

# Journal Abstracts

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In each issue of the journal we will be abstracting articles relevant to the Pacific. Our aim is not to simply re-emphasize material found in widely circulated journals but to bring to your attention articles from many, often less commonly available, sources.

Topics highlighted will include scientific advances, community health, historical reviews and perspectives, and political and sociological issues relevant to health in the Pacific.

Your assistance in locating materials would be appreciated. If you have read or written an article you feel may be an abstract candidate, please send it to the journal, attention: *Abstract Editor*.

## "Changing responsibilities in parenting the Pacific Child"

Sitaleki Finau. *Direction - Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 15, No. 1, June 1993

The participation of Pacific countries in the global economy and social and physical environment have brought about changes in parenting of the Pacific child. Such changes on parenting responsibilities have included a shift of educational responsibility to the schools, eroding parental authority, traditional roles and rules and the status of the elderly as storehouses of information. The development of the nuclear family has led to a decrease in the number of potential parents and the lack of participation in traditional activities, decreasing the child's sense of belonging to society. Monetisation of society has necessitated parents working without a replacement to take care of domestic responsibilities, home education and discipline. The emphasis on individualism has meant parents having to deal with children who insist on finding themselves. Furthermore, the production of children is becoming accidental to the pleasures of partners, eroding traditional guidelines on sexuality. Children should be given the first call on resources in the Pacific and parents need to reconsider their parenting responsibilities.

*Ed.* The role Westernisation has had on changing parenting responsibilities in the Pacific is philosophically discussed. The essential issue is limiting the amount and rate of change with regard to parenting of the Pacific child. The article challenges parents and the system to immediately address the issue to ensure the adequate development of Pacific children.

## "Truk suicide epidemic and social changes"

Francis X. Hezel, SJ. *Human Organisation*, Vol 46, No. 4, 1987

The epidemic increase in the number of suicides in Truk among young males generally occur as a result of trouble within the victim's family. Contributing Trukese cultural factors include the frequent resort to a strategy of withdrawal rather than confrontational tactics when faced with a conflict situation within close circles of kin. Young males are predisposed to suicide by their machismo attitude, fascination with suffering as a proof of love, cultural constraints on expression of feelings, the thirst for recognition among the young and the fact that suicide is a prominent fact of life today in Truk. While modernisation's impact on suicide is not a direct one, social change almost certainly has played a role in precipitating the suicide epidemic. The recently acquired concept of the adolescent's rights is foreign to traditional Trukese. The breakdown of dependence on traditional matrilineal kinship units, as a result of fathers' acquiring cash income and greater authority over the nuclear family, has meant less support for the children; hence, parents increasing inability to deal with conflicts. The hypothesis that the suicide epidemic was due to significant changes in the economic and authority mechanism of Trukese lineage supports the possibility of the suicide epidemic being a single generation phenomenon.

*Ed.* Insight into understanding the phenomenon of the suicide epidemic among young male Trukese is gained from the article. It seems that this Pacific society's inability to adequately deal with modernisation is a function of the cultural patterns unique to the society. Hopefully, this is a single generation phenomenon and will pass with the aging of the cohort of individuals subjected to conflicting traditional and modern lifestyle patterns, values and family structures.

## "Suicide in Micronesia and Samoa: a critique of explanations"

Donald A. Rubinstein. *Pacific Studies*, Vol 15, No. 1, 1992

The epidemic of suicides in males in Micronesia and Samoa have led to the development of differing explanatory models for the phenomenon. Hezel's relationship between family change, specifically the loss of family functions and family cohesiveness, and youth suicide in Micronesia is discussed. The paper asserts the revised version of family change, specifically the monetisation and nuclearisation of family structure with increased authority of parents over children and subsequent parent-adolescent conflicts precipitating suicide, was based on several assumptions and appears mainly applicable to the Trukese male. Macpherson's explanation based on Western Samoa's experience is discussed which may also have application to other types of Micronesia suicides. The concept of intolerance of intensive shame, the authoritarian nature of society and dependence of individuals on the *ainga* explain

the altruistic suicides. On the other hand, anomie suicides appear to relate to blocked opportunities for upwardly mobile youth responding in a culturally distinctive way within the changing economic society. The author proposes his model of adolescent socialisation as another explanation of youth suicide. The importance of developing and maintaining a circle of social ties has been culturally important for the resolution of tensions between parents and children, especially compensatory for the young males. With the development of political and economic change, the subsequent loss of these cultural support mechanisms among the increasingly dependent adolescents afflicted with intrafamilial tensions have led to the rise in suicides in young males. It appears that this phenomena may be a single-generation transitional phase which may soon be approaching the decline with the ageing of the current cohort of displaced adolescent males.

*Ed.* As one examines the various explanatory models for the current epidemic of suicides in Micronesia and Samoa, the importance of changing cultural and familial values and supports within an economically evolving Pacific society becomes evident as a common theme. While there is reason to believe that this may be a single generation phenomenon, it is vital that society's cultural, religious and political leaders identify strategies for effectively dealing with the problem to prevent further unnecessary deaths among the Pacific's future adults. Such a complex problem cannot go unaddressed and society cannot wait for the decline, as discussed in the single generation phenomena, to occur.

### **"Integrated primary schooling of blind children in Papua New Guinea"**

Barend Vlaadingerbroek. *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*, Vol. 15, 162-165, 1992

In most developing countries special schools are established for disabled and blind children, in urban areas. In 1982, the Mt Sion Centre for the Blind initiated a model program of preparatory training and subsequent integration of blind children into the established school system in Goroko in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Criteria for entry to the mainstreaming scheme following one to two years of preparatory training included degree of visual impairment, Braille competency, mobility, social competence and emotional stability. In-service training for school teachers was also provided by the Centre. The successful incorporation of Braille in the normal classroom, acceptance of integrated pupils by teachers and peers, the satisfactory academic performance of integrated pupils and the potential enrolment at high schools are evidence that such a scheme has been successful in Papua New Guinea.

*Ed.* The application of this organisational model of integration has significant possibilities for other developing countries interested in mainstreaming disabled and blind children into the normal established school system. Not

only would it provide these special children with the opportunity to be socially accepted among their peers but it also maximises their opportunity to fulfil their potential in future adulthood.

### **"Children and the future of the Pacific Islands: improved childhood health and education as a basis for sustainable development"**

Randy Thaman. *Directions - Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 15, No. 1, June 1993

Sustainable development which is highly dependent upon the protection and development of Pacific peoples and their environment, would best be ensured through appropriate education and environment-conscious upbringing of our children. The article discusses the challenges facing educators, community leaders, politicians and children of the Pacific Islands, which include reversing the global ecological and cultural breakdown evident in industrialised countries, as seen by pollution, and crime, and preserving the environmental and cultural values of island lifestyles. The preservation of cultural traditions and the fostering of environmental awareness needs to be more widely and actively promoted through the formal and non-formal educational systems through the incorporation of appropriate technology, land debates, economic deterioration discussions and gender equity measures. Furthermore, poor nutritional practices need to be better addressed to avoid the escalating rates of non-communicable and infectious diseases and to improve the average life expectancies for males and females of the Pacific. In attempts to enhance sustainable development we need to identify the causes and potential consequences on our children of social and environmental deterioration, and formulate strategies for the basis of sustainable economic, social and ecological developments. Children need to be the focus of these strategies in order to ensure their long term survival in our rapidly changing islands.

*Ed.* This comprehensive discussion of the importance of including children as the basis of sustainable development of the Pacific should be more widely considered by the politicians, educators, community leaders and parents of our nations in attempts to ensure that it does not become just another academic issue but a basis for the formulation of appropriate practical strategies alluded to in this paper. Not only does the author provide a logical framework for this discussion but he offers specific areas in which major impact may be made in terms of reversing seemingly inevitable deteriorating change. The sooner we observe changes in the current educational system to include greater emphasis on ecological conservation, cultural traditions preservation and structural adjustment for health promotion of individuals the closer we will come to independent and sustainable development in the Pacific. □