years this spirit and energy has invited and encouraged Pacific peoples to strengthen their journey in reclaiming their space, and we see at this conference the strong evidence of that.

In terms of the role for Pākehā/Palagi supporting this journey of reclamation, this committee provides a good example. So what are some of the things we can do as Pākehā to support this journey of reclamation? Firstly, we had commitment. All the committee members have been passionately committed to the reclamation of indigenous psychologies. We have operated in partnership with Māori and more recently with Pacific Island peoples.

Secondly, as Pākehā we need to challenge the Western world view that has dominated the teaching and practice of psychology over many years. We have made some progress on this but there is plenty of space needed to allow indigenous and collective worldviews to make their rightful contribution to psychology. This means that we as Pākehā also need to work collectively to make the necessary changes.

We also need to challenge what I would like to call 'psychological fundamentalism'. Going through my days at Victoria University of Wellington it was like a battle of the world religions in the

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department. The staff were divided into camps and no one seemed to be talking to each other. But I think it seems that one ideology and theory has won the battle and every school seems to be following the market to deliver this framework. This needs to change. Universities need to embrace and make space for indigenous psychologies and post-structuralist psychologies such as narrative practice that include wider world views. We've all heard of evidence based practice but I'm much more interested in *practice-based evidence*.

But not just psychology is at risk of this ideological and philosophical capture by the Western world view. I have just come from Suva where students and staff with whom I teach are from Kiribati and Tuvalu. The results of this dominance of worldview are now threatening two nations and two peoples, their whenua and their identity.

So the future of our planet, due to climate change, is at stake if we do not move to deal with this issue. The planet is forcing us to think and operate collectively and see ourselves connected to our planet and all that is in it. Scientists and conservationists are talking to theologians and indigenous groups to find ways forward to deal with climate change, especially in places like the Pacific.

So what other things can we do as Pākehā to make space? Know our history, here and throughout the Pacific. Not to induce paralysing guilt but to become better informed and grow in our wisdom. Choose humility rather than surety. Choose serving rather than leading. Make space for silence and listening rather than filling spaces with questions. Choose responsibility rather than justification. Understand that power relations are operating every where and so we need to think not just psychologically, but collectively and politically. We need to teach our children at school about world views and these issues when they are young so that they develop a social conscience at a young age.

Thank you for your hospitality to the Fijian group. It has been wonderful to be here with them at this

troubled time between our two countries. This symposium has provided some space for healing ways forward and the beginnings of the reclamation of the indigenous psychologies of Fiji.

So to conclude, I would like to choose the metaphor of a garden. We urgently have a collective responsibility to act to create spaces for all the peoples and the seeds of all peoples, who are the children of this planet to grow and live and love.

#### **Akanisi Tarabe**

Three minutes is not enough time for Fijians. I just want to echo what someone said yesterday about time. What is more important than being on time is to be allocated time and I want to thank you. All of you know I am going to cry – cry collectively with me. Thank you for allocating us from Fiji that time to be part of you. There were many things that impacted me about this Symposium. From the marae at Waikato University and the food – I love it! I love everything. You especially - for making a difference in my life. I am the one and only indigenous psychologist 'wannabe' at the University of the South Pacific. Other people are more into the Euro-western models of psychology. So you giving us the space and allocating us the time to be part of you is very dear to our hearts. It has been a therapeutic process preparing to come. Most importantly this is the first time I have ever been to an international conference and have been able to connect to the heart of the participants. From the marae to here. Going back to the marae – I don't say "Waikato University marae"; I say "our" marae. What am I taking back with me after all this? I am taking the whole of the Māori & Psychology Research Unit. It is here in my heart and I have left a bit of me here to make that connection.

#### **Dr Catherine Love**

The two days spent here – te mana, te ihi, te wehi! It bowls me over. This is the most memorable symposium this year, for several years - actually since the last one. I want to pull out a couple of highlights. Firstly, I loved the fact that we have tamariki around during this conference - in peoples' stories and on the screens. For me, this is

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what we are working for; for our children, our tamariki, for the next generation, to make things better for them.

In regards to the tools that I shared with you on the first day, I have to admit that I was thinking of patenting them. But I have seen that those tools, the ‘telescopic analytic visioner’, ‘exterminator spray’, ‘shape shifter’ and ‘philovactor’ are actually already in widespread usage amongst the people here. Mind you if I wanted to, I could follow a legal process of claiming ownership through patent of those tools. Like for instance the academy has with psychology, and I could seek to control who produced them, their size, shape, colour, form and use of those products. However, I am not going to risk that.

I have heard and seen such a variety of innovative and exciting initiatives and modes of practice over the last two days. I want to thank everybody here for the sharing that you have given about the work that you are doing and the ideas that you are building on. I do however have one question. Some of the work that has been done involves the use of various forms of mātauranga Māori, with teams that comprise people with Western qualifications and those with Māori qualifications. My question around that is who gets the credit, recognition, and recompense, in particular for the mātauranga Māori which is brought to bear in these initiatives? For many of us, while we may have the qualifications in psychology, our strengths may not be in mātauranga Māori and I am concerned to ensure that where that is part of the things that we are doing, that is appropriately recognised.

Lastly, while we are making progress at different rates and in different ways, we are largely relying on persuasive mechanisms. And some of us know we also have some coercive power at our disposal. For instance, a case filed with the Waitangi Tribunal perhaps, relating to the impacts of the imposition of self-contained individualism and individualistic psychology on our whānau, or the academy’s performance in relation to meeting Treaty obligations related to knowledge and pedagogical bases for our students and staff. A bit

of coercive power can always make persuasion more attractive.

One proposal that I have regarding the “where to from here” is that I believe that every university in this country that teaches psychology should be contributing to a two yearly Māori and Pacific Nations Symposium. That is one of the actions I would like to see come out of this symposium. Special thanks and greetings to the Māori and Psychology Research Unit. Also thanks and greetings to our Pacific whanaunga. This time has been so much richer and warmer through your presence and contributions. Particularly to our Fijian contingent who have come all the way here, as we know there are some difficulties in your home country. To our tauwiwi/Pākehā participants – the agenda we seek to follow is of benefit to us all and you are here because you know this and you support it.

#### **Clive Banks**

I am like a coco-cola bottle that has been shaken up and the lid screwed down really tight. I am full, really, really full and in a nice way. But I am still hungry. Go figure. This symposium has been exciting on a whole bunch of levels for me. The kōrero. The whanaungatanga. The way we pull together so many threads of Māori, Pacific, cultural and clinical knowledge and practice is really exciting. The exciting ways that we are using technologies. The things that we have as part of our whakapapa and putting them together seamlessly. And taking it for granted that we are allowed to do it. The question is not can we do it. Its give us the space to do it!

A few phrases have stuck with me over the last couple of days. This morning I was listening to Roma and one of the things she said was “this is all stuff that I know, but not stuff I spend a lot of time thinking about”. And I thought she is right. I know all of this stuff. And then I thought about Armon’s kōrero and a few things that Catherine said. They used words that I didn’t know about. And I will definitely be adding ‘philivactor’ to my lexicon.

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There was something that my good friend Maynard said that I wanted to finish on. The hui has been about claiming space. Maynard spoke very strongly this morning that its not about claiming space anymore. Its about watch this space! Watch this space, because we are doing it, and if we keep doing it people are going to take it for granted. When we get to where it's just the way that psychology is done in New Zealand we have won: the quiet revolution.

### **Mere Berryman**

This symposium with its theme of claiming spaces through Māori and Pacific leadership in psychology has provided us all with a culturally affirming space in which to; listen; question; share; be challenged; challenge; think critically; and begin to formulate some directions for future pathways. We have heard how these spaces in psychology started small and were often fragile and disparate, but that they have grown. We have certainly felt their strength and been strengthened as we have come together over the past two days. We have heard how the practice of psychology can be enhanced for those indigenous peoples that we seek to serve by ensuring that we can all contribute to this space. We have also heard about the important spaces that are created by first strengthening our own identity through a better understanding of indigenous knowledge and practices, by better establishing our own ways of knowing and bringing our own world views to the fore. From another speaker we heard that indigenous and western psychologies are traveling along the same roadway and that in any collision our likenesses are more important than our diversities. In response came a metaphor to which many of us will relate. It was the suggestion that on this roadway Western psychology may better resemble the 'Mac' truck, while indigenous psychologies, the motor scooter. This was a timely reminder for me of the huge impact power has on all of our lives, as we work to shift the barriers and reclaim the spaces that were promised to Māori through the Treaty of Waitangi.

Throughout the symposium we have also been reminded about why we are all here. That is, we are here for the people we are linked to by

whakapapa, the people whom we represent in our work and the reminder that many of these people face crisis situations. While we are so few, and the need is so great, how do we ensure that our people receive the most effective support? I suspect that the other challenging question now as we return to separate, and perhaps for some, much less safe spaces in which we work, is how do we respond to maintaining this momentum, this space when we resume our work?

Western psychology has regularly perpetuated power imbalances, that have served to denigrate and marginalize indigenous knowledge and practices. We have learnt from many Māori academics and from other indigenous peoples as well, that the reassertion of indigenous cultural aspirations, preferences and practices can lead to more effective participation and learning for Māori students. More recently we have learnt that these contexts also provide for successful contexts for non-indigenous peoples. This requires non-indigenous professionals to reposition, to shift their mindset away from their familiar ways of engaging and understanding, to learning how to engage respectfully in legitimate Māori and indigenous cultural spaces. Although the epistemological paradigms emerging from the experiences of indigenous minorities such as Māori may undoubtedly offer challenges to mainstream knowledge and perspectives, it is clear from this symposium, from the presenters that I heard, that continuing to disregard such alternatives may well leave the discipline of psychology impoverished. On the other hand paying attention to indigenous paradigms may well serve to enrich and benefit us all.

### **Leland Ruwhiu**

The wairua of this hui has been focused around whakapapa and whanaungatanga. I separate the two because we all bring our whakapapa here to this hui, with whakawhanaungatanga being the actioning of that whakapapa that we share with each other. I had a chat with a few other students about their experiences here and I likened it to a kete. I chose three aspects. There is the making of the kete; the kete filling; and the kete sharing. The first, you make your kete. Why we are all here,

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that is the construction of our kete. We have a number of Pākehā and a number of Pacific aiga with us. My respect and accolades of admiration for your stories that you have shared with us over this hui. Next we are filling our kete and that's what we are all doing, sharing our whakapapa, stories, the research. The last part is sharing the kete and that is also what we are doing here. Kete filling and kete sharing is what I have got from what other students have said about their experiences here. And the last point I want to offer supports the points made by Dr Catherine Love. Why have the symposium every two years? Why not annually? And why not take it across to the Pacific? What we have done here today is to build those bridges. There should be more exposure to this sort of event for students. From a student/taura perspective I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity that we have had as students to be here and I look forward to attending more.

#### **Epenesa Olo-Whaanga**

I first of all want to really thank the organisers for putting on the symposium and for inviting us. I think that for all of us Pasifika people we are thankful that you have considered us and invited us here. I would also like to thank the university for their hospitality. The dinner we had last night at the marae was just awesome.

I have had a lot of time to think during this hui. Being with brown faces, of varying shades, is awesome, especially when you work in a place that is mainstream. Getting together to talk about issues that we have in common has been fantastic. There have been very common themes for us in this. In terms of Pasifika, there have been very similar experiences that we have shared in our journeys. Not just from our ancestors who have come here to Aotearoa, but also in our journeys as people coming through, getting qualified, and dealing with the institutions we have trained in. Having a forum like this so we can really talk about those experiences and what needs to happen for the next generation coming through has been great.

It's been really wonderful to see images of our people up on the screens and awesome to hear the stories. It's been awesome to see the students presenting the very real research that they do when they are interacting with our people, both Māori and Pacific. I was thinking it's not just about showcasing your research. In these kinds of forums you get the opportunity to be accountable. Not only are we accountable to our participants, we are accountable to others such as colleagues, peers, and supervisors. I go away thinking I just wish I had one more day because I still want to hear more.

When I think about going ahead and the future, we do need to have more of these, more often. The challenge is for other universities to actually step up and do what Waikato are very committed to doing, not just because it makes them look good and it makes them look responsive but because at their very heart and their very core this is their calling. I do challenge those of you who are from other universities and who can make a difference in this way, that not only do you start accepting other students into your programmes, but that you support them. There is a quiet revolution going on in psychology. 'Fundamental psychology' does not work. We have seen that it fails. What people are talking about is an alternative to that. We are talking about bringing that to the fore of psychology the things that work for us; bringing what we know is inherent in us, inherent in our culture, in our whakapapa, our genealogy. Psychology needs to work for us, not the other way around. Lastly, I think that going to Fiji for one of these would be fantastic!

#### **Monique Faleafa**

It was clear from our Pacific presentations that we have had over the past two days that there are distinct diversities within and between Pacific ethnicities. As one of our speakers stated yesterday there is no country called 'Pacific' and so at this fono we have contributions from Samoan, Cook Island, Niuean, Fijian, Solomon Island, Tokolaun, Tuvaluan and Tongan perspectives. Each nation has its own specific set of beliefs, its own values, its own customs and traditions. If you add New Zealand born youth into the mix, where identity might include affiliation to both Western and

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traditional Pacific practices and values, you might find that their perspectives are intrinsically different from traditional perspectives. And given that more than half of our Pacific population are considered children and youth, I think this is a very important perspective that we psychologists need to learn more about and I know its going to become increasingly more important in the future. However, there were some commonalities during this conference which does allow a conversation from a pan-Pacific perspective. Common values that were presented were values such as spirituality, love, respect, humility, reciprocity and service. Pan-Pacific concepts of family emphasized collectivity. Pan-Pacific traditional concepts of health were presented as holistic, where wellbeing is defined by the equilibrium of mind, body, spirit, family and environment. Underpinning many of the messages conveyed from the Pacific presentations here this week for me, was the importance of the centrality of relationships to Pacific people, particularly following our presentation from the University of the South Pacific on decolonizing Fiji and the disconnection and dislocation that is happening to our indigenous Fijian people. They talked about “*venua*” as a space for identity, for reconnecting and when I think about this idea that privileges relationships, I think about the idea of the concept of “*va*”. It’s a little bit different from the Māori concept of “*wa*”. Many Pacific academics and literaries have written about it and I have a definition from Albert Wendt: “*Va is the space between; the betweenness. Not empty space. Not space that separates, but space that relates. That holds separate entities and things together in the unity. The space that is context, giving meaning to things*”. So *va* is about the space between; not in the Pākehā or Palagi sense, that space is open and empty and separates. But in the sense that space is the social, the spiritual, the psychological; this symbolic space that relates us and connects us; and this space is *tapu*. In Samoa we call it “*va fealoaloa’i*”. If we don’t nurture and protect this space, this sacred space between people, family and environment cosmos, that’s when things go wrong. And as agents of healing, as my colleague Karlo Mila-Schaaf writes, we need to ask the question, “Is the *va* healthy?” Which brings me

back to the Western psychology and the limitations it poses when dealing with Pasifika. Dr Catherine Love spoke yesterday about how the individual conception of self as *apriori* still underpins psychology and how self comes before relationships. So the criticism I have, particularly of clinical psychology is that it just hasn’t moved with the times. To be relevant for Pasifika, to be relevant for Aotearoa, there needs to be movement. I think there is a space to claim for a Pacific psychology and a Pacific body of knowledge. No one is going to come and give it to us on a silver platter with a ribbon tied around it but as our Pacific people who have presented today, we know the Cook Island *Tivaevae* model, we know the Samoan *Fonofale* framework, we know the Tongan *Kakala* model, we know the *Fa’afaletui* methodology. So we need to take leadership ourselves and the solution is in the room. We need to reshape psychological paradigms so that our world views and values start to underpin psychology.

#### **Professor Linda Smith (Session Chair)**

I think the theme of creating space is always an interesting concept. Each of the speakers has commented a little on what that has meant for them and their observations over the last few days. Put yourself into the space that has been created and ask yourself the following questions:

- What is your role in that space?
- Who helped you get into that space?
- Who is your mentor who guides you through that space?
- Do more and more people in that space expand the space, or is it a narrow space that is very crowded now?
- In which direction is that space flowing, and are those the directions that intellectually, socially and politically that you would want the space to be going in?

Finally, in coming into that space, who else have you brought in with you? And by this I don’t just mean, the teachers, the students, the practitioners but what clients have come in? Is the expanding space simply a space that has been filled by more and more indigenous Māori clients? If that is the case, is that what we want?

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