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The Politics of Ethnicity in the Fiji Islands: competing ideologies of Indigenous paramountcy and individual equality in political dialogue

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Politics in the Fiji Islands is characterised by competitive processes that draw on and reshape ethnic cleavages. Indigenous Fijians and Indian indentured labourers were incorporated separately into the colonial state and political economy under British rule. Institutionalised ethnic divisions were not significantly restructured during Fiji's negotiated independence in 1970. In the process of building a national polity, these institutions embody a tension, being both a means to integrate ethnic groups into the state and a means to perpetuate ethnic cleavages.

Throughout the Twentieth Century, ideologies of Indigenous paramountcy and individual equality have competed in Fiji's political dialogue. They represent different conceptions of political rights for ethnic groups and individuals; differences not yet resolved into a conception of common national citizenship with wide acceptance. The ideology of paramountcy and its ostensible incompatibility with equality has structured the rhetorical shape of military and civilian coups overthrowing democracy in 1987 and 2000. This political instability has severely impeded Fiji's social, political and economic development.

This thesis focuses on contests between ideologies of Indigenous paramountcy and individual equality in political dialogue in Fiji. It asks whether the concepts are necessarily incompatible. In showing that they are not, it seeks mutual ground on which to base a conception of shared citizenship of an inclusive national polity. This search invokes the idea that the centrality of paramountcy and equality to existing political identities means political inclusiveness may be better achieved by building on these concepts, rather than dismissing either. The thesis argues that notions of paramountcy and equality contain the potential for an inclusive national polity that respects all its citizens and is attuned to the importance of protecting Indigenous culture and socio-economic wellbeing.

Although many political actors in Fiji share this vision, ethnic polarisation in the wake of the 2000 coup enabled extremism to triumph in the 2001 national elections. The thesis draws its analysis from this election campaign, as an intensified debate on paramountcy and equality. It emphasises the inter-connections between political dialogue and historical, cultural and socio-economic contexts. In particular, the state threatens to impede social forces towards political inclusiveness. Its increasing role in advancing individual economic and political opportunities according to ethnic membership is fostering an Indigenous middle and elite class reliant on and promoting values of Indigenous privilege and political exclusion.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRC Constitution Review Commission

CSR Colonial Sugar Refineries

FA Fijian Administration

FAB Fijian Affairs Board

FTUC Fiji Trades Union Congress

GCC Great Council of Chiefs

GDP Gross Domestic Product

ILO International Labour Organisation

ILO Convention 169

ILO Convention 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries

NLTB Native Land Trust Board

RFMF Republic of Fiji Military Forces

UN United Nations

UN Draft Declaration

UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

GLOSSARY OF FIJIAN LANGUAGE TERMS

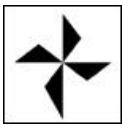
Adi	Title for Indigenous female chiefs.
Confederacy	Alliances of *matanitu* based in Eastern Fiji, forged immediately prior to colonial rule. Burebasaga is based in Southeast Viti Levu, Kabuna in Northeast Viti Levu and Tovata in the Eastern Islands including Vanua Levu and Lau. [See Figure 1]
Matanitu	Large political units forged through alliance or warfare from groups of *vanua* in Eastern Fiji (unknown in Western and Central Viti Levu). There were seven major *matanitu* by the advent of colonial rule.
Mataqali	Groups of several families within a *yavusa*. Families were hierarchically ordered as chiefs (*turaga*), executives (*saturaga*), diplomatic speakers/masters of ceremony (*mata-ni-vanua*), priests (*bete*) and warriors (*bati*) (model based on Eastern Fijian societies).
Ratu	Title for Indigenous male chiefs.
Taukei	Landowners; true people of the land; original inhabitants.
i Tokatoka	Closely related households living in defined areas of villages, cooperating for communal tasks and comprising the subdivisions of the *mataqali* (model based on Eastern Fijian societies).
Vanua	(1) Political units comprising several villages, formed from groups of *yavusa* for strategic protection or social and economic reasons. The title of paramount chief of a *vanua* became hereditary in the leading *yavusa* (model based on Eastern Fijian societies). (2) The land and the people; a group of people closely bound by common values, land or authority.
Vanua Levu	The second largest island in Fiji, comprising 30.1% of its land and close to 15% of its population.
Viti Levu	The main island in Fiji, comprising 56.5% of its land and approaching 80% of its population.
Vulagi	Visitor or guest; stranger or foreigner.
Yavusa	Clans claiming descent from a legendary founding ancestor to which all Indigenous Fijians belong (model based on Eastern Fijian societies).

Sources: Lal (1992); Howard (1991); Lawson (1991); Norton (1990); and Toren (1999).

REFERENCE GUIDE FOR POLITICAL PARTY ACRONYMS

AIM – Justice and Freedom Party
Formed for the 2001 election with an Indo-Fijian support base.
Extreme platform promoting Indo-Fijian rights.

BKV – *Bai Kei Viti* Party
Split from **PANU** for the 2001 election with a Western-Fijian support base.
Extreme platform promoting the interests of Western/Indigenous landowners.



DNT – *Dodonu Ni Taukei* Party
Split from **FAP** after 1999 with an Indigenous support base.
Extreme platform promoting the interests of Indigenous landowners.

FAP – Fijian Association Party (*Soqosoqo Ni Taukei*)
Split from the **SVT** in the early 1990s with an Indigenous support base.
Moderate platform to uplift all Indigenous Fijians within a multi-racial society.

FLP – Fiji Labour Party
Formed in 1985 with multi-racial leadership but primarily Indo-Fijian supporters.
Non-racial platform fighting class politics.

GHP – Girmit Heritage Party
Formed for the 2001 election with an Indo-Fijian support base.
Extreme platform promoting rights for Indo-Fijians displaced by 2000 violence.

GVP – General Voters Party
Established party representing the General Electors.
Moderate/Extreme platform promoting the disadvantaged and Indigenous rights.

LFR – *Lio 'On Famör Rotuma* Party
Established party representing Rotuman people.
Extreme platform promoting Rotuman (and Indigenous) rights.

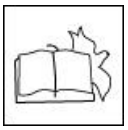
MV – *Matanitu Vanua* (Conservative Alliance)
Formed for the 2001 election with a Northeastern-Fijian support base.
Extreme platform promoting Indigenous rights.

NFP – National Federation Party
Established in the early 1960s with an Indo-Fijian support base.
Moderate platform promoting Indo-Fijian rights within a multi-racial society.

NLUP – New Labour Unity Party
Split from the **FLP** in 2001 for the election, with urban multi-racial support.
Non-racial platform fighting class politics.

NVTLP – Nationalist *Vanua Tako Lavo* Party
A coalition originating from 1970s ethnic nationalists, with Indigenous support.
Extreme platform promoting Indigenous rights.

PANU – Party of National Unity
Formed for the 1999 election with a Western-Fijian support base.
Moderate platform to uplift (especially Western) Indigenes in multi-racial society.

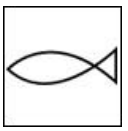


POTT – Party of the Truth
Established party with an Indigenous support base.
Extreme Christian platform promoting rule according to Christian principles.

SDL – *Soqosoqo Duavata Ni Lewenivanua* (United Fiji Party)
Formed from the 2000 military-appointed cabinet with Indigenous support.
Ostensibly multi-racial but with extreme promotion of Indigenous rights.

SVT – *Soqosoqo Ni Vakavulewa Ni Taukei* Party
Formed by the GCC following the 1987 coups with Indigenous support.
Moderate/extreme promotion of Indigenous rights within a multi-racial society.

UGP – United General Party
Established party representing the General Electors
Moderate platform promoting the disadvantaged within a multi-racial society.



VLV – *Veitokani Ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito* (Christian Democratic Alliance)
Initiated by the Methodist Church for the 1999 election with Indigenous support.
Extreme Christian platform promoting rule according to Christian principles.

Note – The Fijian names of parties do not make sense as English translations. Parties with English names listed in brackets provide these names as alternatives (they are not translations). Parties without these brackets reject the need for English names. The FAP is commonly known by its English name, thus the Fijian name is placed in brackets. (Pers.Comm. Lal 12/04/02)

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: PARAMOUNTCY AND EQUALITY IN POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN THE FIJI ISLANDS

A. Development and the Struggle for an Inclusive National Polity

On the 19th of May 2000 radio broke news that armed men were holding Fiji's parliament hostage, ousting its first ethnic Indian Prime-Minister in the name of Indigenous rights. Many were apparently resigned to the idea that government overthrows had just become politics-as-usual in Fiji. Citizens could draw on experiences from two coups in 1987 to determine their immediate responses. The political crisis in 2000 arrested Fiji's attempt to construct an inclusive national polity based on the fundamental equality of all citizens. This attempt was initiated with negotiations to bring in the 1997 Constitution, amending beyond recognition the 1990 Constitution that had guaranteed Indigenous paramountcy through political leadership and a parliamentary majority. The 1987 military coups leading to this 1990 Constitution had themselves halted Fiji's previous attempt to build a multi-ethnic polity, from independence in 1970. Oscillations between attempts to form an inclusive polity and counter-attempts to privilege Indigenous Fijians have characterised Fiji's independence. These inter-ethnic tensions and political instability contrast starkly with popular images of Fiji as a tropical paradise of some 320 islands in the Southwest Pacific [Figure 1]. Before its 1987 exile from the Commonwealth, Fiji was even upheld as a model of a viable multi-ethnic polity (Rothschild 1981:12).

Following British colonisation in 1874, Fiji has struggled to resolve contests played out in political dialogue between claims to paramountcy by Indigenous Fijians and claims to equality by Indo-Fijians. In his definitive history *Broken Waves*, Lal (1992:16) writes:

> The problem of reconciling these competing, indeed, incompatible, interests – paramountcy for Fijians, parity for Indians, and privilege for Europeans – is a central theme of the history of Fiji in the twentieth century.

Over time, these claims have represented changing conceptions of political rights and been deployed in unfolding contexts for different purposes. Discursive claims to 'European' privilege as trustees for the Indigenous population have been marginalized in the post-independence period, obscuring the continued strength of largely Australian capital in the economy. Remaining are contests between Indigenes whose interests the British held paramount, and descendents of Indian indentured labourers promised equality. This thesis explores contests between ideologies of Indigenous paramountcy and individual equality in contemporary political dialogue[1] in Fiji. It questions the necessary

[1] Political dialogue refers to public exchanges of ideas in political contests, dominated but not determined by elites. It encompasses any form of exchange – verbal, written or symbolic – and is here interchanged with 'discourse' or 'debate'.

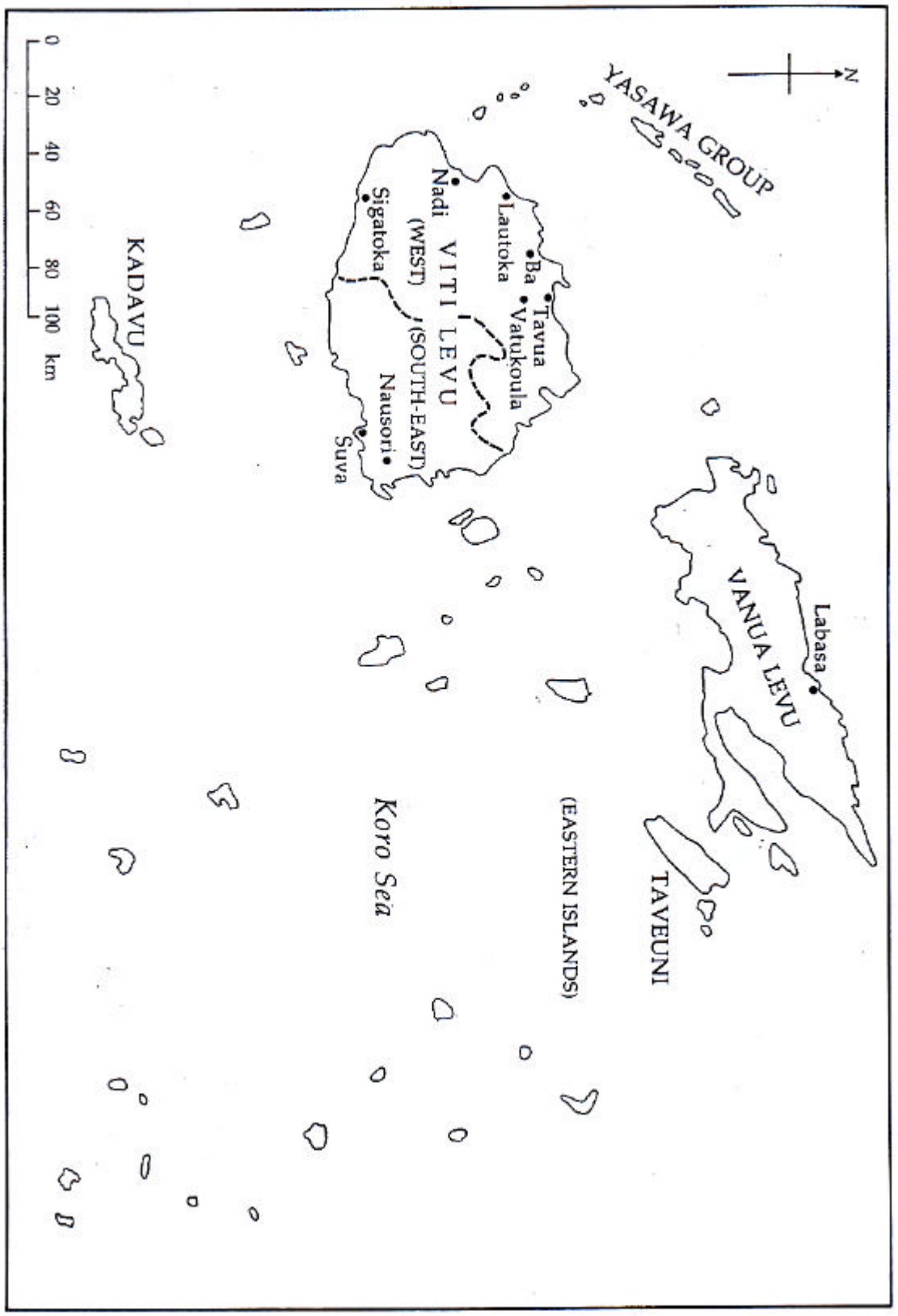


Figure 1: Map of the Fiji Islands

[Source: Lawson (1991:xiv)]

incompatibility of the concepts, demonstrating their significant common ground on which to base a conception of shared citizenship. This invokes the idea that the centrality of these concepts to existing political identities means that *building* on them, rather than dismissing either, may better serve political inclusiveness. The thesis argues that paramountcy and equality can form a foundation for an inclusive national polity that respects all its citizens and is attuned to the protection of Indigenous culture and socio-economic wellbeing. The 2000 political crisis, however, involving fear and violence unparalleled in Fiji's contemporary history (Lal 2001:1), has strengthened extremism: Indigenous political supremacy undermining equal participation by non-Indigenes; and narrow individual political equality undermining recognition of Indigenous cultural rights and socio-economic disadvantage. Fiji's state poses a further threat to inclusiveness. Its increasing role in advancing economic and political opportunities for individuals according to their ethnic membership, fosters Indigenous middle and elite classes reliant on and promoting values of Indigenous privilege and political exclusion.

Underpinning this thesis is the belief that exploring political dialogue is important to understanding political forces (Newman 1991:467). This does not assume ideological debates *determine* political forces. It is well established that the overthrow of Fiji's Labour government in 2000 reflected a convergence of interests behind popular Indigenous disaffection, including defeated and financially crippled Indigenous politicians, Indo-Fijian capital, church elements, and a military faction (*Review* 2001:18). Amid the struggles for political power and resource control, however, is a critical role for ideology. It shapes the form taken by these forces, offers justifications for political acts, and affects the commitments of actors on all sides of politics. Even as a rhetorical cloak, ideology both reflects and affects processes restructuring the political identities of potential supporters. Political dialogue, filtered through particular information channels, interacts with people's experiences to become a source of beliefs, values and attitudes. Rather than dismissing ideology against some perceived 'truth', its importance arises from its potential to be believed, acted upon and constitutive of political identities. As a former President of Fiji suggested of a definitive Indigenous historical account *The Façade of Democracy*, ideologies must be understood because they capture widely held views (Ganilau 1991:vii). As a window onto intensified contests in political dialogue directly attempting to shape political identities, this thesis focuses on Fiji's 2001 election campaign.

Forging a common conception of political rights as the basis for citizenship of an inclusive polity is critical for national development (Premdas 1993a:30). The violence, dispossession and dislocation associated with Fiji's coups may be minor relative to ethnic conflict elsewhere (Norton 1990:1), but the instability has severely impeded development. In human development terms, for some it has detracted from enjoyment of equal political participation, security of person and property and self-respect (Durutalo 1999:428; UNDP 1990:iii,10). For economic growth, per capita GDP only recovered to its 1986 level in the late 1990s, before contracting again by over 8% in 2000 (RBF 2001:10). Its prospects have been seriously damaged by stagnant investment since 1987. Public and private institutions have been severely weakened by human resources loss through accelerated emigration of skilled workers. The emigration of over 13% of the population since 1987 can be considered a form of state disintegration (Naidu and Pillay 2001:3,8). National institutional integrity has

also been damaged, particularly that of the military, police and judiciary. Democratic institutions have been repeatedly destabilised. As long as radical conceptions of political rights offer justifications for destabilising acts, social, economic and political development is threatened. This makes vital the construction of a sustainable, inclusive national polity.

B. The Context of Political Dialogue in the Fiji Islands

The roots of Fiji's fractured political identities lie in the differential incorporation of racial categories into the colonial state, initiating the construction of ethnic groups (Naidu 1996:1-2). In 1874 high chiefs ceded Fiji to Britain, which then needed to establish authority with limited resources and personnel, and in the face of deep distrust. These imperatives combined with officials holding paternalistic and racist philosophies to form a ruling ideology of British protection of Indigenous social, economic, political and land institutions. These Indigenous interests were generally held paramount against settler demands and dissenting colonial officials seeking to modernise Indigenous society. To preserve Indigenous social structures, plantation labour was sourced from India from 1879. Post-indenture, the Indian government played a critical role in securing promises of equality for Indians. These events established two critical foundations: first, the combination of settler capital, Indigenous land and Indian labour in the economy; secondly, the combination of European privilege, Indigenous paramountcy and Indian equality at the discursive level. Economic segmentation typically reinforced ethnic cleavages in political dialogue. Fiji's negotiated independence did little to restructure colonial institutions, including the separate (Indigenous) Fijian Administration and land ownership that are now emblematic of Indigenous paramountcy. Also untouched was the structure of the colonial commodity-export economy, historically controlled by foreign interests in sugar, copra, gold, trading and emerging tourism (Britton 1987:125).

Changing ethnic demography and inter-ethnic inequality provide another important context for political contests (Carroll 1994:319). A measles epidemic at cession killed one quarter of Indigenes, whose population continued to decline until the 1920s (Howard 1991:25). Colonial officials and the press routinely assumed Indigenous Fijians were in danger of extinction (Lawson 1991:88), a consciousness of threatened societal and cultural survival reconstructed in the contemporary global context, aided by the plights of Indigenous peoples elsewhere. With Indo-Fijians outnumbering Indigenes from the 1940s, their claims to equality were easily construed as threats to the paramountcy of Indigenous interests. However, changing population growth rates and increased Indo-Fijian migration, from political uncertainty and overseas opportunities, removed the disparity by 1988 (Mohanty 2001:58). Emigration doubled after the 1987 coups, nearly 90% of migrants being Indo-Fijian, with the 2000 coup a further contributor to their population share heading towards 40% (Naidu and Pillay 2001:3-4). The Indigenous majority will undoubtedly reconfigure future political contests. Socio-economically, Indigenous Fijians have the lowest average income, with significant inequalities existing among Provinces, and between urban and rural areas (UNDP 1997:24-5). Intra-ethnic inequality, which far exceeds inter-ethnic inequality, accounts for Indo-Fijians experiencing the highest poverty, at one third of households. A massive socio-economic divide among Fiji's minorities - Europeans, Part-Europeans, Chinese

and other Pacific Islanders – is masked by their composite category as 'Others'. These data are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Selected Socio-economic and Demographic Indicators

	Indigenous Fijians	Indo-Fijians	Others	National
Weekly per capita income ($F)[a]	38	50	67	45
Gini Coefficient for income	0.42	0.53	0.59	0.49
Households below basic needs (%)[b]	28	33	26	25
Population [% of National]	393,357 [50.8]	338,818 [43.7]	42,684 [5.5]	774,859

Sources: UNDP (1997:25,27,39) [Data: Fiji Government 1990-91 Household Income and Expenditure Survey]; and Prasad *et al* (2001:4) [Data: Fiji Government 1996 Census].

a) £1 buys $F3-$F3.50.

b) A different poverty line is calculated for each ethnic category according to their cost of basic needs, hence the national proportion can be lower than any sectional proportion.

The intensity and importance of political competition in Fiji is magnified by an institutional context, little altered from colonial design, characterised by ethnic segmentation. Nearly 90% of the land area is inalienable, owned by Indigenous communities. Indigenous Fijians comprise 99% of the military, 90% of Permanent Secretaries and 75% of police (Prasad et al 2001:5), non-national institutional characters vital to democratic instability. Indo-Fijians, particularly free-migrants from Gujarat, dominate the professions and visible face of commerce in small and medium-sized enterprises (Norton 1990:24). Expatriate control of finance and large capital is not reflected in popular frameworks of Indigenous and Indo-Fijian economic dichotomies. Fiji's typically multi-racial unions are characterised by political opponents as vehicles for Indo-Fijian interests. Christian churches are almost entirely Indigenous Fijian, with Hindu and Muslim organisations entirely Indo-Fijian. Despite gradual consolidation, most primary schools remain ethnically segmented (Naidu 1996:21). These reinforcing divides of ethnicity, Indigenousness, religion and economic occupation provide formidable obstacles to common political identities, particularly because ethnic closures in alternative competitive institutions intensify contests in the political sphere.

Constitutional and electoral frameworks provide final important elements of the context of political dialogue (Horowitz 2000:628). The foundations laid for an inclusive polity by the 1997 Constitution were challenged but not dismantled by the 2000 political crisis. Following the 19 May 2000 civilian coup purporting to abrogate the Constitution, the military assumed control on 29 May and also purported constitutional abrogation (Williams 2001:77). In March 2001, the evidence of civil society-led pro-democracy protests enabled the Court of Appeal to rule that the military-appointed cabinet had not become a legitimate government because it failed to achieve the acquiescence of the population (*Republic of Fiji v Prasad* 2001:29). Fiji is unique for having usurpers submit to judicial authority and accept the result: the 1997 Constitution remains and elections were called under it (Williams 2001:73-4). This Constitution shapes an inclusive polity based on fundamental individual equality and affirmative action principles to realise equality of opportunity. Indigenes are

protected by Great Council of Chiefs nominees to the upper house holding veto power on legislation affecting Indigenous rights (1997 Constitution:Sect.6,38(1),44(1)). In the 71-seat lower house, members elected by common roll hold the balance of power, the remaining 46 seats being divided between historically entrenched communal rolls. Preferential voting was intended to encourage moderate political platforms and multi-ethnic coalitions (Reeves *et al* 1996:310). The 2001 election did not, however, accord with the promise of this framework. Political moderates interpreted the 1999 electoral route of the incumbent multi-ethnic coalition as the 'outbidding' of moderation (see Premdas 1993:18). Separate party campaigns and post-election coalitions in 2001 replaced pre-election coalitions, demonstrating that even 'inclusive' electoral designs can be insufficient to forge multi-ethnic cooperation (Stewart and O'Sullivan 1998:26). The Constitution was also treated as a variable in the campaign dialogue. The same interaction is true for the historical, demographic and institutional contexts discussed above: each shapes political dialogue but is also partially constructed within or affected by that dialogue.

C. Researching Political Dialogue in the Fiji Islands

My focus on paramountcy and equality arose from the awareness I encountered in Fiji in 2000, that lack of resolution between these concepts continues to undermine Fiji's development. Although socio-economic cleavages crosscut ethnic boundaries in Fiji, political identification evinced by voting is predominantly ethnic (Norton 2000a:63-8).[2] Theoretical frameworks of ethnicity offer appropriate foundations to analyses of political dialogue in Fiji give the ethnic base of political identities.[3] As Chapter II details, my research approached ethnicity as socially constructed in particular historical, cultural, economic and political contexts. My fieldwork covered ten weeks before and including the August 2001 elections, a brief episode, but one capturing an intense period of political dialogue and building on my experience in Fiji during the 2000 political crisis. The constructivist approach to ethnicity suggests a multi-dimensional analysis of ethnic politics. Historical, anthropological and socio-economic statistical accounts are thus incorporated as contexts for my focus on political dialogue. The latter was explored through political manifestos, newspapers and more than 30 interviews with senior party candidates, former political actors, academics, and officials from the Great Council of Chiefs, Fijian Administration, military, unions, business associations, churches and non-governmental organisations. These were complemented by numerous informal political discussions and observations from campaigning and voting. Life experiences also helped put the election in context: people typically turned first to sports in their newspapers; and one village friend frustrated with frequent elections exclaimed, "Who is governing now? Why can't they stay?"

My approach to research is detailed in the Appendix. Briefly, it drew on the insights of interactionist theory to recognise that research is, to some degree, a process of generating

[2] See Young (1993:25-6) distinguishing socio-economic cleavages from class-consciousness.
[3] I use 'ethnic' rather than the 'race' terminology that characterises common parlance to de-emphasise the immutability of these socially constructed divisions.

meaning (Foddy 1993:19-21). This aspect remains in tension with the extent to which research accesses existing perspectives of respondents. I addressed this tension by attempting to remain critically aware of how respondents' constructions of me and my research purpose might influence their selective articulation of particular views from their broader life experience. Political actors with non-racial platforms probably constructed me as identifying with their values and struggles to replicate 'my' liberal democracy. To ethnic nationalists, my being Australian (with 'insensitive' foreign policies) and researching from Britain (causing Fiji's multi-ethnic dilemma) was probably not conducive to their anticipating sympathy. My outsider status, however, also provided access to a broader range of elite actors than many locally situated students could have sought. Additionally, being young and even female encouraged respondents to cast me as a student receptive to help, not a foreigner seeking to dictate (Razavi 1992:158). The evidence produced by my research should be read in this light. My English-language restriction did not prove problematic for this short-term research aimed at national political dialogue. My writing of 'Indigenous Fijians' and 'Indo-Fijians', rather than the 'Fijians' and 'Indians' of common parlance, implies my bias that all Fiji citizens are entitled to a common political identity.

The following chapter outlines the theories of ethnicity applied by other political analysts to Fiji and explores why the constructivist approach is useful in my research. Chapter III provides a historical overview of the political deployment of ideologies of paramountcy and equality, including the demographic, institutional and political economy contexts of their formation and salience. The chapter also demonstrates how constructions of history support different political rights claims. The fourth chapter focuses on the 2001 election campaign to analyse the spectrum of meanings attributed to paramountcy and equality, by whom and how they are manifest in policy prescriptions. It draws mainly on political manifestos, campaign speeches and newspaper reports, but is also informed by perspectives from formal and informal interviews. Chapter V then explores areas of incompatibility and potential overlap between these concepts in political, cultural, socio-economic and resource spheres. Its analysis draws largely on formal interviews.

These elements are brought together in a final chapter drawing out the conclusions of the thesis. It argues that there is potential for compatible interpretations of paramountcy and equality to underpin common citizenship of an inclusive national polity in Fiji. Given their centrality to political identities, commensurate meanings of these concepts should be emphasised as a *resource* for building common political identities. Repudiating either will foster exclusivity. Paramountcy can acknowledge common citizenship, while focusing on protecting Indigenous culture and language, and remedying Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage. Enabling Indigenes to benefit from their land ownership is also crucial to their inclusion in economic development. Equality can underpin conceptions of common individual political rights, while respecting group rights to culture and language protection. It must, however, extend beyond formal political equality to equality of opportunities to socio-economic wellbeing. Intra-ethnic fragmentation evident in contemporary political contests, maligned by ethnic leaders, can be a resource for forging multi-ethnic platforms in political dialogue. These must accommodate ethnic identities, however, rather than denying them. Divisive elite interests and the state's increasing role in differentiating ethnic group opportunities are not the only factors impeding political inclusiveness in Fiji. Non-elites

rationally identify with institutions that have historically mobilised their support and currently represent or symbolise their interests. It is toward these institutions that reconstruct ethnic divisions in unfolding contexts that this thesis points for further research.

CHAPTER II
THEORIES OF ETHNICITY AND THE ROLE OF POLITICAL IDEOLOGY APPLIED TO THE ANALYSIS OF ETHNIC POLITICS IN FIJI

A. Introduction

This chapter analyses the approaches to ethnicity that academics apply to politics in Fiji. It relates these to the theoretical literature on ethnicity, to identify their foundations, insights and limitations. This broader literature has arisen from recognition that ethnicity presents a persistent phenomena growing in importance worldwide. Liberals and Marxists alike have thus had to confront their assumption that the 'residual primordial tie' of ethnicity would disappear when exposed to modern political, social and economic systems (Lonsdale 1994:132). The spectrum of academic approaches to ethnicity in Fiji corresponds to Young's (1993:22-4) theoretical schema: instrumentalism, primordialism and constructivism. Applications frequently combine aspects from different theories, however, and the theories themselves are not discrete but merely characterise varied and overlapping frameworks. This chapter shows the constructivist approach to be a useful framework for analysing the deployment of paramountcy and equality in political dialogue in Fiji, appropriately elucidating the role of political actors. Specific attention is given to theories of the role of ideology in ethnic politics, and core aspects of Indigenous and human rights ideologies are introduced. It argues that to understand adherence to ethnic ideologies, their historical and contemporary contexts need exploration. Constructivism underpins the methodological approach of subsequent chapters, relating political dialogue in Fiji to its historical, social, cultural, economic and institutional contexts.

B. Instrumentalist Approaches to Ethnicity in Fiji

Instrumentalists analyse ethnicity as an effective tool in competition for social, political and economic resources in contemporary state structures (Rothschild 1981:2). Its neo-Marxist strand pervades academic writing on Fiji, emphasising class over ethnic divisions and focusing on the mobilisation of ethnic sentiment by *elites* in their own interests. Howard (1991:5-6) describes his approach as focusing:

> …on the economic basis and political manipulation of communalism in relation to intra-class and inter-class collaboration and rivalry…Fiji's ruling oligarchy has sought to promote communalism in an effort to undermine threatening class cohesion from below…[It provides] an example of very successful conscious manipulation of a polity.

Similarly, Lawson (1991:279,282) describes the 1987 overthrow of Bavadra's Labour coalition:

> [R]ace…has been used deliberately to incite fear and insecurity amongst Fijians by playing on their ignorance and, no doubt, in many cases, their existing prejudices…Bavadra's coalition had, to some extent, been successful in opening up a new kind of discourse by changing the

> emphasis from race to issues concerning socio-economic class, social justice, and commonality of interests between races.

These academics reject 'myths' of communal homogeneity and focus their analysis on intra-ethnic divergences of interest, attempts to form multi-ethnic class coalitions and elite counter-attempts to undermine them (Lawson 1990:795). Neo-Marxists also draw attention to the role of foreign capital in Fiji's political economy, obscured by Indigenous/Indo-Fijian dichotomies (Samy 1976b:27).

Neo-Marxist instrumentalism is valuable for deconstructing political discourse according to underlying economic and political interests. It is excessively dismissive, however, of the rationality of non-economic social, cultural and institutional determinants of ethnic identities (Connor 1984:8-10). It is also weak at explaining why non-elites repeatedly respond to ethnic appeals, beyond assertions of their 'ignorance'. An alternative instrumentalist framework offers some answers, analysing ethnic groups as effective 'tools' for the pursuit of *group* interests in economic competition within states sensitive and responsive to ethnic claims[4] (Roosens 1989:14; Despres 1975a:91). Melson and Wolpe (1970:1115) and Nagel and Olzak (1982:127) identify aspects of modernising states and economies that are conducive to the emergence of competitive ethnic interests, emphasising urbanisation and an expanded state role in society. In extreme, the approach regards ethnic groups simply as interest affiliations (Bell 1975:142,169). The framework offers several insights, including exploring how elites generate ideologies and manipulate cultural resources to mobilise supporters and legitimate ethnic claims (Brass 1991:8,15). Ethnic groups also are appreciated for their potential to integrate communities into broader society (Rothschild 1981:258). Analysing ethnicity as the pursuit of group interest can obscure intra-ethnic differences, however. It typically replaces problematic neo-Marxist explanations of adherence based on false consciousness with equally problematic explanations based on individuals rationally choosing advantageous identities (Glazer and Moynihan 1975:16). The state is typically treated as an arbiter of claims, rather than a material and symbolic resource, or competitor in its own right (Newman 1991:460). Both Neo-Marxist and interest-group instrumentalism are limited by taking the ethnic group as a given, when it requires explanation.

C. Primordialist Approaches to Ethnicity in Fiji

Primordialism focuses attention on understanding the psychological and cultural dimensions of ethnicity to explain the 'unaccountable' emotive force of its affective tie (Geertz 1973:259). It is manifest in approaches essentialising ethnic groups, epitomised by Ravuvu (1991:56-8), describing Indigenous and Indo-Fijians:

[4] See Mayer (1963:1-2) for an early application to Fiji of theories of competitive ethnic groups divided by differential state incorporation, race, religion and culture. See also Kapferer (1962), Mamak (1978) and Naidu (1979:9) for sociological critiques of the applicability of this 'plural society' approach to Fiji.

> [T]heir world views are antithetical to one another. The two communities are culturally different in values, beliefs, and aspirations. Fijians are by nature very accommodating and this quality has been enhanced by adopting Christianity…[Indians] have been very insensitive and indifferent to Fijian feelings and to Fijian aspirations to again become masters of their country.

Its insights are into the strength of ethnic sentiment and the beliefs and values that underpin ties within ethnic groups. It seeks cultural origins for political claims, and probes why supporters identify with ethnic leaders. It recognises the importance of non-economic dimensions of ethnicity, particularly competition for social symbols of prestige, inter-group status and political legitimacy (Horowitz 2000:131; Gurr 1970:24). Primordialism also explores the cultural material with which elites reinforce essentialist notions of selves and others, an essentialism characterising the worldviews of a significant proportion of Fiji's population. Ravuvu (1991:57) accurately depicts the reciprocal negative stereotyping of the *other* and positive valorisation of the *self* that Fiji citizens employ daily.[5] Indigenous Fijians typically valorise themselves as carefree, generous and preferring to redistribute than accumulate; whereas Indo-Fijians denigrate them as lazy, pound-foolish and unable to think beyond today. Indo-Fijians typically valorise themselves as smart, frugal and able to plan for tomorrow; whereas Indigenes denigrate them as crafty, greedy and calculating. Toren (1999:36) argues that Indigenous cultural constructions of these ideal dichotomies grew from Indigenous/European oppositions to now refer to 'Indians'.

Primordialist theory fails to delineate heterogeneity within ethnic groups, and the associated divergences of interests, values and worldviews. It instead focuses on identifying foundations for group solidarity, including religion, race, language, history and common descent[6] (Geertz 1973:261-73). This impedes its capacity to explain the differential intensity of sentiment among group members, or contemporary ethnicities unrelated to any primordial features (Bayart 1993:51). It also explores cultural foundations for political claims without recognising that representations of culture are selective and constructed in particular political, social and economic contexts. Cultural bases of political ideologies are instead presented as ahistorical or timeless, as in Ravuvu's (1991:82) description of Indigenes ceding Fiji:

> [T]hey were of one mind to put their trust in the British Crown to rule Fiji fairly and justly. They did this in the fervent hope that one day they would be in a much better position to hold the reigns of government in their own country once again.

Yet 'tradition' can be imposed on history as much as history reveals tradition. Even the notion of tradition itself can change, with ethnographer Toren (1999:45,63) arguing that the Indigenous equivalent *cakacaka vakavanua* is literally 'acting in the manner of the land.' Politicising tradition as if from an immutable past contradicts *cakacaka vakavanua*, which accepts change if it embodies culturally appropriate behaviour. Primordialism shares with instrumentalism failure to question the existence of ethnic groups (Young 1993:23). It takes ethnic ties as givens and seeks in social contexts the factors that activate them, typically an increasingly impersonal modernity that prompts a search for security and belonging (Geertz

[5] See Despres (1975a:106) for similar observations of daily disparaging ethnic stereotyping in Guyana.
[6] See Horowitz (2000:53), Smith (1981:66) and van den Berghe (1978:405,409) on how kinship forges mutually exclusive ethnic memberships, which are then assumed to generate ethnic antagonism.

1973:258-60; Smith 1981:53). Horowitz (2000:64,131), for example, emphasises their ascriptive nature, penetration into every realm of life, and importance in competition for symbols of prestige and status to account for their potency.

D. Constructivist Approaches to Ethnicity in Fiji

Young (1993:23) labels as constructivist approaches positing ethnicity as a cultural and historical *process*, akin to Anderson's (1991:6) conception of nations as 'imagined communities'. Without refuting instrumentalist or primordialist insights from enquiring what ethnicity does or is, constructivists ask a different question: how do politically mobilised ethnic identities come to exist? Corresponding with this framework is Lal's (1992:3) historical treatment of ethnicity in Fiji, examining processes forming ethnic groups, reconstructing them over time and redefining ethnic consciousness. These include first, the interests and characters of ideologues and political actors who continually mobilise and redefine ethnic groups. Second, the cultural resources and memories that these redefinitions draw on and transform. Third, the social, economic and belief-system contexts in which adherents identify with ethnic groups. Fourth, the formation of ethnically structured institutions and ideologies that propel and constrain ethnicity in the future. Other constructivist analyses depict how colonial designations of ethnic categories initiated the formation of not-previously-existing ethnic groups, and trace the redefinition of group boundaries over time (Naidu 1996:1-2; 1988:398-403). Thomas (1992a:213-5) details the processes by which particular aspects and practices of culture are objectified and made emblematic of a whole life-way in encounters with cultural others.[7] These selective processes are governed by the context of encounters, including the power configurations between different actors that are notably unequal in colonial and capitalist encounters.[8]

These applications to Fiji reflect the broader constructivist literature. Vail (1989:6), for example, argues for an approach relating ethnic ideologies and their constructions of the past to the current realities experienced by supporters. He identifies how ideological frameworks articulated by intellectuals and linked to practice by political actors become relevant to the experiences of adherents (*ibid*:11). The approach questions how the experiences of supporters facilitate their perceiving their ethnicity as systematically affecting their place in society. Bayart (1993:51,56) analyses the process of identity formation as contested, with ethnic elites both reflecting and affecting supporters. Analysis thus looks beyond elite constructions to re-appropriations by adherents (Ranger 1994:24-7). Lonsdale (1994:131-137), for example, identifies how changes in inter-group relations, markets, colonial states and language codification affected the reconstruction of African ethnicities.

[7] Thomas does not restrict objectification processes to colonial encounters – cultural 'others' encountered in pre-colonial Pacific trade, warfare and migration ensured an extensive pre-colonial history of identity-formation processes. Additionally, objectification can occur against environmental 'others' and along internal axes of difference, including gender, age, kinship and region (Linnekin 1983:250).

[8] See also Roosens (1989:12) and Brass (1991:25) on how objectifications selectively define groups, objectifications that by definition do not encompass the entire culture.

He distinguishes between intra-group 'moral ethnicities' arising from daily social practice and inter-group 'political tribalism' competing in wider political and economic spaces. Norton (1990:4-5; 1993:188) approaches Indigenous Fijian ethnicity similarly, distinguishing the identity sustained within Indigenous society through daily enactment of cultural meanings and practices, from the identity defined in competitive opposition to other groups. He regards the strength of the former as mitigating aggressiveness in the latter, particularly because Indigenous chiefs both embody internal cultural identities and mediate the Indigenous interests they represent in the wider political economy. Thus, chiefs both symbolise and restrain Indigenous ethnicity.[9]

Constructivism explains adherence to ethnic elites without resorting to false-consciousness or assuming homogeneous group interests. Instead, it recognises that ethnic identities are continually reconstructed to accord with the social, institutional and economic experiences and beliefs of supporters. Both material and ideal interests contain imperatives shaping adherents' political identifications (Norton 1990:4). It recognises intra-ethnic axes of difference[10] and avoids essentialism, raising the ire of ethnic elites promoting essentialist identities (Roosens 1989:18). Treating ethnicity as a social construct does not attempt to undermine the immediacy of ethnic consciousness for adherents or, necessarily, the conviction of ethnic elites. It does not reduce ethnic identities to 'inventions' (Ranger 1983:212), but analyses the processes by which they have developed (Thomas 1992b:71-3). Constructivism is useful for analysing political dialogue in Fiji because it recognises how the formulation of ethnic political claims is both constrained and enabled by changing social, economic and institutional contexts. It also acknowledges that political dialogue both draws on and reworks cultural constructs, providing a framework that encompasses the role of ideologues. Appropriately for this study, it emphasises the importance of analysing ethnic ideologies to understand ethnic politics (Newman 1991:467).

E. The Role of Ideology in Ethnic Politics

Breuilly (1993:13,54) argues that ideology provides a mode of perception that connects people's experiences to society as a whole: "a conceptual map which enables people to relate their particular material and moral interests to a broader terrain of action." Analysing ethnic ideology involves exploring how notions of the ethnic community are translated into ideological forms, simplified, rendered symbolically, and resonate with adherents. Ethnic ideology emerges from ongoing interactions between existing cultural material, political rendering and the experiences of supporters with which the products must be relevant (Vail 1989:11). Given that ethnic ideologies are formulated in and for the purposes of the present,

[9] See also Linnekin and Poyer's (1990:12) distinction in the Pacific between understandings of ethnic identity from daily life and understandings of ethnicity in the political sphere. The former are based on consocial personhood – the person as a node in social relationships – where the latter are basedon Darwinian personhood – defined by blood descent.

[10] Gender differences are particularly important for ethnic group construction, not only because of the construction of gender roles in socialising the young, but because genders are often ascribed different capacities to pass on group membership, thus being critical to defining group boundaries (Sapiro 1993:40-2).

understanding the context of these processes is vital. Ethnic ideologies can resonate with adherents because they draw on existing beliefs and practices. However, the *selective* process transforming and politicising culture means popular accord is not guaranteed (Breuilly 1993:68-9). Rather, control over symbolic resources is contested, potential adherents may challenge and even reject reified aspects of their culture, and alternative reifications by counter-elites are always possible. Adherents also hold the power to *interpret* ideologies deployed by elites (Thomas 1992a:223; Brass 1991:75,293). If aspects of culture become emblems of whole life-ways during encounters with cultural others, the existence of such encounters at non-elite levels in Fiji's contemporary society offers numerous loci for competing ideological constructions (Thomas 1992a:212).

A focus on domestic actors and contexts should not obscure the broader intellectual sphere from which ideas are drawn, or the international arena in which sub-national claims are articulated (Nagel and Olzak 1982:138). Ethnic ideology mirrors nationalist ideology in its capacity to become 'modular' and shift to new contexts where it interacts with local 'political and ideological constellations' (Anderson 1991:4). The ideal of popular sovereignty underpinning political legitimacy has become an intellectual foundation for ethnic self-determination claims.[11] The process whereby abstract intellectual concepts are incorporated and imbued with meaning in local practice is illustrated in Fiji by the interpretation of Indigenous self-determination rights as rights to political priority. The ideal that popular sovereignty of *all* citizens legitimises rule, with which Indigenous self-determination contests, has vastly different implications in Fiji (Connor 1973:5-6). Both sovereignty of peoples (underpinning Indigenous self-determination) and of citizens (underpinning democracy), exist in tension with individual and minority group rights conceived from a liberal concern to *limit* popular sovereignty (Mamdani 1990:361). Contemporary dialogue in Fiji is characterised by selective interpretations of international rights discourses to legitimise local political aspirations.[12] It exemplifies what Mamdani (1990:359) describes as the formulation of the content of rights in particular historical and social contexts of perceived oppression. In Fiji, analysts must go beyond identifying where group rights may be used to subordinate individual members, rather than governing relations with majority groups or the state (Thompson 1997:787-8; Kymlicka and Straehle 1999:77). It is also necessary to identify where Indigenous group rights subordinate non-Indigenes, and universal individual rights promote sectional interests.

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[11] Connor (1973:11) argues that following the anti-colonial deployment of self-determination, ethnic groups re-appropriated it against newly independent states. Self-determination was recognised as a *human right* of peoples in the 1966 International Covenants on Civil and Political, and Economic, Social and Cultural, Rights, when Socialist and developing states dominated UN membership. Though a *principle* of the 1945 UN Charter, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, composed when Western states dominated the UN, did not provide for it (or indeed, any collective rights). (Cassese 1986:303; Bedjaoui 1987:94)

[12] See D.S. Moore (2000:655-6) on the reworking of global concepts in local political struggles.

F. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a theoretical framework for analysing political dialogue in Fiji, approaching ethnicity as a social construct. It has argued that to understand the relevance of ethnic ideologies to supporters, the context of political dialogue must be investigated. This entails exploring the historical construction of ethnic groups and the social, cultural, economic and institutional contexts within which ethnic ideologies resonate with the experiences of group members. Analysing ethnic political dialogue involves focusing on political actors who construct ideologies from cultural resources and memories, and promote a consciousness among supporters that privileges ethnic identities in political action. Ethnic identities are thus constructed as political from among numerous potential axes of difference in peoples' broader social lives, including class and region (Norton 1990:76; Despres 1975b:193). Chapter III provides a historical analysis of the formation, deployment and transformation of ethnic ideologies of paramountcy and equality in Fiji. According with the constructivist approach, it relates political dialogue to broader historical processes constructing and redefining the boundaries of ethnic groups, and to the demographic, institutional, and economic contexts in which these dialogues unfold. To offset the emphasis on elite dialogue, it explores resistance and support for ethnic elites. Chapters IV and V then focus on contemporary ethnic ideologies and their compatibility with a common national identity. They demonstrate specifically how international rights discourses are used to legitimise local political claims.

CHAPTER III
THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE ON PARAMOUNTCY AND EQUALITY IN THE FIJI ISLANDS

A. Introduction

Historically, political dialogue in Fiji has been characterised by contested meanings of paramountcy and equality, deployed by shifting constellations of actors. This chapter analyses the history of these ideological constructs, focusing both on the interests they have legitimised and the political identities they have shaped (Ratuva 1998:53). The paramountcy of Indigenous interests was entrenched during early colonial rule, but multiple understandings of the 'interests' held paramount have coexisted and oscillated in strength over time. Indo-Fijians have also deployed multiple meanings of equality, in changing historical contexts. Recently, Indigenes have re-oriented equality for their socio-economic claims. The chapter follows the methodological implications of constructivist approaches to ethnicity, by analysing political dialogue in its social, cultural and institutional context, paying particular attention to how meanings of paramountcy and equality have been forged through intersecting ideological and political economy forces. In focusing on the historical origin of paramountcy and equality, the chapter demonstrates how ethnically differentiated political identities have been constructed around these ideologies. It thus underpins the central concern of this thesis of whether these concepts, crucial to existing political identities, offer foundations for a common conception of citizenship and an inclusive national polity.

B. Transition to Early Colonial Rule: 1874 to 1910s

Unconditional cession to the British Crown in 1874 represented a strategic manoeuvre for Fiji's Eastern high chiefs (Lawson 1991:56). Intense nineteenth-century power struggles between leading political units (*matanitu*) in Eastern Fiji drew resources from and were manipulated by European traders, planters and missionaries.[13] Cession was motivated by instability from these struggles and their related failed governance attempts, 'sales' of land and labour to planters and financial pressures (Lal 1992:9-11). Indigenous ideologues interpret cession as a chiefly sacrifice protecting Indigenous lands and people against encroaching settlers; otherwise, leading chief Ratu Cakobau feared, "Fiji will become like a piece of driftwood in the sea, and be picked up by the first passer-by." (Cited in Ravuvu 1991:14) Persuaded of Fiji's strategic and economic potential, Britain accepted.[14] Sections 4

[13] Traders operated in Fiji from the early 1800s; the first missionaries arrived in 1835 (Lawson 1991:47). Thomas (1992a:220) argues that the conversion of Eastern and coastal Viti Levu chiefs occurred only after Christianity became congruous with Indigenous political strategies and imagined futures.

[14] Britain had, in fact, rejected an 1862 cession offer. However, strategic considerations relating to Panama Canal routes, Australian and New Zealand pressure over perceived French and German regional ascendance, a renewed evaluation of Fiji's

and 7 of the Deed of Cession provided Crown proprietorship of lands not alienated and neither occupied nor required by a 'tribe', and recognition of the rights and interests of the high chiefs party to the Deed (Lal 1992:29). These provisions did not guarantee Indigenous ownership of unoccupied lands or paramountcy for the Indigenous people, provisions 'inextricably associated' with the Deed after cession and echoing through subsequent political history (Lawson 1991:59).

The paternalistic colonial orthodoxy established under Fiji's first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, emerged from a convergence of factors. Gordon's 1875 arrival found the rudiments of indirect rule already instituted in the interim by the New South Wales Governor. Ruling through Indigenous power structures was expedient for the new regime facing severe finance and personal constraints (Howard 1991:25). Reinforcing chiefly hierarchy and Indigenous land ownership also fostered chiefly cooperation and popular acquiescence in an environment pervaded by distrust and insecurity during the 1975 measles epidemic (Ratuva 1998:55-6). Philosophies of racial and cultural superiority provided the Crown with moral legitimacy as trustee of the Indigenous people, respecting chiefly reliance in the Deed "on the justice and generosity of Her Majesty in dealing with the subject people, to promote civilisation and Christianity." (Cited in Lal 1992:11) Gordon had himself demonstrated a predisposition for defending the vulnerable in Governorships of Trinidad and Mauritius (Lawson 1991:61; Lal 1992:12).[15] These forces converged in Gordon's mission to uphold the paramountcy of Indigenous 'interests', defined as preserving the traditional values, livelihoods and political structures of a romanticised communal society. Indigenes were to be insulated from 'modern' competitive and 'dehumanising' pressures; their institutions used to manage their affairs, preserve their 'self-respect' and avoid their 'suspicion' (Lal 1992:14). Gordon found conservative sympathies among his officials, notably Ratu Cakobau's previous advisor Thurston who entrenched the orthodoxy as Governor from 1888-1897 (Howard 1991:29).

Colonial favour empowered the voices of Eastern chiefly males, with whom Europeans had interacted for decades, in the dialogue that codified Fijian society for state purposes (Thomas 1992a:221-2). Eastern chiefs have subsequently retained privileged control over cultural meanings, with important power implications (see Keesing 1987:165). Although well aware of regional differences in customs, officials privileged Polynesian-style rigid social and political hierarchies typical of the Eastern islands and coastal Viti Levu, and amenable to colonial rule (Chapelle 1976:483; Kaplan and Kelly 1994:131). An Eastern missionary-developed dialect became the *lingua franca* 'Fijian', and codified 'Indigenous' social structures were applied as administrative units (Lawson 1991:67-8). These processes systematically disadvantaged Western and central regions isolated from Eastern political units, not party to cession and partially subjugated by force. Their more egalitarian customs and smaller, decentralised political units were subordinated (Norton 1990:20; Linnekin and Poyer 1990:10). Fluid land-holdings responsive to forces of demography, alliance and

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commercial potential, a sense of civilising mission and even humanitarian protests in London over the Pacific labour trade, altered the decision in 1874 (Lawson 1991:49-55).

[15] In Mauritius, however, Carroll (1994:318-9) argues that the vulnerable Gordon defended against planters were indentured Indians, not earlier arriving Creoles.

warfare were frozen and made inalienable to *mataqali* social groupings, provisions intensely contested in intra-Indigenous debates (Thomas 1992a:222).[16] Gordon attributed to the Deed of Cession a convention providing Indigenous ownership of unoccupied lands, fixing 83% of Fiji's territory under Indigenous control.[17] Lal (1992:14) argues this degree of protection of Indigenous lands, institutions and customs was unparalleled in the colonial world. Preservation existed in tension with reform, however. The latter predominated where Indigenous traditions or practices were unacceptable to Christian principles or European standards. Gordon also maintained the ambiguity that paramountcy was *temporary* protection to stabilise Indigenous society before transition to modern life (*ibid*:15-6). Divorced from the imperatives generating it, however, paramountcy as the preservation of traditional chiefly, communal and land structures became orthodoxy. Its assumed cultural homogeneity provided a unifying force for chiefs constructing an Indigenous identity (Lawson 1991:90).

Contests over paramountcy within the administration and against settlers helped define its various meanings. Dissenting officials criticised colonial reinforcement of chiefly power and communal production, arguing it encouraged exploitation, hampered enterprise and was based on fallacious stereotypes of lazy, thriftless Indigenes (Howard 1991:25). Mixing evidence with individualist ideologies, they sought to redefine paramountcy as the promotion of Indigenous interests by advancing the socio-economic development of all Indigenes (Lal 1992:21-31).[18] Governor Sir Everard im Thurn (1804-1809) reduced chiefly exactions and communal control of labour, against resistance from administrative chiefs defending Gordon's orthodoxy (Chapelle 1976:482). His attempts to alienate unoccupied land were revoked by the Colonial Office under the influence of Gordon, now in the House of Lords (Howard 1991:38). Dissatisfied planters also contested colonial regulation of Indigenous labour and land. Conservative interpretations of paramountcy were strengthened by their deployment against planters, at a time when the Crown also used its Indigenous trusteeship to reject European demands for responsible government (Lal 1992:36). The tension between conservative and reformist approaches to paramountcy continued throughout colonial and independence history. The resulting compromise involved no serious reorientation of policy or restructuring of established institutions (Lawson 1991:116; Lal 1992:69). What allowed for the separation of state revenue needs from capital interests in Indigenous labour was Gordon's introduction of Indian labour in 1879 (Norton 1990:36). When the Indian Government halted indenture in 1916, 62,837 Indians had come to Fiji, approximately 60% remaining as settlers (Mayer 1963:14). Their political future was ill considered.

The foundation for Indian political rights claims to equality was laid by their separate incorporation into the colonial state. Administered, settled and eventually educated apart from Indigenous Fijians, their status derived from their economic role, completing the analogy of Fiji as a 'three-legged stool' supported by European capital, Fijian land and Indian

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[16] In several regions of Fiji, land had been held by family groups (*i tokatoka*) or even by individuals (Chapelle 1976:481).
[17] Much of the best agricultural land had already been alienated, but about half of it was returned to Indigenous owners by a Native Lands Commission established to investigate purported 'sales' (Mayer 1963:10).
[18] An Acting Governor in 1922 said, "So far he [Indigenous Fijian] is said to have been happy to remain in his old groove. Will he remain so as the world progresses around him? I doubt it." (Cited in Lal 1992:68)

labour (Norton 1990:41). Enduring considerable violence, with indentured women particularly vulnerable, they initially lacked educational facilities and political representation (Lal 1992:42-3). Colonial guarantees of protection were made only to secure the flow of labour, particularly as Indian Government investigations revealed systematic abuses and eroding cultural and religious practices (Mayer 1963:20-1). An 1875 despatch from Secretary of State for Colonies, Lord Salisbury, had assured India that labourers completing contracts and remaining in the colonies would be 'free men' with 'privileges no whit inferior' to other Crown subjects (Lawson 1991:130-1).[19] The Salisbury despatch has 'echoed' through Fiji's history as a charter of Indian rights, founded on equality (Lal 1992:16). Indenture living conditions virtually shattered caste occupational and social organisation, acting as a 'merciless leveller' of hierarchy and forging a social experience amenable to equality (Lal 1992:40).[20] Political deployment of equality was motivated by economic exploitation, and social and political exclusion (Lawson 1991:72). It arose in the 1910s era of re-emergent social and political consciousness following the dislocation of indenture. Homogenous treatment by the state and a *lingua franca* of debased Hindi did not, however, forge unanimity. Leaders from India who spearheaded the establishment of schools and religious institutions also provided the impetus for distinctions between majority Hindus and minority Muslims,[21] and reformist (Arya Samaji) and orthodox Hindus (Mayer 1963:43-4). Later arriving South Indian recruits suffered discrimination by North Indians. Free settlers from Gujarat and the Punjab remained socially aloof, resented in their business professions by indentured Indians who largely remained in cane farming (Jayawardena 1980:437). In the expanded political space of the post-indenture period, these cleavages have shaped Indian rights struggles.

Indian political consciousness and agitation began in this context of emergent social organisation. Leaders attacked racist social and legal discrimination, sought political representation and claimed equal status with Europeans as Crown subjects (Norton 1990:40). From 1904 the Legislative Council had included six elected Europeans and two Indigenes nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), created by Gordon as the highest advisory body on Indigenous affairs (Lawson 1991:85). Whereas the Crown had previously deployed paramountcy to deflect European claims to responsible government, Europeans now re-oriented paramountcy to deflect Indian threats to European racial and political privilege. At the same time, Indigenes were oriented against Indians (Carroll 1994:307). Europeans constructed the 'immigrant race' as threatening Indigenous paramountcy while their race, not merely the Crown, protected it (Norton 1990:37-8). These changing contexts of social, political and economic competition impelled redefinitions of paramountcy and equality throughout the colonial period.

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[19] The Indian Government rejected the purpose of the despatch – its assistance with recruiting indentured labourers – and did not refer to this provision in its future agreement to indenture labour for Fiji. The Salisbury Despatch thus holds little legal weight as a basis for Indian rights. The 1910 Colonial Office Sanderson Report, however, wrote of Fiji: "The present administration fully recognises the value of Indians as permanent settlers, and is willing to concede them the enjoyment of equal civil rights." (Cited in Lawson 1991:131)

[20] An attempt to reconcile the virtue of caste in India (valorised as based on mutual respect and religious hierarchy) with Indian claims to equality against discrimination in Fiji (denigrated as based on wealth and colour) is found in the press of the time (*The Indian Settler March-April 1917*, reproduced in Lal 1992:49).

[21] Hindus comprise 78% of Indo-Fijians, with Muslims comprising 16% and Christians 6% (Carroll 1994:305).

C. Colonial Rule: 1920s to 1950s

The variety of meanings attached to equality is illustrated by 1920s debates over political representation. Recent migrants, imbued with anti-colonial sentiment, vigorously asserted Indo-Fijian rights. Without municipal representation, agitation was channelled through militant unions and central colonial structures (Mayer 1963:108). Paradoxically, struggles for equal status for Indians, an increasing proportion of whom were Fiji-born, were assisted by the Indian Government via the Colonial Office (Lal 1992:74). One deployment of equality demanded racial parity of political representation with Europeans. The Governor reluctantly accepted pseudo-parity in 1929, balancing six communally elected Europeans with three communally elected Indo-Fijians and three nominated Indigenes. Once in the Legislative Council, Indo-Fijians leaders deployed *individual* equality, proposing an egalitarian conception of the status of subjects and a common electoral roll (Mayer 1963:42; Kaplan and Kelly 1994:139). This claim encapsulated an ideology of non-discrimination, an aim to deconstruct communal segmentation, and strategic advantage for a population politically subordinated by Europeans whom they outnumbered more than ten-fold. It fleetingly offered enfranchisement for Indigenous Fijians, and for ethnic minorities excluded from three-way racial categorisations. Fearing the 'immigrant' race and opposing commoner voting, chiefs allied with the European targets of the claim, deploying Indigenous paramountcy against the common roll and equality (Norton 1990:39). Indian political representation was interpreted as compromising the Deed of Cession, where European representation did not (Lal 1992:91). This reinforced an emerging construction of cession as the transfer of sovereignty to the European *race*, thus excluding other races from government (Lawson 1991:140). Fuelling Indigenous fears in their own interests, Europeans described equality as a 'velvet covering' for 'steel claws' seeking Indo-Fijian control of Fiji (Lal 1992:92). This representation was reinforced by the 1936 census, confirming Indo-Fijians would soon outnumber Indigenes (Mayer 1963:60). Muslims and orthodox Hindus also opposed the common roll, equating individual equality with domination by majority Arya Samajis, divisions also demonstrated in future debates over the meaning of equality (Lawson 1991:151-3). Table 2 summarises changes in population and political representation in Fiji in the Twentieth Century.

Indigenous chiefs played critical roles in these political contests. Paramountcy had empowered them vis-à-vis commoners and provided their interest in the colonial state. Rebellions in central and Western Fiji occurred from the 1870s onwards, challenging both the exploitation of commoners by chiefs and the communal system, and the domination of Indigenous society by Eastern chiefs and Europeans (Howard 1991:26-36).[22] Celebrated millenarian Apolosi Nawai promoted an alternative understanding of paramountcy as economic autonomy and development for ordinary Indigenes (Norton 1990:65). Although opposed by chiefly, church, Crown and capital coalitions, such resistance by Western commoners to exploitative 'traditional' systems continued to contest the meaning of

[22] These movements were also typically ambivalent or opposed to the presence of 'Indians' in Fiji, but more directly threatened chiefs, European capital and the Crown (Lal 1992:50).

paramountcy (Thomas 1992b:223-4; Kaplan and Kelly 1994:136-7). Colonial officials

Table 2: Historical Summary of Population and Political Representation

	Indigenous Fijian	Indo-Fijian	Other[a]	Total
1891 (%) [Eur] [%]	105,800[b] (87.3)	7,468 (6.2)	7,912 (6.5) [2,036] [1.7]	121,180
1911 (%) [Eur] [%]	87,096 (62.4)	40,286 (28.9)	12,159 (8.7) [3,707] [2.7]	139,541
1936 (%) [Eur] [%'	97,651 (49.2)	85,002 (42.8)	15,726 (7.9) [4,028] [2.0]	198,379
1966 (%) [Eur] [%]	202,176 (42.4)	240,960 (50.5)	33,591 (7.0) [6,590] [1.4]	476,727
1986 (%) {Rot} {%}	329,305 (43.8)	384,704 (51.2)	37,366 (5.0) {8,652} {1.2}	751,375
1996 (%) {Rot} {%}	393,357 (50.8)	338,818 (43.7)	42,684 (5.5) {9,727} {1.3}	774,859

Non-Official[c] Members of the Legislative Council, then House of Representatives from 1970.

1904 6 Europeans (elected[d]);
2 Indigenous Fijians (nominated by GCC).

1916 7 Europeans (elected);
2 Indigenous Fijians (nominated by GCC);
[1 Indo-Fijian nominated[e] official member].

1929 6 Europeans (elected);
3 Indo-Fijians (elected);
3 Indigenous Fijians (nominated by GCC).

1936 5 Europeans (3 elected, 2 nominated);
5 Indo-Fijians (3 elected, 2 nominated);
5 Indigenous Fijians (nominated by GCC).

1963 6 Europeans (4 elected, 2 nominated);
6 Indo-Fijians (4 elected, 2 nominated);
6 Indigenes (4 elected, 2 nominated by GCC).

1965 11 Indigenes (9 elected, 2 elected by GCC);
9 Indo-Fijians (elected);
7 General Electors (elected).

1970 22 Indigenes (12 communal, 10 cross-voting);
22 Indo-Fijians (12 communal, 10 cross-voting);
8 Gen. Electors (3 communal, 5 cross-voting).

1990 37 Indigenous Fijians (communal);
27 Indo-Fijians (communal);
5 General Electors (communal);
1 Rotuman[f] (communal).

1997 23 Indigenous Fijians (communal);
19 Indo-Fijians (communal);
3 General Electors (communal);
1 Rotuman (communal);
25 'Open' seats (common roll).

Source: Constructed from Prasad *et al* (2001:4); Lal (1992); Lawson (1991); Norton (1990); 1990 and 1997 Constitutions.
(a) 'Others' includes Chinese, Europeans, Part-Europeans, Pacific Islanders, Rotumans and all others. Where relevant, European [Eur] and Rotuman {Rot} sections within the 'Others' category are also noted separately.
(b) The Indigenous population had been 200,000 before cession in 1861, then 114,748 after the measles epidemic in 1881. Its lowest level was 84,475 in 1921.
(c) The Legislative Council had an official majority until 1966, the first elections under the new 1965 arrangement.
(d) Before 1970, all 'elected' representatives were elected from communal rolls.
(e) 'Nominated' means selected by the Governor; the GCC effectively nominated its own representatives, in practice the Governor 'selecting' the nominees the GCC placed first on its list.
(f) Rotuma Island was ceded to Britain in 1879, its people possess a distinct history and culture.

backbone of the economy, also supported reforms to obtain alternative cane farmers to unionised Indo-Fijians. High chiefs resisted, alarmed by disorder, declining chiefly authority attempted to diminish communal regulations, and constrain chiefly power through direct rule (Lawson 1991:91-2). Australian monopolist Colonial Sugar Refineries (CSR), the backbone of the economy, also supported reforms to obtain alternative cane farmers to unionised Indo-Fijians. High chiefs resisted, alarmed by disorder, declining chiefly authority and reduced village control over labour, particularly women's (Lal 1992:66). Oxford-educated acknowledged leader of Fijian chiefs Ratu Sukuna, for example, rebuked Nawai for applying equality to an Indigenous society 'bristling' with inequality (Lal 1992:52). He successfully pressed officials to return to indirect rule and tighten 'native' regulations in the Fijian Administration under a new Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) (Norton 1990:46). These restrictions, at the close of World War Two, provoked considerable resentment in the more open society engendered by media access and foreign military personnel, particularly in the West (Lal 1992:139). The strength of chiefly and institutional resistance to reform, however, continued to prevent numerous reports criticising chiefs and 'native' regulations from being implemented (Lawson 1991:108-9). Mayer (1963:95) argues the concentration of Indigenous professionals in the church and state impeded the strength of independent educated public opinion to counter orthodoxy. Middle-level chiefs and commoners advanced in institutions aimed to preserve 'traditional' Indigenous society and hierarchy; emerging sources of authority providing alternatives to chiefly hierarchy thus also became staunch defenders of conservative orthodoxy.

The re-orientation of paramountcy against Indo-Fijian claims to equality in political dialogue was paralleled in political economy. Europeans, previously fighting to access Indigenous land, exited plantations after the indenture era and then supported paramountcy to protect Indigenous land (Lal 1992:35). The new tenant-smallholder structure of production under CSR pitted Indo-Fijians against Indigenous landowners over lease conditions. Indo-Fijians thus became the 'frontline' for foreign capital against Indigenous protection (Norton 1990:36-7). Political cleavages between Indigenous and Indo-Fijians were deepened as chiefs supported the Crown by breaking multi-ethnic strikes in Suva and Indo-Fijian strikes in Western cane-fields in 1920-21 and 1959-60.[23] These land and labour contests buttressed the representation of Indo-Fijians, from debates over political status, as threatening Indigenous paramountcy (Norton 1990:40). This threat operated via the identity of chiefly interests with the state. By 1940 Ratu Sukuna had convinced Indigenous chiefs to entrust land control to a chiefly-dominated Native Land Trust Board (NLTB), controlling unoccupied lands and overcoming idiosyncrasies in decentralised leasing (*ibid*:189). Norton (1990:48) argues this exemplifies the moderating force of high chiefs, playing a dual role as rallying points for

[23] The 1920-21 strikes were broken by police constabulary involving Indigenous Fijians (Mayer 1963:36-9). Chiefs exhorted Indigenous workers to obey chiefs rather than taking advice from 'foreigners' in Suva's 1959 multi-ethnic strikes (Lawson 1991:162). Fiji's history of militant union leadership in the West contrasts with moderate union leadership in the urban Southeast. Strikes were more difficult to mount and maintain in urban areas, and Suva's long tradition of multi-racial social organisations motivated union leaders who sought social advance to be moderate. Fiji's most militant Indo-Fijian leaders have originated in the sugar unions of the West. As the seat of both radical Indigenous movements and radical Indo-Fijian unions, the West, paradoxically, also has a long tradition of friendly inter-ethnic relations based on multi-lingual communication and shared social lives (Norton 1990:53-4,70).

Indigenous land rights *and* mediators of Indo-Fijian tenant and commercial needs. This mediation, however, also represents the compromise of chiefly interests as Indigenous leaders to their interests vested in the state and economy as colonial officials (Lawson 1991:122).

The 1946 Legislative Council 'Deed of Cession Debate' represents the culmination of the re-orientation of Indigenous paramountcy from opposing European political and land claims to opposing Indo-Fijian political and land claims. Following census evidence that Indo-Fijians outnumbered Indigenes, a European moved on the latter's behalf:

> The time has arrived…to emphasise the terms of the Deed of Cession to assure that the interests of the Fijian race are safeguarded and a guarantee be given that Fiji is to be preserved and kept as a Fijian country for all time. [Cited in Lawson 1991:59]

The debate emphasised European-Indigenous cooperation to avert 'Indian domination'. It also drew together Indo-Fijian claims to secure tenancy and equality as threatening the paramountcy of Indigenous chiefs, land and communal living. It forms part of a dialogic process whereby cultural constructs of chiefly authority and land ownership have become emblematic of Indigenous identity. This depends less on the historical accuracy of colonial-manifestations of these systems, than on their social significance (France, cited in Ratuva 1998:56). Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel, while exposing European hypocrisy, agreed that in conflicts with Indigenes, Indo-Fijians interests should be 'subservient' (Lal 1992:143). A modified consensus motion affirmed the Deed as a 'Charter of the Fijian people' (Lawson 1991:59), reinforcing the construction promoted in contemporary politics of the Deed as a guarantor of paramountcy. The debate did not resolve the meaning of paramountcy; conservatism and assisted 'modernisation' have persisted in tension.

D. Achieving Independence: 1960s to 1987

International de-colonisation pressures in the 1960s hastened Fiji's independence, against the wishes of leading chiefs (Ravuvu 1991:52-3). Upholding the Queen as 'chief of chiefs', they feared independence would weaken Indigenous paramountcy (Norton 1990:26). Ratu Sir Kamesese Mara, groomed by colonial officials to be Fiji's first Prime-Minister, initially deployed paramountcy to preserve benevolent European rule, or at least exclude from negotiations Indo-Fijians not party to the Deed of Cession (Lal 1992:188). With independence imminent, paramountcy was redeployed to mean Indigenous racial privilege vis-à-vis Indo-Fijians in the new nation. Future Governor-General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau argued Britain should "return Fiji to the Fijians in the same spirit in which the Fijians gave Fiji to Great Britain." (Lal 1992:189-97) This understanding of paramountcy was congruent with numerous expressions of popular Indigenous consciousness during the colonial era. The young Indigenous society *Viti Cauravou* had long demanded Indigenous control and advance to prevent domination by 'strangers' (Lal 1992:72). The GCC had consistently voiced similar concerns, in 1933 rejecting any Indian part in 'matters affecting the interests of the Fijian race' (Lal 1992:92; Howard 1991:117). Indigenous chiefs, who had previously moderated these popular sentiments for the state interest (Norton 1990:45), now articulated them in the contest to form a new state power structure. They offered extreme positions from which to bargain during negotiations (Lawson 1991:158). Ratu Mara's philosophy was that intractable

ethnic divisions must be managed by institutionalisation to form an inclusive national polity (Lawson 1991:197).

Indo-Fijian demands for a common roll and shared citizenship during independence negotiations were premised on equality defined as an individual right (Lal 1992:198).[24] Indo-Fijian leader Patel rejected the institutionalisation of ethnic divisions, arguing that colonial institutions and communal voting artificially divided a populace with cross-ethnic political interests (Lal 1992:196).[25] He also drew on Indo-Fijian contributions to Fiji's development to substantiate equal rights; claims vulnerable to reminders of meagre Indo-Fijian contributions to the Second World War and insinuations of loyalty to India (Ravuvu 1991:47; Kaplan and Kelly 1994:142). The platform of Patel's Indo-Fijian Federation Party, emerging from radical cane unions, was of class-based struggle against political and economic oppression (Lal 1992:179). Its campaigns in the 1960s for independence, individual equality and a common roll were partially directed to the international arena, to affect the terms of independence (Norton 1990:61,76-7). Indigenes construed the Indo-Fijian majority's common roll demand as a threat to paramountcy (Ravuvu 1991:54).

Contrary to its colonial practice in Fiji, at independence Britain required that all subjects become equal citizens.[26] The 1970 constitution thus provided the possibility for an inclusive national polity through common citizenship. It was built, however, on a history of racial ideologies and institutions, many of which it preserved. Adherents to individual equality philosophies interpret these institutions as perpetuating ethnic antagonism through division (Prasad *et al* 2001:4); philosophies recognising ethnic group identities interpret them as fostering integration through the security of ethnic institutions (Norton 2000b:83). Instead of a common roll, communal seats were combined with national cross-voting seats[27] to comprise a lower house with pre-determined ethnic composition (Lawson 1991:173).[28] 'Fijians' and 'Indians' held equal numbers of seats, with 'General Electors' grossly over-represented relative to their population share [see Table 2]. Melanesians and Pacific Islanders were classified with Indigenes as 'Fijians', the other minorities as 'General Electors'. Land ownership was unquestioned in independence negotiations, however control over lease conditions was transferred from the NLTB to Parliament (Norton 1990:83). Within the framework of equal citizenship, the Deed of Cession was recognised as providing Indigenous paramountcy, meaning the protection of Indigenous customs and political institutions (Lawson 1991:59). In 'return' for receiving equal citizenship, Indo-Fijians conceded powers

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[24] Muslims rejected the central Indo-Fijian demand of a common roll, as they had in 1929, again indicating the extent of intra-Indian divisions (Mayer 1963:134).

[25] Horowitz (2000: 628), however, argues that common or communal rolls are only one factor determining whether electoral systems encourage multi-ethnic moderation – the method of voting, constituency boundaries and number of members elected per constituency are also vital.

[26] As late as 1965, a Governor was quoted as saying he would not have Fijians "under the heels of an immigrant community." (Cited in Lal 1992:188)

[27] Cross-voting seats specified the ethnicity of the candidate but were elected by a national common roll.

[28] The electoral system was intended to be provisional, to overcome lack of agreement between ethnic leaders during the 1960s. Ratu Mara's government, however, did not implement the recommendations of the subsequent Royal Commission, to make cross-voting seats into common roll seats (Lawson 1991:186).

for GCC nominees to the upper house (Senate) to veto legislation regarding Indigenous regulations, lands, fisheries and political representation (Lawson 1991:189-90). The separate Fijian Administration remained. The negotiated independence effectively transferred leadership from colonial officials to administrative chiefs, rather than representing a serious attempt at nation-building (Lal 1992:216). Both Indo-Fijian and Indigenous leaders were accused of treachery by their respective constituents, whose consciousnesses of their rights did not accord with the bargain struck (Norton 1990:105; Ravuvu 1991:73). Indigenous acquiescence reflected Ratu Mara's stature more than their support for an inclusive polity. Faith in the protection of paramountcy rested on his rule rather than protective provisions in the Constitution, which was never translated into Fijian (Lawson 1991:254). It forms one example of how linguistic segmentation partially structures access to political knowledge in Fiji.

Significant changes in Fiji's political dialogue occurred in the early independence years, underneath the veneer of continuity offered by Ratu Mara's Prime-Ministership. The Fijian Association wing of his Malaysian-inspired Alliance, accommodating corporate ethnic blocks, was gradually dominated by young, well-educated Indigenes of moderate or non-chiefly stature (Norton 1990:81). They rejected protective paramountcy in favour of aggressive racial privilege.[29] In 1975, inspired by Uganda's expulsion of Indians, Alliance member Butadroka (cited in Lal 1992:235) moved:

> That this House agrees that the time has come when Indians or people of Indian origin in this country be repatriated back to India and their travelling expenses back home and compensation for their property in this country be met by the British Government.

Ratu Mara did not support the motion, instead affirming Indo-Fijian rights and economic contributions, but he rejected the National Federation Party's (NFP) amendment upholding full citizenship for Indo-Fijians (Lawson 1991:205). A widely respected Alliance member admitted the motion reflected Indigenous conceptions of their paramountcy, stating it echoed the 'soul' of the Fijian people (Lal 1992:235). The Alliance had gained almost 25% of Indo-Fijian communal votes in 1968 and 1972, largely from moderates, Muslims and particularly Gujurati businessmen (Lawson 1991:160). Following 1975, Indo-Fijian support shifted further to the NFP, which increasingly championed Indo-Fijian rights, abandoning the multi-racial class platform never attracting it more than a few percent of Indigenous votes (Lawson 1991:177).[30] The success of Butadroka's Fijian Nationalist Party in the 1977 elections exposed the discord between multi-racial political ideals and the political identities of a significant proportion of Indigenes. Opposing chiefs as much as Indo-Fijians (Norton 1990:116), Butadroka strengthened the legitimacy of paramountcy as promoting the Indigenous race rather than preserving traditional institutions.

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[29] The Fijian Association admitted that their campaigns for the Alliance during elections involved appealing to Indigenous sentiment to unite against 'Indians', explaining the multi-ethnic Alliance as a clever device for controlling government (Norton 1990:88).

[30] Norton (1990:96) describes some limitations of NFP appeal to Indigenous Fijians as their few campaigners fluent in Fijian, their requiring official permission (influenced by chiefs) to enter villages to campaign and their tendency to alienate Indigenes by criticising chiefs.

Socio-economic life also faced continuities and discontinuities. The dominance of foreign capital, Gujurati commercial leadership, commodity-export orientation and lack of rural development continued (Samy 1976b:25; Norton 1990:27). Rapid urbanisation provided opportunities for commonality in strong multi-ethnic unions, and also inter-ethnic antagonism in employment and housing competition. The stakes of political competition rose as the state increasingly apportioned employment and wealth opportunities; at the same time, a successful Indigenous entrepreneurial elite emerged reliant on connections with political incumbents (Norton 1990:113-23). The Fiji Labour Party (FLP) formed from the union movement in 1985 to offer a non-racial platform based on individual equality and non-discrimination, while the Alliance and NFP increasingly relied on ethnic appeals (Lawson 1991:236-7). The FLP aimed to forge political identities overwhelming ethnic affiliations from socio-economic cleavages, to promote national and regional socio-economic equality. Its Western-Fijian leader Bavadra articulated an ideology separating chiefly hierarchy from individual equality in the political sphere (Lal 1992:263). Alliance opponents countered by arguing he aimed to remove chiefs from politics:

> This will destroy the inseparable link between the *Turaga* [chiefs] and the *Vanua* [the land and the people]. The *Turaga* and the *Vanua* were one – one could not exist without the other – the chiefs were a bulwark of security for all and custodians of Fijian identity, land and culture. [Cited in Lawson 1991:242-3]

E. Political Crises: 1987 to 2000

The transition to FLP-NFP Coalition government in April 1987 appeared to signal the acceptance of democratic succession in an inclusive national polity. After the election, however, protests fearing for Indigenous paramountcy and land under Bavadra's 'Indian-dominated' government intensified.[31] Led by Western-Fijian radical Apisai Tora,[32] their placards implied racial exclusivity – 'Fiji for the Fijians' – and religious supremacy – 'Our God, Our Land' (Lal 1992:273). In the name of Indigenous rights, Lieutenant-Colonel Rabuka ousted the Coalition by military coup in May, and declared Fiji a republic in a second coup in September.[33] Rabuka drew on the Deed of Cession as a guarantee of Indigenous paramountcy. He defined paramountcy as racial privilege, derived from rights to Indigenous self-determination and as God's 'chosen people' for the land of Fiji, with Indo-Fijians their

[31] The FLP-NFP coalition gained over 10% of its votes from Indigenes, higher than the NFP ever attained alone, but the remaining 90% were Indo-Fijian votes (Norton 1990:136). The composition of parliament ensures any government is ethnically biased: the winner, determined by cross-voting, gains most seats in communal electorates (Lawson 1991:220).

[32] Tora, unionist and agitator, is Fiji's perennial political opportunist. In the 1960s he campaigned in the UN for Fiji's independence, then claimed domestically that the best protection of Indigenes was to 'send Indians away to other countries', before merging his radical Western party with the Indo-Fijian Federation Party in 1969 to fight on a class platform as the NFP (Lal 1992:197). He shifted to the Alliance in 1984, before its defeat in 1987 (Durutalo 1999:432).

[33] In the interim, the Governor-General Ratu Penaia was forging a constitutional solution by appeasing Indigenous aspirations expressed in the GCC yet retaining links with the Crown. His progress with Ratu Mara and Bavadra isolated Rabuka, opened the possibility for him to be charged with treason, and dissatisfied organisers of the *Taukei* movement that had staged the protest marches surrounding the coup. A second coup halted negotiations (Lawson 1991:259-72). Rabuka maintains that his actions pre-empted inevitable inter-ethnic violence [Interview: Rabuka 02/08/01].

'guests' (Premdas 1991:542). He thus brought to the centre of political discourse an ideology treated as extreme in 1975. This conception of paramountcy drew on and fostered the construct of Indigenousness. Whilst the Commonwealth condemned the coups, the GCC, Methodist Church,[34] Ratu Mara[35] and other Melanesian countries offered their support (Lal 1992:286; Lawson 1991:262). Regardless of the power and wealth interests of conspirators (see Lal 1992:273),[36] the coup reflected and affected widely held Indigenous identities based on paramountcy (Norton 1990:143). As Governor-General Ratu Penaia reflected, "we are all aiming at the same result, generally, but we are considering different methods of achieving this." (Cited in Lal 1992:278)

Fiji's 1990 Constitution reflected GCC proposals and entrenched paramountcy as Indigenous racial privilege. Its preamble explicitly rejected 1970 Constitutional provisions for protective paramountcy, affirming the right of Indigenes to "govern themselves for their advancement and welfare." Section 41 guaranteed an Indigenous parliamentary majority [see Table 2],[37] with the Presidency, Prime-Ministership and particular ministerial portfolios reserved for Indigenes (Lal 1992:322). It also redefined Indigenous boundaries, excluding Melanesians and Pacific Islanders from a 'Fijian' classification, now incorporating only Indigenes of male descent registered in the *Vola Ni Kawa Bula* book of landowners (Sect.156). Section 21 provided systematic affirmative action for Indigenes in education and business, copied from Malaysia's 1957 Constitution (see Lim 1985:256). Indigenous leaders have promoted parallels with Malaysia, whose Indigenous *Bumiputra*[38] also claim 'special rights' to political control and affirmative action.[39] Fiji's independence is retrospectively interpreted as a bargain, implicitly trading Indo-Fijian citizenship for Indigenous political control, broken by the 1987 FLP-NFP victory (Lal 1992:287). Indigenous protests are constructed as warnings of the inter-ethnic violence inevitable if their political and socio-economic aspirations are not realised, and Fiji has used Malaysian models to increase Indigenous capital ownership and enterprise (Ratuva 2001:20). In response to paramountcy as Indigenous racial privilege, FLP and NFP leaders strengthened ideologies of individual equality, non-discrimination and human rights.

In the 1990s Rabuka retreated from paramountcy as Indigenous privilege, founding an inclusive polity on protective paramountcy. His shift reflected a convergence of factors,

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[34] Pro-Rabuka ethno-nationalist Ministers replaced Rev Koroi, Methodist Church President in 1987 who condemned the coup and upheld equality. Otherwise, a disjuncture may have developed between the political aspirations of the 80% of Indigenes who are Methodists, and their religious leadership. [Interview: Koroi 07/08/01; Lal 1992:286]

[35] Ratu Mara joined the May cabinet and became Prime-Minister after an unstable September cabinet (Lal 1992:275).

[36] Norton (1990:138) argues that many Indigenes see the coups as an instrument of Tovata confederacy hegemony, which has historically dominated the military and had Ratu Mara and Ratu Penaia as its paramount chiefs.

[37] The 37 Indigenous communal seats were gerrymandered against the urban Indigenes who undermined unity by voting Labour in 1987. Being 32.7% of Indigenes, they received only 13.5% of the communal seats (Premdas 1993:999).

[38] Literally: 'sons of the soil'.

[39] The parallels are numerous: *Bumiputra* special rights in Malaysia originated in British colonial ideologies of protective trusteeship, against the immigrant Chinese (Wyzan 1990:52). Indigenous Malays construct independence as a bargain of Chinese citizenship for Malay political control and economic advance (Alamgir 1994:70-1). 'Race riots' in 1969 have been interpreted as evidence of Malay disaffection over socio-economic exclusion, mandating affirmative action ostensibly to avoid otherwise inevitable national disintegration (Faaland *et al* 1990:12-3,25).

including Indigenous political fragmentation and economic mismanagement undermining his leadership (Durutalo 1999:427; Premdas 1993:998).[40] He argues his understanding of paramountcy remained, but he recognised that it required Fiji's development and thus international support (Interview: Rabuka 02/08/01). The Constitution Review Commission (CRC) was required to safeguard paramountcy, defined as the protection of Indigenous rights and interests compatible with international human rights standards for individuals and groups (Reeves *et al* 1996:2). Protective paramountcy was entrenched in the resulting 1997 Constitution (Sect.6): Indigenous interests could 'not be subordinated' to those of other communities. As in 1970, it was substantiated by veto powers for GCC Senate nominees over specified legislation regarding Indigenous lands and customary institutions (Sect.185). Individual equality and non-discrimination were guaranteed (Sect.38), along with mandatory affirmative action to promote effective equality of opportunity (Sect.44). The Constitution thus offered foundations for political inclusion, with Indigenous paramountcy compatible with individual equality. Rabuka 'horse-traded' with NFP leader Reddy to determine the composition of parliament [Interviews: Rabuka 02/08/01; Reddy 03/09/01], increasing the CRC recommended proportion of communal against common roll seats (Reeves 1998:226-7; see Table 2). Rejected by most Indigenous Provincial Councils, Rabuka and Reddy persuaded the GCC to agree to the Constitution (Norton 2000b:110). Following this outstanding achievement in political moderation, little attention was devoted to public education, or the conflict of protective paramountcy with Indigenous expectations of privilege 'legitimated' by the 1987 coups.

The 1999 election campaign was dominated by two multi-ethnic coalitions, but did not realise 1997 Constitutional objectives of rewarding multi-ethnic political moderation. The FLP had increasingly championed Indo-Fijian rights in the 1990s, losing Indigenous votes.[41] Though multi-ethnic in leadership and ideology, it increasingly came to represent its Indo-Fijian-dominated constituency. In 1999 it condemned Reddy's support for the Constitution and coalition with the former coup-leader, outbidding the NFP for Indo-Fijian votes (Ratuva 2000:54; Norton 2000b:94). Its leader, trade unionist Mahendra Chaudhry, became Prime-Minister until being overthrown in May 2000 by a civilian coup fronted by bankrupt businessman George Speight. Protest marches preceding the coup, in which Tora was again pivotal,[42] reiterated 1987 slogans and advocated return to the 1990 Constitution (Tarte 2001:531). Speight justified his purported abrogation of the 1997 Constitution with Indigenous self-determination, deploying paramountcy as both political control and socio-economic advance (*Times* 20/05/00:3). Prominent Indigenous leaders agreed with this meaning during the ensuing months of intra-Fijian power struggles ensnaring a deeply divided GCC. (Tarte 2001:534; Interview: Ganilau 23/08/01).[43] With the Government still hostage the military, on whose support the coup mistakenly calculated, assumed control and appointed

[40] Norton (2000b:107) argues that a then moderate Methodist Church President also persuaded Rabuka to the change.
[41] Predmas (1993:1007) commented on the 1992 elections that Labour support was not only minimal among Indigenous Fijians, but also among urban Indo-Fijians. The FLP support base was in the Western and Northern cane belts.
[42] Tora had stood for a moderate Indigenous party in coalition with the FLP in 1999, but lost his seat (Tarte 2001:529).
[43] Support for Speight was by no means as wide as support for his conception of Indigenous paramountcy. The Fijian Women's Organisation (*Soqosoqo Vakamarama*), for example, addressed the GCC saying, "We [women] are 50% of the Indigenous people, and he's not speaking for us." [Interview: Vakatale 17/08/01]

an Interim Cabinet.[44] Widespread awareness of the multi-ethnic coalition seeking power and wealth behind Speight (Ratuva 2000:56-7; Lal 2000:187), has not detracted from how strongly privilege resonates with Indigenous political identities. It has, however, reinforced instrumentalist analyses of ethnicity by Indo-Fijians and Indigenous moderates, who have resisted political exclusion using claims to equality.

Norton (1990:151) argues that Ratu Mara's return to power after the 1987 coups demonstrated that Fiji's chiefs retained control of the most potent Indigenous 'cultural capital'. Rabuka's attempt to govern with a cabinet of middle-ranking chiefs and educated commoners proved unstable (Lal 1992:295). By 2000, the situation had changed. Emergent victors appointed by the military, were well-educated professional Indigenes of moderate or no chiefly rank (Rakuita 2001:7). They represent an Indigenous middle class that has risen on state educational, occupational, entrepreneurial and nepotistic support, intensified after 1987. Their alignment with extremist ideologies accords with their political and economic interests, dependent on links with an Indigenous-controlled state (Ratuva 2000:56). Their appeal extends to the growing ranks of urban Indigenes living largely outside chiefly hierarchies and daily struggling for employment and housing. Rhetorically, paramountcy supported chiefs and tradition; effectively, it advances Indigenous socio-economic interests to benefit elites and appease populist disaffection. The first focus of post-coup interim rulers was an affirmative action plan (Vinding 2001:209). Ideologically, it represents the ascendance of paramountcy as Indigenous advance over paramountcy as the protection of tradition. Institutionally, it represents an outcome of channelling commoner advance through Indigenous institutions and state-sourced ethnic privileges, to which emerging Indigenous elites are then allied.[45] Paramountcy as racial privilege, championed by commoners and middle-ranking chiefs, has become potent cultural capital.

F. Conclusion

Exploring historical dialogues involving paramountcy and equality ideologies has demonstrated how differential ethnic political identities have been constructed in Fiji. These processes have been characterised by contest, both between paramountcy and equality and among different meanings of each concept. In the wake of the 2000 coup, political discourse has been dominated by extremes: paramountcy as Indigenous rights to group privilege, and equality as a human right to identical individual treatment. The contested nature of these ideologies and range of actors deploying them also offers potential for inter-ethnic cohesion. Possibilities for political inclusion are explored in the following chapters, for which this historical analysis provides a foundation by emphasising themes that continue to impact on

[44] Speight and key political actors he promoted are from the confederacy of Kabuna (Tarte 2001:536). The military, itself dominated by the Tovata confederacy, appointed an Interim Prime-Minister from Tovata. Military refusal to support Speight can be read both as protecting the national interest against the coup, and preventing the political ascendance of Kabuna, home to the Cakobau dynasty ceding Fiji to Britain.

[45] Many Indigenes have succeeded on values of individual enterprise separate from Indigenous institutions and state favour, but as Lal (1992:302) comments, are more likely to be represented in moderate Indigenous parties or the FLP.

contemporary political dialogue through ideologies and institutional structures. These include first, Indigenous interpretations of the 1874 Deed of Cession as a charter of rights for chiefs and their people to retain political paramountcy and land ownership, land security identified with the NLTB. Recently, Indigenous rights to self-determination and resource control have bolstered this construction. Secondly, Indo-Fijian rights claims have been based on indenture-era promises of political equality, and recently bolstered by international human rights discourses. Thirdly, Indigenes have construed Indo-Fijian demands for secure tenancy and political equality as threats to their land and political paramountcy. Finally, trends toward political exclusion and inclusion have oscillated during independence. The 1970 Constitution provided a basis for inclusion with protective paramountcy accommodating equal citizenship and open leadership. The 1990 Constitution reversed inclusion, defining paramountcy as Indigenous political control from guaranteed national leadership and a parliamentary majority. The 1997 Constitution reversed exclusion, making individual equality the framework within which protective Indigenous paramountcy is accommodated. This Constitution continues to structure Fiji's political institutions, promoting a polity where paramountcy and equality are compatible in a context where political dialogue is increasingly dominated by extreme ideologies.

CHAPTER IV
PARAMOUNTCY AND EQUALITY AS CONTESTED CONCEPTS: PARTY PLATFORMS AND POLICY ISSUES

A. Introduction

This chapter analyses the 2001 election campaign to explore the different meanings of equality and paramountcy deployed in contemporary political dialogue. In March 2001 Fiji's Court of Appeal upheld the 1997 Constitution as the supreme law, undermining the legitimacy of the interim regime and prompting new elections (*Fiji v Prasad* 2001). The pro-democracy Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) further sought to de-legitimise the President for not recalling the 1999-elected parliament. Although supported by some union, business and political actors, conservative editorials backed the High Court decision against 'turning back the clock' (*Post* 12/07/01:8; Interviews: Anthony 24/07/01; Whiteside 23/07/01). The August elections thus proceeded under 1997 Constitutional arrangements: a 71-member house, combining 25 'open' seats elected from a common roll, with 'communal' seats divided between Indigenous Fijians (23), Indo-Fijians (19), General Electors (3) and Rotumans (1) [see Table 2]. The preferential system was designed to promote multi-ethnic coalitions addressing national issues (Reeves *et al* 1996:310).

The campaign proceeded in an atmosphere of grievance, despite a pre-election Presidential apology for the instability of 2000:

> Admittedly, we have all suffered from the events of last year but some individuals and communities have suffered more than others. As your President, please join me in extending our apology to these individuals and to these communities. Please accept our sincere apology. Fiji is your home and there is enough here for all of us. [Cited in *Times* 09/07/01:1]

Disaffected supporters of the 2000 coup, its victims and political actors on both sides were by no means reconciled. Insecurity and distrust were exacerbated by a politicised NLTB preventing renewals of expiring 30-year land leases, displacing primarily Indo-Fijian tenants. Livelihoods eroded in an economy stagnating with the tourist downturn and manufacturing closures induced by Australian-union sanctions (Vinding 2001:208). Escalating union and land disputes aggravated tension. The integrity of state institutions was considerably undermined. Few doubted the Police Commissioner's complicity in the coup, or respected the singular incapacity of his officers to prevent associated rioting and sporadic rural violence (*Sun* 11/08/01:1; Tarte 2001:533-5).[46] The new Vice-President and several Interim Cabinet members had clearly supported the coup (Tarte 2001:538). An attempted mutiny demonstrated military factionalism against the Commander for opposing Speight; his

[46] The Commissioner was cleared of complicity by a closed-door hearing chaired by the Chief Justice, himself highly criticised for allegedly recommending and definitely accepting constitutional abrogation in 2000 (Lal 2001:1-2).

attempted abrogation of the Constitution also raised the ire of pro-democracy actors (Interviews: Koroi 22/07/01; Singh 30/07/01). The latter queried the impartiality of the judiciary, with High Court judges previously advising the President on constitutional abrogation now adjudicating it (Interview: Yabaki 30/07/01). Ethnic nationalists maligned the Court of Appeal, comprised of foreign judges (Interview: Tora 06/08/01). The public prosecutor was questioned for his failure to prosecute known coup-supporters (Tarte 2001:538). Well beyond its mandate, the appointed interim regime formed the *Soqosoqo Duavata Ni Lewenivanua* (SDL) party to contest the elections.[47] This context, the aftermath of the 2000 political crisis, promoted ethnic polarisation in the election campaign.

Ethnic polarisation was also promoted by memories of the 1999 election. In the wake of multi-ethnic agreement on the 1997 Constitution, the GCC-created *Soqosoqo Ni Vakavulewa Ni Taukei* (SVT) forged a multi-ethnic coalition with the NFP. From their electoral route, political actors concluded that multi-ethnic moderation offered irresistible 'flank opportunities' (see Horowitz 2000:411). The reality, however, was more complex, since the victorious FLP was *also* in a multi-ethnic coalition. The FLP certainly outbid the NFP for Indo-Fijian communal votes however it successfully grafted onto this, moderate campaigning on socio-economic issues in open seats. The willingness of smaller parties to use preferences to punish the incumbent SVT cost it ten seats, provided the FLP with three and its moderate Indigenous coalition partners five, relative to first-past-the-post counts.[48] Gaining 33.9% of the vote, the FLP secured 52.1% of seats. Fearing outbidding, however, political moderates avoided multi-ethnic coalitions in 2001 (Interviews: Bogileka 27/07/01; Singh 31/07/01). Parties campaigned alone, shared preferences and anticipated opportunistic post-election coalitions (see Horowitz 2000:367-79). The ethnically-polarised context of the election and political memories from 1999 thus obstructed the multi-ethnic moderation intended by the Constitution, demonstrating that an electoral system alone cannot cause inter-ethnic harmony. Although party manifestos replicated the socio-economic focus thought to have assisted Labour in 1999 (People's Coalition 1999), the campaign was dominated by ethnic treatments of land issues, the 1997 Constitution, democracy, affirmative action, national reconciliation and political leadership.

Political fragmentation exacerbated by the 2000 crisis was evident in the record 18 parties contesting the elections. Repeated attempts by the Methodist Church to unify the 12 'Indigenous' parties under the SDL, or contest open seats as a coalition to exclude Chaudhry from government, failed (*Times* 04/09/01:1). Groups sharing preferences were defined as much by opposition to the incumbent SDL and powerful FLP, as by platforms. The SDL was opposed by an ethnic 'nationalist' group on one side, and a 'moderates' group on the other. Virtually all parties opposed the FLP to punish Chaudhry and his insensitivity, abrasiveness

[47] Its deregistration of the CCF indicated its disregard for civil society criticism (*Times* 30/06/01:2; *Sun* 01/07/01:3).
[48] Unless otherwise stated, all electoral evidence has been calculated by the author from data provided by the Fiji Government Elections Office, Suva.

and arrogance that allegedly provoked the coup [see Figure 2].[49] Preference distributions loosely reflected these associations, but ideological compatibility was often subordinated to seat-level opportunism (*Times* 12/08/01:16). The voting system encourages such opportunism by allowing voters to let parties distribute their preferences, rather than being forced to list their own.[50] The Constitution's authors, believing only 'moderate' parties would exchange preferences, were overly optimistic (Reeves *et al* 1996:316).

This chapter delineates the meanings of equality and paramountcy deployed in the political campaign and how they were translated into policy prescriptions. It involves several complexities. First, actors deploy concepts in inconsistent ways for political advantage, according to context, or from not having thought them through. Secondly, a party's candidates need not share the same beliefs, thus evidence from their speeches, interviews and media quotations frequently conflict party manifestos. Thirdly, platforms change as voter-sentiment and the strength of potential coalition partners is gauged from the unfolding campaign. Fourthly, classifying parties according to their use of concepts need not accord with the loose coalitions they formed, coalitions also influenced by personalities, opportunism and other political issues. Fifthly, though it derives from political platforms, the classification schema is necessarily a simplifying imposition on political dialogue. Some parties span the four categories I delineate; others deploy meanings of equality and paramountcy I have separated into different pairs [see Figure 2]. These complexities are treated as opportunities for insight into both political dialogue and my analysis of it, with inconsistent platforms and ill-fitting categories explored.

B. Equality as a Fundamental Individual Human Right, and Paramountcy as a Protective Principle Compatible with Equality

In a first pair of meanings of equality and paramountcy, equality is understood as a fundamental individual human right. It is translated into equal citizenship status, equal formal political rights and treatment by the state, and racial, religious and gender non-discrimination. It underpins support for democracy and the 1997 Constitution as shaping an inclusive national polity based on human rights, where leadership positions and development opportunities are available for all citizens. The FLP (2001a:2), for example, promotes a society assuring citizens 'rights as people of one nation' and removing 'all vestiges of discrimination'. This stance was shared by the Indo-Fijian based NFP (2001:2-3), the New Labour Unity Party (NLUP 2001a:2), a faction of the FLP rejecting Chaudhry's leadership, and the United General Party (UGP 2001a:2), representing General Electors. While recognising that historical ethnic divisions prevent significant cross-voting and that Indigenes ascribe their

[49] 'Moderates' were among the most vocal critics of Chaudhry, the NFP campaign launch stating of him, "One man alone can destroy a nation. If there's a man amongst us, we should get rid of him." (*Times* 01/07/01:3). The New Labour Unity Party stated, "I think that a vote for Mr Chaudhry is really a vote to bring back the terrible days of May 19." (*Post* 31/07/01:1)

[50] In 1999, 81% of voters voted 'above-the-line' for a party, thus delegating their preferences to that party to distribute, rather than ranking the candidates 'below-the-line' (Williams and Saksena 1999:64). In 2001, the figure was over 70% (*Sun* 07/09/01:4). Parties are allowed to list their party symbol above the line even in seats where they field no candidates – promoting preference trading opportunities and allowing parties to direct 'donkey' votes.

protection to communal seats, the FLP holds the common roll as an ideal of non-discriminatory citizenship (Interview: Koroi 22/07/01). Parties differ in translating equality into modes of perceiving society. The FLP, NLUP and UGP analyse society as comprised of politically equal individuals, with ethnicity impeding national identity. Thus, the NLUP

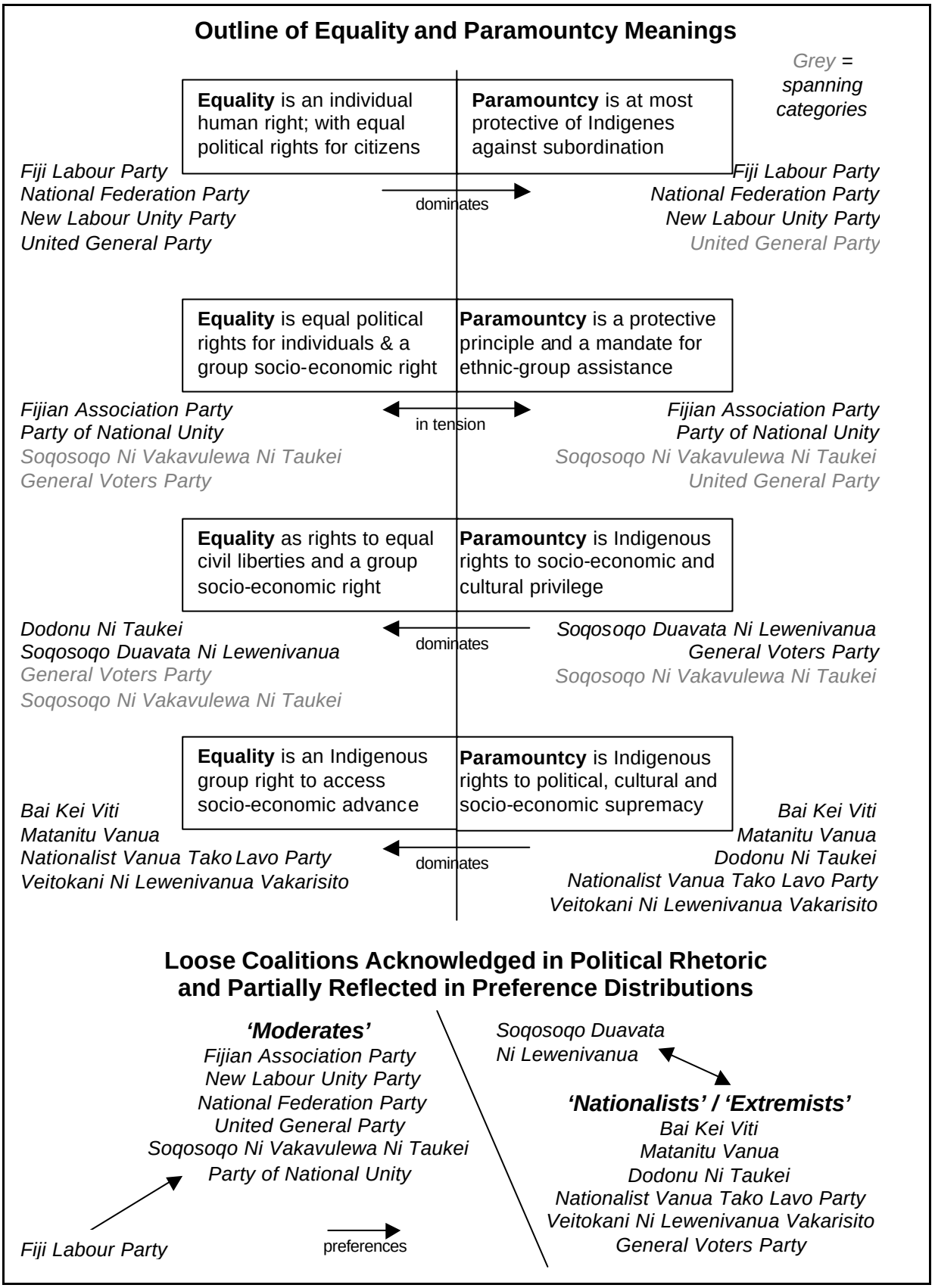

Figure 2 – Party Platforms on Equality and Paramountcy and Coalition Groups

idealises a 'colour-blind' society (NLUP 2001b). Individuals are differentiated by socio-economic status, which should base political affiliations to redress inequality (FLP 2001c). Socio-economic equality thus centres on classes or individuals, not ethnic groups. Conversely, the NFP accepts pervasive ethnic identification, analyses society as plural ethnic groups, and seeks consociational-style cooperative ethnic representation (Interviews: Singh 31/07/01; Reddy 03/09/01). Some Indigenes echo commitments to equality and non-discrimination, one high chief stating:

> If the people want to have a Fijian, Chinese, Punjabi or Indian Prime Minister, the let it be. Who are we to change what the majority of the people in this country want? [Cited in *Sun* 02/09/01:1]

Indigenous support for parties promoting equality exists, but overwhelming support from Indo-Fijians reflects the greater resonance of equality with their identities and advantage in countering Indigenous claims to priority (see Horowitz 2000:201).[51]

The FLP, NLUP and NFP support the 1997 Constitution's (Sect.6(j)) definition of paramountcy, expressed in the context of negotiations on conflicting interests as:

> [T]he paramountcy of Fijian interests as a protective principle continues to apply, so as to ensure that the interests of the Fijian community are not subordinated to the interests of other communities.

They argue the Constitution adequately protects paramountcy, by mandating affirmative action for the disadvantaged, providing veto rights for GCC Senate nominees and protecting Indigenous resource rights (FLP 2001c; NLUP 2001a:5; Interview: Singh 31/07/01). They construct the political deployment of paramountcy and indigenous rights as instrumental, ethnic leaders 'unscrupulously' 'whipping up' Indigenous sentiment to support multi-ethnic elite agendas (FLP 2001b; Interview: Duncan 16/08/01). Indigenes are 'brainwashed' into support by misinformation and disaffection from under-development, caused by exploitative traditional institutions and previous Indigenous Governments (FLP 2001b; EMD-Chand 11/08/01). Grievances are therefore treated as development problems; paramountcy is applied to the interests of the 'masses' (FLP 2001a:21). Indigenous paramountcy can thus be protected and promoted within a prior framework of individual equality.

The meanings of these concepts, and the priority of equality in defining limits on paramountcy, are manifest in these parties' approaches to affirmative action, land and Indigenous traditions. The FLP (2001a:14), NLUP (2001a:5), NFP (2001:9-13) and UGP (2001a:2) reject affirmative action based on ethnic membership alone; it wrongly includes elites and excludes the disadvantaged in other communities, particularly the 'forgotten poor'

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[51] Two marginal Indo-Fijian parties – the 'Justice and Freedom Party' (AIM) and the 'Girmit Heritage Party' (GHP) – hold radical positions on Indo-Fijian rights, demanding British and Australian citizenship and compensation of Indo-Fijians for the abuses of indenture and the expiration of land-leases [Interview: Sami 06/08/01; *Sun* 11/08/01:4]. They do not offer alternative understandings of equality for this schema, however. While the GHP preference distribution was varied, all AIM top preferences went to the FLP.

minorities.[52] Instead, they promote affirmative action for socio-economically disadvantaged individuals. Assistance to Indigenous Fijians is framed in terms of good governance and pro-poor policies, including infrastructure and utilities for (Indigenous) rural communities, rural and eco-tourism development, sustainable use of Indigenous natural resources, wages support and urban housing. These prescriptions recognise that ostensibly non-discriminatory policies can have (favourable) differential ethnic impacts according to the geographic distribution of ethnic groups, poverty incidence and occupational concentrations. In other areas the FLP denies differential ethnic impacts of 'non-discriminatory' policies, exemplified by its defence of VAT-free basic foods (*Sun* 02/07/01:3). This poor-relief was widely believed to benefit urban workers and Indo-Fijians, more reliant on formal markets vis-à-vis subsistence and disproportionately buying the selected 'basic' items. One aspect of the attempt by the NLUP to become 'truly' non-racial was its recognition of the discriminatory potential of non-ethnic policies (NLUP 2001c). In societies pervaded by educational, occupational and wealth-based inequalities of opportunity, emphasis on formal political equality can legitimate perpetual socio-economic disadvantage, as if proceeding from merit. Where these inequalities are borne disproportionately by ethnic groups, not only 'non-ethnic' policies, but also universal values like equality can be deployed with sectional advantage. In Fiji, excessive focus on formal political equality, without accounting for its differential socio-economic effects, leaves equality open to criticism for perpetuating Indo-Fijian advantage.

These parties echo reformist colonial ideologies on paramountcy with respect to Indigenous lands and customs. Positing it as an economic resource, the FLP (2001a:12-3) argues, "emotional attachment to land is understandable, [but] it does not translate into bread and butter."[53] As well seeking access to unoccupied lands for tenancy, easily construed by opponents as threatening Indigenous ownership, the FLP focused on translating land paramountcy into better utilisation and returns for owners. The NLUP (2001d:1) similarly focused on Indigenous gains from land paramountcy. The NFP focused on forging cooperative inter-ethnic relations to secure leases for its tenant-based constituency to access national land resources (Interview: Singh 31/07/01). Each party held a similarly modernising vision on Indigenous customs, separating ritual from daily practice. The founding FLP leader had articulated this vision with respect to democracy, arguing that chiefly authority could remain in ritual spheres, but individual equality prevail in political practice (Lal 1992:263). The parties promoted 'culture' as a symbolic sphere separable from economic and political life: traditions apply in the former and merit government support (for dance, art etcetera), but market and democratic principles dominate the latter. This assumed separability avoided consideration of interdependency between the spheres. The NFP (2001:16) and FLP (2001a:7) also offered equal support to other cultural groups, not recognising a special national responsibility to Indigenous culture or language. This demonstrates how paramountcy is made compatible with equality by defining it on equal terms with the rights of other cultural groups.

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[52] Over 60% of Melanesian households, for example, live below the poverty line (Prasad *et al* 2001:8).

[53] This is echoed by the current Chair of the GCC, "Under the old paradigm we regard land as an heir-loom and under the new paradigm, it should be regarded as an economic asset." [*Post* 15/08/01:1]

C. Equality as a Human and Group Right, in Tension with Paramountcy as a Group Right of Indigenous Fijians

A second pair of meanings of equality and paramountcy alters their content and priority, and is underpinned by a different mode of analysing society. This approach is typical of moderate Indigenous parties: the Fijian Association Party (FAP) that split from the SVT in the 1990s and the Western-Fijian Party of National Unity (PANU), both FLP coalition partners in 1999-2000. It is also evident among moderates within the SVT including leader, and former coup-conspirator with Rabuka, Filipe Bole (Lal 1992:271). His stance may indicate an attempt to differentiate the SVT from the SDL and ally with the moderates, as much as changed personal conviction. These parties promote equality but privilege a vocabulary of equal respect, justice for all citizens and human rights protection, over vigorous political rights claims to fundamental individual equality (FAP 2001a:3; SVT 2001a:2-4). They apply equality to racial groups as much as individuals, underpinning their aversion to inter-ethnic socio-economic equality. Their perception of ethnic-based inequalities is reinforced by a tendency to view individuals via group membership, analysing society as ethnic communities (SVT 2001b). Difficulties faced by Indigenous individuals in educational or occupational competition are derived from their ethnic group – its culture, history or leadership (FAP 2001b; Interview: Bogileka 27/07/01). Instead of the clear priority for equality over paramountcy in the first pair, this platform retains an unresolved tension between them.

The emphasis these parties place on socio-economic equality interacts with their understanding of paramountcy. In translating paramountcy into policies, they do not clearly distinguish between whether inherent Indigenous rights or experienced Indigenous disadvantages justify special treatment. The parties accept the 1997 Constitutional definition of paramountcy as non-subordination of Indigenous interests, and support its protections for Indigenous lands and customs. Whereas the FAP regards these provisions as adequate (Interview: Speed 09/08/01), PANU and the SVT support amendments within the present framework to diminish Indigenous insecurity (*Post* 11/08/01:4; SVT 2001b). The urgent redress of socio-economic inequalities is typically justified by Indigenous disadvantage, whereas protection of culture and language flows more from Indigenous rights. The parties differ over paramountcy for Indigenous institutions. PANU encourages a sensitive approach to their symbolic meaning, but regards them as impediments to Indigenous development, a higher priority. Conversely the FAP seeks to strengthen and improve the performance of Indigenous institutions, including chiefly leadership, to underpin Indigenous development. Moderate SVT candidates argued these meanings of paramountcy and equality are compatible (Interview: Vakatale 17/08/01). Compatibility does not arise from containing one within the prior framework of the other, as in the first pair, but by maintaining a tense but negotiable coexistence.

This unresolved tension is manifest in the approaches of these parties to democracy and affirmative action. Each supports democracy as a value in itself, out of respect for individual political rights and equal citizenship. Their analysis of society as plural ethnic groups, however, lead the FAP (2001b) and SVT (2001b) to subscribe to a consociational-style model based on representation of ethnic groups rather than individuals. Thus they

support consultative democracy among representatives of all ethnic communities, emphasising cooperation not integration (see Norton 2000b:86). Their commitment to non-discrimination leads to their support of equal partnerships between ethnic leaders, and openness of national leadership positions to all races (FijiTV 23/08/01). The FAP, SVT and PANU share this consociational model with the NFP, representing Indo-Fijians. These parties attempt to harness ethnic identities to build an inclusive national polity, rather than superseding them with socio-economic political identities. This underpins their support for the role of Indigenous representative institutions like the GGC and Provincial Councils, in integrating Indigenes into national politics (FAP 2001a:3-4; SVT 2001a).

Affirmative action policy also illustrates the tension between paramountcy and equality. The FAP (2001a:4-5) and SVT leader (2001b) accord with the FLP in locating affirmative action for Indigenous Fijians within a broader concern for good governance: extending basic infrastructure to rural areas, assisting landowners to utilise their resources, and funding disadvantaged Indigenous education. By focusing on spheres of Indigenous disadvantage and integrating remedies within broader development and education policies, these parties make affirmative action compatible with equal state treatment of individuals. Rejecting privilege in favour of good governance, the FAP leader stated:

> We are the most privileged and most protected indigenous community in the world. We have had 30 years of indigenous Prime-Ministership for Fijians; we have had all the permanent secretaries…but what have we done? We have 84% of the land. But I would say that Fijians are the poorest community not because of the other communities but because they have not been led by the people who care about the Fijian people. [Cited in *Post* 24/08/01:1]

This approach remains in tension, however, with their recognition of Indigenous group rights to protection and advance. Even if justified by group disadvantage, these rights are translated into prioritising affirmative action for the Indigenous *group*. Both the FAP (2001b) and SVT leader (2001b) recognise intra-ethnic heterogeneity and emphasise targeting benefits to non-elites, tempering ethnic affirmative action with socio-economic criteria. Assistance, however, is founded on perceiving ethnic groups as beneficiaries, a stance both challenged and reinforced by the UGP (2001b:4). The challenge is to using paramountcy to prioritise Indigenous affirmative action when minorities among General Electors endure greater disadvantage. The reinforcement is from perceiving disadvantage and claiming remedy in terms of ethnic categories. Each party, however, tries to promote group interests while respecting individual equality and non-discrimination principles.

D. Paramountcy as Indigenous Political and Cultural Precedence, Subordinating Equality as a Minimum Rights Guarantee

A third pair of meanings of equality and paramountcy was deployed by the incumbent SDL and the General Voters Party (GVP). The SDL effectively adopted the platform of the SVT in the 1990s, giving them similar manifestos contrary to the SVT leader's campaign on a

moderate platform.[54] They reject protective paramountcy under the 1997 Constitution[55] for a meaning drawing on Indigenous rights (GVP 2001:2; SVT 2001a:3). ILO Convention 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries (hereafter: ILO Convention 169) and the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (hereafter: UN Draft Declaration)[56] were used to support paramountcy as Indigenous priority, contiguous with claims in 1987. Indigenes were argued to hold rights to privilege in cultural and religious spheres, and advance in socio-economic spheres. The parties supported constitutional change, the SDL in particular pressing for reforms to reflect "the strongly-expressed concerns of the Fijian people," notably their present unwillingness to accept an Indo-Fijian Prime Minister and demands for increased parliamentary representation (SDL 2001a:4-5; FijiTV 23/08/01). This made hollow its claim, "There is no racial boundary to our desire to serve Fiji." (SDL 2001a:2) The parties differed on Indigenous land paramountcy, the SDL emphasising joint state-landowner resource exploitation while the GVP, representing landless *vasu*[57] and Pacific Islanders, emphasised consultation with resource users. This understanding of paramountcy rejected equal treatment of ethnic groups, an understanding imbued by the SDL with fundamentalist Christian moral superiority.

In each of their manifestos, equality as an individual right is conspicuous by its absence. In its place are guarantees of respect and democratic freedoms for ethnic groups, and fairness for all citizens (SDL 2001a:305; SVT 2001a:2; DNT 2001:1). The GVP (2001:6) also emphasised the importance of universal human rights for protecting minorities. These references implied guarantees of equal civil liberties and democratic rights to one-person, one-vote for citizens. By contemplating entrenching Indigenous parliamentary control, the parties did not offer fundamental political equality or one-vote, one-value. Each favoured a consociational approach to democracy, the SDL also requiring Indigenous leadership. Instead of individual political rights, equality and equity referred to inter-ethnic wellbeing and underpinned demands to remove socio-economic inequalities threatening national stability and provide basic economic rights to Indigenes to participate in development (SDL 2001a:6). Government support was offered to protect the cultural heritages of ethnic groups, prioritising teaching Indigenous culture and language in schools (SVT 2001a:9-10; SDL 2001a:6).[58] The SDL made no attempt to reconcile its policies of strengthening Indigenous power structures to restore respect for chiefs (*Post* 30/06/01:5), and promoting democratic values and gender non-discrimination (SDL 2001a:16). These uses (and non-uses) of equality indicate that ethnic groups, not individuals, are the units at which equality and paramountcy are applied.

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[54] Other SVT candidates have established nationalist credentials, both in firmly opposing the 1997 Constitution and in visibly supported the 2000 coup (*Post* 23/08/01:3; EMD-Vunibobo/Samisoni 12/08/01)

[55] The review of the Constitution sponsored by the Interim Cabinet (later the SDL) declared the protective principal an 'insensitive treatment' of paramountcy (Ravuvu et al 2002:58-9).

[56] The content of ILO Convention 169 provides the basis for the UN Draft Declaration, which has been contested in the UN Commission on Human Rights since 1994 (Gray 1999:355).

[57] In this context, *vasu* refers to people with maternal links to Indigenous Fijians (typically Part-Europeans and mixed-descent Pacific Islanders). They are generally not entitled to land ownership.

[58] The GVP (2001:6-8), representing minorities, also emphasised individual as well as group political rights, the socio-economic disadvantages faced by non-Indigenes and the importance of intra-ethnic inequalities, overlapping with the understanding of equality in the second pair of meanings.

These meanings are illustrated in the approaches of these parties to affirmative action and national reconciliation. Both inter-ethnic equality and paramountcy underpin Indigenous affirmative action policies conceived for the *whole* ethnic group (SDL 2001s:6; SVT 2001a:3). Assistance for the disadvantaged in other ethnic groups is entertained to convey a multi-ethnic impression, but differentiating Indigenes according to socio-economic wellbeing is not. The backbone of the SDL campaign was 'its' Blueprint for affirmative action for Indigenous Fijians, originally a Senate paper during the 1999-2000 Parliament (*Sun* 13/07/01:6).[59] Assistance covers education, small business, agriculture, tourism ownership, statutory bodies, the public service, political leadership and capital ownership (SDL 2001b). The document intensifies policies attempted in the 1990s by the SVT, and draws on both local Indigenous demands and Malaysian models of affirmative action. Its necessity is bolstered by constructing unrest surrounding the 2000 coup as Indigenous disaffection from having their paramount interests in socio-economic spheres ignored (SDL 2001a:6; SVT 2001a:2-3). The SDL used affirmative action to de-legitimise non-Indigene political leadership, its leader Qarase reportedly saying, "Indian leaders will not help the development of Indigenous Fijians because it is not in their blood." (*Times* 20/08/01:4) Strongly advocating Indigenous paramountcy, the GVP (2001:8) nonetheless questioned assistance that excludes poverty in other ethnic groups. They particularly challenged exclusion of the *vasu*, participating in Indigenous social life, "Yet when it comes to the sharing of the cake like the Blueprint, we are left out…" (*Sun* 23/08/01:5)

The SDL (2001a:2) distinguished itself on national reconciliation, emphasising Christianity as a 'universal' foundation for multi-ethnic harmony in Fiji. Its party logo, a dove carrying an olive branch, exemplified the status given to Christian principles for promoting peace and 'national renewal'. Reconciliation is conceived not as establishing commonality or equality between individuals but affirming difference between ethnic groups, before seeking commonality (*ibid*:7). Critically, it seeks first to unify Indigenous Fijians before considering inter-ethnic reconciliation, betraying 'national' reconciliation as a euphemism for bringing under central authority an Indigenous population whose fragmentation was exacerbated by the 2000 political crisis. The emphasis on Christianity reflects its potential to unify Indigenous Fijians across dynastic, *vanua*, confederate and ideological divides, the Methodist Church leading the SDL's reconciliation strategy.[60] The strategy is justified by the erroneous reasoning that only internally unified groups can find commonality with other groups (Interview: Kanailagi 07/08/01). Methodist Church President Rev Kanailagi extended his role in 'national' reconciliation to unsuccessfully attempting to unite Indigenous political parties.[61] The Indigenous FAP, NLUP and SVT leaders refused to

[59] The SDL leader Laisenia Qarase, a GCC-appointed Senator in 1999, had led Senate opposition to the FLP's attempt to open up previously Indigenous affirmative action programmes to other ethnic groups (Tarte 2001:530). For the purposes of affirmative action, 'Indigenous' includes Rotumans with Indigenous Fijians (see LFR 2001:1-2).

[60] One church leader seeking forgiveness from an Indo-Fijian community terrorised during the 2000 coup stated, "We long to see when the Indian and Fijian families can live together peacefully in a village community. We long for the day when Indians and Fijians can *attend church services* together." (*Post* 26/07/01:1, emphasis added)

[61] The SDL has subsequently appointed Rev Kanailagi to the Senate, as it has Indigenous ideologue Prof Ravuvu who chaired the SDL's constitutional review.

engage in this process, however, and former Methodist President Rev Koroi vigorously contested this political role:

> Unity for what? Reconciliation involves sorrow, repentance, restitution, compassion, love and forgiveness from both parties… Rev Kanailagi…is now a political activist by embracing all indigenous political parties but sidelining the other races. This is racism and apartheid in a new form…Racial unity cannot be called Christian unity. [*Sun* 20/07/01:3]

The SDL thus strengthened the fusion between fundamentalist Christian superiority and Indigenous racial paramountcy, from similar rhetoric during the 1987 coup. Imbued with moral superiority, paramountcy is also increasingly used to reject 'foreign' human rights.[62]

E. Paramountcy as Indigenous Self-Determination, Subordinating Equality as the Recognition of Citizenship for the *Vulagi*[63]

A fourth set of meanings of equality and paramountcy are those deployed by Indigenous nationalists. The Nationalist *Vanua Tako Lavo* Party (NVTLP), a successor to Butadroka, is now in the curious position of having lost its radical constituency, given the mainstreaming of its platform after the 1987 coups. Its platform is discernable in the SDL and SVT manifestos, and shared by emerging ethnic nationalist parties. These include the Christian Democratic *Veitokani Ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito* (VLV), the extreme faction of the FAP *Dodonu Ni Taukei* (DNT), the extreme faction of PANU *Bai Kei Viti* (BKV) led by the indomitable Tora, and the Conservative Alliance *Matanitu Vanua* (MV). MV candidates incorporated seven coup-conspirators including Speight, then incarcerated awaiting trial for treason (*Sun* 20/07/01:1).[64] Styling itself as bearer of the Fijian 'cause' articulated in the 2000 coup, it is reported as stating it made a political manifesto of what Speight sought by violence (*Post* 21/07/01:8). These parties deploy paramountcy as the Indigenous right to self-determination, both over their natural resources and destiny (DNT 2001:1). They draw on the Deed of Cession as a guarantee of political paramountcy, and seek legitimacy from ILO Convention 169 and the UN Draft Declaration, translating self-determination into a Prime-Minister and parliamentary majority reserved for Indigenous Fijians (MV 2001a:10; NVTLP 2001:4).[65] They are supported by the SDL's constitutional review, declaring Indigenous rights to "determine their future and their destiny, as well as those of other racial and ethnic minorities who have chosen to make Fiji their country." (Ravuvu *et al* 2002:58-9). What distinguishes their conception of paramountcy from the previous pair is its overriding concern with Indigenous political control, without any semblance of inter-ethnic political equality. The 1990 Constitution is upheld as a benchmark for the protection of paramountcy; thus the 1997 Constitution must be amended because it dilutes Indigenous paramountcy (*Post*

[62] In the campaign and in the SDL's constitutional review, non-discrimination on grounds of sexual preference was used as a highly inflammatory example of the imposition of 'foreign' human rights (see Ravuvu *et al* 2002:38).
[63] Meaning visitor/foreigner, it applies to non-Indigenes and with *taukei* (landowner) denotes a host-guest relationship.
[64] Speight won his seat convincingly, exceeding his nearest rival in the first round 3232 to 2415 votes, before losing it due to his failure to attend parliamentary sittings. He was convicted for treason in February 2002, with his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment.
[65] The BKV added the idea of granting two votes to landowners in elections (*Times* 23/07/01:5).

30/06/01:5). This claim is refuted by the Court of Appeal's assessment that its provisions protecting Indigenous rights are watertight (*Fiji v Prasad* 2001:15).[66] Paramountcy is also deployed to mandate school teaching of Indigenous language and culture, and Indigenous affirmative action in all socio-economic fields (MV 2001b:12; NVTLP 2001:2-3).[67]

Individual equality or even equal respect and fair treatment of citizens are not included in these manifestos. The MV (2001b:9) mentions human rights, but only to rebuke law enforcement agencies, particularly the military (see below). Instead, human rights are reproached for being immoral, of foreign imposition or otherwise inimical to Indigenous customs (MV 2001b:3; see also Ravuvu *et al* 2002:38). Individual equality is regarded as incompatible with traditional chiefly and gender hierarchies.[68] Equal treatment is refuted because the 'playing field' is not yet level (Interview: Vakalalabure 25/07/01). The only inference for equality is that all people domiciled in Fiji are entitled to citizenship and civic freedoms (MV 2001a:11; DNT 2001:1). Whether an ideological shift or recognition of the logic of Fiji's political economy, respect of Indo-Fijian citizenship represents a recent departure from historical Indigenous nationalism. As citizens, however, non-indigenes must respect their 'guest' (*vulagi*) status in relationship to their 'hosts' (*taukei*). Privileges to promote Indigenous security are accorded with the national interest, exemplified in NVTLP statement:

> Time has moved on and we value the contribution of foreigners in our land but our stand right now is to ensure that the ownership of the land, sea and mineral resources returns to the indigenous Fijian. Give Ceasar what belongs to Caesar. Give the indigenous Fijians what rightly belongs to them and there will be stability in the country. When the needs of the indigenous Fijians are taken care of they will in turn look after the interests of the *foreigners* living in the country. [*Sun* 08/09/01:2, emphasis added]

The parties argue that race-blind approaches to Fiji's society cause instability, because race is 'pivotal' to politics (MV 2001a:11). They also adopt a consociational model of national politics, seeking ethnic group coexistence.[69]

Paramountcy as self-determination is illustrated by Indigenous nationalist positions on land, traditional institutions, national reconciliation and religion. Emphasising the vital importance of land ownership to Indigenous identity and status, these parties demand the return of Crown lands to Indigenous owners for which, the MV leader cried, "We have been waiting for over one-hundred years." (MV 2001c) While the MV translate natural resource control into greater rental returns through a stronger NLTB, the DNT argues for more decentralised control of land in opposition to NLTB paternalism (Interview: Dewa 14/08/01;

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[66] MV leader Vakalalabure (Interview 25/07/01) argues that the 1997 Constitution diluted Indigenous protection because its provision for paramountcy is injusticiable, and the veto rights of GCC nominees to the Senate apply only to *specified* legislation, not *new* legislation affecting Indigenous lands and customs.

[67] Elements of this understanding of paramountcy are also evident in the GVP manifesto (2001:12).

[68] See Toren (1999:179) for an ethnographic account of how hierarchy actually remains in tension with the antithetical value of equality within Indigenous culture.

[69] The MV (2001b:3) argue for proportional allocation of communal seats to intra-Indian 'ethnicities' – Hindu, Muslim, Gujurati etcetera, perhaps seeking to undermine the capacity of Hindus to dominate Indo-Fijian communal seats.

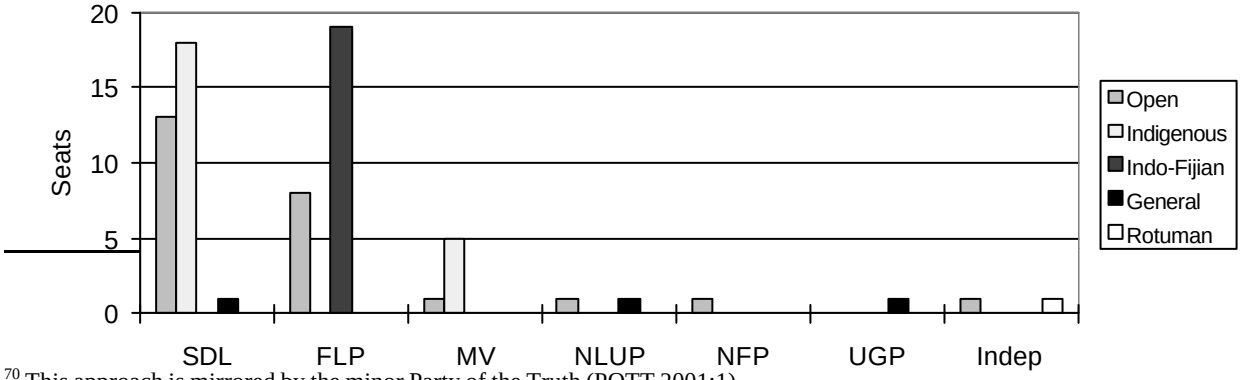
DNT 2001:2). The parties seek to strengthen traditional institutions, in particular making the GCC financially independent of the state (DNT 2001:2). In addition, reflecting the regional bases of these parties, they argue for greater decentralisation of power to Provincial levels. The DNT leader argued the GCC should better reflect the power of landowning chiefs in Fiji (Interview: Dewa 14/08/01). This touches on an intra-chiefly struggle between historically powerful high chiefs of the Eastern Islands with small landholdings, and less powerful chiefs of Viti Levu controlling major landholdings and increasingly valuable natural resources.

On national reconciliation, these parties accord with the SDL seeking to unite *taukei* (landowners) first, to promote Indigenous paramountcy (MV 2001a:3). Extreme Christian parties, arguing that reconciliation should be through Christ, effectively exclude Indo-Fijian Hindus and Muslims from this process (Interview: Tabu 13/08/01).[70] On religion, the MV and VLV argue for a Christian State. They draw on and promote an aspect of Indigenous consciousness constructing the state, church and *vanua* (land and Indigenous people) as inextricably linked (Interview: Vakalalabure 25/07/01). Extreme Christian parties and the Methodist Church imply from a Christian State the necessity of Christian leaders. When queried on its consequent racial exclusion, the Methodist Church President retracted the proposition in favour of leadership by Christian principles (Interview: Kanailagi 07/08/01). The intense concern of these parties with strengthening the institutions of the family, tradition and morality underscores their resistance to external cultural and capitalist forces undeniably contributing to rapid changes within Indigenous society. Supported by numerous international examples of the decimation of Indigenous societies and cultures, they represent Indigenous Fijians as threatened within the global community, reinforcing an Indigenous consciousness of threat. It underpins these parties' constructions of political control, land ownership, Indigenous institutions and Christianity as bastions against this threat.

F. Electoral Results

The election had three major winners – the SDL, FLP and MV – in what can only be described as a victory for ethnic extremism [see Figure 3, Table 6].[71] Despite educational

Figure 3 - Seats Won by Party and Type of Seat



[70] This approach is mirrored by the minor Party of the Truth (POTT 2001:1).
[71] All electoral evidence has been calculated by the author from data provided by the Elections Office [see note 3].

campaigns, confusion over the optional preferential voting system left 11.9% of national votes informal.[72] Despite being compulsory, only 78.5% of those registered attempted to vote, reflecting significant disaffection and apathy, many doubting the results would be respected this time (*Times* 04/08/01:3).[73] The SDL was formed only months before the election without party machinery or historical constituency; its success is a dubious tribute to a number of factors. First, the appeal of the promise of Indigenous prosperity in the Blueprint. Secondly, the importance of state resources in electioneering and vote buying (*Times* 21/08/01:1; *Sun* 29/08/01:1).[74] Thirdly, the influence of Indigenous authorities including chiefs, Provincial Councils and the Methodist Church, in endorsing candidates and mobilising votes behind the incumbent (*Post* 18/07/01:1; *Sun* 27/08/01:6). Fourthly, the effect of threats of instability if the incumbent were not returned to office.[75] Finally, perhaps, the ongoing significance of the undeclared actors influencing selection of the Interim Cabinet (later the SDL) out of the disorder of 2000. Allegations that vote counting was not credible due to irregularities in postal votes (*Sun* 07/09/01:1) were not substantiated by the Electoral Office or Commonwealth observer mission (Commonwealth 2001:37). The SDL gained 78.3% of Indigenous communal seats from 50.1% of the vote [see Table 3] and a pitiful 0.1% of Indo-Fijian communal votes, or 0.6% in the seats it contested. The strength of the new MV partly reflects ethnic nationalist appeal in its region, Eastern Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. The MV also captured anti-establishment emotions ignited during the appalling brutality of the military in reasserting its control following Speight's arrest in Eastern Viti Levu and an army mutiny on Vanua Levu (*Times* 01/07/01:8; 19/08/01:16-7).

The continued strength of the FLP resulted from its effective party (and union) machinery for mobilising votes, its ideological appeal and Chaudhry's outbidding of the NFP as the champion of Indo-Fijian rights, depicting the NFP as a minority South Indian and Gujurati party (*Sun* 01/07/01:4; Interview: Reddy 03/09/01). His campaign included emotive Hindi speeches reflecting his charismatic leadership of Indo-Fijians and sense of vengeance for his overthrow in 2000:

> We, as a nation and particularly, the Indo-Fijians have been wronged. You equally share the injustice and mistreatment with the members of my Government, so this election – we have a chance to get justice….So I question, why don't we, Indians have any right? Why are we treated like this – why can't we have an Indian Prime Minister? He is a citizen of this country and why is an Indian deprived?" [Hindi translation, *Post* 23/08/01:1]

Despite its multi-lingual and pictorially multi-ethnic manifesto, FLP success came from Indo-Fijian support, winning 74.5% of the communal vote and all communal seats [see Table 4]. It won only 2.3% of Indigenous communal votes, or 7.3% in the seats it contested.[76] Punishment by preferences cost the FLP five open seats it won on the first count; in contrast

[72] The High Court has ruled that ballots where the voter ticked one candidate below the line (where all boxes should have been numbered) clearly indicate the voter's intention and should be re-counted as valid (*Times* 15/02/02). Court contests continue, with the FLP expected to gain several seats from the SDL and NFP. These figures are from the initial count.
[73] Urban Indigenous participation was particularly low, at 72.9%, but only 6.9% of their votes were invalid.
[74] There are no laws prohibiting the use of public funds for electoral campaigning in Fiji (*Times* 02/07/01:5).
[75] Authorised SDL television advertisements warned against 'rocking the boat', while newspaper advertisements depicted the chaos inevitable if other parties formed government (See *Times* 24/08/01:30).
[76] This support was not dominated by urban votes, winning only 6.1% of Indigenous urban votes in seats contested.

the SDL made a net gain of seven seats on preferences. Though it abstracts from other

Table 3: Party Votes and Seats Won in Indigenous Communal Electorates

Party	Seats (of 23)	Votes %	Seats %
SDL	18	50.09	78.26
MV	5	20.26	21.74
SVT	-	8.56	-
NLUP	-	6.32	-
BKV	-	4.70	-
PANU	-	2.94	-
NVTLP	-	1.44	-
Other	-	5.70	-

Table 4: Party Votes and Seats Won in Indo-Fijian Communal Electorates

Party	Seats (of 19)	Votes %	Seats %
FLP	19	74.58	100.00
NFP	-	22.10	-
NLUP	-	2.57	-
Other	-	0.75	-

Table 5: Party Votes and Seats Won in Open Seats

Party	Seats (of 25)	Votes %	Seats %
FLP	8	35.20	32.00
SDL	13	25.66	52.00
NFP	1	10.09	4.00
MV	1	9.36	4.00
SVT	-	6.35	-
NLUP	1	5.36	4.00
Indep	1	3.12	4.00
BKV	-	1.93	-
FAP	-	1.33	-
Other	-	1.61	-

Table 6: Party Votes and Seats Won in All Electorates

Party	Seats (of 71)	Votes %	Seats %
FLP	27	34.83	38.03
SDL	32	26.04	45.07
NFP	1	10.10	1.41
MV	6	9.91	8.45
SVT	-	5.40	-
NLUP	2	5.07	2.82
Indep	2	2.65	2.82
BKV	-	2.17	-
PANU	-	1.16	-
UGP	1	0.50	1.41
Other	-	2.16	-

important factors, the electoral failure of the NLUP indicates the extreme difficultly of forging multi-ethnic class-based political identities in Fiji beyond an Indo-Fijian union base [see Table 6]. If the NLUP, NFP, FAP and SVT did indeed represent forces of moderation, they were virtually obliterated; even in open seats the ethnic-bases of the SDL and FLP prevailed [see Tables 5 and 6]. This substantiates Horowitz's (2000:303) claim that the coexistence of ethnic and non-ethnic parties assumes another issue axis: in Fiji's 2001 campaign atmosphere charged with racial polarisation, there was no effective alternative axis.

Political commentators expect cross-ethnic voting to be greatest in open electorates. Figure 4 explores this idea. The estimated ethnic composition of the electorate is used to predict the number of votes cast by Indigenous and Indo-Fijian voters. The difference

Figure 4 - Estimated Cross-Ethnic Voting

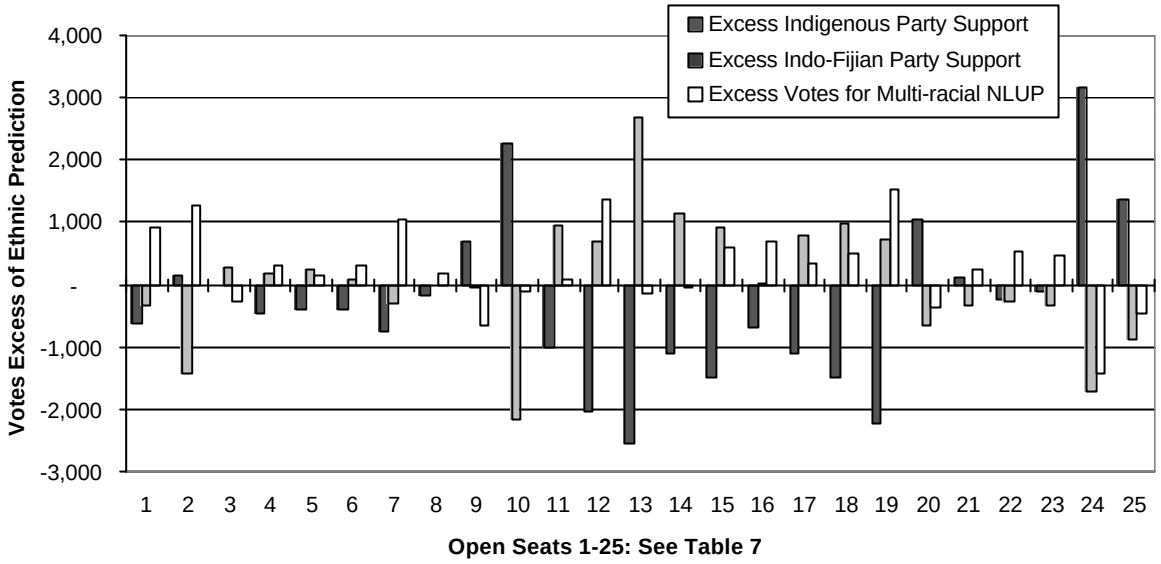


Table 7: Predicted Ethnic Composition of Valid Votes in Open Seats

Predicted No. of Voters

	OPEN SEAT	Votes	Indigenes	Indo-Fijian
1	TAILEVU NORTH/OVALAU	12,774	11,244	1,123
2	TAILEVU SOUTH/LOMAVITI	15,348	10,496	4,763
3	NAUSORI/NAITASIRI	11,930	6,003	5,670
4	NASINU/REWA	13,014	5,972	6,868
5	CUNNINGHAM	12,284	7,274	4,317
6	LAUCALA	11,510	5,904	5,157
7	SAMABULA/TAMAVUA	11,730	5,828	5,111
8	SUVA CITY	11,406	6,136	4,040
9	LAMI	11,860	8,098	2,387
10	LOMAIVUNA/NAMOSI/KADAVU	13,489	11,221	2,171
11	RA	13,623	8,834	4,724
12	TAVUA	12,820	5,629	7,041
13	BA	14,832	2,546	12,133
14	MAGODRO	13,099	3,526	9,516
15	LAUTOKA CITY	12,986	5,326	7,039
16	VUDA	13,119	3,668	9,252
17	NADI	14,607	5,489	8,629
18	YASAWA/NAWAKA	12,650	4,639	7,979
19	NADROGA	12,579	6,088	6,360
20	SERUA/NAVOSA	14,242	9,591	4,287
21	BUA/MACUATA WEST	14,475	8,909	5,247
22	LABASA	11,445	2,419	8,796
23	MACUATA EAST	13,404	2,884	10,456
24	CAKAUDROVE WEST	12,034	8,877	1,726
25	LAU/TAVEUNI/ROTUMA	12,560	11,195	890

between these predicted votes and votes received by Indigenous and Indo-Fijian parties are shown by columns, positive where ethnic parties gained votes in excess of their electorate membership. Net support for the multi-racial NLUP is shown separately.[77] The figure shows that in many open seats, Indo-Fijian and Indigenous parties made net gains and losses of votes into the thousands, with Indigenous losses divided between Indo-Fijian and NLUP gains. Closer examination, however, dampens optimism about significant cross-ethnic voting because it is in these electorates that ethnic compositions are generally skewed [Table 7]. Parties representing the minority ethnicity field weaker or no candidates in expectation of loss, thus prompting cross-ethnic voting. In Southeast Viti Levu, where ethnic proportions are more balanced (electorates 3 to 8), contests were fierce and net cross-voting minimal. Lack of inter-ethnic cohesion was exemplified following the election, as the SDL formed a coalition with the MV to un-constitutionally exclude the FLP from the multi-party government mandated by the Constitution (*Chaudhry v Qarase* 2002).[78] The SDL nonetheless expected all citizens to be 'well-catered for' by its 28-member cabinet initially comprising 27 Indigenes and one General Elector (*Times* 13/09/01:2-3).

G. Conclusion

This exploration of the meaning and deployment of equality and paramountcy in the 2001 election campaign prompts several conclusions. First, the terms are contested concepts, with different meanings and purposes deployed by different actors. Secondly, the terms are related together in different ways. In the first pair of meanings, equality as an individual human right is *privileged* over protective paramountcy that is made to be compatible with it. In the fourth, equality as the recognition of citizenship is *subordinated* to paramountcy as Indigenous self-determination. Thirdly, the analysis of the deployment of the concepts demonstrates potential power implications of the meanings of *both* terms. Paramountcy requiring affirmative action for ethnic groups and political hegemony, for example, has obvious advantages for Indigenous elites. Equality requiring non-discrimination by the state has advantages for ethnic groups already excelling in economic, occupational and educational pursuits. Fourthly, whilst tension between equality and paramountcy is resolvable *within*

[77] 1999 ethnic electorate compositions are used to predict 2001 compositions with the increased number of registered voters. The results are divided into an Indigenous plus Rotuman category, an Indo-Fijian category and a General Electors category (which cannot be assumed to vote with either main group). These predicted registrations are used to calculate the predicted number of formal votes polled by each category. Votes received by Indigenous based parties in each electorate (including relevant Independents) are combined, as are votes received by Indo-Fijian based parties. The NLUP is separate because to classify it according to the race its candidates would increase the appearance of ethnic voting when it presented a strongly multi-racial platform. To remove the residual of General Electors, the moderate NLUP vote is presented as net of predicted General Elector votes. The columns can then be read as net gains above predicted votes. For example, 500 excess votes for Indo-Fijian parties represents net cross-voting by Indigenous and General Electors.

[78] Proposals for Governments of National Unity accommodating ethnic proportionality have been periodically mooted by various parties since independence (Lawson 1991:222-3). In 1999, the victorious FLP invited the SVT to join its cabinet, which the SVT accepted but with so many conditions on ministerial positions and policies that the FLP interpreted it as a rejection (*Times* 01/07/01:3). In 2001, the FLP accepted the SDL offer unconditionally, but were excluded.

these classificatory pairs, the concepts can be incompatible combined across pairs. For example, individual political equality and equal treatment by the state are irreconcilable with paramountcy guaranteeing Indigenous national leadership and a parliamentary majority. Finally, there are also compatibilities between different meanings of these concepts, which the next chapter explores in detail for potential sources of political cohesion. The two chapters combine to understand how different meanings of paramountcy and equality impede and assist the construction of shared political identities and an inclusive polity.

CHAPTER V
PARAMOUNTCY AND EQUALITY TO POLITICAL ACTORS: INCOMPATIBILITIES AND POTENTIAL COMMONALITIES

A. Introduction

This chapter explores sources of incompatibility and potential commonality between paramountcy and equality ideologies in Fiji's political dialogue. Contemporary debates can seem fruitless with political actors not engaging with the ideologies of their opponents, dialogues apparently lacking a common conceptual framework within which different positions can be held. Actors promoting ideologies perceiving society as a collection of individuals, or alternatively as a set of ethnic communities, appear to lack common ground on which to debate their respective arguments for individual equality and Indigenous paramountcy. The first section of this chapter places these arguments in a common framework, as modes of constructing political rights. It explores contests over the use of cultural, religious and international conceptual resources to legitimate these claims. The major source of difference between the constructions is understood as the different time-scales on which the justice of political rights is judged. The chapter then focuses on two claims from paramountcy – Indigenous affirmative action and cultural protection – and shows how they accord with equality. Contemporary deployments of paramountcy for elite interests, however, detract from the broader validity of these claims. Finally, the chapter addresses the political economy of land, focusing not on what paramountcy means but on what Indigenous Fijians are practically able to gain from it. The rationale for these explorations is that placing political claims within common conceptual frameworks is necessary to identify impediments and resources for constructing an inclusive national polity. It shows that these philosophies of political rights are not inherently contradictory (contra Carroll 1994:308).

B. A Common Framework: Political Rights Constructions

This section explores how both equality and paramountcy are deployed as political rights constructions. In the common conceptual framework of political rights, differences and compatibilities between the positions can be identified. The previous chapter, investigating meanings of equality and paramountcy in contemporary dialogue, underpins the appropriateness of this framework by showing that these concepts are translated into rights claims in political, cultural, socio-economic and natural resource spheres. A basis for cohesion between all political actors' constructions of rights is their recognition of the citizenship of non-Indigenes. When Butadroka moved in the 1975 Parliament to repatriate Indians, nationally respected Ratu David Toganivalu admitted, "all Fijians consciously, but mainly unconsciously, feel at times in terms of what is expressed in the motion." (Cited in Lal

1992:235) If these sentiments remain, political parties now separate them from rights claims. As well as a concession to political economy logic,[79] this separation reflects growing recognition that inter-ethnic politics is peripheral to the intra-Indigenous contests affecting Indigenous wellbeing (Interview: Dewa 14/08/01). Beyond this vitally important accord on rights to common citizenship of a multi-ethnic nation, is contestation.

Political actors constructing rights from the concept of individual equality promote a contemporary assessment of the justice of political rights. Their ideologies typically perceive society as a collection of individuals, whose fair treatment in the contemporary polity requires equal status. Differential individual treatment according to ethnic membership not only contradicts equality, but specifically violates the rights of individuals who are members of non-recognised minorities or who do not identify with their ascribed ethnicity (Brass 1991:342). This deployment of equality interacts with paramountcy, countering Indigenous group priority with claims to individual parity (Horowitz 2000:201). It attempts to undermine the perception of society as a set of ethnic groups, to challenge the perpetually inferior status non-Indigenes hold within that framework. Equality is not exclusively linked with individualist analyses attempting to transcend ethnic difference. The NFP advocates group-based analysis of society, applying equality to ethnic groups cooperating through institutions recognising difference (Interview: Singh 31/07/01; Norton 2000b:83). Former NFP leader Reddy (Interview: 03/09/01) argues common identity is a 'pipe dream' not realised in any multi-ethnic society; differences must be accepted.

Cultural, institutional, religious and international resources are used to bolster this notion of contemporary justice for individuals within society. Memories of the levelling experience of indenture are invoked as a cultural foundation for equality claims among Indo-Fijians (Lal 1992:40). Ideologies of Fiji's historically powerful unions support equal political rights and counter ethnic divides with socio-economic cleavages (Interview: Anthony 24/070/01). Offsetting church identification of Christianity with Indigenous hierarchies, proponents deploy the Bible to promote equality. As the FLP President stressed, "We're all the same in God's eyes." (Interview: Koroi 22/07/01) International discourses on human rights and democracy are used as resources for reinforcing equal political rights. The NFP leader, for example, invoked the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as definitive of acceptable value systems, justifying the 1997 Constitution's equality provisions. He argued, "In a democracy…your values are all the same, you're all equal." (Interview: Singh 31/07/01) This claim to contemporary justice is also supported by the practical imperative that Indo-Fijians have no citizenship entitlements elsewhere, Fiji is home: "We are fourth generation, we should have rights too." (Interview: Sami 06/08/01)

Political actors constructing rights from the concept of paramountcy promote a historical assessment of the justice of political rights. Indigenousness is critical to these

[79] One example is Davies' (2000:3) estimation that some 80% of tax revenue is sourced from Indo-Fijians.

constructions, as *original* inhabitants connected to the *land*. Rabuka (Interview: 02/08/01) explains:

> [W]e have the right to say we were first citizens or first occupants of the land, these islands. And we have developed our culture and it is rooted to the land we set foot on, this is ours, this is mine, and anyone else coming along later is *vulagi*.

Being original landowners has become emblematic of Indigenous identity, in opposition to 'immigrant' Indo-Fijian tenants. Ethnic nationalists translate it into rights to political control, Tora (Interview 06/08/01) expounding:

> *Taukei* means ownership, and we use it as owners of the land and resources and fish. Our attachment to the land is an extension of our soul, our spirit. It is the abode of our ancestors. It is a highly emotional connection. Only when people understand that can they appreciate why we speak of control…This is my country, it is strange when I have to make a case on how my country should be ruled…This place should remain forever in Fijian hands.

Indigenousness is thus used to construct rights for original landowners to hold political power over their future, their land and others resident in Fiji. Others entered Fiji largely under colonial, not Indigenous, control; it is constructed as historically just that Indigenes retain political power over 'migrants' to whose presence they never agreed.

Historical, cultural, religious and international resources are used and transformed by political actors to underpin this notion of historical justice for ethnic groups. Chapter III explored how the Deed of Cession in interpreted as the wise decision of high chiefs to enlist the British to civilise and Christianise Indigenes. British rule is imagined as a temporary aberration in Indigenous sovereignty, thus political power should have returned to Indigenous chiefs at independence (Interview: Ravuvu 10/08/01). Historical memories of Indigenous sacrifice in the armed forces are deployed as evidence of Indigenous loyalty to Fiji. In contrast, Indo-Fijian refusals to serve once demands for equal conditions with Europeans were not met,[80] their high emigration, and Chaudhry's much-publicised reference to India as his 'motherland',[81] taint Indo-Fijians as harbouring affinities elsewhere (*Post* 20/08/01:1; see Horowitz 2000:211). Indigenous political identities are increasingly constructed in terms of the relationship between *taukei* (landowners, hosts) and *vulagi* (foreigners, guests), thus differentiating the political rights of common citizens (Rakuita 2001:6). Other cultural emblems, including the *vanua* (the land and people) and the inextricable bond between *vanua*, church and state, are deployed to support Indigenous resource, political and religious supremacy. Christianity is increasingly deployed to support these particular political claims, bolstering historical constructions of Indigenous rights. Tora (Interview 06/08/01), for example, argued:

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[80] Lal (1992:121-3) details other factors discouraging Indo-Fijian enlistment, from poor British recruitment attempts to the absence of any means to support the families of those serving in the armed forces and the loss of land access because of the prolonged absence.

[81] This incensed numerous Indo-Fijians seeking recognition that they identify only with Fiji. Interestingly, the Indian High Commissioner attended the FLP campaign launch, the only foreign dignitary to do so.

> Different races were allocated particular countries by our Maker from the beginning…this country – these 300 islands – is allocated to us: to protect, promote, secure and uphold the principles of that protection. We are prepared to shed blood for that.

Similarly, the leader of the ethnic nationalist MV argued:

> What we say is, you [non-Indigenes] give us what is rightfully ours. Our land is a God-given right, our control of this country, our sovereignty, those are God-given rights. Give it to us, and let us return it to you in the way that we feel is best, not the way we have been structured to return it – where we have been deprived, and have had no say on how it has been used. [Interview: Vakalalabure 25/07/01]

Again, the *taukei-vulagi* relationship underpins differential rights for Indigenes and 'foreigners' and constructs Indigenes as a homogeneous primordial grouping distinct from *vulagi* (Ratuva 1998:58). It re-orients the pre-cession use of *taukei* for members of a *vanua* societal group, against *vulagi* who were in turn the *taukei* of other *vanua* (Rakuita 2001:3). This reorientation forges a shared identity for all Indigenes. Teachings that Indigenes are God's people given the land of Fiji are widely attributed to the Methodist Church, whose President admits to emphasising 'the Earth is the Lord' and thus supporting the identity of God, the land and Indigenous Fijians (Interview: Kanailagi 07/08/01). International discourses on Indigenous Rights, particularly ILO Convention 169 and the UN Draft Declaration, are drawn on to support Indigenous self-determination and control over natural resources (Interview: Vakalalabure 25/07/01). An MV spokesperson argued:

> The International Labour Organisation and the United Nations have accepted these rights but it seems that our past political leaders were deaf, dumb and blind when it came to the enforcement of native rights in Fiji. [Cited in *Sun* 22/08/01:9]

They not only promote the legitimacy of local political claims, but formulate an ethnic Fijian identity linked to a broader global Indigenous consciousness (SVT 2001a: 3; Boxill 1996: 106). At its party launch, the MV leader (2001c) exclaimed, "It is not a domestic movement but a worldwide organisation." International documents also offer universality for Indigenous claims, countering Indo-Fijian assertions that international institutions accord with their values of democracy and equality (FLP 2001c). Apart from historical, cultural, religious and international resources, paramountcy is reinforced daily through language: Indigenes are *the* 'Fijians', underpinning their claim of "Fiji for the Fijians."

These processes constructing Indigenous political rights claims as historically just are widely contested. Respected high chief Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi (Interview: 26/07/01) regards the Deed of Cession as a tactical surrender, and that to have returned power to high chiefs at independence would have presupposed nothing had happened to Fiji's population in the interim. Indo-Fijian and Indigenous actors challenge the historical construction of Indigenous rights with Indo-Fijian equivalents: Fiji's prosperity is built on Indo-Fijian labour, who thus deserve equal recognition in the contemporary polity (Interviews: Bogileka 27/07/01; Speed 09/08/01). The NFP Youth Wing, for example, argues, "the role Indians played in the history of Fiji will never ever be matched by any other races." (Cited in Norton 2000b:97) Others emphasise Indo-Fijian cultural and emotional ties to land they expected to lease indefinitely (Sami 2001). Extreme Indo-Fijian political actors, however, merely reinforce Indigenous aspirations by translating historical justice for Indo-Fijians into citizenship rights in Britain and Australia (*Sun* 11/08/01:4). Indigenous Fijians challenge the deployment of Christianity

to bolster paramountcy, arguing it is the Christian and Fijian way to 'embrace the *vulagi*'; instead of exclusion, "this country is for everybody." (Interview Vakatale: 17/08/01) This deploys a 'benevolent' conception of the *taukei-vulagi* relationship as between gracious hosts mindful of the interests of honoured guests, rather than guests submitting to paramount hosts (Norton 2000b: 98). Former Methodist Church President Rev Koroi (Interview: 07/08/01) persistently opposes church attention to Old Testament teachings on the 'chosen people' and Indigenous Fijians as the 'new Israel'. Political actors also challenge the use of international resources, emphasising that ILO Convention 169 and the UN Draft Declaration do not stand alone, but must be negotiated within the broader human rights framework and read in the context of their drafting for Indigenous minorities[82] (Interviews: Madraiwiwi 26/07/01; Singh 31/07/01; Beddoes 22/08/01; Duncan 16/08/01). Indigenous rights, they argue, cannot be used to suppress the rights of other groups (Spoonley 2001:7).

Placing equality and paramountcy on common ground as constructions of political rights enables a clearer identification of sources of conflict and compatibility between them. Their ideologies promote different perceptions of society, either comprised of individuals or of ethnic groups. Whereas the concept of equality underpins a judgement of political rights based on contemporary justice for all citizens, the concept of paramountcy underpins a judgement of political rights based on historical justice for ethnic groups. Both acknowledge common citizenship, but beyond it they diverge into claims of equal political rights and of differentiated rights between *taukei* and *vulagi*. The section has also explored the contested nature of processes constructing political rights claims. Rights claims are important for their power implications for various groups and individuals in society, but also as parts of ongoing processes reconfiguring political identities. These identities become resources for future political contests. Indo-Fijian and some Indigenous leaders construe paramountcy claims as transitional phases in a destabilising and insecure modernisation process. By privileging the universalist position of individual equality, they attempt to de-legitimise paramountcy as particularlistic and backward (see Mamdani 1990:372). The following sections instead consider the content of paramountcy-based claims to affirmative action, cultural protection and land showing how particular translations of Indigenous concerns into political claims is undermining their own validity.

C. The Content of Paramountcy: Claims to Affirmative Action

Fiji presents a curious case in the Asia-Pacific for the inability of political actors to articulate Indigenous rights claims in a manner amenable to international sympathy (Boxill 1996:98). The media and governments of Fiji's major trading partners and significant aid donors – Australia, New Zealand and the United States – represent Indigenous Fijians as aggressive racists unwilling to acknowledge Indo-Fijian rights to shares of power and land (Lal 1992:285). They build on domestic critiques of Indigenous elites, including by other

[82] See Thompson (1997:790), stating that under international law, group rights *always* refer to minorities that are culturally distinct from majorities in control of the state. The relationship between minorities and the wider state, he argues, is a crucial element in determining the particular rights a minority group can claim.

Indigenes, to regard Indigenes as the oppressors rather than the oppressed. In contrast, Indo-Fijian based political parties harness values of equality, racial non-discrimination and democracy to secure Western sympathy. Vocal Indo-Fijian diasporas enhance this success, as do strong international union affiliations with the Fiji Trade Union Congress, a power-base of the FLP (Boxill 1996:103; Norton 2000b:88). The inability of Indigenous Fijians to successfully articulate their no doubt deeply felt position is a source of frustration and resentment. Western donors, denigrated as 'immigrant' nations, are accused of 'neo-colonialist' attitudes and lack of understanding (SVT 2001a:10; SDL 2001a:16). The local English-language media is also accused of treating Indigenous claims with contempt (MV 2001b:2). This is not altogether surprising given the appeal of universalist values to these typically young, urban, educated journalists working in multi-ethnic environments with considerable international exposure. Indo-Fijian claims that paramountcy makes them second-class citizens, provoke angry responses from ethnic nationalists:

> I think that is very wrong. If you look at the reality of this country, it's the natives who are really second-class citizens. You just walk around Suva, and you see who is first-class and who is second-class. You go out in the countryside and see who is first-class and who is second-class. [Interview: Vakalalabure 25/07/01]

Though rarely spoken of, Indigenes see themselves as victims of Indo-Fijian racism obstructing their employment, housing and inter-marriage by a refusal to 'share' women (Boxill 1996:105; Sapiro 1993:42). A *Taukei* movement spokesperson, resenting perceived Indo-Fijian cultural superiority, said:

> We welcome you into our home. Please learn our customs and culture. It is four to seven generations down the road and there is no reason why you should not. [Cited in *Post* 23/08/01:2]

Indigenous socio-economic and cultural vulnerabilities, however, exemplify how particular translations of deeply felt concerns into political claims undermine their validity.

Ethnic nationalists counter claims that Indigenous rights do not apply to majority communities by correctly arguing that Indigenes are an economic minority in Fiji (Interview: Vakalalabure 25/07/01). Their pursuit of ethnic affirmative action, however, is effectively biased towards socio-economic opportunities for urban, educated elites. The SDL's (2001b) Blueprint recommends funding Indigenous investment corporations, protecting Indigenous companies, and reserving for Indigenes major business licences, government contracts and shares from privatisation.[83] Ethnic nationalist manifestos support privatising government enterprises, offering opportunities for the limited Indigenous elite to capture state resources (MV 2001a:14; SDL 2001a:11).[84] The SDL's *Social Justice Act* (2001) tempered these demands but reflected the priorities of the Blueprint. Increasing the role of the state in

[83] The combination of strengthening Indigenous institutions in rural Fiji with providing share dividends to village, district and Provincial Council companies could be understood as a means to channel additional funds into rural Indigenous society to stem discontent, while preventing a structural transformation of rural production and political relations that would undermine existing chiefly power structures.

[84] See Halim (1990:81) and Jomo and Gomez (2000:295) for the Malaysian exemplar of this process.

structuring socio-economic opportunities for ethnic groups not only enhances the stakes in competition to capture the state, it also promotes Indigenous middle-classes and elites emerging on the value of Indigenous paramountcy (Ratuva 2000:56). There are few reasons to suppose they will later renounce the ideological basis of ethnic affirmative action on which they have ascended, and which continues to promote their market opportunities through access to the state. Emerging elites owing their positions to state discrimination as much as their own education, will not necessarily promote egalitarian policies or identify with multi-ethnic classes (contra Smith 1981:189). Chapter III argued these processes have fostered a constituency for ideologies of ethnic privilege starkly demonstrated during the 2000 coup. Not only, then, can the valid assistance claims of disadvantaged Indigenes be de-legitimised by the systematic way in which elites convert their plight into avenues for elite accumulation. Ethnic-based affirmative action can also reinforce and perpetuate ideologies of ethnic priority, as sections of the population increasingly depend on state-structured opportunities.

Alongside the income disadvantage of Indigenous Fijians is a consciousness that their culture is antithetical to economic success (Interview: RFMF 29/08/01). This opposition is part of broader dichotomy between Indigenous culture and 'civilisation' or 'modernity', commencing with a religious-conversion process that disaffirmed their pre-Christian past as the time of 'darkness' relative to civilisation as the time of 'light' (Thomas 1992a:221; Toren 1999:27). Racist colonial ideologies positing Indigenes as unready either for self-governance or 'modern' economic competition reinforced the antithesis, and fulfilled their prophesy by obstructing Indigenous enterprise. Colonial-era essentialist dichotomies underline contemporary linkages of characteristics amenable to capitalism with Indo-Fijians, and characteristics incompatible with it, with Indigenous Fijians. An Indigenous academic reflected this consciousness:

> How do you compete with a race that has thousands of years of what we call civilization? When the first Indians arrived in Fiji in 1879, my grandparents were just ten years from eating each other. [Cited in Lal 1992:272]

To justify special assistance, leaders have continued to emphasise the disadvantages inherent in Indigenous culture, rather than building on numerous success-stories and seeking economic potential in communal relationships. Consciousness of disadvantage is daily reiterated by Indigenes, perceiving communal society as favouring redistribution not accumulation, and their contentment with the present as preventing successful business and investment (Interview: RFMF 29/08/01). However much they valorise their generosity, Indigenes see it as inherently preventing their economic success in contradistinction to conspicuous Indo-Fijian accumulation. Affirmative action justified by disadvantages inherent in Indigenous culture merely reinforces Indigenous insecurity and inferiority according to the standards of capitalist economics. It promotes an inverted valorisation of factors perceived to prevent accumulation, leaving Indigenous Fijians in opposition to the economic system in which they necessarily participate.

Affirmative action must operate on different foundations if it is to avoid elite capture, the state structuring economic opportunities by ethnicity, and reinforcing an antithesis between Indigenes and socio-economic success. Assistance should be justified not by paramountcy ideologies but social welfare philosophies, with entitlement emanating from

membership of the nation, not an ethnic group. This approach to affirmative action is not only compatible with political equality, but demanded by it. Democratic participation by formally equal citizens requires entitlement to a just share of national resources and acceptable level of wellbeing. Ethnic incidences of disadvantage, regional concentration and occupational segmentation enable pro-poor development policies to disproportionately target Indigenous Fijians. Entitlement, however, would emanate from disadvantage not ethnicity. The inclusion of non-Indigenes facing similar disadvantages could reduce the significance and growing rigidity of Indigenous boundaries, currently excluding the Indigenous maternal line not registered in the *Vola Ni Kawa Bula* book of landowners (Interviews: Sanday 09/08/01; Beddoes 22/08/01).[85] Formal political equality should not legitimate inequalities and social exclusion generated in the private sector, as if its outcomes are merited and affirmative action merely bypasses competitive achievement (contra Roosens 1989:157). This is particularly poignant where ethnic closures, such as trading networks, determine private sector opportunities. As Ratu Mara argued in the 1980s, why should equity apply to Indo-Fijian land access but not Indigenous commercial and professional access? (Lal 1992:227) Universalist claims can mask sectional interests, with Indigenes particularly hostile to Indo-Fijian dominated unions:

> When [unionists] hold the sugar industry and Fiji's economy to ransom through industrial actions, they are called heroes of the farmers and mill workers. When the simplest native Fijian pleads to have his rights entrenched in the Constitution, he is called an extremist and a racist. [*Sun* 22/08/01:9]

Where socio-economic inequity persists, equality should demand alleviation, not impede remedies involving differential treatments of individuals and groups. These principles for affirmative action were provided by the 1997 Constitution (Sect.6,45), but their practice is a matter for political art not concrete specification (Interview: Vakatora 01/08/01).

D. The Content of Paramountcy: Claims to Cultural Protection

A parallel example to the undermining of valid affirmative action by its translation into elite-oriented claims exists with Indigenous cultural protection. Lack of successful articulation of protection claims for international sympathy contrasts with wide recognition that Indigenous culture is threatened (Interviews: Vakatale 17/08/01; Sanday 09/08/01). Ethnic nationalists again refute the inapplicability of Indigenous rights to population majorities by claiming their minority cultural status in the global community (Interviews: Vakalalabure 25/07/01; Tora 06/08/01). Fijian language and local Indigenous dialects are becoming hybridised with or entirely replaced by English (Interview: Williams 16/08/01). Indigenous belief systems, modes of production and communal redistribution structures are changing rapidly with urbanisation, marketisation and encounters with external values. Education and wealth provide alternative bases for leadership, diffusing traditional authority even within villages (Interview: Madraiwiwi 26/07/01). Several political actors regretfully

[85] Where the SDL's *Social Justice Act* (2001) restricted programmes to Indigenous Fijians, that category was defined by registration in the *Vola Ni Kawa Bula*.

suggested that not capitalism or 'Western values' but their own churches pose the most significant threat to Indigenous culture. Church leaders increasingly organise daily activities of villagers, usurping leadership and funds from Indigenous authority structures and networks (see Thomas 1992a:224).[86] Few Indigenes, however, would entertain the possibility of delineating Indigenous from Christian (Interview: Rev Koroi 07/08/01). State funding for Indigenous dance, art and music assumes that 'culture' consists of a ritual or symbolic realm only (SVT 2001a:9; SDL 2001a:16, FLP 2001a:19, NFP 2001:16). Indigenous Fijians, however, experience change in the systems of power, production and exchange they enact daily, but over which they sense little control. Reactions to these insecurities are manifest in attempts to re-introduce customary law courts and legislation, strengthen the Fijian Administration, and reject human rights as antithetical to Indigenous rights and responsibilities (Interviews: Sikivo 17/08/01; Sadole 29/08/01; Vakatora 01/08/01; *Fijian Customary Laws (Recognition) Bill* 2001).

Debate of these micro-level aspects of cultural change was conspicuous by its absence in the 2001 campaign. Strategies to empower Indigenes in the encounter between their belief systems and those external to them were not considered. Nor did political dialogue seriously engage with possibilities for negotiating the relationship between formal justice systems and customary law, or formal democratic systems and customary authority. The daily frustrations of operating within the separate Fijian Administration were not addressed (Interview: Rasoki 27/08/01). Instead, Indigenous nationalists drew on insecurities from micro-level concerns and tenuously linked them to symbolic issues of national Indigenous power. These emotive issues appeared to appeal to voters more than discussions of daily concerns (Interview: Ganilau 23/08/01). Indigenous control of a distant state resonated as a panacea for micro-level frustrations (Interviews: Madraiwiwi 26/07/01; Vakatale 17/08/01). The UN Draft Declaration could, however, be applied with the greatest legitimacy to these marginalized cultural concerns, in which Indigenes fit the Declaration's intended targets of threatened communities. It provides their rights to practice, revitalise and develop future manifestations of their cultural traditions and languages (Art.12,14). Instead, ethnic nationalists selected provisions legitimising their own claims to political power:[87]

> Indigenous peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. [Art.3]

Ethnic leaders thus drew on and fostered Indigenous identities based on rights to political control. Translating self-determination into Indigenous control of the state in Fiji is difficult to substantiate given that the Preamble of the Declaration clearly calls to elevate previously subordinated Indigenous peoples to *equal status* with other peoples. The Preamble also explicitly opposes interpretations denying rights of self-determination to other peoples.

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[86] The *Sun* (29/08/01:10), for example, reported that Methodist Church members had raised a staggering $F2,000,000 for its Annual Conference.

[87] This seizes on the novelty of the Declaration, not in previous international Indigenous rights documents, describing Indigenes as *peoples*, thus self-determination applies to them (Thompson 1997:793)

Guaranteeing political power to a particular race also undermines equality and democracy upheld by this UN Draft Declaration (Art.45).

The contested validity of translating self-determination into guaranteed Indigenous control of the state does not detract from the effectiveness with which local actors are supporting their political strategies by particular deployments of international rights discourses. Nor does it detract from the potential of these processes to structure political identities around national Indigenous power. It has, however, circumvented consideration of the power structures within which Indigenous culture interacts with Christianity, capitalism and liberal values on a daily basis. These concerns were tenuously linked to national Indigenous power, despite the recent history of ethnic nationalist governments singularly failing to translate rule into micro-level Indigenous cultural empowerment and language teaching. In power, typically English-educated, urban-based Indigenous elites tend to subscribe to a modernisation paradigm, oriented away from the micro-concerns that supported their instalment. More importantly, linking Indigenous cultural rights to political control (including coups) undermines potential to forge consensus in Fiji's polity. Culture and language concerns are dismissed with the aggressive paramountcy claims of those who represent them. They could instead bridge the political divide by claiming legitimacy in liberal minority-rights paradigms.[88] Therein, ethnic groups are entitled to protection because the cultural frameworks within which people make meaning are *prerequisites* for members to enjoy equal opportunities to live meaningful lives (Thompson 1997:789; Kymlicka and Straehle 1999:72). Equality requires recognition and protection of cultural groups; it cannot legitimately be deployed to undermine them.

E. Deploying Paramountcy over Land

The UN Draft Declaration (Art.26) provides for Indigenous ownership and control of traditional lands. No political parties in the 2001 campaign questioned Indigenous land ownership, guaranteed in the 1997 Constitution (Sect.185). However, the potential of Indigenous Fijians to develop, control and use these lands, now amounting to more than 90% of the country, was a major political issue. The main Indo-Fijian parties held different positions. The NFP leader argued that Indigenous-owned land should be considered a fundamental national resource, "that must be made available for the development of the nation and for all the people." (Interview: Singh 31/07/01) The FLP (2001a:12-3) sought tenancy access to idle land, but emphasised empowering land owners to optimally utilise their occupied lands. This approach to technical and capital assistance for landowners was supported by the FAP (2001a: 3), PANU (Interview: Bogileka 27/07/01), and acknowledged by the GCC Chairman as potentially benefiting Indigenous Fijians (Interview: Ganilau 23/08/01). Land paramountcy is less a question of land rights than what Indigenous Fijians can practically gain from them; as even some ethnic nationalists admit, this is not an 'Indian

[88] There is considerable potential for consensus on this issue in Fiji, with many Indo-Fijian leaders stressing they do not seek "to usurp the rights and interests of the Indigenous community." (*Sun* 03/09/01:3)

issue' at all (Interview: Dewa 14/08/01). One intra-Fijian aspect of the land issue is massive inequality of landholdings among Indigenes, with traditional mechanisms to redistribute land suppressed by colonial-era codification (Overton 1992:329). These disparities mean that nearly 40% of leases are to other Indigenes, however Overton (1992:338) argues that this cleavage has not been translated into intra-Indigenous rural class ideologies.

With the establishment of the NLTB in 1940, Indigenous Fijians transferred the management of their lands to a statutory body. They were persuaded to this by high chiefs in the colonial administration, serving state economic interests in better administration of agricultural and particularly cane leases (Lal 1992:134-5). The NLTB has subsequently controlled leases under legislation entrenched at independence, that fixes lease rentals, terms and durations. Not only does the NLTB extract a 20% share of arguably already 'pitifully' low rentals (Davies 2000:9), 30% is divided between three levels of chiefs before the remainder is shared among not necessarily egalitarian landowning *mataqali* (Lawson 1991:246). The NLTB is highly politicised, less mediating inter-ethnic political economy conflicts than promoting political instability.[89] It discouraged renewals of expiring 30-year leases during the FLP government, aggravating inter-ethnic tension (Tarte 2001:530-1).[90] The NLTB has now decided it is in the interests of Indigenous Fijians to farm themselves, thus even landowners wishing to renew leases are forced to resume control.[91] Recent compensation cases have revealed the NLTB Manager to perceive the NLTB as the owner of native lands; a situation he sought to engineer during the 2000 crisis through a much criticised 'Deed of Sovereignty' transferring land ownership to the NLTB (*Sun* 01/09/01:2). As a presentation of landowners to one political party argued, "Fijians are landowners in name only." (Interview: Dewa 14/08/01; see also Overton 1992:326)

Indigenous political parties typically argue that the NLTB should be strengthened, and legislative control of land changed to increase returns to owners (SDL 2001a:8; SVT 2001a:2; Interview Vakalalabure 25/07/01). The leader of the ethnic nationalist DNT, however, suggested that the NLTB is the problem (Interview: Dewa 14/08/01; *Times* 08/08/01:12). Dr Dewa argues that land control should be decentralised to *mataqali*, to return to Indigenous owners their sense of land power and to enable them to 'practice their ownership'. He claims the absence of clear land titling, the inaccessibility of NLTB leases, and conflicts over land ownership mean that commercial banks will not accept native lands as security for mortgages. This prevents owners from raising capital on their land to invest in and develop it. Opposing state paternalism, he contends landowners should negotiate their own leases and develop their own land; any failures being valuable aspects of being able to learn. He argues: "If we make a mess, we won't always…It is the landowners' right to make wrong decisions, why should others make the mistakes for them?"

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[89] A number of NLTB officials were candidates for the MV in the2001 elections (*Times* 20/07/01:3).
[90] Prasad *et al* (2001:6) estimate that over 1,200 leases to Indo-Fijians were not renewed from 1999-2000.
[91] The *'Close-Up'* program (FijiTV 13/08/01), interviewing NLTB Manager Maika Qarikau, also revealed that landowning *mataqali* resuming leases are deemed to be leasing their own land through the NLTB, which continues to extract its poundage from their rental.

The NLTB, however, remains apparently unassailable. The DNT stood alone among ethnic nationalists and Indigenous parties in criticising the NLTB. The ease with which opponents rallied popular protest against Chaudhry in 2000 for proposing to alter land utilisation policies, that may have contained NLTB power, exemplifies the political dynamite sparked by Indo-Fijian criticism. Not only does the state have an interest in this *de facto* control of land, the rental division is also extraordinarily lucrative for upper levels of the chiefly hierarchy functioning as a landed aristocracy (Norton 1990:26). Indigenous public servants within the NLTB appear beholden to its interests, rather than to broader Indigenous interests in rural development. Political economy, however, is only part of the explanation for NLTB power. Norton (1990:49-50) argues that the NLTB, along with the Fijian Administration of regional representative councils up to the GCC, has historically provided the basis for solidarity among Indigenous Fijians. These institutions integrate the diverse Indigenous population into a national order, the NLTB forming part of this set of Indigenous institutions offering a 'consciousness of collective honour'. Without obscuring vested NLTB interests promoting this cultural construction, it explains why Indigenes rationally rally behind the institutions through which they have historically been mobilised and which symbolise their collective strength. As Overton (1992:338) argues, however, the NLTB has represented Indigenous interests but has denied the actual landowners real power over their land.

Land not only symbolises Indigenous unity, but is central to intra-Fijian struggles for chiefly power and resource wealth. These were glaringly obvious during the 2000 political crisis where, within a week of the coup, the inter-ethnic conflict providing its rhetoric was sidelined by intra-Fijian power struggles (Ratuva 2000:53). Intra-Fijian dynastic, *vanua* and confederacy tensions involve numerous socio-economic, political and symbolic issues. Not least are the ascent of Indigenes from particular Provinces in the state and patterns of uneven development during colonial and independence eras (Prasad *et al* 2001:5). Increasingly divisive loyalties are associated within the uneven distribution of natural resources and market resource values. As Rabuka (Interview: 02/08/01) explained of intra-Fijian rivalry:

> It is competition…It is jealously or envy. The perception of the unfair distribution of what, perhaps, was universally Indigenous – the resources we had. We had all the land belonging to us. You occupy that part, we occupy this part – the benefit from both we share. [In the colonial era] People swore on the Bible that my land is from that tree to that river etc., we became boxed in to those areas, a group of boxes all related to a chief – people who happened to have the best fortresses at that time would then realise that land was useless for sugar cane and tourism – when we stopped fighting we had a useless piece of territory.

The distribution of benefits from differentially valued resource endowments shared within different sized *mataqali*, is critical in intra-Fijian rivalries. These contest what aspects of resource control remain with the state – thus rents are open to competition – and what are captured directly by their Indigenous owners. A trend toward the latter may reduce state exploitation of landowners and the stakes of political competition, but may also exacerbate regional inequalities based on fixed natural resource endowments. These contests are closely linked with intra-chiefly competition for status within national institutions. Claims to

increase *mataqali* land control are part of a power-struggle to increase representation of large landowners from Viti Levu in a GCC historically dominated by high chiefs from the Eastern Islands (Interview: Dewa 14/08/01; Interview: Ganilau 23/08/01).[92] Whilst uneven distributions of resource rents and chiefly struggles fragment Indigenous politics, Indigenous Fijians continue to lack the means to benefit from their land paramountcy. Were they able to generate economic returns outside the NLTB, the ideological symbolism of Indigenous institutions may gradually be more difficult to sustain (see Berman 2000:20-1). Livelihood dissatisfaction, however, remains a reservoir of potential instability that can be harnessed by Indigenous leaders, however little it relates to its inter-ethnic rhetoric.

F. Conclusion

This chapter has explored divisive and cohesive aspects of contemporary political dialogue in Fiji. Individual equality and Indigenous paramountcy claims were placed on common ground as constructions of political rights. Whilst not capturing all deployments of these concepts, this framework elucidates critical differences in their ideological constructions of society and the historical timeframes in which they judge the fairness of rights claims. The identification of difference within a common framework provides a basis for negotiability. Avoiding clarity on the foundations underpinning political rights claims offers strategic advantage to ethnic political entrepreneurs, however. It provides flexibility for mobilising voters while appealing to potential coalition partners, and scope for altering political demands over time. Critics challenged ethnic nationalists in the campaign to specify what content of paramountcy would satisfy them, to avoid ongoing expansions of claims (Interview: Lini 14/08/01). The criticism, however, is no less applicable to proponents of equality who take their conception of rights as self-explanatory because of its status in international human rights discourse. They thus avoid clearly specifying the relationship between political and socio-economic equality, and between individual rights and ethnic group recognition. Without a common framework for dialogue, the ideologies of paramountcy and equality cannot engage and negotiate with each other. They will thus continue to appear to present an intractable contradiction undermining the formation of an inclusive national polity.

By exploring particular aspects of paramountcy claims, it is possible to demonstrate how the genuine Indigenous concerns underpinning them are compatible with broadly interpreted equality. In each of the cases of affirmative action, cultural protection and land control, the rhetorical use of claims by elites was distinguished from the experienced disadvantage or insecurity of the wider Indigenous population. Addressing these disadvantages and cultural threats is not only compatible with equality, but demanded by it. This requires a broad understanding of equality, recognising that effective political equality requires an inclusive economy,[93] and the existence of cultural frameworks within which

[92] The highest chiefly *mataqali* traditionally owned little land, with agricultural *mataqali* provisioning them. Colonial rule froze these land holdings, while capitalist markets have continued to revalue natural resources for agriculture, fisheries, forestry, minerals and tourism. [Pers.Comm. Rakuita 23/07/01]

[93] See Ake (1993:3) on the necessity of economic wellbeing for political rights in African contexts.

individual choices are meaningful. The translation of Indigenous grievances into elite political claims and vehicles for competition, however, detracts from potential consensus on Indigenous concerns with non-Indigene political parties. This potential is also constrained by extreme Indo-Fijian translations of political equality into identical individual treatment by the state. Reaching political consensus in Fiji demands more than identifying common social and economic concerns, however. As Fiji's land issue exemplifies, recognising the symbolic meanings of institutions is critical before they can be made to better serve Indigenous Fijians. This argument, that to serve as a foundation for political inclusion in Fiji, equality must incorporate welfare, cultural and symbolic concerns, parallels Norton's (1990:xi) argument on class-politics:

> [A] strongly inter-ethnic political organisation [will] succeed only by accommodating general economic and social welfare issues with the more politically potent ethnic concerns and not by seeking to submerge the latter as some political activists and Marxist writers have proposed.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION: PARAMOUNTCY AND EQUALITY IN POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN THE FIJI ISLANDS

A. Towards an Inclusive National Polity

Political rights claims based on ideologies of paramountcy and equality are critical in contemporary struggles for power, resources and justice in Fiji. These concepts are deployed by ethnic elites to underpin their demands and justify their actions. They also structure the political identities of Fiji's citizens, identities that impel and constrain the behaviour of political leaders (Norton 2000b:90). An ethnically 'divided' polity should not be taken as given, to be managed by an imposed political regime (contra Horowitz 1993:25); rather, the polity and regime interact to continually restructure each other. The ideology of Indigenous paramountcy has been used to justify and has shaped the form taken by the overthrows of democracy in 1987 and 2000 that have seriously undermined Fiji's development. The ideology of individual equality has underpinned and shaped resistance to the coups, both through political party opposition and civil society protest. The latter's strength, in the context of respect for judicial authority in Fiji, was exemplified by pro-democracy protests vital in upholding the 1997 Constitution. Political dialogue also reconstructs political identities, and thus possibilities for building an inclusive polity. National identity, as Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi argues, is currently weak:

> Our respective cultures have affirmed our respective identities at the cost of keeping us at arms length from each other…our sense of nationhood, that sense of belonging to a place and to each other as one people has never fully developed. [Cited in *Times* 30/06/01:34]

Mayer's (1963:ix) lament approaching independence is still true: Fiji lacks even an accepted common name for its citizens. Absence of an inclusive polity enables political actors to draw on differential identities to support their claims to power and political exclusion, further undermining social cohesion.

Paramountcy can be understood as a political rights claim whose fairness is adjudged within a historical timeframe. Its rhetoric of restoring political power to the Indigenous people ceding sovereignty to Britain would return Fiji to a 1990-style Constitution, entrenching an Indigenous parliamentary majority. This would undermine common citizenship rights, not only of non-Indigenes denied participation in selecting the government, but also Indigenes supporting democracy and not identifying politically with paramountcy or Indigenous leaders (Lawson 1993:18). Remedying historical injustices against Indigenous Fijians cannot involve abstracting from 130 years of enormous change in Fiji's demographic, political economy and ideological systems. The opportunity to integrate Indigenous and democratic governance structures was not taken at independence, but is currently offered by the 1997 Constitutional recognition of the GCC. The GCC is now developing the funds and expertise to attempt *national* competence in its advisory role (Interview Ganilau: 23/08/01).

The centrality of paramountcy to political identities means the concept must be addressed, not dismissed. As Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi (2001) argues:

> Objectively, the interests of indigenous Fijians appear adequately protected. However, inasmuch as a significant number of Fijians seem to consider their interests are insufficiently safeguarded, there is a problem. Perception is reality: they see, therefore there is a problem.

This centrality of paramountcy to Indigenous identities means it can be drawn on as a resource to integrate Fiji's polity. If defined as a protective principle, to prevent the subordination of Indigenous interests, it is compatible with the equal political rights for citizens that are necessary for political inclusiveness. This goal of political inclusion need not be incompatible with maintaining separate Indigenous institutions offering security or symbolising status, including communal seats that may fragment national political interests but avoid potential democratic exclusion of ethnic groups (Horowitz 1993:31). Using *protective* paramountcy as a foundation for an inclusive national polity offers a principle delineating Indigenous institutions that support national integration from those perpetuating separation and Indigenous priority.

Political equality is necessary for building an inclusive polity, but it is not a sufficient foundation. Whilst pretending universality, it can be deployed for sectional interest. Uneven geographic, educational, occupational and earnings distributions among Fiji's ethnic groups provide scope for ostensibly non-discriminatory policies to have differential ethnic impacts. This can be harnessed positively to alleviate inter-ethnic inequalities within broader development policies, for example rural development that disproportionately assists Indigenes. It can also mask socio-economic exclusion and attract resentment for the concept of 'equality' itself. Its use is illegitimate where political equality constructs private sector generated inequalities as merited, or where class-based action favours formal or unionised labour that disproportionately represents one ethnic group. Moreover, equality forms a foundation for political participation and inclusiveness only if it mandates policies promoting socio-economic inclusion, equity and a minimum level of wellbeing. In a multi-ethnic polity, inter-ethnic socio-economic equity is fundamental to perceptions of fairness and thus the potential for citizens to identify with ideologies of political equality (Stewart 2001:45). Equality is compatible with affirmative action programmes that differentially affect ethnic groups to alleviate disadvantage. Affirmative action should, however, be grounded on social welfare philosophies not ethnic priority, with entitlement from membership of the polity, not a particular ethnic group. Inclusive of the disadvantaged in all communities, it should avoid reinforcing the significance of ethnic boundaries. Focusing on affirmative action must not obscure the enormous potential for even-handed good government in Fiji to reduce inter-ethnic inequities, nor assume that socio-economic inequities are the only sources of inter-ethnic friction (Horowitz 2001: 677). Equality is essential for inclusiveness, but its political deployment should be treated as critically as that of paramountcy.

Indigenous rights need not be incompatible with equality nor impede political inclusion (Spoonley 2002:4). Extreme positions from ILO Convention 169 and the UN Draft Declaration promote exclusion, however. Ethnic nationalist translations of self-determination into Indigenous political hegemony are as flawed as opposing attempts to de-legitimate any application of Indigenous rights because Indigenous Fijians are a population majority.

Reading the Declarations according to their purposes – to elevate disadvantaged Indigenous peoples to equal status with the broader community – provides a basis for identifying aspects of Indigenous livelihoods meriting protection because they are threatened in contemporary society. Assistance for teaching and practicing Indigenous languages, music and oral history are only starting points. The right to develop future manifestations of Indigenous culture (UNHRC 1994:Art.12) underlines the importance of empowering Indigenes in processes that are transforming their customary political, economic and belief-structures. These processes are played out in daily encounters with the effects of national political institutions and global economic forces and value-systems. Strengthening *national* Indigenous institutions need not mitigate Indigenous insecurities arising from their present disempowerment in these *localised* processes. Moreover, once secure of national leadership, Indigenous elites have frequently demonstrated ambivalence to grass-roots cultural empowerment. Recognising group rights for Indigenous and other communities offers a means to integrate into national society citizens identifying with ethnic groups. It also bolsters individual political rights, by supporting the cultural frameworks within which these citizens imbue their lives with meaning. Fiji's changing demography, increasing the Indigenous majority, makes group rights vital. Indigenes must be accorded special rights not because they could not use population and parliamentary majorities to implement equivalent policies, but to prevent such arbitrary discrimination using majority power. Special rights should instead emanate from agreed principles. Indigenous and group rights offer such principles to protect Indigenous culture, *and* minority groups against democratic rule.

B. A Brief Comparative Perspective

Important characteristics of political dialogue in Fiji's struggle to build an inclusive polity come into sharper relief against political contests in similar states. Fiji is frequently compared to Mauritius, Guyana and Trinidad because of their analogous colonial histories of Indian indenture, differential economic integration of ethnic groups, and contemporary politicised ethnic divisions (Carroll 1994:302; Norton 1977:143; Despres 1975a:88). Guyana and Trinidad demonstrate the difficulties of forging and sustaining multi-ethnic identities, with political party systems in both degenerating from class to ethnic ideologies (Jayawardena 1980:443; Horowitz 2000:311). Mauritius also parallels Fiji, with class-based Labour parties becoming vehicles for sectional ethnic interests (Carroll 1994:312). Their significant contrast with Fiji, however, is that all major ethnic communities in these states descend from immigrants (Norton 1977:143). Competing groups in Mauritius accept equality of rights and do not make priority claims (Carroll 1994:314-6). While Afro-Caribbean peoples in Guyana and Trinidad do pursue claims from prior inhabitancy, neither has successfully constructed and drawn on the resources of *Indigenous* identities so potent in Fiji's politics. Instead, political debates pursue and assess policies according to ethnic proportionality, more closely approximating Roosens' (1989:14) framework of ethnicity as establishing *equivalency* between groups. They also show that prior inhabitancy does not inherently lead a group to pursue Indigenous claims (Carroll 1994:316-7). This underscores the importance this thesis has placed on tracing the historical construction of Indigenous claims to paramountcy. It also directs comparison to Malaysia, whose political dialogue parallels Fiji's confrontation between demands for Indigenous priority and individual parity (Horowitz 2000:201; Norton 1977:148).

Particular parallels between *Bumiputra* and Indigenous Fijian political ideologies have been highlighted in the argument of this thesis, from the origins of Malay 'special rights' in British colonial ideologies of protective trusteeship to the construction of independence as a bargain of Chinese citizenship for Malay political leadership and socio-economic advance (Wyzan 1990:52; Alamgir 1994:70-1). Malaysia's 1969 'race riots' were constructed by Indigenes as evidence of Malay disaffection with socio-economic exclusion and threats to their political control. Circumscribed political freedoms preserving the hegemony of incumbent Malay rulers and ethnically based affirmative action could then be justified as pre-empting national disintegration (Faaland *et al* 1990:12-3,25). Indigenous Fijian protests during the 1987 and 2000 coups are similarly constructed as warnings of state disintegration should non-Indigenes rule or the socio-economic status of Indigenous Fijians not be urgently improved.[94] These constructions were starkly evident in the 2001 election campaign, the SDL (2001a:6) using threats of national instability to justify Indigenous leadership and socio-economic advance. Its affirmative action Blueprint (SDL 2001b:3) argued:

> Ensuring the paramountcy of [Indigenous Fijians'] interests and their equitable participation in all aspects of life in Fiji is thus a pre-condition for the achievement of long term peace, stability and sustainable development in the country.

Simply comparing Fiji with Malaysia has power implications, however, reinforcing Indigenous constructions of the causes and solutions of Fiji's struggles to build an inclusive polity. Malaysia is used to strengthen analysis of the salience of ethnic cleavages in Fiji, and exemplify how antagonism can be mitigated by Indigenous-dominated consociational democracy and aggressive affirmative action. Horowitz (2000:402) argues, however, that Malaysia's ruling coalition emerged in non-replicable circumstances; the SDL's recent un-constitutional exclusion of the FLP from cabinet in Fiji demonstrates that Fiji lacks the requisite conditions for power sharing.[95] Malaysian affirmative action may support the importance of socio-economic inclusion to political stability, but it also exemplifies the capture of ethnic based programmes by elites. The focus of its New Economic Policy on Indigenous advance in the public service, commerce, professions and capital ownership has disproportionately benefited an emerging Malay middle class and increased inequality among Malays (Khan 2000:99; Wyzan 1990:68-9). Adam (1998:110) argues 'inter-ethnic equality' has simply reproduced the class structure found in the broader society within the *Bumiputra*. This thesis has argued that Fiji's replication of Malaysian affirmative action has similarly promoted an Indigenous middle class sensitive to non-Indigene competition, reliant on state privilege and supporting paramountcy as an ideology of Indigenous priority preserving its privileges. Indigenous capital and land returns have disproportionately benefited elites, who then resist reform of state structures and rural production relations. Additionally, ethnically

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[94] Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahatir said immediately following Fiji's 2000 coup that it evinced why Fiji should have implemented affirmative action like Malaysia's, to avoid such ethnic conflict.

[95] Brass (1991:345) attacks assumptions of consociational models that constitutional mandates for power-sharing are either sufficient or necessary for political accommodation in divided polities, arguing "When well-entrenched ethnic elites see that their interests will be better served by dividing up state patronage proportionally, they do not require advice from political scientists to seize the opportunity."

exclusive affirmative action will accord less with the needs of Fiji's society as inequalities among non-Indigenes grow: middle class emigration means the Indo-Fijian community in particular is increasing polarised between large entrepreneurs and a landless class (Prasad *et al* 2001:6).

C. Future Directions for Politics and Research in Fiji

Fiji offers insights into processes constituting the inclusive political communities that are vital to development in multi-ethnic states. Recent decades of crisis have increased the importance of constructing an inclusive national identity in Fiji, and frustrated this endeavour. Instability has precluded the possibility enjoyed by Malaysia of economic growth funding extensive affirmative action (Emsley 1996:43). Reducing inter-ethnic socio-economic inequality in Fiji must instead rely on politically more demanding redistribution, requiring political negotiation (Ratuva 2001:24). Fiji's open public space for debate has enabled political actors on both sides of the ethnic divide to contest attempts to increase ethnic exclusion in political dialogue and government practice. Ideologies of Indigenous paramountcy have played critical roles challenging pretensions to universality of particular deployments of ideologies of equality. These, in turn, were critical resources for resistance to the 2000 coup, enabling the retention of the 1997 Constitution as a foundation for political inclusion. The strength of Fiji's judiciary and respect for it has proved vital in opposing political exclusion. The degree of contest in domestic political dialogue over the construction of ethnically and religiously exclusive ideologies cannot be overestimated, contests often most fierce within ethnic groups. Development will not, however, necessarily promote the cause of political actors seeking inclusion based on equality. The more the state becomes a vehicle for structuring educational and economic opportunities according to ethnicity, the more reliant are emergent elites on ethnically exclusive ideologies and practices (Ratuva 2000:56).

This thesis has shown how particular meanings of equality and paramountcy can found an inclusive national polity respecting all citizens and attuned to the importance of protecting Indigenous culture and socio-economic wellbeing. The 1997 Constitution offers a basis for this endeavour in Fiji. Built on fundamental individual equality, it extends beyond formal political equality to mandate affirmative action for disadvantaged sections of the population and acknowledge group rights for cultural communities. It recognises Indigenous rights to land ownership, natural resource returns, protection of customary institutions and paramountcy, preventing Indigenous interests from being subordinated. As Indigenous parliamentary majorities become more secure with demographic change, incumbents have less motivation to tamper with this foundation (Interview: Lal 06/09/01). The Constitution may facilitate inclusiveness, but is insufficient to guarantee it. Fiji has political leaders advocating inclusiveness but, as the 2001 campaign demonstrated, lacks a significant population segment identifying with their ideologies. Instead, leaders articulating ethnically exclusive claims resonated with existing political identities, both reflecting and influencing identification with extreme meanings of paramountcy and equality. In the wake of ethnic polarisation from the 2000 crisis, ethnic appeals triumphed on both sides of politics. Supporters often expressed awareness of elite self-interests pursued through these ideologies, but identified with them nonetheless. In political dialogue, Indigenous privilege thus

continues to rival a conception of equality prone to promoting sectional interests. Considerable inter-ethnic social interaction and clear socio-economic bases for class-consciousness have not been translated into significant multi-ethnic political identities (Norton 1990:106). Nor are intra-ethnic fragmentation and its 'additional social reference points' for identity formation being harnessed for inter-ethnic coalitions (Melson and Wolpe 1970:1126).[96] Ethnic leaders and their adherents continue to construct conflicting histories, frameworks for understanding the present and visions for the future of Fiji. Ideological discord on the past, present and future seriously undermines the construction of a common citizenship and potential for societal cohesion.

Political dialogue in Fiji is structured by interactions between ideologies promoted by political actors, and between these and wider political identities. Political outcomes, however, are not purely the products of the overarching designs of actors (Carr 1961:45). Rather, they result from complex interactions between political dialogues and institutions with their own imperatives. This research has emphasised how historical and institutional contexts shape political dialogue and the potential for an inclusive polity. These critical institutions in Fiji include Indigenous land ownership and leadership structures, and ethnic closures in the public sector, police, military, professions and private enterprise. These institutional closures are part of processes of competition for political, economic and symbolic resources in Fiji; they are not simply objects that policy can manipulate. They are also part of processes reconstructing political identities in unfolding contexts. The next important research question is thus how the activities, interests and strategies of these institutions interact with political dialogue and the receipt of ideologies by supporters to facilitate and constrain particular developmental outcomes.

[96] See also Brass (1991:340), Horowitz (2000:598) and Mayer (1963:164) on the potential for intra-ethnic cleavages to spur inter-ethnic commonalities and alternative identities.

APPENDIX
RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

A. Introduction

This appendix critically reflects on my techniques for researching political dialogue in Fiji. It demonstrates how my awareness of techniques and their underlying methodological theory affected the research design and practice. It provides the context within which my research occurred, vital to interpreting the evidence gathered and assessing its reliability. Finally, this critical analysis suggests improvements for future research design and practice in similar fields. These insights are provided through exploring the methodological theory influencing my techniques for approaching documents, semi-structured interviews and the broader fieldwork experience. The political and ethical issues of researching politicised ethnicity in Fiji are also outlined. These sections follow a sketch of the circumstances of my fieldwork and a review of the approaches of other academics.

The timing and ten-week duration of my fieldwork component was fixed by Oxford's academic schedule. Hoddinott (1992:72-4) argues that the rigidities of research design imposed by time constraints make conclusions more tentative. Further, research questions are partially defined by the possibilities of research schedules – my topic influenced by the fieldwork coinciding with Fiji's elections – rather than a prior purpose defining an optimum schedule. These constraints were mitigated by my retrospectively using a four-month previous residence in Fiji as a 'preliminary' visit (Hoddinott 1992:74-5). It provided practical knowledge reducing time spent on logistical tasks, and a network of colleagues and friends offering invaluable personal and research support. These friendships, where I would otherwise have felt alien, afforded the confidence necessary to generate research encounters and infuse them with sufficient rapport to make them valuable (de Laine 2000:39). My prior visit, coinciding with the 2000 coup, was also an intensive introduction to political actors, issues and attitudes. It provided my research interest and helped define my topic. Whilst local actors did not generate my topic according to their needs (Ravuvu 1976:73), it did arise from the awareness I encountered during the coup that unresolved conceptual clashes between paramountcy and equality undermined Fiji's development. English is used by government, business and most media, however many aspects of political activity, popular media and social life are conducted in Fijian or Hindi. My limited capacity to access these spheres, alongside the limited validity of short assessments of grass-roots political activity, influenced my focus on formal elite political dialogue.

Academics researching ethnic politics in Fiji use techniques from multiple disciplines, according to their theoretical positions. Lawson (1990; 1991; 1992) combines anthropological, historical and political insights to identify instrumental uses of ethnicity according with her class-based analytical framework. This required archival research, fieldwork interviews and analysis of official publications, political speeches, newspapers and secondary academic texts. Samy (1976a; 1976b) and Cameron (1987) also emphasise

political economy determinants of ideologies, drawing on data linking ethnicity to capital-labour relations. Kelly (1998) and Kaplan (1998) apply anthropological analysis to political discourse, relating historical and contemporary texts to political acts. Ravuvu (1991) expounds an Indigenous view of political history linking anthropological and historical interpretation. He criticises research constrained by Western conceptual frameworks:

> Time and time again we come across researchers who are keen to *ask* a great number of questions – most of which are nonsensical, harassing and embarrasing [*sic*], but who are not prepared to *listen* with patience and understanding. All that interests them are the answers and information that fits well into the concepts or models they have set out to prove and establish…contributing to already distorted information about the peoples of the Pacific. [Ravuvu 1976:75]

My learning to avoid this critique is analysed below. My approach parallels Norton's (2000a) multi-disciplinary study of the 1999 election. Gathering historical, anthropological, sociological and economic perspectives on this political process involved methodological integration – analysing newspapers, academic literature, electoral campaigning, discussions with citizens and electoral results. I placed significant emphasis on semi-structured interviews, partly according with my focus on elite dialogue. Partly also, I sought to engage with the perspectives of political actors through personal encounters, rather than excessively deconstructing reported dialogue according to a theoretical framework. The different techniques accessed different issues and offered alternative perspectives on single issues (Moore 2000:13; Warwick 1993:281).

B. Theoretical Underpinnings of Research Techniques

The methodological theory underpinning my research draws insights from interactionist approaches that suggest limits to positivist assumptions (Silverman 1993:91). Interactionists regard research as an encounter where *both* parties determine their behaviour accounting for their perceptions of the other (Foddy 1993:19-21). Consequently, responses researchers perceive vary with how respondents perceive the role and purpose of the researcher and questions. They also vary with how respondents perceive the context of the encounter and the researcher's view of respondents. Positivist[97] notions of bias do not capture the complexity of these processes (Silverman 1993:107; Foddy 1993:13). I thus regarded research encounters partially as processes generating meaning. Rather than being separable from research, my identity and beliefs shaped it (Denscombe 1998:208-9). I saw my *self* as a resource in generating and interpreting evidence. The research scripts would not be identical if a different researcher undertook the project, however much my schedule unfolded from reasoned decisions according to a specified research purpose and methodology (Denscombe 1998:213). These scripts must therefore be interpreted according to the context of their

[97] The positivist framework assumes respondents have, are able and are willing to access the information the researcher requires under the conditions of interview. It assumes respondents understand each question as the researcher intends them to be understood, that the interview situation does not influence the nature of answers, and that the process of answering does not change respondents' beliefs. These assumptions mean that answers different respondents give to clearly defined questions are directly comparable (Foddy 1993:13).

production and the perceptions of the actors involved (Silverman 1993:107). This interactionist aspect remains in tension with the extent to which research provides authentic insights into respondents' perceptions of their realities (*ibid*). I thus regarded research as simultaneously offering insights into the political perceptions of respondents, and producing new meanings according to the context of the encounter. The insights I gained are partial reflections of respondents' attitudes, neither directly accessing their existing perceptions nor unrelated to them: their and my existing perceptions enabled and constrained the process of making meaning in the research encounter (Giddens, cited in May 1997:14).

Just as methodological theory structured my approach to research techniques, so theories of ethnicity structured my research design. Adherence to the constructivist theory[98] directed my research to the social, political and economic contexts in which the ethnic group has historically come to be defined (Young 1993:23-4; Vail 1989:11-2). From historical literature and contemporary politics I explored processes continually reconstructing ethnic groups and their ideologies. I focused on elite dialogues as an aspect of the construction of ethnic ideologies, understanding them as structured by and structuring their social, political and economic contexts. The approach was necessarily interdisciplinary, drawing on anthropological insights into politicised ethnicity, political economy contexts of political dialogue and historical analysis to elucidate contemporary political processes.

C. Documents as Research Resources

In the context of my time-constrained fieldwork and uneven aptitude in the relevant disciplines, documents afforded otherwise unattainable depth and expertise (Denscombe 1998:158-9; May 1997:157). Secondary historical and anthropological literature provided academic analyses of archival records and ethnographic research not achievable within my timeframe (Hoddinott 1992:74). Socio-economic statistics and electoral results offered particular types of evidence on inequality and political allegiance. Newspapers and news-magazines afforded background reports on events, actors, issues and the campaign. They also provided a means to triangulate other evidence, often revealing differences in the attitudes of a party's candidates not apparent in party manifestos and interviews. Without time to survey grass-roots opinion, historical texts on resistance and protest, newspaper reports on campaign support, and electoral results offered some perspective on my elite discourse focus (Tosh 1991:85). They contextualised elite politics, indicating how dialogues were received by potential adherents. Political manifestos were particularly useful portrayals of elite constructions of equality and paramountcy.

Documents can be understood as interpretations of social and political life that also reflect the practical requirements for which they were constructed (May 1997:157,163). I read historical, anthropological and other academic texts in light of an author's theoretical and

[98] Chapter II (Theories of Ethnicity) details the constructivist approach to ethnicity.

political adherence, and relied on them according to an author's credibility and representativeness (May 1997:170; Tosh 1991:154). I read official statistics in light of the straight-forwardness of measuring particular concepts, and the institutional imperatives, interests or discretionary decisions involved in their construction (Denscombe 1998:164-5; Silverman 1993:68). Inequality statistics could be constructed in numerous ways, given alternative definitions of ethnic categories and income, and political interests emphasising *inter*-ethnic rather than *intra*-ethnic inequality. Electoral counts are also partially subjective, particularly the delineation of informal from formal votes.[99] Newspapers were read as both reflections and constructions of reality, and interpreted in the context of owner and editor political biases, audience, advertisers and the imperative of making stories (Denscombe 1998:161). The priority, content and exclusions of reports reflected the outlooks of the journalists I met: typically favouring 'global' values of multi-racialism, equality and democracy. Political manifestos were analysed for the meanings of equality and paramountcy they were seeking to construct. The contexts of manifestos were vital in these analyses: their intended voter and coalition-partner audiences, availability in different languages, priority and exclusion of issues, the ethnic bias of graphic images and parties' wider political persuasions. This reading is the first stage of documentary analysis (May 1997:165); assessing the received meaning and semiotics was beyond the purpose of my research. Manifestos, party speeches and candidate interviews were compared for insights from their inconsistencies (Moris and Copestake 1993:47). A tension remains in simultaneously treating documents as constructed, and recognising that they provided some perspective on an experienced reality (Moore and Vaughan 1994:xxiv).

D. Semi-structured Interviews with Key Informants

Interviews with senior political actors were central to my research of political dialogue. This accords with constructivist theory, emphasising ideologues in processes continually reconstructing ethnic consciousness. My aim was to interview experienced candidates or officials from each party contesting the elections, to access a broad spectrum of well thought-out attitudes. To randomise the selection process beyond sampling each party would have defeated this purpose.[100] The campaign context meant respondents were focused on the issues I researched. Some campaigns precluded research interviews, but without systematic bias since tight, professional schedules of large parties offset the near impossibility of contacting small parties lacking party infrastructure. I did not consider government approval for my research as giving me any right to demand time from people. My interview set covering 13 of the 18 parties[101] relied on good fortune in reaching candidates generous enough to be interviewed.[102] I unnecessarily feared that ethnic nationalist hostility towards

[99] The importance of these processes is demonstrated by the Fiji Labour Party court challenge to the delineation of formal and informal votes, set to overturn several seat results (*Times* 15/02/02).

[100] Of the more than 500 candidates standing for the 18 parties, many had no political expertise, experience or even interest beyond obliging party leaders seeking to improve their appearance of national coverage.

[101] Four of the five remaining parties were minor; the fifth I covered through party materials.

[102] Where interviews were facilitated by mutual acquaintances, I was conscious of how this influenced my research. I thus kept in mind the trails provided by journalists, university academics and my former employer, each providing contacts or securing interviews for me.

answering to foreigners might bias my sample, however only one of four ethnic nationalist parties was missed, it because key officials were arrested for treason. I also interviewed political leaders who brought in the 1997 Constitution, and the actors who formulated it. Being foreign reduced my interview access through social networks, apparently offset by increasing access from my separation from the structures of either main ethnic group.[103]

Semi-structured interviews were most appropriate for my research purpose and schedule. In-depth insights into the meanings people attach to political concepts and their understandings of major political debates are not drawn out by structured interviews. Being able to interview people only once, particular issues had to be covered in each interview thus precluding depth interviewing. Semi-structured interviews provide this coverage and suited elites used to efficient use of their time, whilst enabling respondents to discuss their views in their own conceptual frameworks (Bernard 1995:209-211). They also reflect my preferred conversational style, facilitating discussion without obstructive pre-set wordings, question orderings or irrelevant topics (Moore 2000:122; Silverman 1993:95). Technique aside, I could not have subjected senior political actors to rigid interview schedules, uninteresting for them and implying I thought myself in charge. Practice improved my ability to order and select topics according to relevance, preceding discussion and respondents' remaining patience (Bernard 1995:209-210). Such development during the research process is inevitable; my techniques and conceptual understanding continually improved, defying strict comparison between interviews (Denscombe 1998:216).

Reflecting interactionist insights, I was critically aware of how my age, gender and nationality might influence interviews (Denscombe 1998:208; Moore 2000:17). Some respondents explicitly associated me with Australia or Britain, neither positive given their respective 'bullying' of Fiji and colonial legacy of ethnic conflict. In my general demeanour and explanation of my research purpose, I attempted to disown arrogance by conveying my genuinely-felt humility given respondents' experience, expertise and time generosity. Each, inevitably, held preconceptions of my 'Western' attitudes to Fiji's politics. It is more difficult to seek explanations of concepts people take as self-evident universally (equality), than those they recognise as particular (paramountcy). Their preconceptions of me were partially correct; I required several weeks of listening to recognise years of accumulated commitment to individual human rights, democracy and class-analysis of Fiji's ethnic politics. Respondents' relative authority meant they frequently challenged preconceptions they detected in my questions, reducing the impact of my preconceptions on responses (Foddy 1993:54). In later interviews I more fully engaged with all attitudes, an engagement now in tension with the detachment apparently required to compare viewpoints I had previously seen as internally valid in respondents' life-worlds (May 1997:115).

My interview techniques also drew on interactionist insights. I explained where I was

[103] My Indigenous friends repeatedly commented that their respective locations in social or chiefly hierarchies prevented their meeting some of the Indigenous politicians I interviewed.

from, what I was researching, why, and the value of each respondent's views, to assist respondents to construct me and the research encounter as I intended, to increase the helpfulness of responses (Foddy 1993:21). I could have better explained the purpose of particular questions so their interpretations of my aims would be accurate and answers more helpful (Foddy 1993:70-2). What I feared, however, was suggesting 'appropriate' answers by such explanations. To predict how respondents constructed me, I searched from their behaviour and responses to understand why they agreed to be interviewed, and how they perceived my purpose. Their interest in politics already established (Silverman 1993:92), I still attempted to understand their priorities among political issues before I imposed mine of paramountcy and equality. Silence and neutral interjections encouraged detailed responses (Bernard 1995:214-18). Many interviews tackled emotive issues and, over time, I managed to open discussions of issues not raised voluntarily – particularly Indigenous perceptions of Indo-Fijian racism – by indicating my prior awareness of them (Bernard 1995:219). Interviews were recorded if respondents agreed, or hand notes transcribed immediately where they did not. Although the completeness of transcripts thus varies, I could distinguish no bias in the political stances or seniority of those rejecting recording.

To analyse interview transcripts, I read them in the context of their production (Silverman 1993:94). Not assuming interviews were directly comparable, given their different contexts, question sets and lengths,[104] I sought the broad meanings actors ascribed to paramountcy and equality (May 1997:111). I recognised transcripts as partial reflections of respondents' attitudes, and partial constructions in an interview encounter. For example, asking open-ended questions did not guarantee that people's answers would directly represent their own conceptual frameworks (Silverman 1993:95). From open-ended questions, respondents' constructed my purpose and their own referents for answers on the basis of the research encounter (Foddy 1993:37-52). Simply by doing research I intervened in their lives, to some extent prompting their thinking about issues in ways they may not otherwise have done (Mikkelsen 1995:271; Moore 2000:16). The processes of encoding and decoding depicted in Figure 2 provide scope for interpretations, perceptions and context to significantly influence the scripts produced and my subsequent interpretation of them (Foddy 1993:22). My analysis aimed to faithfully represent the meanings respondents attached to paramountcy and equality, remaining aware that meanings were partly generated by the research. I gauged the validity of my interpretations through comparison with alternative perspectives from political speeches, newspaper quotations and party manifestos.

E. Learning in the Broader Context of Fieldwork

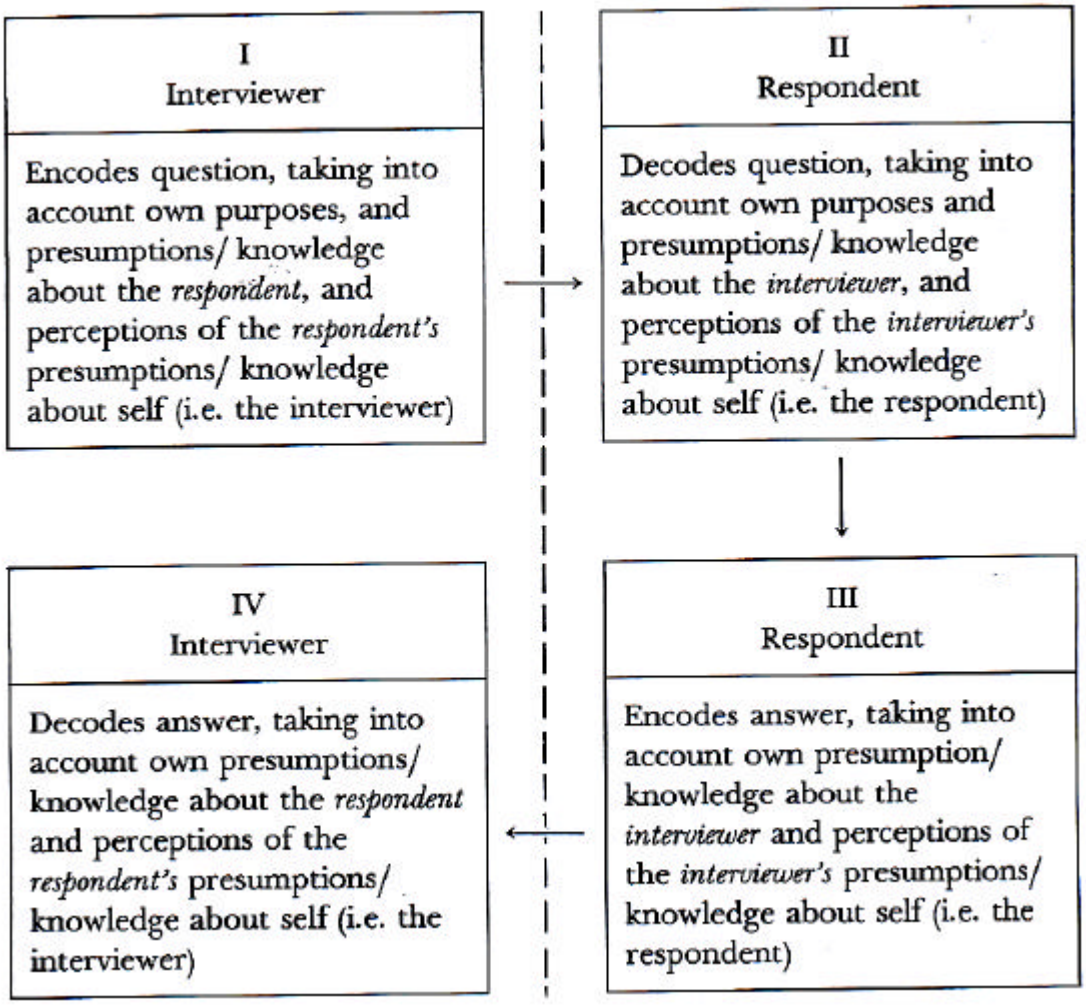
Documents and interviews were part of a broader learning process encompassing my whole experience in Fiji. Recognising how informal research experiences offer alternative perspectives on formal research products, I attempted to maximise such opportunities and be

[104] Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over two hours according to a respondent's willingness and availability to continue; they averaged perhaps an hour and a quarter.

conscious of how they affected my perspective on formal research. Whilst it is impossible to be critically aware of all the experiences leaving traces of ideas, my detailed diary encouraged such critical reflection. Informal discussions with friends, taxi drivers, my netball team, other university students, people in pubs and while staying with village friends – whether roaming over politics or not – offered numerous insights into beliefs, priorities and livelihood struggles (Bernard 1995:209). Simply living in Fiji provided intuitive understandings affecting

Figure 5: Interactionist Model of the Interview Encounter

[Source: Foddy (1993:22)]



my interests and perspective on formal research experiences (Denscombe 1998:216). People communicated in English with me in informal settings, however fluency in Fijian and Hindi would have offered richer experiences. We negotiated between their preferring to alter their behaviour according to known foreign customs, and my seeking to alter mine to fit local

customs. Fieldwork was a life experience, not a process where I – the researcher – extracted information from research subjects on their lived experiences.[105] Several mentors played critical roles in the development of my ideas; I remained both conscious and appreciative of these influences, examples of how my research was a learning process undertaken through relationships with people.

Interpreting and analysing evidence began alongside fieldwork. Diaries and discussions with friends drew together key observations, their interconnections and emerging themes, and subsequently influenced my research direction (Moore 2000:144). Reflective re-reading of my diaries enabled me to re-capture these influences on my research, avoiding abstracting too far from its context in the search for critical distance when interpreting evidence. In reducing the research experience to a thesis, I attempted to elucidate the complexity and nuances of the issues being explored to be faithful to my evidence, rather than oversimplifying and over-interpreting (Denscombe 1998:213; Warwick 1993:328). I have attempted not to extend conclusions beyond my evidence, although the interpretive process of analysis offers no fixed distinction between valid conclusions and hunches (Warwick 1993:329). Denscombe (1998:212) argues for including researcher biographical details in analyses, offering a reflexive account of how the *self* impacts on the research and empowering readers to do likewise. Reflected in Chapter I, this is seemingly in tension with academic disengaged analysis (May 1997:115). This tension perhaps less reflects my difficultly in transcending the personal, and more my unease with abstracting evidence from its contextual production.

F. The Politics and Ethics of Research

Ravuvu (1976:73) calls for foreign researchers in the Pacific to reject research driven by academic ambition or disciplinary theory, in favour of topics of significance to local people. In following my perception that cleavages in Fiji's political discourse impede its development, I did not respect this aspiration. My official government approval is hardly a substitute for locally-defined research, given the disjuncture of interests within the state let alone from the population. My perception was, however, grounded in a lived experience in Fiji. Ravuvu's call begs the question of, on behalf of *which* section of a national population one should research? In the field of national politics, this translates into for *which* vested interest to research? My topic, according to Warwick's (1993:36) definition, is political because it potentially affects "the ability of individuals or groups to impose their will, to pursue their interests, or to be seen as legitimate authorities." Studying political attitudes, issues and contests in a polarised polity is also inevitably controversial (Warwick 1993:318). To address the political implications of my research, I have attempted at least to faithfully represent evidence, reflecting on the processes generating it and comparing it to public sources to avoid exposing extreme claims incongruous with respondents' generally expressed views. This comparison suggested, however, that respondents did not condition views to

[105] See Foddy (1993:13) for criticism of this positivist presumption.

avoid offending me (Bernard 1995:234; Bulmer 1993:210). People rarely sought anonymity, perhaps because public figures are accustomed to dissemination of their views. Beyond these cautions I have not, as de Laine (2000:204) suggests, protected respondents or groups they represent against possible harmful uses of my research if it is used to advance political agendas. In political contests it is regrettably obvious that any document may be misinterpreted and selectively quoted for political gain (ASAC 1999).

Deciding to research politicised ethnicity in Fiji involved a judgement that it was an ethical endeavour (Bernard 1995:220). During research, I discussed with interview respondents who I was, where I was from,[106] what I was researching and what contribution they were making (ASAC 1999). They all had experience of the purpose, methods and outcomes of social research (Warwick 1993:327). In informal conversations related to politics I also explained why I was in Fiji and what I was studying. It tended to elicit rather than suppress responses. Formal and informal interviews focused on publicly discussed political issues, avoiding embarrassing or invasive topics (Warwick 1993:327). Political actors were fully conversant with these; in informal discussions people could avoid politics entirely, if they preferred. I treated respondents with respect, less because it is ethically appropriate (Warwick 1993:326) than because it was genuinely felt. All Fiji citizens have longer and deeper experiences with their politics than have I, and I appreciated their insights enormously. An ethical limitation of my research is that I did not complete my thesis sufficiently early to seek responses to my findings from more than a few people who informed the research (de Laine 2000:104; Moore 2000:124). They have therefore not had the opportunity to test whether they identify with it (Denscombe 1998:214), a flaw I would like to redress both in future work. Having contributors identify with the product could enhance the aim of the thesis: seeking bases for consensus in political dialogues on paramountcy and equality.

G. Conclusion

This exposition of my research process critically analyses the context in which the evidence was generated, and suggests improvements for future, extended work. I would prefer competency in Fijian and Hindi, expanding my focus beyond elite political discourse by gaining richer understandings of political attitudes through vernacular media and campaigning, and informal discussions. Greater field-time could extend research into how political discourses are *received* by potential adherents (May 1997:165), particularly through officially endorsed and feasible study in rural villages and settlements. Broader pre-departure reading may have enabled me to be more aware of my own preconceptions about politics in Fiji, and my own accumulated commitments to human rights and democracy. Stricter prioritisation of research materials according to an exact question at the outset could have made the research process more efficient. I might have benefited from heeding Moore's

[106] My work avoids one potential political tension associated with overseas research: my funding bodies make no restriction on topics or controls on findings (Warwick 1993:317).

(2000:16) caution against thinking that understanding increases with more information, when in fact the reverse can be true. These reflections are relevant to interpreting this thesis as well as designing future research.

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