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“They Couldn’t Win and Didn’t Want to Lose”: The 1982 Inter-district Championship Final (Fiji Soccer)

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In this article, we review one iconic match in Fiji soccer history, the 1982 Inter-district Championship (IDC) Final, when bad light stopped play after 10 kicks each in the penalty shootout with penalty goals tied at 6-6. In interviews with ex-administrators and players from the match we learn that Ba reneged upon a “gentlemen’s agreement,” between the two team presidents, not to turn up for any replay match scheduled for outside of Nadi, the original venue. Ba turned up at the replay venue and claimed the trophy much to the disgust of Nadi supporters and officials. Because the Indo-Fijian community “controls” coaching and administrative positions in soccer, it is able to fashion and refashion how Indigenous Fijian men’s bodies are presented and administered within the sport. Significantly, race and class combine to make it difficult for Indigenous ex-players to move into coaching and administrative positions in soccer post-retirement.

Keywords: Indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians, Fiji Islands, Fijian masculinity, Fiji soccer history; race and class; soccer history

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The aim of this article is to study and contextualize what is nearly definitely the most famous Fiji domestic match from the first half of the 1980s, the 1982 Inter-district Championship (IDC) Final between Ba and Nadi played at Nadi's Prince Charles Park. This match is widely remembered today because of the fading light, which meant that the penalty shootout had to be abandoned after 10 kicks each.¹ Ba officials then reneged on the terms of a "gentlemen's agreement," between the Nadi and Ba presidents, not to turn up for a replay if it was scheduled for outside of Nadi. Ba "won" the trophy, because Nadi players did not turn up ready to play at the replay venue, and this "result" created lasting bitterness between both sets of supporters which arguably still exists today. Plagued by difficulties due to the lack of available primary and secondary sources on Fiji soccer history, our article relies upon newspaper match reports and interviews with a number of ex-players conducted by the first author (although see later clarification) in 2014-15. We give most attention to data from the 20 interviews conducted with ex-Nadi and Lautoka star, Henry Dyer. All but one of the interviewed seven ex-players are Indigenous Fijians, or self-identify as such, while one is a working-class Indo-Fijian man.

In terms of context, this case study focuses on sixty kilometers of land, known as Western Fiji, which stretches from Ba town in the east to Nadi town in the west. This area is known as the sugar cane belt, and historically has a large, if not a majority, Indo-Fijian population (i.e. Fijians of South Asian decent).² Another feature of the region is the international airport and tourism industry located in Nadi. The weather is warm and wet in the summer months, and, in the middle of the calendar year (the winter) is dry and somewhat cooler (unlike Suva and the southern coast of Viti Levu, the main island). In the middle of Western Fiji is Lautoka City (population 52,500), the administrative center for the region and the home-base for Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC).³ While Indigenous Fijians (56.8% of the population as at the 2007 Census) pride themselves on being the traditional landowners of Fiji, and maintain a sacred connection to the land, Indo-Fijians (37.5%) expect a right to live in Fiji (and a right to protection from the state) on the grounds that their labor, going back to the indentured labor era of 1879-1916, paved the way for Fiji's capitalist development.⁴ Opponents characterize the Indo-Fijian attitude to land, far too simplistically, as viewing it akin to a commodity.

Oral historian Alistair Thomson writes that: "[i]f you are writing history from a single narrative, treat it as a 'telling case' which illuminates lived experience in a particular historical context and suggests questions or hypotheses for future research."⁵ Based on Jennie L. Brown's list of "twelve reasons for collecting oral history," ours is primarily "history of an era or event" (in our case, an event), but we also hope to shed light upon regional history; cultural history; organization or institution history (the Fiji Football Association); current concerns (poverty of marginalized individuals and Indigenous concerns); occupational; special population; and advocacy.⁶ As Brown says, "[c]urrent concerns typically revolve around groups of people that have been affected by the same event, circumstance, phenomenon, experience, development, or legislation."⁷ She suggests that "current concerns" oral history projects may be the easiest type to conduct, "since you are exploring current conditions, although exploring past incidents will also be of value."⁸ As with much interpretative research, in the anthropological tradition, the

boundary between context and case facts can be blurry. We use the 1982 IDC Final as a gateway to explore social and economic issues in Fiji, from the time of the match to the present. Event-based oral history is also important, since, large or small, “events that thrill, sadden, or move people are a rich source of oral history.”⁹ This is a work of advocacy, too, as we hope to alert readers to poverty among ex-players and the limited coaching opportunities available for Indigenous ex-players and some Indo-Fijian ex-players post-retirement.

Carly Adams and Darren J. Aoki study the importance of curling as a community-bonding and social integration tool in the lives of Japanese Canadians after 1950 recovering from the forced internment of Japanese by the Canadian government during World War Two.¹⁰ The aim of their study is to “position curling as a lens through which to focus on moments of everyday life and explore the memories generated and passed down intergenerationally.”¹¹ We use Fiji soccer as a similar lens or gateway to explore social, economic, and political issues within Fiji society. We also see the (imperfect) handing down of memories. When I (first author) taught at a Western-Fiji-based Indo-Fijian university in 2013-15, several Indo-Fijian students recalled fathers and uncles talking in reverential tones about Henry Dyer at long-ago family gatherings. I was able to introduce Henry Dyer to them when he visited campus and the soccer-mad staff also enjoyed meeting him. These moments crossed ethnic and class lines in powerful ways.

Because the Indo-Fijian community “controls” coaching and administrative positions in soccer¹², controls the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector, and is very influential in school and university contexts, it is arguably able to fashion and refashion how Indigenous men’s bodies are ideologically presented, portrayed, reified, deconstructed, marginalized, and classified within soccer. Therefore, we explore a complex and controversial topic - the marginalization and “othering” of the “dangerous bodies” of Indigenous Fijian men, in the eyes of Indo-Fijians, even as those same bodies are simultaneously presented as stereotypically masculine and sporting bodies.¹³ Spatially, indigenous Fijians are “relegated,” by the Indo-Fijian worldview, to “the village,” in which non-indigenous Fijians are not allowed to live. In this “dangerous” and “feudal” world, one village is occupied by an extended family or tribe, and the modernist distinction between public realm and private realm irretrievably breaks down or, to be more accurate, never existed. The “village” is spatially cast as “feudal” and “other,” an “outdated” “relic” left behind in a sea of change. A better description might instead be that the modern village is a pragmatic postmodern hybrid of traditional village and public housing.¹⁴

No-one can deny that there is a separation and a difference between the two main ethnic communities in Fiji. They are spatially divided too, as non-Indigenous people are not permitted to live in Fijian villages. Indo-Fijians tend to work in small business or as subsistence farmers and traditionally support soccer and attend mosque or temple. Indigenous people are attracted to the police and military¹⁵, control the administration of rugby, and usually are Christian. In the 1980s, about 75% of national-league players were Indigenous, but very few go into coaching and administration after retirement. The two communities were put on separate development paths by the British colonizers, with the Indigenous Fijians being shielded from the market economy, in

benevolently paternal fashion, so as to protect traditional leadership structures and village lifestyles. As such, the Indo-Fijians got a head start in business, and kept their pre-eminence.

Throughout the research process, we used Indigenous research methodologies. This involved prioritizing Indigenous voices (whilst also respecting minority voices such as Indo-Fijian, part-European, and Chinese).¹⁶ Henry Dyer is assistant village headman at Nakavu Village, Nadi, so we largely followed his lead and advice both inside and outside the village. Indigenous concepts of space and time were adhered to. At five interviews with Indigenous ex-players, we all sat on house or verandah floors or on the grassed Ba River foreshore in one case. Seating style adhered to village customs. I (first author) was unable to cross my legs, but I did not sit with either or both knee(s) raised. Legs must always be fully on the ground, while sitting, according to village protocol. Kava and beer were shared during interviews, and when beer was shared, the process of sharing and drinking mirrored the rituals of the kava ceremony somewhat. Interviews involved casual conversation before and after, thus avoiding Western concepts of rationality and formality and the sharp demarcation of work time from personal time. Wives were present at some interviews and contributed to discussions. As Henry Dyer co-interviewed the other six ex-players, in conjunction with the first author, we had “indigenous facilitation.”¹⁷

Whilst Osmond and Phillips describe their research yarning as more “formal” than their social or collaborative yarning, it is hard to know what meaning to give to “formal” if you were not actually present to witness it.¹⁸ Our interviews with six ex-players were more structured than regular conversations, but still free-ranging. They took place on house verandahs and a grassed river foreshore, alcohol was present, and no-one wore office clothes. While the interview with Meli Vuilabasa was more serious, reflecting his personal style, the interviews with Bola, Tabaiwalu, and Sami were wide-ranging and full of humor. There was a discussion at Sami’s interview, for example, about how he was fed up by Ba Soccer’s treatment of his adult son and how he was happy that (to Henry’s delight) his son had joined traditional arch-rivals Nadi.

In this article we attempt to answer the following three research questions: (1) How do ex-administrators and ex-players now view the iconic and controversial 1982 IDC Final and its aftermath? (2) Was Ba within its rights to break the gentlemen’s agreement with Nadi officials and should Nadi have played the replay match regardless? (3) Was Fiji Football Association within its rights to schedule the replay match in Lautoka?

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The second section provides background; the third section describes research method; the fourth section discusses the 1982 IDC Final; the fifth section is a discussion section about masculinity in Fiji; the sixth section contains a Foucauldian perspectives on race and class issues; the seventh section contains some personal reflections; and the last section concludes.

A Short Note on the Structure and Recent History of Fiji Soccer

It is important to note that, as a result of British and Australian influences, Fiji Soccer is administered on an association-basis with the associations representing provinces in most cases. Twenty-three soccer associations exist in Fiji. Some of these associations have a team in the Fiji Premier League (first-division), whilst twelve smaller associations compete in the Fiji Senior League (second-division). Significantly, the national-league teams *represent their associations*, and so they are correctly called “association” or “district” teams instead of “clubs.”

The three annual cup tournaments for Premier League teams are: (1) the Fiji FACT tournament, held earliest in the calendar year; (2) the Battle of the Giants (BOG), held around July-August; and (3) the most revered and long-standing IDC, held each October. The first IDC was held as long ago as 1938.¹⁹ There was no IDC held in 1987,²⁰ the year of the first two military coups. A separate national league (established 1977) runs concurrently with the cups, throughout the entire calendar year, and is contested by the same district teams.

Ba was in the top-two of domestic soccer in the late-1970s and early-1980s. (Ba is an Indo-Fijian-dominated parochial and conservative manufacturing and market town of 14,000 people.) It famously won six IDC titles-in-a-row from 1975-80 under its legendary manager, the late Sashi Mahendra Singh, aka S.M. Singh, the “father” of Ba Soccer.²¹ Nadi won three national-league titles from 1980-82, but failed to win a single IDC throughout the 1980s.²² Then Lautoka Blues emerged in 1984 to challenge Ba and Nadi for title honors.²³ By the year after the first two coups, 1988, the Lautoka challenge had subsided. Out of eight Premier League teams, Ba finished first (1979), third (1980), fourth (1981), third (1982), first (1983), and second (1984).²⁴ And Nadroga had some success in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but has not been able to replicate it since then. In July 2019, the first author chatted at the poolside bar of a Nadi hotel with a New Zealand-based Indo-Fijian man. The topic turned to Fiji soccer and, with his eyes shifting to a faraway look, the man recounted with pride his memories of Nadroga’s successes. He also freely admitted that his team has never been able to reproduce its glory years.

Our Approach to the Research Process

This project was initiated in the first half of 2014. Our first contact point was Mr. Bobby Tikaram, a former Airport Soccer Club president and Nadi Soccer Association (NSA) president. Through Bobby, I (first author) met Henry Dyer, the ex-Nadi and Lautoka star central-midfielder. We decided that I would help Henry to write his memoir book and that the interview notes could be used for journal articles as well as for the memoir.

In terms of qualitative writing technique, we use the traditionalist realist style combined with the confessional style.²⁵ According to Andrew C. Sparkes and Brett Smith, the traditionalist realist style of qualitative writing adheres to the following conventions: *experiential authority*, *the participant's point of view*, and *interpretive omnipotence*. These conventions, as a package, tend to foreground the voices of interviewees and allow the reader to gain insights into their perspective on events. The “theoretical framing” of these voices by another “disembodied” voice (the author) has its critics, but is in line with most conventions of qualitative reporting.²⁶ The confessional style takes readers behind the scenes of the research process and appeals to the personalized authority of the researcher as professional scholar. The phenomenon of the “missing researcher” is solved as the researcher emerges to fill the gap and “problematise and demystify” aspects of the research process, i.e. the disembodied voice of the author is replaced by the personal voice of the author.²⁷ The “Our Approach to the Research Process” and “Personal Reflections” sections of this article, in particular, follow the confessional style.

We decided to complete interviews with Henry first, as part of an overall oral history approach. These took place between May 2014 and April 2015. Then we moved over to interviewing other ex-players. This took place between June and October 2015. So, in the beginning, Henry constituted a sample size of one, which Sparkes and Smith maintain is acceptable in qualitative research in sport, exercise, and health.²⁸ The aim is not to generalize beyond the one case, but to understand it in its fullness. Then, in November 2015, I accessed old *Fiji Times* articles and made additions and corrections to the draft version of the memoir book to account for these. To do this, I journeyed five hours to Suva by public bus and spent three full days copying from selected back issues at the *Fiji Times* head office. We decided to do interviews first and access newspaper reports second. One reason was so that I would have more knowledge of Fiji soccer history before I accessed the newspapers. This would allow me to choose sections to access based around key matches or other pivotal events. Henry told me that any “facts” he gave in interviews should be overruled and changed if contradicted by newspaper reports. As Jennie L. Brown, author of *Blue Moon Rising: Kentucky Women in Transition*, says: “Although interviewing individuals is at the heart of your project, it’s also necessary to tie in the oral history with facts you can verify.”²⁹ As well as oral history interviews being subject to verification from newspaper sources, they also have the potential to add significant new content to newspaper accounts and/or to rebut them.³⁰ We read and interpreted the newspaper articles with a critical bent. John Kelly writes that the mainstream media coverage of two “high-profile incidents” - both linked to the Great Hunger in Ireland - “expose[s] further the wider systems of

ideology informing Scottish press accounts.”³¹ There is little reason to suppose that Fijian press accounts are independent of wider systems of ideology.

In this essay, we use an oral history approach that is connected to both the "narrative turn" and "history from below".³² Within sport history, Carly Adams and Mike Cronin edited two special issues on oral history which appeared in *The International Journal of the History of Sport* (Vol. 36, 2019 and Vol. 16, 2020). Lynn Abrams defined oral history as “the act of recording the speech of people with something interesting to say and then analysing their memories of the past.”³³ Adams and Cronin noted that, in the beginning, oral history texts rarely mentioned sport, and that, prior to the 1980s, the oral history methodology was rarely used within sport history.³⁴ However, from the 1990s onwards, oral history has been used to study gender and women’s sporting practices within history of sport research. The relevant question is always: “How do we use oral history methods and the stories that have been collected, to potentially shed fresh light on peoples’ experiences and the field of sport history?”³⁵

We aimed to remain aware of both the strengths and limitations of the oral history approach. If we consider limitations of oral history first, Fuhua Huang, Huijie Zhang, and Hong Fan look at some oral history research into traditional Chinese martial arts in China and conclude that problems include: lack of honest disclosure by participants; participants wanting to delete content after interviews because of fear; insufficient number of quotations cited; lack of verification with outside sources; biased recounting by interviewees so as to overstate the importance of masters from one’s own school; and authors’ over-reliance on interviewees with a lack of authorial interpretation and authoritative voice.³⁶ More generally, Tolga Ozyurtcu and Jan Todd point to other limitations of oral history as follows: subjectivity, memory, nostalgia, reliability of oral sources as evidence, and what can be learned from the accounts.³⁷ About the Todd Archive, used in their study of key Muscle Beach, CA identities, problems include small subsample of elite people, advancing age of participants, and the fact that they are trying to recall events of fifty years ago. We find that the complexity of memory is a key issue in Fiji soccer since written sources are often absent and facts become mislaid and altered with repeated telling. For example, the score in Fiji’s May 1985 defeat of Newcastle United is often recalled as 3-1, 5-0 or 5-1 whereas the actual score was 3-0. People do care about the score, but what really matters to people now is the convincing result against the odds. The lack of written sources and the complexities of historical memory, not to mention the death and emigration of key individuals, mean that we must rely more on personal testimony than might be normal elsewhere.

Positive aspects of oral history are the illumination of the lived experiences of ordinary women and men within the context of the turn to “history from below.” These men and women were usually excluded from the official record, under earlier approaches to history, as their lives were not deemed significant enough.³⁸ Samuel Hynes, another war historian, said that “if we would understand what war is like, and how it *feels*, we must ... seek the reality in the personal witness of the men who were there.”³⁹ This seems to be a very strong argument, even after considering oral history’s weaknesses.

We learn from the literature that oral history began in Poland in the 1980s when researchers began investigating and hearing the stories of anticommunist Warsaw-based dissidents who were excluded from official narratives of communist progress and achievement.⁴⁰ Marta Kurkowska-Budzan and Marcin Stasiak show that countryside cyclists competing in Communist Party-sponsored national and regional road races described their lives in terms of local struggles with conservative family structures, farm work obligations, poverty, and local terrain and conditions. An alternative way of viewing the past was obvious since they eschewed the terminology and blanket optimism of the regime. They viewed the races through their own eyes and seemed to be immune to top-down propaganda. These are the types of experiences and worldviews which oral history, and probably only oral history, appears capable of revealing.

I had 20 interviews with Henry lasting an average of 3:00 hours each and totaling 60:00 hours. The first took place on May 1, 2014 and the last on April 23, 2015. Clearly, trust was being progressively built up “internally,”⁴¹ over these 20 interviews, as either party could have withdrawn from the project at any time. Altogether, interviews were conducted with five ex-Ba players and two ex-Nadi players (including Henry). Four of those ex-Ba players and two of the ex-Nadi players played in the 1982 IDC Final. Henry was also involved in other interviews, as an interviewer. As Brown says: “When you empower your participants, they become your allies.”⁴² All player interviews lasted for 3:00 hours, except for the group interview with Pravin Sharma and Lote Delai, which lasted for 1:00 hour. One Indo-Fijian man, Julie Sami from Ba, was interviewed, as our aim was to get a variety of ethnic perspectives rather than just Indigenous views. No interviews were tape-recorded as interviewees were uncomfortable with this idea.

My departing Fiji permanently in December 2015 meant that that date marked an official end to our project’s field-work. I (first author) returned to Fiji for short trips, in July 2017 and July-August 2019, and I used these trips to receive updates from Henry on new developments and to clarify points which he had made earlier in 2014-15.

Participant-observation included attending a Fiji Football Association (FFA) Veterans’ Dinner on October 4, 2014 and various other formal and informal events. At the dinner I could interact with ex-players and ex-officials, meet more ex-players, and observe the interaction and body language, as well as the tone and mood of proceedings. I also interacted with about eight ex-players at a drinking session outside the venue in a public park before the dinner began.

How were our interviewees, including Henry, marginalized? They all live in poverty today, which is in contrast to the Indo-Fijian administrators of the sport and the wealthier sections of the supporter base and sponsoring firm bosses. Our Indo-Fijian interviewee is similarly excluded from wealth and networks of power even today. He complains about coaching courses not being publicly advertised.⁴³ Instead, news about them are only communicated to favored insiders via word-of-mouth. Inia Bola, former Ba and Fiji striker, was mentally and physically scarred by the 1984 motor-vehicle accident which killed Joe Tubuna and ended his (Inia’s) playing career. Belatedly, Inia was awarded Legend status of Fiji Football Association by the president in July-August 2019. This award has not improved his living conditions. He and his wife believe that his children died young due to black magic by opposing fans. For his part,

Henry Dyer was involved in criminal activities, such as an after-hours robbery at a jeweler store in Lautoka City opposite Churchill Park. He spent the year of the first two coups, 1987, in prison, aged twenty-five. One can only wonder whether these factors are why his name does not appear in Mohit Prasad's authorized Fiji soccer history book, even though most other stars of his era are mentioned, and Henry was universally said to be a player of high caliber. Oral sport historians Ornella Nzindukiyimana and Kevin Wamsley suggest that alternative data can be used to write "alternative histories" as an emancipatory and assertive act, which can fill the gaps in official records, and bring us closer to complete knowledge.⁴⁴

Two main ways to do interviews is the self-explanatory "Question & Answer" format and "Lifetelling" aka "Free form," which involves *only* listening after the beginning instructions have been given.⁴⁵ One key issue when doing oral history interviews is when and how to intervene by asking probing and clarifying questions. Probing questions can allow an interviewee the chance to explore memories more deeply and offer more detail. However, probing questions should not disturb or interrupt the storyteller's natural flow since the storytelling style itself is important and should not be disturbed from the outside. Brown suggests asking *only* clarifying questions after the interviewee has begun recounting her/his story; learning not to fill in silences; and not sharing one's own story because this practice "can completely derail the interview."⁴⁶ By contrast, Andrew C. Sparkes, following Norman Denzin, "took the interviews to be a process in which two people creatively and openly share ... experiences with one another in a mutual search for greater self-understanding."⁴⁷ Sparkes is referring here to intensive interviews, over a period of time, with one or a small number of sportspersons who have faced debilitating injuries or life setbacks. Thus, the interviewee may be more mentally "fragile" than the typical oral history research participant. This explains the contrasting approaches of Brown and Sparkes. I tried to take a middle-of-the-road position during the interviews, in terms of how often I asked non-clarifying and probing questions and whether I told my own stories.

As Adams and Cronin explain, "[e]qually as important are the co-creative practices that inform the methodology and the subsequent interpretation and meaning-creation."⁴⁸ We view the interview process, with Henry, as co-creation. One habit soon began to emerge - I would read the sentence back to Henry to check that I had heard it properly. Then, for more difficult-to-express or sensitive topic areas, we would together agree on the exact wordings of a sentence before proceeding on. I would only write down the agreed-upon meaning.

In 1997, Valerie Yow clarified that the relationship between interviewee and interviewer is crucial to determining how the story is remembered and told.⁴⁹ Like any conversation, people tend to recount events and do it in a style which they think will impact on and resonate with the hearer. The storytelling will be influenced by the narrator's style, her/his expectations from the research, and the relationship between interviewee and interviewer.⁵⁰ This relationship also changes and usually deepens over time, especially in the case with my 20 interviews with Henry, which took place over a one-year period and were interspersed with social meetings.

Thomson writes that "[l]ess obviously, each participant perceives and imagines the other in certain terms, and these expectations can affect both questions and answers".⁵¹ In our case, the

unique temporal situations of both persons deeply impacted upon the narratives and stories produced. I was a white Australian expatriate lecturer in Fiji wanting to learn more about Indigenous culture and Fiji soccer history. Partly I wanted to acclimatize and settle in to Fiji life and feel like less of an uninformed outsider. I had been watching Fiji domestic soccer matches for a year before meeting Henry - I wanted him to fill in blanks within my own understanding.

I worked in an Indo-Fijian-run university and so was wanting to hear challenges or alternative views to those professed and communicated at that institution, which I nonetheless respected. To be completely frank, I was wanting to simultaneously experiment, rebel, question, and find new experiences outside my restricted world of home-bus-shops-university. Henry was an ex-soccer hero working as a subsistence farmer in Nakavu Village, Nadi. In some ways, his status was above mine, whereas, in other ways, the opposite appeared to be the case - relative perceived status very much depended upon whether we were in a soccer, village or university setting. As a part-European, of mixed indigenous Fijian and white British descent, Henry appeared to enjoy being able to connect with a white Australian researcher as he could then bring out and connect with that part of his own background and self-identity.

Thomson says that “[l]ife stories provide rich evidence about past lives, but also about the continuing and changing significance of the remembered past in people’s lives.”⁵² Once I left Fiji and returned back for just week-long trips, in July-August 2017 and July 2019, the atmosphere had totally shifted, almost against our will, as I lived overseas and no longer needed Henry’s information to help me to acclimatize to Fiji - the information was now for the research project only. I also felt that as a short-term visitor I had much lesser status in Fiji than I had before. There was a feeling in our conversations then that we were reliving old times. Nostalgia began to dominate our relationship. So we have various dates of storytelling involved: 2014-15, 2017, and 2019, and the researcher’s relationship with the interviewee and the interviewee’s and researcher’s relationship with events described also changed. Changes between 2017 and 2019 were more significant than those between 2015 and 2017, for me, as I felt that external situations in Fiji (people passing away, people leaving home, people leaving jobs, people emigrating) had changed significantly by 2019 whereas, between 2015 and 2017, changes appeared to me to be only minimal. For example, by 2019, Henry’s wife, Liku, had passed away, and his youngest son, Alipate, was a tall 17-year-old rather than a primary-school boy. The original Indigenous Deep Sea Pub in Nadi town had closed, but the nightclub of the same name, across the road, was still open. Renee’s in Lautoka had also closed. People’s memories of me had weakened by 2019 too. Because of this I am glad that the fieldwork proper was largely completed by the time I left Fiji in December 2015. Furthermore, I now live in a Western country - although divergences now stand out in sharper focus, my memories of lived Fiji life and culture have faded.

A major difficulty we encountered was the paucity of available primary and secondary data on Fiji soccer history. Fiji is a small and remote island nation, with a small and basic book-publishing industry, and a very small online footprint. The only dedicated Fiji soccer website was set up by the authors and the only book-length coverage has been the two Fiji soccer history books written by Dr. Mohit Prasad and commissioned by the FFA. We are not aware of any

book-length player biographies or autobiographies. Only recent articles from the country's major newspapers, *Fiji Times* and *Fiji Sun*, are available online. For this reason, we had to visit the *Fiji Times* head office in Suva to copy out old match reports and other articles. This was extremely time-consuming. We were very fortunate that Bobby Tikaram kindly lent us a number of old NSA and FFA publications, dating back to 1982, including the NSA's official 1982 tournament program issued to coincide with that year's home IDC. Without access to these publications, the quality of this article would have suffered adversely.

1982 IDC Final: Nadi versus Ba at Prince Charles Park, Nadi

One particularly iconic game saw the best two teams from the first half of the 1980s, Ba and Nadi, contest the 1982 IDC Final at Nadi's Prince Charles Park. Unusual events and results have been a feature at Prince Charles Park, as if the very naming of the stadium has called forth the eccentric and unpredictable character of the real Prince Charles. There was excitement in Nadi prior to the tournament, as, with Nadi's very strong team, outstanding in every position on the pitch, there was expectation in the town, the hinterland, and the (usually only rugby-mad) Indigenous villages that Nadi might win it this year. Nadi had won the 1980 and 1981 Premier League titles, and later won the 1982 title to make it three-in-a-row, which is surely a feat to rival Ba's six-in-a-row IDC crowns (1975-80). However, Nadi fans were also nervous, as Nadi had a poor record at home IDCs - the association team had won only two out of five of the IDC tournaments which had been played on home-turf, and lost in 1942, 1961, and 1965.⁵³ So there was both hope and nervousness in the air, and possibly the mixture of these two ingredients helped to charge the atmosphere and create and magnify the effects of the events which followed. To quote a *Fiji Times* article from just prior to the tournament:

The feeling amongst people in the Airport town is also running high. Everyone believes that Nadi will make the grand slam this year.

Nadi's team is impressive. With veterans like Mohammed Hussein, Inosi Tora, Prem Chand, along with Savenaca Waqa in goal, the Nadi defence would be difficult to penetrate.

The return of links, Marika Ravula, Kimi Momo along with Emasi "Bacardi" Koroi has built another wall in the mid field.

Nadi's attacking force and their fast roving forwards, Manu Pokar, Henry Dyre [*sic*], Kamal Sahib, Kaitani Soci and Rusiate Waqan [*sic*] always seem to pose a threat to the opposition's defence.⁵⁴

During the second half of regular time, Nadi's Dyer had literally crashed heads with Ba star, Joe Tubuna, and Tubuna had had to be taken to hospital for stitches.⁵⁵ He had returned to the stadium, and demanded to be allowed to play again, but Ba officials refused his demands in the interests of his safety. This incident reveals the legendary courage and determination of Tubuna. Two years later, his memory would be honored by a funeral at Ba's Govind Park where 5,000 people attended to testify to his strength of character and spirit of leadership. Tubuna had been killed in a motor vehicle accident, on a deserted stretch of highway between Ba and Tavua after returning from a nurses' dance held in the latter township.⁵⁶ (This accident effectively ended the playing careers of teammates Inia "Golden Boot" Bola and Semi Tabaiwalu, and relegated Ba to a minor player for several seasons.) Tubuna still cast a shadow over all the interviewed ex-players 33 years later in 2015. There was sadness mixed with pride at having known him and played with and against him. He was seen as a lion-hearted leader, and his refusal to let administrators boss him around was seen in terms of Indigenous pride as well as player and class pride. The head injury and the car accident reveal together the heroic and the

tragic in the Tubuna story, and we are happy to let this interpretation justify our recounting of both these incidents together. Figure 1 shows Henry Dyer (left) with Ba's Semi Tabaiwalu in the Ba hinterland, June 17, 2015.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The final finished with a drama-infused penalty shootout to break the 0-0 (after-extra-time) deadlock.⁵⁷ However, the shootout was abandoned after 10 kicks apiece, when penalty goals were tied at 6-6 (see Table 1), because conditions were deemed too dark to play.⁵⁸ The penalty scores were tied 3-3, after the first 5 kicks each; and, from the next 5 kicks by both sides, the two kickers either both scored or both missed, meaning that the shootout continued.

In what was later viewed in Nadi as evidence of Ba's innate trickiness and ruthlessness, Ba protested against the light, after 10 kicks each, and the protest was upheld. Ba and Nadi managers, after consultation with their players, reluctantly accepted the bad-light verdict. Ba officials and players, Henry said later, did not realize that Nadi's goalkeeper, Savenaca Waqa, the only Nadi player not to have yet taken a penalty-kick, had suffered an ankle injury, and hence would have had a hard time kicking on target. As Henry explains: "When it came to Save's turn, little did we know that Ba was about to protest about the floodlights. They did not know that Save could not kick. He could [also] not stand in goal to take any more pain to defend."⁵⁹ One interesting fact from Table 1 is that both teams' strikers missed their goals (Koroi and Rusiate Waqa for Nadi and Vuilabasa and Bola for Ba), but the midfielders, for the most part, succeeded.

Insert Table 1 about here

A replay match was organized by the FFA to be held at Lautoka's Churchill Park at 3:00 p.m. on a Sunday. The logic behind the decision was that it was a neutral venue located approximately halfway between Nadi and Ba (and hence it would be easily accessible to both sets of fans for the Sunday 3:00 p.m. kick-off). Nadi's off-field decision-makers refused to play the game at Churchill Park on the logical (but hardly pragmatic) premise that Nadi had been the venue of the original tournament.⁶⁰ In response to the FFA's decision, the Ba Soccer officials agreed with the Nadi Soccer officials not to turn up for the replay match. According to the former Nadi administrator, Mr. Bobby Tikaram, it was a verbal or gentlemen's agreement between the then presidents, the late Sri. V. Chetty of Nadi and Vinod Patel of Ba.⁶¹ This agreement was witnessed, back in 1982, by Sashi Mahendra Singh, the "father" of Ba and Fiji Soccer (according to Bobby Tikaram).⁶² Henry describes what happened next:

At the eleventh hour, Ba turned up at the [replay] match and walked on to the field. We [Nadi players] were there expecting the game not to happen. We were surprised to see Ba walk on to the field. We were there in our normal street-clothes walking around the park. We were shocked at

what happened. Ba broke their verbal agreement. That was a matter for the officials. We players are still close until today.⁶³

Mohit Prasad's official Fiji soccer history book says that the trophy was presented to Ba captain, Vimlesh Singh, after it was obvious that Nadi was not going to contest the replay.⁶⁴ Ba had willfully broken the gentlemen's agreement with the Nadi officials *not* to play the replay outside of Nadi. The way in which Ba "won" this game created lasting resentment towards Ba from Nadi fans and administrators, which festered for many years and arguably still exists today. Ironically, five contributors, who wrote introductory messages in the 1982 *IDC Bulletin*, put forward the customary statement "may the best team win."⁶⁵ This statement has an uncertain meaning, at the best of times, with the implied undercurrent being that sometimes the best team does not win due to unsportsmanlike conduct. However, here, the words ring hollow, as an unfulfilled promise, because the best team did not win, and neither did the second-best team. In fact, neither team won on the pitch. One contributor seemed eerily prophetic when he seemed to warn the NSA that the FFA runs the show: "I also trust that this soccer 'Bulletin' will acknowledge the fact that this Tournament whilst hosted by Nadi is nevertheless being played under the auspicious [*sic*] of the Fiji Football Association."⁶⁶ Even in advance of the tournament, this contributor seemed to hold the view that certain administrators needed to be "kept in line."

In interviews with players from the 1982 Final, conducted in 2015, Ba players denied knowledge of the gentlemen's agreement, but made it clear that they were commanded to turn up for the replay by the Ba administration. (Contrary to the account in Prasad's 2013 book, Henry reveals that a few Nadi players did turn up at the replay venue, but drunk and in street-clothes⁶⁷). Some players expressed quiet regret about the way that events unfolded. The players of both teams remain united by (in most cases) the close networks of Western Fiji's Indigenous Fijian community and shared membership in the Fiji national-team of that era.⁶⁸ Therefore, the players hold no lasting resentment towards one another and express an understanding that events were taken out of their hands. The argument was between both sets of officials, they argue, and we see here, again, the racial and class divides involved. Indigenous Fijian ex-players do not let the politicking and gamesmanship of Indo-Fijian officials, some of whom are no longer alive, sully critical cultural bonds existing in the present. Significantly, both Henry and S. Waqa of Nadi feel that, with the benefit of hindsight, Nadi should have swallowed its hurt pride and turned up for the replay so as to give fans from both sides a proper conclusion to the IDC. Otherwise, although this was left unsaid, the fans who had attended earlier games and paid admission money had been defrauded by being deprived of a result. Figure 2 depicts Henry Dyer (right) in the presence of Nadi fans in Nadi town, 2015. In the center is Mr. Vijay Prakash, a long-time Nadi fan from Nawaicoba and retired ambulance driver at Nadi hospital.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Players who played in the final commented, from the distance-created safety of June-August 2015, as follows:

Meli Vuilabasa (Ba): We were ordered to replay on a neutral ground but Nadi did not turn up so it was awarded to us. We marched into the ground but then we heard that Nadi was not coming.⁶⁹

Author: Was Ba correct to turn up for the replay in your opinion?

Inia Bola (Ba): It was the officials who required us to get to the ground and walk on to the field. There was the threat of a fine hanging over our heads.

Author: Did you know that the Nadi players were upset about what happened?

Bola: We knew very well that the Nadi players and officials were very upset!⁷⁰

Henry (Nadi): Now I'm able to say I think we should have played the final to sort it out and to provide a proper conclusion for the fans.⁷¹

The idea that sports are or should be character-building can be traced back to Plato's *Republic* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or on education* (published in 1762).⁷² A more recent important reiteration of this belief is found in an 1864 report by the U.K. Public Schools Commissioners, under Lord Clarendon's chairmanship, which maintained that sports develop self-discipline, team spirit, courage, and fair play. In 1978, Francis C. Kew argued that sportspersons should display respect for others and respect for the rules of the contest.⁷³

Sports philosophers Robert Butcher and Angela J. Schneider put forward different ideas or mini-theories about what fair play in sport means or should be defined as, namely (a) fair play as a "bag of virtues"; (b) fair play as play; (c) sport as contest and fair play as fair contest; (d) fair play as respect for rules; and (e) fair play as contract or agreement.⁷⁴ Then they introduced their own idea, "fair play in sport is fair play as respect for the game," which they regarded as incorporating and being superior to all of the other ideas. How can we logically evaluate the actions of the FFA, Ba officials, and Nadi officials according to these various perspectives? The FFA acted within its rights, as the legitimate controller of the sport, to schedule the replay match in Lautoka, and it was a reasonable decision given the accessibility of Lautoka to both sets of fans for a Sunday afternoon 3:00 p.m. kick-off. The principle (e), fair play as contract or agreement, would intuitively seem to be the most relevant principle to assess the Ba officials' actions as they broke their gentlemen's agreement not to contest the replay match. However, both Associations also had an agreement to adhere to the FFA's rules and *ad-hoc* directives, which Ba clearly did whilst Nadi did not. Which of these obligations should be regarded as the most crucial, from an ethical standpoint? If we introduce the preferred principle, respect for the game, it gives added insight. If we regard "the game must go on to reach a proper conclusion and outcome on the field of play" as a very important principle, a subset of respect for the game, then Henry and S. Waqa were right to say that Nadi should have turned up for the replay and played the game regardless of the venue. Lautoka is only 26.2 kilometers⁷⁵ from Nadi and a Sunday 3:00 p.m. kick-off would have provided Nadi fans with every opportunity to attend.

One key question, then and now, is whether Ba officials entered into the “gentlemen’s agreement” *without having any intention of adhering to it?* In such a case it was deliberate deceit and Sartrean bad faith rather than a case of changing one’s mind. Some Nadi fans suspect that Ba had no intention of adhering to the agreement, but this was not confirmed in any interviews

Fiji Masculinity

Indigenous Fijian players are presented, in the Indo-Fijian worldview, as primitive, feudal men *and hence not marriage material* for Indo-Fijians - in this way they are demasculinized, in the sense of deprived of marriageable masculinity via discourse and practices. The masculinity of Indigenous Fijians is presented as feudal and physical, bound by village customs and physical characteristics. Indian masculinity, by contrast, emphasizes scholarly achievements and success in the business-world.⁷⁶ It is a nine-to-five, white-collar masculinity, a masculinity of the cities and towns rather than of the villages.⁷⁷ (Poor Indo-Fijian farmers do not fit neatly into this concept either, but that is a story belonging elsewhere.) Success in these areas helps a man to fulfill his cultural and religious obligation to financially provide for his family at a reasonable standard of living.⁷⁸ Indigenous Fijian masculinity is seen as (physically) dangerous, uncontrollable, and unreliable. Indo-Fijian women, and the Indo-Fijian community in general, need to be protected from it, physically and socially, according to the ideology. The dominant ideology, among Indo-Fijians, tends to present Indigenous men as athletically talented, but childlike, too different, and part of an outmoded feudal world in a capitalist land. In contrast to Indian concepts of masculinity, (Indigenous) Fijian masculinity is based on customary hereditary positions, social skills, and networks, and the ability to successfully perform cultural obligations. The ability to build ties within and across villages is perceived as vitally important within Indigenous circles.⁷⁹ The ability to earn money is deprioritized culturally, but, of course, is important up to a point.⁸⁰ And, as the late historian Brij V. Lal wrote, “military prowess and demonstration of physical strength, not abstract ideology, are highly-esteemed virtues in [Indigenous] Fijian society,” but much less so with the Indo-Fijians.⁸¹

The power and ubiquity of racial and gender stereotyping in Fiji can be seen clearly by the case of the three Lata sisters, Indo-Fijian teenagers, who were probably murdered by an Indo-Fijian neighbor. In this thoroughly depressing and tragic case, on June 26, 2005, three Indo-Fijian sisters, Aashika Sherin Lata (aged 19), Renuka Roshni Lata (aged 18), and Radhika Roshni Lata (aged 17), disappeared near Rakiraki (in northeastern Viti Levu).⁸² The man probably behind their disappearance, and likely murder, was an Indo-Fijian, 42-year-old Mr. Dip Chand (a neighbor and family friend).⁸³ On being approached by police, Chand attempted to place the blame on “some [Indigenous] Fijian men,” “several Fijian men,” and “three Fijian men in a boat.” He was clearly hoping to use prevailing ethnic stereotypes of the “angry, violent Indigenous Fijian man” to divert attention away from his own wrongdoing.⁸⁴ This incident shows the power and pervasiveness of such ideological narratives and how easily people can fall back upon them under stress. What is revealing here is how Chand thought that the police and the Indo-Fijian community would accept his statements, implying that the ideology was perceived, at least by Chand, to be highly dominant and persuasive. We accept that there were attacks by Indigenous Fijian youth on Indo-Fijian homes and businesses, after both the 1987 and 2000 coups,^{85, 86} but this is no justification for defining a whole population by such stereotypes.

Consistent use over the years, even in formal press accounts, of “Waqan” (pronounced “Wang-un”) as the (nick)name for popular and prolific Nadi and Fiji striker, Rusiate Waqa

(pronounced “Wang-ah”), seemed like an affectionate and ennobling gesture by the fans (and it was no doubt intended as such).⁸⁷ Waqan directly replaced Waqa in press accounts so that Rusiate Waqa became Rusiate Waqan. In fact, Waqa was being deracinated and decultured by the removal of his real Indigenous family-name, which is an important signifier within Indigenous Fijian culture.⁸⁸ His name was replaced by a nonsensical “name,” which belonged to none of the ethnic groups resident in Fiji.⁸⁹ He was reduced to the realm of nonsense, separated discursively from family, kin, and community. This example shows the power of Indo-Fijian hegemony over the sport since Waqa was in the position, during his playing days, where he effectively had no option but to accept the nickname in silence. Richard S. Gruneau (cited in Kelly) writes that “[i]n struggles over ‘common sense’ and public consent, dominant interests are often able to de-legitimise alternatives by labeling them as frivolous, unnatural or archaic. In the meantime, other sources of difference frequently get incorporated in a compromised and non-threatening manner.”⁹⁰ By referring to the indigenous player Rusiate Waqa by the Indo-Fijian-bestowed nickname of “Waqan,” Waqa was incorporated into “public consent” in a way that was “compromised” and “non-threatening,” although why his real name Rusiate Waqa could be perceived by anyone as being threatening is hard to fathom. The nickname was an attempt by the Indo-Fijian community to control the player, on its own terms, and claim him as “acceptable” and “one of their own” (but obviously only up to a point). We are not implying ill-will or malice here on the part of any person who used this nickname, but simply showing that it is the dominant and more powerful group which gets to control the discourse, and this can have unsettling and unwanted consequences for some bearers of discursive practices.

When we refer to dominant ideology, we are referring to power structures of the type studied by Foucault, and the reasons attributed to these power structures and their alleged benefits.⁹¹ These power structures operate at the level of everyday, taken-for-granted practices, discourses, and assumptions. They are everywhere and they are nowhere. They reflect decades of internalized understandings of one’s own community and those of others.

Significantly, the power-base and dominant ideology is Indo-Fijian within the world of soccer, as it is in the SME sector. In fact, these worlds are intertwined as many soccer managers and administrators are Indo-Fijian small businesspersons. They start clubs, and fund them and sponsor them themselves, and this mentality extends even to the association teams at Premier League level. These businesspersons work in a largely honorary capacity within soccer, and so a benevolently paternal culture operates where the managers and administrators are expected to be viewed with gratefulness for having given up their time and energies. Ba Motor Parts, for example, sponsored the Ba team in the 1970s and 1980s and gave employment to Ba players such as Bale Raniga. Religious institutions work in a similar way, based on honor and hegemony, although, in that case, the beneficiaries of the paternalism are other Indo-Fijians. Intermarriage has no place in the dominant ideology (on either side) and soccer reinforces, within this context, the unspoken premise that Indigenous men are talented athletes on-the-field, but too different to fully integrate with Indo-Fijians including getting married to Indo-Fijians.⁹²

Although it doesn't happen that often, Geir Henning Presterudstuen explains a common reaction among Indigenous men if they manage to have sex with an Indo-Fijian girl:

On the same token ... "fucking an Indian girl" would give them certain bragging rights as the perceived sexual domination in such relations not only mirrored the imagined Fijian physical, moral and political superiority over Indo-Fijian men that permeates popular [Indigenous] racial discourses but also provided a symbolic opportunity to "get one back" at the latter group, who is often perceived to have a material advantage.⁹³

Clearly then the complexity and history behind the relations between the two main ethnic groups, and the ideologies which have cropped up on both sides, mean that even a solitary sexual encounter is imbued with layers of potential meaning, and various interpretations.

How do we analyze race/ethnicity in Fiji soccer in the 1980s? It was an era when the Indo-Fijian population was over 50% of the total and much larger than today. The sport of soccer was far more popular then, as the Fiji rugby 7s team began to generate widespread support only after its three-in-a-row wins in the Hong Kong 7s from 1990-92. Crowds were much larger than today and Indigenous Fijians were more often seen attending soccer games, including ordinary villagers. Now, outside of Ba, Indigenous Fijian spectators are small in number (say 10% of the crowd) and restricted largely to ex-players and current players' relatives. Our estimate is that Indo-Fijian men make up the vast majority of crowds, with Indo-Fijian women and Indigenous Fijians being minorities. Ex-Ba player Meli Vuilabasa explained to us that Fijians feel let down and excluded by soccer - they "feel that the game does not belong to them."⁹⁴ And now they are educated enough to understand the real situation. In particular, although 75% of Premier League players in the 1980s were Indigenous Fijians, while 25% were Indo-Fijians, six out of the eight head coaches, in both 2015 and 2019, were Indo-Fijians. The faces changed over those four years, but the numbers didn't. Indo-Fijian man, Julie Sami, claimed that there is "a racial feeling in the game now."⁹⁵ He, along with his younger brother Vimal, mixed in well with the Indigenous Fijians at FSC in Ba and in the Ba hinterland. This is a social class thing. By contrast, those middle-class Indo-Fijian players, from business house families, such as the late Farouk Janeman and Vimlesh Singh, tended to remain more separate from their Indigenous teammates.

Author: Nowadays we see very few Indigenous Fijians at district games but Henry tells me that it was different in the 1980s. Why is this and can it be changed?

Meli Vuilabasa: It can be changed, James. There are so many Fijians who are educated now. When they see things they can make out what is happening. Even the uneducated can understand. In Fiji Football [FFA] there is not a single administrator who is [Indigenous] Fijian. At the district level there is only a few. Of the eight districts there are two Fijian coaches and few or none in the administration. The people feel that the game does not belong to them.⁹⁶

While discrimination may be a factor behind lack of coaching opportunities for Indigenous ex-players, it is also the case that Indo-Fijian small businesspersons set up and

support grassroots clubs, via their own money, and they, or their friends or relatives, often end up being the coaches. These same practices operate even up to Premier League level. After the 1990s, the percentage of Indigenous players rose due to Indo-Fijian emigration.

According to Adams and Aoki, scholars looking at the formation of baseball teams by Japanese Canadians in the internment camps argue that what occurred in these sporting spaces was “inextricably linked to issues around assimilation, resistance, ethnicity, and identity formation.”⁹⁷ While assimilation of either community into the other is not really possible in Fiji, as both are of near-equal size and have vastly different cultures, the present study reveals much about “resistance, ethnicity, and identity formation” in Fiji soccer from the 1980s until now. Resistance occurs nowadays as ex-players of Indigenous background get together more often and sometimes express an idea that being Indigenous opened up to them a world of shared understandings, then and now, which their non-Indigenous teammates could not fully access or enjoy. For example, Semi Tabaiwalu (Fig. 1) jokingly attributes Nadi’s on-field success in the early 1980s to Nadi’s regional Indigenous Fijian gods.⁹⁸ When Indigenous players from Ba and Nadi agreed to give Nadi two “free” extra goals so that Nadi could win a Premier League title over Lautoka, Dyer claims that non-Indigenous players on the pitch were excluded from these communications and shared understandings. All of these events are, of course, deniable.

Foucauldian Perspectives

For the late-seventies Foucault, the body of the tortured prisoner is forced to signify his crimes and justice at a public execution in France.⁹⁹ How did the 1980s' Fiji Football and Nadi Soccer publications create publics of Indigenous and Indo-Fijian? By advertisements of Indo-Fijian small businesses, noting their sponsorship of teams, and their citations of Indian names as directors and managers, they signify their own moral righteousness and selfless support for the sport, as well as their availability to supply services readily and cheerfully to the readers. Indigenous men only appear as players, captured in action shot or in formal team pictures. They are aloof, faraway, magical, in continuous movement until forced to accept the imposed disciplinary structures of a formal team picture. Occasionally, an Indigenous woman appears as a charming, submissive hostess in an advert for a hotel or restaurant in the tourist precinct. Portraits of Indian administrators, in suits and ties, signify that they are the traditional and moral custodians of the sport, beyond reproach. Below the pictures are statements of well-wishing and blessings, which almost take on the form of priestly pronouncements - unchallengeable, good-natured, but stern. Bodies, capital, practices, and discourses together constitute and create the world of Fiji soccer - not only in terms of ideology, but in terms of material and class relations.

We see competing discourses which animate and empower the class and race/ethnicity struggles in the material realm. Struggle occurs, for Foucault, for discourse and by discourse.¹⁰⁰ A main characteristic of discourse in Fiji is that one's own ethnic group is viewed more charitably than the others, as if its "natural" traits are free from ideological encumbrance, but self-evident.

Rusiate Waqa was called out and resignified by the Indo-Fijian soccer public - he was allowed to belong to a special category of "loved athletes" with a much higher status than ordinary Indigenous men and possibly even above that of other players. But that meant that he was subjected to special controls and the price was the giving up of his real family name in press and other discourses. "Waqan" almost completely replaced "Waqa" in the historical record.

Personal Reflections

When discussing letter-writing, as a process and as a data-source, within the context of his own research on immigrants from the U.K. to Australia, Alistair Thomson writes that “[s]eparation could be painful and frustrating, but it also offered the letter-writer an opportunity to compose their words without the beckoning gaze or interruptions of direct conversation.”¹⁰¹ We wrote earlier about the change in atmosphere and perceptions between the time I (first author) lived in Fiji in 2013-15 and my later, short-term visits in 2017 and 2019. Further trips in 2020 and 2021 were not possible due to Covid-19-related restrictions. For the first author now, living in a Western Global North country, there is literal and felt separation between my life now and my experiences and memories of life in Fiji. The two worlds are very different for reasons of culture, weather, history, economics, and politics. I try repeatedly to conjure up memories of the atmosphere of Fiji, mostly failing. I watch Fiji reggae video-clips and I communicate with Henry and his eldest son, Anare Tuidraki, by Facebook messages. I am acutely aware of the passage of time and realize that I am in danger of oversimplification, romanticization, and the loss of nuance and contradiction. Researchers who practice short-term ethnography (STE) would be aware of these things, but, for me, the pre/post contrast was sharper. Figure 3 depicts the first author (left) with the mother of Henry Dyer at Namoli Village, Lautoka, in 2014.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Sometimes I feel guilt for “betraying” Henry by leaving him back in the islands. (He has never made me feel guilty.) I get to return to the First World while he and the other interviewees are left behind. Ethnographers can get very close, perhaps too close, with their respondents.

Another factor which I must mention is the weight of the whole research project, in my mind, as time has passed. I had two interviews with Henry and the Julie Sami interview not even typed up when I left Fiji. The latter was not posted online until February 16, 2017. In my new job, I was so busy that I was not able to type up such a long interview until a year had passed. I was also weighed down by the idea that I wanted to be able to perceive my own three years in Fiji as a success, and having a natural starting and concluding point, which could be interpreted within my own story-telling experiences. In my Western country, I often recount anecdotes from my time in Fiji to students and friends. I want to perceive my time there as a success and as a positive experience and achievement. As a result, my time in Fiji and the research project data-collection tend to coalesce in my mind. My presentation of the narrative, I presume, is couched in these terms and thus mixes and merges with Henry’s presentation of *his* own story.

Recommendations for Further Research

In their study of Black Canadian sporting women's experiences from 1920s-1940s, Nzindukiyimana and Wamsley conclude that "[i]n a community marginalized not by laws, but by social norms, cultural institutions ensured community survival at an organic level."¹⁰² As with Canada in the 1920s-1940s, but not the U.S., it was social norms, rather than laws, which enforced and enacted marginalization in Fiji soccer based on race/ethnicity. But it was not all doom and gloom¹⁰³ - there was genuine warmth and a sense of camaraderie which bound the players, and now ex-players, together, although bonds between Indigenous players, regardless of team, seem to be especially strong. National-team tours and activities and Western Fiji Indigenous activities cemented bonds between the players who played in the 1982 IDC Final. This was aided by the fact that many of the Ba players were originally from Nadroga province, which borders the Nadi region to the southwest. Other supporting organizations for Indigenous players were the extended family, the village, and the church.

Nzindukiyimana and Wamsley go on to conclude that "[s]port, an institution upon which the community had a measure of control, was a source of strength and positivity," and even more so than churches and schools.¹⁰⁴ This comment applies to the Fiji soccer playing fields of that era, where Indigenous and Indo-Fijian stars showed off their talents in front of large crowds of adoring and appreciative fans. However, the administrators' and coaches' offices remained closed, foreign bastions, and little support or help was given to ex-players post-retirement. They were expected to slink back to their villages and fade quietly into obscurity. The lack of monetary remuneration prevented players from investing in pubs, hotels or service stations, as was common in the Global North in that era. Only the Indo-Fijians from business house families, such as Ba captain Vimlesh Singh, had a career pathway waiting for them. Many of the Indigenous stars enjoyed themselves rather too much with beer-drinking sessions on overseas tours, and this can be viewed as rebellion at life's inequalities and a decision to create shared memories which would last beyond retirement and could be recalled at will as the years passed.

Soccer history in Labasa, located on the second island of Fiji, Vanua Levu, is worthy of further study. The team has been the only long-term side in the Fiji Premier League to hail from Vanua Levu and an interesting sociological aspect is the existence of Labasa expatriates on the main island of Viti Levu, as these expatriates passionately and unashamedly offer their vocal support to the Labasa team when it plays on Viti Levu soil.

The Indigenous star, Tony Kabakoro, became head coach at Savusavu, another Vanua Levu team, after an outstanding career with big-city team Suva. His career path would be an interesting case study for research as his success in the "big smoke" and with the national-team meant that the "local-boy-made-good" narrative surrounding him on his return to Savusavu outweighed his Indiogeneity. The geographic and psychic distance between a small town on the second island and the big-city Premier League association team created a narrative which, in his case, was powerful enough to secure him a coaching job at Savusavu. Despite this, as at October 2015, he still worked under an Indo-Fijian manager.

Lastly, a longitudinal study aiming at explaining and contextualizing Ba's on-field successes, and relating them to the culture and identity of the town, would be a worthy academic project. It could be studied at PhD level and examine linkages between the Ba soccer team, the Ba soccer administrators, and the leading business houses of the town. It would also presumably bring out and explain further the "Indianness" of the Ba town and main shopping strip, a key factor which makes Ba distinct from all of the other major settlements in Fiji.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Dedication

This article is dedicated to the memory of the Lata sisters.

Table 1 Penalty shootout results, 1982 IDC Final
(Source: *Fiji Times*; various interviews)

Number	Nadi player	Result	Ba player	Result
1	Peter Dean	√	Ilisone Nale	√
2	Emasi “Bacardi” Koroi	x	Jone Nakosia	√
3	Rusiate Waqa	x	Meli Vuilabasa	x
4	Marika Ravula	√	Inia Bola	x
5	Shiu Naicker	√	Julie Sami	√
6	Henry Dyer	√	Kini Mocelutu	√
7	Manu Pokar	√	Semi Tabaiwalu	√
8	Mohd. Hussein	√	Vimlesh Singh	√
9	Inosi Tora	x	Bale Raniga (GK)	x
10	Tela Qoro	x	Rupeni Soro	x

√ denotes successful penalty kick, x denotes unsuccessful kick.

Notes

1. Mohit Prasad, *Celebrating 70 Years of Football: 1938-2008* (Suva: Fiji Football Association, 2008), 43.
2. Indo-Fijians, 37.5% of the population, are the Fijians of South Asian heritage. They are mostly the descendants of the original sixty thousand *girmitiyas* (indentured laborers) brought over by the British between 1879 and 1916 to labor on the sugar-cane plantations. There is also a small Gujarati shopowning class who arrived in Fiji as free settlers mostly between 1900 and 1940. Susanna Trnka, “Land, Life and Labour: Indo-Fijian Claims to Citizenship in a Changing Fiji,” *Oceania* 75, no. 4 (2005): 354-367.
3. City and town population figures are sourced from World Population Review, “Population of Cities in Fiji (2020),” *World Population Review* (2020), available online at: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/cities/fiji> (accessed November 28, 2020).
4. Trnka, “Land, Life and Labour,” 365.
5. Alistair Thomson, “Life Stories and Historical Analysis,” in *Research Methods for History* (2nd edition), eds. Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016). 118.
6. Jennie L. Brown, *Authentic Voices: Oral History and the Art of Creative Eavesdropping* (Bowling Green, KY: Jennie L. Brown, 2012), 7-8.

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7. Ibid., 31.
 8. Ibid., 32.
 9. Ibid., 33.
 10. Carly Adams and Darren J. Aoki, “‘Hey, Why Don’t We Have a Bonspiel?’ Narrating Postwar Japanese Canadian Experiences in Southern Alberta through Oral Histories of Curling,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 37, no. 16 (2020): 1715-1733.
 11. Ibid., 1718.
 12. Kieran James and Yogesh Nandan, “Gesturing Elsewhere and Offshore Memory: Amateur Elite Soccer in the Fiji Islands, 1980-1992,” *Sport History Review* 52, no. 1 (2021): 22-40; Jack Sugden, *Sport and Integration: An Exploration of Group Identity and Intergroup Relations in Fiji*, Unpublished PhD thesis (2017), University of Technology Sydney, Australia, 121. Although approximately 75% of the players in the 1980s were indigenous Fijians, and 25% were Indo-Fijians, the ratios are reversed as far as coaching is concerned. At the Battle of the Giants tournament, of July-August 2019, six Fiji Premier League head-coaches (“managers” in the British parlance) were Indo-Fijians, while two were indigenous Fijians. The six-two ratio was the same in October 2015.
 13. Our original intention was always that “dangerous bodies” was a ridiculous concept and stereotype and so it was always placed in inverted commas or should have been. It is ridiculous in that Indigenous men are no more likely than any other demographic to commit violent crimes, and yet it stigmatizes them and may well demean them and limit their life-chances and opportunities.
 14. Kieran James and Jenny K.-S. Leung, “On the Relationship between Catholicism and Marxism,” *International Journal of Critical Accounting* 10, no. 2 (2018): 169-191.
 15. Teresia K. Teaiwa, “Articulated Cultures: Militarism and Masculinities in Fiji during the Mid-1990s,” *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji* 3, no. 2 (2005): 201-222.
 16. Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips, “Yarning about Sport: Indigenous Research Methodologies and Transformative Historical Narratives,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, nos. 13-14 (2019): 1271-1288.
 17. Ibid., 1281.
 18. Ibid., 1279.
 19. Mohit Prasad, *The History of Fiji Football Association 1938-2013* (Suva: Fiji Football Association, 2013), 17-19.
 20. Fiji Football Association, *Inter District Championship 2013* (Suva: Fiji Football Association), 44.
 21. Regarding Ba’s six-in-a-row IDC wins, see Anon, “Ba knows all about Winning,” *Fiji Times*, October 8, 1982, 21; Gabriel Singh, “Two Districts object to IDC Referees,” *Fiji Times*, October 6, 1982, 32.
 22. Fiji Football Association, *Silver Jubilee Celebration, 1977-2002* (Suva: Fiji Football Association, 2002), 16-17, *Inter District Championship 2013*, 44.

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23. Kieran James, "Sugar City Blues: A Year following Lautoka Blues in Fiji's National Soccer League," *International Journal of Soccer* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1-25.
 24. Fiji Football Association, *Silver Jubilee Celebration*, 16-19.
 25. Andrew C. Sparkes and Brett Smith, *Qualitative Research Methods in Sport, Exercise and Health: From Process to Product* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 155-158.
 26. *Ibid.*, 155.
 27. *Ibid.*, 156-157.
 28. *Ibid.*, 24.
 29. Brown, *Authentic Voices*, 25.
 30. Ken Howarth, *Oral History: A Handbook* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1998), viii.
 31. John Kelly, "'Sectarianism' and Scottish Football: Critical Reflections on Dominant Discourse and Press Commentary," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 46, no. 4 (2010): 418-435
 32. Carly Adams and Mike Cronin, "Sport and Oral History," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, nos. 13-14 (2019): 1131-1135.
 33. Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.
 34. Adams and Cronin, "Sport and Oral History," 1131.
 35. *Ibid.*, 1132.
 36. Fuhua Huang, Huijie Zhang, and Hong Fan, "Oral History and Sports Historians in China," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 37, no. 16 (2020): 1651-1663.
 37. Tolga Ozyurtcu and Jan Todd, "Critical Mass: Oral History, Innovation Theory, and the Fitness Legacy of the Muscle Beach Scene," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 37, no. 16 (2020): 1696-1714.
 38. Adams and Cronin, "Sport and Oral History," 1132.
 39. Samuel Hynes, *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern Warfare* (London: Pimlico, 1998), xii, 30, emphasis original.
 40. Marta Kurkowska-Budzan and Marcin Stasiak, "Road Cycling Racing in Poland of the Communist Regime Era: An Exercise in Oral History Method," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, nos. 13-14 (2019): 1256-1270.
 41. Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 147.
 42. Brown, *Authentic Voices*, 22.
 43. Julie Sami, interview with author, October 1, 2015, Ba town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.
 44. Ornella Nzindukiyimana and Kevin B. Wamsley, "'We Played Ball Just the Same': Selected Recollections of Black Women's Sport Experiences in Southern Ontario (1920s-1940s)," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, nos. 13-14 (2019): 1289-1310.
 45. Brown, *Authentic Voices*, 55-56.
 46. *Ibid.*, 57.

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47. Andrew C. Sparkes, "Illness, Premature Career-termination, and the Loss of Self: A Biographical Study of an Elite Athlete," in *Sociology of Sport: Theory and Practice*, eds. Richard L. Jones and Kathleen M. Armour (Harlow: Pearson, 2000), 17; Norman Denzin, *Interpretive Interactionism* (London: Sage, 1989).
 48. Adams and Cronin, "Sport and Oral History," 1131.
 49. Valerie Yow, "'Do I like them too much?' Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-versa," *Oral History Review* 24, no. 1 (1997): 55-79.
 50. Thomson, "Life Stories and Historical Analysis," 110.
 51. *Ibid.*, 111.
 52. *Ibid.*, 113.
 53. Anon, "Nadi's Star is shining bright," *Fiji Times*, October 8, 1982, 19.
 54. *Ibid.*
 55. Henry Dyer, interview with author, June 5, 2014, Nadi town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.
 56. Kieran James and Yogesh Nadan, "Post-retirement Blues in the Shadow of Joe Tubuna: The Post-retirement Struggles of Fiji's Indigenous Soccer Elite," *Sport in Society* (2020) (published online).
 57. Back then the normal playing-time of all IDC games was 60-minutes.
 58. Unless otherwise indicated, all 1982 IDC Final facts come from M. Prasad, *The History of Fiji Football Association*, 95.
 59. Henry Dyer, comment at author's interview with Bobby Tikaram, August 14, 2014, Nadi town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.
 60. M. Prasad, *Celebrating 70 Years of Football*, 43.
 61. Bobby Tikaram, conversation with author, June 12, 2014, Nadi town, Ba province.
 62. Bobby Tikaram, interview with author, August 14, 2014, Nadi town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.
 63. Henry Dyer, interviews with author, June 5 and July 9, 2014, Nadi town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.
 64. M. Prasad, *The History of Fiji Football Association*, 95.
 65. See, for example, Y.M. Haniff, "Message from Y.M. Haniff," in *IDC Bulletin 1982*, ed. Nadi Soccer Association, (Nadi: Nadi Soccer Association, 1982), 9.
 66. Moti Tikaram, "Message from Hon. Sir Justice Moti Tikaram," in *IDC Bulletin 1982*, ed. Nadi Soccer Association (Nadi: Nadi Soccer Association, 1982), 3.
 67. Dyer, interviews, June 5 and July 9, 2014.
 68. M. Prasad, *The History of Fiji Football Association*, 104-105.
 69. Meli Vuilabasa, interview with author, June 2, 2015, Ba town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.
 70. Inia "Golden Boot" Bola, interview with author, June 17, 2015, Ba town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.

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71. Henry Dyer, comment at author's interview with Savenaca Waqa, August 27, 2015, Namotomoto Village Extension, Ba province, notes in possession of author. Savenaca Waqa expressed agreement.
 72. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).
 73. Francis C. Kew, "Values in Competitive Games," *Quest* 29, no. 1 (1978): 103-112.
 74. Robert Butcher and Angela J. Schneider, "Fair Play as Respect for the Game," in *Ethics in Sport*, 2nd edition, ed. W.J. Morgan (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2007), 120.
 75. This is the traveling distance by car, along the Queen's Road, according to Google Maps.
 76. M. Prasad, *Indo-Fijian Diasporic Bodies*, 109-110; Sugden, *Sport and Integration*, 119.
 77. Sugden, *Sport and Integration*, 119.
 78. *Ibid.*, 119.
 79. Geir H. Presterudstuen, *Performing Masculinity: Body, Self and Identity in Modern Fiji* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 79.
 80. *Ibid.*, 79-80.
 81. Brij V. Lal, "'Anxiety, Uncertainty and Fear in our Land': Fiji's Road to Military Coup, 2006," in *The 2006 Military Takeover: A Coup to end all Coups?* Eds. Jon Fraenkel, Stewart Firth and Brij V. Lal (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009), 36.
 82. Kieran James and Yogesh Nadan, "Race, Ethnicity, and Class Issues in Fiji Soccer 1980-2015," *Soccer & Society* 21, no. 7 (2020): 741-761; Susanna Trnka, "Violence, Agency and Freedom of Movement: Issues emerging out of the Lata Sisters' Disappearance," *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji* 3, no. 2 (2005): 277-294.
 83. Trnka, "Violence, Agency and Freedom of Movement," 278.
 84. *Ibid.*, 278-279.
 85. Lal, "'Anxiety, Uncertainty and Fear in our Land,'" 38; Robert Norton, *Race and Politics in Fiji*, revised edition (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1990), 138, "The Changing Role of the Great Council of Chiefs," in *The 2006 Military Takeover: A Coup to end all Coups?* Eds. Jon Fraenkel, Stewart Firth and Brij V. Lal (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009), 102; Jonathon Prasad, "The Good, the Bad and the Faithful," in *The 2006 Military Takeover: A Coup to end all Coups?* Eds. Jon Fraenkel, Stewart Firth and Brij V. Lal (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009), 211; Susanna Trnka, *State of Suffering: Political Violence and Community Survival in Fiji* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).
 86. Jonathon Prasad points out that some attacks were by gangs which included, or were led by, Indo-Fijians. J. Prasad, "The Good, the Bad and the Faithful," 231.
 87. James and Nadan, "Race, Ethnicity, and Class," 759. The comments about the Waqan nickname come originally from Henry Dyer.
 88. *Ibid.*, 759.
 89. We counted ten references to the player Rusiate Waqa in Prasad (2013), on pages 78-104. The first was to "Rusiate Waqa," while the subsequent nine were to "Rusiate Waqan." M. Prasad, *The History of Fiji Football Association*, 78-104.

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90. Richard S. Gruneau, *Class, Sports and Social Development* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 20, cited in Kelly, "'Sectarianism' and Scottish Football," 426.
 91. Michel Foucault, *Power: Essential Works 1954-84* (revised ed.) (London: Penguin, 2020).
 92. In fact, the rate of indigenous Fijian-Indian intermarriage, as captured in the 1996 census data, is estimated at only 0.93%. The more common combination is Indo-Fijian man married to Indigenous woman, and the opposite rarely occurs. Portia Richmond, *Never The Twain Shall Meet?: Causal Factors In Fijian-Indian Intermarriage*, Unpublished Masters thesis (2003), Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu; "We Do(n't): Explaining Fijian-Indian Intermarriage in Fiji," *Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji* 7, no. 2 (2009): 215-242.
 93. Presterudstuen, *Performing Masculinity*, 155.
 94. Vuilabasa, interview.
 95. Sami, interview.
 96. Vuilabasa, interview.
 97. Adams and Aoki, "'Hey, Why Don't We Have a Bonspiel?'" 1718.
 98. Semi Tabaiwalu, interview with author, June 20, 2015, Ba town, Ba province, notes in possession of author.
 99. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 1977), 43; Diane Macdonell, *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 104-105.
 100. Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Unifying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 52-53.
 101. Thomson, "Life Stories and Historical Analysis," 115.
 102. Nzindukiyimana and Wamsley, "'We Played Ball Just the Same,'" 1302.
 103. Adams and Aoki, "'Hey, Why Don't We Have a Bonspiel?'" 1717.
 104. Nzindukiyimana and Wamsley, "'We Played Ball Just the Same,'" 1302.