THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

AUSTRALIA

**Rethinking journalism for supporting social cohesion and democracy:
Case study of media performance in Fiji**

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*A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
The University of Queensland in 2014*
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<u>Abstract</u>

This thesis examines conflict reporting in Fiji, an ethnically and politically divided Pacific island country debilitated by four socially and economically devastating coups between 1987 and 2006. Like media in some other developing countries, the Fiji media stand accused of exacerbating societal tensions through ill-informed, inflammatory journalism. This has had major repercussions for freedom of speech and good governance, with governments often citing media's alleged role in aggravating conflict as justification for the introduction of punitive Media Industry Development Decree in 2010. Pacific media lacks in-depth scholarly investigation, and consequently this Fiji-focussed research has four core objectives: to empirically test the claims being made constantly about conflict reporting; to assess journalists' professionalism and diversity; to analyse media legislation to determine whether it is having its purported effects; and finally, to examine the national media ownership structure and its impact on journalism. These cross-cutting issues are examined through the political economy and normative media theoretical frameworks in combination with contemporary conflict reporting concepts such as peace journalism.

The literature review involved an assessment of the media coverage of the major post-Cold War conflicts, including some in the Pacific. In the main, existing literature focuses on Western news organisations. Non-Western, domestic media are largely neglected, with little exploration of the links between media content and the national media structure (ownership, legislation, journalist diversity and journalist capacity). The thesis approaches conflict reporting in Fiji in a holistic manner by linking media content to the national media landscape. This method enables not only an empirical assessment of the long-standing claims made against the Fiji media, but also a determination of whether conflict resolution can, and should be, one of the recognised roles of the national media in a tense, multi-ethnic country such as Fiji.

The methodology includes the following: a content analysis of the print media's coverage of the 2006 general elections; a survey of the national journalist corps; a document review to evaluate the legislative environment and the national media ownership structure; and in-depth interviews for deeper insights into the key issues emanating from the literature. The content analysis returned a peace journalism reading, but the lack of context and the heavy reliance on elite sources diminished the value of the positive tone of the overall findings. Indeed, a new line of enquiry indicated that media were under-reporting important socio-economic issues, usually at the heart of societal conflict.

The questionnaire survey revealed a relatively young, inexperienced and under-qualified journalist corps, which betrayed signs of a fairly high rate of journalist attrition. This thesis tries to determine to what extent this problem can be attributed to low salaries, and to some other potential causes, such as Fiji's coup culture and punitive media legislation. Document review shows the legal environment has become quite restrictive since the 2006 coup, and that the media ownership regime has become increasingly corporatised since Fiji's independence in 1970. Following the implementation of the 2010 Media Decree, the government has become the most powerful influence in the media sector, both as a major proprietor and a high-volume advertiser. Moreover, government is the legislator of not only media policies, but also trade, business and economic policies that could impact on the profitability of media company owners, which include local conglomerates with major interests in other sectors of the economy.

These findings are indicative of a media sector mired in serious political, economic, and structural challenges. The results show that inflammatory reporting may have been a problem at one time, and is not to be underestimated in a multi-ethnic country like Fiji. But the one-sided focus of the policy on inflammatory reporting could be diverting attention from the more serious, deep-rooted problems that seem to have taken hold in the media sector over the decades, such as the lack of in-depth coverage, apparently due to insufficient newsroom capacity. This morass leads to the conclusion that authoritarian oversight, over-regulation and punitive media laws – introduced in the name of social stability and national development – are insufficient on their own to address the root causes of the problems. A better strategy would be to direct greater efforts towards training and development, and improving working conditions to build and retain a strong journalist corps over the long term.

This study spans theory, practice and policy. With conflict reporting rarely researched in a systematic manner in the Pacific, the thesis aims to put the subject firmly on the agenda. It seeks to make a distinct contribution to knowledge with originality through approaching the whole area via theoretical frameworks involving political economy and peace journalism. Policy-wise, conflict containment is going to be an on-going, generational effort in Fiji, and a study looking into the problem from a media perspective is long overdue.

<u>Declaration by author</u>

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Publications during candidature

Peer-reviewed papers

Singh, S. (2013). Responsible conflict reporting: Rethinking the role of journalism in Fiji and other troubled Pacific societies. Pacific Journalism Review, 19(1), 111-131.

Singh, S. (2012). Investigative journalism: Challenges, perils, rewards in seven Pacific Island countries. Pacific Journalism Review, 18(1), 83-104.

Singh, S. (2011). Peace journalism, media objectivity and Western news values in fragile Pacific island states: Reflections from Pacific island journos. The Journal of Pacific Studies, 31(2), 259-276.

Publications included in this thesis

No publications included.

Contributions by others to the thesis

No contributions by others.

Statement of parts of the thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree

None.

Keywords

Peace journalism, conflict reporting, news media in Fiji, Fiji, military coup, Pacific, media development, democracy, ethnic conflict, indigenous Fijian, Indo-Fijian, culture

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List of Abbreviations

CAMV	Conservative Alliance–Matanitu Vanua
CCF	Citizens' Constitutional Forum Limited
CFM	Communications Fiji Ltd
CSR	Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company
FAP	Fijian Association Party
FBC	Fiji Broadcasting Corporation
FHL	Fijian Holdings Limited
FLP	Fiji Labour Party
GCC	Great Council of Chiefs
MIDA	Media Industry Development Authority
NBF	National Bank of Fiji
NFP	National Federation Party
PANU	Party of National Unity
PER	Public Emergency Regulations
PFF	Pacific Freedom Forum
PINA	Pacific Island News Association
POAD	The Public Order Act Amendment Decree
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SDL	Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SVT	Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei

Glossary

Bati	Traditional Fijian warrior
Bose Levu Vakaturaga	The Great Council of Chiefs
Fiji Bhat	Pidginised version of Hindi spoken in Fiji
Lotu	The Christian Church
Matanitu	Fijian government and traditional political systems
Matanivanua	The traditional spokesperson of the chiefs
Mataqali	Fijian land-owning clan
Qoliqoli	Communally-owned tribal fishing grounds
Turaga-bati	The chief-warrior traditional link
Vanua	Land, people
Ratu	Chiefly title held by males

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

> *"Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding."*
> – Albert Einstein.

1.1   Overall research paradigm and significance

Certain observers consider that Fiji's news media, not unlike media elsewhere, are implicated in exacerbating social and political conflict. Yet media per se are also thought to have potential for peace building and promoting understanding (Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Robie, 2001). This research seeks to investigate such seemingly anomalous claims in the Fiji context. Discussion in this first chapter opens with the overall research paradigm and significance before explaining the origins of the thesis. It then outlines the problem statement, research objectives and the research questions, before proceeding to a preliminary discussion of the key concepts and methodological framework shaping the thesis. The chapter rounds off with an overview of the thesis chapters followed by a summary of this chapter.

This particular investigation is a response to a global trend in research and practice in conflict prevention in reaction to security threats arising in the post–Cold War era, particularly ethnically-driven, internal conflicts (AusAid, 2006; Centre on International Cooperation, 2010). Various studies assert that such conflicts, which made up 80 per cent of all major conflicts in the 1990s, are a security problem of "global proportions" (Bloomfield & Reilly, 1998; Wimmer, 2004). This research was inspired by a growing recognition among policymakers that the news media should be a part of any comprehensive peace-building strategy (United States Institute of Peace, 2008). Some Pacific analysts believe that an empowered media could play an important role in the region, especially in politically fragile island societies (Papoutsaki & Harris, 2008; Robie, 2011, 2014). One of the aims of this research is to determine whether the Fiji media needs to be empowered, and if so, in what manner.

Towards this end, this research seeks to fill a major gap: Peace studies have become an important contemporary field in many parts of the world (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2011); however, the subject remains largely unexplored in Fiji and the Pacific, particularly from news media and conflict reporting perspectives. Paradoxically, this coy silence persists amid a global era marked by unprecedented intra-State conflict, in which media are allegedly used to exacerbate

tensions (see Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Elsewhere, some analysts have been researching and propagating concepts such as peace journalism and conflict sensitive reporting, which propose an alternative approach to conflict reporting (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). These frameworks have been partially applied in troubled spots like the Philippines, with mixed results. But the allegedly Western-influenced Pacific media are said to have largely emphasised conflict as a predominant news value by focussing on its visible, often violent manifestations, with little in-depth reporting or debate about alternative paradigms (Robie, 2011, 2014).

In the western context, journalism attaches great value to the public interest agenda. Aggressive, confrontational and adversarial watchdog journalism is not only tolerated, it is also seen as a legitimate way to seek out and expose the truth. The Pacific cultural context is somewhat more complicated, as in Fiji, where there is an emphasis on respect for elders and chiefs, shying away from open criticism, not questioning leaders' actions and avoiding conflict (Madraiwiwi, 2014; Williams, 1999). Some see this as an unequal distribution of power within Pacific societies, but it is generally accepted as part of the tradition (see Saffu, 2003). Some scholars argue that for journalism to be effective in the Pacific, there is a need for a more inclusive media framework that appreciates and incorporates the strong role of culture and its influence in island societies (see Latu, 2010). Commentators like J. Bhagwan (2010) believe that concepts such as peace journalism may be more suited for Fiji's cultural, social and political conditions. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p. 5) state that peace journalism:

> uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting. Peace journalism provides a new route map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover, and the consequences of their intervention.

A thoughtful, thorough and considered approach to conflict reporting could benefit an ethnically-tense country like Fiji. Moreover, it would seem to be more compatible with indigenous communal values compared to the traditional reporting format, which can be quite direct and even confrontational. But there are long-standing issues about societal elites using so-called culturally-sensitive journalistic frameworks to curtail the media and cover up abuses (see Robie, 2014; Smiles, 2001). Such concerns aside, an investigation into the role of media in conflict is overdue, given the post-Cold War trend in conflicts in the region. This includes the four coups (arguably five) in Fiji between 1987 and 2006; the decade-long Bougainville insurgency, 1988–1997; anti-French nuclear

protests in Papeete, French Polynesia, in the mid-1990s; armed forces rebellion in Vanuatu in 1996; ethnic conflict between the people of Malaita and Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands, 1998–2003; army mutinies in Papua New Guinea in 1997 and 2001; and the political riots in Tonga in 2006 (Henderson & Bellamy, 2002; Robie, 2011, 2014; U. Harris, 2004).

Citing human rights agency reports and other sources, Robie (2014, p. 311) estimates that 120,000 Pacific Islanders have been killed in various disputes over the past quarter-century, plus another 200,000 when Timor-Leste is included. In Fiji, political and ethnic tensions between the two major groups, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, contributed to the four coups – ostensibly only in one or two cases. Several empirical studies have attempted to show that inflammatory reporting by sections of the national media emboldened rebels involved in the 2000 takeover of government (Robie, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011). This thesis investigates such claims theoretically and methodologically.

Fiji has not, thus far, degenerated into wide-scale violence. However, it has experienced fairly long-term ethno-political tensions, which degenerated into rioting and looting during the 1987 and 2000 nationalistic coups, with major property damage, some loss of lives and further harm to race relations (T. R. Singh, 2011). The December 2006 coup was a perplexing turnaround, with the indigenous Fijian-dominated military taking power in the name of multiracialism (T. R. Singh, 2011). Fiji has its share of demagogues. In 2002, an indigenous Fijian cabinet minister, Asenaca Caucau, described Indo-Fijians, descendants of indentured labourers brought to Fiji by the British during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as "weeds taking up space" (Bisram, 2002). Such forms of hate speech are viewed with grave seriousness within the media sector and academic circles, especially after the Rwanda experience, when Hutu agitators used radio to demonise Tutsis as "cockroaches and snakes to be stamped out" prior to and during the genocide (McCullum, 1997).

For Fiji, the lack of growth resulting from the political instability could be seen as a major problem and a potential trigger for further conflict. Paul Collier's words in his acclaimed book, *Guns, Wars and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, ring true for Fiji: "wars and coups are not tea parties: they are development in reverse" (2009, p. 9). Fiji's four coups can be linked to a trend of serious and sustained decline that permeates virtually all levels of society. This includes investment falling from 25 per cent of the GDP in the 1970s to around 12 per cent in more recent decades. This is reflected in the meagre annual average growth of 1.6 per cent since 1996, which is in turn linked to

high unemployment, increasing social problems and declining services and infrastructure (see B. Prasad & R. Singh, 2008; Naidu, 2005, 2008, 2013).

In addition, research shows that the country has a 20-year infrastructure deficit of FJD3.4 billion partly due to persistent instability (B. Prasad & P. Narayan, 2008). Fiji economist and political commentator Wadan Narsey (2013a) estimates that by 2011, Fiji had lost FJD1,700 million because of the 2006 coup. This included FJD400 million in government revenue, which could have been allocated to education, health, infrastructure, public debt repayments and so forth. Cumulatively, these indicators reveal that Fiji's precarious position has progressively worsened over the past 25 years. The situation betrays signs of an ominous trend: long-term ethnic and political tensions coupled with low growth rates and under development are usually the formula for violent conflict in fragile states (see Collier, 2009; Henderson & Watson, 2005).

From a conflict reporting perspective, the moot point is whether journalism in Fiji is informed and influenced by this historical context of persistent, low-level conflict that periodically boils over into coups. Given the ongoing social, political and economic consequences of conflict in Fiji, and a national aspiration to contain the problem, this research seeks to understand conflict in the country and the local media's role in it, especially since successive Fiji governments' accusations of press incitement of racial discord are used to justify censorship (Robie, 2009a, 2009b).

1.2   Foundation of this thesis

The seeds for this thesis were planted in this researcher's mind subconsciously during his conduct of a news interview with a deposed government minister in the aftermath of Fiji's third coup on May 19, 2000. Civilian and military ethno-nationalist elements proclaiming indigenous Fijian supremacy took the country's first legitimately elected Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, and his People's Coalition Government, hostage (T. R. Singh, 2011). The fall of this government in its first year in office was preceded by what many analysts saw as the media demonisation of Chaudhry, which allegedly fed into latent indigenous concerns about their rights under an Indo-Fijian prime minister (Obini, 2000; T. R, Singh, 2011; Robie, 2001). But an unrepentant media blamed the Chaudhry Government for its own demise. However, while government had made some poor decisions, it was seen to be performing well on the crucial economic front (see Robie, 2000, 2001).

Notwithstanding government's supposed tactical blunders, including getting off-side with the media, were indigenous interests really threatened by an Indo-Fijian prime minister as claimed by the insurgents? This researcher put the question to a senior Chaudhry Government MP, Krishna Datt, who had escaped arrest by the rebels. In a compelling discussion, Datt insisted that the issue had more to do with leadership style, assumptions about a fully-fledged democracy, the roles played by the media and certain individuals in shaping public opinion, rather than outright indigenous Fijian rejection of the government (Living on borrowed time, 2000). Datt, the education minister in the deposed cabinet, added:

> Journalists abroad have a certain style in questioning issues and adopt a particular
> slant, which is fine in fully-fledged democracies that can take it. But here we had a
> fledgling democracy, which hadn't got its roots dug in. That kind of journalism did a
> lot of damage. We could score all this and see where the problem is – whether there was a
> reaction to the media image about government or if it was the reality. Unless we delve
> deeply into these and other issues, it would not be fair to jump to conclusions.
> (Living on borrowed time, 2000, p. 18)

The Datt interview was a profound experience for this researcher, who trained as a cadet reporter in the late 1980s with the Rupert Murdoch–owned the *Fiji Times*, developing a rather strong faith in the media's fourth estate role in a democracy, forged largely in the newsroom. In hindsight, the grounding laid in the newsroom lacked critical analysis. It was limiting in the Fiji context, particularly in terms of a deeper understanding about the fragility of Fiji's democracy due to its history and its mixed society.

Twelve years after the Datt interview, this researcher conducted interviews with Fiji journalists for his PhD study. It was *déjà vu* when a print media journalist commented that "we are stuck in here and just go through the mill (with) no time to reflect. The newsroom environment is not conducive for reflective thinking" (Print Newsroom Manager, in an in-depth interview with the author, 25 September 2012). Typically, journalists and analysts conceptualise the role of Fiji's media from the fourth estate perspective. This idea of an unfettered and independent press holding governments to account was conceived and developed by liberal theorists in Western democracies with largely homogeneous populations (Cornog, 2006; Mohd, 2005). However, Fiji is neither a liberal democracy in the sense that Australia and New Zealand might be, nor is it an ethnically

homogeneous entity. Fiji represents a "hybrid" political order, which combines Western and indigenous models of governance.

To further complicate things for journalists, the country has two major ethnic groups, with cultural and religious differences magnified under a racially-based electoral system. This means that in Fiji, liberal media values can become caught in the cross-fire of cultural respect on the one hand, and the ethno-political divide on the other. The government of Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama (which took power in the 2006 coup) claims to be addressing ethno-nationalism through the 2013 Constitution. This Constitution has eliminated race-based electoral rolls and seat quotas in favour of a single constituency (see Boege et al., 2008, p. x; Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands 2013, 2013; Naidu, 1996, 2005, 2013).

Since independence in 1970, the Fiji media have attempted to apply a libertarian press model to Fiji's national framework. The libertarian dogma holds that in the pursuit of truth, the press should be free to publish what they choose, regardless of the consequences (Christians et al., 2009; Mohd, 2005). The libertarian attitude took a stronger hold in Fiji in the 1990s, particularly after deregulation, as this thesis will argue. In 1999, the Chaudhry Government bore the brunt of the aggressive coverage, largely at the hands of Fiji TV and the Rupert Murdoch–owned *Fiji Times,* the latter with its distinct Australian influence and flavour (see Gaunder, 2008; Obini, 2000; Robie, 2000, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011). In fact, in an address at a Fiji Media Council launching on 26 October 2000, Chaudhry singled out the paper for criticism, saying in a remarkable broadside:

> The media in Fiji needs to take stock of how it is behaving and whether it is facing a crisis of ethics. Since taking office, my Government has had occasion to be extremely disgusted by the antics of some elements in the media who have used the medium of the newspaper and television to further their own personal agendas to discredit the Government. Is the *Fiji Times* carrying the torch for people engaged in seditious activities? Is it not fanning the fires of sedition and communalism by giving undue prominence to stories that are really non-stories? (M. Chaudhry, 2000)

The media dismissed the allegations, although various researchers and analysts concluded that at least some of Chaudhry's concerns were valid (Field, 2002, 2007, 2010; Obini, 2000; Robie, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011). This researcher was in Fiji in 2000, employed as a journalist, and in Australia from 2011 to 2014 as a PhD research student. He could not help but notice parallels between the

coverage that preceded Chaudhry's fall and that of his Australian Labor Party counterpart, Julia Gillard, by the different branches of the Murdoch media. The air of inevitability and the palpable sense of a government under siege and living on borrowed time have been well captured by various authors and scholars in the respective countries (see K. Walsh, 2013; Muller, 2013; Obini, 2000; Robie, 2001, 2014).

Australian Labor Party senator Doug Cameron's comments about the Murdoch media's coverage of the Gillard Government were strikingly similar to Chaudhry's (2000) speech at the Fiji Media Council launch more than a decade earlier. Cameron described the Murdoch media as an "absolute disgrace", a "threat to democracy", engaging in "fabrication", "putting false headlines, day in and day out", "misrepresenting" and trying to "destabilise" government. Cameron's remark about a "culture that permeates the Murdoch press internationally" had a certain ring to it (J. Thompson, 2011).

However, there was a major difference in the two countries in terms of outcomes. Australia experienced an orderly transition of power, with Kevin Rudd reclaiming the prime ministership in a palace coup in June 2013. Fiji faced a violent overthrow of government that caused massive social and political disorder, economic ruin, a mutiny at the military barracks, and six years down the line, the country's fourth military coup (see T. R. Singh, 2011). Fiji's experience belies Labour MP Datt's remarks about the different impacts of media messages in mature democracies on the one hand, and fragile ones on the other. It somewhat vindicates claims that unfettered, libertarian media approaches may not be suited in every context or setting. As Goonasekera and Ito (1999) state, in multicultural, multiparty democracies, such media tactics can heighten societal tensions and mobilise sectional constituencies by flooding the marketplace with racially divisive information. This could set countries on a course of racial strife and even civil war (Mohd, 2005).

This study argues that the 2000 coup was a defining moment for the Fiji media sector. While the upheaval provided journalists with a lot of copy, it also gave rise to an unprecedented level of public and academic scrutiny into the inner workings of the media (see Cass, 2002; Field, 2002; Gounder, 2006; Kiran, 2005; Mason, 2007; Robie, 2001, 2002, 2004). Apparently spooked by the Chaudhry Government's fall, the new government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase increased attacks on the media and boosted efforts to restrict media criticism by attempting to impose tougher controls (Reporters Without Borders, 2004). These developments underline the need for a study into conflict reporting in Fiji.

1.3   Problem Statement

Concerns about the negative impact of an unencumbered, Western-inspired news reporting culture in Fiji and the Pacific are not new. More than three decades ago at the University of Hawaii, the late Fiji journalist Robert Keith-Reid had this to say at a Pacific media roundtable:

> In coming years, Pacific Island journalists, native and expatriate, without being subservient, will have to develop a style of operation that sees all the news, good and bad, get into print, yet making some allowances for Pacific Island sensibilities. They will have to learn how to get local leaders to accept criticism coolly and with the realisation that a free press must often be cruel to be kind. (cited in Brislin, 1979, p. 85)

Keith-Reid was addressing a panel reviewing "adversary" and "cooperative" (developmental) press systems in the Pacific. The panel noted that the libertarian press systems imported from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States prevailed in the Pacific (Brislin, 1979). The wellness of this system was predicated on the availability of a "multitude of possible voices" in the public forum. However, contemporary economics had "undercut" the multitude of voices' foundation, compromising media's search for the truth. The panel suggested that somewhere between the extremes of the purely adversarial and the purely developmental might lie a press system more suited for the Pacific (Brislin, 1979), although they did not outline or advocate any specific model.

Since that 1979 meeting, there has been little follow-up discussion about contemporary Pacific press models to deal with contemporary issues. Instead, the libertarian system has become entrenched even as concerns about the impact of "contemporary economics" on media's watchdog role has intensified with globalisation (see Brislin, 2004, 2007). In Fiji, journalists are still confined to 1970s-style conflict-focused reporting inherited from the British free press model. Media have attempted to maintain this system even under military rule since December 2006. Ultimately, this has resulted in State-imposed restrictions through a punitive media law (see Dutt, 2010).

The Fiji media are paradoxically described as both a national security threat and champion of democracy (see Robie, 2014). This is not surprising, given the country's complex socio-political history. Credited with exposing corruption and challenging the military government, journalists are also commonly alleged to lack cultural sensitivity, professionalism, educational standards,

knowledge of political and social institutions, and having a questionable grasp of ethics (Robie, 2004). Unlike previous works (Field, 2002; Gounder, 2006; Kiran, 2005; Parkinson, 2002), this study does not stop at identifying media's mistakes. It goes further in trying to understand the alleged mistakes in the context of the other variables within the media landscape. This is explained in the next section.

1.4 Research Objectives

Given the apparent paucity of rigorous research on the media context in the Pacific, this research goes 'back to the starting line' to establish some factual groundwork. It is guided by the following intentions:

- to verify claims about the nature of conflict reporting by studying local print media through a content analysis framework inspired by peace journalism
- to assess the professional capacity and diversity of Fiji's media corps and discern any links with conflict reporting
- to find out who owns what media in Fiji and determine any link between the ownership structure and the nature of the news coverage
- to analyse the nature of Fiji's legislation relating to the media and to evaluate its conduciveness for responsible conflict reporting
- to determine whether conflict resolution can, and should, be one of the recognised roles or core values of the media in a multiethnic country such as Fiji
- on the basis of the findings, to make recommendations for a national framework to facilitate responsible conflict reporting in Fiji.

At this juncture, it should be clarified that responsible conflict reporting is not to be confused with the Bainimarama Government's concept of "journalism of hope," which some critics interpret as media not criticising the government (Media in Fiji told to adopt 'journalism of hope', 2009). This thesis argues that a reasonably free media environment and open dialogue is more conducive for responsible conflict reporting than an overly restricted one. Any media abuse or shortcomings are best addressed through regular debate, discussion, training and education rather than excessively punitive legislation.

1.5   Research Questions

The research objectives will be explored through the following four research questions in relation to conflict reporting:

1. Are the Fiji print media inflammatory, as is often alleged?
2. What is the level of journalist professional capacity and diversity in Fiji?
3. What are the genesis and nature of Fiji's media laws?
4. What are the genesis and nature of media ownership in Fiji and the link with political and economic power?

1.6   Key concepts and methodological framework

The study is supported by conflict theory and contemporary conflict reporting frameworks, such as peace journalism, use and abuse of media in fragile societies and conflict-sensitive reporting (Frohardt & Temin, 2003; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; R. Howard, 2003, 2009). The study also applies political economy and normative media theory to conflict reporting (Christians et al., 2009; Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 2008). Methodologically, the research triangulates four techniques: a content analysis of Fiji's 2006 general elections to evaluate the nature of conflict reporting; a survey questionnaire to assess the professional capacity and diversity of the national journalist corps; and document review to analyse the legislative environment and trends in media ownership. These three methods are underpinned by the fourth, in-depth interviews with journalists and academics. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, this approach is unique for a region with little empirical research into conflict reporting or the media landscape.

1.7   Organisation of chapters

The thesis comprises seven chapters, including this introductory one.

Chapter Two reviews the study's literature and theoretical frameworks – conflict theory, normative media theories, political economy and contemporary conflict reporting frames. The idea is to understand conflict both as a social phenomenon and a news product. The literature on Fiji suggests that the Fiji media privilege the ethnic angle in conflict reporting. This ignores the multitude of conflict causes and triggers rooted in colonialism, ethnically-based electoral systems and

competition for scarce resources. The chapter notes that, despite some apparent merits, peace journalism and other developmental journalism concepts are surrounded by scepticism due to a government tendency to use them to justify undue censorship (Media in Fiji . . ., 2009). The chapter conceptualises the Fiji media's post-2006 coup predicament through the four roles of the media theory (Christians et al., 2009) in attempts to show that the country's slide into authoritarianism was matched by the media's gradual capitulation into a collaborative role with the State.

Chapter Three turns its attention to the research context. In line with the literature review, the analysis adopts the instrumentalist (elite manipulation/political economy) and constructivist (structural/historical) philosophies for conflict analysis. Primordialism (ethnic hatred) is de-emphasised, not ruled out. With regard to conflict, the chapter considers the impact of British imperialism, the country's pluralistic make-up, its legacy of an unusual, ethnically-based political system and its distinctive cultures and traditions. This expansive approach seeks to give deeper insights into some seemingly intractable conflicts that have dominated the local news agenda for decades. The chapter argues that what has been described as Fiji's "coup culture" (Lane, 2012) is in reality an ongoing, if unsteady, and inconsistent, process of militarisation. This trend is comparable, in some respects, to a guarded democracy, whereby elected civilian authorities form government and the universal rule of law applies, but the military remains in control, and is the ultimate authority (see Buchanan, 2013). The media overlooked this trend due to a generally positive disposition toward the armed forces. In the same way, sections of the media might have been initially seduced by 2006 coup leader Bainimarama's promise of a "clean up" campaign against corruption (see Media failed to grill coup leader, 2009).

Chapter Four details the methodological framework, integrating four techniques – content analysis, survey questionnaire, document review and in-depth interviews. These methods not only identify patterns in conflict reporting, but link them to the media landscape, which includes journalist professional capacity and diversity, the legal environment and the structure of media ownership.

Chapter Five deals with the research findings. Surprisingly, the *content analysis* returned a dominant peace journalism frame whereas the *questionnaire survey* found a comparatively young, inexperienced and under-qualified journalist cohort. *Document review* shows that although, after independence in 1970, the country adopted British free press traditions, successive governments tried to tighten the laws in the name of social stability and economic development. *Document*

review also indicates that since independence, media ownership has become increasingly corporatised.

Chapter Six analyses the results. In terms of the *content analysis*, the peace journalism frame was deemed somewhat irrelevant in the face of a new line of enquiry showing a dearth of stories dealing with core developmental issues. This implies that the lack of analytical vigour is a bigger problem than inflammatory journalism, at least insofar as print media coverage of the 2006 election is concerned. Evidence of a young, inexperienced and underqualified journalist corps in the *questionnaire survey* indicates a high rate of journalist attrition. Lack of journalist capacity could be behind, or at least implicated in, the lack of in-depth reporting discovered in the content analysis.

Chapter Seven concludes the thesis, makes recommendations, outlines the research contributions and implications, identifies weaknesses in the study and suggests areas for future research. The chapter surmises that journalist attrition rates make insignificant any gains recorded in journalist qualification standards. Moreover, the lack of analytical reporting is not wholly due to weaknesses in journalists and their craft. Media owners who prioritise low-cost news sources, deadlines, and high selling sports and entertainment news products limit the space for serious news coverage and journalistic endeavour. The thesis argues that one of the major contributors to the apparent decline in journalism in Fiji is the country's coup culture.

1.8   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the overall research paradigm in the national, regional and global senses, as well as the underlying research goal of identifying strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in conflict reporting in coup-prone Fiji. The chapter outlines the devastating social and economic costs of ongoing conflicts in the nation to rationalise an exploration into long-standing concerns about the alleged links between the national media and conflict. It summarises the research objectives and the research questions, explaining the central concepts and methods, and gives a brief overview of the chapters.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1   Introduction

The previous chapter articulated the thesis' rationale and scope. This chapter reviews the literature and theoretical frameworks as they relate to conflict reporting in Fiji. It includes an analysis of the media coverage of major post–Cold War conflicts, both inter-State and intra-State, in the South Pacific and beyond. The idea is to locate Fiji within contemporary conflict reporting research in both the regional and global senses. Consequently, the following frameworks and concepts are used:

- conflict theory
- contemporary conflict reporting frames
- normative media theories
- the political economy-media nexus.

The first two sections discuss the inevitability of conflict (and conflict resolution) as well as the conflict–media dynamic. The next two sections analyse media coverage of the major post–Cold War conflicts – both inter-State and intra-State – and media's alleged disproportionate focus on the ethnic aspects of social conflicts. A discussion on the frames of conflict-reduction journalism and the perspectives of Fiji and Pacific Islands media theorists follows. Next, the chapter looks at normative press theories and theory grounded in the political economy of the media, before identifying the apparent gaps in the literature, setting out the resultant research questions and summarising the chapter.

2.2   The inevitability of conflict and conflict resolution

Anyone trying to analyse conflict reporting needs first to understand that conflict is part of humanity. As Cees Hamelink (2008, p. 77) points out, "human history is filled with the horror of lethal conflict". Indeed, in some instances, the literature reveals a worsening trend in spite of (or perhaps due to) the so-called civilisational progress in technology, democracy, and human rights. The 20th century saw 250 armed conflicts, with up to180 million dead, making it humankind's bloodiest era (Manoff, 1997). British novelist Margaret Drabble describes it as "a beastly century" (2001, p. 160).

The post–Cold War era gave rise to a new trend – a decline in inter-State conflicts but an increase in intra-State conflicts (Van Leeuwen, 2009), notwithstanding the two Iraq Wars. Theories to explain warfare and social conflict are vast, complex and contentious, drawing from multiple disciplines including but not limited to anthropology, economics, history, human geography, mass communication sociology and so forth (Berberlogu, 2005). Although a full review of the literature is beyond the scope of this thesis, a brief discussion is possible and appropriate.

Conflict theory is a potential minefield of contradictions and controversies. At the very basic level, the theory holds that the human species is both psychologically and biologically primed for war. This is due to "selfish genes" that motivate groups of people – usually governments but also a country's general population, or tribe or ethnic group – to increase their power and wealth (Taylor, 2014). War is also attributed to the large amount of testosterone produced in males, in that it is linked to aggression and competition. But these accounts do not sufficiently explain the apparent lack of conflict in early human history or pre-history, and why many communities have a record of living peacefully (Taylor, 2014).

While it is true that conflicts are inevitable, there are peaceful and creative ways of dealing with them. Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe (2000) has conceived the notion of "agonistic pluralism". Here, the aim of democratic politics is to construct the 'them' in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but an "adversary" whose ideas are opposed, and whose right to hold and defend those ideas are recognised, even respected (pp.14-15). Mouffe's idea of agonistic confrontation can be imagined as a healthy escape valve to let off excessive steam. This could avoid pent up tensions and aggressions resulting in violent outcomes. Innovative and evolving conflict prevention measures such as those espoused by Mouffe are vital: the deadly trend of intra-State conflicts since the 1990s have only added to the existing perplexities surrounding group conflicts. Characterised by territorial disputes, competition for natural resources, and ethnic disagreements, such conflicts count for more deaths, destruction, and displacement than any other type of conflict in the world today (Chirot & Seligman, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2001).

Three dominant typologies are generally proposed to explain ethnic conflict: primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. Primordialism argues that ethnic conflict is primal. It stems from ancient hatreds between ethnic groups based on religious, racial and/or regional differences. These traits are so deeply ingrained in human history and experience as to be ostensibly immutable

(Weir, 2012; Wolff, 2006). But primordialism is seen to be theoretically and empirically fraught in some respects. As Varshney (2002) points out, primordialism on its own fails to sufficiently explain why serious conflicts can occur within the same ethnic groups, or why different ethnic groups are able to cooperate and co-exist harmoniously. Instrumentalism is the antithesis of primordialism. It holds that conflict is driven by power and wealth seeking elites actively manipulating ethnic identities (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). But instrumentalism too suffers from theoretical contradictions. While its central argument rests on leaders stirring conflict for political or economic gain, instrumentalism fails to explain why people would mobilise behind leaders if they (the people) were not going to gain tangibly from it (Varshney, 2002).

Constructivism seeks to bridge the primordialist–instrumentalist divide. It holds that ethnicity is a socially constructed identity and as such, dynamic, amenable and changeable (Yang, 2000). Constructivists operate on the ontological assumption that actors are shaped by the socio-cultural milieu in which they live (Conteh-Morgan, 2005). According to this theory, conflict is better understood in relation to other meaningful events. That meaning can be found in structures, hence the constructivist focus on various social structures to establish how individual and group interests, self-understandings, and behaviour relate to demobilisation, identity politics, or post-war reconciliation activities (Conteh-Morgan, 2005).

While it is the most popular of the three concepts, constructivism is criticised for downplaying the role of political and economic motives in the construction of ethnicity and conflict (Yang, 2000). A logical conclusion from these explanations is that conflicts are either 'manufactured' (instrumentalist view); an inevitable 'outcome' or 'product' of history and social structures/processes (constructivist view); or an 'inborn' and 'inherited' human trait (primordialist view); if not a product of all these three variables. Given the multi-layered, complex phenomenon that conflict is, it would be imprudent to confine it to any one source or cause, or to emphasis one variable over the other potential, underlying variabless. Indeed, while specific conflicts in specific counties can be explained in ad hoc ways, few patterns can be seen to overarch all examples. For instance, it is theoretically difficult to explain why some conflicts "turn genocidal" while others are seen as "moderate and move towards resolution" (Chirot, 2001).

In his book, *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*, Steven Pinker (2011) argues, somewhat controversially, that the spread of democracy, literacy, trade, and prosperity has seen a dramatic decline in organised conflicts over the long term. While Pinker is adamant that the

present era is far more peaceful than any others in human history, and presents fairly convincing data to back his claims, he concedes that there is no guarantee that this trend will continue. Indeed, in reviewing Pinker's book, Singer (2011) reminds us of what some refer to as the 'clash of civilizations' with Islam, and the risk of nuclear terrorism by war with Iran. Singer also highlights the potential risks of conflicts resulting from climate change, especially in light of a Columbia University study purporting to show, through data from the past half-century, that in tropical regions, the risk of a new civil conflict doubles during the hotter El Niño years (see the study by Hsiang, Meng, & Cane, 2011). A possible implication of the reported climate-conflict nexus is that a warmer world could lead to greater conflicts (Singer, 2011).

While Pinker's central thesis is about an overall decline in conflicts, his research is also an unerring reminder of the unpredictable nature of conflicts and their destructive force. If anything, Pinker's theory underscores the need for ongoing conflict reduction efforts, regardless of the supposed decline in violent conflicts. One could justifiably argue that the claimed decline in conflicts is, at least in part, due to the increased focus on conflict reduction over the years (see Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2011). Regarding post–Cold War trends in intra-State conflicts, two theories are common. One holds that the breakdown of the Cold War structures released ancient ethnic ambitions and hatreds, resulting in a world far more complex and dangerous than the familiar bipolar East and West construction. This is the primordialist view. The other theory surmises that conflicts are instigated by influential local figures who exploit ancient differences to retain power, gain access to resources and further their nationalist visions (Chirot & Seligman, 2001; O'Sullivan, 2001). This is an example of instrumentalism.

Moreover, conflict can be violent and nonviolent. The different outcomes can be conceptualised through Galtung's (1964; 1969) notion of negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace denotes the absence of violence, often enforced by the state apparatus. Positive peace denotes constructive conflict resolution characterised by the respect for universal human rights and the creation of social systems to benefit the whole population (Galtung, 1964; 1969). From this, we see that positive peace is harmonious and deeply-rooted, where as negative peace is superficial, acrimonious and fragile. The "Galtung Triangle", comprising direct violence, indirect violence and cultural violence, gives further insights into the different forms and manifestations of conflict. Direct violence, which is visible, verbal and/or physical, harms body, mind and spirit, leaves behind trauma, and involves an immediate relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. Examples

include armed conflicts or human rights abuses by state security forces or other armed groups (Galtung, 1969).

Structural violence is invisible. It is characterised by politically repressive or economically exploitative systems embedded within the local, national and international structures. There is no direct perpetrator-victim contact. Harm results from structures of inequality, such as huge disparities of income or wealth, or highly unequal patterns of land ownership (Galtung, 1969). Cultural violence is invisible and it divides by content such as religion, law, ideology, language, art, empirical/formal science, cosmology (deep culture); and by carriers, which include schools, universities, and media (Galtung, 1990). Galtung's models lead us to some preliminary observations about Fiji. Direct violence has been experienced in short bursts during the coups. Verbal violence is more prevalent, especially when Parliament is sitting, and during the general elections, when debate can degenerate into hate speech, including racial slurs (See Kant, 2012). Verbal violence is transmitted through the media.

Structural violence seems to be the major, ever-present form of violence in Fiji and the key cause of conflict between the two major races. Both Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians feel victimised by the system – the former claim they are the targets of legalised State discrimination while the latter assert that they suffer economic marginalisation (see Boege, et al., 2013; Naidu, 2005; 2008; 2013). Furthermore, for a country like Fiji, where the two major races see each other as oppressors, Galtung's focus on structurally-orientated (indirect) violence instead of actor-orientated (direct) violence is significant. If the Fiji media understand and portray violence as structurally-orientated, it is possible that instead of seeing the 'other' as the oppressor or enemy, people may come to realise that to a certain level, they are perhaps the victims of a flawed system. As Grewal, (2003) puts it, violence exists because of the structure. The actors merely carry out that violence. This point is quite pertinent to Fiji given that direct or physical violence is rare whereas structural violence has been prevalent. The consequence of unaddressed structural violence is physical violence, which tells us where conflict-reducing efforts should be directed.

While conflict is generally portrayed as a negative development, it can potentially be beneficial and achieve some positive outcomes and transformations. For instance, Fiji's first coup in 1987 caused widespread economic and social devastation but it might have averted a bloodier racial confrontation caused by a change in the political order, controversial as this line of reasoning is (see Ewins, 1998). Supporters of Bainimarama hailed his coup as a revolution that brought in "genuine

democracy" for the first time in Fijian history, on basis of a non-racial electoral system (Davis, 2013), although opinions on this matter are divided (for a rebuttal, see Narsey, 2012a, 2013a).

Tonga's Black September political uprising instigated unprecedented violence and exacerbated pre-existing social tensions in the country, but it may have precipitated the political reforms deemed necessary for greater democracy and long-term stability (see Latu, 2010; Moala, 2004, 2008, 2009). Naidu (2005, p. 370) sums it up well by pointing out that without conflict, constructive structural transformations in societal relationships and culture would not have been possible.

2.3   The conflict–media dynamic

Where there is war and conflict, there is usually media to be found. Owens-Ibie (2002) describes it as a natural attraction, clearly because war is a major story. As American journalist and novelist Nora Ephron states, for the correspondent "war is not hell. It is fun" (in J. Harris, 2006). If excitement, fame and ambition drive journalists, then ratings and profitability apparently motivate media owners. R. Collins (1991) states that "media images pitch war for profit" and "corporate opportunism [frequently] hides behind the veil of patriotism". Butler (1935) has declared that: "War is a racket; possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable racket that benefits only a small group of insiders". He had noted that World War I produced 21,000 new millionaires and billionaires in the United States. Similarly, Akin (2005) writes that in the era of modern communications, conflict attracts viewers, listeners, and readers to the media – the greater the conflict, the larger the audience, the better the financial returns.

While there are some apparent truths in these postulations, perhaps they are too sweeping in terms of ascribing blame on the media. Journalists such as BBC war correspondent David Loyn tend to reject such allegations. In a 2003 essay, Loyn ridicules the notion that war correspondents are "somehow unhealthily addicted" to violence. In his view, media actually "under-report conflict", often failing to expose it in the early days. But herein lies a core criticism about conflict reporting – that they are mostly interested in the visible, often violent manifestations, (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). There is some justification in the literature for such criticism. Take, for instance, coverage of the first Gulf War by sections of the American and international media. Gottschalk's (1992) research found that the influential *Newsweek* "talked breathlessly" about "six weeks of the most precise bombing in the history of modern warfare" and "obsessively explored the question of whether the fighting ended too soon". Overall coverage was "jingoistic, misleading and an abysmal failure" (pp.

450-479). Gottschalk's work supports Dixit's (2010, p. 55) portrayal of conflict as the "adrenaline of a macho media" (for a statistical analysis of coverage first Gulf War, see Kempf, 1996).

This alleged slant in war reporting is what Lynch and Galtung (2010) describe as war journalism. It is often linked to a dominant journalistic paradigm that regards conflict as a premium news value with "drama" and "abundance of visuals" (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p. 68). There is an emphasis in the use of emotive or demonising language, which promotes hatred and fear, and often results in violence (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). This journalistic orientation is said to put both people and nations on a war footing, be it intra-State or inter-State conflicts. For example, a PhD dissertation by Zenebe (2012) used comparative case studies and process tracing to show that media contributed to both the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya.

Intra-State conflicts, as in Rwanda, are often fought with strong references to ethnic, cultural and religious identities (primordialism) but they are also said to be financially motivated, with roots in resource disputes and political power (instrumentalism) (Chirot & Seligman, 2001; Henderson & Watson, 2005; Kriesberg, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2001). Media are allegedly used to mobilise population groups behind leaders seeking to gain personally from the upheavals (Bonde, 2007; Frohardt & Temin, 2003; R. Howard, 2003). In the former Yugoslavia, political powerbrokers are said to have hijacked the media, particularly television, to stir ethnic tensions in the build-up to civil war (Frohardt & Temin, 2003). Pejic claims that the Yugoslavian media lied in the name of patriotism. He warns that "where there is too much patriotism there is no professionalism" (1998, p. 10).

However, it appears that the literature on conflict reporting is somewhat one-sided. If media coverage has started wars, it has also helped end wars, as in Vietnam, but this aspect has not received as much research attention (Bonde, 2007; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; O'Sullivan, 2001). Some analysts state that it is wrong to assume that there is a direct cause-effect relationship between media coverage and the chances for either preventing, preempting, or limiting a conflict, simply because of insufficient evidence (see Gowing, 1994). Such assertions are, in essence, a call for further research to fill a major gap in the literature. This particular study is attempting to address the issue through the application of contemporary conflict reporting theoretical concepts like peace journalism to gather and analyse empirical data in Fiji. Concepts like peace journalism are seeking opportunities to harness media's power for the purpose of mitigating, resolving and ending conflicts based on a broader, more forward-looking, and conscientious (as opposed to a detached) approach to the problem.

2.4   Post–Cold War conflicts in Fiji and the Pacific

The South Pacific did not escape Cold War geopolitics, and experienced its fair share of violent and non-violent conflicts (Henderson & Watson, 2005; Robie, 1989). Tensions suppressed during colonial rule surfaced gradually after independence in the 1970s and 1980s, with recent decades marked by a rash of uprisings, both civilian and military. In Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Papua New Guinea, recurring problems have given rise to tags such as the "arc of instability" and "failed states", contentious as these labels might be (Dibb, 2007; Dobell, 2003).

While not as deadly or as prolonged as the upheavals in other parts of the world, these conflicts have taken a comparatively heavy and lasting toll. The Bougainville rebellion against the Papua New Guinea Government was the region's deadliest conflict, with an estimated death toll of 15,000 in a population of 200,000 (UNIFEM, 2007; Wallis, 2012). The Solomon Islands ethnic conflict, based on land and resource disputes, claimed several hundred lives, displaced around 40,000 people, and caused a GDP loss equivalent to 20 years (Hegarty & Regan, 2006). Iroga described this conflict as the "most destructive" and "darkest moment" since the Solomon Islands gained Independence in 1978 (2008, p. 152).

Fiji's four coups are often described as bloodless. But this account fails to cover the social and economic trauma of the coups. Partly because of a prolonged period of uncertainty and instability, Fiji has achieved a paltry annual average growth rate of 1.6 per cent since 1996, well below the five per cent needed for sustainable development (Firth, 2001; Naidu, 2005, 2008; Robie, 2011; B. Prasad & R. Singh, 2008). According to a major paper from a seminar in Brussels in 2003, conflicts in the Pacific Islands are generally powered by: unequal distribution of benefits from natural resources; change of traditional social structures caused by modernisation; detachment of the State from society; and perceptions of injustice among citizens (Pacific Issues Paper No. 7, 2003, p. 4). These denote both instrumentalist and constructivist causes of conflict, although it is the primordial manifestations that seem to receive the most media attention, as in Fiji and Solomon Islands (see Kabutaulaka, 2000; Robie, 2014).

2.5   Alleged media 'ethnicisation' of conflicts

The alleged tendency of the media to 'ethnicise' conflicts, often at the expense of other causes and triggers, is a global concern (Bonde, 2007; O'Sullivan, 2001). Kabutaulaka (2000) has written about this issue in relation to Solomon Islands. He states that media resorted to the "easiest explanation" in describing the conflict as a product of ethnic differences between the peoples of Guadalcanal and Malaita. He added:

> while ethnicity should not be completely disregarded, there is a need to situate the crisis
> within the context of broader socio-economic and political developments rather than
> as merely a result of "hatred" between the peoples of two islands. There is a need to
> explore the poor policies of successive governments, weak and ineffective structures and
> systems of government, poorly planned large-scale resource developments, the inequitable
> distribution of development benefits and the need for institutional and constitutional
> changes. Alone, the ethnic explanation is too simplistic and lacks the ability to explain the
> causes of the conflict and contribute to its resolution. (Kabutaulaka, 2000)

Kabutaulaka's grievances accord with O'Sullivan's (2001) idea that media prioritise the ethnic angle because it provides an easy explanation to a complex problem, whereas substantive coverage is antithetical to the methodology and requirements of modern media. This means that the elements necessary for better understanding – nuance, ambiguity and complexity – are avoided as they are perceived as an undesirable complication of matters. Instead, a convenient "packageable concept" that precludes more complex analysis is used (O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 54). In Fiji, the literature shows a multitude of conflict causes and triggers rooted in colonialism, electoral systems, competition for scarce resources, perceived threat to indigenous Fijian institutions and an over-generalised perception of Indo-Fijian wealth. Other factors include ethnocentrism and corruption, power struggles among politicians and within the traditional chiefly system, and conflicts of interest among politicians, businesses and the military (Firth, 2001; J. Bhagwan, 2011; Naidu, 2005, 2013).

Some commentators, however, tend to approach conflict from an ethnic angle, with indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians portrayed as the two sole adversaries (see Boxhill, 1997; Ewins, 1998; Pirie, 2000; Robie, 2000; 2001; 2004; Teaiwa, 2000). Indeed, Kelly and Kaplan (2001) observe that ethnicity has been used to construct and reify social differences in Fiji. Some researchers even claim that the disproportionate media focus on ethnicity played a part in Fiji's coup culture (Obini, 2000;

T. R Singh, 2011), although two former *Fiji Times* editors-in-chief, Russell Hunter (2009) and Netani Rika (2009), have strongly rebutted such allegations. To some extent at least, academic analysis of Fiji's 2000 coup coverage validates claims by the Suva-based civil society organisation, Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF), that the Fiji media played a "significant role" in propagating racial stereotypes and inciting racist feelings by publishing inflammatory material (CCF criticises . . ., 2008). However, to put the blame squarely on the media, and to ignore the reality of pre-existing ethnic tensions in Fiji, whatever their origins, could be counter-productive. As Connor notes, "ethnic conflicts have been around for centuries". To overlook this historical fact is antithetical to understanding a "phenomenon that has demonstrated marked disregard for time and place" (Conner, 2004, pp. 26–27). With regard to the Solomon Islands conflict, Stratford (n.d.) suggests that Kabutaulaka (2000) may have downplayed the significance of ethnicity. He cites recent anthropological studies to highlight the observation that conflict and political upheaval lie at the heart of Pacific societies, rather than at the periphery. As such, the latest conflict is not an anomaly, but a new chapter in a long history of conflict at various levels of Solomon Island society (Stratford, n.d.; also see Murray & Storey, 2003). Moreover, scholars like Kaufman (2006) insist that peace-building efforts that pay insufficient attention to ameliorating the emotional and symbolic roots of extremist ethnic politics are likely to fail. However, insofar as the media is concerned, the literature suggests that there is not too little, but too much focus on ethnicity, not to mention a perceived fixation on negative news, as in the case of Fiji. Connell (2007, p. 87) notes that, "as in most other national newspapers, casual reading of Fiji's press suggests that all news is bad news". This particular research is attempting to empirically examine such assertions.

2.6   Conflict reduction journalism

The post–Cold War surge in conflicts and concerns about media's assumed role in escalating these disturbances led to numerous efforts to introduce "conflict-reduction journalism" (Betz, 2011; Ward, 2005). There are two apparent views in this field. The first holds that conflict is inherent in humans and society, so media cannot do much. Such doubters include Hamelink (2008), Gowing (1994) and Loyn (2003). An opposing view holds that conflict is derived from a mixture of media and other societal variables in certain situations/contexts so media could play at least some part in the solution (Galtung, 1986, 1996, 2006, 2010; R. Howard, 2003, 2009; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Manoff, 1997). This field argues that media have a "unique capacity" to escalate or de-escalate situations by conditioning public attitudes and influencing policy responses (O'Sullivan, 2001, p. 54).

A significant part of this genre is peace journalism, the creation of prominent Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung, with roots in a seminal paper entitled 'The Structure of Foreign News' (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). The paper analysed the Norwegian press portrayal of three international conflicts in the Congo, Cuba, and Cyprus. It uncovered an alleged value bias towards violence, a preference for elite sources, disinterest in peace initiatives, disregard for grassroots views, and little evidence of in-depth reporting (pp. 65–71). Galtung called this type of reporting war journalism because of its apparent potential to escalate a tense situation. Later, he would propose peace journalism, which he defined as an interpretative, non-elite, grassroots approach to conflict reporting (Galtung, 1986).

S. T. Lee (2010, p. 363) describes peace journalism as a goal-oriented, non-objective and self-conscious promoter of peace. Bratic, Ross and Kang-Graham (2008, p.2) see peace journalism as a reformist vehicle seeking to change journalistic practices that "too stringently control and limit access" to the media and "too narrowly define information". Lynch (2006, p. 72) has sought to broaden the genre's theoretical framework, positing it as a "critical realist theory" applied to conflict reporting.

Critical realism views reality as complex and evolving, and recognises the role of both agency and structural factors in influencing human behaviour (Clark, 2008). The critical realist view of reality as fluid, amenable and complicated dovetails with Galtung's (2002, 2004, 2006) notion of conflict as a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and multi-layered phenomenon. This contrasts with the conventional media portrayal of conflict as dualistic; that is, confined to two parties engaged in a win-lose struggle (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Lynch and Galtung's (2010) emphasis on reporting the background of conflicts is well-founded when one considers Obonyo and Fackler's (2009) analysis of the Kenyan media's 2007–2008 election coverage. Based on a qualitative analysis of three major dailies, the pair concluded that journalists' lack of appreciation for context played a part in igniting the nation's latent ethnic tensions.

Media failed to consider that every Kenyan election since 1992 had witnessed some degree of violence, and they continued to report with abandon. Stories dichotomised and 'ethnicised' the political race into a zero-sum game; they repeated hate messages and aggravated the dividing line; they displayed a preoccupation with political elites; and there was a tendency for mudslinging, which de-emphasised the real issues at stake (Obonyo & Fackler, 2009, pp. 22–25). Predictably, the cycle of violence was repeated, and more than 1,000 people were killed, 3,500 injured, and 600,000 displaced, while 100,000 properties were destroyed (Seils, 2012). Ominously, Obonyo and

Fackler's (2009) findings are consistent with similar studies in some other countries. See, for example, S. T. Lee and Maslog's (2005) seminal work on the coverage of conflicts involving India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines. Also see Wilson and Devere's (2013) paper on Radio New Zealand's coverage of some troubled Pacific Islands countries. The apparent gaps identified in these studies seem to justify longstanding calls by scholars like Loo (1994) for a redefining of conventional news values to reflect that journalists have a societal role to play.

But conflict reporting frameworks such as peace journalism have their detractors. In terms of professional practice, peace journalism is rejected on the basis of a manifest belief that the "way we have been reporting up to now is not that bad" (Loyn, 2003); a sense that peace journalism is simply "good journalism" (Hanitzsch, 2007); and a conviction that peace journalism is unnecessary – journalists simply have to "work better in the frame of traditional standards" (Gjelten, 2001). Peace journalism is also criticised for its alleged lack of empirical validation; for being too normative and prescriptive; and for lacking a solid theoretical base (Bratic & Schirch, 2008; Hanitzsch, 2004, 2007; Shinar, 2009; S. T. Lee, 2010). In addition, peace journalism scholars are commonly accused of jumping from theorising to media reform without producing empirical data to inform and guide their initiatives (McMahon & Chow-White, 2011).

Apparently, a major obstacle for the implementation of conflict reporting frames such as peace journalism is economics. Such frames need to reflect a multitude of dramas and side dramas rather than one linear narrative (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). This clearly entails more work and requires additional resources. As Hanitzsch (2004) aptly points out, peace journalism unrealistically demands additional resources at a time when the industry is downsizing. But peace journalism proponents counter that they are proposing a long-term project based on small changes and incremental gains, with minimal costs (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Hanitzsch's (2004, 2007) argument – that peace journalism ascribes too much blame and power to the news media with regards to causing and solving conflicts – is compelling. For instance, in Fiji's case, the literature does not show any apparent provocation on the part of the media in the 1987 coup, which took place just a month after the new Labour-National Federation Party Government was sworn in (see Ewins 1998).

Another major concern regarding peace journalism and concepts like development journalism is self-censorship, described as:

> a set of editorial actions ranging from omission, dilution, distortion, and change of emphasis to choice of rhetorical devices by journalists, their organisations, and even the entire media community in anticipation of currying reward and avoiding punishment from the power structure. (C.-C. Lee, 1998, p. 57)

Thorgeirsdottir (2004, p. 384) sees self-censorship as one of journalism's most "ineffable hazards". But analysts from conflict-prone societies tend to have a more nuanced view. Uganda's *Daily Monitor* argues that when it comes to self-censorship, identical standards, logic and ideology cannot be uniformly applied to different media cultures, political arrangements and social settings. The editorial added:

> A newspaper in a country in transition emerging from a violent past is different from a newspaper in London or New York. Every day we must calculate the impact of what we write, in ways that our colleagues in other, richer parts of the world do not have to do. (We will remain fair . . ., 2013)

Skjerdal (2010) points out that in conflict-prone African countries, self-censorship is instinctively applied to coverage of ethnic conflict or national security issues. This is defensible, even if it is sometimes open to abuse. Moreover, "the same way that self-censorship practices do not always indicate lack of professionalism, the presence of self-censorship doesn't necessarily mean absence of critical journalism" (p. 105). These persuasive arguments show that when it comes to analysing and understanding self-censorship, a 'one-size fits all' approach may be both imprudent and limiting, especially when the contexts are different. Putting it another way, the conventional meaning and understanding of self-censorship does not apply equally in every cultural/national setting. In terms of peace journalism and its goals, self-censorship can actually be counter-productive: as Sturges (2008) says, not talking openly about social problems is quite simply a formula for their perpetuation.

Another point of contention with concepts like peace journalism is their perceived subjectivity. Loyn is adamant that journalists are (and must be) "observers not players" (2003). He insists on "traditional values" – fairness, objectivity and balance – at all times. Even the likes of Kempf

(2007), who waver on the side of peace journalism, warn against a radical departure from objectivity. The likes of Loyn and Kempf are emphasising the journalist's traditional role, which is to provide information that allows people to read a situation and make their own decisions and reach their own conclusions. The argument that it is not for the journalist to patronise the people by making decisions on their behalf is compelling. But others feel that such criticisms are not only premature, they are out-dated and discredited. McQuaid (2009) insists, perhaps somewhat strongly, that media objectivity is obsolete, and that the paradigm has shifted as a result of media losing swathes of "public trust" over the past 40 years.

Then there are those seeking a middle ground in the objectivity–subjectivity debate, such as R. Howard (2003, 2009), who advocates new approaches in conflict reporting but without abandoning the "first principles" that legitimise journalism. He points out that professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict, but to present accurate and impartial news, which in itself is useful to the goals of peace (2003, p. 8). According to him:

> Instead of taking on more roles, journalism in conflict-stressed zones must strengthen its
> original roles. What is needed is some sophistication in reporting conflict without
> inflaming it – a rudimentary understanding of conflict and conflict resolution and the
> news media's role. Part of being a reliable provider of information is not to advocate what
> should happen but to reveal what can happen, including peace. (R. Howard, 2009, pp. 3–4)

Like R. Howard's conflict sensitive reporting concept, Frohardt and Temin's (2003) "use and abuse of media in vulnerable societies" framework is designed for reporting intra-State conflicts. Vulnerable societies are "highly susceptible to movement towards civil conflict and/or repressive rule", they point out. For the most part, such countries include multi-ethnic societies in developing countries, which are more likely to fall victim to conflict than are societies with greater ethnic homogeneity. These 'at risk' societies tend to be struggling to make the changeover from authoritarian to democratic government (Frohardt & Temin, 2003, p. 2). Fiji, with simmering ethnic and political tensions leading to four coups since 1987, slips neatly into the descriptive category of vulnerable societies.

Because of various weaknesses in the media landscape, journalists in vulnerable societies are deemed to be more susceptible to political manipulation and abuse than media in developed countries, which is something this research will investigate in the Fiji context. A major focus of the

Frohardt and Temin framework is how to equip journalists not only to resist overt manipulation by powerful interests but also to avoid *involuntary* or *passive* incitement to violence. This occurs when journalists have poor professional skills, when the media culture is underdeveloped, or when there is little or no history of independent media. Under such circumstances, journalists can inflame grievances and promote stereotypes by virtue of the manner in which they report, even though their intentions are not malicious, and they are not being manipulated (Frohardt & Temin, 2003, p. 2).

2.7   Fiji and Pacific Islands media theorists and analysts

In Fiji and other Pacific Islands, discussion about the forms of journalistic practice better suited for the developmental needs and the political and cultural conditions of the region has been sporadic at best. Such discourse has often lacked specifics, although Robie (2012a) has gone further than most in proposing the *Four Worlds* news values paradigm for Pacific media. Based on the principles of deliberative journalism (Romano, 2010), *Four Worlds* news values would focus on a range of perspectives often disregarded by the "mono-cultural" Western news model, as typified by Australia and New Zealand. Important, but neglected topics include indigenous culture, and custom and tradition as critical agencies (Robie, 2012a, p. 84). Other regional scholars concerned about the apparent heavy Western influence on Pacific Islands media include Rooney, Papoutsaki and Pamba (2004), whose focus is Papua New Guinea. In their view, the urban-based, elite-focussed press had failed the country due to a "blind acceptance" of Western-style reporting. This style cannot be "transplanted" into "fragile" Pacific societies on the assumption that it will serve the same purpose, meet the same objectives and be absorbed in the same manner (Rooney, Papoutsaki & Pamba, 2004, pp. 6–7). While the concerns raised by Rooney and co-authors are widely shared in the Pacific (see Thaman, 2004), perhaps they put too much responsibility on the national media for the nation's problems. They also overlook the important role of the so-called Western-style journalism in upholding transparency, accountability and free speech in the Pacific. Indeed, in his commentary on Pacific media, Hackett (2013) argues against totally discarding Western free press ideals even while recognising their "significant shortcomings" (2013, pp. 23–34). Similarly, former Tongan journalist Latu (2010) calls for a middle ground, rather than a total abandonment of Western reporting values.

Other prominent Pacific Islands journalism thinkers and practitioners have called for a form of journalism anchored in indigenous values. Tongan publisher Kalafi Moala advocates a "Pacific values" approach reflecting "our way" and "our cultural view of realities", while former PINA president Monica Miller advocates going beyond conventional news definitions to focus on issues

that impact on Pacific people's lives (Perrottet, 2010). However, Pacific values, our cultural view of realities, and issues that impact on Pacific people are not defined in any great detail. Only a few papers on Pacific Islands media discuss the subject of alternative conflict reporting frames like peace journalism (J. Bhagwan, 2011; Iroga, 2008; Obijiofor, 2011; Robie, 2011; S. Singh, 2011; Wilson & Devere, 2013). Two of these papers (Iroga, 2008; Wilson & Devere, 2013) are based on empirical studies. Obijiofor's (2011) paper, based on primary research on conflict reporting in Nigeria, was used as a comparative study with the situation in the Pacific Islands. The remainder of the papers are largely essay-based, anecdotal or descriptive.

Wilson and Devere's (2013) study was constructed around exploratory work on Radio New Zealand's coverage of four conflict-prone Melanesian countries – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. A content analysis of 108 articles between June and July 2012 returned a 74.1 per cent war journalism frame, a result consistent with similar international studies (see Obonyo & Fackler, 2009; S. T. Lee, 2010; S. T. Lee & Maslog, 2005). Interestingly, Solomon Islands journalist Iroga's (2008) research into his country's media in the post-conflict situation returned a peace journalism frame. His content analysis of the *Solomon Star*, and interviews with local journalists, found many examples of media practising peace journalism without realising it. Media complemented the State's reconstruction efforts, even while free to criticise government. Senior reporters who were interviewed stated that the country had suffered. As responsible citizens, the reporters did not want to see further derailment (Iroga, 2008, pp. 166–172).

From a conflict reporting perspective, several significant insights can be drawn from Iroga's findings:

- In post-conflict situations, media are more cautious in their reporting. Media play facilitative and collaborative roles (see Christians et al., 2009) with the State to aid national reconstruction, while striving to uphold their watchdog role.
- The Solomon Islands media were blamed for the social unrest (Media rapped . . ., 2005; Pacific media 'gatekeepers'. . ., 2002). Iroga's paper implies a contrite national media supporting nation building as part of the atonement processes.

These observations are consistent with assertions by peace journalism scholars like J. Lynch and R. Howard about an inherent capacity and willingness within media for peace-building roles that could be nurtured, especially in societies experiencing conflict (see International Media Support, 2003).

The question that arises is why should media engage in peace-building retrospectively, only after the damage has been done? Indeed, some think that with the right kind of training in conflict theory, media could display the same proactive attitude prior to the outbreak of conflict rather than after the fact (see R. Howard, 2009; Iroga, 2008; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). In the next section, we conceptualise conflict reporting through normative media theories to gain a deeper understanding of the problem.

2.8   Normative media theories

Normative theories derive from media's ideal functions rather than their actual conduct in society (Skjerdal, 2001). As a theoretical construct, normative principles are based on the philosophy of idealism, which emphasises how human ideas – especially beliefs and values – shape society (Macionis, 2012, p. 81). From this, one understands that while normative theories may not always accord with journalistic practice, they still go beyond the abstract, in that institutions draw upon them, implicitly or explicitly, when shaping media policies (see Benson, 2008).

Normative models derive from, and expand on, the Hutchins Commission (1947) report entitled, *A Free and Responsible Press*. In addressing criticisms about newspaper operations in the United States, the Hutchins report supported the notion of a free but socially responsible press. It warned against over-commercialisation, media concentration and ethical breaches while emphasising truth, objectivity, and plurality, in part to safeguard media's own health and freedom (Hutchins Commission, 1947). Today, this message resonates even more with Fiji and some other Pacific Islands countries, where autocratic-minded governments habitually attack what they see as the lack of journalist professionalism to justify stricter controls (Hunter, 2009; M. Chaudhry, 2000; Perrottet & Robie, 2011; Rika, 2009).

The Commission's ideas were further developed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) in their seminal *Four Theories of the Press*. They differentiated: Authoritarian (privately-owned, government-controlled, barred from criticising the State); Libertarian (privately-owned, no government control, watchdog role); Soviet (State-owned and controlled, cannot criticise the State); and Social responsibility (privately-owned but socially-orientated, with community access and control). Paradoxically, *The Four Theories* thesis was hailed as a "classic" that filled an intellectual gap in understanding world media systems and condemned as an "ethnocentric, functionalist and simplistic" idea, particularly since the collapse of the Soviet system (Merrill, 2002; McQuail, 1994; Hallin &

Mancini, 2004). Despite their perceived shortcomings, the *Four Theories* continue to inspire new research. McQuail's (1994) work on two additional models – development and democratic-participant – is premised on the original *Four Theories*. A timely revision of the concepts by Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng and White (2009) has resulted in an insightful book, *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies*. It looks into how media roles have evolved since the end of the Cold War. Christians and co-authors provide new and updated insights into media roles in relation to contemporary post–Cold War conflicts and online media. We contextualise the discussion by outlining the four roles – monitorial, facilitative, radical and collaborative – as they apply to Fiji and other relevant Pacific Islands contexts.

Monitorial role (for reporting power): The monitorial role, embedded in the fourth estate tradition, is associated with watchdoggism around the world, Fiji and the South Pacific included (Brislin, 1979 Christians et al., 2009; Devi & Chand, 2008; Hunter, 2009; Rika, 2009). Over time, the monitorial role has become associated with a broader set of responsibilities, such as "forger of social consensus", sometimes "deliberately", but more often "implicitly" (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 141–143). One could link this paradigm shift to the post–Cold War proliferation of intra-State conflicts and subsequent calls for a re-examination of journalism's role in times of violent conflict, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The "forger of social consensus" in the monitorial role has parallels with both peace journalism and conflict sensitive reporting. This tells us that frames like peace journalism, which are essentially about a different approach to conflict reporting, are not necessarily a substitute for conventional journalism, which has useful watchdog functions if exercised in an ethical and accountable manner. Rather, any such frameworks could be seen as a balancing or harmonising model existing within, or alongside, conventional watchdog journalism, adding scope and depth to this traditional role. This is particularly the case in fragile societies. Other monitorial roles that are relatable to responsible conflict reporting frames include media "barking" when a social actor is perceived to be going against the public interest (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 146–147). One apparent drawback of the monitorial role as far as conflict reporting is concerned is the heavy reliance on elite sources. Because the news agenda is often set by the centres of power, grassroots people – usually on the frontlines and on the receiving end of conflicts – do not usually get much of a hearing. This is an area in which a facilitative role, seeking to give voice to the ordinary people, could provide a balance.

Facilitative role (for serving civil society): In this role, media reflect the political order in which they are situated. Reporting seeks to support, enrich, improve and strengthen civil society by promoting media consumers' active participation in the public sphere (Christians et al., 2009, p. 158). In Fiji's case, aspects of the facilitative role is most evident in social media such as blogs, which provide individuals the space to critique and condemn the Bainimarama Government, especially so in the face of the restrictions on mainstream media (C. Walsh, 2010). This is an example of the facilitative role acting as a vehicle for "democratic pluralism" by allowing a "diversity of groups" to exert influence within the polity (Christians et al., 2009, p. 158–159; Plattner, 2010, p. 89).

Democratic pluralism has parallels with consociationalism, a political system premised on guaranteed power-sharing and proportionate representation between groups to manage conflicts in deeply divided societies (see Lijphart, 1999, 2004). Underpinned by values of democratic pluralism and consociationalism, a facilitative media role could conceivably serve a purpose in countries where social conflict is the predominant security threat. However, there are some knotty issues to consider. Politically, consociation denotes a lesser role for oppositional politics. Empirical evidence shows that a weak opposition could breed corruption, including patron–client relationships (Shouman, 2013). It would seem that accommodative political systems based on consociation warrant a greater rather than a diminished watchdog role.

Cheng and Zuam (2012) wrestle with the same vexing issue in their edited book, *Corruption and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Selling the Peace?* They acknowledge that corruption threatens economic development, political stability and good governance in post-conflict countries. However, they argue that in conflict-prone countries, corruption needs to be situated in the "wider context of peace-building", and the additional competing priorities that arise from such environments. These issues require "nuanced discussion" that acknowledges the difficult trade-offs involved. For one, corruption could have limited positive effects through facilitating the "purchase of peace" and in its redistributive benefits (Cheng & Zuam, 2012, p. 8). Such matters pose some thorny moral questions for the media in Fiji and other Pacific Islands countries when it comes to choosing between elements of monitorial or facilitative roles.

Radical role (for questioning the political system): The radical role is distinguished by media fundamentally departing from the diktats of the State and other power structures of society (Christians et al., 2009). Such media are antagonistic towards dominant forces, offering alternative channels and

perspectives to those reflecting entrenched political, economic and cultural hegemony. Media act as a critical voice in their own right, challenging authority and supporting change – including violent revolution – to achieve just societies by overcoming exploitation, corruption and human rights violations (Christians et al., 2009, p. 191). A much touted example of radical media is the Havana-based weekly anarchist newspaper, *¡Tierra!,* which played a critical part in forging both a Cuban-wide and larger Caribbean-wide anarchist network from 1902 to 1915 (Shaffer, 2009). Notably, radical media are not only present, or relevant in revolutionary situations. They can also have an impact during 'normal' periods. Downing (2001) explains that mainstream media professionals in capitalist societies are often bound by self-censorship and standard professional media codes. Because radical media are free from such constraints, they are better positioned to challenge these control systems (pp. 15–16).

In this scenario, radical media resemble what Gramsci (1971) calls an "anti-capitalist", "counter-hegemonic" force (also see Rupert, 2005). More recently, the Internet has come to symbolise radical media, serving as a major tool for today's crop of "cyber radicals", both for political organisation and cultural production (Atton, 2004; Kahn & Kellner, 2002; C. Walsh, 2010). Krotoski (2010) calls this trend the "most powerful harbinger of social change the world has ever seen". The tools are websites, blogs, emails, mobile phones, and other platforms used by dissident groups all over the world to mount political campaigns and kick-start people-power movements (C. Walsh, 2010). The radical role is the antithesis of the collaborative role, which is discussed next.

Collaborative role (for serving the State/other power institutions): Normatively, a collaborative role implies a partnership between the media and the State built on mutual trust and a shared commitment to mutually agreeable goals (Christians et al., 2009). While media also cooperate with community activists and advertisers, collaboration with the State stands out, for only the State can intervene in the affairs of journalism and fundamentally alter the nature of everyday news (pp. 139–198). As Christians et al. point out, the collaborative role is often viewed suspiciously since media largely exist as a "check on power, not as a conduit to it" (2009, p. 197). Sections of the Western media establishment are particularly uncompromising on this issue. For example, the Anglo-American media establishment vehemently dismisses development journalism – which calls for certain levels of collaboration with the State – as "government-say-so journalism" (Gunaratne, 1996, p. 66). But media in countries such as Singapore, Israel and parts of Africa and Latin America are more accepting of development journalism, usually in the name of nation-building and/or national security, the utmost priorities in these lands (Nossek & Limor, 2001).

The collaborative role can be divided into three distinguishable types – *compliance*, *acquiescence* and *acceptance* (Christians et al., 2009). Under *compliance*, three categories are distinguished – *coercion*, *apathy* and *tradition*. Collaboration through *coercion* is regarded as the weakest and the least compelling since it is enforced, rather than voluntary or mutual. Collaboration based on *apathy* sees media conserve the status quo through indifference or ignorance, whereas in collaboration based on *tradition*, the status quo is maintained through custom or habit (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 198–199). In the second type, collaboration through *acquiescence*, cooperation is reluctant and somewhat unappealing, but deemed necessary, to avoid retribution. Furthermore, it could also be useful instrumentally. Collaboration through *acceptance*, the third type, may be considered the most satisfactory in that media willingly and knowingly cooperate because they believe it is "correct" or proper (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 199–200).

A collaborative role can be useful in conflict-prone societies, as in Kenya, where after the deadly 2007–2008 elections, the country's media rallied behind government to help calm tensions (Ojwang, 2009, p. 23). But, as some international precedents show, a collaborative role is also fraught with risks, especially in the long term. For instance, the State–media–military collaboration in Israel has been likened to a "marriage of convenience". Media are partners rather than rivals of the elite establishments and power centres with which they share common interests (Nossek & Limor, 2001, pp. 1–11). But most citizens appear to accept this as a pragmatic, necessary arrangement to safeguard national security. In Turkey, a similar alliance apparently turned sinister, with the country's media barons accused of complicity in military coups in return for lucrative tenders in the energy, mining and banking sectors (Keneş, 2012). In some ways, these issues are relevant for Fiji, where the military has been quite influential since the 1987 coup. It been the major power since the 2006 coup and, at the time of writing, should the election scheduled for September 2014 proceed as planned, would have been effectively running the country for almost eight years. In the following section, we return to the four roles of the media as discussed above, and apply them to the contexts in Fiji and other relevant Pacific Islands countries.

2.9   The four roles in the Fiji and Pacific Islands contexts

In the Fiji and Papua New Guinea contexts, Robie's (2003a) survey of journalists found that 70 per cent in both countries agreed that the phrases "fourth estate" and/or "watchdog" applied to them (p. 346). This indicates the dominance of the classical monitorial role in a democratic setting.

However, as the application of the four roles to Fiji will show, media roles are neither static nor stratified but oscillate between different roles, based on shifting political and economic power. The most immediate and dramatic fluctuations in media roles occur when there is a major shift in the political landscape and a sudden transfer of power, resulting in a loss or weakening of democracy. In Fiji, prior to the 2006 coup, the monitorial role was dominant under the country's democratic framework (Hunter, 2009; Rika, 2009; Pareti; 2009). Shortly after the coup, authoritarianism set in, and media struggled to maintain any sort of monitorial profile. As the State tightened its controls, media changed tack. In a last-ditch effort to maintain their independence and preserve their powers, they decided to confront the regime, and adopted a radical role. As veteran Fiji journalist Samisoni Pareti (2009) explained:

> The political landscape had undergone a dramatic, if not revolutionary, change, so should the business as usual kind of reporting continue or should the change in landscape require a change in approach? (Pareti, 2009, p. 271)

The metamorphosis of media's role after the 2006 coup is further reflected in former *Fiji Times* editor-in-chief Netani Rika's comments. In a presentation at the 2009 PINA Conference, Rika likened the *Fiji Times* to a *matanivanua* – the traditional herald and communication channel between chiefs and peoples in indigenous Fijian society. Rika described the *matanivanua* as a messenger, and likened aspects of this role to that of present-day journalists, who serve as a vital communication link in society. The *Fiji Times*, he stated, had been a *matanivanua* for the Fiji community since 1869 (Rika, 2009). This defining label has certain parallels with a monitorial role for media of information gatherer and disseminator.

But that is not all. Earlier, Rika had described the *Fiji Times* as the "unofficial opposition" with an "even more important role to play" since the 2006 coup, with no "stepping back" (Edwards, 2008). This stance was far removed from the *matanivanua's* role of "ancient ambassador" and mere disseminator of information or commands received from the top (see Rika, 2009). The role was synonymous with media oppositionism. It was going beyond the realms of the monitorial role and entering into radical media territory. But in a repressive environment, a radical role on the part of the mainstream news media can go only so far. In Fiji's case, the Bainimarama Government struck back, detaining several local journalists and deporting three expatriate newspaper publishers between 2008 and 2009 (Dutt, 2010; Reporters Without Borders, 2009). In April 2009, the regime

introduced the Public Emergency Regulations (PER), imposing prior censorship through government censors present in all newsrooms (Reporters Without Borders, 2009).

A defiant *Fiji Times* protested by leaving some columns blank to represent the stories pulled by the censors, while the *Fiji Daily Post* turned to satire, publishing tongue-in-cheek titles such as "Watching the paint dry", and "What I had for lunch today" (Greenslade, 2009). The *Fiji Sun*, for its part, banned the publication of all political stories and Fiji TV cancelled news bulletins (Greenslade, 2009). These moves exemplify a radical media approach, even if they were short-lived. In June 2010, the Bainimarama Government promulgated the punitive Media Industry Development Decree 2010, stipulating stiff fines and jail terms for ethical breaches (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). This forced the media into a more cautionary position and raised major concerns about self-censorship (Hooper, 2013). This characterises "coercive collaboration" through legislation. It leaves media with little choice but to comply (Christians et al., 2009, p. 199).

Another provision in the Media Decree that forced some media into a collaborative role, albeit in a roundabout way, was Part 7, which limited foreign ownership of local media to 10 per cent (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). This forced the sale of the Rupert Murdoch–owned *Fiji Times* to a local firm, Motibhai Company Limited (Robie, 2010). The sale marked the dismantling of remnants of resistance in the print media sector. Once a strong critic of the government, the *Fiji Times* signalled it was changing its stance. The new publisher, Dallas Swinstead, stated that a free press did not work in Fiji and that taking on government was neither wise nor constructive (Leaver, 2010). He indicated that the *Fiji Times* supported government's proclaimed multiracial policies:

> Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama is a Fijian working towards sharing his country with Indians. The PM knows it must happen or the place is doomed; too many good Indians and others have deserted the place. I strongly agree with the PM's intentions and my paper will do what we can to achieve a means to a beginning and a nation of free speech. (Leaver, 2010)

Initially, the *Fiji Times'* collaboration had been based on *coercion*, enforced as it was through the PER. Swinstead's comments indicated that the *Fiji Times* was entering a different phase of the collaborative role – collaboration through *acquiescence*, based on pragmatic and instrumentalist reasons. Some might even interpret Swinstead's professed support for Bainimarama's multi-racial policy as collaboration based on *acceptance*. This is when media judge collaboration to be correct

and proper (see Christians et al., 2009, pp. 199–200). This trend shows that in the Fiji context, the four roles and sub-roles are at times quite fluid, with thin dividing lines between them.

This point is further illustrated by the changing stances of the *Fiji Sun*. As discussed earlier, the paper was initially defiant. Later, it reversed its position, and in a relatively short time, began to openly support the Bainimarama Government's policies (Greenslade, 2009; Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). Critics charged that the change in the *Fiji Sun's* stance was commercially motivated and referred to the paper's monopoly on State advertising as proof (Narsey, 2013b, 2013c; Woods, 2010). But the *Fiji Sun* claimed its support for Bainimarama was based on his vision for multi-racialism and nation building. In fairness to the paper, a Lowy Institute (2011) poll put Bainimarama's personal approval rating at 66 per cent, although regime opponents claimed the results were unreliable (Narsey, 2011). Whichever way one looks at it, the *Fiji Sun's* example denotes the variability of the four roles and sub-roles in response to the changing political environment: the paper went from a monitorial role (under a democratic framework) to a radical role, before transiting into a collaborative role (under a non-democratic political framework) based on *acquiescence*. Gradually, the paper (at least its publishers and owners) seemed to embrace the regime's core policies and slipped into a collaborative role based more on *instrumentalism* and/or *acceptance*.

The metamorphosis of the *Fiji Times* and the *Fiji Sun* highlight that a media role based on collaboration can be a slippery path ultimately leading to greater control by government using both incentives and retribution to enforce compliance. It underlines concerns about the perils of entering into such a role in the first place, although under Fiji's authoritarian government, media had little choice. An interpretation of the literature suggests that other private media, like radio broadcaster Communications Fiji Limited, Fiji Television Limited, and Fijilive.com, engaged in collaboration through *acquiescence* to avoid the consequences of non-compliance. These media did not criticise government strongly, to avoid falling foul of the media laws, but unlike the *Fiji Sun*, neither did they show open support for government policies (Dorney, 2011;Narsey, 2013b, 2013c; Woods, 2010). As Dorney (2011) somewhat harshly commented, "the rest of the Fiji media is not quite as sycophantic as the *Fiji Sun*".

The State broadcaster, Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, juggles two somewhat contradictory roles: promotion of State policy on the one hand and operation as an independent, commercial news organisation, on the other (Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, 2012; Pacific Media and Communications Facility, 2005). FBC's chief executive officer Riyaz Sayed-Khaiyum believes

Fiji's social and political conditions require "solutions-orientated development journalism" without abandoning the watchdog role (Vandhana, 2012). This denotes two dominant roles – facilitative and collaborative. But as Hooper's (2013) work indicates, maintaining the watchdog role in full would be difficult, if not impossible, given government's limited tolerance for criticism.

In terms of the four roles, there is a clear pattern since the 2006 coup. The country's slide into authoritarianism was matched by the media's capitulation to more repressive forms of State control. Media went from a monitorial role to a short-lived radical role, before being coerced into a collaborative role. This trend invokes comparisons with Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's (1956) four theories of the press. This theory holds that the media do not function in a vacuum, but take on the form and colouration of the social and political structures within which they operate (pp. 1–2). Some had suggested that the four theories were irrelevant in the new world media order (McQuail, 1994). In some respects, Fiji's example defies predictions of the four theories' obsoleteness. The exception was social media, which government could not control (see Foster, 2007; Hammond-Thrasher, 2007; Harborow, 2008; C. Walsh, 2010). The proliferation of social media in Fiji shows that putting too many controls on the media could backfire on the State. Controls on media are usually imposed in the name of security (Hackett, 2013). But in the Internet age, this tends to drive dissident views underground, into the realm of social media, where they re-emerge in more violent and radical forms (see Foster, 2007; C. Walsh, 2010). In the next section we look at the problem through the framework of the political economy of the media.

2.10   Political economy of the media and conflict reporting

This section locates conflict reporting within political economy of the media and communications – a field that focuses mostly on mass media ownership and how this impacts on society (Graham, 2007). Influential political economy of the media scholars whose works guide this study include: Herman and Chomsky (1988, 2003, 2008); Garnham (1990); McChesney (2000); Bagdikian (2000, 2004); Mansell (2004); and Mosco (1996). Mosco (1996, p.25) posits political economy as the study of social relations, "particularly power relations", which constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources. Political economy of communication applies these principles to media and communication systems to determine how they are shaped by ownership, market structures, and government policies (Bagdikian, 2004; Chambers, 2000; McChesney, 2008).

The theory seeks to illuminate "how changes in an array of forces which exercise control over cultural production and distribution limit or liberate the public sphere" (Golding & Murdock, 2000, pp. 70–92). The political economy approach provides important insights into the economic and political dynamics of media ownership and control, variables that affect conflict reporting (Chambers, 2000; Frohardt & Temin, 2003; also see Lynch, 2011). McChesney (2000) has usefully divided the political economy of communication and media into two broad categories:

> First, it addresses the nature of the relationship between media and communication systems on the one hand and the broader social structure of society … with a particular interest in how economic factors influence politics and social relations. Second, [it] looks specifically at how ownership, support mechanisms (e.g. advertising) and government policies influence media behavior and content. [It] emphasises structural factors and the labor process in the production, distribution and consumption of communication. (McChesney, 2000, p. 109)

Central to the political economy of the media theory is Herman and Chomsky's (1988, 2003, 2008) much-debated Marxist-based propaganda model. This model holds the dominant media as profit seeking businesses funded by, and beholden to, big advertisers such as government and private enterprises. Media serve as levers of control to "mobilise" support for these special clients, which dominate State and private activity (1988, p. xi; 2003; 2008). Herman and Chomsky's US-based study reflected concerns raised decades previously by the Hutchins Commission (1947) and by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) about control and commercialisation of media. Ownership of the country's major media had slid largely into the hands of a few large, vertically-integrated firms (owning means of media production, distribution and exhibition) and horizontally integrated firms (controlling majority market share) (Bagdikian, 2000). Globalisation accelerated the process, giving rise to firms like Time Warner, "the largest media company in the world, and the standard bearer of synergy and vertical integration in the digital age" (Mihal, 2004).

In terms of the political economy of conflict reporting, Boyd-Barrett (2004, p. 26) discusses how in times of war, "insatiable" audience appetite for news attracts advertisers, who in turn create commercial opportunities for the media. This suggests that some media whet audiences' pre-existing appetite for conflict, then seek to satiate it. Hence, media's preference for content with high drama and tension, a trait Galtung (1998) describes as war journalism – allegedly the dominant frame in conflict reporting. Both the political economy of the media and the peace journalism frameworks are critical of the conventionally strong preference for elite sources in mainstream news

reporting (Herman & Chomsky, 2008; Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Moreover, both fields regard media objectivity as a problematic concept. From a political economy viewpoint, the media are structurally locked into pro-systemic bias, and will rarely give objective coverage to anything that seriously threatens the social order of capitalism (McNair, 2009).

Tehranian (2002, p. 58) gives further insights into synergies between political economy of the media and conflict reporting and how the two concepts can inform and reinforce each other. He observes that government and commercial media have their own interest in creating images of "self" and "other" – the government to command allegiance, and commercial media to sell products and services. As such, the promotion of particular commodities and identities is the main preoccupations of the two systems, which tends to exacerbate tensions by dichotomising, dramatising, and demonising "them" against "us". Tehranian's views are supported by Shinar (2007, p. 59), who highlights how media ownership determines the level of "production and dissemination of peace-oriented content during and after conflicts".

Such concerns are behind calls by analysts like R. Howard (2003, 2009) for greater conflict reporting research from a political economy perspective to create a better understanding of the link between media commercialisation and conflict reporting. Such calls are timely for Fiji and the South Pacific, where attention has mostly focused on the threat from the State. In comparison, the potential threat from the private sector has been largely overlooked, particularly by international monitors, who regard Pacific Islands governments as the main oppressors of the media (see, for example, International Federation of Journalists, 2010; 2012a and b). Robie (2014) has claimed appropriately that in the Pacific, media freedom has been defined in far "too narrow terms, as if Big Brother governments and politicians ignorant about the role of media are the only problem". He states:

> There are many other issues that are vitally important in the region that impinge on media freedom yet are rarely mentioned … self-censorship, media ownership and convergence, poor qualifications and salaries for many journalists (which make them potentially open to undue influence and bribery) and lack of education. (pp. 305–306)

This inclination to focus on the State as the prime threat to media freedom can be attributed to western/liberalist interpretations of media. This leaning tends to lavish attention on State–media relationships while neglecting the impact of privatised capitalism on communication (C-C. Lee,

2001). In Fiji and the South Pacific, neo-liberalism was sold as a positive development. The private sector was lionised as the engine of growth and the saviour of sluggish, centralised Pacific Island economies, some riddled with corruption (see Firth, 2000). The hegemony of neo-liberalism could explain why governments are often seen as the major nemesis of the media in the region. In addition, the media sector in Fiji fiercely guards its independence, often portraying government as a threat to freedom of speech. In 2003 the Fiji media sector mounted a major 'No Media Bill' public campaign against the Qarase Government's draft Media Bill, which was eventually shelved (Kaitani to dump media bill, 2004). Yet another reason why the corporate threat to media is overlooked is the dearth of studies into the issue. However, the political economy field has its doubters, both on the right and the left.

These sceptics often use Herman and Chomsky's theories to illustrate Marxist positions. They dismiss the propaganda model as polemic, or worse, a mere "conspiracy theory" (Edgley, 2009; Golding & Murdock, 1996, 2000; Klaehn, 2002). Entman (1990) believes the propaganda model has serious analytical flaws, a shaky hypothesis and disregards journalistic integrity and proficiency. These same issues rankle Hallin (2000), who points to the various high-profile government and corporate sector scandals exposed by media to debunk the idea that journalists are easy targets of manipulation. Entman and Hallin have a point. Generalism does appear to be a weak link in the theory in that journalists and the public are not treated as rational beings who can think, analyse, oppose and resist. As Lehrer (2004) says, the propaganda model exaggerates the power of media owners and underestimates the independence of journalists. Another alleged fallacy of studies in this tradition is that they are too concerned with the structure of production, and not enough with content, meaning and the symbolic (Mansell, 2004).

Corner (2003) notes that the propaganda model was devised for the United States, and casts doubts about its relevance in countries with different media and political systems. This, however, is not a strong rebuttal since the theory has been effectively applied in different settings (for a list of political economy of the media studies, see Mullen & Klaehn, 2010). Like any theory, political economy of the media has its flaws. Nevertheless, as Klaehn (2002) pointed out, many scholars have presented evidence, from countries with different media systems and political structures, in support of the central hypotheses of the thesis. Media behaviour during the Iraq wars and the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal vindicated elements of political economy. In a content analysis of both news and editorials, McKnight (2012) showed that News Corp and News International used their media to campaign for the side of politics that best served their commercial goals.

In Fiji there is little, if any, previous research from a political economy of the media angle, even though media ownership, in line with global trends, has become increasingly corporatised and conglomerised since independence in 1970. Robie (2009a, 2009b) has been warning about media consolidation and commercialisation in Fiji, while economist Narsey (2013b, 2013c) has blogged insightfully about local media moguls "squashing media independence". But in-depth scholarly research is virtually absent. What is more, the State in itself is a major media owner and since the 2006 coup, it has been regulating the media (see Dutt, 2010). This, and the other gaps in the literature, are discussed in the next section.

2.11 Gaps in the literature and research questions

This review has revealed important gaps in the literature, which this particular PhD research will attempt to address. These are outlined below:

- Existing research focuses mostly on Western news media coverage of conflicts. The role of non-western, domestic media lacks in-depth study (Betz, 2011).
- Conflict reporting generally lacks research within a political economy framework. In the Pacific, there has been virtually no scholarly research from this perspective.
- In both Fiji and the Pacific, governments are seen as the major threat to media freedom, while the corporate threat is overlooked. The negative impacts of self-censorship, media ownership and convergence, poor qualifications and salaries for many journalists need to be examined.
- The literature on conflict reporting in Fiji heaps blame on the journalist or media organisations without considering the effect of the media landscape, or the structural factors at play (Gounder 2006; Gaunder, 2008; Kiran 2005; T. R. Singh, 2011).
- The last survey of the Fiji media landscape was carried out by Robie (2003a). A follow-up survey is timely given the changes in the intervening decade.
- Fiji's media ownership regime has been evolving since Independence in 1970. It changed dramatically after new ownership laws were implemented in 2010. But the consequence of the law and the changing media ownership patterns have yet to receive an in-depth and focussed scholarly investigation, especially from a conflict reporting perspective.
- Peace journalism is criticised for jumping from theorising to media reform without producing empirical data to inform and guide their initiatives (McMahon & Chow White, 2011).

- Studies in the political economy of the media tradition are said to focus on the structure of production, with not enough attention paid to content, including meaning making and the symbolic (Mansell, 2004).

These significant gaps in the literature give rise to the following core research questions in relation to conflict reporting:

1. Are the Fiji print media inflammatory, as is often alleged?
2. What is the level of journalist professional capacity and diversity in Fiji?
3. What are the genesis and nature of Fiji's media laws?
4. What are the genesis and nature of media ownership in Fiji and the link with political and economic power?

2.12   Chapter summary

Globally, there has been fairly widespread concern about the allegedly damaging manner in which the various media report conflict. This prompted calls for a rethinking in the question of reporting strategies and initiated some contemporary conflict reporting frameworks to address the problem. Fiji and the Pacific are largely behind in this relatively new trend despite the outbreak of violent conflict in some island countries in the post–Cold War era. Like media elsewhere, Fiji media are accused of prioritising the primordial angle while downplaying valid instrumentalist and constructivist motives for conflict. Such allegations were viewed through the political economy and normative media theoretical frameworks, as well as contemporary conflict reporting frameworks such as peace journalism, conflict sensitive reporting and use and abuse of media in vulnerable societies. On the whole, these concepts recommend a broader conflict reporting approach anchored in an understanding of a country's social, historical and political experiences (constructivism). Based on the gaps in the literature review, this study proposes to examine both media content and media landscape together to analyse conflict reporting in Fiji. In the next chapter, we follow the instrumentalist and constructivist traditions of conflict analysis by discussing Fiji's history, culture and politics in relation to conflict reporting.

CHAPTER 3 – THE SOCIO-POLITICAL SETTING

3.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter, a key argument was the media's apparent tendency to report conflict on the basis of primordialism (ethnic hatred) while downplaying instrumentalist (elite manipulation/political economy) and constructivist (historical) causes. The disproportionate focus on ethnicity was deemed reductive and potentially damaging with regard to understanding conflicts in all their complexity and taking appropriate corrective measures. Consequently, this chapter approaches conflict in Fiji from various instrumentalist and constructivist perspectives, such as the impact of British imperialism, the country's pluralistic composition, its somewhat unusual political system, its distinctive cultures and traditions and the numerous power dynamics at play. This holistic approach to conflict analysis is consistent with contemporary conflict reporting frames such as peace journalism and conflict-sensitive reporting (Frohardt & Temin, 2003; R. Howard, 2003, 2009; Lynch & Galtung, 2010). These frameworks view conflict as a process – a steady build-up and manifestation of social, political and economic influences grounded in history – rather than a series of isolated events driven solely or largely by ethnic hatred. As such, this chapter considers the various individuals, groups, formations, organisations, events, issues, agendas, cultures, communications and histories relating to conflict and how the Fiji media function at the intersections of these multi-layered undercurrents.

The chapter begins by looking at indigenous migration and settlement of Fiji; the country's 'discovery' by Europeans; the onset of modernisation (including colonialism, industrialisation and globalisation); and the lasting and ongoing impact of these trends on Fijian society. Next, it considers the arrival of the agricultural industry and the influx of Indian indentured labourers and how these trends gave rise to intractable conflicts on the basis of ethnicity, demography, the land issue, perceived threat to indigenous culture, perceived Indo-Fijian wealth, affirmative action, cultural assimilation and contestations for political and economic power. Also forming part of the discussions are Fiji's struggles with constitutional and electoral systems, the apparent presence of oligarchic structures within Fiji's hybridised democratic framework and a renewed examination of the country's four coups.

The coups were a chain of violent outcomes of pre-existing conflicts and the inspiration behind new and additional ones. Many journalists and non-academic commentators interpreted the coups uncritically in primordial terms and treated them as isolated, unconnected and spontaneous events (see Ewins, 2008). This thesis looks at the coups holistically and collectively to tease out the linkages and find meanings in them. The thesis argues that the coups are indicative of competing and shifting power balances within Fiji's various power structures – traditional, modern, political and economic, with the military emerging as the apex authority. The military's ascendency is symptomatic of increasing militarisation, a process that has been in the making for decades. Finally, the chapter deliberates on the 2006 coup and the path to the 2014 elections. The discussions are interspersed with analyses of how the media have understood and reported these tensions.

3.2   Historical background

Adequate comprehension of the structural drivers of conflict in Fiji requires a brief look at the county's history (constructivist approach) and the various powers, power structures and vested interests within its systems (instrumentalist/political economy approach). This strategy can help explain the root causes of conflict, including when, where, how and why the ethnic dimensions (primordialism) become relevant. Based on the literature review, this analysis de-emphasises primordialism, but does not totally rule it out. Rather, it attempts to show that in Fiji, what are termed as ethnic conflicts are almost invariably underpinned by the instrumentalism and constructivism they screen. This approach is supported by the widely-held scholarly view that ethnic identities are socially constructed (Evera, 2001).

This could very much be the case in Fiji, a modern, if complex, multi-ethnic South Pacific nation of some 322 islands scattered over 650,000 square kilometres of ocean. Fiji has a total land mass of 18,343 square kilometres, of which the two largest islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, comprise around 90 per cent (Ministry of Information, 2004/2005). Fiji's 2007 census shows a population of 837, 271. The majority, 56.8 per cent, are indigenous Fijians; 37.5 per cent are Indo-Fijians; and 5.7 per cent are European, Chinese and other mixed ethnicities. Most of Fiji's population is settled on the main islands of Viti Levu (80 per cent) and Vanua Levu (15 per cent) (Bureau of Statistics, 2007). The majority of Fiji's population, 64.5 per cent, is Christian, mainly from the indigenous community. Of this, the largest denomination, 54 per cent, is Methodist. The second-largest religious group, Hindus, makes up 28 per cent, followed by Muslims, at six per cent, both largely from the Indo-Fijian community (Bureau of Statistics, 2007). English is the common language, but

the Bauan Fijian dialect (promoted by missionaries and colonial administrators as the lingua franca for all indigenous Fijians) and Fiji *Bhat*, a *pidginised* version of Hindi (spoken by Indo-Fijians) are also widely used (Naidu, 2013).

According to some accounts, archaeological evidence suggests that Fiji was first settled by the "Lapita People" from Southeast Asia some 3,500 years ago (Ministry of Information, 2004/2005; Pirie, 2000). It is posited that over time, incursions from close eastern neighbours Tonga and Samoa added Polynesian elements to Fiji's Melanesian components, including 13 distinct dialects (Pirie, 2000). The communal society was organised along tribal lines, with two major classes – chiefs and commoners – assigned specific roles. Tribal warfare among rival chiefdoms was common (Ewins, 2008; Pirie, 2000). Among Europeans, Fiji was first sighted by Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1643, followed by Captain James Cook in 1774, then Captain William Bligh in 1789 (Kikkert & Dexter, 2007). The first White settlers – mostly sailors, beachcombers, traders and missionaries – arrived in the early decades of the 1800s. Thus began the rupture of native Fijian society with the introduction of guns, alcohol, a new religion and alien diseases (Ewins, 2008; Kikkert & Dexter, 2007; Pirie, 2000; Sutherland, 1992).

Soon, a small but powerful White bourgeoisie emerged, untrammelled by law, in that they were outside and beyond the reach of any jurisdiction that they recognised. Their self-centred and self-serving values of private enterprise caused major social and political disruptions within collectivist native societies, including an increase in confederacy wars (B. Lal, 1992; Sutherland, 1992). On October 10, 1874, Fiji's most powerful chieftain, Ratu Seru Cakobau, supported by a claque of (mostly Eastern) chiefs, ceded the country to a less than eager Great Britain, stating that otherwise the "White stalkers on the beach, the cormorants, will open their maws and swallow us" (B. Lal, 1992, p. 11). Fiji's first Governor-General Sir Arthur Gordon arrived in 1875 to find an estimated 40,000 natives, a quarter of the entire population, devastated by measles, with the survivors facing dispossession. Gordon, who himself fought a war of pacification against the natives, also worked to end tribal wars and safeguard indigenous land by decreeing that all land should be held in inalienable right by the *mataqali* (traditional land-owning clans) (B. Lal, 2008, 2011; Sutherland, 1992). This law remains in force today; close to 90 per cent of all land is communally-owned by indigenous clans. To this day, despite various legal safeguards, indigenous fears about the loss of land, whether real or imagined, continue to be the major source of conflict (Ewins, 2008; B. Lal, 2011; Pirie, 2000; Qarase, 2000).

For the colonial administration, land was a resource to develop Fiji and attain financial self-sufficiency, as required by the Crown (B. Lal, 1990). Based on a blueprint adopted in other colonies, Gordon planned large-scale sugarcane plantations in Fiji. This attracted the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) in 1882, signalling the arrival of foreign capital and the agricultural industry. To preserve indigenous Fijians' subsistence lifestyle, Gordon imported plantation labour from India (B. Lal, 1990). This was to be a fateful decision that laid the foundation for future, generational conflict. Between 1879 and 1916, there was an influx of over 60,000 indentured Indian labourers, with most opting to remain in Fiji at the end of their contracts. The decision to import foreign labour and allow them to settle permanently was made largely by the colonial administration. There was apparently no real consultation with indigenous Fijians, who are said generally still to view their relations with Indo-Fijians as those of (less than willing) host and (grudgingly tolerated) guest (B. Lal, 2011; Leuprecht, 2012; Pirie, 2000; Ramesh, 2008). According to Naidu (2013), ethnicity was the "fundamental" organising principle of the colonial economy and society, with European skills and capital at the top, followed by 'Indian' labour, then 'Fijian' land.

Fiji's first English language newspaper, the *Fiji Times*, was founded and produced in Levuka from 1869. Owned by a white settler, the paper allegedly adopted a pro-establishment/anti-worker stance and actively stimulated inter-ethnic hostility on behalf of its patrons (Gillion, 1997; Gaunder, 2008; Heartfield, 2002). The paper's reportedly ethnic overtones and its pro-establishment stance appear consistent with elements of normative media theory, which states that media reflect the "basic beliefs and assumptions that society holds" (Siebert et al., 1956, pp. 1–2). The paper's posture is also reflective of political economy theory, which asserts that profit-driven media represent the interests of the dominant elites in society (Herman & Chomsky, 2008). As a colonial State, Fiji also epitomised the broad view in conflict studies that the "root causes" of most conflicts lie in economic and political factors even if people are organised and mobilised around ethnic or religious identities (Stewart, 2009, p. 1). Indeed, social conflict in Fiji increased along with the increase in competition for political and economic resources among the different communities.

This was evident after the Indo-Fijians emerged from the harshness of indenture with a greater assertiveness about their rights rather than meekly accepting their designated place at the bottom of the colonially-instituted racial hierarchy. Challenging the power balance often saw Indo-Fijians pitted against the Europeans, who regarded them as a threat to their own commercial dominance (B. Lal, 2011). The Europeans made 'anti-Indianism' a common cause with the native population, who viewed the recent immigrants as a danger to self-determination. For instance, when Indo-Fijian

CSR workers went on strike for better wages during World War 1, the colonial government used 250 specially commissioned indigenous Fijian constables to break up the action. As B. Lal (2011) writes, an industrial strike acquired a racial element, further polarising two communities already separated by religion, language, culture and history.

The *Fiji Times* was an important tool for established private interests in disseminating anti-Indian messages. In 1929, the paper called for the deportation of all Indians, opining that Fiji's lands and climate "are for Europeans" (Gillion, 1977, p. 116). By making ethnicity central to the issues affecting the country, the *Fiji Times* was attempting to preserve the status quo, aiding and abetting elite domination and the exploitation of those on the lower rungs of society. The seminal work of Fiji economist Wadan Narsey (1979, p. 98) reveals the strong economic rationale for maintaining the ethnic divide: the prevailing social/economic structure gave the CSR a guaranteed supply of cheap labour and bumper crops – the basis for spectacular profits amounting to 13 million pounds between 1914 and 1924, compared to 3.7 million pounds for its Australian operations. These financial facts show how primordialism masked instrumentalist motives when it came to conflict in colonial Fiji. To put it another way, the veneer of race was used to camouflage the CSR's exploitation of Indo-Fijian labour and indigenous Fijian land to achieve what Narsey (1979, p. 98) termed as "superprofits".

Moreover, fostering the ethnic divide served as a useful buffer against the formation of class solidarity to oppose the capitalist establishment. As Sutherland (1992, p. 36) observed, "racism became absolutely central to capitalist profit". These developments lend weight to the popular assertion among social scientists that ethnicity is "socially constructed" (Weir, 2012), although the link between ethnic violence and the social construction of ethnicity is said to lack empirical validity (Fearon & Laitin, 2000, p. 847). From a constructivist viewpoint, one of the major causes of enduring inter-group conflict in Fiji is the colonial policy of racial segregation, which included the confinement of native Fijians to their villages, ostensibly to protect their communal lifestyle. This was achieved through the collusion of the chiefs, who stood to lose most if their people were allowed to leave their villages at will and establish any kind of autonomous lifestyle. Critics, in hindsight, deride the segregationist policy as a paternalistic, divide-and-rule strategy that prevented social integration, confined native Fijians to the subsistence sector, and delayed their move into the modern economy (Dakuvula, 2004; Sutherland, 1992; Yabaki, 2009).

By the time the natives emerged from their villages in the 1950s, Indo-Fijians were well entrenched in the main towns and centres (Dakuvula, 2004). Prevented from owning land, Indo-Fijians had started small farms and businesses, learnt the trades and acquired education to gain a head start in the money economy. Native Fijians were left feeling economically marginalised (Dakuvula, 2004). However, whether two culturally distinct communities would have interacted socially even in the absence of colonially-imposed barriers is open to question. To this day, inter-ethnic relationships, including marriages, remain uncommon. But to put the issue into perspective, marriages even within the Indo-Fijian community across class, caste, and religious lines are discouraged (see Narsey, 2014a; Sienkiewicz, 2000; Rao, 2004). Intermarriage, as one of the most definitive social and cultural indicators of social integration (Richmond, 2003) is worth further discussion given the nature of this thesis. In Fiji, intermarriage and cultural integration are largely viewed through the primordial lens. The nationalist politician Apisai Tora stated that "we took in the Indians" and let them "live in peace and make money" but there has been "no single act of reciprocity. They won't learn our language, our customs, or join our political parties" (cited in Rao, 2004, p. viii).

The scenario described by Tora is quite typical of pluralist societies. Basically, a society is plural when there exist differences in ethnicity, language, race, assumed blood ties, customs and/or territory (Ramli & Jamaludin, 2012). The different groups largely remain separate and maintain their religious and ethnic identities, which can persist over time (Sidanius & Petroicik, 2000). According to Penny & Khoo (1996), intermarriages signify the dissolution of social and cultural barriers. In Fiji, Richmond (2003) has conducted probably the only empirical study on the subject. She highlights that while the lack of intermarriage is often ascribed to ethnic differences, there are various structural and institutional obstacles involved.

These include colonial policies that resulted in the development of schools, political parties, and residential communities along racial lines. This is said to have hindered cultural assimilation, even after independence (see Richmond, 2003). The Fiji situation is consistent with Penny and Khoo's (1996) assertion that endogamy (marriage within one's specific social group) and exogamy (marriage outside of a specific social group) are affected by access to education and employment, opportunities for young people of all ethnic backgrounds to participate in social and community activities, and government policies and programmes that facilitate inter-group associations. These institutional factors are constructivist in nature but receive less attention than do primordial elements. Towards this end, the Bainimarama Government has been praised for introducing some radical integrationist policies – for instance by abolishing the ethnic element in the naming of

schools, making the teaching of Hindi and Fijian languages compulsory and establishing a common name, "Fijian", for all citizens – even though these imposed policies are not universally popular (Lane, 2012; Naidu, 2013). However, intermarriage is not a sure protection against ethnic conflict. Intermarriage among Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks was fairly common but this did little to slow the Bosnian slaughter of 1992–1995 (Evera, 2001).

3.3   The intra-ethnic divides

While Fiji's dominant inter-ethnic cleavages capture the most attention (Lane, 2012), significant intra-ethnic differences also exist. These need to be acknowledged if the objective is a fuller and truer measure of social conflict in the country. Some pre-existent conflicts within the indigenous community were suppressed by colonialism while others became worse and re-emerged under new guises. The formation of tribal leaders into a body called the Council of Chiefs is a case in point. The colonial administration granted greater powers to the fair-skinned Eastern chiefs as a reward for helping to capture the western part of Fiji, much to the chagrin of Western chiefs (Ewins, 2008; M. Howard, 1991). This skewed system was maintained after independence and produced lasting tensions (Pirie, 2000; Teaiwa, 2000). Western chiefs have, on occasion, even called for separation from Fiji, complaining that while most of the national wealth was produced in their region, the seat of political power remained in the east (Ewins, 2008; M. Howard, 1991; Pirie, 2000).

This defies the popular notion that competition for political power and economic resources in Fiji is a dualistic battle between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. It also highlights that Fiji's major conflicts are underpinned by grievances over the sharing of national wealth and resources. This is not to deny that within the indigenous community, deep-rooted tribal differences, regional tensions and chiefly rivalries that existed before European contact still persist at one level or another, even if they are masked by the politics of race (Sutherland, 1992). Teaiwa (2000) has even gone so far as to claim that, "there is no Fijian nation", only "Fijian provinces, and traditional Fijian confederacies". For instance, the 2000 Speight coup was purportedly carried out on behalf of ordinary indigenous Fijians. But a core (if covert) aim was to allegedly restore the influence of the traditional political elites from the Kubuna confedracy (Firth & Fraenkel, 2009). Dobell (2008) noted that the longer the 2000 coup crisis ran, the more it became clear that this was a fight among indigenous Fijians, though efforts to scapegoat the Indo-Fijians were not altogether abandoned.

By the same token, Indo-Fijians are perceived and portrayed as a homogeneous group despite differences, distinctions and discrimination along regional, religious, linguistic, caste and class lines, such as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians; North Indian or South Indian origin; descendants of indentured migrants as opposed to free migrants, the latter mostly composed of Gujaratis and Punjabi Sikhs (Narsey, 2014a; M. Reddy, 2011). Despite a fairly common social and political ideology, the two major Indo-Fijian-based political parties have been bitter rivals since the 1990s (Ramesh, 2010). When it comes to reporting conflict in the news, a dual focus based on ethnicity not only hides the inequalities prevalent within ethnic societies but also masks the formation of elite networks across ethnic boundaries to consolidate power. As Pirie says, to describe the Fiji situation as a 'Fijian–Indian conflict' both "oversimplifies" the context and renders many critical factors invisible. In addition, the named groups can serve as "lightning rods" in conflict rhetoric and the tension intensifies (2000, p. 57).

3.4   The tradition–modernity binary and cultural stereotypes

Interestingly, while nationalists like Tora and former Prime Minister Qarase (2000) speak about the lack of cultural assimilation, they also emphasise the need to protect and preserve indigeneity. At the surface level, such comments indicate a classic tradition–modernity tussle (see Qarase, 2000). Tradition and modernity encompass a huge and complicated field of study and this is not a place to delve into the intricacies of this debate. For the purpose of this thesis, it suffices to define modernity as a new order based on social progress, human reason, individualism and technological advances, along with the attendant hazards such as cultural breakdown and environmental destruction (McGregor, 2003). Tradition defines cultural practices such as group welfare, social stability, observation of traditional customs and deference to authority (Macionis & Plummer, 2008).

Regarding Fiji, some contradictions are discernible in the tradition–modernity binary, symbolised by none other than Qarase himself. In his speech at the 55th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Qarase praised indigenous chiefly traditions and communal values, contrasting them with supposed Indo-Fijian values of individualism and entrepreneurship (Qarase, 2000). This same Qarase was at one time the head of the Fiji Development Bank and author of the *Ten Year Plan* for indigenous Fijian affirmative action. He was a board member of Fijian Holdings Limited (FHL), a profitable indigenous Fijian-owned enterprise that is a major player in Fiji's corporate sector. In addition, Qarase was the chief business and financial advisor to the Fijian Affairs Board and Great Council of Chiefs (Ratuva, 2013). During the 2001 election campaign, Qarase made much of the

fact that his *Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua* (SDL) party had as candidates only successful business and professional men and women (MacWilliam, 2002, p. 139). Throughout his career as a merchant banker, company director and later prime minister, Qarase was at the forefront of efforts to advance indigenous Fijian capitalist ventures (Davis, 2012).

On a personal level, Qarase was part-owner of a family company that was among the largest shareholders in FHL (Ratuva, 2013). Despite his misgivings about certain aspects of modernity, Qarase has been a major beneficiary, and indeed an emblem, of modernity in Fiji, at least in the commercial sense. The former prime minister's contradictions are perhaps symbolic of the struggles within the wider indigenous community. Brison (2007) highlights how indigenous Fijians, especially in rural areas, want to live up to communal ideals but they also face pressure to prove they are autonomous individuals who can achieve personal success (p. xiii). Indigenous business "failures" are often attributed to cultural traits such as collectivism, while Indo-Fijian entrepreneurial success is credited to their supposed individualism (Rao, 2004, p. 55).

Collectivist societies advocate mutual dependence, teamwork and harmony, while individualistic cultures champion self-sufficiency, competition, personal initiative and private success (Drake, 2001, p. 320). The concepts of individualism–collectivism were developed by Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede as part of five different dimensions of national cultures. Individualism–collectivism denotes the extent to which individuals are integrated into groups or not. Individualism prevails in Western and other developed countries while collectivism is common in Eastern and less developed countries (see Hofstede, 2001). In Fiji, perceptions about indigenous economic backwardness and Indo-Fijian wealth are a major source of ethnic tensions and warrant further discussion. Sienkiewicz's (2000) anthropological study of ethnic relations in Fiji rejects the stereotype that indigenous Fijians are too bound by the perspectives and demands of their culture to care about money. To the contrary, indigenous Fijians conceptualise themselves as "commercial beings" eager to make money rather than show a disregard for wealth, as some leaders claim.

A related issue is affirmative action on behalf of indigenous Fijians. Ratuva's (2013) empirical research invalidates some blanket assertions about these schemes. His findings blame the failure of some schemes on poor planning, poor disbursement and poor implementation. This includes capture of the programmes by an elite political and business class from all ethnicities (Ratuva, 2013). This elite group allegedly used the "veneer of indigenous advancement" to circumvent the programmes to serve various personal, political and commercial interests (Ratuva, 2013, p. 177). For instance,

FHL was set up primarily for the benefit of rank and file indigenous Fijians. But the premium shares with the highest returns were secured by a clique of well-connected indigenous elites through family-owned companies (Ratuva, 2013). This included Qarase, jailed for a year in 2012 for abuse of office over the matter (Davis, 2012). A strong theme that emerges from Sienkiewicz and Ratuva's revelations is that ethnicity and culture alone do not by any means fully explain the cause of indigenous Fijian business setbacks. Other structural factors at play include corruption perpetuated by class and corporate interests that cut across ethnic lines. These conflict triggers are instrumentalist in nature, even if masked by primordial manifestations. The perception of Indo-Fijians' wealth, which is misleading because it is by no means true of all Indo-Fijians, is also a major cause of ethnic tensions in Fiji (Narsey, 2014b). Given that the aim of this thesis is a deeper understanding of conflicts, these issues are addressed at some length.

Towards this end, Amy Chua's (2003) book, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, provides a good basis for analysis. Chua points out that across South-East Asia, parts of Africa and South America, a small, market-dominant, ethnic minority has secured a disproportionate share of economic wealth. This has bred resentment among the disadvantaged majority, and caused serious outbreaks of violence and a backlash against democracy (Chua, 2003). Chua makes a passing reference to Fiji, which has some similarities, but also some striking differences, with her major case studies. For a start, Indo-Fijians are not a small minority in Fiji as the Chinese are in the Philippines. The Filipino-Chinese make up one per cent of the population, but dominate commerce at every level of society, and control over half the country's wealth (Chua, 2003). Indo-Fijians form a significant 37.5 per cent minority in Fiji. Their control of the Fijian economy is not as pervasive as Chinese control in South-East Asia (Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Chua, 2003). Statistically, the population distribution of business by ethnicity is 53 per cent Indo-Fijian (37.5 per cent of overall population); 27 per cent 'Other' ethnicities (5.7 per cent overall population); and 20 per cent ethnic Fijian and Rotuman (58.6 per cent overall population) (Samisoni, 2010). Notably, most Indo-Fijian-owned businesses are in the hands of Gujaratis, a small, distinct and exclusive group within the Indo-Fijian community.

Known for their thrift, hard work and business acumen, the Gujaratis arrived from Northwestern India from 1916 onwards as free migrants (B. Lal, 2011; Narsey, 2014a; Ramesh, 2008). According to one estimate, Gujaratis make up approximately seven per cent of the Indo-Fijian population but own up to 80 per cent of all Indo-Fijian businesses, although this community also has its poor (People Groups, 2013; Ramesh, 2008; for a fairly thorough account of the economic contribution of

Gujaratis to Fiji, see, *Gujaratis in Fiji Islands: Personal Glimpses*, Jinna & Mangubhai, 2008). Furthermore, Indo-Fijian businesses do not have a strong presence in the financial, mining, fisheries or tourism sectors, which are dominated by foreign firms (Aporosa, 2007; Naidu, 2013). In addition, ethnic Fijians are gaining ground. They form a strong and growing middle class, dominate the public sector, some are part-owners of tourism resorts and some run small-scale agricultural cooperatives (Naidu, 2013; Ramesh, 2008). The indigenous Fijian-owned FHL had an investment portfolio worth $87 million in 2013 (Fijian Holdings, 2013). Fiji's 2008–09 Household Income and Expenditure Survey shows that the bulk of indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians are virtually at the same levels in terms of poverty and middle class income earners (Narsey, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; also see Narsey et al., 2010).

However, many major enterprises are still Indo-Fijian owned and most of the professionals come from this community (Lane, 2012). While indigenous Fijians form a substantial part of formal sector employment, many have failed to make inroads into the corporate sector and urban home ownership. Narsey's (2014b) view is that in the interest of future stability, the gap needs to be narrowed through strategically-targeted affirmative action, particularly at the business and corporate levels. This same theme is apparent in Chua's (2003) research, which shows that worldwide, the presence of "market-dominant minorities" inevitably results in an ethnically-targeted, violent, backlash against free market democracy.

Fiji had its own violent backlash during the 1987 and 2000 coups, when Indo-Fijian businesses in the capital city were burnt and looted by indigenous Fijian mobs (T. R. Singh, 2011: Ramesh, 2010). Fiji's founding Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara is reported to have said that if the Indo-Fijians ever gained political power, Suva would burn to the ground since all that the indigenous Fijians would lose would be the Indians' records of Fijian debt (Narsey, 2014b; Sharpham, 2000). One of the ironies becoming apparent in Chua's (2003) book is that the market-dominant minorities became fabulously rich due to globalisation and through connections with indigenous political elites. Similarly, the tiny minority of wealthy, dominant, Indo-Fijian businesses are said to owe their success to the protectionist policies of successive indigenous Fijian governments, with consumers of all ethnicities subsidising these operations through higher prices and taxation (Narsey, 2014b). These consumers include 31 per cent of people from both ethnicities who live in poverty (Narsey, 2014b; also see Narsey et al., 2010). Indeed, a running theme in Chua's (2003) thesis is the inequalities caused by globalisation and free market democracy and how this breeds ethnic hatred (pp. 5–6).

In Fiji, well-placed political and business cartels exploited the opportunities and advantages offered by a globalised capitalist economy to consolidate links and market position. The cost was borne by the grassroots people of all ethnicities, both financially and in the form of social conflict. This scenario underlines the limits of primordial explanations of conflict. They create misconceptions and make it harder to identify the real issues and devise appropriate policies for rectification. Indeed, in Fiji's case, Narsey (2014c) is adamant that race-based poverty alleviation policies are redundant as both the major ethnic groups are equally poor. Because of the declining Indo-Fijian population, poverty alleviation based on needs alone would fairly allocate the majority share of State assistance to indigenous Fijians.

3.5   Demography, electoral systems, coup culture and oligarchism

According to Choucri (1984), conflict is a central feature of all political behaviour, including population variables, which shape social and political responses. In Fiji, population has been another major and longstanding cause of tensions, partly due to misconceptions perpetuated by politicians and propagated by the media. Chung's (1999, p. 131) research indicates that tensions over population issues escalated in the 1920s when both Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijian numbers grew rapidly, triggering political perceptions of a "population race". By the mid-1940s, Indo-Fijians outnumbered ethnic Fijians, which generated a "political furore" that dominated public debate through to the 1960s and remained a potent political force thereafter. According to Chung (1991, p. 131), the debate's:

> touchwood was fertility and the political nature of comparisons between Fijian and
> Indian fertility, thinly disguised by seemingly objective statistics. In public accounts, the
> Fijian crude birth rate was described as "normal", or "slow and steady", in comparison to
> the Indian's "truly horrible fecundity".

However, the real reason for the difference in growth was because of the different age structures of the two populations and the high number of Fijian infant and child deaths (Chung, 1999). But raw statistics showing an excess of Indian over Fijian fertility became "powerful tools" in political campaigns waged by the colonial government and ethnic Fijian leaders. The media played a part in the disinformation campaigns by emphasising that "Indian numbers would eventually swamp Fijian interests; portraying Indians as land-grabbers and blaming their fertility as threatening Fijian cultural survival" (Chung, 1999, p. 131).Tensions increased in the 1950s and 1960s as Indo-Fijian

numbers reached an absolute majority due to a wave of free settlers from Gujarat and Punjab (B. Lal, 2011; Leuprecht, 2012). During Independence talks in London, indigenous leaders rejected common roll, fearing it would confer advantage on Indo-Fijians. As Leuprecht explains, indigenous "feelings of being 'swamped' were compounded by an unintended (Indo-Fijian) challenge to native political incumbency" (2012, p. 84).

But insinuations about Indo-Fijian designs to take over Fiji through biological means did not correspond with the facts: Chung's (1999) research shows that Indo-Fijian clients responded in greater numbers to a national family planning campaign launched in the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in a steeper decline in Indo-Fijian fertility rates. These facts apparently did not make it into the private national media, which at the time constituted the *Fiji Times*. Ultimately, to placate indigenous concerns, the country adopted a mixed voting system based on both communal (racial) and open seat allocations (Leuprecht, 2012). The founding 1970 Constitution established a 52-seat parliament consisting of 27 communal seats and 25 open seats. The electoral procedure was based on majoritarianism, which is premised on a two-party race, with successful candidates required to win an absolute majority (Norris, 1997). The constitution gave recognition and power to colonially-constructed 'indigenous institutions' such as the Great Council of Chiefs and recognised customary ownership of land (M. Howard, 1991).

In totality, this arrangement resembled what Boege, Brown, Clements and Nolan (2008, p. x) describe as "hybrid political orders". Such orders combine elements of Western models of governance with local indigenous traditions. In Fiji's case, the system was designed to safeguard the paramountcy of Fijian elites (M. Howard, 1991; Naidu, 2005, 2008, 2013). Over time, this permutation was to result in various unforeseen and unfortunate consequences in Fiji.

But for the first 17 years of independence at least, Fiji enjoyed relative stability under Prime Minister Ratu Mara's predominantly indigenous Fijian-supported Alliance Party. The flaws in the ethnically-based political arrangement became apparent only after the Alliance, inundated with allegations of corruption, lost the 1987 elections to the mainly Indo-Fijian supported Fiji Labour Party–National Federation Party coalition (Alley, 1987; M. Howard, 1991). The change in government was a momentous event that upset the delicate balance that preserved the semblance of national unity. As A. Prasad (2008) writes, prior to 1970, indigenous Fijians maintained political control whilst the Indo-Fijians had acquired economic pre-eminence. In the following decades, Indo-Fijians improved their political representation yet indigenous Fijians did not ascend

significantly in the socio-economic hierarchy. This "disjuncture" fermented coups d'état and conflicts (A. Prasad, 2008, p. 953).

The 1987 coup leader Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka claimed that his act was inspired by God to save Fiji from an Indo-Fijian takeover. The potent mix of religion and nationalism resonated with Rabuka's indigenous brethren for whom the loss of political power was an old fear. At the time of the coup, Indo-Fijians made up 48.6 per cent of the population, slightly outnumbering indigenous Fijians at 46.2 per cent (Fraenkel & Firth, 2009; Garrett, 1990; Sharpham, 2000). However, demographic trends had been indicting an eventual decline in the Indo-Fijian population. Since the early 1980s, lower fertility rates had seen Indo-Fijian numbers decrease against ethnic Fijian increases (Chung, 1999). Various critics felt that Rabuka had exaggerated the threats and that rather than God, he was acting on behalf of an earthly power. M. Howard (1991, p. 80) described this power structure as a political "oligarchy" that was unwilling to relinquish control of the nation.

Oligarchic arguments derive from elite theory, pioneered by Italian sociologists Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941). The basic premise is that in many societies, political decision-making is controlled by small political and non-political elite groups who exercise a pervasive hold on society. Oligarchies are discernible in situations where royalty, wealth, family connections, corporate power, and/or military control maintain a strong grip on government and/or the national economy (Legaspi, 2011). A pioneer in the field, German sociologist Robert Michels, developed the 'Iron law of Oligarchy', arguing that any political system inevitably evolves into an oligarchy (1962; also see Legaspi, 2011). While there are gaps in terms of a full theory linking elites to major irregularities in the political arena, political scientists watch elite power closely, particularly in relation to democratic transitions, breakdowns and revolutions (Higley, 2006). Scrutinising elite power formations in coup-prone Fiji could provide deeper insights into both the motivations for conflict and their true nature, especially from the perspectives of instrumentalism, which is linked to political economy.

With regard to Fiji, the works of Baledrokadroka (2012), Halapua (2003), M. Howard (1991), Narsey (2014b) and Ramesh (2008; 2010) allude to elements of 'oligarchism', with roots in colonialism. As Michael Howard explains, decolonisation saw the British increase the people's power while bestowing on the powerful Eastern chiefs and their local European allies enough authority to retain control of the state, at least initially upon independence (1991, pp. 80–81). Ratu Mara's Alliance Party, which included a small but influential European arm, formed government

after the 1972 elections. The British-devised ethnically-based parliamentary system allowed the Alliance Party to extend and develop the colonial administrative system into an oligarchic structure by consolidating ties with the Great Council of Chiefs, the Methodist Church of Fiji and the predominantly-indigenous Fijian military. These patron–client relationships were underpinned by the dogma of indigenous political paramountcy (Baledrokadroka, 2012; M. Howard, 1991).

This system extended downwards through an elaborate network of State patronage in the form of civil service jobs, university scholarships and contracts and development funds distributed through the Fijian Affairs Board and various other administrative arms of government. This arrangement enabled government to exercise considerable social, political and economic control over the indigenous population, with coercion applied through job transfers, the withholding of rewards, and the application of various other forms of social pressure (see Alley, 1987; Hagan, 1987; M. Howard, 1991). Oligarchies take different shapes and forms in different countries and settings. In Russia, they are connected with "big bad and sleazy Mafioso-type businessmen" whereas in the United States, they are associated with the "capture" of the State by the big corporations (Schechter, 2014). In the Philippines, oligarchies represent a few wealthy families who amassed phenomenal influence due to privatisation, and exercise a "stranglehold" on political and economic power (Chua, 2003; Legaspi, 2011).

Analysis of the relevant literature indicates that in Fiji, oligarchies primarily comprised indigenous Fijian political, social and military power on the one hand, and Indo-Fijian, European, part-European and Chinese economic clout on the other (see M. Howard, 1991; Narsey, 2014b; Ratuva, 2013). The uniqueness and resilience of Fiji's version of oligarchism lies in its link to indigenous politics and tradition through tie-ins with the Great Council of Chiefs (*Bose levu vakaturaga*), indigenous government (*matanitu*), and the Methodist Church (*lotu*). With these pillars of indigenous Fijian society interwoven with oligarchic rule, any threat to this system was bound to be met with strong resistance. Bowman (2001) opines that oligarchies oppose democracy if it will lead to a decline in their wealth and power. In Fiji's case, the FLP–NFP political coalition's emphasis on class was seen as a threat to a system premised on ethnicity (see M. Howard, 1991). The oligarchy responded by arousing primordial feelings among the *vanua* (indigenous people), triggering a groundswell of support from the Fijian Administration, indigenous Fijian public servants, ethnic Fijian trade union leaders and ordinary ethnic Fijians, not to mention the *bati* (military) (Naidu, 2005. 2008, 2013).

These developments suggest that the 1987 coup was instigated by Fiji's ruling oligarchs to regain power (instrumentalism) by arousing latent ethnic tensions (primordialism). Robertson and Tamanisau state as much by pointing out that the incoming FLP–NFP Government "represented the most complete challenge to the position of the chiefly bureaucratic class in the 20th century" (1988, p. 14). The media allegedly emphasised the primordial angle – the "most comfortable explanation" that neither "challenges the intellect nor poses disturbing questions" (Robertson & Tamanisau, 1988, p.144). However, oligarchies can be a puzzle. For one, their presence is not always obvious and their motives are not always clear in all cases. As Schechter (2014) states, often oligarchies start out as normal, idealistic and democratic institutions. But eventually they come to be dominated by a small, self-serving group of powerful people. In Fiji the oligarchy was not necessarily a deliberate construct. It was not purposefully formed with bad intentions, neither was it malevolent and rapacious in every aspect. For instance, the State's affirmative action programme was, before it evolved into a form of political patronage, a genuine effort to assist indigenous Fijians. Also, in spite of their pro-indigenous leanings, the chiefs and the church assisted national development by facilitating inter-ethnic compromises on crucial matters such as land and political reforms (see Norton, 2009).

Moreover, the same military that had staged two nationalist coups in 1987 defused a racist coup by renegade soldiers in 2000. By the same token, notwithstanding the Alliance Government's oligarchic tendencies, it provided 17 years of stability and a fair amount of progress and development (Ewins, 1998; Lane, 2012). So it is conceivable that the oligarchy's complexities and contradictions made it difficult for the media to conduct proper and regular analysis.

Indeed, just before the 1987 coups, a visiting Pope John Paul II had described Fiji as "the way the world should be" (Field, 2010). The Rabuka coups shocked both locals and the international community, perhaps because as M. Howard (2008, p. 11) writes, people had accepted Ratu Mara's "propaganda about the Pacific Way" and the "special nature of Fiji's society". Howard's words suggest that the Fiji media may have failed to interrogate Mara's ideas sufficiently, which is plausible. As an articulate Oxford scholar and paramount chief, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara was an imposing figure in a region in which great deference is shown to traditional authority (see B. Lal, 2010a, for a preview essay on Mara). For cultural reasons, an adversarial approach or any kind of deeply probing interview on the part of the media would not have been encouraged. However, the problems went deeper than any one person, even if that person was a powerful figure like Ratu Mara, as we will see in the following section.

3.6   Faults in the ethnically-based electoral system

Despite the peaceful impressions that fooled the Pope, post-colonial Fiji lacked the institutional or political frameworks for inter-group contact. Below the calm exterior, racial prejudices had free rein (Ramesh, 2008). Because the electoral system was ethnically-based, parties formed on the basis of race rather than ideology and voting largely followed ethnic patterns (Ramesh, 2010). Elections usually returned a Parliament largely made up of an indigenous Fijian government facing off against a mostly Indo-Fijian opposition. Adversarialism, a hallmark of Westminsterism, reached intense levels since the political demarcation was based on ethnicity rather than on ideology (Hagan, 1987, p. 126). Often, Fiji's leaders lacked the will to collaborate lest such actions dilute their hold over their communal bloc (M. Reddy, 2011; Ramesh, 2008). As veteran New Zealand journalist Michal Field (2010) observed, "Fiji's poison was its politicians".

Following a post-1987 coup period of interim rule, Fiji adopted a new constitution in 1990, based entirely on racial voting. This constitution sought to strengthen oligarchic rule by linking it even more strongly to indigenous self-determination. The 1990 Constitution guaranteed indigenous political supremacy by virtue of a fixed majority in parliament. It reserved the presidency, vice-presidency, prime ministership and all other senior government positions for indigenous Fijians. The military was given extra powers to safeguard the State (Green, 2009; Naidu, 2013; Ramesh, 2010). Traditionalism was strengthened by entrenching chiefly rule and by placing indigenous institutions and titles above criticism through laws protecting their dignity and esteem (Ewins, 1998). From a hybrid democracy, Fiji had transited to a political system that fits Ghai's (2008, p. 667) description of a "nationalist" State. This conveys an ethnically-based leadership actively engaged in establishing a State on the principle of the supremacy of one ethnic group over others.

The skewed system helped Rabuka's newly-formed, chiefly-backed *Soqosoqo Vakevulewa ni Taukei Party* (SVT) to a strong win in the 1992 election. But the new constitution was soon linked to rampant corruption, decline in economic growth, a worsening of inter-ethnic relations and strains within the indigenous political order (Ghai, 2008). Apparently disillusioned by these developments, a chastised Rabuka teamed up with NFP leader Jai Ram Reddy to push for a review of the 1990 Constitution. A consultative process through an independent Constitution Review Commission resulted in the more equitable 1997 Constitution, which combined elements of both majoritarianism and consociationalism (Fraenkel, 2006). Consociational democracy is based on power-sharing and proportional representation. Because it emphasises consensus over opposition, it is deemed more

appropriate for multi-ethnic societies (Lijphart, 1999, 2004). The 71-member Parliament consisted of 25 open seats and 46 communal seats. Twenty-three communal seats were allocated to indigenous Fijians, 19 to Indo-Fijians, three to General Electors, and one to Rotumans.

The GCC was constitutionally-empowered to appoint the President, Vice-President and 14 members of the Senate. An important element was the mandatory power-sharing provision in Section 99. This guaranteed political parties with more than 10 per cent of the seats a proportionate number of places in cabinet (Fraenkel, 2006). However, Rabuka's SVT and Reddy's NFP lost the first election that took place under the new constitution in 1999 to a resurgent People's Coalition, comprising the secular Indo-Fijian-supported FLP and two indigenous-supported parties – the Party of National Unity (PANU), and the Fijian Association Party (FAP) (Ramesh, 2007, 2010). Rabuka (2000) equated the SVT–NFP loss to a rejection of multiracialism and the media were quick to pick up on this discourse (Ramesh, 2010). However, ethnicity was but one variable. The SVT also fell victim to one of the flaws of multi-partism – voter fragmentation (Norton, 2000). Furthermore, both the SVT and NFP were outdone by a better-organised People's Coalition, its astute exchange of preferences and its slick campaigning (B. Lal, 2000). The 1999 election returned Fiji's first Indo-Fijian prime minister in the shape of Labour Party leader, Mahendra Chaudhry, only for him to be ousted in the May 2000 nationalist coup.

During its one-year stint, the Chaudhry Government scored well on economic management and social policies. But it was bedevilled by infighting, demonisation by ethno-nationalists, clashes with powerful business interests, differences with outspoken academics, allegations of favouring Indo-Fijians, charges of bad governance and nepotism, and battles with the media (Robie, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011).Moreover, government's *Land Use Policy* became the target of an alleged disinformation campaign (Dakuvula, 2004; Ramesh, 2008; T. R. Singh, 2011). This was not unexpected: for indigenous people, land is both an economic and a cultural asset. As such, it easily lends itself to conflicts around which groups readily mobilise (Kurer, 2001; United Nations Interagency Framework, 2012). Misreporting by the media only exacerbates the situation. This is discussed in the next section.

3.7   Conflicts surrounding the land issue and the role of media

In Fiji, tensions over land epitomise a clash of differing values: ethnic Fijians view land as a central component of their identity – in their language, *vanua*, "land" also means "people", and the two are

inextricable (Robie, 1989, p. 205). Indo-Fijians who farm land leased from indigenous owners see it as a source of livelihood, whereas Europeans regard it as capital (Pirie, 2000). At times, the Fiji media tend to report the land issue in rather emotional terms. At the height of the land dispute in 2000, the April 17 issue of the *Fiji Daily Post* editorialised that to indigenous Fijians, land is "culture", their "soul", and their "very spirit". Land is "sovereignty", something to be "defended to the death, like honour". Land is so sacred that indigenous Fijians would rather see it "lying idle, overgrown with grass and not fetching any economic return at all" (cited in Rao, 2004, p. 40).

The *Post* did not explain the basis of its claims. But its opinion piece was, in some important respects, in stark contrast to Sienkiewicz's (2000) empirical study based on interviews with landowners. The study, in sharp contradiction to the *Post* editorial, showed that landowners were willing to offer leases for the right rental and also keen to farm their land to make money. One possible explanation for the *Post's* reporting slant is that the paper was taking its cue from elite sources: Dakuvula (2004) had observed that some nationalist politicians were urging the non-renewal of the 20,000 leases held by Indo-Fijians. Many landowners took heed, leading to reversion to bush of over 50 per cent of farms and a subsequent FJD21 million loss to the Fiji Sugar Corporation in 2002 alone (Dakuvula, 2004; Naidu, 2013).

This situation accords with instrumentalist explanations of conflict in that "ethnicity is simply a way of aggregating individuals for collective ends, which is seized and used by politicians for political advantage" (L. Robertson, 1997, p. 269). Media like the *Fiji Daily Post* could have been drawn in because of their focus on elite sources of news. Or, as L. Duncan (2002) says, some Fiji media seemed to show lack of understanding about the special protections accorded to land ownership in the 1997 Constitution. If so, this is omission through ignorance, which Frohardt and Temin (2003) describe as passive or involuntary incitement to conflict by the media. This occurs as a product of poor media skills and knowledge. Journalists emphasise the ethnic angle due to its simplicity (see O'Sullivan, 2001).

The case studies discussed so far show how a disproportionate focus on primordialism downplays and masks the underlying causes of what is termed as 'ethnic conflict' in Fiji. To the list of conflict causes can be added the failure of political leadership, including both Chaudhry and Qarase's inability to negotiate multiparty arrangements after the 1999 and 2001 elections (Naidu, 2013; Robertson & Sutherland, 2001). In 1999 for instance, a successful post-election political settlement would have meant a broader national mandate given that Rabuka's SVT commanded 39 per cent of

the indigenous vote compared to the FLP's two per cent (Ramesh, 2007). A workable coalition with the SVT could have disproved some of the justifications used to stage a nationalist coup.

In the next section, we take a deeper look at media's potential role in conflict through the concept of hyper-adversarialism.

3.8   Transnational media influences and hyper-adversarialism

The focus on ethnicity masks the fact that the Chaudhry Government was not brought down by primordialism alone, but by a confluence of diverse forces ranging from defeated politicians, disgruntled native landowners, hostile ethno-nationalists, antagonistic academics, and aggrieved corporate interests (not to mention the Chaudhry Government's own misjudgements). The oppositional discourses found their way into sections of the national media and other public platforms to put pressure on the government. Such sources of pressure included the Rupert Murdoch–owned *Fiji Times*, which was opposed to what it saw as government's anti-neoliberal policy, including rolling back privatisation (Robie, 2000, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011). The political economist McChesney (2001) refers to neoliberalism as the set of national and international policies that call for business domination of all social affairs with minimal countervailing force. This includes the freeing of commercial media and communication markets. Murdoch's News Corporation is considered the "most aggressive" proponent of neoliberalism (McChesney, 2001).

News Corporation's neoliberal stance was arguably reflected in the opposition of the *Fiji Times* to the Chaudhry Government's economic plans. One particularly scathing editorial accused government of "hammering the private sector" and "Robin Hood-style policies" that benefitted only politicians "sitting on their well-fed backsides collecting generous pay packages" (Why Robin Hood, 2000, p. 6). This comment was incongruent with some other assessments of the government's economic performance (see Robie, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011). The *Fiji Times* position caused some to question whose interests and ideology the newspaper was reflecting: the people of Fiji, or its owners (Robie, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011). As a subsidiary of a global media conglomerate, it is plausible that the *Fiji Times*' foreign ownership had a knock-on influence on the paper's domestic coverage in terms of an overarching neoliberal philosophy that binds virtually all News Limited publications (see Hall, 2011; McChesney, 2001). This shows how local conflicts could be affected by greater global forces.

In analyses of the *Fiji Times* coverage of the Chaudhry Government's short-lived term, T. R. Singh (2011), Kiran (2005) and Obini (2000) provide further clues of the toxic relationship. T. R. Singh's (2011, p. 256) overall summary showed almost two-thirds (62.8 per cent) of the stories were negative (p. 256). Kiran (2005, p. 82), who also conducted a content analysis of the *Fiji Times*, spoke of a "media war" with government. Both Singh and Kiran claimed that much of the criticism was undeserved and over the top. The literature on media coverage of the Chaudhry Government betrays signs of what Fallows (1996) describes as "hyper-adversarialism". This signifies a worldwide paradigm shift in political reporting characterised by a move from a "healthy skepticism" and an "independent, adversarial relationship with politics", to a "corrosively cynical and hyper-adversarial" position (Fallows, 1996).

In Fiji, aside from the *Fiji Times*, other local media could be quite brash. In response to the Chaudhry Government's criticism of media standards, a *Fiji Daily Post* editorial in June 1999 said: "There is only one way to describe the attack on the media by Assistant Minister for Information Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi: rubbish. It is really not worth any other comment." The newspaper then left the rest of its editorial column blank (New Fiji Islands government continues attacks on media, 1999). McNair (2011) traces hyper-adversarialism to the United Kingdom in the 1950s. He describes it as an increasingly aggressive form of political journalism caused by a "decline of deference", a trend fueled by expanding and increasingly competitive media system incentivised to "get the story first", with political leaders considered fair game (McNair, 2011).

In Australia, political journalist Laurie Oakes (2012), in his 2012 Andrew Olle Media Lecture, has alluded to a similar media culture, as did former Australian Labor minister Lindsay Tanner (2011) in his book, *Sideshow, Dumbing Down Democracy*. It is plausible that hyper-adversarialism spread to Fiji from Australia and New Zealand, the country's major source of publishers, editors, trainers and funds for media development (Robie, 2010, 2014). It is perhaps more than a coincidence that Fiji and Australia share similar concerns in areas like self-regulation and the alleged belligerent nature of political coverage (see Bale, 2003; Robie, 2014; Rosen, 2011; Tanner, 2011).

Hyper-adversarialism is similar to what Spiess (2011, p. 6) refers to as "attack dog journalism", an aggressive strain of reporting that goes beyond the watchdog role. It harms "fledgling democracies" by "nurturing intolerance and diminishing faith" in democratic leaders (Voltmer, 2009, p.5; Spiess, 2011, p. 6). Obini's conclusions based on his content analysis of the *Fiji Times* suggest a hounding of the Chaudhry Government. In Obini's words:

> There is a clear difference between informing the public in a non-partisan, unbiased manner and waging a war of destabilisation. Without giving the People's Coalition time to settle down in office, the *Fiji Times* started hammering on promises made by the People's Coalition during the election campaign. Also some sensitive issues were blown out of proportion and given more attention than they deserved; they were amplified in the front pages, and regularly given prominence in the editorials. (2000, p. 59)

The seemingly aggressive coverage of the Chaudhry Government and its subsequent overthrow seemed to alarm politicians and harden attitudes toward media. After winning the 2001 election, the Qarase Government tabled a tougher draft *Media Council of Fiji Bill* in 2003, having claimed that self-regulation had failed and media posed a danger to stability (Bale, 2003; Bale blasts media…, 2003; Qarase, 2001). Sections of the public also seemed to favour tougher media legislation. The *Fiji Times*–commissioned Tebutt opinion poll in 2003 with a sample of 1005 people across the country found 71 per cent favouring either "a lot" of government control or "a little control" (Support for media control, 2002, p. 7). These developments seem to vindicate Spiess's (2011, p. 6) assertions that an overly aggressive journalistic approach could harm fledgling democracies by diminishing public confidence in democratic leaders. The risk is arguably greater in Fiji due to a culture of respect for leaders (see Madraiwiwi, 2014). An overly belligerent approach on the media's part could be deemed as rude and disrespectful, and provoke a backlash among sections of the public, as the 2003 Tebutt poll seems to suggest.

In the next section we continue to examine the media-conflict link, this time from the perspective of media as a tool for propaganda. The section also discusses militarisation in Fiji.

3.9   Racist propaganda and the resurgence of identities

Jowett and O'Donnell (2012, p. 7) define propaganda as the "deliberate attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the

desired intent of the propagandist". In Fiji, research indicates that racist propaganda has been used to disguise the hidden motives for power grabs, especially during coups. In 1987, the military singled out the media, particularly the indigenous language media, to tap into indigenous Fijian uneasiness about Indo-Fijians and reinforced the coup sentiment, "we are going to get our country back" (Ewins, 1998; Garrett, 1990, p. 91). In 2000, the Speight group used various techniques to arouse primordial feelings and mobilise group support during the 56 days they kept the Chaudhry Government hostage in parliament. The rebels styled themselves as *bati*, traditional Fijian warriors tasked with protecting the clan (Baledrokadroka, 2012; Halapua, 2003; T. R. Singh, 2011). This technique resembles what Giordan (1994) describes as the "resurgence of identities" or the "production of new identities". It is designed to tap into emotions associated with inherited group identities to win support against the "other" through recourse to national traditions often deeply rooted in the collective memory. These are revived and reactivated through the use of propaganda (Giordan, 1994).

In the Fiji context, this *bati* strategy would have appealed to indigenous Fijians' strong martial heritage. It would have also played on the media's weakness for exoticism as a core news value. Such media images could have had a hand in galvanising greater indigenous support for the Speight putsch. Indeed, indigenous Fijians answered the call in the hundreds, flocking to parliament to act as human shields for the coup plotters (Robertson & Sutherland, 2001; Ramesh, 2010).

3.10   Militarisation

The 2000 crisis ended with the eventual capture, conviction and imprisonment of the rebels (Ramesh, 2008, 2010). A landmark ruling by the Fiji Appeals Court on November 15, 2000, declared the military's abrogation of the 1997 constitution unconstitutional. The subsequent 2001 democratic election was won by Prime Minister Qarase's newly-formed SDL party (Ramesh, 2010). However, Qarase rejected multi-racialism by refusing to share power with the second-largest party, the FLP, claiming that their policies were incompatible (Ramesh, 2007, 2010). Instead, Qarase sought to consolidate the indigenous hold on power by uniting the fragmented indigenous polity by partnering with the pro-Speight Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua (CAMV) party (Ramesh, 2010). Qarase also reinforced the oligarchic order by consolidating State ties with the Methodist Church and the GCC. The latter received $20 million in State funds for the construction of a new complex (Fijian trust fund earnings . . ., 2005). In all, during Qarase's term, the State disbursed over

FJD50 million through the Fijian Development Trust Fund for the benefit of the 14 provinces (Fijian trust fund earnings . . ., 2005).

Qarase's call on ethnic Fijians to support an Act to grant the GCC further powers (Fijian trust fund earnings . . ., 2005) was another apparent move to revive and strengthen the old oligarchic order. But the Qarase Government's apparent sympathy for some high-profile coup convicts pushed it into conflict with the military. Some 2000 coup plotters were not only prematurely released from prison, but also given cabinet and senate positions (Ramesh, 2008, 2010). The tense situation was exacerbated by two proposed pieces of legislation – the Reconciliation Tolerance and Unity Bill and the *Qoliqoli* Bill. Government asserted that the first bill was meant to heal the country from the 2000 coup experience and the second to give native resource owners greater rights over traditional fishing grounds. Critics, however, claimed that the former was a thinly-disguised pardon for the Speight group and the latter a populist move that threatened the tourism industry (Green, 2009; Ramesh, 2010). The 2006 election was held against the backdrop of increasing politico-military tensions. The SDL won 36 seats to the FLP's 31. What became increasingly apparent was the widening gulf between the two major ethnicities: the SDL had increased its indigenous Fijian support by 25 per cent whereas the FLP increased its Indo-Fijian support by 6.8 per cent (Ramesh, 2007, 2008).

In part, the divisions reflected Indo-Fijian concerns about on-going State discrimination in the event of an SDL win and indigenous Fijian anxieties about the forfeiture of affirmative action should the SDL lose (Ramesh, 2010). This exemplifies ethnic conflict based on instrumentalism, with political elites utilising economic rewards and divide-and-rule tactics to maintain power. In a sense, politicians feel compelled to use this strategy in order to win seats under Fiji's ethnically-based electoral system, a legacy of colonialism. This typifies constructivism, whereby ethnic conflict is the end product of historical, social and political processes (L. Robertson, 1997). Fiji's State–military dispute, which culminated in the December 2006 coup, had elements of both instrumentalism and constructivism. Previous coups were nationalist in nature. Bainimarama staged his coup in the name of multiracialism, equality and "clean-up against corruption" (Ramesh, 2010). But critics saw the coup as an attempt by Bainimarama to thwart his alleged imminent sacking and derail investigations into the deaths of several mutinous soldiers in 2000 (Bhim, 2007; Firth & Fraenkel, 2009, p. 128).

However, what has been termed Fiji's "coup culture" (Lane, 2012) is better understood if viewed as the outcome of a sequence of interconnected processes rather than the result of a series of unrelated, spontaneous, events. Conceptualised from constructivist (conflict being the outcome of historical processes) and instrumentalist (conflict is elite-instigated, often for pecuniary gain) perspectives, the Bainimarama coup indicates an ongoing process of militarisation, symbolised by the army's growing assertiveness over the decades and an increasing desire for direct control of the affairs of the country and its resources. Militarisation has been conceptualised in a multitude of ways. Relevant for Fiji is a definition coined by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. It describes militarisation as:

> [a] steady growth in the military potential of states … usually accompanied by an increasing role for military institutions both in national affairs, including economic, social and political affairs, and in international affairs. (cited in Ross, 1987, p. 562)

Also relevant is Enloe's (2000, p. 291) description of militarisation as the "step-by-step process by which something becomes controlled by, dependent on, or derives value from the military or militaristic criteria". In Fiji's case, Rabuka is often accused of releasing the coup "genie" (B. Lal, 2010b, p. 366). However, Rabukas' actions were part of a broader process of militarisation with roots in colonialism. As M. Howard (1991) writes, the British placed great importance on Fiji's military tradition, and used it to establish colonial rule during the 19th century. Later, under chiefly leadership, the military was used to support Britain during both world wars and the Malayan insurgencies. Upon independence, the British bequeathed to Fiji a political system weighted in favour of indigenous Fijians (M. Howard, 1991). After independence, the Mara Government developed the military for the United Nations international peacekeeping operations largely as a source of income generation for Fiji. From a tiny force of 200 at independence, the military grew to more than ten times that number by 1987 (Baledrokadroka, 2012).

Given the trend in developing countries with large standing armies, Fiji's path to militarisation was perhaps predictable. Post-colonial Latin America, Africa and Asia had gone down the same route in the 1950s and 1960s, with the national militaries used to defend the oligarchs when social change threatened their power and privileges (Balebaledroka, 2012; Bowman, 2001; Lane, 2012). In Fiji's case, the military's relationship with government was built on the traditional chief–warrior (*turaga–bati*) roles, with the warriors expected to do the chiefs' bidding (Baledrokadroka, 2012; Sharpham, 2000). Qarase's SDL party had been anointed by the chiefs and was voted in by an overwhelming

number of indigenous Fijians (Ramesh, 2010), which perhaps explains the depth of the shock over its unceremonious toppling by the military.

However, the warning signs were there even in 1987: Rabuka's second coup on October 1 and the abrogation of the 1970 Constitution was in direct defiance of two high chiefs – then Governor-General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau and then Prime Minister Ratu Mara. It followed Rabuka's dissatisfaction with a power-sharing deal the two chiefs had brokered with the ousted Bavadra Government (Garrett, 1990). Days later, on October 6, Rabuka again defied the chiefs when he severed connections with the Commonwealth and declared Fiji a Republic, installing himself as the head of state (Mason, 2009). However, successive indigenous Fijian governments appeared ambivalent towards the military. They possibly saw the military as an enforcer of the oligarchic structure and guarantor of indigenous rule rather than as a threat. This partly explains the military's unchecked expansion and the granting of extra powers in the 1990 Constitution (Baledrokadroka, 2012; Firth & Fraenkel, 2009). In proportion to overall population, Fiji's 4000-strong army is larger than those in Australia and New Zealand and closer in size to those in coup-prone countries in the Asian region (Baledrokadroka, 2012; Lane, 2012).The media also overlooked the military's growing size and the potential consequences of this trend. Instead, sections of the media appeared to be glorifying coups and the military culture: Rabuka was dubbed "Colonel Steve Rambo", while 2000 coup strategist, former British SAS Ilisoni Ligairi, was nicknamed the "Invisible Man" for his mythical feats of daring (Field, 2010). A day after the Speight coup, the *Fiji Times* ran a cartoon of a masked man pointing a rifle at a figure labelled "The Peoples Coalition", which could easily be construed as insensitive, if not gloating (see T. R. Singh, 2011).

Pamela Thomas (2005, p. 158) has highlighted increasing concerns in Pacific societies about the media glorification of the "Rambo gun toting, macho image as a role model for young men". In Fiji, the media's apparent lionisation of the military appears to be part of a broader tendency to prioritise and elevate indigenous customs, institutions and tradition over those of other ethnic groups. Norton (2000, p. 87) notes that indigenous Fijian culture "predominates" the public domain, with little attempt made to create a narrative of a shared history. Kaplan (1995, pp. 108–116) highlights the "dominance of Fijian chiefly rituals" in the rites of the nation. It is conceivable that a positive disposition towards the military caused the media to overlook the threat of militarisation. One sign of this threat came at the height of the May 2000 coup, when Bainimarama declared martial law, sending President Ratu Mara into retirement. Some interpreted this as Fiji's fifth coup (Field, 2010).

Henderson and Bellamy point out that an important aspect of the psychology of soldiers carrying out a coup is developing an "own sense of a special and separate identity" (2002, p. 126). This element of the Fiji military surfaced in the build-up to the 2006 elections, when Bainimarama sent military teams into the villages to articulate the military's national vision in direct opposition to the ruling SDL Government's election platform (Firth & Fraenkel, 2009; Green, 2009; Ramesh, 2010). Qarase's SDL still won the election, and this time, complied with Section 99 of the 1997 Constitution by awarding the FLP, as the second largest party, substantial ministerial portfolios, in a multi-party cabinet. Aside from being well-received by political representatives, community organisations and the general public, the formation of the multi-party cabinet had the appearance of at least partly addressing the military's grievance about the SDL's ethno-nationalistic leanings (Green, 2009). But Bainimarama still went ahead with the coup, which caused his critics to question his true motives (Green, 2009; Ramesh, 2010).

Some observers felt the Fiji media were seduced by Bainimarama's apparent egalitarianism and believed his promises to clean up corruption and not to hold on to power for too long (Media failed to grill coup leader, 2009, p. 10). Nor was it only media. Bainimarama also won support from considerable numbers of members of the public and civil society organisations (Green, 2009). Soon after the coup, Bainimarama was sworn in as prime minister and instituted a major crackdown on the media, the trade unions and the opposition. He consolidated his hold on power by dismissing numerous public servants and heads of government boards. He also brought the police, prisons, immigration and justice departments under the direct control of the military (Green, 2009; Firth & Fraenkel, 2009). Reacting to media reports about the growing military presence in the civil service and diplomatic positions, naval officer and director of immigration Viliame Naupoto stated that military officers should be part of "nation building". In an apparent reference to previous coups, Naupoto complained that the military had been used like a "tied watchdog" only to be marched back into the barracks after the job had been done. He warned that "if you keep using the military as a watchdog the chain might break and bite people" (cited in Firth & Fraenkel, 2009, p. 129). These sentiments betray the military's intention to become more directly involved in the running of the affairs of the nation rather than carry out coups on behalf of other powers.

Further evidence of the apparent march towards militarisation followed the April 2009 Appeals Court ruling declaring the 2006 coup illegal. Instead of retreating back to the barracks, the military-backed government circumvented the court decision and further consolidated its position. The military-appointed President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, dismissed the judiciary, repealed the 1997

Constitution, and re-appointed Bainimarama as interim prime minister (Ramesh, 2010). The self-appointed government then issued several decrees that banned public gatherings and censored the media. These included the Public Emergency Regulations (PER) and in June 2010, the punitive Media Industry Development Decree 2010 (Lauder, 2012; Valemei, 2012). Critics like Fraenkel (2010) pointed out how over the years the 2006 coup priorities changed from an anti-corruption campaign, to electoral reform, followed by economic development, all of which elected governments had allegedly failed to deliver. Military funding increased by 40 per cent in 2010, with plans to spend an extra $199m in the following decade (Field, 2010; Firth & Fraenkel, 2009).

Bainimarama dealt with any challenge to his authority in a firm manner. When the Fiji Methodist Church and the Great Council of Chiefs refused to cooperate, he simply banned their gatherings, claiming that they were hindering the "pursuit of a common and equal citizenry" (Bainimarama, 2012a; B. Lal, 2009). The removal of an indigenous Fijian government, and the disempowerment of the Methodist Church and the chiefs showed that the military was no longer content to be a minion in the oligarchic order and had muscled its way to the top of the power structure. As former Fiji army Colonel Jone Baledrokadroka noted, Fiji's military had become "a parallel state within a state" (2012, p. 109). In 2013 the military-backed government rejected a new draft constitution drawn up by an independent commission led by Professor Yash Ghai, claiming it was bureaucratic and undemocratic (Field, 2013; Nailatikau, 2013). But critics claimed the constitution was rejected because it ruled out the military's role as "guardian of the constitution or conscience of the nation" (Field, 2013; Narsey, 2013a). A replacement constitution drawn up and adopted by the Bainimarama Government in September 2013, ahead of an announced September 2014 polling date, established a secular state based on non-racial constituencies, with a single-house 50-member national assembly, a first for Fiji. Polling was to be on the basis of one person, one vote. Bainimarama (2013) hailed the new constitution as one that met "the test of a genuine democracy". He condemned previous constitutions, which "highlighted differences rather than commonalities", adding:

> Every time we went to vote, we had to stand in separate lines. How could we expect our nation to be united? As a nation, we had lost our way. And I remain convinced that only the most radical intervention was capable of ever turning us around. With the revolution and the new Fijian constitution, our national compass has been reset. (Bainimarama, 2013)

Bainimarama's apparent egalitarianism was a contrast to the Qarase Government's perceived ethno-nationalism and alleged corruption. It had won Bainimarama fairly strong support among civil society organisations, segments of the non-indigenous population, the then Catholic Archbishop of Suva, and some rural indigenous communities for whom Bainimarama reportedly did more than previous governments had (Firth & Fraenkel, 2009; Tabureguci & Matau, 2013). Chapter two in the 2013 Constitution contains a Bill of Rights, guaranteeing the right to education, economic participation, a just minimum wage and freedom of speech, expression and publication (Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 2013). But, somewhat paradoxically, the new constitution preserves almost all existing laws and decrees of the interim government, including the 2010 Media Decree. Moreover, it prevents the judicial scrutiny of these laws and decrees, and even provides that they will override the constitution in the event of any inconsistencies (Citizens' Constitutional Forum, 2014; Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 2013).

In March 2014 Bainimarama resigned as military commander, announced his candidature for the 2014 elections, and appointed Colonel Mosese Tikoitoga to the military commander's post. In a media interview, Tikoitoga, seen by some as a Bainimarama loyalist, pledged to honour the election results, but added: "if people throw out the current constitution as current political parties are talking about, then they have thrown out the chance of avoiding coups" (Matau, 2014). Tikoitoga's comments lent credence to allegations that an "ideology of political intervention now pervades the Fijian military's senior command" (Baledrokadroka, 2012, p. 105). Tuitoga's stance was another giveaway sign of on-going militarisation. However, his comments carried some constitutional weight. Section 131 of the 2013 Constitution gives the military the "overall responsibility to ensure at all times the security, defence and well-being of Fiji and all Fijians" (p. 83).

A study commissioned by the Suva-based Citizens Constitutional Forum described the military's constitutional role as "unusually expansive", "contrary to democratic practice", and tantamount to "supervising the civilian government's compliance with the 2013 Constitution (Citizens' Constitutional Forum, 2014, p. 8). The report conceded that "transitioning from military-backed government to a "fully-fledged" democracy is almost always gradual, spanning many years" (p. 15). The process of militarisation outlined in this thesis is another indication that the main conflict in Fiji is not only between the two major ethnicities. In addition, it exposes the perilous situation of the Fiji media. It shows that the media has not been operating in a fully democratic framework for some time. The trend underlines the fallacy of conceptualising and analysing the media solely from a fourth estate perspective. Not only is this stance divorced from the realities of the political

developments that have taken place in recent decades, it disregards the political framework that is currently in place in Fiji. One-dimensional, liberalist, fourth estate interpretation of the media's role could lead to unrealistic expectations of the media's power and influence, how media should behave in terms of holding power to account, and what they could accomplish.

3.11   Chapter summary

To gain a deeper appreciation of ethnic conflict in Fiji, this chapter has approached the problem from the broader instrumentalist and constructivist perspectives. Primordialism, which has been largely discredited in academia (Evera, 2001), was de-emphasised, not completely ruled out. The chapter examined the major polarising issues in Fiji – land use and ownership; constitutionalism and political power; demography and cultural assimilation; coups and militarisation; and share of economic wealth, including affirmative action. It has been a significant disclosure that many long-running onflicts with strong primordial overtones are in fact underpinned by and scarcely inextricable from instrumentalist and constructivist causes. Included are the capitalist policies of the colonial government, which saw to the importation of Indian labour; a colonial divide-and-rule strategy; and an ethnically-constructed social, economic and political system.

These legacies are at the core of some enduring present-day conflicts largely blamed on ethnic animosity alone. Among other things, the hybridised electoral system incentivised the politics of race and worsened group-based conflict. This arrangement encouraged the formation of political and economic cartels that exploited the ethnic divide to stay in power. The cartels instigated military coups when their position was threatened by a new class-based political order. This led to the politicisation of the military and put Fiji on the path to gradual militarisation. Media missed the warning signs of apparent militarisation partly because the military, a revered indigenous institution, is seen as the protector, rather than the usurper, of indigenous power. The Fiji media's focus on ethnicity to explain conflicts makes them lose sight of the underlying causes of conflict and evidently distort sensitive issues, such as demography and share of economic wealth. This could partly be due to bias and partly due to a lack of professional capacity in newsrooms, which is not uncommon in developing countries (Frohardt & Temin, 2003; R. Howard; 2003; 2009). The media slant could also be due to elite manipulation, or for political economy reasons (Gaunder, 2008). Or media could simply be a mirror of Fiji's ethnically fractured society. The study will test some of these theories and assertions empirically. In the next chapter, we discuss the methods to be used for empirical validation.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

4.1   Introduction

The previous chapters set the research context. This chapter articulates the plan, process, design and rationale behind the four qualitative methods selected to address this study's research questions. The methods are, respectively, content analysis, survey questionnaire, document review and in-depth interviews. The chapter begins by explaining the decision to choose multi-modal qualitative methods, including how the methodology was informed by the research questions. It then outlines the fieldwork and data collection procedures, before going into the details of each of the four methods. This includes a description of the process involved in developing a specific content analysis coding scheme and survey questionnaire for this particular project. The chapter outlines the final two methods – document review and in-depth interviews – as they relate to this study, before ending with a discussion on the challenges, ethical considerations and chapter summary. In arriving at the methodology for this study, this researcher revisited the basic, but crucial question about what is the purpose of research.

According to Collis and Hussey (2003, p. 2), the rationale for research is multifaceted: "investigate" some existing situation; "provide solutions" to a prevailing problem; "explain" a new phenomenon; "generate new knowledge"; or a combination of any of the above. These research goals are usually pursued by two research approaches – quantitative (numeric form) and qualitative (non-numeric). The combination of the two is referred to as a mixed methods approach (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Quantitative and qualitative research relates respectively to positivistic and phenomenological paradigms. The positivistic approach sees reality as objective and singular, and the researcher as independent and value-free (Reinard, 2001). The phenomenological paradigm sees the world as socially-constructed and subjective. The focus is on meanings and ideas developed through induction from the data, rather than on statistical trends and measurements (Easterby-Smith, Richard & Lowe, 1991). Qualitative research is usually favoured by researchers in the social sciences – psychology, sociology, anthropology and so forth – who seek deeper understanding of human behaviour. Human social dynamics are better comprehended qualitatively in terms of developing explanations of social phenomena rather than in dry, quantifiable, terms (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009). The above applies to communication-based social science projects (such as this thesis), which usually deal with understanding meaning making.

It involves delving into how "people make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language, sound, imagery, personal style and social rituals" (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 2007, p. 5). In the field of media and mass communication, some scholars (e.g., Lindlof, 1995) believe that a qualitative approach is sufficient, mainly because the focus is on the set of relationships within the sample whereas some others (e.g., Halloran, 1998) believe a mixed methods approach is more wholesome. This research is a mixed quantitative and qualitative survey.

4.2   Methods, research questions, theoretical framework

This study's multi-modal methodology was informed by the research questions, gleaned from perceived gaps in the literature. The research is inspired by the works of Frohardt and Temin (2003) and other conflict-sensitive reporting and peace journalism frameworks (Galtung, 1986, 2002, 2010; R. Howard, 2003, 2009). In order to understand conflict reporting as fully as possible, identify problems, reach conclusions and make recommendations, Frohardt and Temin (2003) suggest analysing both media content and the national media infrastructure. This study applies Frohardt and Temin's (2003) framework through a four-pronged methodological approach:

- *content analysis* of the print media's coverage of Fiji's 2006 elections to gauge any reporting slants or patterns
- *survey questionnaire* to gauge the level of journalists' professional capacity and diversity
- *document research* to study media ownership patterns and the legal environment
- *in-depth interviews* with journalists and academics to supplement the above research methods and to fortify the findings.

The first method focuses on the content to gauge the nature of conflict reporting. The remaining three methods look at the human, organisational, cultural, and institutional variables that affected, shaped and produced the content. This approach is based on the "pragmatic" research paradigm of "do what works best" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 320). It links the methods directly to the aims and the nature of the research questions (Creswell, 2003). Mason (2009) adopted the pragmatic approach for his PhD thesis on the Australian media coverage of Fiji's 1987 and 2000 coups. According to Mason (2009, p. 71), pragmatism suits the nature of journalism, which faces different situations and possibilities in news reporting, ranging from sporting events to military coups. Yet, invariably, the goal is the same – to make decisions that will result in the best possible story.

The emphasis on linkages and the flexibility that a pragmatic approach offers could be an advantage for a qualitative research project such as this one, in terms of both methodology and data analysis. As Patton (2002, p. 432) states:

> Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. No formula exists for that transformation. Direction can and will be offered, but the final destination remains unique for each inquirer, known only when – and if – arrived at.

The research questions and adopted methods for this study connect as follows:

1. Are the Fiji print media inflammatory, as is often alleged? **(Content analysis)**
2. What is the level of journalist capacity and diversity in Fiji? **(Survey questionnaire)**
3. What is the genesis and nature of Fiji's media laws? **(Document research)**
4. What are the genesis and nature of media ownership in Fiji and its link with political and economic power? **(Document research).**

The in-depth interviews were designed to further explore the issues raised by the four questions, as well as other issues that emerged from the literature review and the data as a whole. The premise behind this multi-faceted approach is not just to identify patterns in conflict reporting (content indicators), but also to link them to journalist capacity, the legal environment and media ownership (structural indicators). This ties together the study's methodology, research questions and the major theoretical concepts and frameworks, namely peace journalism, political economy of the media and normative press theories. These combined methods were adopted with the aim of addressing the gaps in conflict reporting frameworks such as peace journalism. These are criticised for jumping from theorising to media reform without producing empirical data to guide and support their initiatives (McMahon & Chow-White, 2011).

Indeed, it makes sense to study media structure and media content in unison to understand how one affects the other. As Betz (2011) says, the foundation on which news content is built and created is the national media structure or landscape. The approach adopted by this study addresses another criticism about concepts like peace journalism – that too often, such frameworks are premised on the conduct of media organisations and/or individual journalists rather than on structures that support news selection and news reporting procedures (Hanitzsch, 2004).

Certainly, in Fiji and the Pacific, existing literature on conflict reporting tends to heap blame on journalists or media organisations for alleged mistakes and bias but does not fully consider the larger forces at play, and how these might be affecting and shaping the final news product. In looking at this apparently under-researched area, the study is attempting to get to the root of the problem. As McChesney (2008) articulates it, to reinvigorate journalism – and with it democratic governance – it is necessary to understand the source of the problem first before recommending the correct solutions.

4.3   Data collection and content analysis

Fieldwork for data collection, which took place in Fiji in 2012 and 2013, was divided into two phases (Table 1).

Table 1: Data Collection			
Phase	**Date**	**Venue**	**Research Activities**
One	2012 Aug–Sept	Fiji	Questionnaire survey; in-depth interviews; document/archival research
Two	2013 Feb–March	Fiji	Content analysis; document/archival research

Phase One took place over four weeks from August to September 2012. It involved a nationwide journalist survey of 10 media organisations, in-depth interviews, and document research. Phase Two, from February to March 2013, involved a content analysis of the 2006 general elections and further document research.

Content analysis: The aim of the content analysis was to identify patterns in the reporting of national issues during the 2006 election, through the application of a peace journalism–inspired coding scheme. Content analysis is a well established method that uses written, visual and spoken material as data for the study of recorded human communication, qualitatively and/or quantitatively (Babbie, 2001). If employed prudently and self-consciously, content analysis is said to be a useful means of summarising or describing selected aspects of a large body of material (Hackett, Gilsdorf & Savage, 1992). For all its strengths and popularity, content analysis, like any other method, has its drawbacks. A major one is that the selection and scoring of coding units can be rather subjective. In other words, content analysis is limited to, and by, the choices researchers make about categories

and by the degree to which they select and treat the material systematically (Hackett, Gilsdorf & Savage, 1992). For this reason, the effort was made to remain mindful of Eysenck's (2004) instruction that the chosen coding categories should reflect accurately the content of the communication, with each of the categories defined as precisely as possible.

On its own, content analysis is deemed insufficient for thoroughly analysing the meaning and motive of a message (Buddenbaum & Novak, 2001). Kohlbacher (2006) suggests "integration" with other methods to capitalise on content analysis' potential for advancing social research. As such, this Fiji study is based on an integrative approach: it combines content analysis with in-depth interviews, as recommended by Merten (1996), and two other methods, questionnaire survey and document research. The advantage of such a multi-modal strategy is that the weaknesses in each single method are potentially "compensated" by the counter-balancing strengths of another (Jick, 1979, p. 604). The choice of content analysis as one of four methods has, of course, various other justifications. Content analysis could fill a gap in the literature from national, regional and international perspectives. In Fiji, media content is rarely studied for general reporting, let alone from a conflict-reporting perspective.

Applying a conflict-reporting content-analysis frame would further test various claims made about the Fiji media's alleged culpability in conflict (see T. R. Singh, 2011). Internationally, the literature on war and media is substantial, but studies informed explicitly by a peace-journalism perspective are said to be lacking (Hackett, 2007; Lee & Maslog, 2005). Thus, a Fiji study based on a peace journalism–inspired framework could make an important contribution to empirical research in the genre as a whole. Leading scholars of peace journalism like Hackett (2007, p.51) recommend content analysis to "monitor" and "evaluate" how news media perform in conflict situations. In the Fiji context, national elections are a form of non-violent conflict. This study is one of the rare occasions in which a peace journalism content analysis framework has been applied to assess conflict reporting during a general election. Additionally, content analysis may support and reinforce this study's political economy and normative media theoretical frameworks by, among other things, clarifying whether elite and official sources heavily dominate mainstream media discourse in Fiji, as alleged.

Why the 2006 general elections: Turning to general elections, these are 'hot moments' in Fiji. Claims that news reporting during an election in Fiji is driven not only by ideological debates and party manifestos but also by an unhealthy dose of political and racial rhetoric need to be empirically tested (see Alley, 2001; M. Howard, 1991; Kant, 2012). From a conflict reporting perspective, elections could provide an outstanding case study for determining how the Fiji media report socially and politically sensitive topics in a plural society. Elections provide a good case study because during elections, it is not only the politicians who are competing but also the media. Elections offer an opportunity to test Fog's (2004) claim that "competitive news media" select and frame stories in ways that could hamper the democratic system's ability to solve internal social problems in an optimal manner. Fog blames this alleged tendency on the "unintended consequences of the structure of the media market" (Fog, 2004, p. 1). Fog's assertions underscore this study's rationale for studying content in relation to the media structure. They underpin the need for 'catching' media during an election, when they are arguably at their most competitive. Fog's observations also justify this study's political economy of the media-based theoretical approach.

Moreover, Fiji's 2006 election marked seven years since the 2000 coup, within which time frame the country was expected to have returned to normalcy. The 2006 election was the last held under Fiji's much-vaunted, reportedly equitable, 1997 Constitution. Just seven months later, the Bainimarama coup took place. From a conflict reporting perspective, a content analysis of the 2006 election coverage could provide fresh insights into any links between media, democracy and coups in a fragile country like Fiji. While this analysis recognises that political rhetoric is part of democratic elections, the issue in tense, multi-ethnic societies like Fiji is where to draw the line given the links between rhetoric, propaganda, misinformation and media manipulation established by various studies (see Carruthers, 2000; D. Kumar, 2006).

4.4   Sample size, unit of analysis and coding categories

The study analyses coverage of Fiji's 2006 general elections by the three national dailies – the *Fiji Times*, *Fiji Sun* and the *Fiji Daily Post*. The print editions of the papers were accessed at the University of the South Pacific library in Suva, Fiji. The *Fiji Times* was the country's biggest newspaper (as well as the oldest) at the time, followed by the *Fiji Sun*. Both were privately-owned. The *Fiji Daily Post*, the smallest of the three and jointly owned by government and private interests, closed because of its financial problems after the 2006 coup and the introduction of new media ownership laws in 2010 (Usman, 2012).

The initial period chosen for study was one month (April 4 to May 64) before the start of elections from 6 to 13 May 2006. This time frame covered 30 issues of each newspaper, yielding around 1300 election-related articles in the 90 issues. The sheer volume of the data proving too much, the sample size was reduced by narrowing the time frame to the final 10 days of campaigning, to capture the most intense period of the political contest. The focus of the analysis was to be on hard news, which deals with public interest matters concerning political, economic and social issues, rather than soft news, which is more sensational and entertainment-focussed (Baum, 2003). As such, weekend editions of the papers were set aside since they are dominated by soft news – entertainment lift-outs from Hollywood and Bollywood, as well as features, lifestyle and sports.

Another issue relating to the content was the smallness of some election-related articles. They resembled notices rather than news stories. Such articles usually appeared in the "briefly" columns or as "fillers". These shorter articles were omitted based on Harrower's (2007) definition that a news story should contain six or more paragraphs. Op-eds, editorials and letters to the editor were also omitted as they did not fit the definition of hard news (see Baum, 2003). The culling process left a more specific and manageable sample of 350 articles. The coding categories and scoring system borrow from Lee and Maslog (2005). This coding category has been used by Wilson (2013) and Wilson and Devere (2013) to analyse Radio New Zealand's coverage of conflicts in five Pacific Island countries. A score of one (1) is recorded for each peace journalism indicator found in a story. Likewise, a score of negative one (-1) is recorded for each war journalism indicator. If an item did not meet the criteria outlined in the coding categories, it was ranked unclassified and given a score of zero (0).

Based on the scores, each story was classified as peace journalism, war journalism or neutral. When the peace journalism indicators exceeded the war journalism indicators, the story was classified as peace journalism, and vice-versa. If the score was equal, the story was classified as neutral (Lee & Maslog, 2005, pp. 316–317; Wilson, 2013; Wilson & Devere, 2013, p. 140). For this particular Fiji investigation, the researcher devised a specific coding scheme based on the works of Galtung (1998, 2006); Lee and Maslog (2005); Frohardt and Temin (2003) and Youngblood (2009, 2011).

Lee and Maslog, Galtung: Lee and Maslog (2005) were the first to expand and actualise Galtung's (2006) peace–war journalism typology in five Asian countries – India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Their typology comprised 13 indicators in two broad categories, *approach* and *language* – as outlined:

1. *Approach* – 1) reactivity; 2) visibility; 3) elite orientation; 4) focussed on differences; 5) focussed on the present; 6) dichotomises between good and bad; 7) two party orientation; 8) partisan; 9) winning orientation; 10) does not report peace initiatives.
2. *Language* – 1) victimising; 2) demonising; 3) emotive.

Reactivity and visibility refer to media's attraction to, and focus on, the violent manifestations of conflict. These indicators were deemed irrelevant for a case study involving a non-violent, internal conflict such as the 2006 Fiji election. The same applies for the 10th indicator, *does not report peace initiatives*, which largely covers media's failure to report ceasefire agreements and peace treaties. These indicators were dropped.

Elite orientation refers to media's alleged partiality towards political, corporate and other elites as actors and sources of information. This indicator is retained as it is relevant for understanding the link between conflict, power, influence, and elite manipulation of media, particularly from a political economy angle. *Partisanship*, which denotes bias for one side in the conflict, has also been retained.

Focused on the present was brought under a new indicator introduced for this study, "context". This indicator is more holistic in assessing whether media consider the present in relation to the past when reporting contentious issues. It aims to test criticisms that conflict reporting in Fiji is often bereft of context. For instance, in her analysis of *Fiji Times* and *Fiji Daily Post* editorial comments during the 2000 disturbance, Duncan (2002) asserted that the editors failed to provide "any in-depth analysis of the causes of the political crisis nor relate it back to historical events". Instead, they tended to write "sensational statements" rather than promoting "audience thought" (pp. 23–24). The indicator "context" is used to expand on Duncan's work to determine to what extent her findings apply to coverage of the 2006 election.

The essence of three indicators – *focused on differences*, *two-party orientation* and *zero-sum, win-win orientation* – is captured under a new indicator, "consociation or majoritarianism". Consociation denotes political and social cooperation and accommodation, particularly in plural settings. Majoritarianism means competition and contention based on a two-party, win-lose, political system (Lijphart, 1999; 2004). This new indicator is particularly relevant for coverage of Fiji's 2006 national election since it was contested under the 1997 Constitution, designed to encourage consociation (Green, 2009). Previous racially-based constitutions were majoritarian in nature (winner-take-all), which is said to have polarised the two major ethnic communities even more and caused coups (Green, 2009; Ramesh, 2002, 2007). Consociation and majoritarianism are similar to two indicators in Galtung's (1998, 2006) typology of peace–war journalism, as outlined:

a) *Two-party orientation versus multiparty orientation* – war journalism adopts a two-party, zero sum orientation [majoritarianism] with one winner and one loser. Peace journalism denotes a multiparty orientation [consociation] by giving voice to the many parties involved in conflict.

b) *Zero-sum orientation versus win-win orientation* – war journalism is represented by the former. The overriding goal is to win, usually at any cost [majoritarianism]. Peace journalism values are inherent in the latter. There are multiple goals and issues, and various options for reaching consensus and finding solutions to problems [consociation].

Consociation/majoritarianism combines two similar elements of Galtung's typology into one indicator. This indicator could determine the extent to which the print media, politicians and society at large embodied the spirit of Fiji's 1997 Constitution. These factors could be assessed by the proportion of coverage given to the larger political parties compared to the smaller ones. It could be further gauged by the utterances of politicians and the level of coverage given to voices advocating unity and cooperation as opposed to voices promoting disunity. Another new category is "undue reference to race and/or religion". The idea was to test allegations that Fiji media make uncorroborated, unbalanced or excessive references to race and religion (see CCF criticises 'media contribution to racism', 2008; Kant, 2012; T. R. Singh, 2011). In order to assess this indicator in an objective manner, the researcher was mindful that as a society, Fiji is structured along ethnic lines – politically, socially and economically – and that media reports may simply reflect these demarcations.

Dichotomy differentiates between good–bad or victims–villains by putting them into exclusive compartments with no middle ground. This classification has been retained. The three overlapping *language* indicators (Lee & Maslog, 2005, p. 326) have been combined into one indicator, "language", to cover for all forms of provocative, demeaning, victimising and emotive discourse reproduced by the media without counteraction.

Frohardt and Temin

Frohardt and Temin (2003, pp. 5–6) propose a series of indicators to access media's susceptibility to manipulation. These "clues to conflict" are divided into "indicators" dealing with *media structure* (the way the media sector is set up) and those dealing with *media content* (the articles and programming that media outlets produce). This section deals with content indicators, which help to shape an individual's view of the world (Frohardt & Temin, 2003). There are two specific types of content. The first, *content creating fear*, deals with the construction of fear and is likely to be a component of any effort to use media to promote conflict. The second, *content creating inevitability and resignation*, involves the use of media to convince people that conflict is inevitable. This could become a self-fulfilling prophecy: media consumers become resigned to the notion that conflict will happen, thus conflict prevention seems futile. Hence, people are much easier to move to violence (Frohardt & Temin, 2003, pp. 6–8). For the purpose of this study, both these indicators have been combined into one indicator, namely "fearmongering", to identify news items that aimed to influence voters through the articulation of threats and intimidation.

Steven Youngblood

Youngblood's (2009, 2011) framework is derived from Galtung's peace–war journalism typology, but with a focus on domestic disputes. The indicators are:

1. *language*: 1) inflammatory/emotional; 2) demonising/name calling; 3) victimising.
2. *writing/reporting:* 1) opinions treated as facts; 2) historical wrongs mentioned; 3) writer's opinion/position one sided; 4) only 'one side' interviewed/quoted; 5) story spreads official propaganda; 6) information/quotes taken out of context.
3. *parties*: 1) blame assigned to one party.
4. *solutions*: 1) peace proposals dismissed; 2) story dwells on differences and/or shuns similarities.

The *language* indicators were covered earlier in this section. Under *writing/reporting*, two related indicators – *opinions treated as facts and writer's opinion/position one-sided* – have been grouped under a single indicator, "opinion". The indicator *historical wrongs mentioned* is already covered under "language", whereas *story dwells on differences and/or shuns similarities* is covered under "dichotomy". Another indicator, *only one side interviewed/quoted*, falls under partisanship; *story spreads official propaganda* is covered by indicators such as "sources"; and *information/quotes taken out of context* is covered under "context".

Collectively, Lee and Maslog (2005), Frohardt and Temin (2003), and Youngblood (2009, 2011) make up 23 indicators. The relevant indicators from this lot were retained, with some modifications. Those indicators deemed irrelevant for the coverage of a non-violent, intra-State conflict were eliminated. Some superfluous indicators were combined and at least two new indicators introduced to make the coding category relevant for this specific Fiji case study. The applicable peace journalism indicators were retained to allow for a comparative analysis between this study and similar ones conducted overseas. As such, this study could add new knowledge to international research in peace journalism and conflict reporting.

The selection, elimination, modification and finalisation of the indicators resulted in a more manageable and focused coding category for the study, with 10 indicators specific for application to Fiji's 2006 elections. They are outlined in Table 2 on the following page:

Table Two: Content Analysis Coding Categories

Indicator	War Journalism	Peace Journalism
Orientation	Focuses on official sources – government officials, politicians, military figures, bureaucracy & institutions as information providers; ignores ordinary people.	Covers perspectives from beyond the usual 'official sources'; community members, common people's contribution recognised & valued.
Sources	Uses one source /propagates viewpoints of single party/parties.	Uses multiple sources and presents different viewpoints.
Context	Event reported with a closed space/closed time orientation; fails to provide in-depth analysis, nor relate back to historical events; tends to write sensational statements rather than promote audience thought.	Event reported with open space/time orientation; discussed as part of a bigger picture rather than occurring in isolation; reports address underlying issues & promote audience thought.
Partisanship and balance	Biased for one side/party, usually on the basis of ethnicity, religion, ideology or other forms of kinship.	Balanced reporting that transcends the ethnic or ideological; fair, accurate, neutral reporting that presents all sides equally.
Majoritarianism/ consociation	Emphasis on two major parties, with a focus on what divides them; win/lose, winner-take-all, zero-sum approach; ostracizes smaller parties.	Multi-party focus; avoids portraying conflict as consisting of only two parties contesting the same goal(s) with win-lose outcome; highlights cooperation, power-sharing; reveals common ground and shared goals.
Language	Victimising, demonising, divisive, provocative, emotional language; tells only of wrongs committed; over-emphasises helplessness of some people by portraying them as powerless & weak, which is dis-empowering & limiting.	Disavows emotive words; favours empowering language; reports what has been/could be done by people; highlights how people coping; suggests solutions.
Reference to race/religion	Undue and unwarranted racial and/or religious references that could unnecessarily aggravate tensions.	Avoids undue and irrelevant racial and/or religious references.
Opinionated	Journalist opinion in news. Portrays opinion/claim as an established fact.	No journalist opinion in news. Avoids making opinion or claim seem like an established fact.
Fearmongering	Content creating undue fear; cultural violence (e.g. hate speech); threatening language.	Content does not create undue fear.
Good/bad dichotomy	Dichotomises between good and bad; victims and villains; accepts stark distinctions between 'self' and 'other' & places blame; focuses exclusively on the suffering, fears and grievances of only one party.	Avoids good–bad labeling; discusses the positive and negative actions and behaviour of both parties; coverage picks up, explores & reports peace initiatives.

As Table 2 shows, the most salient indicators of war journalism to be a disproportionate focus on elite sources; use of single sources; stories devoid of background; stories showing bias for a particular side; a two-party win-lose focus; use of victimising, demonising or emotional language; undue reference to race and/or religion; journalist's opinion intruding in news stories; content designed to create fear and nurture resignation to the inevitability of conflict; and dichotomising by categorising people as good or bad. The most salient indicators of peace journalism would be the inverse of the aforementioned characteristics. Insofar as this study is concerned, reporting inflammatory comments does not in itself constitute war journalism. Indeed, suppressing such comments would be tantamount to censorship. However, reporting inciteful statements without including a multiplicity of views and context would be classified as war journalism, particularly if they breached Fiji's hate speech laws. Whether Lee and Maslog (2005) made this distinction in their studies is not made clear in their paper.

In the next section we look at methods used to identify the "structural indicators" of conflict in the national media landscape in terms of journalist professional capacity and diversity, the legislative environment and the media ownership scheme. For these, the study applies a survey questionnaire, followed by document analysis.

4.5   Survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire deals with the second element of structural indicators of conflict in the media landscape – media professionals – as outlined in Frohardt and Temin's (2003) framework. It concerns identifying potential fault lines in the national journalist corps in terms of experience, training, qualification, diversity, and so forth. The information needed to assess this on a nationwide basis can be obtained efficiently by means of a national newsroom survey administered through a self-completion questionnaire. Survey questionnaires are an effective way of gathering "information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people" (Pinsonneault & Kraemer, 1993, p. 77). Isaac and Michael note the use of survey questionnaires to:

> answer questions that have been raised, solve problems that have been posed or
> observed, assess needs and set goals to determine whether or not specific objectives have
> been met, establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, analyse
> trends across time, and generally, describe what exists, in what amount, and in what
> context. (1997, p. 136)

One of the things this survey hoped to address was the questions raised over the years about journalists' qualifications and professionalism. This could provide an empirical framework for assessing journalists' training needs, salaries and working conditions. A similar survey was last published by Robie (2003a) a decade before. It provides an important benchmark for analysing trends that have occurred in the intervening decade. As mentioned, this survey was administered to journalists only. In this study, a journalist is defined as a person who produces news, information and opinion for public consumption, and one who makes decisions directly affecting news content (Donsbach & Klett, 1993; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Thus, the survey was administered to all editorial staff involved in producing news, opinions and features in politics, government and current affairs. This included editorial decision-makers and gatekeepers, such as chief-of-staff, news editor and features editor.

The researcher used the work of Malhotra (2006) to guide the formulation of the survey questions. Malhotra advises that questions should be organised around topic areas and asked in a logical order. The survey questions in this research focussed on the following core themes in the context of their impact on conflict reporting:

- journalist diversity – gender, ethnicity, religious background, political leanings
- journalist capacity and professionalism – training, qualifications, age, experience
- working conditions and job satisfaction – pay, career progression
- professional values – cognition and application of media law and ethics
- pressures faced by journalists – cultural, political, organisational, institutional
- conflict reporting – attitudes toward notions of objectivity and contemporary
- conflict reporting frameworks.

Some questions were modelled on Robie's (2003a) Fiji survey to allow for a comparative analysis to determine what had changed in the intervening decade. This survey also drew from Romano's (1998) survey examining normative theories of development journalism in Indonesia. Like Fiji, Indonesia has struggled with social and political strife, including coups. Some other issues covered by this study's questionnaire arose at two journalism seminars on media, peace and development in the Pacific Islands. The seminars were held at the Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand and the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji, in December 2010.

Further questions were derived from the literature review to address key contemporary media issues at the local, regional and international levels. At the local level, there is little research into how Fiji journalists' political biases and religious beliefs might be affecting their work, even though this is acknowledged as a topic of interest in other multi-ethnic societies. The same can be said about research to gauge Fiji journalists' insights into current debates on media and society, both local and global. This includes their understanding of, and openness toward, contemporary concepts in journalism, including in conflict reporting. This survey is also informed by Weaver and Willnat's (2012) global media survey covering more than 29,000 journalists in 31 countries and territories. This international survey covered topics such as ethics, professionalism, pressures on journalists and other issues that cut across national, regional and international boundaries.

In all, the eight-page survey designed for this study contains 37 questions, divided into two sections. For the most part questions are of the multiple choice type, though they include "explain briefly" and "other (specify)" options where appropriate to cover the full range of possible alternatives (see Malhotra, 2006). The questions are prefaced by an explanatory "abstract", a "research project information sheet", and an "informed consent form". Extra pages are provided for any additional comments. The first section of the questionnaire includes demographic information, such as respondents' ethnicity, religion, language, gender and age, as well as qualifications, training, experience and work conditions. The second section deals with respondents' perceptions about professional norms; the work challenges they face; their understanding of the role of journalism in society; and thoughts on conflict reporting.

Structured survey questionnaires are not without associated disadvantages and inadequacies. Because they are standardised and predetermined, such surveys often elicit rational responses while tending to overlook (or assess inadequately) the emotional dimension (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). In addition, while questionnaires can provide evidence of patterns among large populations, they lack more in-depth insights into participant attitudes, thoughts, and actions (Kendall, 2008). Moreover, Fiji's repressive political climate and media owner sensitivities regarding journalists' working conditions imposed restrictions on what the researcher felt able to include in the questionnaire. In order to address such shortcomings, in-depth interviews were added as a fourth research method, after document analysis. These are discussed in the following sections.

4.6   Document review

This section deals with the first and third elements of structural indicators in Frohardt and Temin's (2003) framework – media ownership and the legislative environment. The method used to assess these variables is document review. Mogalakwe (2006) writes that document review in social science is a useful (if under-utilised) scientific method with rigorous adherence to research protocols. Documents can be from private, public and personal sources. Personal documents include photo albums, medical records, diaries, personal letters and the like. Public documents, which this study is primarily concerned with, include government publications, Acts of Parliament, policy statements, statistical bulletins, commissions of inquiry and departmental annual reports (Mogalakwe, 2006, p. 222). Private documents, which are also utilised by this study, emanate from civil society organisations and the private sector (Mogalakwe, 2006, p. 223).

This research utilises organisation and consultancy reports, news reporting frameworks and training manuals, Fiji's four national constitutions (1970, 1990, 1997 and 2013), annual reports, various speeches and presentations and government bills and legislation. These are supplemented by articles from news archives, blogs, books and academic journals. The main documents and sources include but are not restricted to: Committee to Protect Journalists, 1998; Freedom House, 2011; International Journalists Federation, 2012; United States Department of State report, 2012; Minority Rights Group, 2013; The Center for International Media Assistance, 2009; Future media legislation and regulation for the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 1996; Fiji Human Rights Commission, 2008; Free and responsible: Towards a more effective Fiji Media Council, 2009; Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 1997; Media Council of Fiji Bill, 2003; Fiji Public Emergency Regulation, 2009; Media Industry Development Decree 2010.

As an analytical tool, document review can be used on its own as the principal research method or triangulated with other methods for greater effect (Mogalakwe, 2006). For this particular study, document review is used in collaboration with content analysis, survey questionnaire and in-depth, unstructured interviews to facilitate triangulation in data analysis. The presentation and reporting of the data were guided by qualitative research principles. This involved summarising the frequencies of variables and the differences between them. Towards this end, documents can be categorised into themes and analysed similarly to focus group or interview transcripts (Denscombe, 2007; Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009; Love, 2003; Mogalakwe, 2006). The steps involved included:

1. Read the document thoroughly, more than once if need be. Record some observations and reflections.
2. Return to the transcript to transform the initial notes into emerging themes.
3. Examine and cluster emerging themes according to conceptual similarities.
4. Identify patterns and produce a structure to highlight converging ideas.

In following the four steps, the researcher used the "constant comparison" approach. This addresses the research questions in a systematic way to facilitate the identification of important themes and communicate the most important features so as to arrive at "the big picture", or the major findings (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009, pp. 23–26). Throughout the data collection, presentation and interpretation processes, the researcher was conscious about some disadvantages in document review in relation to accuracy, completeness, credibility, reliability and legitimacy of authorship (Scott, 1990). As such, any documents about which there were any doubts were cross-examined and verified before being utilised.

4.7 In-depth interviews

Because methods such as structured surveys, content analysis, and document research are criticised for being too technical (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000), unstructured, in-depth interviews were incorporated as a fourth method, particularly for gaining insights into, and direct contact with, the subjects and their lived experiences. This approach enabled deeper delving into issues brought to the foreground by the other three methods, which proved enabling when it came to exploring and gaining new insights into new topics. In-depth interviews were developed in anthropology and sociology to elicit people's social realities with minimal researcher intervention (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The researcher has no predefined theoretical framework but engages in conversations with interviewees and generates questions in response to their narration (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The researcher tries to encourage the interviewees to relate experiences and perspectives relevant to the topic (Burgess, 1984). The questions are usually broad in nature, allowing interviewers freedom to determine what further questions to ask to obtain the required information (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). As Kvale (1994, p. 14) says, the researcher derives knowledge from the "social situatedness" and the "centrality of human interaction for knowledge production".

In addition, unstructured interviews seemed to have an advantage in Fiji's politically coercive environment. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) point out that because of their conversational and non-intrusive characteristics, unstructured interviews can be used in settings where it is inappropriate or impossible to use other more structured methods. In the present Fiji situation, in which the media have to deal with punitive legislation, some questions that could not be articulated in the survey forms could be investigated in face-to-face interviews conducted in private settings. This included questions about how the recently-introduced media laws were affecting journalists' work.

Still, there are major challenges with in-depth interviews to consider. For example, in a new setting, it can be difficult trying to gain access to interviewees and win their trust (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). This researcher was not new to Fiji, his country of birth and residence. But since the 2006 coup, the setting had changed radically, with various new impediments to contend with. Journalists, apprehensive of possible repercussions, could not be expected to be as open as they might have been prior to the 2006 coup. Moreover, because of their loose and free-flowing nature, in-depth interviews can generate large amounts of often contrasting data. This makes it hard to determine patterns, establish themes and draw concrete conclusions, especially when each interviewee is asked a different series of questions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

Another issue with in-depth interviews is who to interview. According to Stake (1995, p. 64), the selection of candidates who can "best help us understand the case" is critical. With regards to the present study, this researcher's background knowledge as a Fiji-based journalist and academic was useful in terms of selecting the sample. The researcher interviewed relevant and knowledgeable candidates from the media and non-media sectors to gain both insider and outsider perspectives. Having to be conscious of his biases as an insider conducting research in his own country, this researcher spoke with editors, journalists, publishers and executives from all the major news media companies, irrespective of their stances regarding the 2006 coup and the Bainimarama Government. As well as journalists, editors, publishers and media company CEOs, interviewees included academics in economics and sociology, chosen randomly on the basis of their published works and public statements regarding the 2006 coup, the Bainimarama Government and the state of affairs in the country. Interviewees from different fields were linked by their wide-ranging experience and knowledge about media, politics and society in Fiji. Variation in interviewees' ages and experience – to capture memories and perspectives of different time periods since independence – garnered a cross-section of understandings about the state of journalism, including conflict reporting, based on trends since Fiji's independence in 1970.

On the issue of how many candidates to interview, McCracken (1988) suggests a minimum of eight respondents for most interview research, although there are no set rules for this. What is important is targeting people who possess knowledge that would assist the researcher to answer the research questions (Patton, 2002). In other words, size is not as always as important as the information-richness of the cases and people selected. This project ended up with 19 interviewees, bearing in mind the subject matter, the time and resources available to the researcher and the accessibility of suitable interviewees. In light of the time period being covered – from independence to the present – it was envisaged that 19 interviewees from various backgrounds and ages would provide a good cross-section of lived experiences and in-depth views about the problem being investigated.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted between September and October 2012. Most sessions were held at the Radio Pasifik office at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, where this researcher was based for the duration of the fieldwork. Others took place at the offices of the interviewees. Virtually all the interviews were conducted in English, digitally recorded, and transcribed. To synthesise the interviews, ascertain links and patterns and identify and build narratives, the researcher followed McCracken's (1988, p. 42) five stages of data analysis as a guide:

- observe useful utterances in isolation and relative to the text's other aspects
- develop observations by themselves, then relative to the text/previous literature
- examine inter-connections, focussing on ideas that emerge from the observation and comparison process
- scrutinise observations collectively, isolating inter-theme consistencies and contradictions
- take patterns or themes emerging from all interviews and subject them to analysis.

McCracken's five steps are linked to Kvale's (1996, p. 192) concept of "meaning condensation", whereby the researcher reads, scrutinises and summarises long interviews into concise ideas. This follows on to a thematic analysis of the text to identify "common content themes and the function of these themes" (Gaskell, 2003, p. 53). This researcher carefully read through the individual transcripts, highlighting interesting points. This included commonalities and contrasts in respondents' experiences and viewpoints and any recurring themes or unexpected or surprising utterances. After this, the findings from each interview were collated and collectively analysed. This involved comparisons with the literature, including theories, concepts and frameworks as they related to the Fiji situation. Any new and relevant aspect not covered by the existing literature was

highlighted. Direct quotations were used to present an accurate depiction of what was being evaluated, as recommended by Schuh and Upcraft (2001). Based on this approach, it was possible to create several inter-connecting themes under which the information was grouped, analysed and presented.

4.8   Cross-data fertilisation

Table 3 summarises the data and sample size for this study.

Table 3: Summary of Data and Sample Size	
National Media Survey	10 media companies, 114 journalists (63% response)
Content Analysis	3 newspapers, 30 issues, 350 articles
Document Review	Over 70 documents
In-depth Interviews	19 interviewees

As discussed, the multi-modal methodology provides for data triangulation. Alexander and others (2008, p.127–129) suggest that this approach facilitates the cross-checking, the accuracy of research findings and the level of confidence in the outcome. It also generates new knowledge through a synthesis of the findings from different approaches to reflect the complexity of a phenomenon.

4.9   Challenges and limitations

In erstwhile, ordinary circumstances, this researcher's activities would not have aroused any suspicions or concerns in Fiji. But with Fiji effectively under military rule since December 2006, the situation was challenging. Fiji's 2010 Media Decree stipulates steep fines and custodial sentences for any legal breaches by journalists and also for what were once regarded as ethical breaches (see Dutt, 2010). As such, some media professionals were noticeably apprehensive and nervous. Fiji editors, publishers and journalists gave the impression of looking over their shoulders at a watchful, suspicious and cantankerous regime. Like the rest of the country, the Fiji media corps appeared divided between supporters and opponents of the 2006 coup (see Tacchi, et al., 2013). In such situations, being a local could be a disadvantage: interviewees, uncertain about the researcher's position on the 2006 coup and the Bainimarama Government, may have been guarded in their responses, if not untruthful. Indeed, truthfulness (or rather, apprehension of its possible

absence) is a major weakness with interviews, even in normal settings. There is always the risk of a "social desirability bias", which refers to interviewees' general tendency to provide socially desirable rather than honest answers (Eysenck, 2004, p. 4). It would seem that such a risk is heightened in autocratic and coercive political environments.

With these problems in mind, the researcher sent a carefully-worded email request to all editors, publishers and other potential interviewees prior to arriving in Fiji. The aim was to inform them about the objectives of the research and to reassure them about confidentiality. This was followed up by phone conversations. Face-to-face meetings with selected interviewees after the researcher's arrival in Fiji re-emphasised the study's importance, provided further guarantees of confidentiality and gave reassurance of researcher impartiality. The chief executive of one major broadcaster wanted to know the rationale for the questionnaire survey differentiating journalists on the basis of gender, ethnicity and religion, reflecting the sensitivities surrounding these issues in Fiji. He dropped his objection once he was satisfied with the explanation that the information was crucial for determining newsroom diversity in a multi-ethnic country like Fiji.

The researcher's anticipation of the potential problems, his advance planning, his considered approach and his long-standing ties with Fiji's news media executives helped to build some trust and confidence. Despite some initial reservations, all the major media companies willingly participated in the questionnaire survey. Senior executives, editors and journalists from all the major news media organisations took part in the in-depth interviews. After securing the full cooperation of the media companies, the next big hurdle was getting individual journalists to complete the questionnaires. In some instances, the recovery of completed forms went without problem. In others, the process proved to be more difficult. Journalists in some media organisations did not fully complete the forms. All journalists at one organisation chose not to fill in the section on ethnicity and gender because as a group they decided these sections were irrelevant. Nor did they sign the forms, being concerned about confidentiality. The researcher had to return to this media organisation to convince the respondents again of the necessity for having these sections filled and redistributed and re-collected the forms.

Similar mopping up was required at some other media organisations: several return visits were paid to media companies and personal approaches made to individual journalists. The researcher, while organising the survey, had requested that participating organisations nominate an employee to liaise between the researcher and the survey participants. These nominees were useful in helping recover

the questionnaires. Some of the researcher's former University of the South Pacific journalism students working at media companies were also enlisted to assist with distribution and recovery of questionnaires, so that the recovery process was able to continue after the researcher's return to Brisbane. This type of pre-planning and the persistent follow-ups were invaluable in securing an improvement in the questionnaire return rate. In all, 10 news organisations with 114 eligible journalists were surveyed for a response rate of 63 per cent (72 returnees). This is a fairly good outcome in a region associated with historically low responses (Robie, 2003a) and if the difficult political climate in Fiji is accounted for. The rate is comparable with similar surveys in the Pacific: Layton's (1993, 1995) survey analysing press freedom in eight selected Pacific Island nations had a response of rate of 60 per cent for 300 forms distributed to 47 organisations; and Robie's (2003a) survey of 13 news organisations in Fiji and Papua New Guinea in April–May 2001 recorded a response rate of 60.7 per cent for the distribution of 152 questionnaires.

The researcher was deep into the second phase of his fieldwork when a video showing local police and prison officers beating recaptured prison escapees was released on YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GgdrQ0j-rSI). The video was seen worldwide and painted the ruling establishment in an extremely poor light (Lagan, 2013; Schwartz, 2013). This did not help matters on the ground. Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher, conscious of his vulnerability in the unpredictable nature of the situation, was keen to complete the project as quickly as possible.

4.10   Ethical considerations

The study was directed by the University of Queensland's comprehensive guidelines for ethical research (http://www.uq.edu.au/research/rid/human-guidelines). Approval for the study was granted by the university's Behavioural and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee (BSSERC). Additional guidance was provided by the literature on the ethics of research. Resnik's (2011) articulation of the need for researchers to adhere to ethical norms is useful. First, norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error. Second, they help to ensure accountability. Third, the norms promote important values, not least those of social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, compliance with the law, and health and safety. For this researcher, personal bias was a major consideration since this study was home-based. Having been born and lived in Fiji, he was challenged to keep a safe distance from the events and issues being researched, more so when he would have been influenced and affected by them. Moreover, the research was on media and journalism, a field he had worked in since 1988, starting as a cadet reporter before

becoming a senior journalist and editor and later an academic. He was dealing with people he knew at both personal and professional levels. This inside knowledge was both an advantage and a disadvantage: it facilitated his access to people, places and information. But it also made him vulnerable to prejudices borne out of years of personal and professional observations and experiences. These could lead to the reinforcement of preconceived notions and ideas that could be difficult to eradicate. Having held positions as both reporter and editor with two major Fiji newspapers and news magazines made the researcher well aware of the commercial, cultural and deadline pressures faced by the media and how this affects journalists' work. In the face of this background, it was all the more important to maintain as balanced and open a mind about the subject matter as possible.

Towards this end, a set of guidelines proposed by Rubenstein (2011) served as a useful reminder. The guidelines recommend:

- *Distancing yourself*: Seeing yourself as an observer of the situation rather than an active participant.
- *Thinking logically, not emotionally*: If you cannot dissociate yourself from the situation, then take a more dispassionate approach (i.e. facts/figures).
- *Thinking of the reasons*: Consider all motives and explanations behind actions; look at things from all sides.
- *Realising* that you may be wrong: Be aware that emotions can cloud judgments.

Also critical was the confidentiality of participants. This central research ethic is even more significant where the military are in control, as in contemporary Fiji, where the possibility of retributive actions against people who speak against the ruling establishment needs to be seriously considered. Most interviewees signed a *Consent Form* that gave background information about the project and explained the methods used to maintain confidentiality and the security of the data once collected and stored. Some interviewees were reluctant to put their signatures on formal research consent forms. They were asked to give oral consent. This was taped on a digital recorder. By signing the consent forms, the interviewees indicated that they understood the nature of the research and their role in it as voluntary respondents. The respondents were given the option of withdrawing from the interview at any time they wished, without prejudice. Only one interviewee, a civil servant, withdrew her statement some weeks after having participated in the interview. A former journalism student the researcher had taught, she requested that her interview be withdrawn after

learning from her supervisor that it was a condition of her employment to gain prior permission before participating in such interviews. Based on this interviewee's request, her participation was duly withdrawn.

4.11   Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the four research methods used to collect data for this thesis – content analysis, questionnaire survey, document research and in-depth interviews. A mixed-mode research method based on 'pragmatism' was chosen as the most appropriate since the research is essentially about understanding human motives and behaviour. Through this strategy, this research seeks to fill certain gaps in the literature, such as the apparent disconnect between content creation and the media landscape. The adopted strategy was deemed necessary to realise the core aims of this research – to understand a phenomenon and provide possible solutions.

 Another core aim of this research was the creation of new knowledge. Toward this end, the development of a peace journalism–inspired coding category specifically for Fiji is unique. The application of this framework to a non-violent conflict such as a national election is also rare. The chapter outlined the procedures involved in the development of the survey questionnaire, which drew from local, regional and global themes in order to address a decade long gap in the literature since Robie's survey (2003a).Document research is used to map media ownership patterns and trends in media legislation since independence in 1970. In-depth interviews with journalists highlight the impact of the legislation and other variables in everyday work. The chapter recounts the advanced preparations needed for operating in a restrictive political environment such as Fiji to minimise difficulties in the field.

The next chapter outlines the results obtained from the fieldwork.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1   Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the methodology employed to address this project's research questions. This chapter deals with the application of the four research methods and the subsequent findings. The chapter first presents the results of the content analysis undertaken to gauge coverage of Fiji's 2006 general elections and then it presents the results of the questionnaire survey, undertaken to assess diversity and professional capacity in Fiji's national media corps. This is followed by the presentation of the analysis of documents relating to the genealogy of media legislation and media ownership in Fiji. Finally, the chapter presents the outcome of the in-depth interviews, undertaken to gain deeper insights into the research questions and the other issues being explored.

5.2   Content analysis results

Overview

The content analysis was based on a peace journalism rubric modified for this specific study. It was used to address Research Question One: Are the Fiji print media inflammatory, as is often alleged? The sample consisted of 350 election-related news stories published in the 10 days prior to the polling dates (6–13 May 2006). As Figure 1 shows, 145 (41 per cent) were produced by the *Fiji Sun*; 105 (30 per cent) by the *Fiji Daily Post*; and 100 (29 per cent) by the *Fiji Times*. Overall, the peace journalism frame was dominant for 243 (69 per cent) articles, followed by the war journalism frame for 59 articles (17 per cent). The neutral frame best fit 48 articles (14 per cent).

Figure 1: Breakdown of sample by category
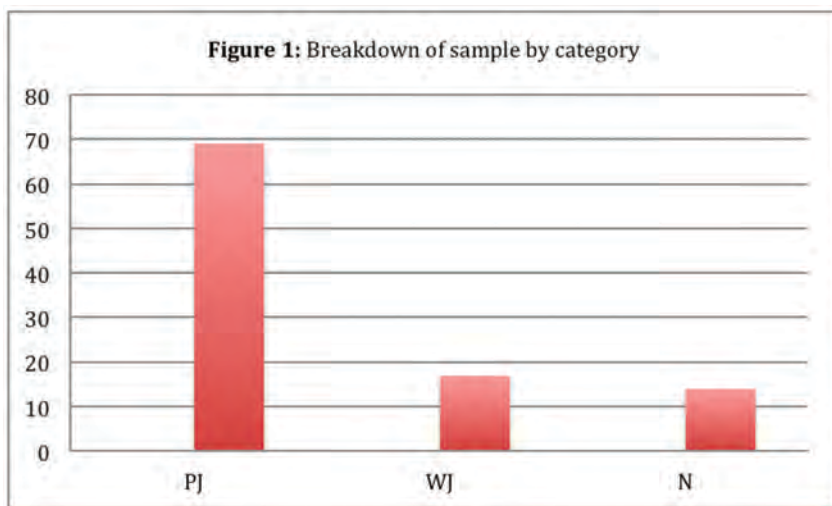
Each of the 10 indicators produced different outcomes – four returned a peace journalism reading, three returned a war journalism reading, and three returned a neutral reading. The most salient peace journalism indicators were *partisanship, consociation–majoritarianism, language* and *opinion*. This result indicated that on the whole, the articles were not overtly biased towards one side, gave space to moderate views, used temperate language and were devoid of the reporter's opinion. The most salient war journalism indicators were *orientation, sources* and *context*. This indicated the prevalence of single-source, elite-orientated stories that lacked depth. The indicators of *ethnicity-religion, fearmongering and dichotomy* produced neutral readings. The three newspapers differed also in their coverage (see Figure 2). The *Fiji Sun* contributed the greatest number of peace journalism-oriented stories to the overall total of 243, with 99 articles (41 per cent). This was followed by the *Fiji Times* with 73 stories (30 per cent) and the *Fiji Daily Post* with 71 stories (29 per cent).

Figure 2: PJ stories by newspaper
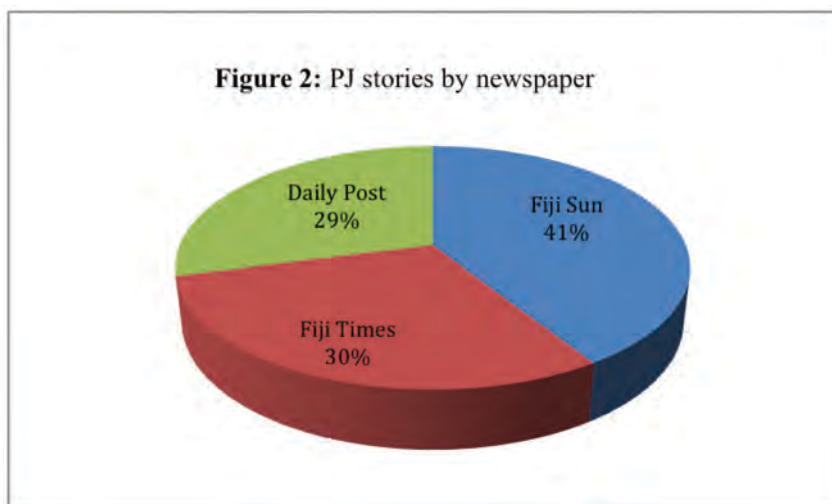
Proportionately, the *Fiji Times* showed the strongest peace journalism leaning, with 73 per cent out of its 100 published items. The *Fiji Sun* and the *Fiji Daily Post* were equal second with 68 per cent of their respective totals.

In the next section we look at each of the 10 indicators in more detail.

Orientation (WJ)

Orientation (see Figure 3), which sought to establish whether the stories were elite or people focused in their choice of news sources, returned a predominantly war journalism frame, with 252 articles (72 per cent). This was followed by 71 articles (20 per cent), with a neutral frame. Only 27

articles (eight per cent) returned a peace journalism frame. Overall, the results show a heavy reliance on elite sources over ordinary people.

Figure 3: Reading for *Orientation*
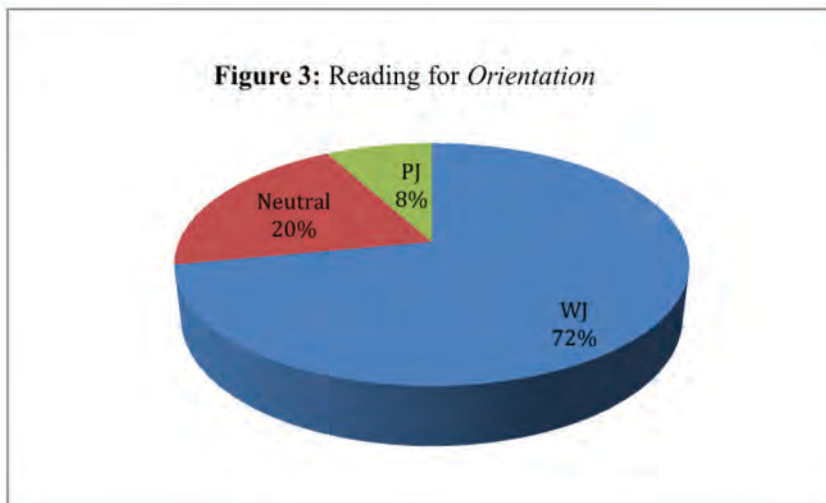
Some examples of the elite sources who dominated print media space over the 10 days of election coverage analysis included: Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase; military commander, Commodore Frank Bainimarama; Fiji Labour Party leader Mahendra Chaudhry; and Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua party candidate Dr Tupeni Baba. Others included bureaucrats like Police Commissioner Andrew Hughes; Supervisor of Elections Semesa Karavaki; Finance Minister Jone Kubuabola; and Reserve Bank Governor Savenaca Narube. Chairman of the Commonwealth Observer Group KD Knight also received prominent coverage. It should be pointed out that the neutral stories mostly emanated from the bureaucracy and featured expert sources providing specialist, election-related information. The journalists did not have the option of sourcing such technical information from non-elite informants. Such stories were informational in nature, even though they were sourced from the bureaucracy. Consequently, these stories were framed as neutral rather than war journalism.

Sources (WJ)

Sources aimed to determine the extent to which media used single or multiple informants in stories (see Figure 4). This indicator also recorded a predominantly war journalism frame with 246 articles (70 per cent). This was followed by a peace journalism frame with 64 articles (18 per cent), and a neutral frame with 40 articles (12 per cent). An example of a single-source story in the *Fiji Times* on May 3 involved an academic accusing the electoral office of breaching the electoral act, with no comments from the electoral office or from other relevant parties.

Figure 4: Reading for *Sources*

PJ 18%

Neutral 12%

WJ 70%
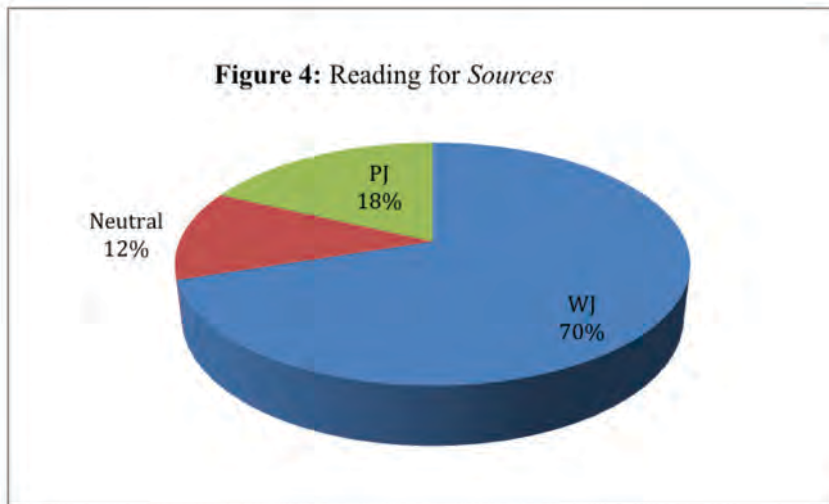
Context (WJ)

Context (see Figure 5) aimed to determine the number of stories with or without sufficient background information.

Figure 5: Reading for *Context*

PJ 24%

Neutral 8%

WJ 68%
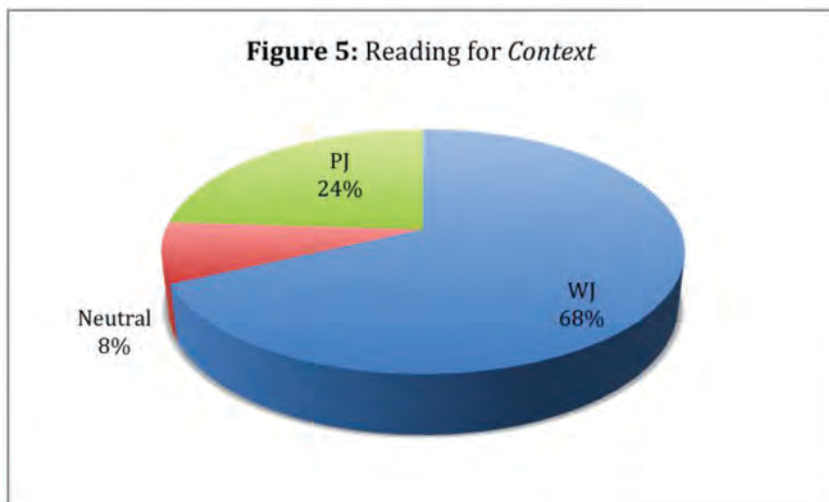
This indicator returned a war journalism frame, with 239 stories (68 per cent). Such stories showed a strong emphasis on the present, with insufficient background. This was followed by 84 stories (24 per cent) with a peace journalism frame. Such stories were deemed to contain sufficient contextual information. Twenty-seven stories (eight per cent) were deemed neutral. Generally, such stories were informational in nature. They did not require much background. An example of a story with insufficient context appeared in the *Fiji Sun* on May 2 headlined, "Military gears for election". The five-paragraph story mentioned that a battalion was conducting a three-day exercise with battle drills and other tactical moves, using explosives and blank ammunition. There was no context

given, even though the backdrop to the story was increased tensions between the government and the military, and the drills seemed somewhat heavy-handed for an election.

Partisanship (PJ)

Partisanship (see Figure 6) assessed the prevalence of journalist bias and one-sidedness in news stories. Given the strong war journalism reading for *sources*, it is somewhat surprising that *partisanship* returned a peace journalism frame, with 246 stories (70 per cent). Only 22 stories (six per cent) were categorised as war journalism, while 82 stories (24 per cent) were categorised as neutral. The results indicate that for the most part, the stories did not show an overt journalist bias for any one party.

Figure 6: Reading for *Partisanship*
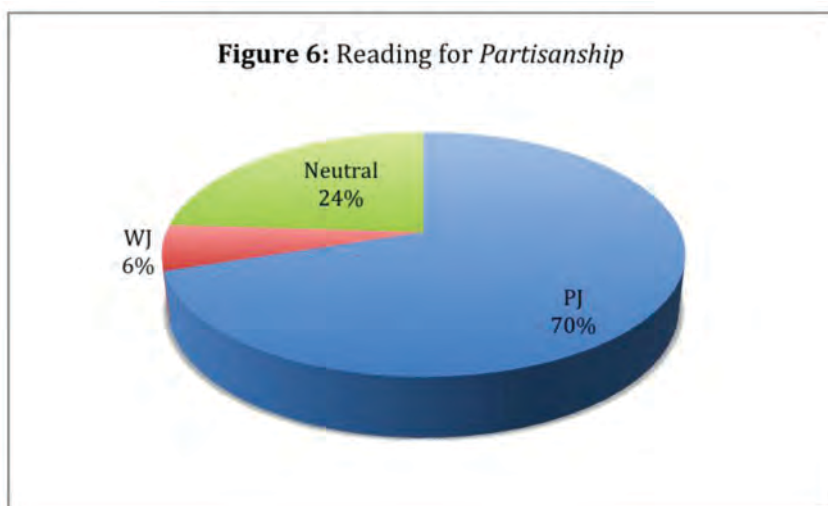
Consociationalism-majoritarianism (PJ)

Consociationalism refers to multi-ethnic cooperation and power-sharing (peace journalism), whereas *majoritarianism* embodies a two-party, win–lose contest (war journalism), in both the political and community senses. This indicator (see Figure 7) returned a peace journalism frame with 266 stories (76 per cent). Articles in this mould emphasised political cooperation and social cohesion. The war journalism frame constituted 29 stories (eight per cent). Such stories were characterised by a one-sided focus on the two major competing parties and the propagation of divisive messages without balancing comments. In all, 55 stories (16 per cent) were categorised as neutral. An example of consociation and multi-party focus was a *Fiji Daily Post* story published on May 3 headlined, "Leaders smoke the peace pipe". The story was about the front-runners for the post of prime minister giving a rare undertaking to honour the Fiji Constitution and to work together if they qualified to form government after the election.

Figure 7: Reading for *Consociationalism-Majoritarianism*
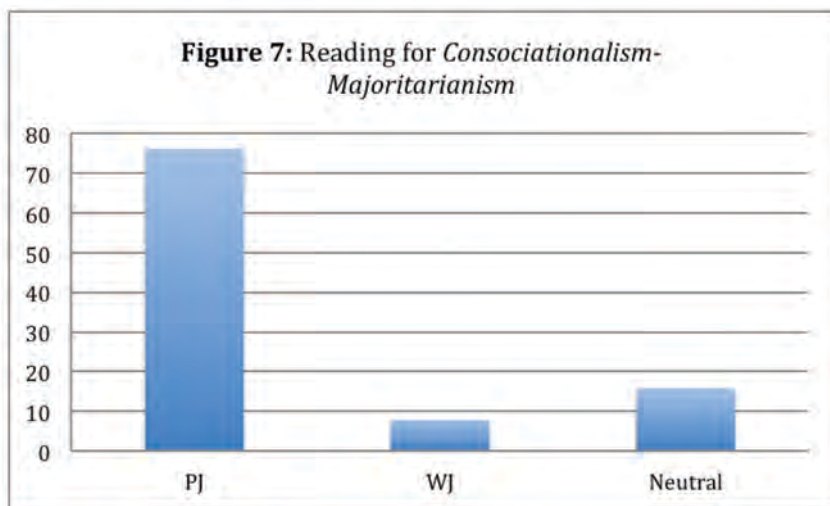
Language (PJ)

Language determined the prevalence of victimising, demonising or emotional words in news stories, as opposed to rational and empowering words. Considering that an election campaign was underway, some intense political exchanges were normal and inevitable. They are accounted for in this analysis. In other words, reporting inflammatory comments was not war journalism per se, but merely reproducing and propagating such discourse without balancing comments was deemed war journalism. Even in the heat of elections, this indicator (see Figure 8), somewhat surprisingly, returned a peace journalism frame, with 298 stories (85 per cent). This was followed by a neutral frame with 32 stories (nine per cent) and a war journalism frame with 20 stories (six per cent). An example of war journalism language appeared in the *Fiji Daily Post* on May 3, in which Fiji Labour Party candidate Lekh Ram Vaishnoi claimed that the rival National Federation Party candidates were backstabbers and sellouts, with no refutations. However, the results indicate that journalists avoided the use of strong language, except in a small number of cases.

Figure 8: Reading for *Language*
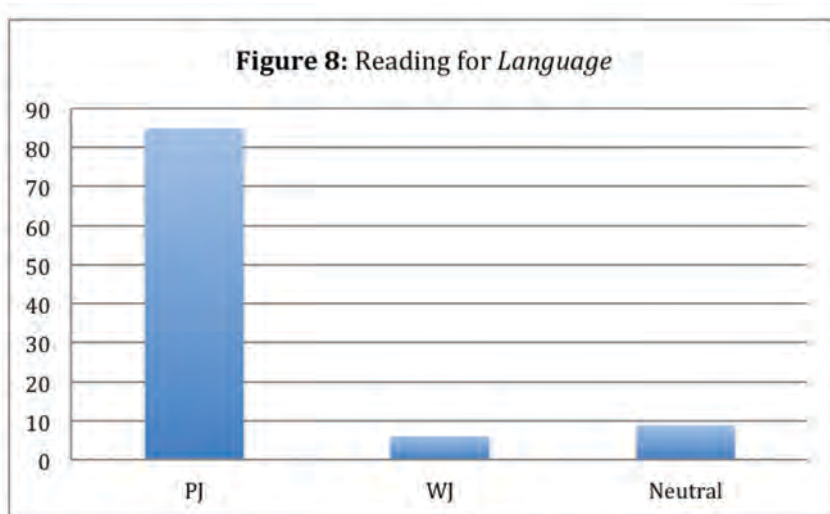
Ethnicity-Religion (N)

Ethnicity and religion as an indicator (see Figure 9) aimed to determine the prevalence of undue references to these variables in news stories. This indicator returned a high number of neutral articles at 278 (79 per cent). Many such articles dealt with the election's logistical or operational matters. The nature of these articles was such that the issues of race and/or religion did not arise. This was followed by a peace journalism frame with 59 articles out of 350 (17 per cent). Such articles were deemed to have addressed issues dealing with race and/or religion in an even-handed manner. If controversial or divisive views were published, they were balanced with opposing views. For instance, comments by prime minister Qarase that Fiji's prime minister must be indigenous Fijian would be deemed an unwarranted reference to ethnicity. However, the media also sought opposing views. The May 2 edition of the *Fiji Daily Post* reported that "anyone can fill PM's post", regardless of ethnicity. The war journalism frame accounted for just 13 articles (four per cent). Stories of this persuasion contained undue and/or unbalanced references to ethnicity/religion. Such stories were rare. The results indicate that race and religion were not major preoccupations for most election candidates and subsequently, the media.

Figure 9: Reading for *Ethnicity-Religion*
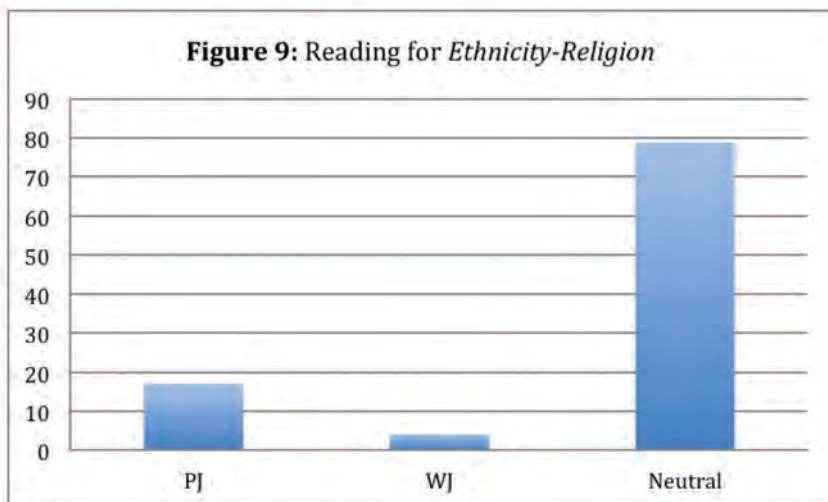
Opinion (PJ)

Opinion (see Figure 10), which measures the level of journalists' personal views in news stories, returned a strong peace journalism frame, with 317 stories (91per cent). This shows that journalists' personal views were indiscernible in most stories. The war journalism frame constituted 13 stories (four per cent). There were 20 neutral stories (five per cent), largely dealing with announcements and operational matters regarding the elections, such as a Fiji Employers' Federation statement urging members to take time off work to vote. The question of journalists' opinion did not arise in such election-related stories, hence the neutral categorisation.

Figure 10: Reading for *Opinion*
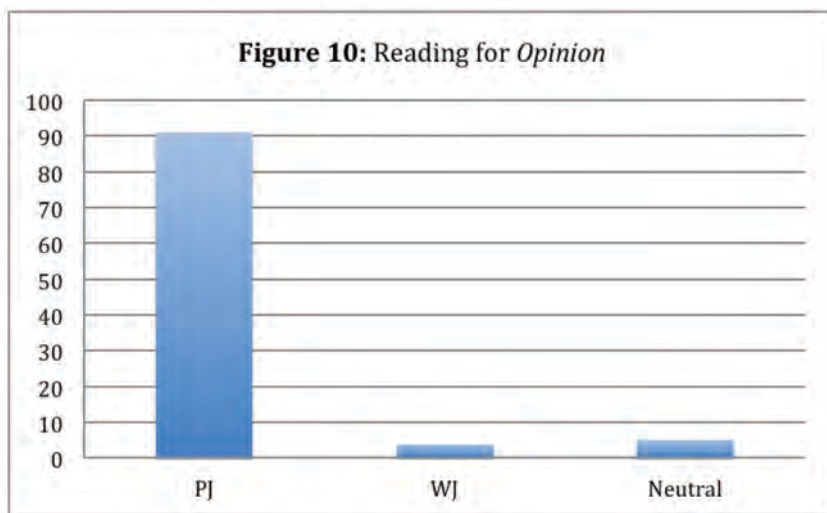
Fearmongering (N)

Fearmongering (see Figure 11) was used to determine whether media were being used as a tool to construct fear.

Figure 11: Reading for *Fearmongering*
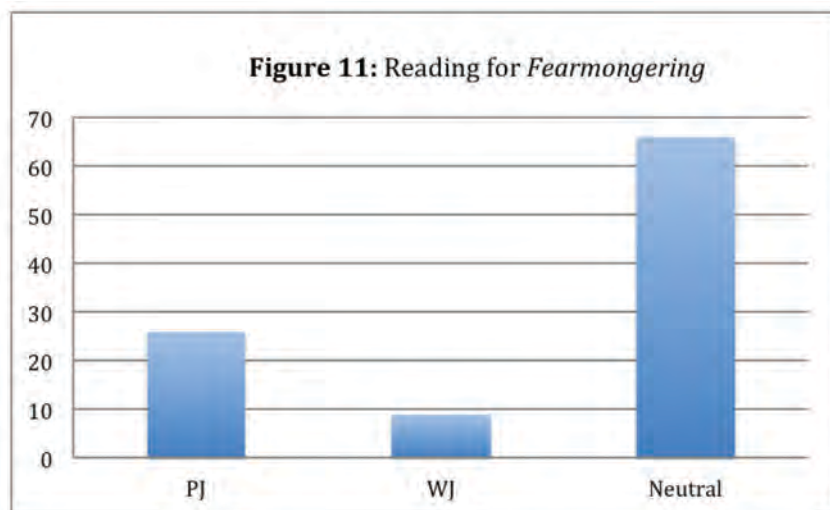
A majority of the election-related stories, 226 (65 per cent), returned a neutral frame. Such stories dealt with logistical matters regarding the elections, such as the training of polling officers. The peace journalism frame accorded with 90 stories (26 per cent). Articles in this mould were deemed to have handled potentially volatile issues in an even-handed manner by, among other things, seeking a multiplicity of views. War journalism stories totalled 34 (nine per cent). Such stories did not demonstrate fairness or sensitivity when dealing with controversial or volatile subjects. An example of fearmongering was a *Fiji Daily Post* article on May 2 with a bold, page one headline with exclamation marks that read: "Psst! Watch it Frank!" The story stated that Prime Minister Qarase had vowed a "permanent solution" to the standoff with the military and by implication, its commander, Commodore Frank Bainimarama. The headline and the tone of the story gave the

impression of an imminent confrontation, which could be deemed provocative and sensationalist according to peace journalism protocols. On the whole, results indicate that media stories did not, except in a small number of cases, contribute unduly to the creation of fear.

Dichotomy (N)

The last of the 10 indicators, *dichotomy* (see Figure 12), aimed to determine the extent to which media put people or groups in 'good–bad' or 'victim–villain' compartments.

Figure 12: Reading for *Dichotomy*
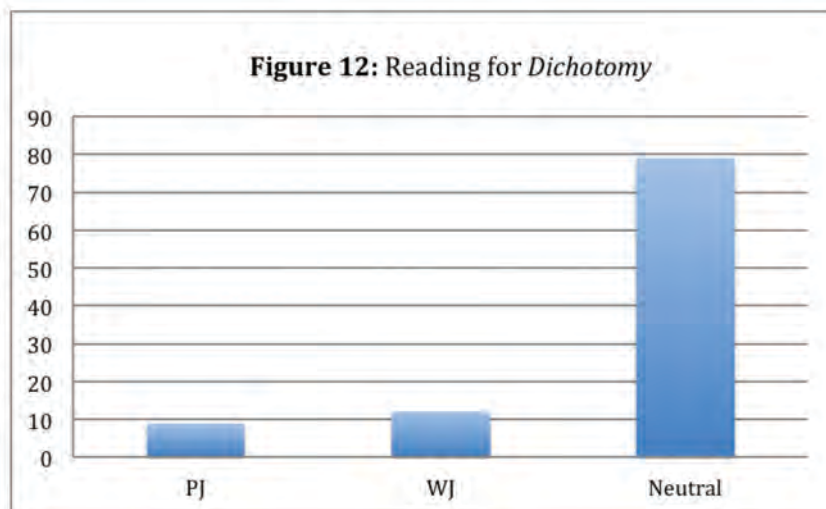
This indicator returned a high neutral frame, with 275 stories (79 per cent). Such stories could not be coded as peace or war journalism as they focused largely on logistical or operational issues. This was followed by a war journalism frame with 43 stories (12 per cent). Stories in this frame portrayed one individual or group as good, the other as bad, often based on unverified or exaggerated claims. A good example is a *Fiji Sun* article on May 5 in which nationalist politician Iliesa Duvuloco claimed that the Agricultural and Landlord Tenants Act had denied indigenous landowners a fair rent. Furthermore, Duvuloco declared that Indo-Fijians supported the land act as they wanted to perpetuate an illegal, unfair and unjust act against indigenous Fijians. This article fit the label of 'good–bad' or 'victim–villain' compartmentalisation. The 32 stories (nine per cent) in the peace journalism frame avoided the 'good–bad' dichotomy trap.

Synopsis of content analysis

In summary, the overall content analysis results show a peace journalism reading. Based on that, the answer to Research Question One – are the Fiji print media inflammatory as is often alleged? – is negative. A fuller and truer account of this finding will emerge only after further data analysis in the discussion chapter. In the next section, we lay out the results of the questionnaire survey.

5.3   Questionnaire survey results

The questionnaire survey was used to address Research Question Two: What is the level of diversity and professional capacity of Fiji's news media corps?

Overview

The journalist survey was conducted in August and September 2012. The results have been grouped into the following categories: journalists' age and experience; training and qualifications; gender, ethnic and religious background; working conditions and job satisfaction; and professional values. The survey also addressed the potential cultural, environmental, organisational, institutional and political pressures of the job. One section sought journalists' views on some of the issues that arose from the literature review on Fiji and elsewhere. These included allegations of ethnic bias in the media and an apparent fixation on politics, elite sources and conflict.

Where appropriate, the results are briefly compared with similar surveys carried out in Fiji and abroad, although the full analysis and discussions proper are presented in Chapter 6. The major basis for benchmarking is Robie's (2003a) similar Fiji–PNG comparative study conducted in 2001. This gives an indication of the changes Fiji's media sector has undergone in the intervening decade or so. Another key basis for comparison is Weaver and Willnat's (2012) global journalist survey.

Scope of survey

Table 4 shows that the survey covered 10 news media companies and 114 eligible journalists, including full-time journalists working in daily newspapers, monthly magazines, and broadcast and online media. Eligible editorial staff numbers ranged from 38 at the 145-year-old *Fiji Times* to one at *República*, a Suva-based monthly news magazine launched in September 2012 – the same month that this survey was undertaken. In all, 72 out of 114 possible respondents, from 9 of the 10 companies, returned completed questionnaires, yielding a return rate of 63 per cent (cf. Robie's 60 per cent for his Fiji survey, p. 330). Only *The Jet*, a monthly community newspaper based in Nadi, western Fiji, failed to reply. All of Fiji's five major news media companies responded, namely: *Fiji Times*, (including journalists from the Fijian and Hindi vernacular weeklies, *Nai Lalakai* and *Shanti Dut*); *Fiji Sun*; Fiji Broadcasting Commission (FBC); Communications Fiji Limited (CFM); and Fiji Television Limited (Fiji TV). The response rate from four of the five major news organisations was above 50 per cent. The highest response was from Fijilive at 100 per cent, followed by CFM at 93 per cent.

Table 4: Media companies surveyed and response rate			
Medium	Staff numbers	No. of respondents	Response rate(%)
DAILIES			
The Fiji Times	38	18	47
Fiji Sun	21	18	86
MONTHLIES			
MaiLife	3	1	33
Repúblika	1	1	100
Islands Business	2	1	50
The Jet	2	0	0
BROADCAST			
FBCL	12	8	67
CFM	15	14	93
Fiji TV	15	9	60
ONLINE			
Fijilive	2	2	100
TOTAL	**114**	**72**	**63 %**

Robie's survey included seven Fiji news media companies. The common companies surveyed by this research and his are Associated Media Group (Fijilive); CFM; FBC; Fiji TV; and the *Fiji Sun*. The *Fiji Times*, at the time country's largest news media sector employer, did not take part in Robie's survey, which also included six Papua New Guinea news organisations.

Newsroom positions and media platforms

Table 5 looks at the newsroom positions held by journalists. It shows that the majority of the respondents, 61 per cent, identified themselves as reporters. This is typical since reporters normally make up the bulk of the journalist corps. Newsroom leaders made up 35 per cent of the sample. Of this, 22 per cent identified as editors or section editors and 13 per cent identified as news editors, chief-of-staff and the like.

Table 5: Newsroom positions	Number	Percentage
Reporter	43	61
News editor/chief-of-staff	9	13
Editors/section editors	16	22
Other	3	4
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

Table 6 gives a breakdown of the media platforms journalists work in. It indicates that the traditional platforms – print and broadcast – still dominate, although the online medium is gradually gaining ground. Slightly more than half the respondents identified as print journalists. Behind them, radio journalists stood at 20 per cent and television journalists at 14 per cent. A further 11 per cent worked across multi-platforms, while three per cent worked specifically as online media journalists. In Robie's Fiji survey, print journalists also headed the list, although to a lesser extent (44 per cent), followed by television journalists (12 per cent), radio (seven per cent) and online journalists (two per cent) (pp. 329–331).

Table 6: Media platforms journalists work in	Number	Percentage
Print	37	52
Radio	14	20
TV	10	14
Online	2	3
Multi-modal	8	11
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

Journalist age, experience and qualifications

Table 7 shows journalists' age groups. The mean age is 31 and the median age is 30. However, the largest cohort, 27 per cent, is found in the 20–25 age group. In addition, more than 50 percent of the respondents are aged below 30, with only 27 per cent above the age of 35.

Table Seven: Age	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percentage
15-20	4	4	6.3
20-25	17	21	27.0
25-30	14	35	22.2
30-35	9	44	14.3
35-40	10	54	15.9
45-50	5	59	7.9
50-55	2	61	3.2
55-plus	2	63	3.2
Total	63	63	100

Robie's Fiji survey recorded a younger mean age of 24.7 years (p. 332). The mean age in the present survey has climbed by almost six years in the intervening decade. Weaver and Willnat's global survey shows that journalism tends to be a young person's occupation, but even then, Fiji's journalists' mean age is still lower than the global mean of 32 in the youngest categories (Weaver & Willnat, 2012). In neighbouring Australia, the average age was 37 years (Hanusch, 2013).

Table 8 details journalists' work experience. The mean work experience is seven years and the median work experience is six years. This shows an important improvement over Robie's finding of 3.5 years a decade earlier (p. 337). However, a significant 54.5 per cent of journalists still had less than six years experience. The largest cohort, 31.8 percent, only had zero to three years experience, followed by 22.7 per cent with three to six years experience. Only 12.1 per cent had more than 15 years experience, followed by three percent (two journalists) with over 21 years experience.

Table 8: Experience (yrs)	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency	Percentage
0-3	21	21	31.8
3-6	15	36	22.7
6-9	10	46	15.2
9-12	11	57	16.7
12-15	1	58	1.5
15-18	5	63	7.6
18-21	1	64	1.5
21-24	0	64	0.0
24-plus	2	66	3.0
Total	66	66	100.0

Table 9 indicates journalists' academic qualifications, with the latest data showing some significant gains over the Robie survey. A slight majority, 51 per cent, did not have any tertiary or other forms of formal post-secondary qualifications. The remaining 49 per cent had some form of tertiary qualification: 18 per cent held diplomas; 17 per cent, degrees; 11 per cent, certificates; and three per cent, postgraduate qualifications.

Table 9: Qualifications	None	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Postgrad	Total
Number	36	8	13	12	2	71
Percentage	51	11	18	17	3	100

This result is an improvement over Robie's survey, which found just 26 per cent of Fiji journalists with some form of prescribed academic, polytechnic or industry certificate (p. 338). Whereas the present survey found two postgraduate degree holders, Robie's survey included none.

Ethnicity, language and religious affiliation

Table 10 displays the ethnic breakdown of Fiji's national journalist corps, showing that the largest group represented in the survey is indigenous Fijian journalists at 49 per cent, followed by Indo-Fijians at 30 per cent and other ethnicities at 10 per cent. Robie's newsroom survey had found an even split between indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian journalists at 42 per cent, with the other races making up the balance (p. 334). The latest findings on the ethnic composition of Fiji's journalist corps reflect Fiji's changing demography as a whole, with indigenous Fijians now the dominant ethnic group in the country at 56.8 per cent (Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

Table 10: Ethnicity	Indo-Fijian	Ethnic-Fijian	Others	Unstated	Total
Number	21	35	7	8	71
Percentage	30	49	10	11	100

Table 11 reports journalists' first language. It shows that Fijian is the mother tongue of most journalists in the sample (44 per cent), followed by Fiji Hindi (30 per cent) and English (25 per cent) following. These findings are consistent with the ethnic make-up of Fiji's journalist corps, which is dominated by indigenous Fijians. Robie's survey also found a prevalence of Fijian language speakers at 40 per cent, followed by Hindi speakers at 37 per cent and English speakers at 19 per cent (p. 334).

Table 11: Journalists' first language	Number	Percentage
English	18	25
Hindi	21	30
Fijian	31	44
Other	1	1
TOTAL	71	100

Table 12 sets out the language of work, showing that while English was not the native tongue of most respondents, for the vast majority of them it was the language of work. In all, 76 per cent of the respondents gave English as their sole language of work, followed by 11 per cent giving both English and Hindi and another 11 per cent giving both English and Fijian. Two per cent (one person) worked across all three languages.

Table 12: Language of work	Number	Percentage
English	54	76
English and Fijian	8	11
English and Hindi	8	11
English, Fijian and Hindi	1	2
TOTAL	71	100

Table 13 covers journalists' religious affiliation. It shows that Christian journalists are in the majority at 59 per cent, followed by Hindus at 17 per cent and Muslims and 'Others' at three per cent each. Virtually all indigenous Fijian journalists are Christians and virtually all Indo-Fijian journalists are either Hindu or Muslim. The religious breakdown of journalists is roughly representative of the country's religious character as a whole, with Christians making up 64.5 per cent of the population, Hindus 27.9 per cent and Muslims 6.3 per cent (Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

Table 13: Religion	Christian	Hindu	Muslim	Unstated	Others	Total
Number	42	12	2	13	2	71
Percentage	59	17	3	18	3	100

Gender balance

Gender proportionality, seen as an important component of newsroom diversity in Fiji, the Pacific and elsewhere, is displayed in Table 14 (Nichol, 2006; Usman, 2012). The figures show that male journalists outnumber females by 56 per cent to 44, a difference of eight percentage points. Robie's survey had recorded a more even balance – 51 per cent male, 49 per cent female (pp. 317–339).

Table 14: Gender balance	Male	Female	Total
Number	40	31	71
Percentage	56	44	100

Table 15 looks at the gender breakdown in newsrooms with regard to journalists' editorial positions and responsibilities. The results indicate that 22 per cent of males held managerial positions (editor, chief-of-staff, etc.) compared to 13 per cent of females. The genders were more fairly represented in the more junior news reporter positions, with females at 31 per cent and males at 34 per cent.

Table 15: Newsroom positions by gender	Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%
Reporters	22	31	24	34
Newsroom managers	9	13	16	22
TOTAL	31	44	40	56

The typical Fijian journalist

As Table 16 shows, the typical Fiji journalist is an ethnic Fijian male, aged below 30, Christian by faith, with less than six years of experience, trained on the job and likely to have no university qualifications.

Table 16: The typical Fiji journalist	
Age	27.8 years
Ethnicity	Indigenous Fijian
Gender	Male
Religion	Christian
Training	On the job
Post-secondary school qualifications	None
Experience	Less than six years

Satisfaction with career progression and remuneration

Table 17 displays journalists' job satisfaction levels, a variable often associated with journalistic standards. The results show that most journalists, 61 per cent, were satisfied with their career progression and general working conditions, though 17 per cent were not satisfied, eight per cent were unsure and 14 per cent declined to comment.

Table 17: Journalist satisfaction with career	Number	Percentage
Yes	43	61
No	12	17
Not Sure	6	8
Prefer not To Say	10	14
TOTAL	71	100

Table 18 addresses journalists' salaries, another variable deemed to have an impact on journalistic standards. As the results show, most respondents, 39 per cent, felt they were fairly rewarded. However, a fairly significant, and not greatly lower, 34 per cent answered in the negative, while 10 per cent were unsure. Seventeen per cent preferred not to say.

Table 18: Are you fairly rewarded for your work?	Number	Percentage
Yes	28	39
No	24	34
Not Sure	7	10
Prefer not To Say	12	17
TOTAL	71	100

Views on training, standards, grasp of professional codes and public view of media

The questionnaire sought respondents' views about the best mix of training strategies for future journalists. Table 19 shows that the majority, 68 per cent, favoured university education combined with cadetships. Second preference was for on-the-job training on its own, favoured by a reasonably high 21 per cent. University education on its own was favoured by only six per cent. In Robie's Fiji survey, 54 per cent preferred a combination of university education and cadetships while nine per cent favoured on the job training (p. 341).

Table 19: How to best prepare journalists for careers?	Number	Percentage
On-the-job training	15	21
University training	4	6
Combined cadet/university training	48	68
Any other	3	4
No comment	1	1
TOTAL	71	100

Table 20 tabulates respondents' ratings on the standard of journalism in Fiji, a question asked to gauge their self-confidence and overall faith in the media industry. The results show that most journalists, 46 per cent, rate the standard of journalism in Fiji as 'good', while slightly less, 44 per cent, rate it as 'average'. Four per cent rate the standards as 'low' whereas three per cent rate it as 'excellent'. This suggests that most journalists believe they are doing an adequate or better job.

Table 20: Standard of Fiji journalism	Number	Percentage
Excellent	2	3
Good	33	46
Average	31	44
Low	3	4
Unsure	2	3
TOTAL	71	100

Asked to rate journalists' understanding and application of media law and ethics – a crucial issue since the promulgation of the punitive 2010 Media Decree – respondents produced the range of responses, shown in Table 21.

Table 21: Grasp of media law & ethics	Number	Percentage
Excellent	4	6
Good	25	35
Average	34	47
Low	4	6
Don't know	4	6
TOTAL	71	100

These results show that 47 per cent believe that journalists' grasp of media law and ethics is 'average', 35 per cent believe it is 'good', while six per cent feel it is 'excellent'. Another six per cent gave a 'low' rating. Journalists' perceptions of how the public views media are reflected in Table 22. The aim is to get a measure of journalists' awareness of, and sensitivity to, public perceptions about their work.

Table 22 shows that most respondents, 46 per cent, thought the public regarded the media's performance as 'good', followed by 34 per cent who gave an 'average' rating. Six percent thought the public had a 'low' perception of the media. The results suggest that a majority of Fiji journalists – 81 per cent – feel the public has a fairly positive or neutral opinion about the media. Only six per cent believe the public has an unfavourable view, while 13 per cent were unsure.

Table 22: Journalist perceptions of public view of media	Number	Percentage
Excellent	1	1
Good	33	46
Average	24	34
Low	4	6
Unsure	9	13
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

Journalist perceptions of media owner and advertiser pressure on the news process

Table 23 presents the distribution of responses to the attempt to garner journalists' perceptions, as insiders, about the level of media owner influence on news. As the results show, 87 per cent of the respondents alluded to varying degrees of owner influence on the news process. As many as two-thirds, 67 per cent, felt that there was 'some', or 'a fair amount' of influence. A further 19 per cent stated that there was 'a great deal' of owner influence, followed by 14 per cent, who said 'none at all'. Depending on the reliability of the results, one would suspect that attempts by media owners to affect the news process are fairly prevalent. To get a more clear understanding, this issue is explored further in the in-depth interviews later in this chapter.

Table 23: Level of media owner influence on news	Number	Percentage
A great deal	13	19
Some, or a fair amount	48	67
None at all	10	14
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

Table 24 reports respondents' views about the level of advertiser influence on the news process. The results indicate that 87 per cent of the respondents feel that advertisers have varying degrees of influence on the news process. The majority, 68 per cent, stated that there was either 'some' or a 'fair amount' of advertiser influence. This was followed by 19 per cent who stated there was a 'great deal' of influence. Thirteen per cent indicated that there was no advertiser influence on the news at all. If the respondents' perceptions are anything to go by, attempts by advertisers to influence the news could be fairly prevalent.

Table 24: Advertiser influence on news	Number	Percentage
A great deal	13	19
Some, or a fair amount	49	68
None at all	9	13
TOTAL	71	100

Effect of journalists' political beliefs, ethnicity and religion on their work

Apart from commercial pressures, respondents were questioned about the political and social pressures that they might be facing, starting with a question about any political ties or affiliations that they might have. As Table 25 shows, a highly significant 97 per cent denied any political affiliation, as opposed to three per cent who admitted to it.

Table 25: Do you have any political affiliations?	Number	Percentage
Yes	2	3
No	69	97
TOTAL	71	100

This is a rather one-sided result, notwithstanding the fact that in Fiji's present political context, not every respondent can be expected to be open and free about declaring any political affiliation they might have. Further probing about whether their political beliefs affected their journalism revealed that the majority, 79 per cent, were of the opinion that their political views do not affect their work (Table 26).

Table 26: Political beliefs and effect on work	Number	Percentage
A great deal	1	1
Somewhat	14	20
None at all	56	79
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

However, 20 per cent admitted that their political beliefs do influence their work to some extent, while one per cent (one person) accepted 'a great deal' of effect as a reasonable description. In other words, while a majority of journalists feel that their work is virtually unaffected by their political beliefs, up to one fifth admitted to some effect.

In Fiji, ethnicity and religion are strong rallying points for group solidarity (Sutherland, 1992). Respondents were asked to what extent, if at all, their religious and ethnic backgrounds might prejudice their work. Table 27 shows that the majority, around two-thirds or 66 per cent, stated that their work was not affected by their religious or ethnic background.

Table 27: Effect of journalists' ethnicity and religion on their work	Number	Percentage
A great deal	1	1
Some or a fair amount	23	33
None at all	47	66
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

The remaining one-third, 33 per cent, claimed 'some or a fair amount' of effect and a minimal one per cent admitted a 'great deal of effect'. These results appear, to some extent at least, belie claims of ethnic and religious bias in Fiji's print media.

On the risk of violent conflict in Fiji, alleged media fixation on conflict, neglect of positive developments and training in conflict prevention

This section presents responses on various issues regarding conflict reporting, starting with opinions about the risk of violent conflict in Fiji. As Table 28 shows, three-quarters of the respondents (76 per cent) considered the risk to be 'low' to 'moderate'.

Table 28: Risk of violent conflict in Fiji	Number	Percentage
High risk	3	4
Low or moderate	54	76
No risk	9	13
Other	5	7
TOTAL	71	100

However, 13 per cent felt there is 'no risk', and four per cent felt Fiji is at 'high risk'. These results suggest that Fiji journalists are fairly conscious of some level of risk of violent conflict erupting in the country, though they differ widely in their assessment of its severity.

The next question concerned contemporary debates in conflict reporting, such as an allegedly disproportionate media focus on conflict, sensation and scandal (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Fiji journalists are split fairly evenly over the issue (Table 29).

Table 29: Media focus too much on conflict, sensation	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly agree	31	43
Disagree or strongly disagree	33	47
Undecided	7	10
TOTAL	71	100

A majority, 47 per cent, 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the notion. But a significant 43 per cent 'agree', while 10 per cent were 'undecided'.

Asked to comment on allegations that journalists aggravate racial and political tensions by how they report conflict, most respondents, 47 per cent, 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the proposition (Table 30).

Table 30: Media amplify tensions by how they report conflict	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly agree	28	39
Disagree or strongly disagree	33	47
Undecided	10	14
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

A significant 39 per cent, though, 'agree or strongly agree', while 14 per cent were 'undecided'. These results indicate a fairly substantial split in the opinions of the national journalist corps over this matter.

In Fiji, ethnicity and politics are often at the centre of conflict. Journalists were given an opportunity to respond to claims that they have misreported these issues (see C. Gounder, 2006). As Table 31 demonstrates, a majority of the respondents hold a favourable view of media coverage of ethnicity, politics and conflict.

Table 31: Coverage of ethnicity, politics, conflict	Number	Percentage
Excellent	4	6
Good or fair	58	81
Low	4	6
Don't know	5	7
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

A significant 87 per cent felt that coverage was either 'excellent' or 'good or fair'. Six per cent rated the quality of coverage as 'low', while seven per cent did not know. The results indicate a high level of satisfaction with conflict reporting within the national media corps.

Respondents were asked to comment on the claim that elite sources such as politicians and other prominent people get more than their fair share of media coverage. Division over this issue is evident in Table 32.

Table 32: Elite sources get too much media coverage	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly agree	45	63
Disagree or strongly disagree	24	34
Undecided	2	3
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

A majority, 63 per cent, 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that elite sources get too much coverage. But a significant 34 per cent 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. Three per cent were undecided. A related question investigated respondents' sense of Fiji's so-called 'culture of silence', in which elders, traditional chiefs, politicians and other authority figures are said to be above criticism (see Madraiwiwi, 2014). A direct question asked whether politicians and traditional leaders should be subject to the same level of criticism as ordinary people.

Table 33 shows that the majority, 86 per cent, 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that elites and non-elites should receive equal amounts of criticism.

Table 33: Leaders should receive same level of criticism as ordinary people	Number	Percentage
Strongly Agree or agree	61	86
Disagree or strongly disagree	8	11
Undecided	2	3
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

However, 11 per cent 'disagreed or strongly disagreed' while three per cent were 'undecided'. If the results are anything to go by, the 'culture of silence' notion among the journalist corps is somewhat discounted, at least in theory. This result will be triangulated with the content analysis and in-depth interviews in chapter 6 for further verification.

Respondents were asked about another alleged mainstream media characteristic with regard to conflict reporting – the neglect of positive developments (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Table 34 shows that an overwhelming majority, 81 per cent, 'disagree or strongly disagree' that media ignore positive developments.

Table 34: Media neglect positive developments	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly agree	7	10
Disagree or strongly disagree	58	81
Undecided	6	8
TOTAL	71	100

Ten per cent 'agree or strongly agree' while eight per cent are 'undecided'. This indicates a rather strong belief among the Fiji journalist corps that media give positive developments a fair amount of exposure.

Still on the subject of conflict reporting, respondents were asked whether Fiji journalists should receive training in conflict prevention, given the country's history of coups. The intention was to gauge journalists' receptivity towards alternative frameworks in conflict reporting. Table 35 shows that a significant 79 per cent 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the proposition.

Table 35: Journalists should be trained in conflict theory	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly agree	56	79
Disagree or strongly disagree	7	10
Undecided	8	11
TOTAL	71	100

That only one-fifth of the sample disagreed or were undecided suggests that most Fiji journalists are fairly open to the idea of basic training in conflict theory, even if in the earlier question, most of them were happy with how the Fiji media report conflict. Respondents' views were also sought about ongoing debates regarding some traditional media values, such as objectivity, in relation to conflict reporting (see Lynch & Galtung, 2010).

To start with, respondents were asked whether media objectivity was a realistic and obtainable goal. Table 36 shows that an overwhelming 91 per cent 'agree or strongly agree' that the goal of media objectivity is both realistic and obtainable.

Table 36: Media objectivity is realistic, obtainable	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly Agree	65	91
Disagree or strongly Disagree	4	6
Undecided	2	3
TOTAL	71	100

Only six per cent 'disagree or strongly disagree' while three per cent were 'undecided'. These results reaffirm the apparent dominance of some conventional news media values within the Fiji media corps, at least theoretically or in the mind.

Further probing about media objectivity in terms of whether it was the best and only way for media to serve the public interest elicited the responses displayed in Table 37.

Table 37: Is objectivity the best/only way to serve the public interest?	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly agree	60	84
Disagree or strongly disagree	9	13
Undecided	2	3
TOTAL	71	100

A significant 84 per cent 'agree or strongly agree' that objectivity is the best and only way to serve the public interest, another affirmation of the strong belief in media objectivity among most Fiji journalists. Only 13 per cent 'disagree or strongly disagree' and three per cent were 'undecided'.

In the final question in this section, the objectivity issue was rephrased. Respondents were asked whether the promotion of peace and social cohesion should supersede media objectivity if necessary. Table 38 shows that most respondents, 45 per cent, 'agree or strongly agree' that social cohesion should supersede media objectivity if it ever comes to that.

Table 38: Should promotion of social cohesion supersede objectivity?	Number	Percentage
Agree or strongly agree	32	45
Disagree or strongly disagree	30	42
Undecided	9	13
TOTAL	**71**	**100**

But 42 per cent 'disagree or strongly disagree' while 13 per cent were 'undecided'. The results indicate a fairly significant split in the Fiji journalist corps over this issue. A similar division exists within the wider journalistic community regarding media objectivity and conflict reporting frameworks like peace journalism (see Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011).

Synopsis of the questionnaire survey

The questionnaire survey was used to address Research Question Two: What is the level of diversity and professional capacity of Fiji's news media corps? The survey also covered other areas in relation to conflict reporting, such as commercial, social and political pressures on journalists. The results show some progress in the areas of training and development and some evidence of external and internal pressure on the news process.

In the next section, we look at the problem from a third perspective – the legislative environment concerning media.

5.4   Document Research – legislative environment

This section applied document review to address Research Question Three: What is the genealogy and nature of media legislation in Fiji?

Overview

Most attention has been focussed on the Bainimarama Government and the punitive 2010 Media Decree. This research, in line with its overall approach, broaches the question through a constructivist paradigm, which looks at trends and processes rather than events and individuals. The idea is to study the genealogy and nature of media legislation to understand how the legislation arrived at its current point. The methodology is largely guided by Frohardt and Temin's (2003) conflict reporting framework, which considers three key variables: a) the history of past legislation; b) the degree of media freedom established in the country's laws; and c) the extent to which the laws are enforced. The first element is

normally an indicator of future trends in legislation. The second element could control or cultivate media abuse by defining the space within which media are allowed to operate, as also does the third element.

History of past legislation

Let us start with Fiji's first constitution (commonly known as the King Cakobau Constitution), which contained a set of human rights principles modelled on the French and American constitutions. It was designed by Charles James Herbert de Courcy St Julian (1819–1874), a journalist who served as Fiji's first Chief Justice and Chancellor of the Kingdom of Fiji in 1872 (S. Shameem, 2011).

Once Fiji became a colony in 1874, it came under the constitutional laws of England, including the Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights of 1688, which applied to all the colonies (S. Shameem, 2011). The British laws enshrined freedom of expression, notwithstanding certain caveats to protect the national interest, particularly during the two world wars (Cryle, 2004). Wartime censorship and other restrictions were vigorously opposed by the Empire/Commonwealth Press Union, conceived in 1909 as a mouthpiece and forum for British-language newspapers throughout the Empire. Fiji was on the agenda of the Union's postwar conference at London in 1946 in relation to censorship of cable news (Cryle, 2004). Following independence in 1970, Fiji's legal system continued to be modelled essentially on that of Britain, with some recognition given to customary laws, particularly in the area of land ownership. Despite the constitutional guarantee of (and occasional lip service to) freedom of speech, virtually all Fiji governments since 1970, whether elected or unelected, have threatened to introduce tougher media laws. Sometimes such proposals were in response to embarrassing disclosures, at others to stem media's alleged transgressions (Robie, 2009a, 2009b).

One alleged media indiscretion often used to justify tighter legislation is the ostensible provocation of ethnic tensions. Such concerns have persisted since the establishment of the press in Fiji in the form of the country's first newspaper, the *Fiji Times*, in 1869. The apparent apprehension about media's alleged role in fuelling ethnic tensions, whether real or imagined, has influenced the evolution of media legislation in the country, as this research will show. In the 19th and most of the 20th centuries, it was alleged many times that the *Fiji Times*, the country's only newspaper back then, was attempting to drive a wedge between indigenous Fijians and Indians in support of a White Fiji campaign (Gillion, 1977; Gaunder, 2008; Heartfield, 2002). One letter published in March 1922 described Indians as "evil smelling" and "treacherous" (Gillion, 1977, p. 81).

It prompted then acting Governor Fell to consider legislation to prevent newspapers "promoting racial discord" but there was no such legal precedent in the British Empire to allow this (Gillion, 1977, p.82). In the lead-up to independence in 1970, the then editor of the *Fiji Times*, Len Usher, prompted calls for media control when he criticised indigenous Fijian leader and founding Prime Minister Ratu Mara for "lavishing praise" on the Indo-Fijian opposition. Ratu Mara, in turn, accused the paper of opposing his efforts to promote ethnic co-operation. Politician K. C. Ramrakha warned, "We must strangle this newspaper before it strangles us, and I mean it" (Gaunder, 2008, p. 257). The question of stronger media legislation took a back seat in the face of two key developments – the euphoria over Fiji's independence in 1970 and the arrival of the country's second newspaper, the *Fiji Sun*, in 1974 (Gaunder, 2008). The *Fiji Sun* was jointly owned by the Hong Kong-based Sally Aw Sian publishing empire and New Zealand publisher Philip Harkness (Robie, 2001, p. 151).

The buoyant post-colonial mood coupled with the harsh realities of competition forced the *Fiji Times* to drop its rhetoric. As the political and economic power of the White establishment dwindled, the paper had to re-invent itself from a publication for the elites to one catering for the mainstream. This metamorphosis was part of a global paradigm shift in the early 19th century, when market imperatives in the US and other countries saw newspapers abandon partisanship and embrace the middle ground (Fengler & Ruß-Mohl, 2008, p. 676). In Fiji's case, the 1970 Constitution was a catalyst for further changes in the media. Chapter two, section three, of the constitution guaranteed the freedom of "conscience, expression, assembly and association", constrained by the respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest (Fiji Independence Order 1970 and Constitution of Fiji, 1970, pp. 18–19). These rights were further elaborated in section 12(1), which states:

> no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression … the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference, and freedom from interference with his correspondence. (p. 28)

Other legislation affecting the media was covered under the Penal Code. This included section 66, seditious offences, which stated that any person who "prints, publishes, sells, distributes or reproduces any seditious publication" was liable to face two years' imprisonment and/or a $200 fine (Laws of Fiji, 1945). Section 136 covered contempt of court, while section 148 covered intention to wound religious feelings through written or spoken words (Laws of Fiji, 1945).

The media were also bound by the Official Secrets Acts; Public Order Act [Cap. 20]; Defamation Act [Cap. 34]; Broadcasting Commission Act [Cap. 105]; the Television Decree 1992; Registration of Newspapers Act [Cap. 106]; and Press Corrections Act [Cap. 107]. The last two were repealed after the Bainimarama Government introduced the Media Industry Development Decree in June 2010 (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010).

The 1987 coup, first brush with censorship, and the heady 1990s

As the country's post-independence honeymoon period cooled off, the political climate heated up, culminating in the 1987 nationalist coups. This gave media their first brush with censorship, short-lived as it was (Pareti, 2009). The *Fiji Sun* reportedly closed rather than publish under self-censorship restrictions. A new publication, The *Fiji Daily Post*, began operations in October 1987, going on to become the country's third daily (Robie, 2001). While the military and others who took power in 1987 imposed restrictions in the name of preserving order, they used the indigenous Fijian vernacular newspaper *Nai Lalakai* and the Fijian program on the State broadcaster to promote the coup ideology, further sowing suspicion between the two major ethnicities (Ewins, 1998).

After the 1987 coups, indigenous political supremacy and chiefly power were entrenched through the adoption of the 1990 Constitution (Ewins, 1998). Based on traditionalism, certain sections of the new constitution were in conflict with the British heritage of the Fiji press (as was the racially-imbalanced political system as a whole). Section 13(2) in the 1990 Constitution granted special protections to the reputation, dignity and esteem of indigenous institutions and values, putting them virtually above scrutiny and/or criticism. Such institutions included the Great Council of Chiefs and some other traditional systems and titles (Constitution of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Fiji, 1990; also see Ewins, 1998).

Constitutionally and politically, Fiji embraced traditionalism. But economically it adopted free market reforms as part of the globalisation agenda (Firth, 2000). This had encouraged further opening up of the economy, including the media sector, in the 1980s and 1990s. It was one of the most robust periods in the media sector's evolution. Aside from acting as a trigger for reinvestment in existing companies, deregulation spawned a plethora of new media companies in both print and commercial broadcast, ending government's monopoly of the airwaves (Bhagwan-Rolls, 2007). In 1999, a consortium of local businesses opened a new daily under the same name of the old *Fiji Sun*. This served as a catalyst for the rival *Fiji Daily Post* to announce a major revamp.

The then shareholders – government (44 per cent) and Colonial and the Unit Trust of Fiji (23 per cent each) – injected fresh funds to revitalise the ailing paper (Digitaki, 2000). At the time, a commentator described the Fiji news media market as "saturated, to the point of overflowing", with three dailies, eight commercial radio stations, three monthly business magazines, one commercial TV station and numerous other commercial publications (Digitaki, 2000). The 1990s also marked a strengthening shift toward the Internet. Associated Media Limited, the parent company of the now non-operational news and business magazine, *The Review*, was a pioneer in this field, as was Communications Fiji Limited (Digitaki, 2000). All these developments were marked by a bigger, brasher and bolder journalist corps making new strides into previously uncharted territory, most notably investigative journalism. This drove State–media tensions to a new high.

The new monthly publication, *The Review*, published by Fiji journalist Yashwant Gaundar, exposed the National Bank of Fiji collapse, implicating prominent politicians, businesses, and citizens. This was Fiji's biggest banking scandal, with a recorded loss of FJD372 million (S. Reddy, 2010; also see Grynberg, Munro & White, 2002). *The Review* broke an unwritten taboo by exposing Fiji's first political sex scandal, involving then Prime Minister Rabuka and a female journalist. Certain Rabuka Government ministers threatened stronger media legislation (Rabuka and the reporter, 1994). Such retributive actions are an example of the "backfiring effect" of investigative journalism in Fiji and the Pacific. The backfiring effect refers to the tendency for parties revealed in, and antagonised by, media exposés to take retaliatory actions against news media writers and publishers (see S. Singh, 2012, for an article on this issue developed in the context of this present investigation into the media legislative environment in Fiji).

Self-regulation, constitutional safeguards and market deregulation
The Rabuka Government backed down from imposing stronger laws since the country was democratising and apparently craved international legitimacy. In order to deal with what it regarded as an increasingly belligerent media, government opted for an internationally more palatable plan. In 1996 it commissioned the Thomson Foundation of Britain to carry out a study on 'Future Media Legislation and Regulation for the Republic of the Fiji Islands' (Robie, 2009b). The ensuing report, implemented in 1998, stated that the most appropriate system for Fiji media accountability ought to be applied by an independent, non-governmental body (Morgan & Thomas, 1996, p. 17). The recommendations led to the establishment of British-style self-regulation via a media industry-funded Fiji Media Council made up equally of media company representatives and the public.

A neutral committee would hear complaints lodged against the media and its rulings would be published by all news companies. Apart from naming and shaming offenders, the report did not stipulate any other forms of punishment. Self-regulation was compatible with Fiji's newly-adopted, 1997 Constitution, which was deemed fairer and more equitable than the racially-weighted 1990 Constitution. The 1997 Constitution's preamble recognised the "human rights and fundamental freedoms" of all groups (Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 1997, p. 9).

The media drew their authority from section 30, which stated that, "Every person has the right to freedom of speech and expression, including: (a) freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas; and (b) freedom of the press and other media (Constitution of the Republic of the Fiji Islands, 1997, p. 21). These constitutional guarantees coupled with market deregulation and media self-regulation stimulated further competition in the media sector. It led to a somewhat jingoistic media environment, with a proliferation of both good and bad journalism. If investigative journalism reached new heights, then media tabloidisation reached new lows. Market pressures saw the financially-struggling *Fiji Daily Post* resort to headline stories like an alleged sighting of a ghost in Parliament House and a woman giving birth to snakes (Usman, 2012). This phase did not last. Still, it was fodder for a government trying to justify the introduction of stronger media laws.

The 2000 coup – a watershed event for media legislation in Fiji
As the State–media tensions increased, there were renewed calls from conservative politicians for strict, Singaporean-style, media legislation (Committee to Protect journalists, 1998). In Singapore, "uninhibited" reporting was partly blamed for racial tensions and ethnic riots in the 1950s and 1960s (Ang & Nadarajan, 1996; Asiuzzaman, 2010). Consequently, social cohesion became an important State policy pillar for nation-building and informed Singapore's future media legislation (Harish, 2013). In comparison, Fiji had a relatively peaceful path to independence and the push for greater media regulation was somewhat milder. However, the pressure did build up during the heady 1980s and 1990s. State–media tensions peaked in 1999, when Mahendra Chaudhry became Fiji's first prime minister of Indo-Fijian descent. Unsettled by the relentless criticisms, Chaudhry went as far as to accuse the *Fiji Times* of "subversive actions and provoking racism and sedition". He threatened a "swift justice" media tribunal to curb a "distorting", "lying" and "seditious" press (Chaudhry, 2000, pp. 6–10). But before he could act, he was ousted by the 2000 coup.

The 2000 coup was a watershed event for media freedom in Fiji. Apparently alarmed by the Chaudhry Government's fall, future governments intensified their censorship efforts. The Qarase Government, elected into office in 2001, sought to exert greater State control on the media through the Media Council of Fiji Bill. But it dropped the idea in the face of a fierce "No Media Bill" campaign mounted by the media (Government of the Republic . . ., 2003). After winning a fresh mandate in 2006, the Qarase Government looked poised to re-introduce the media bill but it was ousted in the 2006 Bainimarama coup ('Don't blame media . . .', 2006).

The 2006 coup – cementing censorship and establishing State control
Soon after seizing power in December 2006, the military government embarked on the most intense and sustained media crackdown in the country's history. Initially its agents intimidated and maltreated journalists but later resorted to more sophisticated strategies, such as the use of decrees and emergency laws (Dutt, 2010). In 2008, the allegedly pro-Bainimarama Fiji Human Rights Commission released the *Freedom and Independence of the Media Report* (Robie, 2009b). Authored by Fiji-born-and-bred Hawaiian-based consultant Dr James Anthony, the report criticised media standards, condemned self-regulation, called for punitive measures against breaches of the Public Order Act and recommended that Fiji adopt legislation similar to the Singapore Sedition Act.

The report, claiming that the Fiji media were controlled by a cabal of white editors and publishers (Fiji Human Rights Commission, 2008), was firmly rejected by the media sector as compromised, racist and undemocratic. But some critics, concerned about what they saw as declining standards, supported parts of it (see Robie, 2009b, for a detailed analysis of the Anthony Report). Some recommendations of the Anthony Report are manifest in the Bainimarama Administration's 2010 Media Decree, which is discussed more fully later in this section. A major piece of legislation that profoundly affected the media was the Public Emergency Regulation (PER). It was activated a day after the April 9, 2009, landmark ruling by the Fiji Court of Appeal declaring the 2006 coup unlawful. Through the PER the State obtained sweeping powers to censor the news and revoke the licences of offending media outlets. Compliance was enforced by State censors placed in all Fiji newsrooms to clear copy prior to publication (Dutt, 2010; Public Emergency Regulation, 2009).

The PER was continuously extended before it was lifted in January 2012, only to be replaced by the Public Order Act Amendment Decree (POAD). This decree gave government the discretion to use whatever force it deemed necessary to enforce public order and preserve the peace, including the use of firearms (Public Order (Amendment) Decree, 2012; United States Department of State, 2013, p. 9). In 2009, Fiji's century-old Penal Code was replaced by the Crimes Decree (Freedom House, 2011). Under section 65, "urging political violence or inciting communal antagonism" through any form of communication (including electronic communication) is an indictable offence liable to 10 years' imprisonment. The decree covers the use of electronic media, by Fiji residents or corporations from other countries, to commit offences (Crimes Decree, 2009, p. 1054–1056; Freedom House, 2011).

The core, all-encompassing media legislation, the *Media Industry Development Decree 2010*, was promulgated in June 2010. It is outlined here at some length to establish the base for analysis and discussion in the following chapter. The media decree stipulates stiff fines and jail terms for any breaches of media code. A somewhat milder version of an earlier draft, the decree purports to incorporate all media-related laws under one regime. This includes the relevant constitutional provisions, the Public Order Act and the now void Fiji Media Council's code of ethics (Freedom House, 2011). The decree, modelled partly on sections of Singapore's media law (Dutt, 2010), establishes itself in *Part One* as part of the country's law. *Part Two* empowers the relevant Minister to establish the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) consisting of a chairperson and five other members. This includes the Solicitor-General or his/her nominee and representatives of consumer affairs, children, women and the media industry (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, p. 734).

MIDA is tasked with enforcing compliance with the codes of practice, advising the Minister on media matters, facilitating quality media services and promoting local content. The news and advertising codes are similar to those of the now defunct Fiji Media Council, except that what were once regarded as ethical breaches are treated as criminal offences (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). *Part Three* integrates the media code of ethics and practice, the general code of practice for advertisements, the code for advertising to children and the television program classification code that governs all media organisations. *Part Four* deals with content regulation. It disallows any material that is against the "public interest or order", against "national interest", or "creates communal discord". Print media stories in excess of 50 words must include a byline (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, pp. 738–739).

Part Five, covering enforcement, empowers MIDA to investigate any media breaches and refer them to the Tribunal, as well as powers to enter, search and seize under warrant. On the basis of good cause, MIDA can procure an order from the Tribunal to force the disclosure of the sources of any published information, except in cases of State corruption. The Attorney General can be heard at Tribunal proceedings, where he can also table submissions in writing (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, pp. 739–741).

Part Six, covering registration, requires all media organisations to submit to MIDA sworn affidavits disclosing proprietors' contact details and ownership interests. Broadcast media have to lodge location of stations, repeater stations, any relevant premises involved in broadcasting and all applicable frequencies. Newspapers and magazines are required to provide contact details of printers and publishers (p. 743). *Part Seven*, dealing with media ownership, is covered in detail later in this chapter.

Part Eight establishes the single-member media Tribunal Chairperson – a qualified judge appointed by the President on the Attorney-General's advice. The Tribunal has the jurisdiction to receive and adjudicate on all matters relating to alleged breaches of media codes. *Part Nine* establishes the complaints procedure, open to any person or entity against any media organisation deemed to have breached the decree. MIDA can proactively carry out an investigation and report to the Tribunal even if no complaint has been lodged (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, pp. 747–752).

Part 10 details the proceedings concerned with hearings before the Tribunal, which can fine offending media organisations up to FJD100,000; publishers or editors up to FJD25,000; and media workers up to FJD1,000. The Tribunal can also compel media companies to make written public apologies to wronged complainants and pay restitution of up to FJD100,000. Culpable publishers and editors are liable to pay compensation of up to FJD25,000 and journalists up to FJD1,000. These awards are enforceable through the High Court (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, pp. 751–762). MIDA and the Tribunal have virtual protection from legal liabilities, civil or criminal, although the complainants or MIDA can challenge Tribunal decisions in the Fiji Court of Appeal. Media organisations can do likewise, but only if it involves payments in excess of FJD50,000 (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, p. 755).

Part 11, Miscellaneous Provisions, outlines the powers of the Minister concerned. This includes the authority to impose pre-publication censorship and close down non-compliant media organisations in the event of an emergency (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, pp. 749–755). The Minister may also direct the performance of the functions of the Authority, amend media codes as MIDA recommends, and issue policy and financial guidelines to the Tribunal (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010).

Upon conviction for breaches of certain provisions, a media organisation can be fined up to FJD100,000; a publisher or editor up to FJD25,000 and/or two years' imprisonment; and a journalist or media worker up to FJD1000 and/or two years' imprisonment.

Other significant legislation relating to the media includes:

- the Television (Amendment) Decree 2012 (2012, p. 1439), which empowers the Minister to "revoke" or "vary" the licence of any broadcaster deemed to have breached the media code of ethics and practice
- the State Proceedings (Amendment) Decree 2012 (2012), which shielded all government ministers from defamation lawsuits in both their official and unofficial capacities. The same immunity was extended to media organisations that reported any defamatory comments made by ministers (Government nullified this decree in July 2014)
- Political Parties. . . (Amendment) Decree (2013) that barred media from reporting or representing political parties that had been deregistered from contesting the 2014 elections. Breaches could result in a maximum FJD50,000 fine and/or five years' prison (Political parties . . ., 2013, p. 145).

In September 2013 the government signed into law a new constitution, with elections announced for September in the following year. Chapter Two of the 2013 Constitution has a Bill of Rights that enshrines every individual's right to "freedom of speech, expression, thought, opinion and publication". It also guarantees "freedom of the press, including print, electronic and other media" (Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, 2013, p. 12). The State can limit these rights for reasons pertaining to national security, public safety and order, or the orderly conduct of elections. It can also suspend these rights to prevent hate speech and inaccurate and/or offensive media reports; avert ill will between ethnic or religious groups; and compel media to disclose information received in confidence; (Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, 2013, p. 13). Paradoxically, under 173(1),

Preservation of laws, the 2013 Constitution retains the interim government's decrees (including the 2010 Media decree and the POAD), which supersede the constitution in the event of any inconsistencies. Under 173(4), the decrees are exempt from any legal challenges (Constitution of the Republic Fiji, 2013, pp. 112-114).

Synopsis of media legislation

This section has addressed research Question Three: What are the genesis and nature of Fiji's media laws? This research has shown that in all four of the country's constitutions since independence, media freedom has been enshrined; however, the spectre of tighter legislation has also always hung threateningly over everything. This threat became reality after the 2006 coup.

We now turn to the next section, media ownership patterns in Fiji.

5.5   Document research – media ownership, reach and influence

This section uses document review to address Research Question Four: What are the genesis and nature of media ownership in Fiji and the link with political and economic power?

Overview

The study of media ownership is integral to any analysis about conflict reporting, particularly in fragile, multi-ethnic societies, where governments, politicians and other powerful interests may own or control much of the media channels. Economically and/or politically powerful media owners have allegedly used their dominance of the public sphere to influence people and move them towards conflict, as in Kenya, Rwanda and Serbia (Frohardt & Temin, 2003; Nyanjom, 2012; M. Thompson, 1999). The study takes a constructivist and instrumentalist theoretical approach to take into account both the processes and motives that may have influenced Fiji's media ownership structure. This is in line with Deacon, Murdock and Golding's (1999) recommendation that researchers determine trends and patterns of media ownership over time to gain a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon. The authors also advocate identifying the dominant media owners and determining their market share and capitalisation to gauge the media company's control, penetration, influence and dominance. All shareholders with over five per cent holdings should be identified, as well as any close ties – political or familial – between individual shareholders (Deacon, Murdock & Golding, 1999).

Fiji's media ownership structure

Fiji's media ownership structure falls under three broad categories: State or public-owned, primarily in broadcasting; privately-owned, across print, broadcast and online media; and community media, run by non-profit civil society organisations, largely in broadcast. The two major commercial print media companies are owned by two large local conglomerates with vast investments in other sectors of the economy. In the field of television, Fiji Broadcasting Commission TV (FBC) is State-owned while Mai TV and Fiji TV Limited are privately owned, although a State-controlled investment company holds majority shares in the latter. All three television stations compete in the free-to-air market. Fiji TV also runs pay-tv channels. In all, television content is largely dominated by foreign productions, with some local programs (Pacific Media and Communications Facility, 2005; Robie, 2014; Tacchi et al., 2013). Of the two major radio stations, FBC Radio is owned by the State while Communications Fiji Limited (CFM) radio group is owned by private interests. Radio remains the major mass medium in Fiji, particularly in rural areas and outlying islands (Tacchi et al., 2013). The commercial radio stations broadcast daily current affairs news on a regular basis, as well as robust talkback shows.

Laws governing ownership

The key laws governing media ownership are covered in *Part Seven* of the 2010 Media Decree. Section 38 limits foreign shareholding to 10 per cent, with 90 per cent of controlling interests to be held by Fiji citizens permanently resident in the country (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, p. 743). Section 39 introduces cross-media ownership regulation. It stipulates that media owners and their immediate family and associates may own a further interest in only one other company of the same medium, restricted to 25 per cent of non-voting interest (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). Beneficial interests in a media organisation of a different medium are limited to five per cent of non-voting interest. The State, or any State-owned entity, or any media organisation in which the State owns majority shares, is exempt from these requirements (p. 746).

The focus of this section is largely on the country's major daily news providers – FBC, *Fiji Times, Fiji Sun*, Fiji TV, and CFM. These five organisations have the greatest reach and market penetration and they were the ones most affected by the Bainimarama Government's 2010 Media Decree. The *Fiji Daily Post*, inactive since 2010, is also reviewed as it was, at one time, Fiji's third major daily and the only paper in which the State bought shares. Smaller, privately-owned media organisations less affected by the decree are not covered in a detailed manner. The main ones include the Suva-based news portal Fijilive.com; monthly print publications like *República*, *Mai Life* and *The Jet*;

and Fiji's third television station, Mai TV. Except for Fijilive, none of these companies produce local news on a daily basis.

Fiji Times

Established in 1869, the *Fiji Times* is the country's oldest and largest privately-owned newspaper. It changed hands several times before News Limited Australia – a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation Limited – bought it in 1987 as part of the group's acquisition of *The Herald & Weekly Times* (Chessell, 2010). The *Fiji Times* claims an audited average readership of 72,993 from Monday to Friday; 114,024 on Saturday; and 68,115 on Sunday (*Fiji Times* top readership figures, 2011). The company also produces the indigenous-language weekly *Nai Lalakai*, the Hindi-language weekly *Shanti Dut*, and *Kaila*, an English weekly that focuses on youth (Tacchi et al., 2013; also see the company website, http://www.fijitimes.com/). The *Fiji Times* was sold on September 2010 to a local conglomerate, the Motibhai Group, to comply with the new foreign ownership laws (Dutt, 2010). Motibhai's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Mahendra Motibhai Patel, was a long-time board member of paper (Robie, 2010). Motibhai's other businesses and assets are outlined in the following chapter (Chapter 6) on discussion and analysis of results.

Fiji Daily Post

The *Fiji Daily Post* was the country's third daily. Established in 1987 by Wame Waqanisanini, the *Fiji Daily Post* was a significant foray into the news media sector by local indigenous investors. It suspended operations in 2010, but any analysis on media ownership in Fiji would not be complete without including this newspaper through which three different governments tried to gain a hold in Fiji's print media sector (Digitaki, 2000; Pacific Media and Communications Facility, 2005; Robie, 2001) The *Post's* key local individual and original publisher, Dan Bolea, had no major stake in other sectors of the Fiji economy. There are no available audited circulation figures for the paper but estimates ranged from 15,000 copies at its peak in the 1990s to about 5,000 prior to its closure (Moore, 2008). In an unprecedented move, the Rabuka Government purchased 44 per cent holding in the ailing paper just prior to the 1999 general election. Critics saw the purchase as a major threat to media independence (Digitaki, 2000; Fiji Government takeover . . ., 1999). Colonial Fiji Ltd and Unit Trust of Fiji also acquired shares in the paper before Australian publisher Alan Hickling eventually gained a controlling interest (Robie, 2004, 2014).

The Labour Party roundly criticised the Rabuka Government for buying into the *Post*. But after forming the People's Coalition Government in 1999, it decided to retain the paper (Digitaki, 2000). After the coalition government's ouster in the 2000 coup, the Qarase Government that eventually emerged announced in 2003 that it would sell off the newspaper to indigenous Fijian interests after nursing it back to financial health (Robie, 2003b, 2003c). In the year 2004–2005, the Fiji Government was the major shareholder, with a 44 per cent interest. Government-linked entities also started buying into other private media companies (Robie, 2001; T. R. Singh, 2011). The one-time acting editor of the *Post*, Mesake Koroi, was a cousin of then Prime Minister Qarase. Under Koroi's editorship, the paper was accused of supporting the Qarase administration. The Qarase Government gave Koroi a special appointment in Fiji's Ministry of Information in 2002 (Koroi gets special job . . ., 2002). The *Post* struggled after the 2006 coup due to the harsh publishing climate. The new foreign ownership regulation disqualified Alan Hickling, an Australian, from holding a majority stake in the paper, which had effectively closed by 2010 (Freedom House, 2011).

Communications Fiji Ltd

Suva-based Communications Fiji Limited (CFM) was founded by local radio personality William Parkinson in 1985 (Pacific Media and Communications Facility, 2005, p. 141). CFM was among the first media ventures to involve a major local conglomerate, Hari Punja and Sons Limited. It listed on the South Pacific Stock Exchange in 2001. It operates five radio stations in Fiji, and claims to have 60 per cent of the audience. It also owns the news portal Fijivillage.com; the Internet service provider, Unwired Fiji; Total Event Company Limited; and CinemaADs (see company website, http://www.cfl.com.fj/). CFM claims to be the largest radio company in the South Pacific, with daily airings to over three million people in four different languages. Offshore, its Papua New Guinea subsidiary, PNG FM, operates three radio stations. CFM also owns one-third of Papua New Guinea Paradise Cinemas (Wilson, 2013). In 2012, the Group returned a record after-tax profit of FJD2.2m on Group sales of FJD14.1m. This was an increase of 155 per cent on the previous year (Communications Fiji Ltd, 2013). Of this, Fiji accounted for FJD937,000 and Papua New Guinea for FJD1.3m. As a fully-owned local company, CFM was largely unaffected by the caps on foreign ownership. However, restrictions on cross-ownership led to the departure of Hari Punja and Sons (Punja sells . . ., 2012). Parkinson Holdings, which represented the interests of CFM managing director William Parkinson, acquired Punja's shares, making it the largest shareholder at 55.48 per cent (Punja sells. . ., 2012).

The other major CFM shareholders as per the company's 2011 annual report were: Unit Trust of Fiji Limited (10.72 per cent); BSP Investments Fiji Limited (7.11 per cent); Matt Wilson (3.17 per cent); and Kontiki Funds Limited (2.48 per cent) (Communications Fiji Limited, 2011, p. 38). Unit Trust of Fiji is a government commercial company. Former journalist Matt Wilson is chairman and a founder of CFM (Communications Fiji Limited, 2013). Kontiki Funds Limited is an investment banker based in Suva (see the company website, http://www.kontiki.com.fj/pages.cfm/about/).

Fiji Television Limited

Television was introduced in Fiji in 1991 to air that year's Rugby World Cup, morphing into Fiji Television Limited (Fiji TV) in 1994 as the country's first national television network. It listed on the South Pacific Stock exchange in 1996 (Robie, 2009a, 2009b). As of early 2014, the Fiji TV Group comprised Fiji TV, Media Niugini Limited (Papua New Guinea) and Media Solomon Islands Limited (Solomon Islands) (About us, 2014; Fiji TV, 2014; History of Fiji TV, 2004). Fiji TV positions itself as the leading television broadcaster in Fiji and the Pacific. It claims to operate the most-watched free-to-air TV stations in Fiji and Papua New Guinea – Fiji One and EMTV respectively. SKY Pacific, launched in 2005, covers 10 other Pacific Island countries with 17 channels to its name. Fiji TV claims transmission coverage of the majority of Fiji's population (About us, 2014; Fiji TV, 2014; History of Fiji TV, 2004; Tacchi, et al., 2013).

For the 2012/2013 financial year, the Fiji TV Group reported a net profit of FJD3.6m compared with FJD4.2m the previous year (Fiji TV, 2014, p. 2). Fiji TV's top eight shareholders as per the 2013 annual report were: FHL Media at 51.95 per cent; Punja and Sons at 26.16 per cent; Unit Trust of Fiji at 4.66 per cent; CJ Patel at 2.43 per cent; Dominion Insurance at 1.21 per cent; Kontiki Fund Limited at 0.77 per cent; and Fiji National Provident Fund at 0.42 per cent (Fiji TV, 2014, p. 59). FHL Media Limited is a subsidiary of Fijian Holdings Limited (FHL), a State-funded local equity investment company set up in 1984 to help indigenous Fijians catch up with Indo-Fijian entrepreneurs (Fijian Holdings, 2013; Ratuva, 2013).

As of 2013, FHL had an FJD$87 million investment portfolio spread across building, construction and property; tourism and financial services; and manufacturing and retail. The company recorded consolidated revenues of FJD233 million in 2013, reflecting a 27 per cent growth. This yielded a pre-tax profit of FJD9.8 million, a five per cent increase over the previous year. Of its total portfolio, media and telecommunications constituted just 2.1 per cent (Fijian Holdings, 2013, pp. 26–27).

Fiji TV's second largest shareholder, Hari Punja and Sons Limited, is a major player in the food manufacturing and distribution industry in Fiji and the Pacific through its six subsidiaries. The company surpassed the $200 million mark in earnings in 2011 (see the company website, http://www.fmf.com.fj/). In 2013, the group launched a $20-million hotel complex project in Fiji as part of a total $55 million expansion (Hari Punja's $20m Palms Denarau . . ., 2013).

Fiji Sun

The *Fiji Sun* was relaunched under new ownership in September 1999. This new initiative was led by a consortium of major Fiji businesses, including CJ Patel & Company Limited; Vinod Patel & Company Limited; and FHL (which divested its holdings in September 2013 to comply with cross-media ownership laws) (FHL divests *Fiji Sun*, 2013). Major shareholder CJ Patel is a multi-sector company with food procurement and distribution operations across Fiji and the Pacific (Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). The bulk of CJ Patel's revenue is derived from 20 companies based on ownership models ranging from joint venture to wholly-owned subsidiaries. These companies are involved in manufacturing, sales, marketing and distribution of goods and services in various industries (see CJ Patel website, http://cjp.com.fj/cjp/). In 2012 a CJ Patel subsidiary, Southern Cross Foods (Ltd), purchased the State monopoly, Rewa Dairy, for a reported price of FJD10 million (Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). Another shareholder, Vinod Patel, proclaims itself the country's "biggest name in hardware". It also imports Chinese vehicles through a subsidiary, Wheels Pacific, and is involved in interior design work (see company website, http://www.vinodpatel.com.fj/). In 2011, Vinod Patel purchased the rival Suncourt Hardware Company Limited after the sale was approved by the State's Commerce Commission (Vinod Patel buys . . ., 2011). The *Fiji Sun* does not have independently audited sales figures, although in 2011 it won a Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers' Association advertising award in the 25,000-circulation category (Fiji Sun shines . . ., 2011).

Fiji Broadcasting Corporation

Fiji's oldest broadcaster, the State-owned FBC, first started operating in 1935 under licence from the Posts and Telegraphs Department (Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, 2012). It was corporatised in January 1998 and started operating under the name of Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Limited. FBC operates a network of six radio stations, two in each of the three major languages (I-Taukei, Hindustani and English), reaching most parts of the country (Fiji Broadcasting Corporation, 2012). In 2011, FBC received a FJD24 million government-guaranteed loan, enabling it to launch its free-to-air television station in December 2011 to mark its 57th anniversary.

With the financial backing of the State, the FBC CEO Riyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, a former Fiji Television journalist, revamped and revitalised FBC, extending its nationwide coverage and the scope of free-to-air programs. But his appointment was controversial as the younger brother of Fiji's Attorney General, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, even though he went through the standard selection criteria (see Narsey, 2013b, 2013c).

Synopsis of media ownership section

This section addressed research Question Four: What is the nature of media ownership, reach and influence in Fiji? Document research shows that since independence in 1970, media ownership patterns have moved towards increased corporatisation. The placing of restrictions on cross and foreign media ownership since 2010 has seen increased conglomeration of the print media.

Next, we move to the final phase of this particular chapter, in-depth interviews.

5.6   In-depth interviews

This section presents the findings of the in-depth interviews, the fourth and final method used for this research. These interviews were conducted to supplement the previous three research methods by incorporating direct human interaction, experience and knowledge into the findings.

Overview

Since this thesis is primarily about understanding meaning making by journalists, the majority of the 19 interviewees were selected from the news media sector. They ranged across current and former journalists, including reporter, sub-editor, news editor, editor, and media industry executive roles. Three interviewees were from academia, one from community radio and another from talkback radio. The interviewees were purposively selected because of their specialist knowledge of media, politics and society in Fiji and due to their practical, professional and personal records. The material collected from the interviews has been organised thematically to provide a narrative about the state of the news media based on the interviewees' experiences and perspectives, especially after the 2006 coup. Seven broad themes were identified: challenges journalists face and alleged faults in the media sector; the impact of State control mechanisms; journalists' education, working conditions and attrition rates; pressure from owners and advertisers; media's alleged political bias and conflict reporting; the viability of alternative conflict reporting frameworks; and media's potential role in nation-building and the future of journalism.

Challenges faced by journalists and alleged faults in the media sector

A major theme emanating from the interviews was the perennial pitfalls journalists face in a politically and ethnically divided country like Fiji. Reporting in this situation requires negotiating a host of social, cultural and political sensitivities rooted in the diversity of the country's social fabric. These cross-cutting issues affect virtually all media industry workers in one form or another, be they reporters or CEOs. Predominantly, they include the seemingly racial outlook of Fiji's different communities; leaders' alleged hyper-sensitivity to criticism; an apparent perception among political parties and governments that certain media organisations are biased against them; and a culture of deference towards traditional leaders and people of rank.

The following sentiments typify what interviewees see as some of the core problems:

- *No matter how much we try to be fair and balanced, in people's eyes, we will always be seen as biased. (Former Editor One, 25. 09. 12)*

- *Government sees the media as an adversary. This has been the case with all governments. They see us as nosy parkers out to upset the balance of power. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*

- *The cultural challenge is very strong. Regardless of the culture you come from, you are not supposed to ask direct questions. We come from a leadership-led society. We are supposed to accept what the leaders say, be they national leaders, family leaders, community leaders or church leaders. The unique case in Fiji is that if you ask questions, you are seen to be rude. Breaking that mindset and saying 'it is okay to ask questions' is about the biggest challenge we face. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

- *The struggle of a young, female journalist starts in the newsroom when you are not assigned certain stories because you are the weaker gender. You have to fight against the newsroom hierarchy. Right now you see more females in the newsroom but males dominate the newsroom culture. They decide how stories get covered and who is assigned. It's the same thing in the field where people make snide comments. As a young journalist fresh out of university, you are not taken seriously until you prove yourself. (University-educated journalist, 01.10.12)*

Virtually all interviewees stated that some issues and difficulties also emanate from weaknesses within the industry. The following comments exemplify such feelings:

- *We can't say that we are perfect – open the papers or watch television and you see slanted and biased reporting every day. Glaring mistakes and sensationalism are common. How certain issues are portrayed is questionable. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager One, 18. 09. 12)*

One interviewee alleged that the newspaper that she once worked for habitually published one-sided stories to meet deadlines:

- *Often, there is not enough time and the paper, for the correct reason or not, runs with the story, just for the sake of making sure we have a front page. It was atrocious how the paper would report without any reasonable counter. I wonder if it was ever asked, 'should we be even running this? How will this help us?' Many times it was about getting the headlines and stealing the show rather than carrying out a public service. (Former Print Journalist, 26. 09. 12)*

Interviewees from outside the news media sector were also critical of what they regarded as questionable media standards. Two academics claimed that the media are too reliant on press releases and too fixated on politicians, thus marginalising other groups and voices. The community radio broadcaster alleged that at times media are overtly biased.

- *Lots of journalists rely on press releases, which they use verbatim. That's not the way to do it. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, journalists worked very hard. The editors and subeditors kept them on their toes. I do not think this has been the case in recent years. (Academic One, 20. 09. 12)*
- *Media tend to parrot the views of what I call an elite coalition of the privileged few – politicians, business leaders and civil society activists. Media do not seek the views of academics and intellectuals often enough. They are more interested in sensational issues and political rhetoric. They only focus on what is happening at a particular point in time. (Academic Two, 29. 09. 12)*
- *Journalists have various affiliations – political, religious and provincial. These show up in their reports, especially during coups. (Community Radio Broadcaster, 03. 10. 12)*

One interviewee from the news media industry stated that most journalists were doing their best in what was, socially and politically, an extremely tricky environment. Journalists, like the rest of the population, were not immune to ethnic biases.

- *I have an editorial staff member from the indigenous community who has some racial*
- *issues. We are trying to deal with it. You really can't blame him as he was born into this system. (Broadcast Executive Two, 28. 09. 12)*
- *We always have to be careful not to be swayed by political or racial rhetoric when talking to politicians. We have to check ourselves from time to time to ensure that we are sticking to the issues rather than getting caught up in the propaganda. (Former Print Journalist, 26. 09. 12)*

Another interviewee felt that there is no justification for ethnically-biased reporting and that journalists, of all people, should remain above racial stereotyping:

- *Your opinions are formed by your culture and by what you are taught. I would like to think that I was always taught to be fair. As a journalist you must have a sense of justice. You've got to be absolutely non-racial in your outlook and treat everyone equally. I know of instances where journalists were biased because of the racial background. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

Alleged professional shortcomings in the media sector were one of the government's central justifications for implementing stronger legislation. These State control mechanisms generated a lot of feelings among the interviewees. These are presented in the following section.

Attitude towards the 2006 coup and the impact of State control mechanisms
The interviews reveal that like the rest of Fiji's population, journalists are divided over the 2006 coup and subsequent media legislation such as the Public Emergency Regulation (PER) and the 2010 Media Decree. Government maintains the decrees are needed to provide stability. However, most interviewees felt that it is more about control and curtailing criticism. Media company employees complained about the impracticalities of the decrees, although a few interviewees were more tolerant, and even supported, the government's actions. The following comments represent the gist of the interviewees' feelings:

- *The censors stationed in newsrooms rejected stories that even remotely portrayed the government in poor light – standard stories dealing with declining health services, or deteriorating roads. Professionally, journalists found this hard to tolerate. It caused them to question the true motives about the coup. (Former Editor One, 25. 09. 12)*
- *During the PER State control was almost absolute. There was more pressure than ever before. Stories were constantly checked and rechecked, with heavy involvement from the legal section since anything could end up in court. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*
- *The law was supposed to enforce balanced reporting but it was used to avoid media scrutiny. People we needed to interview to balance a story deliberately ignored our interview requests. The media decree meant that we just couldn't run some stories. So the public had no knowledge of these issues. (Television Journalist, 18. 09. 12)*

Such concerns apparently remained unaddressed in the absence of consultations between the media industry and the regulatory authority. One interviewee asserted that there had been virtually no meetings in the two years the media legislation had been in place:

- *A media law needs to be a breathing, living document and the body overseeing it needs to be functional. (Broadcast Executive Three, 24. 09. 12)*

The tougher legislative environment appears to have exacerbated a longstanding staff turnover problem in some newsrooms. One interviewee stated that he lost five journalists in the space of 18 months. Retaining his core editorial team became a major preoccupation:

- *Trying to keep people motivated in this environment is tough. I have lost quality people with 10 or more years of experience. I could lose a lot more people before 2014. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager One, 18. 09. 12)*

The interviews indicated that some media, having lived through the 1987 and 2000 coups, were adapting to the conditions in order to function and survive as best they could. One interviewee felt that some media companies erred in imposing news blackouts in protest over the PER as this only resulted in a tougher government crackdown. He stated that his company had built loyalty by providing round-the-clock coverage of coups and natural disasters. For his company, there was never any question of boycotting news reporting:

- *Our response to the coup was based on the long-term interest of the whole company rather than just the news section, which forms a small part of the group. In our case 140-plus jobs were at stake. The newsroom could not operate in isolation. It had to consider the wider interests of the company. If [the editor] broadcasts anything that will harm the company or the workers, I will be the first to show him the door. (Broadcast Executive Two, 28. 09. 12)*

Yet another interviewee felt it was possible to work within the confines of the 2010 Media Decree and produce at least some good journalism. He stated that journalists could be functional in relative safety as long as they followed the standard journalistic codes of ethics. In this interviewee's view, working within the boundaries of the 2010 Media Decree should not mean having to collaborate with the Bainimarama Government:

- *We have been working under the media decree. We have produced public interest stories. We have been critical of the Bainimarama Government. As long as you follow the code of ethics you can do your job safely. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager Two, 28. 09. 12)*

A veteran of the Fiji media industry felt that in Fiji, a "softy-softly" approach in a politically-tense, multi-ethnic country like Fiji had its advantages, especially when faced with the realities of surviving a coup. This interviewee stated that a pragmatic approach not only allowed them to carry out useful journalistic functions, but also enabled the company to outlast and survive previous coups:

- *During the coups we were able to continue operating. A lot of jobs were saved. And we were still able to keep an eye on the government. We could comment on government decisions and we had some influence. Once we ran a piece on a shooting that occurred at a checkpoint. We suggested that the army should perhaps move further away from the road, closer to its barracks. And sure enough, the next day they had moved. That's a minor example of the kind of positive impact persuasive articles could have even in a coup situation. (Former Editor Two, 03. 09. 12)*

This interviewee was asked whether a softly-softly approach was consistent with media's watchdog role and also whether the media were answerable to an illegal regime. The response was adamant:

- *That's a very important consideration. Any military coup is illegal. It puts the media in a very awkward position. You either resist or you work within the limited freedom that you have. The media has to face the reality. You can't recognise it as a legal government and yet you can't ignore the reality of its existence. It leaves the media between a rock and a hard place. But you don't have to be shouting from the rooftops to hold leaders to account. Language is the most powerful tool in the world. There are many ways in which we can write and comment on public issues. (Former Editor Two, 03. 09. 12)*

At least two interviewees supported what they saw as the Bainimarama Government's nation-building policies, including rural development and a common name for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity. This is reflected in the following comments:

- *Government's multiracial policies are forward-looking. They are changing people's racial outlook and moving the country away from ethno-nationalism. I believe media should support this. (Section Editor at a Daily, 27. 09. 12)*
- *I never thought I would see the historic day when all citizens would be known as Fijians. Two things still freak me out – one, that this is happening in my lifetime; and two, that I am in a position to promote it, which is pretty fantastic. We should seize the window of opportunity to promote the message of a non-racial Fiji. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

Broadcast Executive One did not seem to have any qualms about discarding media neutrality and taking a stance on such issues:

- *I agree we should report objectively. But I will not report fundamentally divisive things. Journalism is not practised the same in every country. Fiji is very unique. We still have a long way to go before we can practise free-for-all journalism. Let's also be fair about development stories and about not doing stories that will harm the country. I believe the message of a common identity is a good one and media should support it. Time is of the essence. A new government could come into power and re-introduce the divisive policies of old. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

However, one interviewee felt that media best serves the national interest by being neutral rather than showing any kind of partiality, regardless of the issue at stake. Another questioned the Bainimarama Government's true motives.

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- *It is not the media's job to promote government's policy. Media should report the facts and leave it to the public to make up its own mind. The public is capable of making up its mind. We should concentrate on reporting the facts in an impartial manner. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager Two, 28. 09. 12)*
- *Is the Bainimarama Government genuine about multi-racialism or is it trying to hold on to power? Should we support an unelected government that is imposing top-down multi-racial policies? We need to ask whether such policies are working at the grassroots level rather than support them blindly. (Former Editor One, 25. 09. 12)*

An academic summed up these discussions in the following way:

- *Media have a constructive role to play. Media can be critical and constructive, and also critical and destructive. Historically, there has been more destruction in our case. Some of what is happening is the [Qarase] Government's fault, some of it is the fault of people who have usurped power. You don't want the media to be a mouthpiece of government. But media have to look at themselves and ask 'what have we done, what have we not done and what could we do to help Fiji's recovery'. (Academic One, 20. 09. 12)*

While there is broad acceptance about the need to improve media professionalism, there are some doubts about the Bainimarama Government's legitimacy and its use of stronger legislation to lift standards. Most respondents felt that a better strategy is to focus on training and education. This is discussed next.

Journalist education, working conditions and attrition
One issue about which there was virtually total agreement among the interviewees was the need to boost training and educational opportunities for journalists. The following interviewee's lamentation about the lack of opportunities and the absence of support from journalist organisations was typical of the sentiments expressed.

- *I have not received any kind of training from any regional or national journalist organisation. The only training I received was on the job or at university. (Television Journalist,18. 09. 12)*

Another interviewee enrolled in a postgraduate-level course spoke of a "knowledge gap" in her newsroom:

- *That depth of knowledge is missing because the seniors themselves do not have the theory or the educational grounding to make them think critically. I realise this now because of the readings I have been through as a postgraduate student. It is not just formal education, it is important for journalists to read. But we do not have a reading culture in most Fiji newsrooms. [In-house] training teaches you skills – we had subediting and management courses. But it was from an Australian perspective. It does not teach critical thinking. We need something tailored for the region. (Former Print Journalist, 26. 09. 12)*

A veteran journalist with no formal qualifications despite his many years in the industry perhaps best summed up how desperate the training and education opportunities are. He said:

- *We are stuck in here and just go through the mill with no time for creativity or thinking. There is no time to reflect. The newsroom environment is not conducive for reflective thinking. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*

This interviewee was a product of the cadet system. Yet another interviewee felt strongly that cadetships were no longer suitable because Fiji's political, social and economic climate had become far more complicated since the coups:

- *Young cadets learning on the job are more susceptible to various inside and outside influences. Often they are thrown in the deep end to learn through trial and error. This is not enough in today's Fiji. (Television Journalist, 18. 09. 12)*

But one interviewee stated that in his experience, reporters with commitment and the right mind-set could perform better than university-trained journalists:

- *People from universities have the training but whether they have the right attributes to be journalists, I am not sure. You can't really teach it; you either have it or you don't. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*

All three media executives interviewed asserted that their companies were offering all the training support within their means. They felt that if that was insufficient, government and donor agencies could step in, provided the training schemes were well researched, transparent and unconditional:

- *Training programs should be provided and administered by impartial and independent sources with all media organisations benefitting equally. Anything else would be viewed with suspicion. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

- *Training of any sort is going to be welcomed by all. But you need to go back and see if there is a problem in the first place and what sort of problem. Any such study has to be inclusive – not just carried out by the State, or by the media, and certainly not by a parachute consultant. It can't be a one-week or two-week study and it needs to address some key questions. What role do the media have? A reporting role or an educating role? Who are the funders of the training? What do they want? You can't say there is a nice, simple answer to all of this. Anyone who even suggests that is being extremely naïve. (Broadcast Executive Three, 24. 09. 12)*

- *Training is a top priority. We have regular in-house training for all our staff. This includes technicians and newsroom staff. We regularly bring in experts from abroad. Over the years our organisation has trained many people who have since moved on and done really well in the industry. We do not mind government or any other organisation assisting with training. But we have to be consulted and there should be no strings attached. Otherwise our independence will come into question. (Broadcast Executive Two, 28. 09. 12)*

Related to education and media standards are the issues of working conditions and the apparent high attrition rate of journalists. There was a clear division on this topic. On one side, practising journalists and interviewees from outside the media sector allege that the low salaries in the sector are a weak link. On the other side, the three media company executives insist that their journalists are fairly compensated. The following responses are typical of the sentiments working journalists expressed when asked if they were adequately remunerated:

- *No. It is an issue that has been talked about for years with minimal results. (Section Editor at a Daily, 27. 09. 12)*

- *It is high time some sort of salary structure was put in place because most journalists and cameramen are underpaid. That's why we lose really good personnel. (Television Journalist, 18. 09. 12)*

- *A transparent salary structure and promotion criteria were are needed so we know exactly where we stand at any given time rather than be subjected to the [whim] of the editors and publishers. (Section Editor at a Daily, 27. 09. 12)*
- *I have been in media for 28 years. I started on $1000 [per annum] and worked my way up to my current salary of $28,000. I live alone with no family commitments. For me it has never been about money. But if you ask some other journalists, they are not happy because there is no pay structure. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09.12)*

A number of interviewees linked what they saw as a high rate of journalist attrition to the alleged low salaries offered in the industry. They contended that the punitive 2010 Media Decree had exacerbated the situation, with an increasing number of journalists taking up media-related jobs with civil society organisations, government departments and the private sector. The following comments provide further insights into this issue:

- *Our organisation lost five journalists in the space of 18 months. If I had my way, I would have invested in them [because] their experience is worth more to the company than the few extra thousand dollars they were getting from our rivals. But my employers do not share my position. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager One, 18. 09. 12)*
- *At one time, people we hired were leaving within a few weeks of joining to take up better-paid positions but the situation has stabilised. (Section Editor at a Daily, 27. 09. 12)*

One interviewee explained why after some time as a journalist, she took up an offer to work with a major international organisation:

- *My heart was in journalism but I realised that in my present job it would take me a very long time to get to the pay level I was being offered in public relations. It was almost four times more. Who could resist that? (University-educated Journalist, 01. 10. 12)*

One newsroom leader affected by the trend pointed to the ongoing struggle they faced to fill the gap with new recruits. This was unfair on the new recruits because:

- *All of a sudden there is a lot of responsibility on their shoulders and they are required to deliver. For some it has worked; for others it hasn't. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager One, 18. 09. 12)*

An academic attributed the apparent high turnover of news staff to the alleged lack of career opportunities in the sector:

- *A person could be a journalist for the rest of his or her life and remain on a low salary. Paying low wages and expecting journalists to stay year-in, year-out, is not feasible for the sustainability of good quality media. (Academic One, 20. 09. 12)*

However, the three media company executives felt that they were managing the situation well. They stated that they paid appropriate salaries and that they fought hard to retain their top staff. But they said they would not be able to compete on equal terms with the private sector or civil society organisations, particularly in a stagnant advertising market. The following comments give some indication of the executives' overall feelings:

- *It's a problem for all industries because Fiji is a great exporter of talent. Countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States are always willing to take our people, who are very mobile. It's not restricted to journalism; it's across all sectors. In the media sector the advertising dollar has not been growing for five years. It is worth $25 million. The return on investment is critical because it determines how much you reinvest in training and equipment. The small market size and limited returns can affect many things. The 20 per cent devaluation of the Fiji dollar and the 2.5 per cent increase in value-added tax had a huge impact on costs. But we look after our journalists. It is a case of us ensuring we have enough depth, succession planning and development to ensure that our news product does not suffer. (Broadcast Executive Three, 24. 09. 12)*
- *Staff turnover has always been high. In the 1990s and early 2000 the movement was within the industry – from broadcast to print and vice-versa. Recently journalists have been leaving the industry altogether. Media organisations should recognise the good journalists, give them the salaries they deserve, constantly train them and make sure they stay in the industry. It is important to have mentors setting high standards. For a while we had this big hole in the industry because the experienced people were not there. We reward journalists who go through our training and improve themselves. Around 85–90 per cent of my staff received increments. But media organisations can't compete with banks and other industries, so we have to look at it on a case-by-case basis. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

- *Demand for public relations officers has increased because every government department now has a media spokesperson. We fight hard to retain our top staff. All our staff are fairly paid. Over the years we have managed to hold on to our top staff. (Broadcast Executive Two, 28. 09. 12)*

Journalists' education, salaries, working conditions and the high rate of journalist attrition are apparently caused by push factors such as a stagnant advertising market and the punitive media decree and pull factors such as increased demand and high salaries in the public relations and communication sectors. Besides these issues, interviewees also discussed the commercial pressures exerted on the national media corps. This is presented in the following section.

Alleged pressure from owners and advertisers

All the interviewees from a journalism background said they had witnessed or directly experienced attempts by media company owners and advertisers to influence the news. Media company executives, for their part, tended to deny such happenings. These contrasting discourses are presented below:

- *Since the 2006 coup life has been tough. We have to stay alive; there is no denying it. The government advertising dollar is not coming our way. We have been told by management that our future depends on getting back government advertising. We need them [government] to take the boot off our throats so we can breathe and stay above water. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*
- *Interference from advertisers and company directors in editorial matters was common. We were a new company. Initially we did not attract a lot of advertising. There was a lot of interference from our publisher. He started micro-managing the newsroom to the extent of telling us what to write in the editorial column and banning anti-corporate stories. Controversial stories were often pulled out by the publisher at the request of major advertisers. (Former subeditor, 24. 09. 12)*
- *I am aware of stories being dropped at the request of board members acting on behalf of advertisers. Sometimes, stories were covered based on advertisers' request. The request was usually channelled into the newsroom through the company executive. (University-educated journalist, 01.10.12)*

Revelations by an interviewee with a long and distinguished record in the Fiji media show that advertiser pressure was prevalent even in the 1970s and 1980s. The interviewee stated:

- *There was always pressure from the advertisers. One of the first front-page stories I did as a reporter was about [an international] jet catching fire after take-off from Nadi International Airport. The story made the front page. It upset the [airliner's] general manager, who put pressure on our chief executive. But our editor would not have a bar of it. (Former Editor Two, 03. 09. 12)*

The responses from the executive level were quite different:

- *The board does not interfere with the operations of the company. The board looks at strategic issues such as what the growth of the company needs to be. The board talks about the deployment of resources to enhance shareholder returns. They like to have an operational update but they do not interfere. (Broadcast Executive Three, 24. 09. 12)*
- *Our board is only concerned about the return to shareholders. They never came into the newsroom once to tell us how we should run the newsroom. (Broadcast Executive Two, 28. 09. 12)*
- *Our owner is like any other owner. The owner wants us to do well, make profits and a decent return on investment. And that is where it ends. Does [the owner] come in here and tell us what to do? It does not. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

Besides alleged commercial pressures on journalism, another major issue involved the alleged dearth of analysis and an apparent media fixation on politics and conflict. These are discussed next.

Lack of analytical reporting, including fixation on politics and conflict
Some interviewees felt that media are fixated on politics and emphasise conflict. The following comments encapsulate these sentiments:

- *We focus so much on the negativity that we forget the positive aspects, which could be just as important. But we have never turned our minds to it. It is the conditioning. It is human nature – we are drawn to the darker side. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*

- *If it bleeds it leads is living phrase. Politics is the top priority. Political reporters rank very high in the hierarchy since they fill the front pages. (Former Print Journalist, 26. 09. 12)*

- *Conflict and politics receive saturated coverage while poverty and rural development are neglected. Elections should be a time to force politicians to focus on social issues. But media's emphasis is on tit-for-tat exchanges between politicians who create conflict as a distraction. (Academic Three, 25. 09. 12)*

- *There is a preoccupation with conflict and a reliance on prominent people. (Academic One, 20. 09. 12)*

- *Media have short memory since we have not been taught the importance of keeping records due to the pressure of churning out news stories daily and due to laziness. Politicians will say something new on a regular basis, contradicting completely what they might have said before. There is almost a zero practice of questioning this. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

- *Media are seen as organisations that can generate debate and shape public opinion. But sometimes they fail to do that. Journalists are easily swayed by politicians and report whatever they say – like a broken record. They are not asking the right questions to simulate thinking and discussion. They have not reached that stage yet. (Community Radio Broadcaster, 03. 10. 12)*

- *The focus on politics disadvantages certain groups, such as youths, who feel they are not involved. They are saying, 'we have got to get our voices in; we are sick and tired with the politics of old. Now is our time'. But they are not being heard. (Radio Talk Show Host, 27. 09. 12)*

Two interviewees raised the issue about media allegedly ignoring positive developments.

- *We are more hung up about being negative rather than positive. Fiji has made more friends in the international community in the last four years than in the 30 years prior. That in itself merits a story. I am not saying we should never do negative stories – we have to bring the truth out. But at the same time we have to balance our stories with positive developments. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

- *In a developing country like ours, a lot of people still rely on what they read, watch and hear. It influences their decision-making. Media could inspire people to look at things differently by being more positive. (University-educated Journalist, 01. 10. 12)*

One academic felt that while the Public Emergency Regulation was quite draconian, there had been some positive outcomes in terms of the ban on political reporting. The interviewee said:

- *Media's job in a developing country is to inform people in a balanced way. People from all walks of life are doing newsworthy things, be they farmers, tourism workers, or people on construction sites. But historically they have not been given much prominence. The Fiji media were so used to publishing what politicians and bureaucrats had to say they did not know what to do when faced with a ban on political reporting. The ban forced media to focus on social issues, which is incredible. They would not have done it if not for the 2006 coup because it's easier to speak to a few prominent people rather than go to some rural area and talk to people about their issues. Since the coup, media have done a marvellous job reporting developmental issues. This type of full range of reporting is the way to go. (Academic One, 20. 09. 12)*

The academic's views about a disproportionate media focus on politics were supported by a journalist:

- *Journalists watched everything that the politicians did, including how they drank tea. Now they are focussed on human interest stories to retain a semblance of ownership since there is less censorship involved in such stories. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*

However, a couple of interviewees did not begrudge the media focus on politics and conflict:

- *The problem is not the amount of time and space devoted to politics and conflict, but the amateur manner in which these issues are handled by inexperienced editors and reporters. We need a calibre of people who can provide newsroom leadership so that stories are moderated and the final product does not provoke a situation. (Former subeditor, 24. 09. 12)*

One interviewee rejected the notion that politics and conflict reporting lacked depth:

- *How much in-depth is enough? Who draws that line? Who sets that standard? It's one thing to talk about it, another thing to do something about it. We in the industry are actually doing it and evolving with it. (Broadcast Executive Three, 24. 09. 12)*

In sum, there was some concern about the alleged media emphasis on conflict and politics and feelings that coverage should be moderated with the reportage of some positive developments. This led on to discussions about alternative frames for reporting in conflict situations, presented in the following section.

The viability of alternative news reporting frameworks

On the issue of the viability of alternative reporting frames like peace journalism and development journalism, the interviewees were evenly mixed: some supported the idea, others were against it and some others seemed undecided, as the following comments indicate:

- *In a successful newspaper, there is always room for development news. We used to publish such news, which was readable and contributed to the paper's good standing. (Former Editor Two, 03. 09. 12)*
- *In the interest of nation-building, we have started reporting development issues more frequently while maintaining a focus on standard news. Development news has been moved to the more prominent news pages to maintain a national outlook. (Section Editor at a Daily, 27. 09. 12)*
- *Fiji journalists are groomed in the western, confrontationist, approach, which at times is necessary. Equally necessary is a non-confrontational approach to tap into positive feelings in the country. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*

Interviewees from outside the news media sector expressed most strongly the need for development news and conflict-sensitive reporting frames.

- *What is newsworthy is a subjective call based on the editor's whim. There are developmental and nation-building issues that could be talked about, but they are not. The appeal is for media to be more inclusive. It boils down to journalists being introspective and asking some fundamental questions of themselves: What is their duty as human beings? Why are they in this business? What is their role? Is it to create problems, or prolong a conflict? (Academic One, 20. 09. 12)*

Two interviewees indicated that their organisations were re-considering how they covered certain issues and that they were reprioritising the editorial focus. One of them stated that their organisation

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had adopted government's proclaimed non-racial ideology and stopped covering "divisive issues" because:

- *Fiji's unique situation warrants a different approach. Everyone is affected if something goes wrong in the country, so media cannot operate in isolation. (Broadcast Executive One, 26. 09. 12)*
- *My organisation supports development journalism in line with the Bainimarama Government's pro-Fiji policy. (Section Editor at a Daily, 27. 09. 12)*

However, in one interviewee's experience, development journalism initiatives can be cut short if they conflict with the media organisation's commercial goals, or when it upsets advertisers. The interviewee recalled:

- *We introduced an in-depth segment on development issues in 2011, including consumer rights. But it was short-lived due to pressure from advertisers who did not like negative product reviews. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager One, 18. 09. 12)*

One interviewee felt that media reports merely reflect the existing divisions in Fiji society, which are rooted in the country's history. In his view, blaming the media was the old case of "shooting the messenger":

- *For 25 years we have been stuck in confrontation – political, military, religious, racial. We have grown up in this culture. When we report it we are scape-goated and called racists. (Print Newsroom Manager, 25. 09. 12)*

Questions about the nature of reporting and media reform can perhaps be better addressed in the context of defining (or redefining) media's role in Fijian society. This is the next issue for discussion.

Media role in nation-building and the future of journalism
Most interviewees stated that in a developing country like Fiji, media should have a nation-building role, although they differed on how this could best be fulfilled, as the discussion shows:

- *Media should stick to their basic role based on neutrality. The code of ethics is the best guide. Media cannot assume a nation-building role without first covering the basics properly. Otherwise they will do more harm than good. (Broadcast Newsroom Manager Two, 28. 09. 12)*

Interviewees from outside the news media sector were more inclined to link news media's role to what they saw as the needs of the country. Three of the interviewees stated that in charting a role for themselves, news media should consider the upheavals Fiji had gone through and based on this, determine the direction media needed to move:

- *Because of coups and political conflicts in the last 25 years, Fiji has achieved insufficient levels of social development. This has led to persistent and abject poverty in certain pockets across the country. Ongoing instability will simply make things harder. These are the issues media should consider in defining a future role. (Academic Three, 25. 09. 12)*
- *Media's role and conduct should be defined by a broader national framework. If media are to play a nation-building role, they have to learn from events that have taken place in the last 25 years and apply this knowledge to their work. Rather than just report events as they happen, media need to look back and then look forward. (Academic Two, 29. 09. 12)*
- *In a developing country like Fiji, reporting frameworks should be underpinned by a nation-building role. Journalists should be aware of the country's history. They should seek to influence government policy by projecting the problems faced by society and drawing attention to them. (Academic One, 20. 09. 12)*

With regard to the future of Fiji journalism, the interviewees felt that it is important to address difficulties relating to the 2010 Media Decree, boosting training and development and finding ways to arrest the apparent high rate of journalist attrition. Virtually all the interviewees who had operated under the Media Decree since 2010 felt that on the whole, it was too restrictive and needed to be reformed, as the following views indicate:

- *The decree is acceptable as a transitional law, but not as a permanent law with ironclad rules about how media should operate. (Broadcast Executive Three, 24. 09. 12)*
- *Something as critical as media regulation needs to be carefully considered rather than imposed arbitrarily. It should be based on negotiations between the media, government and civil society. (University-educated journalist, 01. 10. 12)*

For one interviewee, the high rate of journalist attrition is a most pressing issue. Unless it is addressed, journalism is "unlikely" to improve:

- *You cannot have a good future if you lose the quality of your core product – your content – through high staff turnover. Skills won't come overnight and it is a major loss when your editorial staff leave after you have trained them for two or three years. (Former subeditor, 24. 09. 12)*

One interviewee emphasised that the State needs to focus on media development rather than just enforcement:

- *The State should provide resources to the development authority to deliver training, the key ingredient. At the present time, the Media Development Authority is just a penalising body rather than a development one. (Broadcast Executive Three, 24. 09. 12)*

This section concludes with a comment from an interviewee who stresses the crucial role of the media:

- *The media are enablers. They need to lead by example in terms of the issues they present and how they present them. In wild journalism freedom of speech means you can say just about anything. In the nation-building context, freedom of speech means much more. It is the responsibility of journalists to understand what freedom of speech means in their own contexts in terms of how it will affect them and the nation, not just for the present, but in future also. (Radio Talkback Show host, 27 .09. 12)*

Synopsis of in-depth interviews

On the whole, the in-depth interviews provide deeper insights into Fiji's media landscape and the structural indicators that affect content. The interviews highlight the unique challenges of practising journalism in Fiji, based on journalists' every-day experiences. These include State legislation, societal barriers, commercial and political pressures and apparent professional shortcomings partly due to lack of training opportunities.

5.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented the results of this research based on a four-pronged, complementary, methodological approach – content analysis, survey questionnaire, document research and in-depth interviews. The aim was to assess conflict reporting in a holistic manner by linking media content to the national media landscape, which encompassed journalists' diversity and professionalism, the legal environment and the media ownership structure. The content analysis returned a peace journalism reading while the survey questionnaire showed a fairly diverse journalist corps with some gains in the areas of training and education. Available documents confirm that the legal environment has become more restrictive since the 2006 coup while the media ownership regime has become increasingly corporatised and 'conglomerised' over the 45 years since independence. In the main, these findings obtained by three differing qualitative methods were supported by the more probing in-depth interviews.

The deeper implications of these results and findings are explored in the discussion and analysis presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

6.1   Introduction

The previous chapter presented the research results. This chapter analyses the results, starting with the content analysis of the print media's coverage of Fiji's 2006 general election. This is followed by an analysis of the questionnaire survey to gauge journalist diversity and professional capacity, views on conflict reporting and related issues. The chapter then moves on to the document review, which was undertaken to determine the nature of media legislation and media ownership in Fiji. Lastly, the chapter deliberates on the in-depth interview outcomes before summarising the discussions. Where appropriate, the analysis uses triangulation by comparing the data generated by the different methods to increase the potency of the evaluation (Alexander et al., 2008).

6.2   Content analysis

Overview

The preponderance of a peace journalism frame in the content analysis is somewhat surprising, both from national and international perspectives. Previous studies on Fiji media had alleged numerous cases of bias and misreporting, especially in relation to the coups (Devi, 1992; Duncan, 2002; C. Gounder, 2006; Obini, 2000; Robie, 2000, 2001, 2004; T. R Singh, 2011). These trends had raised the expectation of a war journalism framing. Moreover, the content analysis focused on Fiji's 2006 general election. Elections can be contentious, even if not necessarily violent. The literature on Fiji's ethnically-based political and electoral systems had also hinted at a war journalism reading, what with one observer describing the political race as a "zero-sum game pursued via a scorched-earth policy" (Kant, 2012). This study's peace journalism reading also contradicts some international studies of a similar nature. Such studies have largely returned war journalism readings, whether applied to intra-State or inter-State conflicts, in both the Asia–Pacific region and beyond, regardless of whether the coverage was by domestic or international media (see Fong, 2009; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Obijiofor, 2011; Obonyo & Fackler, 2009; S. Lee, 2010; S. Lee & Maslog, 2005; Shinar, 2009; Wilson & Devere, 2013).

The similar findings in peace journalism–inspired content analysis conducted in different parts of the world appear to support claims that, although international media systems and journalistic cultures differ widely, they share some similar traits based on a dominant western-influenced

approach to news reporting (see O'Sullivan, 2001; Rooney, Papoutsaki & Pamba, 2004). Nevertheless, there are some plausible reasons for this study's departure from the frame. A partial explanation for the peace journalism reading could be rooted in the Fiji media's 2000 coup experiences, when the media were roundly criticised for the allegedly racially-provocative nature of their reporting (C. Gounder, 2006; Obini, 2000; Robie, 2000, 2001, 2004; T. R Singh, 2011). It is possible that a chastened media moderated their coverage of the 2006 elections. This reasoning is supported by in-depth interviews. Some respondents indicated that since the 2000 coup, they are now more careful about how they handle certain topics surrounding ethnicity, religion, and politics.

Another plausible reason for the peace journalism frame could lie in the involvement of the Fiji armed forces in the 2006 elections. During political campaigns, the military warned politicians not to inflame ethnic tensions. Military commander Bainimarama even told candidates they would be imprisoned should they "instill fear" (Vunileba, 2006, p. 1). Such warnings may have caused the candidates to tone down their rhetoric. Indeed, indicators like *language, content creating undue fear or anxiety, consociationalism–majoritarianism* and *ethnicity–religion* all returned peace journalism readings (see content analysis results section in Chapter 5).

Domestic versus international media coverage

Further insights into the content analysis can be gained through comparisons with Wilson and Devere's (2013) work on Radio New Zealand's coverage of four Pacific Islands countries during June and July 2012. They recorded an overall 74 per cent war journalism frame. The Fiji component of their study returned a fairly strong 72 per cent war journalism frame (pp. 140–142). A core difference between this particular study and Wilson and Devere's (2013) work is that the former covered reporting by domestic media while the latter looked at coverage by foreign media. Notwithstanding the different time periods, it is likely the domestic media were more culturally sensitive, and perceptive about local tensions than international media. This could partly explain the stark difference between this study's peace journalism reading (domestic media) and Wilson and Devere's (2013) strong war journalism reading (overseas media).This analysis is further substantiated by the Papua New Guinea component of Wilson and Devere's (2013) study. That study coincided with Papua New Guinea's general election, and recorded a strong 91.2 per cent war journalism frame. The authors logically concluded that coverage of elections and politics is more likely to return a war journalism frame due to their contentious nature (pp. 140–141). However, this study's analysis of Fiji's 2006 elections defied such expectations. Again, aside from the

aforementioned variables, the key difference is that this Fiji study looked at coverage by local media whereas Wilson and Devere's (2013) study looked at coverage by international media.

The Fiji media were arguably better informed by experience and as such, more conscious and cautious about local sensitivities and tensions, especially after the 2000 coup. In Papua New Guinea's case, the international media were less constrained by local issues, although this conclusion is limited by the absence of data on Papua New Guinea's election coverage by the national media. However, it seems that journalists in conflict-stressed zones are more sensitive about local tensions than colleagues in established democracies, especially after a major upheaval. This finding is supported by various research (Iroga, 2008; R. Howard, 2003, 2009; also see International Media Support, 2003).

Research in Kenya shows that in the build-up to the 2007–2008 presidential election, media adopted a war journalism stance. But after the deadly post-election violence, media rallied behind government to promote peace messages (Obonyo & Fackler, 2009; Ojwang, 2009; Zenebe, 2012). Long (2013) interviewed more than 30 Kenyan media professionals as part of a project on conflict sensitive journalism and found a more contrite and reflective national media corps. Coverage of the 2013 election in the ethnically-tense country was far more restrained than in 2007. Closer to Fiji, Iroga's (2008) interviews with several leading Solomon Island journalists showed similar results. The interviewees stated that after witnessing the people's suffering during the county's internal conflict, they felt obliged to assist the State in peace-building. Similarly, Lee and Maslog (2005) recorded a peace journalism framing by Sri Lankan papers after the December 2001 ceasefire. They concluded that the change reflected a conscious effort by journalists to promote a culture of peace (p. 323). To some extent, this shows that conflict reporting can be approached and reported in various ways rather than highlight, or lead, with the tensions and violence. Journalists have at least some degree of freedom over what perspectives to emphasise or de-emphasise.

Negative peace versus positive peace

This study's unusual results raise some interesting issues. A prominent question is whether the peace journalism frame represents a temporary phase or a sustainable, long-term, trend. The validity and longevity of peace journalism frames founded on government or military coercion would seem to be doubtful. It would be akin to what Galtung (1996) describes as negative peace. Such peace is enforced by repressive State apparatuses. It is typified by an absence of direct physical violence. Positive peace, conversely, is grounded in the constructive resolution of conflict based on universal

human rights principles (Galtung, 1996, pp. 31–31). This indicates that positive peace is harmonious and deeply-rooted whereas negative peace is superficial, acrimonious and fragile.

If this study's peace journalism reading was influenced by undue military pressure, it would be classified as negative peace rather than positive peace. Viewed from this perspective, the peace journalism reading is not entirely good news, at least not for the long term. As Albert Einstein said, 'Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding' (http://www.notable quotes.com/e/einstein_albert.html).

Salient indicators of peace and war journalism

Other indications of peace journalism in this study such as *language, nonpartisanship* and *consociation–majoritarianism* look positive. However, they could reflect that the Fiji media were merely upholding the core principles of their professional code of practice, such as balance, fairness and objectivity, rather than actively promoting peace. In their study, S. T. Lee and Maslog (2005, p. 324) had concluded that some peace journalism indicators, although important, were mere extensions of the objectivity credo of mainstream media. In the Fiji context, this means that by adhering to the established tenets of their profession, Fiji journalists were subconsciously achieving some peace journalism outcomes.

This finding supports R. Howard's contention (2003, 2009) that even if professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict, they can achieve positive results by presenting accurate and impartial news. This Fiji study's findings underscore the relevance and usefulness of instilling the basics of journalism in conflict reporting, something easily overlooked in the heated debate surrounding concepts like peace journalism (see the literature review in chapter 2). Journalism basics is often a weak area among journalists in developing countries due to various constraints in the media landscape, such as lack of training opportunities and poor working conditions. These shortcomings are also major issues in Fiji, as this research has shown. Turning to this study's three salient indicators of war journalism – *orientation*, *sources, and context* – they denote a prevalence of single-source, elite-orientated stories that lacked depth. Both Wilson and Devere (2013, pp. 141–143) and S. T, Lee and Maslog (2005, p. 311) also recorded war journalism readings for these indicators. These commonalities betray a certain predilection for single-sourced, elite-orientated stories that are focused on the present. This reinforces the earlier point about certain transcending traits in news media culture and practice, regardless of country or region. The strong preference for single sources and elite spokespersons contradicts professional journalistic norms of objectivity, fairness and balance.

This study's strong war journalism reading for elite sources (72 per cent) is worth further discussion. This finding is common for other studies in this mould (Fong, 2009; Iroga, 2008; Obonyo & Fackler, 2009; Wilson & Devere, 2013). It would seem to support this study's political economy theory, specifically Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model, which highlights that media favour elite sources over non-elite ones, based on common and shared interests. It seems that media in developing countries like Fiji gravitate towards people of rank and authority rather than ordinary people, although the same could be said of media in developed countries (see Lynch & Galtung, 2010). In a sense, the preference for elite sources can be justified on the basis of their specialist knowledge, their powerful positions and their decision-making power. In Fiji, the elites are instrumental in shaping the country's social, economic and political order (Boege, et al., 2013, p. 20), which explains why they dominate the news.

However, allowing elite news sources to monopolise the discourse carries certain risks, especially in multi-ethnic societies that harbour extremist elements. From their vantage positions, such elements can use the media to exaggerate threats, inflame grievances, and hasten the escalation toward violent conflict (see Frohardt & Temin, 2003; J. Smith, 2006). In Fiji, the 2000 coup plotters allegedly handpicked George Speight as their front man because of his skills with the media. Speight adroitly exploited the media's penchant for conflict to gain access to a national and international platform to propagate xenophobic views and fuel the crisis (Field, 2002, 2007; Media Councils . . ., 2004; Ofotalau, 2000; Robie, 2001). The Speight example suggests that when it comes to conflict reporting, media should also consider non-elite sources rather than rely only on elite sources who may have a vested interest in instigating and prolonging conflicts.

Moreover, the war journalism frame for *sources* and *context* denotes a heavy media reliance on officialdom and the bureaucracy for news. Context was lacking partly because of the newspapers' preference for shorter news stories. A similar issue was identified by Lee and Maslog (2005) and Wilson and Devere (2013). Indeed, during the course of the content analysis, it was noticed that most news items merely reported political rhetoric or they dealt with logistical matters concerning the elections. There seemed to be little critical or sustained reporting on public interest issues like health, education, employment and infrastructure. To get a more meaningful outcome from the data, a peace journalism rubric on its own was deemed insufficient. Subsequently, a new line of enquiry was opened to determine the level of print media coverage of some of the more critical issues affecting the country. This is discussed in the following section.

New line of enquiry

Over the years, various reports have raised some perennial issues concerning Fiji society, such as land tenure, increasing poverty, unemployment and crime, urbanisation and housing, health and education and so forth (see Boege, et al., 2013; Naidu, 2005; 2013). These issues re-emerged during Fiji's constitution review process in 2012, with the Ghai Commission receiving 7000 written and oral submissions from throughout the country (Draft constitution: the explanatory report, 2012). Such issues can be defined as the structural causes of conflict in Fiji and the Pacific (Henderson & Watson, 2005; Naidu, 2013). A simple count of the stories in the sample shows that the seven developmental issues yielded a total of 44 stories from the sample of 350 stories (13 per cent). The bulk of the stories ¬132 (38 per cent) – largely covered logistical and operational matters involving the election. The rest (49 per cent) largely consisted of statements and interviews from politicians and aspiring candidates. Stories about logistical matters were mostly sourced from the bureaucracy. This included government ministries, the national elections office, police, military, political organisations and so forth. These organisations utilised press releases, press conferences, media statements and interviews to secure media space.

There were numerous examples of inconsequential logistical matters taking priority over national issues. On the eve of the election, on May 5, 2006, the *Fiji Times* devoted page three – a prime news page – to stories dealing with theft of FJD6000 in allowances for polling clerks; transportation of ballot boxes; police checks on poll facilities; the observer mission; and military warnings against bullying tactics. Some coverage of logistical matters is necessary but questions arise when such stories are so numerous they crowd out developmental issues. For instance, a national debate involving all major political leaders just three days before the election was given less prominence by all three papers in the study. Some developmental issues were addressed in feature articles, question and answer interviews and columns. These were not part of the sample, which focused on news stories. But these longer pieces made up only 10 per cent of all articles in the period chosen for the study. In general, both features and news items lacked depth. Political comments and campaign messages were reported without much probing.

One example is an address by the then Minister of Works and Energy, the late Savenaca Draunidalo, published in the *Fiji Times* on May 2, 2006. The six-paragraph story merely quoted Draunidalo thanking workers and asking them to keep up their good work. The reporter missed the opportunity to question the minister about some major problems with the national infrastructure.

A rare example of a story that addressed some national issues appeared in the April 29, 2006, issue of the *Fiji Daily Post*. At a Fiji Labour Party rally in Suva, speakers raised concerns about Fiji's 90,000 slum dwellers, the country's low growth rate, its FJD2.6 billion debt and the 15,000 school leavers for the year who would struggle to find jobs. However, these issues were not sufficiently followed up or covered in any great detail. Indeed, a newsroom manager spoken with in the in-depth interviews had commented that important stories were often left unattended. This study set out to prove or disprove that media may be exacerbating conflict through the use of inflammatory language. But it found something seemingly more significant – the under-reporting of critical socio-economic issues, which are at the heart of most conflicts.

These findings could be a manifestation of Fiji's young, inexperienced and underqualified journalists, as revealed in this study's survey questionnaire and in Robie (2003a). Such journalists seem to shy away from covering complex issues, in favour of handouts from the bureaucracy. Indeed, the crucial land tenure issue received less coverage than the international election observers, which some would consider a journalistic travesty. The research was seeking evidence of journalist manipulation by politicians and other elite actors with privileged access to the media. It found this, and perhaps more. The manipulation seems to be a two-way rather than a one-way process. Journalists are 'willing victims' in that they readily use elite sources and the bureaucracy, who provide a ready supply of news. This arrangement also holds potential, all-round benefits – journalists are able to meet story quotas and production deadlines due to a steady stream of stories from easily accessible sources; politicians, bureaucrats, and other elites are able to secure sustained media coverage; media organisations are able to optimise operating costs.

This situation suggests a symbiotic relationship between Fiji's print media and the political elite and their functionaries. It appears to resonate with elements of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda theory, which states that journalists are drawn to powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interests (1988, p. 18). This trend seems to validate Larson's claim that Fiji has a "bureaucratically-orientated" media existing as part of the country's larger political structure (2008, pp. 14–27). This would be reminiscent of institutionalism, or what makes for a "controlled society" (Keeble, Tulloch & Zollmann, cited in Robie, 2010, p. 223). However, the apparent shortcomings in the content are not solely due to lack of journalist proficiency. They could be partly attributed to the lack of time and space given for journalistic endeavour because of the tyranny of tight production schedules underpinned by cost considerations.

Synopsis of content analysis

The content analysis was used to address Research Question One: Are the Fiji print media inflammatory, as is often alleged? The overall peace journalism framing suggests that the print media were not inflammatory in their coverage of the 2006 elections in that they used moderate language and exercised some balance. However, war journalism readings for some individual indicators like *context* and *orientation* indicate that stories lacked background and relied heavily on elite sources and the bureaucracy for news. Of further concern is the scant coverage of crucial developmental issues like land, as revealed by a new line of enquiry.

In the next section, we analyse the findings of the survey questionnaire.

6.3 Questionnaire survey analysis

Overview

The survey questionnaire part of the research design was meant to assess the media landscape – in this case the working journalists' diversity, professional capacity and views and attitudes toward conflict reporting. The aim was to identify any links between the nature of the content and the media infrastructure, which includes journalists. The results have been grouped according to the various themes that emerged from the analysis. These are outlined and discussed in the following sections.

Media platforms – traditional versus new

The preponderance of print (52 per cent) and broadcast (34 per cent) media workers shows the dominance of traditional media formats in Fiji. In contrast, the newspaper industry in some parts of the world, including Australia and New Zealand, has been scaling down or closing operations in the face of increasing competition from the Internet (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2010). However, online and digital media are gaining ground in Fiji, accounting for some 14 per cent of the total journalist workforce compared to two per cent in Robie's (2003a) survey a decade earlier. Fiji's Iinternet connectivity had increased to 37 per cent by June 2014, which suggests increased migration to online platforms in future. Indeed, all major Fiji news companies have their own well-established websites, with some incorporating multimedia and also utilising social media like Facebook.

Journalist age, experience, qualifications, career satisfaction

As mentioned, the recorded mean journalist age of 31 is lower than the global mean age, which ranges from a low 33–36 years for countries like Australia, Chile, China, Malaysia, and Singapore, to a high of 45–53 years for Denmark and Japan (Willnat, Weaver & Choi, 2013; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). Fiji journalists' mean experience is higher than Robie's recorded mean experience of 3.5 years a decade earlier (2003a). However, the largest cluster, 31.8 percent, had between zero to three years experience only, with a significant 54.5 per cent boasting less than six years experience. A handful of journalists aged 45 years and over were largely involved in managing newsrooms rather than writing or reporting.

The age and experience components betray a high journalist turnover rate, a finding confirmed by the in-depth interviews. This could be linked to journalists' career progression and remuneration, for which satisfaction levels ranked at 61 per cent and 39 per cent respectively, possibly indicating that while a majority of journalists are satisfied with their career progression, they are not necessarily content with their remuneration. This could be one cause of the apparent high turnover rate. This survey, in conjunction with Robie's survey (2003a) and other relevant literature, shows that over the last decade or more, Fiji has had a relatively young and inexperienced journalist corps left to deal with some weighty issues. For example, the average age of journalists covering the May 2000 coup d`état was only 24 years (Robie, 2003a, 2003b). Looking at the research results, one cannot avoid concluding that journalist attrition is an ongoing problem and one of the major structural weaknesses in the Fiji media landscape.

The lack of depth in reporting, conspicuous in the content analysis, may well be attributable, at least in part, to this cause. The high rate of attrition is usually blamed on low salaries (Fiji Media Watch head calls . . ., 2003; Padarath, 2003; Yaya, 2002). However, various other factors are also at play. These need to be understood if the issue is to be properly assessed and addressed. Fiji's coup culture has also contributed to journalist attrition; the media sector never fully recovered from the exodus caused by the political upheavals in 1987 and 2000 (Herman, Siwatibau & Sweetman, 2009; Morgan & Thomas, 1996). According to the in-depth interviews, the situation was compounded by the 2006 coup, with staff leaving at higher-than-normal levels. This is plausible. The coup caused a major economic downturn, resulting in the devaluation of the Fijian currency in 2009 and an

increase in sales tax in 2011. This was worsened by unfavourable global economic conditions such as the 2007–2009 global food and fuel price crisis (United Nations, 2012).

These inflationary pressures saw journalists' salaries become caught in the doldrums. The drastically reduced the purchasing power of the local dollar could be explanation enough for journalists' predominant response in the questionnaire survey that they were satisfied with their careers but not so much with their remuneration. These conditions dovetailed with the punitive media decree, which was yet another push factor for journalists. These variables conceivably combined to create the 'perfect storm' for journalist flight from the media sector. Indeed, in terms of career satisfaction, Robie's (2003a) survey recorded a relatively more content group than the one in this present study.

Fiji's journalist turnover problem is similar to that in other Asia–Pacific countries, even if it was exacerbated by the country's coup culture. In Papua New Guinea, new recruits are routinely asked to fill in for departing experienced journalists (Kanekane, 2006). In China, Hong Kong and Singapore, two in five journalists have less than five years of work experience whereas in European countries like Belgium, Denmark and Finland, the average journalist spends more than 15 years on the job (Kanekane, 2006; Willnat, Weaver & Choi, 2013; Weaver & Willnat, 2012). While inexperience within Fiji's journalist corps is a concern, the survey recorded some progress in the area of training and qualifications, with 49 per cent of the respondents having achieved some level of formal accreditation. This represents a 23 per cent increase over Robie's (2003a) figure of 26 per cent a decade ago. This growth is partly attributable to the increased availability of journalism courses in Fiji and the region through recently-established tertiary and vocations training institutes (see Skuse, 2012).

In terms of journalist qualifications, Fiji has yet to reach the level Papua New Guinea had achieved over a decade ago, when 81 per cent of journalists Robie had surveyed held either a degree or a diploma (2003a, p. 338). In Papua New Guinea, university-based journalism education started in 1975, 21 years before it did in Fiji (Robie, 2003a; 2004, 2014). Moreover, the Papua New Guinea media industry still seems more receptive to journalism education than Fiji's does. The late Fiji journalist Robert Keith-Reid once claimed that journalism graduates suffered from "academic anaemia" (2000). The global trend is for more journalists to enter the profession via school, department or institute for journalism education (Deuze, 2006). However, one of the downsides of academically-qualified journalism graduates in Fiji, as far as the news media sector is concerned, is that they usually take up better-paid positions in other industries (see Robie, 2003a, 2014).

Newsroom diversity

Numerically, male journalists slightly outnumbered females by 56 per cent to 44. However, nearly twice as many males (16) as females (nine) held managerial positions (editor, chief-of-staff, etc.), though representation in the junior ranks is somewhat more even. According to various international studies, gender imbalance in newsrooms fosters male-centric work cultures. This could lead to scant and stereotypical media coverage of women (Byerly & Walker, 2007; Cotter, 2011; J. McGregor & Comrie, 2002; Nicholl, 2006; Norris, 1997; North, 2012; Ragodoo, 2012). In Fiji's case, Usman's (2012) content analysis of the portrayal of female candidates in the 1999 and 2006 national elections found that the women received negligible and clichéd coverage. In the course of in-depth interviews for this study, one relatively young female respondent spoke about her struggles to be taken seriously in a male-dominated newsroom.

The literature on how far gender-balanced newsrooms actually help the cause of women seems inconclusive (Byerly & Walker, 2007; Cotter, 2011; J. McGregor & Comrie, 2002; Nicholl, 2006; Norris, 1997; North, 2012; Ragodoo, 2012). But some Pacific Island campaigners insist that gender-balanced newsrooms could help promote equality and fairness in coverage (Bhagwan-Rolls, 2007). From a conflict reporting perspective, strategies to promote gender equality in newsrooms and women's visibility in the media make sense given research showing women's positive impact in conflict resolution in places like Kenya and Nepal (Klein, 2011). In the Pacific, women have been credited with pacifying tensions and facilitating conflict resolution in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Bougainville (Bhagwan-Rolls, 2006).

Effect of journalists' political beliefs, ethnicity and religion on their work

Aside from gender balance, other important variables of newsroom diversity in multi-ethnic societies such as Fiji include religion, ethnicity and political affiliation. This survey shows that in the decade since Robie's 2001 survey, indigenous Fijian representation in Fiji's national journalist corps has increased to 49 per cent, followed by Indo-Fijians (39 per cent), and others (10 per cent). This is roughly reflective of the country's overall demographics (Bureau of Statistics, 2007). In Robie's (2003) survey, indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian journalists were split at 42 per cent each, with seven per cent Rotuman and the rest being other races.

Since the 2000 coup, the ethnic, religious and political makeup of Fiji newsrooms has become an increasingly important issue. In his MA study, T. R. Singh (2011) claimed that the dominance of ethnic Fijian journalists in the *Fiji Times* newsroom contributed to the paper's alleged racially-biased coverage of the country's first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, in 1999 (for rebuttals, see Hunter, 2009; Rika, 2009).

Newsroom diversity is an issue in other troubled Pacific Islands countries also. In Solomon Islands, former local journalist Duran Angiki claimed controversially that ethnic Malaitan dominance of the country's news media during the conflict disadvantaged the Guadalcanal community in terms of coverage (Pacific media gatekeepers . . ., 2002; also see Iroga, 2008). This survey showed that more respondents (34 per cent) felt that their work was affected by their ethnicity and/or religion than by their political views (20 per cent). This indicates that journalists' religion and/or ethnicity has a stronger effect on them than their political beliefs. This is not surprising. In Fiji, some commentators have noted, people mobilise more along ethnic and religious lines and less along ideological lines (Sutherland, 1992).

Given the country's historical ethnic, religious and political divisions, it is perhaps surprising that most respondents in this survey indicated that their work is not affected by the aforementioned variables. This outcome contradicts studies that claim that the national media place a distinct emphasis on indigenous Fijian customs, rituals and way of life, side-lining other cultures (Kaplan, 1995; Norton, 2000; Rutz, 1995). While there are no specific studies on how the Fiji media cover religion, the subject has been broached indirectly by Connell (2007) and Newland (2009), who suggest that Christianity is given deferential treatment by the media. This is plausible given the relative dominance of indigenous Fijian journalists over the past decade, as established in Robie (2003a) and also in this survey.

The claimed preponderance of Christian messages is also conceivable given that the Methodist Church, the dominant denomination with close to 300,000 members, is a fairly powerful spiritual, cultural and political influence among indigenous Fijians (Connell, 2007; Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Halapua, 2003; Newland, 2009). From a conflict reporting viewpoint, this issue is worth further discussion. As former editor-at-large at *Time* Inc., Daniel Okrent says, religious diversity in the newsroom is important for providing different perspectives and to safeguard a functioning democracy (see Religious diversity in the newsroom, 2009).

To understand the Church's influence in indigenous society, a brief look at the background of Christianity in the region is necessary. Just as in Africa, Asia and the Americas, Christianity helped accelerate colonisation in the Pacific by banishing indigenous beliefs and herding the natives under the new, monotheistic order (Comaroff, 1986; Horton, 1971; Newland, 2009). The Christian doctrine was instrumental in ending tribal bloodshed and cannibalism. It was also an effective form of social and political control to subjugate the masses and get them to conform and comply (Fer, 2011; also see Helen Ellerbe's book, *The Dark Side of Christian History*). In Fiji, Wesleyan missionaries were the first to proselytise Christianity in the 1830s, so Methodism became the most firmly rooted Christian belief system, with the lever of control eventually passing on to the indigenous clergy (Newland, 2009). They reinforced this power system by infusing it with indigenous social, cultural, political and economic institutions.

Garrett (1982, p. 114) writes that the Church (*lotu*) became intertwined with two other core indigenous Fijian values – *vanua* (country) and *matanitu* (chiefly authority). This represented an almost "Trinitarian solemnity in the inner lives of Fijians". Robie (2009a) describes the indigenous Fijian political, chiefly and clerical establishment as the fifth estate – a traditional cultural pillar that is a counterbalance to all other forms of power, including the news media. Once courted by the colonial establishment, the Methodist Church, in particular, remains a major force. Today it is wooed by chiefs, prime ministers, coup makers and military dictators alike (see Halapua, 2003). For an indigenous Fijian government, looking after the church is both a cultural and a religious obligation. It also makes political sense in that it keeps the core electorate satisfied (see the Bishop of Polynesia, Dr Winston Halapua's (2003) book, *Tradition, Lotu, and Militarism in Fiji*).

The Church and the State may be separate on paper but historically, the Methodist Church has enjoyed a cosy relationship with all indigenous Fijian governments. The problem arises when a secular party takes power, as in 1987 and 2000. The Church feels threatened and often falls in with coup plotters. The planning of the 1987 coup took place in the Bible Society of Fiji headquarters in Suva (see Naidu, 2005; Newland, 2009; Robertson & Sutherland, 2001; Robie, 2003a, 2014; Sharpham, 2000). It should be pointed out that the Methodist Church does have a small Indian Division and within the church's indigenous followers there are some dissidents and reformers. This includes two former Church presidents, Reverend Josateki Koroi and Reverend Ilaitia Tuwere, who condemned the coups. In addition, some laity are concerned about the politicisation of the Church. But they are in the minority and the Church is often associated with ethno-religious nationalism (see Garrett, 1990; Newland, 2009).

Notwithstanding the questionnaire survey results, the literature suggests that religious beliefs pose a quandary for indigenous journalists caught between their professional calling and their community values. This is reflected in how the media simultaneously criticise and exalt the Methodist Church at the same time. For instance, a *Fiji Times* editorial reproached the Methodist Church for its strong opposition to the 2006 military coup but at the same time urged it to work with government (Newland, 2009). The elevated status that the country's most prominent newspaper accorded to the Church appears similar to the esteem that indigenous Fijians have for the institution, reflected in calls from some quarters for Fiji to be declared a Christian state (Halapua, 2003). Journalistically, the issue can be further conceptualised through this study's normative media, political economy and conflict reporting frameworks. For instance, the Committee of Concerned Journalists think tank holds that media's "first loyalty is to citizens" (Pew Research Journalism Project, 2014). This means that media must show ultimate commitment to citizens' interests, not just the interests of the political or economic system. Media should also portray a representative picture of all constituent groups in society. Ignoring certain citizens was akin to disenfranchising them (Pew Research Journalism Project, 2014).

Towards this end, the *Fiji Times's* editorial stance shows that it feels that the Methodist Church should have a say in how the country is governed. It promoted this line without bestowing the same privilege on the country's other major religions, Hinduism and Islam, or the other Christian denominations. From a media perspective, it can sometimes be difficult determining whose interests the Methodist Church represents – the people or successive indigenous Fijian governments – since the church is seen to be close to both. The interests of the government and that of the people are not by any means always the same. Another journalistic issue involves determining who the Methodist Church regards as 'the people' – only its members or all citizens, regardless of ethnicity and/or religion? This is a moot point given the Methodist Church's support for the 1987 and 2000 nationalistic coups (Halapua, 2003). At the heart of such arguments is the politicisation of the Methodist Church due to its closeness to the centre of power.

By contrast, the Catholic Church and Hindu and Muslim religious organisations had remained on the political periphery. However, this is not to say that they are not prone to getting involved in politics should the opportunity arise. The Catholic Church supported the Bainimarama coup on the grounds of multiracialism and social justice (Newland, 2009).

Fiji's largest Hindu organisation, the Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha, also lent its support to the Bainimarama Government but some prominent Sabha members criticised the decision. Another major Hindu organisation, the Then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam, unequivocally condemned the Bainimarama coup (Shyyam, 2013; R. Prasad, 2009). The issue for the Fiji media is that religious organisations are, in some respects, part of the political landscape involving various power dynamics and vested interests. This needs to be taken into consideration before putting religious bodies on a pedestal.

Language issues

The finding that English was not the first language of most respondents and yet the language of work for the majority of respondents is no surprise. English has been Fiji's official common language, taught at all schools. Moreover, the English language media have always been dominant – especially print and television – as part of the British colonial legacy (Geraghty, 2001). But first language literacy is an important issue in the Pacific Islands. Vanuatu government minister Ralph Regenvanu points out that this region is one of the world's richest in languages and insists that the way to maintain that is to increase usage of vernacular (Sergel & Scott, 2013). Geraghty emphasises that 95 per cent of Fiji's population have either Fijian or Fiji Hindi as their first language, yet English language media proliferate. He calls this a "tyranny by the minority" (2001, p. 164). A decade after Geraghty published his paper, the Bainimarama Government implemented a landmark policy requiring all schools to teach conversational Fijian and Hindi (Ministry of Education, 2011). From a conflict reporting perspective, this could be an important development: in Geraghty's words, "the obvious way for people of different cultures to get along is to learn about and respect each other's language and culture, not attempt to communicate through a language which is foreign to both communities" (2001, p. 166). In the past, vernacular media has been targeted by coup makers and extremists to mobilise group support (Ewins, 1998). The government's bilingual policy and promotion of vernacular in schools present the media sector with some new opportunities and challenges with regards to the development of vernacular media as a means of promoting cross-cultural understanding.

Views on standards, media law and ethics and public regard for media

Journalists' self-evaluation of their performance and their views on how they are perceived by the public are indicators of their self-awareness and confidence about their profession. It also reflects their perceptivity and consciousness of public moods and attitudes toward media.

Interestingly, virtually half the survey respondents approved the standard of journalism and almost as many felt that the public has a positive view of the profession. This is reflective of some research internationally that has shown that journalists view media reporting more positively than the general public does (see Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). However, more than half the respondents in this survey were less confident about journalists' grasp of media law and ethics. With a punitive media decree in place, a strong understanding of media law and ethics is more crucial in Fiji than ever before. But the survey shows that two years after the promulgation of the decree, a fairly significant proportion of Fiji's media corps still appeared to be on unsure grounds about these issues.

This could be a symptom of the overall lack of experience and qualifications in the news media sector, as earlier discussed. It could also indicate journalists' difficulty and confusion in keeping abreast of the plethora of decrees passed by government since the 2006 coup, as seen in the document review in chapter five. Fiji media companies have asserted that they provide in-house and on the job training. However, the survey findings question the efficacy of such training, especially with regards to media law, with the *Fiji Times* twice cited for contempt of court, attracting a USD170,000 fine in 2013 (Tough week . . ., 2013). Earlier, Fiji's Director of Public Prosecutions Christopher Pryde had written to the *Fiji Sun* to complain about "another" court story riddled with "errors of fact" and "missing salient points" (Court report contains errors, 2012). These examples underlie the uncertainty regarding media law and ethics among the survey respondents,. They accord with the in-depth interviews, in which one respondent stated how journalists felt swamped by the high volume of media-related laws passed by government.

Journalist perceptions of media ownership and advertiser pressure
Up to 86 per cent of the respondents reported appreciable levels of owner and advertiser influence in the editorial process. This result is a revelation of sorts: unlike State pressure, ownership and advertiser pressure in Fiji is more subtle and hardly makes the news. One exception is the reported resignation of the *Fiji Sun* editorial board in 2000 due to alleged owner interference in editorial matters (Fiji Sun editorial board resigns, 2000). Owner and advertiser pressure is better understood by triangulating the research results. The document research shows that the punitive 2010 Media Decree represents increased financial risks for news media organisations. Both the in-depth interview testimonies and survey questionnaire results indicate what would seem to be an uncomfortably high level of owner involvement in the editorial process.

It is conceivable that in light of the 2010 Media Decree, media owners would take on a more cautious, hands-on, approach to mediate the danger of breaching the decree and incurring heavy fines for the company. Yet another reason for media owner involvement could be to avoid the potential risk of losing State advertising because of criticism or challenge of the government. Viewed holistically, the questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews and document research findings illuminate government's effective 'carrot and stick' approach to bring the media to heel: State advertising along with favourable policies and concessions could act as rewards and the punitive media decree as a punishment. The *Fiji Times* reportedly lost out on millions of dollars in State advertising because of its apparent anti-regime stance. The allegedly pro-regime *Fiji Sun* garnered most State advertising (Lagan, 2013; Woods, 2010).

Signs of the *Fiji Times* caving in to commercial pressures came immediately after the ownership change in 2010. Two successive publishers indicated that they wanted to mend relations with government (see Robie, 2010; C. Walsh, 2013). One interviewee in the in-depth interviews indicated that they had been informed from "the top" about the need to regain government advertising to ensure their company's survival and the continuation of their own employment prospects. This could be taken as further evidence of increased owner involvement since the 2006 coup.

Conflict reporting and fixation on elite sources

In terms of conflict reporting, analysis of the responses indicate a mixed and somewhat confused result. On the question of whether media focus too much on conflict and amplify tensions through their coverage, the responses were evenly mixed between those who agreed and those who did not. On the coverage of ethnicity, conflict and positive developments, a significant majority felt the media was doing a good enough job. Yet, 79 per cent still agreed that specialist training in conflict theory would be useful for Fiji journalists because of the nature of the terrain they covered. Linked to the issue of conflict reporting is that of the elite monopolisation of news channels (see Lynch & Galtung, 2010). Most questionnaire survey respondents (86 per cent) felt that elites and non-elites should get equal treatment by the media. However, the content analysis showed that this did not translate into practice; elite sources dominated the discourse insofar as the print media coverage of the 2006 election was concerned. On this matter, there is a clear disconnect between journalists' personal feelings and their professional calling. Most journalists seem to sense that elite and non-elite sources should get equal treatment. But their training tells them that elites are prime and valued sources of news and this is reflected in the coverage, as indicated in the content analysis.

From a conflict reporting perspective, this is an important issue: in divided societies with weak media capacity, the risk of media manipulation by political elites is said to be greater (Frohardt & Temin, 2003; R. Howard, 2003; 2009). Presumably, this apparent risk could be amplified in societies where traditional values hold strong, such as Fiji, where chiefs and other authority figures command much respect and following. The heavy-reliance on elite sources reveals a major contradiction in news media ethos: in terms of newsworthiness, elite sources might make sense but from an ethical viewpoint, such lopsided coverage contradicts the principles of media balance and objectivity.

Media objectivity and advocacy

The survey respondents showed strong support for the objectivity ethic but it seems to be a fluid concept. When asked if social cohesion should supersede media objectivity, most respondents (45 per cent) agreed. In the in-depth interviews, at least two respondents stated that their media companies were advocates of what they regarded as the Bainimarama Government's "multi-racial" and "nation-building" policies. This is hardly an objective stance. By the same token, neither is being stubbornly opposed to government policies, as in the case of some media in Fiji. Interestingly, the Fiji media initially opposed the 2006 coup. Fiji TV One attempted to boycott the news, the *Fiji Times* left blank spaces on some pages from which stories had been pulled by censors and the *Fiji Daily Post* resorted to satire (Greenslade, 2009). These examples denote a departure from objectivity to radicalism (see Christians et al., 2009). Indeed, Pacific Islands journalism is said to have a tradition of advocacy, as in Papua New Guinea, where media campaigned against guns and declared a 'war against corruption' (Kanekane, 2006; Matbob, 2007). This supports Robie's (1995) view that countries with persistent development problems are likely to compel journalists and media organisations to take up education and nation building roles. Triangulation of the different results shows that theoretically, there is a strong belief in the objectivity credo but in practice Pacific journalism seems to be more flexible than some in the survey would care to admit.

Synopsis of questionnaire survey discussion

The questionnaire survey was used to address Research Question Two: What is the level of diversity and professional capacity of Fiji's news media corps? The analysis shows a fair amount of newsroom diversity, notwithstanding some concerns about the apparent hegemonisation of the dominant indigenous culture and institutions in media discourse. With regard to professional capacity, gains have been recorded in academic qualifications but the journalist corps is still relatively young and inexperienced due to apparently high journalist attrition rates.

In the next section we analyse the findings of the document review of Fiji's legislative environment as it relates to the media.

6.4   Document Review – legislative environment analysis

The analysis of Fiji's media law is partly guided by Frohardt and Temin's (2003) conflict reporting framework, which calls for a healthy balance between two types of legislation:

I.   Legislation protecting media from abuse and guaranteeing their freedom to operate without excessive government interference.

II.   Legislation, such as privacy, libel, slander and hate speech laws, protecting private individuals from unjustified and inaccurate reporting.

Not only does the appropriate legislation have to be in place, it needs to be enforced sincerely to safeguard journalists from unwarranted prosecution and the public from media transgressions (Frohardt & Temin, 2003, p. 5). The major focus of the analysis is on the core media law, the Media Industry Development Decree 2010, and other related legislation. The aim is to understand the impact the legislation has on journalism, including conflict reporting.

Overview

The results show clearly that besides economic factors such as deregulation, three highly significant variables influenced the course of media legislation in Fiji: political motives, cultural traditions, and State and community perceptions about the media acting as a catalyst in social and political conflict. Although freedom of speech was constitutionally enshrined, media freedom has always been fragile. This is partly because some fourth estate traditions conflict with Fiji's 'hybrid' democracy, which is based on a combination of western and indigenous systems of governance (Boege et al., 2013). Some indigenous values call for deference to chiefs and authority figures, shying from open criticism, not questioning leaders' actions and avoiding conflict (Madraiwiwi, 2014; Williams, 1999). In Fiji, each incoming government since independence has threatened to institute stronger legislation to curb what they portrayed as an irresponsible, impertinent, culturally-insensitive media, even though critics charged that authorities' real intention was to curtail media scrutiny (Hunter, 2009; Rika, 2009; Robie, 2001).

The document research does show that allegations of a possible media role in provoking societal tensions have been a concern since the birth of the press in Fiji (see Gaunder, 2008). Such concerns peaked after the 2000 coup, with some media controversially accused of waging a deliberate destabilisation campaign against the ousted Labour–Coalition Government (see Robie, 2001). The punitive 2010 Media Decree, implemented in the name of social stability, was a radical departure from the freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights in the abrogated 1997 Constitution (Constitution of the Republic, 1997; Dutt, 2010). Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum (2010) portrayed the decree in terms of media responsibility and accountability. Prime Minister Bainimarama (2012) linked it to societal progress and national stability.

The most relevant sections of the decree are analysed to see how far the aims stated for its implementation are achievable.

Powers of the President and relevant Ministers

The document research shows that the government practically controls various aspects of the operations of the two bodies' that are overseeing the implementation of the decree – the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) and the Media Tribunal. This is by virtue of the powers vested in three central officials of State: the President, the Minister concerned and the Attorney General (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). The various powers given to the State officials constitute a strong government presence and both direct and indirect involvement in the major facets of the operations of MIDA and the Tribunal. These include making appointments, regulating content, conducting hearings and adjudicating complaints. Through this arrangement, government control and leverage are enhanced while media freedom and independence are diminished.

This was also pointed out by the International Senior Lawyers Project, which concluded that the decree failed to "distinguish between the executive, legislative and judicial functions in regulating the media" (2013. p. 2). This oversight breaches the "separation of powers" principle, the basis of the media's fourth estate role in a democracy. This role is conditional upon media's independence from State and corporate institutions (Christians et al., 2009).

Lack of clarity

Another issue is the general and sweeping nature of some provisions, such as section 22, which bars any content that is "against public interest or order; against the national interest; or creates communal discord", without adequately specifying the meaning of these terms (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, p. 739). As this researcher has pointed out elsewhere (S. Singh, 2010), what is for or against the public interest can be a contentious and debatable issue, with the government, the opposition, the media and the public all having their own different views on these matters. For instance, in the 1990s, the Rabuka Government depicted media coverage of the National Bank of Fiji loans scandal as being anti-indigenous government while the media saw it as a legitimate part of their watchdog role (see Boxhill, 1997; Grynberg, Munro, & White, 2002). This raises the issue of whether publishing an editorial opposing the government view on a matter concerning the national interest could constitute an offence. The answer to this question is as uncertain as the law itself. Given the broad nature of the law, any miscalculations could be costly for the media due to the fairly hefty fines and jail terms stipulated in the decree.

The complaints procedure

The decree's complaints procedure is also stacked against the media. Previously, the self-regulating Fiji Media Council acted only after receiving a complaint. Section 54 of the media decree gives the MIDA the broad discretion not only to consider complaints received but also to investigate presumed breaches on its own accord (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). This provision has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, a proactive regulatory approach could counteract situations such as that which arose over the coverage of the Speight coup. Despite numerous alleged ethical breaches, the Fiji Media Council adjudicated only two complaints in the following two years (Robie, 2003c; 2009b). On the other hand, this provision leaves media organisations vulnerable to government-orchestrated inquisitions that could end up being financially, operationally and psychologically draining. Another major change is the powers bestowed on the Tribunal to order media companies to pay a maximum of FJD100,000 in compensation to aggrieved parties. Editors are personally liable for maximum payments of FJD25,000 and reporters, of FJD1,000. There is a risk of media organisations becoming the target of frivolous complaints by people seeking to win payouts. This threat had not materialised in the first four years of the decree but there is nothing to stop someone from setting a precedent.

Media organisations can challenge decisions of the Tribunal in the Court of Appeal but only for awards in excess of $50,000. Editors and reporters have no such recourse (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). This is even though the sums involved appear to be quite high in proportion to journalist salaries and the size of the media sector (for journalist salary levels, see Yaya, 2002; Robie, 2003a). The payment of further restitution is debatable, especially since defamation laws are still intact.

Media ownership

Measures adopted to localise and pluralise media ownership are detailed in sections 38–39 of the decree. These will be reviewed in the next section, which specifically deals with this issue.

Emergency powers

Another critical area in the 2010 Media Decree is section 80, which gives the Minister "power to make orders in emergency" (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010; pp. 749–755). Emergency powers are sometimes justified in an ethnically and politically tense country like Fiji during a crisis, such as a coup. The International Senior Lawyers Project (2013) concedes that even in democratic societies, certain narrowly-defined State interests, such as the prevention of imminent violence, justify some restrictions on speech. However, the precedence in Fiji shows that emergency rule could be open to misuse. The Public Emergency Regulations (PER) that imposed pre-publication censorship on media was promulgated in April 2009. It was continuously renewed on the grounds of national stability. By the time it was lifted in January 2012, almost three years had passed, which seems quite lengthy for an emergency law. Moreover, the PER was lifted only to be replaced by the Public Order Decree, which also curbed some civil rights (Lauder, 2012).

However, some provisions in the PER and the 2010 Media Decree are deemed to have had a positive impact in that they forced journalists to stop fixating on politics and pay more attention to people-orientated news (Naidu, 2013). Some in-depth interview participants stated that the tighter legislation had forced them to cover "safer" development-related topics. This finding is reinforced by the fact that in the first four years of the decree, no journalist or media organisation was prosecuted for any violations. This is indicative of the media's cautionary, risk-averse, reporting approach. Some may see this a healthy sign, while others may regard it as an ominous symptom.

The apparent change in reporting focus would signal a major paradigm shift in Fiji journalism that can be further conceptualised by reference to the four roles of the media developed by Christians et al. This holds that media may collaborate with the State to avoid retribution, or because it may be instrumentally beneficial, or they feel it to be the proper thing to do (Christians et al., 2009). Fiji's situation, however, is quite distinctive: ironically, some media were collaborating in order to maintain some semblance of independence. As one subject in the in-depth interview revealed, there was less State interference in development-related stories, so focusing on such angles gave the media a greater measure of editorial freedom and control. However, the focus on people-orientated news could have come at a cost. Various analysts hold the media decree responsible for what they see as a culture of self-censorship in the media sector, even though by 2013, media were carrying a little more criticism of government policies (see Fraenkel, 2014; Hooper, 2013).

Radical underground media

One of the dangers of censorship is that mainstream media channels no longer act as a reliable sounding board for the public mood. Societal frictions and anti-government feelings can remain concealed, with the government lulled into a false sense of security (see Hackett, 2013). Moreover, in the Internet age, it is virtually impossible for the government to exercise full control over the media. Stringent restrictions could see opposition views migrate to online media platforms. In Fiji, the media crackdown seems to have driven dissenting views into the blogosphere, where they re-emerged in more virulent forms (Foster, 2007; Hammond-Thrasher, 2007; Harborow, 2008; C. Walsh, 2010).

Research has shown that at its peak, around 72 blogs were expressing opposition to the Bainimarama Government: a "heady mix of rumours, misinformation, incitement to racial violence, calls for revolution, hate crime and even terrorism" (Hammond-Thrasher, 2007; also see C. Walsh, 2010). One post urged government opponents to attack tourist buses with Molotov cocktails. This was juxtaposed with another post "fanning the decades-old flame of racial hatred" (Hammond-Thrasher, 2007). This indicates the existence of an underground culture of extreme radical social media. Such media do not stop at espousing violence to fight what they regard as injustice (Christians et al., 2009).

These developments defy Bainimarama's (2012) claims that tougher legislation would deter "self-interested individuals" who "fan the flames of prejudice and intolerance". It is no wonder peace journalism researcher Hackett describes the "'solution' of censorship as worse than the cure" (2013, p. 36). The Fiji situation suggest that an enabling national regulatory framework for journalism may be better founded on a certain level of openness. As media commentator Simon O'Connor states, media's first role in nation-building is to critique the style of the nation being created. To reverse this situation can lead to facts and serious questions being left out to facilitate only one group's vision of the nation (Fiji Media Watch, 2003).

Threat to whistle-blowing culture

O'Connor's perspective brings us to another significant provision in the 2010 Media Decree: section 25. This enforces media disclosure of documents or information, although confidential sources that expose State corruption are exempt. However, this protection is somewhat weakened given that the MIDA can obtain a Magistrate's warrant to search premises and confiscate any documents deemed relevant (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). In any such swoops, the identity of confidential sources could be at risk. This risk factor could be a deterrent to a whistleblowing culture in a region where journalists routinely rely on "judicious leaks" (Larmour, 2006). It could help hide corruption, a major problem in Fiji and the South Pacific (Barcham, 2007). This is another example of how the 2010 Media Decree could work against the very objectives on which Bainimarama staked his coup: control corruption and enhance social stability (Bainimarama, 2011; 2013).

From a conflict reporting perspective, any laws that could help mask corruption could be disadvantageous: research has highlighted how corruption and instability feed off each other and stunt overall growth (Fredriksson & Svensson, 2003; Hodge, Shankar, Prasada, & Duhs, 2011). In the Pacific, the 1998 Port Vila riots, the 2006 Honiara and Nuku'alofa disturbances and the four Fiji coups are all linkable to corruption (see FBI report says, 2003; Iroga, 2008; Latu, 2010; Warning that Vanuatu, 2011). Alleged corruption on the part of the Qarase Government was used to justify Fiji's 2006 military takeover, dubbed a "clean-up campaign" (Larmour, 2008).

Duplication and over-regulation

Further insights into Fiji's media law can be gained through an independent review of the Fiji Media Council published in 2009, a year before the 2010 Media Decree was promulgated. The report, *Free and Responsible: Towards a more Effective Fiji Media Council*, had rejected statutory

regulation, arguing that it would undermine press freedom by, among other things, replicating the legal system's "delays, costs and complexities" (J. Herman et al., 2009, pp. 5–40). This warning may be valid. Possible duplications in laws include section eight of the 2010 Media Decree, which prohibits publication of material likely to "create communal discord" (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, p. 739). This provision has parallels with the comprehensive Public Order Act, which covers racial and religious vilification, hate speech and economic sabotage (Crimes Decree, 2009).

Further perspectives can be drawn from Fiji's Draft Constitution, designed by the Ghai Commission (Fiji youth group rejects, 2013). The Ghai Commission proposed to repeal those provisions of the 2010 Media Decree deemed inconsistent with the Draft Constitution's Bill of Rights section (Draft constitution: the explanatory report, 2012). However, the Bainimarama Government rejected the Draft Constitution and drew up its own version (Fiji youth group rejects, 2013). Concerns about over-regulation implicit in the media council review and the 2012 Draft Constitution have some merit. The 2010 Media Decree notwithstanding, Fiji's defamation laws are still intact. Moreover, government has been vigorously enforcing any media breaches under pre-existing sub judice legislation, with two successive contempt of court prosecutions against the *Fiji Times* in 2011 and 2013. The latter incurred a FJD300,000 fine for the paper and a suspended six-month jail sentence for editor Fred Wesley (Tough week and times, 2013).

Another example of over-regulation is the 2010 Media Decree's code of practice requiring all news stories to be balanced (Media Industry Development Decree, 2010). This requirement became a loophole for parties wanting to prevent potentially embarrassing stories from being published. They simply did not respond to media questions, thus making it impossible to fulfil the decree's requirement for balance. A journalist who took part in the in-depth interviews stated that stories that would have been ordinarily reported in the public interest had to be dropped since they were deemed unbalanced by the law. It is alleged that if a story was positive towards the government, the legal requirement for balance was ignored (see United States Department of State, 2013). If true, this is an example of how the State can selectively apply such laws in its favour.

Legislative reform
Despite the apparent faults in the legal environment, whether future governments would relax the controls is open to question. Normally, the trend is not to surrender hard-won power over the media, especially in countries transiting from authoritarian to democratic rule. Singapore, which served as a model for Fiji's 2010 Media Decree (Dutt, 2010) serves as a valuable example.

There, media legislation was first imposed in the name of social stability and economic development. Over the decades, even as Singapore became an economic powerhouse, government used various tactics to tighten its hold on the media progressively. The more sophisticated and subtler controls included harnessing market forces to bring the media to heel (for a detailed analysis of Singapore's media law, see two well-received books by Francis T. Seow, 1998 and Cherian George, 2012). In Fiji, government continued to pass laws to strengthen its hold over the media. One example is the Television (Amendment) Decree 2012. This not only empowers the Minister to "revoke" or "vary" the licence of any broadcaster deemed to be in breach of the decree, it also stops aggrieved parties from challenging the decision through the courts (Television (Amendment) Decree, 2012).

The decree was used against Fiji TV following the expiry of its 12-year broadcasting licence in May 2012, with Attorney General Sayed-Khaiyum opting to approve six-month temporary renewals only instead of a full renewal (No word on renewal . . ., 2012). Respondents in the in-depth interviews revealed how uncertainty over licensing lowered staff confidence and affected business plans.

Fiji's example shows that given the power, government, unsurprisingly, is prone to pass legislation to its own advantage. An example is the State Proceedings (Amendment) Decree 2012, which grants government ministers immunity from defamation. The same protection is extended to media outlets that report the Ministers' defamatory statements (State Proceedings (Amendment) Decree, 2012). This would have put the opposition, still bound by defamation laws, at a distinct disadvantage, particularly in the build-up to the 2014 elections (This legislation was annulled by Attorney General Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum in July 2014).

At this juncture, it is worth looking again at the 2009 Fiji Media Council review discussed earlier. The review favoured self-regulation subject to reforming the Fiji Media Council to address some long-standing criticisms (J. Herman et al., 2009, p. 35). These include alleged ineffectiveness, lack of credibility in the public eye, failure to address ethical breaches by media, and perceived by the public to be part of the media industry establishment rather than an independent regulator (Fiji Human Rights Commission, 2008, pp. 43–51; J. Herman et al., 2009; Robie, 2003c). The review called for proper financing of the council and a restructuring of its complaints processes to provide an aura of independence (J. Herman et al., 2009, p. 35).

Previously, the Fiji Media Council and the media industry fiercely guarded their independence. In 2003 they mounted a successful "No Media Bill" campaign to oppose a draft media law that proposed partial government regulation (Reporters Without Borders, 2004). In recent years, however, self-regulation has lost some ground worldwide, particularly after the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal in the United Kingdom, with strong calls from various quarters for stronger regulation and greater government intervention (see Leveson, 2012). In some countries, the media industry has come to recognise the need for reforms to protect self-regulation (see Hasan, 2011; Sabbagh, 2011; D. Smith, 2011). In 2014, the New Zealand Press Council was to to be granted relatively tougher powers for dealing with complaints, including the right to censure a magazine, newspaper or website (Press council to offer . . ., 2014).

Analysts such as Robie (2009b) believe that in Fiji, an element of "hypocrisy" exists about media freedom, with little industry acknowledgment that the country's media do have shortcomings. Robie points out that controversial as it was, the Anthony Report echoed media weaknesses identified by the Thomson Foundation review more than a decade earlier (2009b, pp. 109–111). Towards this end, an international report on self-regulation prepared by the US-based Centre for International Media Assistance insists that any government disengagement from media regulation must be met with increased media accountability and vice-versa, especially for countries in political transition (Centre for International Media Assistance, 2009, p. 5). These developments suggest the need for recognising the potential value of greater consultation between government and the media industry on the complex but crucial issue of future media legislation in Fiji. The media sector needs to acknowledge its weaknesses and where possible, take corrective action. Government needs to consult the media industry and address the various grievances concerning this issue. Such negotiations can be fraught with difficulties, not least because of differences in opinion between the government and the media sector about the 'proper' role and function of the media, as demonstrated by research.

Synopsis of legislative environment
Part one of the document review addressed Research Question Three: What is the genesis and nature of media legislation in Fiji? The analysis used Frohardt and Temin's (2003) framework, which calls for harmonisation between legislation that allows media to operate without excessive restrictions and legislation that protects society from inaccurate and hateful reporting.

Post–2006 coup Fiji appears to suffer from over-regulation, with insufficient space for the media to carry out their monitorial role. In addition, the application of some sections of the law is inconsistent. This may not be conducive to responsible conflict reporting.

Next, we look at media ownership and its potential impact on conflict reporting.

6.5   Document research – media ownership, reach & influence analysis

This section analyses the findings of the results on the genesis of media ownership in Fiji. It uses Frohardt and Temin's (2008) conflict reporting framework as a guideline, as well as drawing from the political economy and normative media theory frameworks (Christians et al., 2009; Herman & Chomsky, 1998, 2008). From a conflict reporting perspective, it is important to be proactive in monitoring and reporting changes in a country's media ownership structure. A study looking into media's role in Kenya's 2007 election violence revealed extensive connections between politicians, media ownership and evidence of corruption (Nyanjom, 2012). Towards this end, media plurality is an important variable in conflict reporting. Frohardt and Temin (2003) argue that the greater the competition, the less the likelihood that one or a small number of media outlets can influence people and move them towards violence. A critical variable is whether State-owned or private outlets dominate the media scene. Equally important is the share of mainstream news media owned by companies with interests in other non-media sectors of the economy (see 2013 edition of the Press Freedom Index: http://rsf.org/index/qEN.html).

Overview

On the whole, the results reveal some salient features of media ownership trends in Fiji:

- Following independence in 1970, State media in the form of the national (radio) broadcaster was in government hands. The major private media, the *Fiji Times*, was in foreign hands, with a clear demarcation between State and private ownership.
- Economic liberalisation in the 1980s and 1990s triggered major changes in Fiji's media landscape, increasing the corporate penetration of the sector.
- Curiously, the State started to acquire interests in private media indirectly through its proxies, blurring the once clear division between State and private media ownership.
- The next major phase came with the State restrictions imposed on foreign and cross media ownership through the promulgation of the 2010 Media Decree. This was marked by

increased conglomeration of media ownership, with a large local company such as Motibhai taking ownership of the *Fiji Times*.

In some ways, the impact of deregulation on Fiji's media sector was similar to that of some other countries, but in other ways it was different. In the United States and other developed countries, deregulation facilitated government's retreat from the media sector and allowed private interests to increase their presence (Bagdikian, 2000, 2004). In Fiji, deregulation also saw private interests increase their stake. But the government not only maintained its hold on the national broadcaster, it also diversified into private media through shares purchased by some State-funded entities. Contrary to the trend in some countries, deregulation in Fiji actually increased the State's presence in the media sector (see Pacific Media and Communications Facility, 2005; Tacchi, et al., 2013).

Impact of media ownership reforms

Usually, ownership limits are instituted to prevent media concentration, but in Fiji the placing of limits on foreign and cross ownership seems to have exacerbated the situation, at least in some respects. The forced sale of the *Fiji Times* by News Limited to the Motibhai Group was a significant development. Fiji's only other daily newspaper, the *Fiji Sun*, was owned by another major local business entity, CJ Patel. The sale of the *Fiji Times* meant that both newspapers were now in the hands of local conglomerates with vast interests in other sectors of the Fiji economy (see Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). This indicates that localisation of ownership was achieved at the cost of conglomeration.

This situation gives rise to major political economy concerns given the State's powers to enact economic policies that could impact on the profitability of businesses owned by media company owners in both the media and non-media sectors. Narsey (2013b) sums up the situation well:

> The real weakness in Fiji's media industry currently is that Fiji's media owners are not
> dedicated independent media companies, but corporate entities with much wider business
> interests which are far more valuable to the media owners than profits from their media
> assets. This is exacerbated by the reality that the media owners' other investments are
> extremely vulnerable to discretionary government policies, which can cause greater
> financial harm than the media profits are worth.

Ownership of media by politically-connected businesses that control large segments of the economy betrays signs of the emergence of an oligarchic media system in Fiji. Such a media system thrives on links between the corporate and the political class (Matuszak, 2012). One sign of an oligarchic system is the presence of "filters" for weeding out dissenting journalists. Singham (2011) states that it is not so much that journalists write stories that are then censored by their bosses on the orders of politicians, as a crude propaganda model would suggest, but the system weeding out dissenting journalists and retaining only compliant ones who eventually become heads of news divisions.

Singham's point is well illustrated by the resignation of the *Fiji Times* editors Netani Rika and Sophie Foster after the newspaper changed hands in 2010. The new publisher, Australian Dallas Swinstead, suggested that the resignations were voluntary. He related that Rika, in particular, left following a series of discussions about his future in the paper. Rika's resignation letter stated "our conversations over the past week have made it evident to us that you (Swinstead) see my continued tenure at the newspaper as a major obstacle to its progress" (Fiji Times former editor . . ., 2010). Clearly, Rika was considered a liability because of his perceived anti-government tendencies and he was made to feel that the only option was to leave the company.

Examples in the Philippines, the United States, Russia and Ukraine indicate that the long-term consequences of an oligarchic media system are dire. It fosters corruption, leads to the formation of powerful, exploitative networks, marginalises the people's voice, and threatens democracy (Bowman, 2001; Chua, 2003; Legaspi, 2011; Schechter, 2014). Further insights into the apparent politico-corporate connections in Fiji's media ownership structure can be examined through Deacon, Murdock and Golding's (1999) framework. This calls for identifying the dominant owners and determining their market share and capitalisation, to give an idea about the particular media company's control, penetration, influence and dominance. All shareholders with over five per cent holdings should be identified, as also should any close ties – political or familial – between individual shareholders. In the following sections we use the five major news companies as case studies to gain deeper insights into the media ownership situation.

Fiji Times

The present parent company of the *Fiji Times*, the Motibhai Group, established in 1931, is one of the biggest firms in Fiji, with six subsidiaries: Motibhai and Company Limited, Stinson Pearce Limited, Waqavuka Development Company Limited, Suva Central Limited, Fiji Foods Limited, and PET Technology Limited (see company website, http://www.motibhai.com/About-

Motibhai.aspx). The company is involved in import, wholesaling, retailing, manufacturing, real estate and hospitality, with franchising and distribution rights for over 50 international food and luxury brands. Its airport duty-free and fine retailing ranges include brand names such as Sony, Chanel, Seiko, Rolex, LVMH perfumes and watches, Nikon, Pentax, Samsonite and others. Through its parent company, Becharbhai Holdings Limited, Motibhai owns over 50 commercial and residential properties. Its 1300-strong workforce makes Motibhai one of the largest private employers in Fiji (see company website, http://www.motibhai.com/About-Motibhai.aspx).

As a privately-owned family company, Motibhai is not obliged to make its financial details available publicly. However, as Narsey points out, the company's investments in the non-media sector, and the profits derived from them, far exceed the returns from the newspaper business. As such,there is every incentive for Motibhai, as publishers of the *Fiji Times*, to minimise content critical of government (Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). Indeed, as the paper's ownership changed hands, Motibhai Group chairman Mahendra Patel signalled a willingness to work with the Bainimarama Government (Patel ready . . ., 2010). The pressure on the *Fiji Times* management to mend ties with the government became starkly clear when Swinstead's successor, fellow Australian Hank Arts, made the surprising admission that "The PM and I get on well. He's great company. And our wives are friendly" (see C. Walsh, 2013). This remark was quite telling in the context of the State's crackdown on the *Times*, including a ban on State advertising, which was reportedly costing the paper millions (Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). In the in-depth interviews, one respondent had stated that management had made it clear that recovering State advertising was a priority.

Arts's comments about the friendship between his family and the Bainimarama family harken back to the close ties between the British political establishment and the Murdoch press, exposed in the wake of the *News of the World* phone hacking scandal in the UK (Hasan, 2011; also see Leveson, 2012). In Fiji, some viewed Arts's overtures suspiciously, while others saw it as a pragmatic move to rid the paper of the former owner's "anti-government baggage" (C. Walsh, 2013). In a sense, these developments reveal the newspaper's vulnerabilities as part of a larger, local, conglomerate. By definition, conglomerates are composed of distinct business entities (subsidiaries) working as a whole to achieve common organisational goals (Skorski, 2013). They form on the basis of synergies, whereby dissimilar segments of the business leverage each other as they work side-by-side to promote related products (Skorski, 2013). As a member of the Motibhai Group, the *Fiji Times* is now a small part of a larger whole. This could require the paper to sacrifice some editorial independence for the common good of the entire group, if it came to the point.

Fiji Sun

The major owners of the *Fiji Sun*, CJ Patel, also have considerable business interests in other sectors of the Fiji economy through 20 subsidiaries. In addition, CJ Patel's financial manager Mr Ajith Kodagoda is the chairman of several leading State entities: the Fiji National Provident Fund, Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, Amalgamated Telecom Holdings and Vodafone Fiji Limited; and also serves as a director of Home Finance Company. In 2011 he was appointed the Chairperson of FINTEL (Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, 2012; Sirimanna, 2013). This raises potential concerns about interlocking directorates, that is, the links created by a director who is on the board of more than one company or organisation (G. Murray, 2000). Bagdikian (2000) has addressed interlocking in relation to news media ownership and the threat to editorial independence due to various conflict of interest situations, often undetected by the public. It can involve sharing insider information, imposition of the parent firm's policies on the media organisation and political interference. These interventions are usually designed to enhance profits.

This brings us back to the question of why local corporations with vast and profitable interests in other sectors of the economy would want to invest in the news media sector. In Kenya, businesses saw the media as an avenue for profits while politicians saw the sector as an efficient means of increasing their political influence (Nyanjom, 2012). But for the Fiji corporations, the profits are negligible relative to their non-media investments. Interlocking directorates could partly explain why local corporations would invest in the media sector when the returns, compared to the corporations' overall assets, are small. Moreover, there is the risk of the media arm of the business arousing the government's ire, which could be bad for group profitability. On the other hand, there is the opportunity for forming mutually beneficial arrangements: as media owners, the corporations would be well-positioned to enter into a partnership with governments and promote their initiatives. Government could reciprocate through favourable policies, grants and concessions to benefit the media company owners' larger business assets.

There are some apparent signs of such an arrangement in Fiji. In 2012, CJ Patel purchased the State monopoly Rewa Dairy on what some described as favourable conditions (Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). The parent company's newspaper reported Prime Minister Bainimarama's comments linking the sale to modernising a dairy industry riddled with mismanagement, inefficiency, and out-dated infrastructure (PM signs dairy deal, 2012). However, the ACP–EU website, Agritrade, raised various producer concerns over the sale, linked to low farm-gate prices and "important information gaps" between policy makers, farmers, and the company (Privatisation raises hopes…, 2013).

Narsey (2013b) claimed that the substantial discriminatory tariff assistance that clinched the deal succeeded most visibly in raising the price of milk and milk products for local consumers.

These developments betray signs of what Habermas (1964) describes as the "re-feudalisation" of the public sphere. This is when large organisations strive for "political (and commercial) compromises" with the State and with each other, excluding the public sphere whenever possible (p. 49). Re-feudalisation is often a product of globalisation and deregulation leading to corporate consolidation, conglomeration and hyper-commercialism (see McChesney, 1999; Owen, 2010). Fiji's example indicates that the possibility of re-feudalisation is enhanced when media owners have major business interests in other sectors of the economy and commercial ties with the State. The Rewa Dairy deal, a significant transaction, apparently took place with little or no public discussion. This resonates with McChesney's (1998, p. 25) warning that because of their relationship with big business (which may include "sister companies") the media may become "less vigilant to corporate bureaucracy".

Several writers allege that the *Fiji Sun* enjoys a favoured status with the Bainimarama Government due to an ostensible allegiance to the Bainimarama Government, rewarded by a monopoly on State advertising (print) and other business concessions (Dorney, 2011; Narsey, 2013b, 2013c; United States Department of State, 2013; Woods, 2010). The *Fiji Sun's* business editor Rachna Lal has rejected such accusations, describing the publication instead as "proudly independent" and "Pro-Fiji", adding:

> What we are as a newspaper, and we make no apologies for this, is broadly supportive of the Bainimarama government's policies. We believe these policies are building a better Fiji. We know these policies have strong, broad, public support. (University of the South Pacific (Producer), 2014)

In line with Christians and co-authors' (2009) conceptualisation of media roles, Lal's assertions suggest that the *Fiji Sun* has settled into a collaborative role partly based on *acceptance* and partly based on *acquiescence*. In the former, given what is known about a situation, media judge cooperation with the State to be the proper thing to do. In the latter, cooperation is deemed necessary to avoid retribution but it could also be instrumentally useful.

Communications Fiji Limited

As discussed, the local company Communications Fiji Limited (CFM) was affected by limits in cross media ownership introduced in 2010. Its second-largest shareholder, Hari Punja and Sons Limited, sold its 27.82 per cent stake in the company, subsequently increasing its share in Fiji TV Limited to 26.16 per cent to become its second largest shareholder. Punja's CFM shares were bought by CFM's holding company, Parkinson Holdings, to increase its majority shareholding to 55.48 per cent (Punja sells, 2012). These developments show that in some respects, the impact of new cross media ownership laws implemented to address media concentration was at best limited. The law put restrictions on horizontal concentration in terms of ownership across different types and modes of media companies. But it spurred vertical concentration in terms of increased holdings within individual companies. CFM shareholders do not, for the most part, appear to have large or direct commercial involvement in other sectors of the economy on the same scale as the owners of the *Fiji Times* and the *Fiji Sun*. Neither is CFM's majority shareholding in the hands of an organisation with financial ties to government, as in the case of Fiji TV. While CFM's third largest shareholder, Unit Trust of Fiji, is a government commercial entity, it holds less than 11 per cent shares in the company (Communications Fiji Limited, 2011, p. 38).

In this regard, CFM is probably less exposed to government pressure than are the four other major Fiji news media companies. However, like any publicly-listed company, CFM would be under constant pressure to maximise its main source of revenue, advertising, to boost shareholder returns. Like any media company in Fiji, CFM would be cautious about how the news media arm of the company deals with issues relating to the government. Granted that the State is not a major advertiser in CFM, which relies on the corporate sector as its major source of advertising revenue, but the government could apply indirect pressure on CFM through the corporate sector in the form of policy decisions. Moreover, some private firms which are major advertisers supply goods and services to the State. For example, motor vehicle companies count government as a major customer. Such companies would be wary of advertising in a media company that is critical of government over the fear of losing lucrative government contracts and purchase orders.

Fiji Television Limited

Fiji TV's largest shareholder, FHL Media (57.26 per cent), is a subsidiary of the indigenous Fijian equity company FHL, which has close financial ties with the State. In 1989, FHL received a $FJD20 million interest-free loan from the State to buy shares in successful companies as part of government's affirmative action plan for the advancement indigenous Fijians. In 2001, the Qarase

Government converted the loan into a grant (Ratuva, 2013). In September 2013, FHL Group chief executive Nouzab Fareed announced a medium-term goal to double revenue to $500 million on consolidated total assets of $421 million (R. Lal, 2013). The media arm of FHL's business is comparatively minuscule at 2.1 per cent of its total investment portfolio of around $87 million (Fijian Holdings, 2013). These facts imply extreme reluctance on the part of FHL to put the company's greater profitability at risk by getting on the wrong side of government through allowing Fiji TV to play any kind of genuine watchdog role (see Narsey, 2013b, 2013c).

From a news media perspective, having FHL as a major shareholder could be challenging for Fiji TV. The major political economy considerations lie in relation to not only the State but also the corporate sector, with FHL's $87 million investment portfolio spread across 22 companies in several sectors of the Fiji economy (Fijian Holdings, 2013). As a major benefactor and seeing FHL as one of the pillars of its affirmative action programme for indigenous Fijians, the State (through government) appoints both the FHL board and the chairman (Fijian Holdings, 2013; Ratuva, 2013; United States Department of State, 2013). In 2013, FHL and three other government-linked entities – Unit Trust of Fiji, the i-Taukei Affairs Board and the Fiji National Provident Fund – collectively held a 64.8 per cent stake in Fiji TV (Fiji TV, 2014; Fijian Holdings, 2013). This gives the State considerable traction within the television company. Fiji Television's second-largest shareholder, Hari Punja and Sons, operates six subsidiaries under the banner of Flour Mills of Fiji Foods Limited, with earnings surpassing the $200 million mark in 2011. In comparison, Hari Punja's earnings from its media holdings in Fiji TV would be insignificant (see the company website, http://www.fmf.com.fj/). In 2013, the group launched a $20 million tourism complex project as part of a total $55 million expansion plan (Hari Punja's $20m Palms Denarau . . ., 2013). This demonstrates the vastness of the business interests of Fiji TV's second largest shareholder in other sectors of the economy with exposure to government policies.

A moot question is how the uppermost Fiji TV hierarchy would react if they felt their commercial interests were under threat should Fiji TV carry out its watchdog functions scrupulously. The company's ostensible summary dismissals of journalists deemed to have incurred the Bainimarama Government's indignation are cases in point. In 2014, news veteran Anish Chand was, it is alleged, sacked for reportedly calling for balanced coverage of the 2014 elections (PFF concerned over Fiji TV…, 2014). In 2013, Fiji TV sports editor Satish Narayan was reportedly forced to resign after he criticised the Fiji Sports Council, headed at the time by Bainimarama's daughter (Sports commentator resigns, 2013).

Fiji TV management began to strike a noticeably conciliatory note after government started its practice of renewing the company's licences on a six-monthly basis only, allegedly in response to the TV coverage given to two former prime ministers (No word on renewal, 2012; United States Department of State, 2013). Company chairman Padam Lala gave an undertaking that the board and management would work closely with regulatory authorities to secure a long-term licence (Fiji TV, 2013, p. 7). Lala's comments raise questions about the level of board and management involvement in editorial matters. In this study's questionnaire survey, 87 per cent of the respondents indicated varying levels of management pressure on the newsroom. This was supported by some journalists who took part in the in-depth interviews, although respondents who held executive positions in news media companies insisted that the newsroom was autonomous.

Hermanson's (2007) in-depth interviews with several Fiji TV reporters and managers indicated that the corporate sector, particularly advertisers, sought to influence news content. Moreover, in 2000, commercial pressures were said to be behind Fiji TV's controversial refusal to screen an award-winning documentary, *In the Name of Growth* (Robie, 2002). The movie alleges exploitation of indigenous female workers by the State-owned Pacific Fishing Company and its American partner Bumble Bee International. The local maker of the documentary, former Fiji Senator `Atu Emberson-Bain, blamed Fiji TV's stance on the "big (private sector) boys with their vested interests" (see Robie, 2002, pp. 148–149). Hermanson had concluded that "corporate influence is potentially a larger threat to the independence and credibility of television news than government influence" (2007, pp. 80–81). But the 2006 coup and media ownership reforms implemented in the 2010 media decree have changed the situation: the government's presence, power and influence in the media sector have increased. One could say that media such as Fiji TV face a government–corporate nexus when it comes to attempts to influence the outcome of news, rather than just a corporate threat on its own, as suggested by Hermanson.

Besides being a prominent media owner in its own right, the government plays a central role in the economy through policy-making. Moreover, it is a major advertiser and a big customer of some local firms. State interests and media company owner interests are intertwined as perhaps never before, partly as a result of the ownership reforms implemented through the 2010 Media Decree, although the process had begun with deregulation in the 1990s, when the government-linked enterprises started buying shares in private media.

Fiji Broadcasting Corporation

Besides increasing its presence in the private media through proxy organisations, the Bainimarama Government has been investing in the national broadcaster to strengthen its capacity. The FJD24 million government-guaranteed loan to FBC was reportedly one of the largest single investments in media technology in Fiji's history, facilitating a major revamp of the studios and financing the launch of its free-to-air television for extended coverage (TV for families in remote areas, 2011). In marking the opening of the refurbished studio, PM Bainimarama articulated that as a State-owned medium, FBC was expected to support government's plans to modernise the nation and foster unity (Bainimarama, 2011). Bainimarama's comments indicate that government expects FBC to play a primarily collaborative role based on acceptance. This identifies with the tradition of development journalism based on a partnership with the government. Such a partnership is premised on a commitment by media to play a positive role in the process of development. Journalists "can question, even challenge, the state, but not to the point where they undermine government's basic plans for progress and prosperity" (Christians et al., 2009, p. 200).

This FBC stance was reflected in media comments made by its chief executive officer, Riyaz Sayed-Khaiyum. He stated that Fiji's social and political conditions require "solutions-orientated development journalism" without abandoning the watchdog role (Vandhana, 2012). FBC's relationship with the State would be a formal one defined in State documents like the *Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-economic Development*. Such plans see the media as vital for facilitating government policies for economic development and national unity (Ministry of National Planning, 2009, p. 51). The concern is that government funds and controls the State-owned broadcaster, and political economy realities mean criticism of the government will be limited, if not muted. Narsey alleges that FBC virtually stopped critical analysis of the Bainimarama Government that it had done regularly before the 2009 abrogation of the 1997 Constitution (Narsey, 2013c).

Moreover, the FBC competes for advertising with the commercial broadcasters. The government loan has given it a distinct advantage in the market in terms of the recruitment of talent, the purchase of programs, and its outreach. As a government entity, FBC is exempt from cross-media restrictions. Unlike its competitors, it is able to run both a commercial radio station and television station. This gives FBC yet another major advantage in that it is able to cross-promote and air programs on both radio and television. A possible consequence of all this is the dominance of the market and the airwaves by a State broadcaster funded in large part by government to promote its policies. Aside from stunting the development of Fiji TV and CFM, FBC could become the lone, dominant broadcaster in the market.

This outcome would be the opposite of what government's anti media concentration reforms were expected to achieve.

Synopsis of media ownership analysis

This section addressed Research Question Four: What is the genesis and nature of media ownership in Fiji and its link with political and economic power? The analysis shows that since independence in 1970 and the implementation of liberal economic reforms in the 1990s, media ownership has moved toward increased corporatisation. This trend continued under the ownership reforms implemented in 2010. The reforms left government, a major media owner in its own right, well-placed to use punitive legislation on the one hand, and favourable incentives and subsidies on the other hand, to coerce and/or induce media into a collaborative role. The high level of State power and increased corporatisation of media ownership has led to various conflict of interest situations. This could be a negative trend for the development of journalism, including responsible conflict reporting.

6.6   In-depth Interviews analysis

Overview

The in-depth interviews reveal a beleaguered media sector struggling to cope with a litany of issues, both recent and protracted, that have an impact on journalism, including conflict reporting. This includes a multitude of pressures emanating from the government, media owners, advertisers, politicians and the community at large. The interviews show that in a small, closely-knit, pluralistic society with strong traditional elements, journalists have to cope with an exceptional level of social, cultural, political and commercial stresses. Some interviewees felt that tougher legislation introduced since the 2006 coup has resulted in a claustrophobic atmosphere, even while acknowledging that a history of professional lapses and ethical breaches might have exposed media to just such legislation.

In the following sections we analyse the in-depth interviews under various themes.

Shoot the messenger

The interviews indicate that playing the classical watchdog role in Fiji is quite challenging, partly because of the country's cultural norms of deference to authority and partly because of its ethnic and political fractionalisation. These realities hold true even when Fiji is under democratic rule.

Besides the authoritarian predisposition of the leadership and the government, some interviewees spoke about a "shoot the messenger" attitude among the public. This is no doubt largely attributable to Fiji's mixed demography and racially-based electoral system. Construction of political mobilisation and partisan support based on ethnic lines (Ewins, 2008) increases the probability that people will reject media criticism of their political parties or leaders and turn on the hapless messenger instead. Sometimes politicians actively cultivate such attitudes by resorting to racial politics. When the National Bank of Fiji (NBF) loans scandal broke in 1995, the Rabuka Government portrayed the fiasco as an "Indian" attempt to malign a "Fijian" government — an "orchestrated" attack against "Fijian businessmen and companies" (B. Lal, 2010, p. 449).

Government depicted the media as an anti-indigenous entity, a stance designed to ferment a siege mentality among indigenous Fijians by creating the impression that indigenous rule was under threat because of the media coverage of the banking scandal. The *Fiji Times* was forced to go on the defensive, stating in an editorial: "Let us get some things straight. The media is not trying to topple the government. Criticism of the NBF debacle has nothing to do with race" (see B. Lal, 2010, p. 449). The Fiji public's apparent "shoot-the-messenger" mentality is reminiscent of a negative view of "oppositionism" seen in some other plural societies such as Malaysia, where even healthy criticism of the ethnic Malay-dominated government is reportedly greeted with disdain by sections of the indigenous Malay community (Fong, 2009, p. 28). This response resonates with what is described as a "hostile media phenomenon" (Dalton, Beck & Huckfeldt, 1998; Peffley, Avery & Glass, 2001). The term derives from a 1992 study of the US presidential election, which identified a strong tendency among partisan supporters to regard even balanced news coverage of their political side as biased (see Dalton, Beck & Huckfeldt, 1998).

In Fiji, a sign of the 'shoot the messenger' mentality was apparent in a Lowy Institute poll in which most respondents (43 per cent) stated that since the 2006 coup, the media had become more reliable. This was against 31 per cent who stated that there had been no change, and 24 per cent who stated that the media had become was less reliable (Lowy Institute, 2011). Interestingly, the Lowy poll indicated 96 per cent "strong" or "partial" preference for a censorship-free media environment (Lowy Institute, 2011, pp. 12–13). Taken together, the results indicate fragile public confidence in journalists, yet fairly strong support for a free media. In other words, the Fiji public's desire for a free press is not necessarily a measure of its confidence in the local media corps. From a conflict reporting perspective, the issue of public support for the media is crucial: the lower the level of

public support, the higher the risk of exposure to government control. This was a central message in the Hutchins report on "A Free and Responsible Press" in the United States. The report warned that media risked compromising their own freedom and independence if they lost public confidence due to a decline in their professional standards (Hutchins Commission, 1947). This message applies equally today to Fiji and other Pacific Islands countries, where the danger of State control is amplified due to authoritarian-minded governments (see Perrottet & Robie, 2011; Robie, 2009b).

Lack of professionalism

The reported lack of public support for Fiji's media could also be attributed to a perception about the lack of professionalism in the sector. This is an old concern reflected in various studies, including three reports on media self-regulation: the Thomson Foundation Report (Morgan & Thomas, 1996), the controversial James Anthony Report (Fiji Human Rights Commission, 2008) and the Fiji Media Council Report (J. Herman, Siwatibau, & Sweetman, 2009). Concerns about professional standards culminated over the coverage of the 2000 Speight coup and the 2001 high-profile murders of former Fiji Red Cross director John Scott and his partner Greg Scrivener (Cass, 2002; Field, 2002; Robie, 2003c). Alleged shortcomings in the coverage of the Speight coup have already been covered elsewhere in this thesis.

The apparent journalistic failures associated with the Scott and Scrivener murders are explicitly documented in a compelling book, *Deep Beyond the Reef: A True Story of Madness and Murder in the South Pacific*, authored by John Scott's younger brother, Owen Scott (2004). The self-regulating Fiji Media Council was allegedly unable to deal effectively with a litany of media transgressions associated with the coup and the murders (Robie, 2003c, pp. 106–107; 2004, p. 54; Scott, 2004).

These reported media faults could have resulted in a public backlash, as was reflected in a Tebbutt opinion poll released after the 2000 coup and the double murder. The poll showed 71 per cent public support for stronger media laws. The Qarase Government used the poll as justification for a proposed media bill (Support for media control, 2002). These developments indicate a link between a decline in professional standards – whether real or perceived – and a loss of public confidence in the media sector. The lack of public support would put the media in a more vulnerable position with regards to government intervention. However, the media industry is not solely to blame for the alleged decline in standards. Fiji's coup culture, which stunted economic development, is also partly culpable. The coups are partly responsible for a persistently stagnant economy. This would have affected media companies' finances, and their ability to pay competitive salaries, and re-invest adequately in staff development.

This came through clearly in the in-depth interviews, and was also evident in the annual reports of companies such as Fiji TV and CFM as part of document review. The coup culture and punitive legislation caused journalist flight, reflected in the high rate of journalist attrition, as detected in the questionnaire survey. Journalism attrition could be partly responsible for the lack of in-depth reporting uncovered in the content analysis. In other words, the Rabuka and Bainimarama Governments who denounced the media sector for the alleged lack of professionalism are themselves to be blamed. They are the instigators of the coup culture that caused journalist attrition and damaged the media sector as a whole. This issue is discussed further in the next section.

Journalist attrition and training

Some interviewees raised the high rate of journalist attrition as a major concern. This was also detected in the survey questionnaire, which indicated a relatively young and inexperienced cohort. The survey questionnaire gave some indication about the overall scale of the problem while the in-depth interviews gave insights into its impact on day-to-day journalism practise. While journalists leaving the industry for better-paid jobs is not new (see Fiji Media Council, 2009; Robie, 2014; Yaya, 2002), the in-depth interviews coupled with the questionnaire survey findings indicate that the rate of attrition may have worsened since the 2006 coup, causing major challenges in the newsroom. The 2010 Media Decree was an apparent contributing factor – the introduction of punitive fines and jail terms could have caused journalist fright and flight due to the heightened risks. As one interviewee stated, previously journalists moved from one news media company to another. Now they were leaving the media industry altogether.

This finding is consistent with Foster's (2010) survey of Fiji journalists: 100 per cent of the respondents stated that they did not feel free to report the news as they found it. The survey had a low 13.6 per cent response rate (Foster, 2010, p. 25). But the results, if accurate, are quite revealing when juxtaposed with the high journalist attrition rate evident in this study. Some interviewees spoke of the tough local business environment. This would have had an impact on media companies' ability to pay and retain editorial staff already unhappy with working conditions. There is some evidence of this in the document review of Fiji TV. The company's annual report for 2013 shows an increase in programming costs and a decrease in staffing costs across the group by as much as 18.8 per cent over the previous two years (Fiji TV, 2014). This suggests cuts to staffing to cover for increasing costs in other areas, such as programming. Another strong theme that emerged from the in-depth interviews was the lack of training and educational opportunities in the media

sector, as well as career progression. This could be another variable linked to journalist attrition and the apparent decline in standards. Journalist attrition is common in some other developing Pacific Islands countries (Pacific Media and Communications Facility, 2005; Tacchi et al., 2013). But in Fiji it seems to have been exacerbated by successive coups (Fiji Human Rights Commission, 2008; Foster, 2010; Morgan & Thomas, 1996; Tacchi et al., 2013; Pacific Media and Communications Facility, 2005).

Elite orientation and indiscriminate use of press releases

Some interviewees, particularly those from outside the media sector, spoke of the media's alleged reliance on press releases and the tendency to "parrot" the views of elite sources rather than report in a critical manner. These findings were supported by the content analysis through war journalism readings for both elite orientation and context. It was also established by a new line of enquiry into the content analysis that found that a fairly high proportion of stories in the sample were based on press releases or press conferences. Notwithstanding the conventional news media wisdom that treats prominence as a core news value, the strong elite leaning and apparent lack of critical reporting could partly be attributed to a culture of deference for authority. Pacific traditions of respect and humility sometimes make it hard to ask tough questions or openly challenge leaders (Latu, 2010; Madraiwiwi, 2014; Tuafuti, 2010).

While the region's media are by no means totally cowed by culture and tradition, the alleged lack of critical reporting was raised at a major Pacific Islands News Association conference in Noumea, New Caledonia, in 2014. Two prominent speakers – Roch Wamytam, then President of the Congress of New Caledonia, and Dr Colin Tukuitonga, then Director General, Secretariat to the Pacific Community (SPC) – were in agreement that Pacific journalists avoid asking the hard questions, are less inquisitive than their foreign counterparts and rely too much on press releases (Pacific journalists challenged . . ., 2014). In Fiji, the apparent passive nature of the reporting could also be a reflection of Fiji's youthful and inexperienced journalist corps. Such a young cohort would conceivably be more prone to elite influence and manipulation than a more experienced, qualified cohort. One interviewee was specific about the vulnerability of young trainees recruited as cadets to various forms of pressure. She insisted that cadetships on their own are inadequate for training new recruits. This makes sense given Fiji's ever-more complicated political environment and news reporting terrain.

Yet another cause of the elite disposition could be business-related. Media can rely on a ready supply of stories from politicians, the corporate sector and other State and non-State authorities. Such sources would have established bureaucracies to churn out press releases and to organise press conferences. For the elite who control the bureaucracy, this means greater coverage. For the media, it means a regular supply of stories and cost savings. This seems consistent with Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda theory, which holds that institutional and organisational profit-focussed imperatives limit journalists to producing news for the benefit of an established elite with whom media owners often have common interests. Deeper insights into this scenario can be gained through Christians and colleagues' media framework of four roles (2009). The in-depth interviews reveal various forms of the dependency and collaborative role of the media at different levels. The heavy reliance on press releases suggests that at the journalist level, collaboration appears to be based on apathy, indifference and/or ignorance, as well as instrumentalism, that is, some type of useful trade-off. At the media owner level, such collaboration appears to be largely based on instrumentalism (see Christians et al., 2009, p. 199).

A divided media

Another major in-depth interview finding was the apparent division in the Fiji media fraternity over the 2006 coup and subsequent Bainimarama Government policies, such as the 2010 Media Decree. Some interviewees were opposed to the decree, some were quite supportive, while some others gave qualified support only. Those in the former group felt the coup was illegal and the media decree was debilitating, unworkable and designed to stop the scrutiny of government. Those in the latter group felt the decree was a "wake-up" call for an errant media. It had compelled media to de-emphasise political rhetoric and to focus more on people-oriented stories. For them, the Bainimarama Government stood for oneness rather than divisiveness, which should be supported.

These interviewees did not regard discarding media's classical neutral stance as a problem since they felt they were supporting a greater national cause. This demonstrates the apparent fluidity of the objectivity ethos within sections of the Fiji media corps, something that was also picked up in the questionnaire survey. Conceptualising this situation through the four roles of the media framework (Christians et al., 2009) shows that media collaboration with the Bainimarama Government was not entirely based on coercion or pragmatism; acceptance also played a part. The latter occurs when media share the State's philosophical beliefs and enthusiastically support government policy, which may or may not also reap financial spinoffs (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 199–200).

The contrasting roles that sections of the media adopted in response to the Bainimarama Government implied that the split within the Fiji journalist fraternity was based on both political ideology and ethnicity, which is not surprising since the two variables are closely related in Fiji. The divisions in Fiji's journalist fraternity, which reflect the divisions in Fijian society at large (see B. Lal, 2008; Ewins, 1998; Naidu, 2013), are alluded to in the *Fiji State of the Media and Communications Report 2013* (Tacchi et al., 2013). The report speaks of an "an undercurrent of mistrust" among media colleagues based on "pro-" or "anti-government" alignments. This had polarised journalists along political and provincial lines, which could hinder efforts to form a media association to represent media workers' interests (p. 3).

From a conflict reporting viewpoint, ethnic or political divisions within the journalist community could be damaging, especially if they thwart the formation of a national journalist network since such networks could be crucial for organising support groups within the profession to help combat media abuse in vulnerable societies (see Frohardt & Temin, 2003, p. 11). Networks can also be useful in collective bargaining with employers. Moreover, a local journalist network is often the precursor for forming international networks. In East-Timor, for example, journalists formed a national Press Union with the intention of affiliating with the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists to oppose a draft media law (East Timor journalists form press union, 2014). Fiji has lacked a domestic journalist network for some time, which may have deterred the formation of a broader, regional and international network, as well as a local lobby group.

Future strategies for journalism and conflict reporting
In terms of future strategies for strengthening journalism, interviewees generally felt that the 2010 Media Decree was a hindrance rather than a help, especially in the long run, as the legislation was proving too restrictive and too costly. It clearly emerges from the interviews that the sweeping and punitive nature of some provisions stopped media from functioning properly. Even those who were usually supportive of government policies felt that the decree was suited for the short-term, post-coup period only, and that it had outlived its purpose. On the most, the feeling was that long-term, sustainable solutions should be based on training and development. Interviewees from both the media and non-media sectors felt that media should have a developmental role to assist nation-building although there were some differences on how any such role should be defined and applied. A minority, mostly with a journalism background, felt such a task was best achieved by media sticking to their traditional watchdog role based on neutrality. Others felt that this was not sufficient in a developing country like Fiji.

For them, the media's role and conduct should be defined by a broader national framework inclusive of Fiji's troubled history. The journalists' reactions indicate their dilemma when trying to reconcile what they see as their professional duties with ill-defined nation-building roles that could be used by the government to justify censorship and deflect legitimate criticism. This disjuncture is seen in other developing countries also. Skjerdal (2011) conducted a series of in-depth interviews with Ethiopian media professionals to investigate conflicting journalism identities. The overall conclusion was that journalists were favourable towards development journalism but they were challenged when they tried to convert the framework into actual media practice (p. 58).

Similar contradictions were seen in this study's in-depth interviews over the question of conflict reporting. Some respondents felt that the Fiji media bear some responsibility for conflict. They accepted the idea of specialist training in conflict reporting. Some others stated that since the 2006 coup, they had been focussing more on positive developments and paying less attention to divisive politics. However, there were some interviewees who insisted that media should be guided by their professional code of ethics and practice and stick to neutrality. This attitude is reflected in the content analysis of the 2006 national election, with the indicator "balance" returning a peace journalism frame, showing that journalists are attempting to uphold balance.

But the content analysis also showed lack of context and negligible coverage of critical issues. These shortcomings negate the overall value of the peace journalism reading. What emanates from the in-depth interviews and content analysis is the premium value that some Fiji journalists attach to professional norms such as balance and neutrality. The content analysis indicates that similar attention also needs to be paid to context and relevance, which were found to be lacking. This argument was most strongly put forward by interviewees with a non-journalism background. They felt that journalism lacks context and every-day relevance. The irony is that despite journalists' strong insistence on balance, neutrality and objectivity, the Fiji Media Council code of ethics allows media organisations to take a politically partisan stance (Media Council (Fiji) Ltd, 2005). It is also interesting that some journalists refuse to be strait-jacketed into the classical, western news reporting format and are trying to break out of it. This was evident in one media executive's insistence that while he believed in objectivity, he would not report fundamentally divisive things in the name of "free-for-all journalism". He would rather privilege development stories than stories that could harm the country.

Leaving the complexities of the costs, benefits and practicalities of development journalism aside for the moment, the media executive's comments show that some Fiji journalists are questioning the established ways of reporting. Indeed, somewhat similar sentiments were expressed in the questionnaire survey, in which most respondents prioritised social stability over media objectivity. This perhaps shows that Fiji journalists' experiences of reporting conflicts are causing them to ask whether there is a better way of approaching and covering certain issues in the country. The latest soul-searching has apparently been caused by the 2006 coup (see Pareti, 2009). This underlines the point that while conflicts can be damaging, they can also provide an opportunity for reflection, not to mention the chance to question, challenge and change the status quo (see Naidu, 2013).

Synopsis of the in-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into the problems being investigated. The analysis reveals a media landscape made challenging by Fiji's ethnic make-up, racially-based political system and cultural respect for authority. A coup culture and tough media legislation have added to the problems, among other things by compounding economic challenges and causing journalist flight. The in-depth interview analysis illuminates the link between professional media standards, public confidence in media, and freedom of speech. Divisions are apparent in the Fiji journalism fraternity over the Bainimarama Government's policies. But there is broad agreement that media development should be centred on training and education rather than on punitive legislation alone.

6.7   Chapter summary

This chapter has analysed the research results. Content analysis of the 2006 elections finds elements of balanced, considered reporting. But the lack of context and heavy reliance on elite sources diminishes the value of the overall peace journalism findings. Analysis of the questionnaire survey reveals a relatively young, inexperienced and under-qualified journalist corps, which could explain some of the weaknesses discovered in the content analysis. The shortcomings could also be blamed on tight, cost-efficient production schedules that leave little room for journalistic enterprise. Document research of the legislative environment suggests over-regulation and duplication of laws since the implementation of the 2010 Media Industry Development Decree. Document research into media ownership shows an increasingly corporatised set-up dominated by local conglomerates. In-depth interviews give an insight into journalists' everyday struggles in Fiji's challenging political and social landscape, exposing apparent stresses for the journalism fraternity. The next chapter – which is the final chapter – draws together the major findings of the thesis by revisiting the research questions. It outlines this study's major contributions to knowledge, as well as its limitations, followed by recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

7.1   Introduction

This final chapter draws the thesis together by synthesising the major themes that emerged from this study to reach conclusions, offer recommendations and outline the research implications. To recap, conventional journalism is said to place a premium on conflict as a news value, while eschewing complex explanations (Wolfsfeld, 1997). This study investigated such claims in Fiji, where the national media stands accused of ill-serving the country by allegedly misreporting social and political conflicts. Conflict is a critical issue, with analysts linking latent social and political tensions to the country's coup culture and a vicious cycle of prolonged instability and stagnant growth. This has stopped the country from reaching its full potential (Naidu, 2005, 2008, 2013).

This research was partly inspired by a growing recognition among policymakers that an empowered media could contribute to conflict prevention in society (R. Howard, 2003, 2009), and encroaches into the field of peace studies, an important area of research internationally, but lagging behind in the Pacific. In approaching the problem from a global perspective, a review of the media coverage of the major conflicts in the turbulent post-Cold War era was undertaken, including ethnic conflicts in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, the US War on Terror and the troubles in Kenya (Gottschalk, 1992; Kellner, 2002). Closer to home, the unprecedented political riots in Tonga, the ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands, the civil war in Bougainville and the Fiji coups were examined (Moala, 2008; Robie, 2007).

The literature review revealed a common thread – an apparent media attraction to elite sources, lack of contextual reporting and the use of media by certain powerful elements to mobilise groups and flare up war hysteria. Specific to Fiji, the literature suggested that the country's major, long-running conflicts with strong primordial overtones were actually underpinned by instrumentalist and constructivist causes rooted in the capitalist policies of the colonial government. The colonial system, which thrived on an ethnically-constructed social, economic and political framework, was partly retained after independence in 1970, resulting in an ethnically-divided parliament. Over time and space, this led to the formation of political and economic cartels and the steady politicisation of the ethnic Fijian military, fueling a coup syndrome. However, colonialism should not become the perpetual excuse. Leadership failures have also plagued Fiji, as discussed in Chapter 3.

On the media's part, an evident tendency to focus on the primordial angle of conflicts could have caused them lose sight of the underlying causes of these conflicts. Similarly, a formulaic tendency to use elites as news sources could be a partial cause of the media's misrepresentation of sensitive issues such as demographical trends, the share of economic wealth and matters concerning land (Chung, 1999; Gaunder, 2008). This brings into question the wisdom of the unmitigated and wholesome application of the inherited western news reporting model in non-western, non-homogenous societies. My research suggests that the premium value placed on conflict and elites as news sources, and the focus on the immediate, violent effects of conflict, could be harmful in tense, multi-ethnic societies, where elites with vested political and economic interests often hold sway.

One academic who took part in my study's in-depth interviews complained that the media discourse in Fiji was dominated by the political elites, and that intellectuals received comparatively less coverage. To some extent, this was borne out by the study's content analysis. This suggests that media need to consider a more broad-based approach when it comes to sourcing news. In terms of conflict reporting, the literature showed an apparently strong research focus on Western news organisations, with domestic media receiving comparatively less attention; an emphasis on the journalist and media organisations without considering the larger political, social and economic forces at play; and failure to fully consider the link between media content and the national media infrastructure. The gaps in the literature informed my study's multi-faceted methodological approach, which included content analysis, questionnaire survey, document research and in-depth interviews. This strategy was used in the attempt to address an apparent disconnect between content creation and the media landscape by identifying the links between content and some other key variables, such as the professional capacity and diversity of the national media corps, the national media ownership structure and the national legislative environment.

The following sections organise the outlining of the conclusions around the four research questions.

7.2   Research Question One: Is the Fiji media inflammatory, as is often alleged?

As a starting point, a modified peace journalism content analysis framework was applied to the print media's coverage of the 2006 national elections to address Question One. Literature on other peace journalism-inspired studies and on Fiji's ethnically-based political system had hinted at a war journalism reading, as did an apparent media tendency to narrowly define conflicts on the basis of

primordialism. But the analysis returned a peace journalism reading, indicating that the print media coverage of Fiji's 2006 election was not inflammatory.

However, the validity of this finding was questionable as it was likely affected by the military's political involvement in the 2006 elections. Moreover, the finding was overshadowed by war journalism readings for individual indicators like *context* and *sources*, suggesting that most election stories lacked background and focused on elite sources only. In addition, a new line of enquiry showed that stories on logistical issues and political rhetoric vastly outnumbered those dealing with critical national matters. These results lead to the conclusion that if a peace journalism reading is meant to denote a positive outcome, it does not really apply equally in every context or setting. In Fiji's case, the peace journalism reading could be deceiving, founded as it was on apparent military coercion. This cast doubts on the validity and longevity of the induced peace journalism frame.

Taken at face-value, the peace journalism reading could even mask some deeper problems, such as the apparent lack of critical media coverage given to issues such as poverty, land, corruption, unemployment and infrastructural development, variables that often underpin long-term conflicts in Fiji. So in the Fiji context, the peace journalism reading is not necessarily a positive outcome. In other words, coverage of the 2006 election indicates the Fiji print media were not inflammatory. But that does not mean that conflict reporting is not a problem since the structural causes of conflict are not given adequate coverage, as per the content analysis. At this juncture, it is worth noting that the Bainimarama coup, reasonably blamed for many problems in Fiji's media sector, took place months after the 2006 election, and cannot be held liable for all the shortcomings apparent in the 2006 election coverage.

The weak coverage could possibly be symptomatic of the decades of decline apparent in the media sector, partly as a result of Fiji's coup culture and partly as a result of inaction by the media sector to take corrective measures. The 2006 coup simply exacerbated the situation (see Herman, Siwatibau, & Sweetman, 2009; Morgan & Thomas, 1996).

Next, we look at the media content in relation to the media infrastructure, specifically journalist professional capacity and diversity.

7.3   Research Question Two: What is the level of journalist professional capacity & diversity in Fiji?

The questionnaire survey found that virtually half the respondents boasted some form of recognised credentials, but this was undermined by the detection of a relatively young and inexperienced journalist corps. It betrayed signs of a fairly high rate of journalist attrition, which could partly explain the lack of critical reporting apparent in the content analysis. The current findings coupled with the literature review indicate that journalist attrition is a long-standing problem whose effects may have been overlooked and underestimated. The research suggests that attrition is likely caused by a combination of factors, including Fiji's coup culture and more recently, the punitive 2010 Media Decree. The high level of journalist attrition implies that improvements in journalist education and on-the-job experience, once proffered as a panacea, are not after all sufficient on their own. For the media industry, the first priority must be to find ways and means of breaking the debilitating journalist attrition cycle, that is look at strategies for retaining matured journalists in the media sector.

A passion for journalism can only go so far. There is a need to improve incentives in terms of working conditions, remuneration, career progression and opportunities for training and development to stem the outward flow, build newsroom capacity and improve the quality of the content. Otherwise, as the in-depth interviews suggest, Fiji's media sector is doomed to act as a nursery for corporate companies, civil society organisations, tertiary institutions and government departments. With reference to academic qualifications, only two journalists out of the 63 in the sample held postgraduate degrees. Negative implications of this situation include lack of local capacity to conduct research into Pacific media. At the moment, such research is not only infrequent but largely carried out by non-Pacific Islanders, thus lacking an insider lens (see Latu, 2010).

Developing academic research capacity in Pacific media is on its own a strong incentive for boosting journalism education, not just at the undergraduate level but also at the postgraduate level. While non-media academics, scholars and research institutions have the capacity to conduct research into Pacific media, research by graduate journalists with professional experience can provide unique insider perspectives and add depth and new knowledge to the literature. These discussions raise one of the great fallacies and ironies of journalism in Fiji. Governments, including those headed by prime ministers Rabuka, Chaudhry and Bainimarama, habitually blame the media sector for an alleged lack of professional standards. This thesis, however, has argued that a major

cause of the various problems in the media sector is Fiji's pervading coup culture, a legacy dating from Rabuka's first coup in 1987, reinforced by the Speight putsch in 2000, and perpetuated by Bainimarama in his 2006 takeover, which was initially supported by Chaudhry (Firth & Fraenkel, 2009; Green, 2009).

In the pursuit of answers, an honest acknowledgement of all the factors that hamper the media sector, and the sharing of responsibility equally and fairly, could lead to a better understanding of the issues at stake. Apportioning blame on the media sector alone will only obscure the full extent of problem and hinder the search for solutions. A key conclusion is that while some profitable media companies may be held responsible for not paying a fair wage and not re-investing enough in training and education, the biggest and most enduring negative impact on media standards is from successive coups, global and local economic downturns and punitive legislation. These variables – previously overlooked, if not underestimated – deal a double blow to media companies by increasing operating costs and lowering profit margins, leaving little funds for reinvestment and redevelopment.

These problems are not of the media sector's making. Indeed, they are beyond the media sector's control. Furthermore, punitive media legislation cannot do anything to address the shortage of academically-qualified journalists, the apparent lack of work incentives in the media sector, or journalist attrition. In fact, evidence uncovered by this research indicates that hardnosed legislation could aggravate these problems, especially journalist attrition. Turning to journalist diversity, the survey found a proportionate balance in terms of ethnicity and religion, but there were some concerns about media prioritising indigenous traditions and institutions over those of other communities.

To a certain extent, the prevalence of indigenous traditions could be justified on the basis of indigenous Fijians' first nation status. But concerns arise during coups, when the phenomenon tends to take on strong primordial overtones, with appeals made on the basis of ethnicity, religion and cultural affiliation (see Mishra, 2008; Robie, 2000, 2001). Given that the indigenous population is forecast to increase its majority (Bureau of Statistics, 2007), this issue needs to be monitored so that the media does not marginalise other groups that make up Fiji's multi-ethnic society. Marginalisation of women would be another concern. In numerical terms, gender representation in the journalist corps is fairly evenly mixed but female journalists are disadvantaged when it comes to seniority. The literature on gender in journalism suggests female journalists perceive and report

issues differently from male journalists (Bhagwan-Rolls, 2006, 2007). Perhaps if there were more female journalists in senior newsroom positions, it is conceivable that they might adopt a more peace-oriented style of journalism practice.

One news executive said during the in-depth interviews that his organisation recruited journalists on the basis of ability alone and still managed to maintain a balanced newsroom. That may well be the case. However, the findings of this research suggest that there are justifications for monitoring the political, ethnic, religious and regional composition of Fiji's journalist corps to safeguard against dominant groups exerting disproportionate control over content, more so in a multi-ethnic country such as Fiji. These findings reaffirm that it will take more than just the 2010 Media Decree to address the inherent structural weaknesses in Fiji's media sector.

Indeed, the survey finding that a fairly large segment of the respondents seemed less than confident about journalists' grasp of media law and ethics is rather disconcerting. Such a lack of assurance is another signal of a weak national journalist corps that is not only a danger to itself but also in a compromised position when it comes to scrutinising people in authority, the more so with the State vigorously pursuing any legal and ethical breaches through the courts. The *Fiji Times* was cited twice for sub judice contempt, incurring a FJD300,000 fine in 2013 (Tough week and times ahead, 2013). Despite being one of the larger and more profitable companies, the *Times*, let alone Fiji's smaller news media organisations, surely cannot sustain fines of this nature. This indicates that the Fiji media sector must make media law and ethics a high educational priority as it could mean the difference between the survival or the demise of some news organisations. The next section looks at the conclusions reached with reference to the third research question relating to the media infrastructure, namely the legal environment.

7.4   What are the genesis and nature of Fiji's media laws?

For a media sector that has, historically, operated under the British legal framework, the punitive 2010 Media Decree marked a major paradigm shift as self-regulation gave way to State regulation and ethical breaches were criminalised (see Dutt, 2010). Moreover, the Bainimarama Government promulgated additional decrees that impacted on the operations of the media sector, with the research identifying some clear cases of over-regulation and duplication. Government instituted stronger laws to curb alleged inflammatory journalism, citing social, political and economic stability as the primary goals. The content analysis suggests that inflammatory reporting is not as much a problem

as the lack of in-depth, contextual reporting. However, as the document research shows, the bulk of the Media Industry Development Authority's (MIDA) strategy to date has focused on media regulation rather than media development, leading one to conclude that the general thrust of government's media policy could be seriously flawed. Also evident was a power imbalance between the State as the regulating authority and the media as the fourth estate. Data suggests that the punitive legislation fostered a culture of self-censorship, possibly contributing to journalist fright (Hooper, 2013).

However, the western concept of media watchdoggism can be problematic in Fiji's 'hybrid' democracy, which is based on a not-altogether harmonious amalgamation of Western and indigenous systems (Boege et al., 2013). Media has to contend with indigenous respect for traditional authority on the one hand, and the general population's ethnic-based, partisan political affiliations on the other. The means that in Fiji's political and cultural contexts, an overly-aggressive watchdog approach could actually be counter-productive. It could turn the public against the fourth estate, which in turn could strengthen government's case for tighter regulation. In other words, the media not only face autocratic-minded governments, but at times a cagey and untrusting public. This resembles, in the Fiji context, what Dalton and others (1998) describe as "hostile media phenomenon". Indeed, while on paper Fiji has looked good regarding freedom of speech, the reality is different. While Fiji's constitutions enshrined media freedom, the spectre of tighter legislation has been a constant threat due to the country's history, culture, tradition and ethnic politics. Stronger regulation was delayed by independence in 1970, deregulation in the 1990s and ironically, by the 2000 and 2006 coups. But the respite was only temporary. Regulation is now a reality – the consequence of both good and bad journalism. The result is too much power with the State and too little space for media, not the least because of selective, opportunistic application of the media law.

In addition, legal provisions compelling the disclosure of confidential sources and search and confiscate powers could discourage a whistleblowing culture and impede investigative journalism, already a weak link in Fiji (see S. Singh, 2012). This provision contradicts the Bainimarama Government's professed stand against corruption and declared support for good governance (see Bainimarama, 2009, 2011, 2013). Another contradiction is that tougher media legislation was introduced with the stated aim of stopping media from fanning ethnic tensions. However, overly restrictive laws could have caused opposition views to migrate from mainstream media to the uncontrolled realm of social media to resurface in more extreme forms.

Moreover, where the Fiji Media Council was seen to be too close to the media industry in the days of media self-regulation, some critics have come to regard MIDA, tasked with enforcing compliance with the media codes, as a government stooge (J. Herman et al., 2009; Narsey, 2012a, 2012b, 2013b, 2013c). The literature also indicates that weaknesses within the media sector may have made it more vulnerable to government designs and motives to impose harsher legislation. To some extent, one cannot but agree with critics such as Professor Crosbie Walsh, the founder of the development studies program at the University of the South Pacific, who stated that the restrictions on the Fiji media stem from a backdrop of unfair reporting and lack of background, and that in Fiji, issues of press freedom cannot be isolated from ethical reporting (see Yamo, 2012).

Journalists in the in-depth interviews admitted that mistakes and ethical breaches were commonplace, with one former newspaper employee even stating that running one-sided, single-sourced stories had become routine. One wonders if this trend inspired the provision in the 2010 Media Decree criminalising the publication or broadcast of one-sided stories. In essence, Fiji's legislative environment fails Frohardt and Temin's (2003) requirements for a proper balance between legislation that allows media to operate without excessive restrictions and legislation designed to enforce responsible reporting.

The next section looks at the conclusions in relation to the fourth and final research question concerning the implications of the media ownership structure.

7.5   Research Question Four: What is the genesis and nature of media ownership in Fiji and its link with political & economic power?

The move towards corporatisation since independence in 1970 accelerated under new laws implemented in 2010, with the sector effectively dominated by local conglomerates. Government emerged as a major media owner, with sole proprietorship of the State broadcaster, FBC, and majority holdings in Fiji TV via several State-linked entities. Even as far back as the 1970s, scholars like Melody (1978) had noticed the global shift towards increased corporatisation in media ownership. Melody had in fact warned that legislation would be necessary to counter the entrepreneurial tendency to monopolise the marketplace of ideas for power and profit, usually under the guise of economic efficiency.

Fiji's example shows that ill-conceived media ownership laws can do more harm than good. The litany of ironies relating to Fiji's media sector includes the fact that new ownership laws

implemented in the name of media de-concentration seem to have had the opposite impact, giving rise to increased conglomeration. These developments are indicative of major political economy and conflict of interest concerns. As McChesney (2013) argues, a social system dominated by economic elites will see them prioritise their capitalist interests, with a fixation on the stock market rather than poverty, business rather than labour, and celebrity news and gossip, rather than pressing social problems. During the content analysis, it was noticed that lifestyle, sports and celebrity features from Hollywood and Bollywood featured prominently in the local dailies. Corporate news in the expanding business news sections of the dailies and advertising features were also conspicuous. This leads one to the conclusion that the lack of depth in elections coverage was not just due to lack of journalist capacity, but also due to the lack of time and space for journalistic endeavor to flourish.

Moreover, limits on foreign ownership that forced the sale of the Rupert Murdoch–owned *Fiji Times* to a major local company put both the country's dailies into the hands of local conglomerates. Arguably, Fiji might have been better off if at least one of the two national newspapers had remained under foreign owners with no other business ventures in the local economy. To some extent, this would mean being less beholden to government's business and economic policies, although there is no guarantee that a foreign media organisation would not give in to government demands and threats, or inducements for that matter. Moreover, a foreign company would still be beholden to local advertisers, who in the case of Fiji, can be very sensitive to government policies. However, this research indicates the *Fiji Times* was apparently more critical of government while under foreign ownership than under local ownership. The next section discusses some suggestions to address the problems identified.

7.6   Recommendations

In Fiji, it is apparent that media have to deal with censorship, and a lack of trained, qualified and experienced journalists. Salaries in the media sector are comparatively low as is evident from the high staff turnover. Providing training and educational opportunities, and changing entrenched newsroom cultures and mindsets, will be difficult tasks to achieve. These recommendations are based on the premise that if Fiji is going to make a successful transition to democracy following the September 2014 general election, the media need to be given sufficient freedom to be able to hold power to account and keep the public informed. For their part, media need to lift professional standards, address salary issues and demonstrate accountability through contextual, culturally-

sensitive and responsible journalism. In keeping with Frohardt and Temin's (2003) guidelines, the recommendations fall into two categories: *content-specific interventions* and *structural interventions*. The former are based on studying media content and identifying ways to strengthen it, including ascertaining areas where issue-oriented training might be warranted. The latter involve an audit of the national media structure, identifying fault lines and making recommendations for improvements.

Content-specific interventions

Media content can shape and influence an individual's view of the world (Frohardt & Temin, 2003). This study revealed an apparent lack of critical reporting and some possible cases of misreporting with regard to developmental issues and contentious matters. The study indicates a media with a fairly heavy reliance on elite sources and a young, inexperienced and under-educated journalist corps. This combination increases the risk of journalist control and manipulation by politicians and other leaders, especially given Fiji's culture of deference towards authority figures (see Boydell, 2014; Hartsell, 2010; Kurer, 2001; Naidu, 2013; Sutherland, 1992). The historical misreporting of some polarising matters, such as land ownership and usage, demographic trends, and constitutionalism and coups, has been claimed, with allegations of media over-emphasis of the ethnic angle (Cottrell & Ghai, 2004; Chung, 1999; Ewins, 1998; Sutherland, 1992). The key point is that the issues discussed are crucial matters that form the national news package on a regular basis, both from the perspective of the government of the day and the political opposition.

However, this thesis argues that media content is inextricably tied to the national media infrastructure, which includes journalists. Too often, policy-makers ignore this link, and focus on the content. This can lead to misguided legislation that is often punitive in nature. This is at best a makeshift measure that does nothing to improve the quality of journalsts. This limited approach is a major shortcoming given that journalists with poor professional skills can be a potential security threat. They can inflame grievances and promote stereotypes even if that is not the intention (Frohardt and Temin, 2003).

It is recommended that journalists receive specialised training to in reporting sensitive issues, as part of the curriculum, or by means of specific workshops and seminars, particularly nearer to an election. A basic course in conflict reporting theory should be included in university curricula generically, incorporating peace journalism principles. This could provide a framework for journalists to produce content is inclusive of all conceivable angles concerning an issue, rather than

just the ethnic element. It could enable grassroots people to express their views about events and issues that affect them directly, especially if they are in the front lines of conflict. It would also require paying more attention, and giving more space, to people who condemn violence and offer solutions.

The recommendation is made on the premise that specific demands on media systems vary from country to country. In multi-cultural societies such as Fiji, journalists deal with political differences, ethnic tensions, social conflicts, cultural sensitivities, autocratic governments, and military coups. Journalists covering these complex issues need not only practical skills but also philosophical and contextual knowledge taught in university curricula (see Deuze, 2006). Besides improving the curriculum content of the training programs in universities, providing affordable and accessible university education for journalists should be a priority. To overcome a lack of resources, the media sector could tap into the expertise and knowledge available in universities and civil society organisations, which conduct research and hold lectures, seminars, conferences and workshops on critical issues facing the nation. Regularly participating in such events could help journalists become more critical thinkers and produce improved content. The private sector has a major stake in a stable political environment. It is recommended that it participate in sponsoring training programs for journalists and university students.

The next section addresses structural interventions.

Structural interventions

The media structure is the foundation on which news is produced. Based on the research results and outcomes, this study concludes that media content cannot be improved sustainably without first addressing the structural weaknesses in the system. This study recommends the following strategies:

Training and Development: Training and education opportunities need to be expanded to cater for the many untrained journalists found in the survey and for future recruits. Training is indispensable for empowering journalists to operate competently in a rapidly transforming media landscape dealing with fast-changing social, political, technological and economic paradigms, as is Fiji. The government, the private sector and donor agencies should consider specific scholarships in journalism and media to attract a greater pool of interested applicants to achieve the critical mass.

Journalist Attrition: Unless journalist attrition is brought to manageable levels, training and development will have little impact simply because skilled journalists will leave the sector once they have become more experienced and marketable. Challenging as this issue is, attempts should be made to stem the outward flow. In terms of salaries, media companies may not be able to compete equally with other sectors, such as banking. However, donor agencies, the private sector and governments could assist by providing other incentives. These include fellowships and scholarships to mid-career candidates for part-time or full-time study in exchange for a reasonable bond period to stay in the journalism profession. Moreover, there are now a number of universities, vocational training institutions and research centres in the region that could offer positions for journalists-in-residence. This could be a stepping stone for journalism teaching positions at regional institutions for individuals who have spent the requisite amount of time as a journalist. It would also boost capacity for research in Pacific media. Outlining such career paths and creating positions to be filled by professional, academically qualified journalists would be a boost for the sector.

Awards and Citations: The Fiji Awards for Media Excellence should be revived as another incentive to recognise and reward excellence and commitment in journalism, doubling as a measure for slowing the rate of journalist attrition. The awards could be sweetened with the offer of local or overseas fellowships for the winners.

National Media Associations: The formation of a journalist association for collective bargaining is also recommended. Such associations could defend journalists' rights and freedoms, provide legal counsel and advocate for employers to implement a transparent salary structure (see Frohardt & Temin, 2003).

Community Education: A culture of 'hostile media phenomenon' identified in the in-depth interviews indicates that, apart from educating journalists, there is a case for educating the community about the important and challenging role of media in society. In this regard, media literacy could be included in the school curriculum, in the interest of a better-informed public. In time, such a public may show greater appreciation for the media. This could be crucial for putting public pressure on government to relax some of the more punitive laws governing the Fiji media.

Media Law: On the part of the State, greater clarity is needed regarding the media decree's ambiguous provisions. Some of the more punitive measures need to be reconsidered and the law needs to be streamlined to eradicate duplication. Consistent enforcement of pre-existing defamation,

sub judice and hate speech laws should be sufficient. Government's updated media strategy should focus more on journalist development and less on journalist regulation as a way of improving media content. For its part, the media sector needs to acknowledge and address apparent professional shortcomings, rather than dismiss them out of hand as a case of shooting the messenger. Should Fiji adopt a democratic framework after the 2014 election, a return to self-regulation should be considered. This would be under a properly constituted, reformed, strengthened and well-resourced independent media council that is given more powers after consultations with the relevant parties. Any such body should include government representatives.

Media Ownership: Fiji's media ownership structure has emerged as a major concern because of the blatant State–corporate nexus. It has given rise to various political economy and conflict of interest scenarios in relation to conglomeration, interlocking directorships and re-feudalisation, as outlined in Chapter 6. A matter of concern is the fact that Fiji's major media owners have significant stakes in other sectors of the economy, which makes them beholden to government policies that could affect their profits (see Narsey, 2013b, 2013c). This research used Christians and others' (2009) concept of the four roles of the media to show how pressure from owners may have forced some media into a collaborative role with the State in return for pecuniary gains or to avoid retributive actions. While one analyst (Narsey, 2013b, 2013c) has called for a reversal of Fiji's media laws to re-divest ownership from Fiji's corporate giants and revert it to dedicated media operators, this seems unrealisable, at least in the near future. In the immediate to mid terms, there are alternate ways of countering the strong corporate influence in media ownership. These include:

Public Service Broadcasting (PSB): The State-broadcaster, FBC, quite possibly the country's most influential medium, could take on a stronger public service broadcasting (PSB) role. The Pacific Media and Communications Facility study (2005) on Fiji and the region states that while national PSB services are government-owned, they are uniquely placed to cover programming gaps in a profit-focused broadcasting environment. It would require government to grant greater autonomy to the State broadcaster to allow it to operate under a similar charter to that of Radio Australia, for instance.

Alternative Media: These media forms are not bound by State and commercial ownership-related constraints. This means they are better positioned to provide independent analysis on media. These could take the form of independent bloggers, such as David Robie's *Café Pacific blog*: (http://cafepacific.blogspot.com.au/) and Wadan Narsey on *Fiji – for fairness and freedom:*

(http://narseyonfiji.wordpress.com/). Narsey (2013b, 2013c) provides critical analysis of media ownership and other related issues. Alternative media includes community media, such as the femLink initiative, which seeks to address imbalances inherent in traditional decision-making communication structures (Bhagwan-Rolls, 2006, 2007).

Media Watch Groups: Watch groups can be critical for providing an independent assessment of media reporting and the influence of media owners. The Suva-based Fiji Media Watch, a civil society organisation, carries out limited research, media monitoring and media literacy programs. The group's aim is to raise awareness about mass media power in today's Fiji (see website, https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fiji-Media-Watch-Media-Watch-Group/453871711359883). The Consumer Council of Fiji as an independent statutory body has the mandate and resources to add a media watch role to its list of responsibilities. The Council describes itself as a consumer "watchdog" that conducts rigorous research and policy analysis on key consumer issues, with power to influence decision-makers (see the Council's website, http://www.consumersfiji.org/about-us/consumer-council-of-fiji).

Independent Research: Research can be critical for creating awareness, stimulating debate and building a case to influence policy about relevant media ownership regulation in Fiji. The only research publication fully dedicated to media and communications in the Pacific is the peer-reviewed *Pacific Journalism Review*, based at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland (see website, http://www.pjreview.info/). Other journals that could publish research on media ownership and political economy of the media include: the University of the South Pacific–based *Journal of Pacific Studies*, which covers a range of disciplines (see website, http://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=3015) and *Fijian Studies*, published by the Fiji Institute of Applied Studies, with a focus on scholarly articles in humanities and social sciences (see website, http://search.informit.com.au/browseJournalTitle;res=IELHSS;issn=1728-7456). In 2008, *Fijian Studies* published a special edition on media and democracy in Fiji.

Annual State of the Media Report: This could take the form of a research article that keeps a check on ownership patterns and the impact on journalism. The Pacific Media Assistance Program released its *PACMAS State of the Media and Communication Regional Report 2013* (Tacchi et al., 2013). On the whole, such investigations are irregular and do not necessarily focus on ownership issues.

Networking and collaborating: In terms of responsible conflict reporting, which requires greater resources, economic realties could be a major deterrent. However, the Pacific Islands, including Fiji, appear to have a comparative advantage: the proliferation of community-based organisations, which form a vital part of life in the islands (see Swain, 2000). These range across religious organisations, women's groups, community radio, media watch groups, educational institutions, and local and international non-government organisations. Media could share the 'burden' by pooling resources with these like-minded civic institutions when it comes to peace-building. Some areas of cooperation could include creating or sharing content, providing specialist training, collaborating on research and so forth. This is already happening. To cite but one example, in Fiji a major post–2006 coup study, *Voices of the People: Perceptions and Preconditions for Democratic Development in Fiji*, was carried out under the auspices of the Pacific Theological College in Suva (Boege et al., 2013). Fiji-based media personality and peace journalism advocate James Bhagwan was part of the project team. The Suva-based non-governmental organisation, Citizens' Constitutional Forum Limited (CCF), which promotes human rights, has an active media advocacy program through which it has hosted speakers like peace journalism advocate, Professor Jake Lynch, to conduct workshops (see website, http://news.ccf.org.fj/about-ccf/)

The chapter now turns to the implications of the study.

7.7 Contributions and implications of the research

The significance of this study spans theory, practice and policy nationally, regionally, and internationally. Surprising as it may seem for a turbulent region like the Pacific, conflict reporting is rarely discussed, debated or researched in a systematic manner. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, conflict reporting has not featured as a major topic at the bi-annual conference of the Pacific Islands News Association, the major media organisation in the region. This study seeks to help position conflict reporting as one of the top priorities for media development in the region to meet both current and future challenges in research and professional practice.

Regional and national policy significance
In terms of the formulation and pursuit of policy, this study strives to contribute to the apparently sparse research in this region into conflict prevention, especially from a news media perspective. The study is consciously consistent with expert recommendations for a holistic, proactive, multi-sector approach to conflict resolution, since post-conflict interventions can be both protracted and

costly (Henderson & Watson, 2005). For example, the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) achieved some impressive results but it laboured for over a decade and cost AUD2.6 billion, a "massive and disproportionate investment" (Lowy Institute, 2014, p.1).

Fiji is located in the relatively volatile sub-region of Melanesia, which which has been labelled with controversial tags such as "arc of instability" and "failed states" (Dibb, 2007; Dobell, 2003). Internal conflict is considered a predominant threat to regional progress and to *The Pacific Plan*, the region's blueprint for sustainable development, good governance and security (Henderson & Watson, 2005; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2007). This research has implications for Australia, which considers the Pacific as a major priority, with one quarter of its total AUD4.8 billion in aid directed to the region in 2011/12 (Lowy Institute, 2014). The aid program could be undermined by violent conflict. Indeed, a failed coup in Papua New Guinea in January 2012 stands as a reminder of the region's volatility and the importance of conflict prevention strategies, preferably founded on research. Papua New Guinea is the major recipient of Australian aid in the region (Failed coup in PNG, 2012; Lowy Institute, 2014).

Implications for national, regional and international research
The Australian Government, recognising the media's potential in the area of peace and conflict, allocated AUD11 million over four years (2011–15) to the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme for the adoption of a communication for development strategy (Pacific Media Assistance Program, 2011). This particular PhD study can be directly linked to a crucial goal of Australia's National Research Priorities, namely, *Safeguarding Australia* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007, p. 35). This goal involves:

- Understanding our region and the world: Enhancing Australia's capacity to interpret and engage with its regional and global environment through a greater understanding of languages, societies, politics and cultures
- Protecting Australia from terrorism and crime: Promoting a healthy and diverse research and development system that anticipates threats and supports core competencies in modern and rapid identification techniques.

The Australian Research Council awarded the University of Sydney AUD500,000 to "strengthen the credentials of peace journalism as a research agenda and for media reform advocacy" through the formulation of a "Global Standard for Reporting Conflict" (Centre for Peace and Conflict

Studies, 2011). This particular study, quite possibly the first to examine conflict reporting in Fiji empirically, using the frameworks of peace journalism and political economy of the media, can contribute knowledge from a Pacific media perspective to such efforts as those Australia is supporting. Internationally, there is substantial available literature on war and media but empirical studies from a peace journalism perspective looking into media's potential for conflict reduction are lacking (Hackett, 2007; Lee & Maslog, 2005; Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011). Thus, a Fiji study based on a peace journalism–inspired content analysis framework could make an important empirical contribution to the genre internationally.

Theoretical and methodological implications

The literature suggests that Pacific media lacks consistent and in-depth scholarly investigation. The majority of the work is descriptive and does not apply theory (see Latu, 2010). Even fewer studies look at conflict reporting in any great depth. In fact, while internal conflicts in the region have been on the rise, there have been few corresponding studies into these developments from a media theory perspective.

This includes research into media ownership in the Pacific with an emphasis on political economy aspects, or conflict reporting from peace journalism and conflict theory frameworks. An audit of the media landscape via questionnaire survey to assess journalist capacity and diversity is also rare in most Pacific Islands countries. Again, it is hoped that this particular study will inspire and inform similar theoretical and methodological approaches in future, especially in regional countries where the media set-up is largely under-researched. Moreover, most regional studies in the field of peace and conflict have been conducted by political scientists and sociologists (see, for example, Boxhill, 1997; Hegarty, 2003). Such works do not adequately cover the role of the media. This is a major gap given the media's central position in society and their prominent role in reporting conflicts (Lynch & Galtung, 2010). As R. Howard (2003) explains, a peace project that launches without examining the media environment is more liable to fail.

Based on the apparent gaps in the literature, this research attempted to address the disconnect between content creation and the media landscape to better understand the phenomenon and provide possible solutions. In terms of originality, the development of a peace journalism–inspired coding category specifically for Fiji is unique, to the best of this researcher's knowledge. The application of this framework to a non-violent conflict such as a national election is also rare. In the Fiji context, this approach has given some distinct insights, including the fact that a careful

interpretation of the results is warranted since a peace journalism reading is not necessarily a positive outcome. Such a reading could mean different things in different settings and contexts.

Practical and training implications

Specific to Fiji, the findings could be useful for supporting the case for policy reform in media legislation. It could also support the development of customised training and conflict reporting curriculum in Fiji and the region. Some regional governments accuse media of instigating conflicts and claim that draconian legislation is needed to lift professional standards (Robie, 2014). This research could help mitigate and counter such claims, having highlighted that the root causes of conflict are often constructivist and instrumentalist in nature, and that media censorship may be futile in the Internet age, not to mention a possibly counter-productive move. The research has argued that training and development may be better pathways for lifting professional standards and improving conflict reporting. Based on empirical evidence as it is, the research could be useful for advocating increased educational and training opportunities for journalists from the State, private sector and international donors.

Contribution to other sectors

This study also contributes to the work of other sectors. Globally, civil society organisations (CSO) are vital forces in the field of peace and conflict (Ekiyor, 2008). In the Pacific, the Suva-based United Nations Development Programme's Pacific Centre set up a Crisis Prevention and Recovery division in 2006. At least four Fiji-based CSOs – Citizens' Constitutional Forum, Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy, Dialogue Fiji and femLINK Pacific – have incorporated media-related peace-building initiatives in their programs (Bhagwan-Rolls, 2007). Frohardt and Temin (2003) assert that the media should collaborate with conflict resolution organisations. For meaningful collaboration to occur, the media sector needs to keep abreast of the developments in other sectors and respond accordingly by building its own capacity through research activities. This study is a contribution to such efforts.

The next section discusses the limitations of the research.

7.8   Limitations of the research

While this research has made some major findings, filled some gaps in the literature and made various theoretical, policy and practical contributions, there are various inevitable limitations that need to be acknowledged. With regard to the content analysis, only the English language print media was studied. Broadcast and online media were not considered – despite the importance of radio in rural and remote areas – so the results cannot be said to be wholly representative of the national media's coverage of the 2006 elections, even if print media is quite significant in Fiji. Moreover, one of the newspapers analysed, the *Fiji Daily Post*, closed in 2010.

The focus of the content analysis was on news stories, with features, opinion articles, editorials and letters to the editor were left out. Including these items may have provided a more holistic impression of the elections coverage. However, they had to be excluded to bring the sample down to a manageable size and keep the emphasis on journalists and how they cover news. In addition, it is acknowledged that the researcher's interpretation of content analysis data may be influenced by his biases and choices given that some measure of subjectivity is inevitable. Specific to this research, the content analysis data could have also been affected by a peculiarity of the 2006 elections – the relatively high profile of the Fiji Military Forces, which warned election candidates to tone down their rhetoric. It is highly unusual for the military to involve itself in democratic elections. This 'unnatural' occurrence may well have distorted the true picture of how elections are normally fought by political parties and reported by the media in Fiji. In other words, without the military's intervention, the outcome could have been different and in the final analysis, the data could well have returned a war journalism reading.

For the national journalist survey, the researcher developed the questions from the literature review on the basis of his interpretation of what was relevant. In this regard, it is likely that there are elements of subjectivity involved. Additionally, the survey questionnaire was somewhat limiting in that most questions contained predetermined answers that allowed little room for explanations or elaboration. Moreover, the truth or otherwise of the responses in both survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews are usually hard to verify. This would be more the case with regard to this particular study since the fieldwork was conducted in a politically coercive environment, what with Fiji under military rule since 2006 and the punitive media law in place since 2010.

7.9   Future research

As an important non-state actor, the media's role in conflict needs to be examined from various perspectives to inform further academic studies and policy directions. This study hopes to serve as a benchmark for further research and discussion in conflict reporting in Fiji and the region. Future risks to stability in the Pacific include transnational threats such as resource scarcity, climate change and youth bulges, especially in Melanesia (Centre on International Cooperation, 2010; Ware, 2004). It is imperative for the media sector to start strategising proactively in response to these impending matters, such as identifying areas in which journalists may require issues-based training. Such strategies need to be informed by, and grounded in, research.

Another fertile area is the role of social media in conflict escalation and containment, given as an instructive example the part it played during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. Data presented in this study show that Internet use in Fiji is on the rise, which means that increasingly, the news media are no longer the only major sources of information. A thriving political blogging culture already exists in Fiji, publishing news that the mainstream media will not handle, and also allowing the public to comment. These developments include an explosion of anti-government blogs in Fiji, fermenting ethnic tensions since the 2006 coup (C. Walsh, 2012). A parallel investigation of the 'un-censorable' political blogging culture in Fiji and its potential impact on conflict would be a valuable addition.

Fiji's neglected vernacular media also need to be studied to verify claims that they are the prime target to stir ethnic conflict, especially during coups (Ewins, 1998; Garrett, 1990). Another area of interest is the potential of Pacific women in peace-building, given their prominent and crucial contributions to the cause of peace in Bougainville and Solomon Islands (Bhagwan-Rolls, 2006). This dynamic could be further explored from the perspective of the space and prominence given to women in both the newsroom and in the news. In the interest of media freedom and professionalism, parallel research is needed in other regional countries to assess journalist capacity and diversity, the national legislative environment and the media ownership structure to inform future policy directions. This study's findings and recommendations could be the basis for further research into re-building media in post-conflict Pacific Islands societies. This includes Solomon Islands, where journalists faced accusations of ethnic bias during the civil conflict (Iroga, 2008).

7.10   Chapter summary

This final chapter synthesised the thesis to reach conclusions and recommendations. The content analysis returned a peace journalism reading, but this was overshadowed by the lack of critical reporting. The survey questionnaire showed a fairly diverse journalist corps with some gains in the areas of training and education. However, there were worrying signs of sustained journalist attrition. Available documents confirm that the legal environment has become more restrictive since the 2006 coup while the media ownership regime has become increasingly corporatised and 'conglomerised' over the 45 years since independence. In essence, the findings are indicative of a media sector mired in serious political, cultural, economic and legislative threats and challenges. Media's alleged lack of professionalism are blamed for social tensions. But this research holds that media are not the root cause of conflict in Fiji, even if they are allegedly stimulated by it, accused of escalating it, and may thrive on it. In Fiji, conflict is more likely rooted in colonialism, racially-based electoral systems, ethnicity, competition for scarce resources, lack of leadership, and a myriad other issues (Firth, 2001). The study indicates that in Fiji, there are deep-rooted problems in the media sector, ranging from lack of depth in reporting, largely due to an inexperienced and under-qualified journalist corps, and an increasingly politico-corporate media ownership structure putting greater political and commercial pressure on the news process.

Punitive media legislation may have actually compromised media's watchdog role by impeding their ability to speak the truth and to be critical of things as they see fit. The major sticking point is the incompatibility between the media's views about what ought to be their 'proper' roles and functions compared to the views of the State. Finding common ground and mutually-acceptable solutions may require compromises on both sides. The bottom line is that media on their own accord cannot bring peace to Fiji's divided society. As former Fiji Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tupeni Baba (2005) states, if Fijian society is to enjoy peace, a vision needs to be enunciated. In Fiji, there are substantial impediments to overcome: an enduring colonial legacy of divide and rule, racial polarisation and lack of political will, to name a few (Baba, 2005; Chand, 2008; Firth, 2001; Naidu, 2005). As Chand, writes, change in Fiji cannot "take place in a day or a year", or over the "next two decades even", simply because the "base is so low to start (2008, p. 202). However, change is surely feasible if envisioned as a long-term strategy based on realistic goals, incremental gains, and persistent efforts.

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