

## How Educated PNG Youth Perceive Western Power<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper examines how educated Papua New Guinean youth perceive Western countries, and in particular their level of power. The educated youth studied in this paper come from across Papua New Guinea. They stem from a wide range of geographical and cultural settings. University students are the research subjects as these are the educated, privileged young people who will most likely move into positions of influence. Given this group's comparative educational advantage, this paper assesses their level of knowledge about international events and systems. This paper then examines the young people's perspective on the West by focusing on two cases: the United States of America, and Australia. Particular international news events, such as the war in Iraq, are examined, in order to provide specific insights into the dominant perceptions shared by the students. The influence that media consumption may have on these perceptions is explored. Methods of investigation include questionnaires and focus groups.

### Introduction

This paper explores the perceptions that young Papua New Guineans have about the world beyond their country's borders. Australia is one of the case studies of this research, as there are close links (and a rather complex relationship) between Australia and Papua New Guinea (PNG). A second case study emerged when research by Kull (2003) and the BBC World Service (2006) was considered, and contrasted with student comments such as this one; 'From the coverage of the Iraq war in 2003, I thought that all Iraqis were terrorists' (student, 2006). This second case study considers the young people's perceptions of the United States of America (USA), the power it holds, and its involvement in the war in Iraq.

This paper will commence by outlining the inspiration for this research. It will then detail the methodology employed for this research. The context for the study will be explored, including the educational system in PNG, as well as the country's historical relations with Australia and the USA. The findings will be summarised, followed by the limitations of this research, and its implications. Finally, some information will be provided about the role that the Papua New Guinean media may play in the formation of perceptions, and then conclusions will be drawn.

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### **Inspiration for this research**

‘On a world scale, only a few dozen media and media organisations play a key role in ‘selective articulation’ of life experiences, media messages and news definitions across all continents. Why do the US and the UK dominate, along with a handful of other major Western countries?’ (van Ginneken, 1998:41)

As much of the world’s media output, particularly news material, is generated in countries like the USA, it is imperative to consider how such a cultural concentration influences the perceptions that people in other parts of the world have about international events, and the power held by such countries. As one student asserted in a focus group discussion (2006), ‘PNG has to maintain its cultural heritage and not let it be pushed aside by Western forms of influence’.

It has been argued that the media has oversimplified coverage of the situation in Iraq (Gotbaum, 2006), and yet a Papua New Guinean journalism student responded to this argument by pointing out that;

‘The journalists who write the stories are Americans. They have their country’s sovereignty to protect. Of course they should write the truth, but how would the USA look in the eyes of the world if the truth of how complicated this whole issue is, was spilled? It would make the USA look incompetent.’ (student, 2006)<sup>2</sup>

Kull’s research into the perceptions held by citizens of the USA found that ‘a substantial portion of the public had a number of misperceptions that were demonstrably false’ (Kull, 2003:1). It is interesting to contrast this finding with the perception of the USA held by citizens of other countries. Therefore, this research paper will attempt to determine the awareness possessed by young, educated Papua New Guineans of the war in Iraq, and the USA’s involvement in it. It will also attempt to determine the perceptions that the respondents have about Australia, which is PNG’s nearest Western neighbour.

### **Methodology**

This research embodies both positivist and interpretivist theoretical perspectives. A positivist approach tends to prefer quantitative data (Neuman, 2003:71), and to analyse this data using statistics. Interpretivism, on the other hand, is concerned with understanding people’s interpretations of the world (Cohen & Manion, 1997:10). Punch makes a case for the value of utilising both approaches in the one research project (2004:245-250). He argues that combining the two in the one study can ‘capitalize on the strengths of the two approaches [and also] compensate for the weaknesses of each approach’ (Punch, 2004:246). Justins supports Punch’s assertion, arguing that utilising both qualitative and quantitative approaches enables the researcher to obtain both ‘depth of field, and detail’ (2003:7). This combination is called ‘multi-

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<sup>2</sup> This and all subsequent quotes, which are indicated with quotation marks but not attributed, were made by students as part of this research, conducted in 2006.

method', 'mixed method' (Punch, 2004:246) or triangulation (Cowger and Menon, 2001:477). The author hopes that employing research methods preferred by both theoretical perspectives will aid in the collection of meaningful information.

The two primary methods of investigation used in this research, conducted in 2006, are focus groups and questionnaires. The questionnaire surveyed approximately one tenth of the full-time student population at Divine Word University in Madang, which is one of the major Universities in PNG. The survey respondents are all members of the full-time student population at Divine Word University, studying in a range of fields. This research is limited to youth, which is defined by the United Nations as 'persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years old' (Ghee, 2002:1). The primary reason for choosing educated youth over other demographic groups is the importance of this group for the future of PNG.

The respondents are from 19 of the 20 provinces of PNG. The one province not represented amongst the questionnaires received is Sandaun. There are also a number of questionnaires that have been returned from students from the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Culture can be described as 'a matter of perception' (Papoutsaki, quoted in Kais, 2006:177), and perception is a key concept in this research. As there are substantial cultural differences across PNG (Reilly, 2004:480; McLaughlin, 1994:64), this range of home provinces of respondents is crucial to this research.

Questions in the survey attempted to determine the degree of prior exposure to Western countries, and the level of knowledge about Australia and the USA. Open questions provided the opportunity for respondents to articulate their perceptions of Western countries in their own words. Most of the questions in the section asking general knowledge questions relating to the USA were sourced from other research projects (Kull, 2003; BBC World Service, 2006). The exact wording of questions was adhered to, so that some comparison could be made between the responses given by these young, educated Papua New Guineans, and the respondents in other countries.

The first three questions in this section came from the BBC World Service (2006). They ask respondents whether it was right for the USA to invade Iraq in 2003, whether this has had an impact on the terrorist threat in the world, and whether the troops should pull out, or remain in Iraq. The next three questions were sourced from Kull (2003). The first two deal with matters of fact; did the USA find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?, and did the USA find links between Saddam Hussein and the terrorist organisation al-Qaeda? The third question asks respondents to gauge whether or not they feel that world opinion favours the USA's invasion of Iraq. Respondents were also asked whether they feel that Papua New Guineans favour or oppose the USA's invasion of Iraq. Finally, there are questions which attempt to assess the media consumption habits of the respondents.

### Context for the study

In the Papua New Guinean context, a person who is studying at a University is considered educated. There are several stages within the formal education system at which students must pass examinations before they can progress to the next level (Hopkins et al, 2005:93; Weeks, 1993). Some early attempts were made to establish quota systems, to ensure girls and rural youth were offered educational opportunities, but these moves have been overcome by an emphasis on examination results (Weeks, 1993). Therefore, 'settlement and village school children will be discriminated against when they have to compete with urban school children for places in high schools' (Hopkins et al, 2005:94) due to their lower English language literacy skills, which are influenced by socio-economic factors such as the high number of students in the classroom, the language spoken at home and the lack of accessible reading materials (Hopkins et al, 2005). There are also many more potential students than there are available places in all grades in the schools across the country (Rao, 2006:24). Those people who have the academic ability, and the funds, to be able to study at University, often refer to themselves collectively using the adjective 'elite' (student, 2006; Fife, 1995:130). These are the educated Papua New Guineans who will go on to take up positions in Government departments, non-governmental organisations, and corporations. The percentage of Papua New Guineans with access to higher education is low (Papoutsaki and Rooney, 2006:422-423), and the number with postgraduate degrees is even lower.

'In planning for educational change during the pre-independence period, the consent of indigenous people was not sought, hence educational policies were based on Western knowledge systems' (Papoutsaki and Rooney, 2006:424), and Western influences continue to remain in schools in PNG (McLaughlin, 1994:64; McLaughlin, 1997b:2). Although attempts have been made by educational planners in the country to learn from the educational approaches of other developing countries, such as Tanzania (Weeks, 1993), more recent policy direction has been drawn from the USA and the United Kingdom (Papoutsaki and Rooney, 2006:428). In addition, missionary influences remain in the formal education system in PNG (Fife, 1995:132). Many of the students in PNG have also participated in the traditional educational system, which is 'practical and situated within a village context' (Huckaby, 2004:78; McLaughlin, 1994:64; McLaughlin, 1997b:1). Introduced methods of instruction can be in direct opposition to traditional ways of thinking and doing (Huckaby, 2004:79; Huckaby, 2004:88). Therefore, 'an educated Papua New Guinean is a hybrid of traditional and western socialisation' (McLaughlin, 2002). Papua New Guinean University students encounter difficulties with the English language, as the language 'has its meaning embedded in alien concepts' (McLaughlin, 1997a:98). Therefore, when referring to the term 'educated' in PNG, it must be acknowledged that the ability for an educated Papua New Guinean to express their ideas in English (McLaughlin, 1997a:98-101) might not be what would be expected by a visiting Australian academic (McLaughlin, 1997a:103). Luteru is concerned about the placement of foreigners, such as the author, in teaching and curriculum development positions, and the resulting likely transfer of culturally inappropriate material to

students (Luteru, 1993; Fife, 1995:132; Papoutsaki and Rooney, 2006:425). There have also been a significant number of Pacific islanders who have been trained at institutions in Australia and New Zealand (Luteru, 1993; McLaughlin, 2002), many of whom are now teaching in their home countries. There may be moves to reinvigorate such programs (Rudd, 2007:24), although assistance is also being provided for educational facilities located in the Pacific (Sydney Morning Herald, 2007).

A key concept in this research paper is the notion of the West, or Western countries. Although Raeff does not define the term explicitly, he refers to 'Europeans' (1964:13) and 'Americans' (1964:13) when mentioning the West. Similarly, van Tubergen refers to seventeen 'Western societies' (2005:709); 'Australia, Canada and the United States [...and] 14 countries in the European Union' (2005:709). Therefore, for the purposes of this research, the term Western refers to '[the] USA, Australia, England, New Zealand, some European nations, and Canada'.<sup>3</sup>

Ichheiser defines social perception as 'any kind of consciousness or awareness concerning other persons as well as any social relations among them' (1966:546). Perception is subjective (Alcock and Newcombe, 1970:335). People can have perceptions about other countries (Alcock and Newcombe, 1970), even if they have never been there, or met someone from there. Perceptions change over time (Appelbaum and Lorch, 1978:470), and might be influenced by the media (Sacco, 1982:475-479). In Kull's research, the perceptions and beliefs of respondents are explored (2003:1). Kull refers to misperceptions, which are defined as beliefs 'that were demonstrably false, or were at odds with the dominant view in the intelligence community' (2003:1).

It is important that the historical context be taken into account when considering the perceptions that citizens have of other countries (Raeff, 1964:19). Prior to independence in 1975, PNG was administered by Australia (Waiko, 1993:80; Waiko, 1993:125-126). Since the time of PNG's independence, Australia has supported PNG with substantial financial and development assistance (Waiko, 1993:195-197; AusAID), although, according to Luteru, much of Australia's donor aid has not met the aspirations of the recipient nations (Luteru, 1993). In the first ten years after independence, PNG's foreign policy indicated that 'the most important single relationship was that with Australia' (Waiko, 1993:195). De Gedare argues that although PNG gained independence from Australia in 1975, Australia continued to have a substantial amount of influence over the policies of its former protectorate (De Gedare, 1994:122-123).

'Though PNG is of importance to Australia, PNG's western political orientations and pro-western outlook meant Australia did not have to spend resources or maintain a hands-on approach to keep PNG within the western sphere of influence.' (De Gedare, 1994:123)

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<sup>3</sup> This definition was provided for respondents on the research questionnaire.

Currently, PNG's most important diplomatic relationship continues to be with Australia (Aime, 2006a). Nonetheless, the relationship is sometimes a complex one (for example Post-Courier, 2006:1; Philemon, 2006:1). When the two countries diverge, diplomatic relations can be strained (for example De Gedare, 2000:83). Recently, Australia's 'relations with Papua New Guinea [have been] marked by bans on contact with PNG ministers' (Rudd, 2007:23) and 'increasing levels of alienation' (Rudd, 2007:24). Rudd suggests that, partly due to recent foreign policy choices on the part of the Australian government, 'Anti-Australianism is now particularly rife in our immediate Melanesian neighbourhood' (Rudd, 2007:24). This contemporary diplomatic climate highlights the relevance and significance of Australia as a case study in this research.

The USA is a leading player in the production of media output (Kettle, 1999; Putnis et al, 2000). The USA is also a major figure in the global political arena, and therefore it is interesting to uncover how educated Papua New Guinean youth perceive the USA's actions and power. The first direct contact between the USA and PNG was when troops from the USA were deployed to PNG during World War Two. For Papua New Guineans, 'the experience of contact with American troops had a deep effect on the people' (Waiko, 1993:111), due to the large amount of goods that arrived, the exposure to the African American troops who seemed to be treated as equals by their white peers (Waiko, 1993:111), and the interactions with the troops, which were friendlier and on a more equal footing than those with the Australian troops (Aime, 2006a).

Post-independence, there was interest in PNG by corporations from the USA, and the USA provided military training and aid to PNG (Waiko, 1993:202). By 1985, PNG listed the USA as one of the countries that it would 'concentrate attention on' (Waiko, 1993:232). Compared with the relationship between Australia and PNG, much less has been written in recent years about the relationship between the USA and PNG (De Gedare, 2007). The USA has significant concerns about the safety of citizens of the USA who are living in or visiting PNG (US Department of State), and these concerns have resulted in a substantial decrease, since the 1990s, in the number of representatives of the USA based in PNG (US Department of State).

The mass media in PNG consists of 'some of the most advanced [organisations] in the region in terms of training, level of reporting, presentation of the news [...] and understanding of the issues of governance' (Molnar, 2005:246). Nonetheless, PNG's media faces considerable constraints, such as low pay rates for journalists, a poor relationship with non-government organisations and the absence of consumer surveys (Molnar, 2005:246). PNG's media is urban-centred (Molnar, 2005:232). The vast majority of Papua New Guineans live in rural areas (National AIDS Council, 2006:8), with poor infrastructure (Government of Papua New Guinea and United Nations in Papua New Guinea, 2004:5), so their access to media is limited. Also, due to the large number of languages spoken in PNG (Rooney and Papoutsaki, 2006:2), and low literacy rates (PNG Yearbook, 2006:157) the mainstream media is not able to communicate clearly with all potential consumers (Crocombe, 2001:105).

## Findings

The group of respondents have met more Australians than citizens of the USA, although three quarters of them have never been to Australia or any other Western nation. The group demonstrates a reasonably high level of knowledge about Australia. The respondents expressed mixed perceptions of Australia. Positive comments (34%) mostly referred appreciatively to the aid that Australia gives to other countries, in particular PNG. Negative comments (25%) described Australia as a 'bully' which is 'always interfering with the affairs of the smaller Pacific Island countries'. A sizable group (21%) gave considered responses that included both negative and positive angles, for example 'easygoing but snobbish', or 'though they provide us with aid, I think they are some bunch of racist (sic)'.

There was a balance between wholly positive comments (15%) about the USA, such as 'the saviour of the world', 'filled with brilliant people or professionals who can create things for global wise (sic)', and 'like a mother country who guides us and protects us', and wholly negative comments (13%) such as 'arrogant', 'power hungry', 'world bully', and 'manipulating'. A substantial group (21%) gave considered answers, for example 'most people from the USA are friendly, [but] America is a big bully', or 'I think that the USA is very supportive in helping other poor countries, but it is greedy and proud'.

These educated young Papua New Guineans hold fewer misperceptions about the war in Iraq than those surveyed by Kull in the USA (2003), but there are still a substantial amount of respondents who hold these misperceptions. A quarter of the educated Papua New Guinean youth surveyed believe that the USA found Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. Over a third of respondents believe the USA has found clear evidence in Iraq that Saddam Hussein was working closely with the al-Qaeda terrorist organisation. It is perceived that slightly more Papua New Guineans are in favour of the war in Iraq than are in opposition to the USA's actions. In focus group discussions, it was generally agreed that rural Papua New Guineans favour the USA having gone to war, whereas educated Papua New Guineans oppose the move.

Compared to findings in 35 nations (BBC World Service, 2006), a higher percentage of the Papua New Guineans surveyed felt that it was the right decision for the USA to invade Iraq. Nonetheless, the majority of the respondents feel that the USA's invasion of Iraq has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks across the globe. Even so, an unusually high percentage of respondents (72% compared to the BBC World Service's 2006 findings, which indicated an average of 35% across 35 nations) also believe that the USA's troops should stay in Iraq until it becomes stable.

The adjective most often used by respondents in the open questions in this survey was 'power'. This notion was associated most strongly with the USA, with 29% of respondents referring directly to the concept of power or influence when asked about their perception of the USA. The nation was described by

respondents as a 'superpower', a 'world power' or 'like the boss of the whole world'. The notion of power was also associated with Australia and other Western nations. Alcock and Newcombe concluded that 'perceived national power is some function of GNP or military expenditure (in purchasing-power-equivalent-dollars) if none of the nations has been at war recently, but is a function of military expenditure alone if warring nations are included' (1970:342). This is in line with the findings of this research, with respondents viewing the USA as powerful on a global scale, and Australia being referred to as powerful in the Pacific region.

When it comes to discussing Western countries in general, the respondents primarily perceive them as wealthy and technologically advanced. They see that both benefits, as well as hindrances, emerge for nations like PNG from their dealings with Western countries. Many commented on the disparity that exists between Western nations and developing nations like PNG, in terms of technology, living standard, etc. How this disparity influences the power relations between the two types of nations is discussed by a number of respondents, with comments ranging from '[Western nations] influence underdeveloped countries under the pretence of grants', and 'Western nations are a major influence to the current stage of Papua New Guinea in terms of economy crises, as well as other constraints', to 'they provide aid to the third world countries which is very beneficial'. It was interesting to note that 29% of respondents listed PNG as one of the countries where the Australian defence forces are currently operating. This is inaccurate (Australian Government Department of Defence), and perhaps is another indication of the perceived power that Australia wields in the South Pacific region.

The majority of the respondents (59%) stated that they source most of their news from newspapers. The remainder were divided fairly evenly between EMTV (PNG's only free-to-air television station), cable television, radio and the Internet. Nearly a third of the respondents (31%) keep up to date with world news events on a daily basis. The largest group of respondents (41%) inform themselves about world news on a weekly basis. The remainder inform themselves less often. The final survey question asked respondents about their consumption of non-news media products, and many of the respondents (58%) indicated that they regularly watch movies. They also regularly consume music CDs and music videos.

### **Limitations**

Many of the respondents might have realised that the researcher is from Australia. Although the research questionnaire was anonymous, there is a chance that some students may have felt it necessary to give a more positive assessment of Australia than they might have done otherwise.

The research by Kull (2003) polled a broad spectrum of the population of the USA. The BBC World Service (2006) similarly contacted a cross-section of the adult population in each of the 35 countries surveyed. These two surveys form the basis of comparison. However, the author's survey is restricted to a



somewhat privileged demographic within PNG. This will lead to obvious differences in the findings, and is therefore a limitation of this study. As this research is targeting the educated segment of PNG's population, it does not presume to reflect upon the perceptions of Papua New Guineans who live in villages or settlements. As Raeff points out, perceptions vary for different groups of people (1964:17), and indeed the responses that would be received from villagers in rural areas of PNG would be quite different to those expressed by the University students surveyed. This is one of the major constraints of this study. It is noteworthy that it would be difficult to assess the opinions of uneducated Papua New Guineans as a substantial percentage of the population is illiterate (PNG Yearbook, 2006:157).

The sample size is another limitation of this study. Kull surveyed over 8000 citizens of the USA in 2003, and the BBC World Service had over 1000 respondents in most of the countries involved in its research in 2006. Due to limitations of time and resources, this study had a substantially lower number of respondents (82 responses, of which 14 were excluded from the statistical analysis as they were older than 24 years of age). Partly to compensate for this deficit, focus groups were also conducted.

Another limitation is the time that has elapsed since Kull's research was conducted in 2003. This means that comparisons regarding the misperceptions held by the respondents may be inaccurate as there has been further media coverage since that time, which presumably has increased awareness levels, of the invalid stance of the arguments regarding weapons of mass destruction and links with al-Qaeda.

Steenbarger and Manchester argue that research carried out at more than one institution is more likely to be representative of the wider population (1996:201-203). Although this research was conducted at only one University campus, it is nonetheless somewhat representative of youth across PNG, due to the cultural diversity evident on the campus, and represented in the sample group.

### **Implications**

Kotzé asks readers to understand his comments as suggestions for further possible research (1986, 424). Likewise, Neuman warns of the danger of researchers overgeneralising from the available data (2003:159). Therefore, given the limitations of this study, it seems pertinent to recommend further research. There are a number of related areas that could be explored, for example what youth in other developing countries think of Western power, what youth in Western countries think of Western power, what policy makers and diplomats in PNG think of Western power, what older Papua New Guineans think of Western power, what rural Papua New Guineans think of Western power, and more.

Some practical implications of these findings relate particularly to University curriculum development in PNG. It could be argued that courses should allow

students the opportunity to explore more fully the phenomenon of Western power and what it means for Papua New Guinea's diplomatic relations and political future. This research also highlights the need for visiting Western lecturers to be sensitive to the wide range of perceptions held by young Papua New Guineans about Western nations and the power that they wield.

Yamuna (2002) suggests that media literacy skills should be gained by students in classrooms in PNG. The term media literacy refers to 'deconstruction; [... and] critical thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation' (Singer and Singer, 1998:172). The findings of this research indicate that a number of the respondents have astute critical thinking skills. Nonetheless, a significant minority possess misperceptions which may have been generated through their consumption of media products. Therefore, this research seems to support Yamuna's assertion for an increased emphasis on the strengthening of media literacy skills in PNG's formal education system. If an individual has highly developed media literacy skills, then they are able to 'formulate their own opinions and ideas through examination of the evidence and through inquiry, reflection and response' (Singer and Singer, 1998:165). Such skills would assist students to 'move towards laying the strong foundations for self awareness which ultimately leads to achieving the national educational goal of integral human development' (Yamuna, 2002). McLaughlin also highlights the need for a curriculum which aims to aid the students in the development of their critical thinking skills (1997b:8).

### **The role of the media in the formation of perceptions**

Sacco questions the extent to which the media influences the perceptions of consumers (1982:491), and Kotzé suggests that other factors, such as family, education and peers, also influence the perceptions of students (1986:430; 1986:418). However, Aime argues that the influence of the media in PNG is quite strong:

'The media are seen to be promoting a new set of values that are not compatible with the values and customs of the people, both traditional and Christian as stipulated in the Constitution of the country. There is a grave fear that these introduced values may be destructive to the young people growing up in modern Papua New Guinea.' (Aime, 2006b:120)

This could be because, unlike Western countries, PNG's 'experience of media is relatively new' (Aime, 2006b:119), which implies that the media literacy skills of Papua New Guineans might not yet be fully developed. Ogden supports Aime's view, stating that 'television functions as both an intensifier and catalyst of social change' (1993:24). A focus group participant supported this view, arguing that 'PNG's culture is dying out slowly, and Western influences viewed on TV, in my opinion, are the definite cause'.

Considering the media content available in PNG, Aime argues that 'the world of the western society is depicted as what all societies should be' (2006b:127). For Aime, this perception is 'constructed by developed countries' (Aime,

2006b:127) and accepted by Papua New Guineans without question (Aime, 2006b:127). One student expressed a similar sentiment in a focus group discussion; 'Overseas coverage of news is one-sided information because we look at it from the Australians' or Americans' point of view. Most overseas news is not seen through the eyes of Papua New Guineans.'

It is possible that those respondents who made positive comments about Western nations, or mentioned wealth and technological advancement, were influenced by the media in this way. However, the findings of this research do not align completely with Aime's view, as a substantial group of respondents expressed negative views of Western countries. These young people consume media products that were produced in Western nations, but over half of them read the PNG press regularly, and this may also influence their perceptions.

Regarding the misperceptions held by a significant minority of the respondents, it seems plausible that these may have come from media coverage of the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq, when the leaders of the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom 'sought to persuade their publics of the moral imperative for invasion and the immediacy of the threat that needed to be eradicated' (Doig et al, 2007:23). Although the intelligence data was selectively utilised, and 'the immediate threat from weapons of mass destruction turned out to be illusory' (Doig et al, 2007:23), nonetheless the perception of this threat lingers in the minds of some.

### **Conclusion**

This research attempts to assess the perceptions of young, educated Papua New Guineans, as these are the future leaders of this developing nation. The respondents come from across PNG, although they are all studying at the same institution. A mixed method approach (Punch, 2004:246) is utilised in this research. Educated young Papua New Guineans perceive Western nations in general as wealthy and technologically advanced. They view the USA in particular as being a powerful nation, and they are ambivalent about the impact that Western power has on countries such as PNG.

Given the complex diplomatic relationship between Australia and PNG, it is unsurprising that educated Papua New Guinean youth have mixed feelings about Australia. This is in parallel with McLaughlin's findings of a 'deep ambivalence' (McLaughlin, 2002) felt amongst young Papua New Guineans who studied in Australia. The respondents have a reasonable level of knowledge about Australia, but are divided as to whether they think Australia has helped or hindered PNG in its development.

The young respondents admire and yet fear the USA. They are concerned about its influence, and predominantly see it as a powerful nation. A substantial minority of the respondents hold misperceptions about the war in Iraq (Kull, 2003:1). Most of the respondents also view the decision to invade Iraq as the right decision, although they believe it has increased the threat of terrorist

attacks. A strikingly large percentage of the respondents feel that the troops should remain in Iraq until the situation is stable.

Young Papua New Guineans consume a range of media, from news media sources to entertainment products. Much of the world's media output is generated in the USA and other Western nations (Kettle, 1999; Putnis et al, 2000; van Ginneken, 1998:41) and it is argued by Aime (2006b) that the influence of Western perspectives may have a detrimental affect on young Papua New Guineans. However, this research has found that there are a substantial number of educated young people who have media literacy skills and can critically analyse PNG's position in the global arena. To further develop these media literacy skills, the author recommends that training in the deconstruction of media texts be incorporated into University curriculum in PNG. Finally, the author recommends that further research be undertaken to explore the perceptions that other groups possess regarding Western power.

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