Transforming Images: Participatory Video and Social Change in Fiji

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by

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Abstract

This thesis presents an ethnographic case study of a participatory video (PV) workshop which the author conducted with rural women in Fiji and discusses its implications for dialogue and community building in a post-conflict society. Participatory video is explored as a 'lived experience' through ways in which community producers integrate local knowledge, networks, norms and practices in the production process and programme content. Social networks and community relations are discussed within a broader framework of social capital. Participatory action research (PAR) was the primary methodology employed for the facilitation of the video workshop while visual ethnography, in the form of video documentation, was used for collecting and interpreting the findings. The enthnographic footage shot by the researcher has been edited into an 82-minute audio-visual presentation and submitted as the findings chapter on DVD. A six-minute promotional video, and 30-minute members' video produced by the women have been presented on two other DVDs as outcomes of the research project and are owned by the community.

This study found that rural women in Fiji used social capital – their relationships and social networks – as a key element in video production to highlight community needs and linkages. Active engagement in PV production allowed rural women to access bonding networks as well as extend bridging ties with other communities by visiting each other's homes and exchanging information, thus widening their social relations and their understanding of the wider community in which they reside. Through their content creation the women reflected the interconnections and community relations between various ethnic groups occurring at the subaltern level in Fiji.

Statement of Originality

This is my own original work and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. All sources of information used in the thesis has been referenced and is presented in the Bibliography. Ethics approval has been received for this research through the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee. The Protocol number is HE01APR2005-DO3982C.

Signed_____
Usha Sundar Harris

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Dedication

To my mother
who gave me my first lesson in community empowerment

Introduction

> We call on communicators to "make" a different kind of communication, one not focused on giving the news or media-based creations, but rather on improving the communicative capabilities of communities, transforming people and, thereby, their lives. It is not about informing, but about forming; we wager on proposals that can be maintained over time and space and that may have an effect on cultural, economic and political development (Peirano, 2006:webpage).

This thesis presents a case study of a participatory video (PV) workshop with a group of rural women in Fiji and discusses its implications for community building and dialogue in a post-conflict society. Fiji's socio-political and economic foundation has been deeply scarred by four coups in 19 years. The cumulative effect of these coups has significantly ruptured the fragile structures of social cohesion, deepening divisions between the two ethnic groups – the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians. The concept of national identity has never been articulated in Fiji in a way which is inclusive of all races. Rather it has been disparate and disconnected. The nation-building project has been complicated not only by the ethnic divisions, but also the archipelagic nature of the island state, which has impeded the information flow creating a disjuncture between the urban population and those living in remote areas. Unfortunately, the ruling political elites have encouraged a nation of disparate identities through essentialist policies and political processes. This has created two levels of discourse in Fiji – the dominant political discourse of identity politics prevalent in urban areas, and the day-to-day relationships based on interdependence and goodwill especially among rural communities. Unfortunately, mainstream media coverage lends credence to the hegemonic discourses, thus reinforcing the fissures instead of the linkages. My research occurs against this background of national conflict.

This research is different from other academic studies of the Fiji society undertaken in recent times, in that it relocates discussion framed within conflict analysis towards research which attempts to engage in dialogic solutions. In the telling of this story, I recognise the everyday actions of the common people in promoting civility and goodwill towards each other, and the work of women's networks in seeking social and political reform as well as enriching social capital at the grassroots. As a young girl growing up in Fiji, I remember my mother traversing many miles of dusty roads to encourage rural women to participate in self-education and community activities. Although she had a telephone, she could not use it to contact her compatriots who lived in Indo-Fijian settlements not that far from town. Instead her tools were the local bus, her feet and a deep commitment to personal empowerment. She encouraged the women to meet once a week to socialise and exchange their skills in reading, writing, sewing, and music. It is this type of women's community groups that have become the mainstay of grassroots networking in Fiji and in which I conducted my research into participatory video production process.

Community media can play an important role in peace building efforts and conflict resolution in Fiji. Through their engagement in message development individuals become empowered to find ways of solving problems in their own communities. When communities actively participate in communicative processes they learn to engage with each other, thus improving their understanding of the other and the underlying concerns which drive their actions. Increased dialogue, collaboration and respect for other's ideas become elements in community building and social cohesion. Thus the process of production becomes a dynamic site for community building and reconciliation.

Two of the most effective forms of communication in this regard have been the medium of radio and video, which have the capacity to bring the voices of marginalised groups into the

public sphere. When people are able to express exactly what they want to say, they become engaged in a strongly empowering act. This capacity for self-representation eventually leads them to reflect on the power relationships "within their specific social structures and cultural contexts", as well as those from outside (Braden, 1999:118). A World Bank study supports this view:

> In 2000, the World Bank carried out the largest-ever survey to determine what people living in poverty said they wanted and needed most. The most common response was that people's first priority was not money. Instead, what they needed is a voice—a say—in decisions that affect them (Deane, 2005:2).

Participatory Video (PV) projects in various parts of the world have put this power in the hands of the most marginalised in society for self-representation and social reform. Since the introduction of portable cameras in 1975, video production has gained a favoured place in many development projects and has been used by non-government organisations, development workers and indeed communities themselves for empowerment and to foster dialogue and instigate change.

Indigenous communities such as the Australian Aborigines in the Northern Territory (see Buchtmann, 2000; Meadows and Morris, 2003; Michaels, 1986a) and the Kayapo Indians in the Amazonian rainforest have used it, as Terence Turner describes, "to assert their own political agency and cultural values" (2002:230). It has given voice to non-literate women in projects such as Video SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) in India (Stuart, 1989) and the Mayan women in Guatemala by bridging "the oral with the technical" thus allowing their voices to be heard in global forums (Guidi, 2003:253). Used in this way video becomes a channel through which individuals express themselves as active citizens (Rodriguez, 2001), using it to act upon their worlds within concepts of empowerment and transformation. White recognises the deeper implications of video as a tool for social change when she states:

> Participatory video as a process is a tool for individual, group and community development. It can serve as a powerful force for people to see themselves in relation to the community and become conscientized about personal and

> community needs. It brings about a critical awareness that forms the foundation for creativity and communication. Thus it has the potential to bring about personal, social, political and cultural change. That's what video power is all about (2003:64).

It is the discussion of video within these frameworks of empowerment and transformation that I locate my research. Within this concept the process of production is central to the empowerment of individuals rather then the finished product. The development communicator plays the role of facilitator rather than the video maker.

One of the difficulties for a communications researcher who sets out to study community media production is the dearth of conceptual tools and theoretical frameworks within which she/he can analyse the research findings. Little academic work has been done to develop a conceptual framework within which to study video's transformative potential (Huber, 1998; Rodriguez, 2001; White, 2003). Although scholars (see Atton, 2002; Carpentier et al., 2002; Couldry and Curran, 2003; Downing, 2001; Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte, 2006; Rodriguez, 2001; Rodriguez, 2004) have actively searched for new interpretations in this field, developing an all encompassing theory, a sort of one size fits all, is problematic because of the contextual nature of each community media project.

Huber indicates that "there is a poor specification of what PV can achieve, what dangers and pitfalls it involves, and for what purposes it has proved appropriate" (1998:9). This view concurs with White's assertion that an informed link needs to be developed between theory and the practice of PV. The shortcoming in theory is also exacerbated by the fact that most PV projects are short-term and facilitated by people who are focused on a community outcome rather than academic scholarship.

Rodriguez (2001) urges researchers to analyse the transformative processes 'citizens' media' such as video bring about within participants and their communities. Here tools of

communication such as radio and video are used by individuals to express themselves as citizens through their 'lived experiences', encompassing the "fluidity and complexity of alternative media as a social, political and cultural phenomenon" (Rennie, 2006:21). This interpretation seeks to locate community media outside the binary frameworks of small media vs big media or as a site of resistance to counter the cultural domination of powerful transnational media, which have dominated the discussion of alternative media practices. Rodriguez (2001:128) urges researchers to undertake "research methodologies such as ethnography of media production processes and action research" to gain insights into the complex relationship between media production processes and the transformation it invokes. It is this call to researchers to understand change and transformation through the study of media production processes that has inspired this research.

Research Aim

The aim of this research is to carry out ethnography of a participatory video production process to observe how communities engage with processes of production, and the implications for dialogue, community building and representation within the context of Fiji's fragmented multicultural society. As the researcher and facilitator of the video production workshop, I planned to observe the process of production and how it acted as a catalyst for community action within a given context. This included the purposeful use of video to achieve certain goals identified by the community as well as any change the process may invoke.

Undergirding the research is Rodriguez's conceptualisation of 'citizens' media' as a 'lived experience' for those engaged in alternative media production. The process of message production catalyses a diversity of experiences:

> It implies having the opportunity to create one's own images of self and environment; it implies being able to recodify one's own identity with the signs and codes that one chooses, thereby disrupting the traditional acceptance of those

> imposed by outside sources; it implies becoming one's own storyteller, regaining one's own voice; it implies reconstructing the self-portrait of one's own community and one's own culture […] (Rodriguez, 2006:763).

The idea of participatory media as a 'lived experience' is explored in this research within the context of the local culture and the ways in which producers integrate local knowledge, networks, norms and practices in the production process and content. By recodifying the established norms and networks producers create new opportunities for dialogue and revitalise traditional relationships within and between communities.

The research also recognises that to own their media people must be able to relate it to their own culture and language. It has to be embedded in their culture and has to reflect their everyday life experiences. This approach is supported by Pacific scholars Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo who have noted in their discussion of Pacific epistemologies:

> By indigenous epistemology we mean a cultural group's ways of thinking and of creating and (re)formulating, and theorizing about knowledge via traditional discourses and media of communication anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture[...] (2002:381).

As such, the study draws on local knowledge, norms and practices integrating it with a viable framework within which to discuss the findings. Social capital offers a framework within which social networks as well as participative action can be discussed and offers a link to local norms and practices. Putnam has defined social capital as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (2000:19). Fijian scholar Ropate Qalo (1998) has linked the Fijian concept of *Vakaviti* or the *Fijian Way* to social capital. He proffers: "*Vakaviti* should be viewed as social capital", and discusses the various concepts within it "which enhance the common good more than the self-interest" (Huffer and Qalo, 2004:108).

I use social capital theory as a tool to aid my analysis and understanding of social networks and community relations during the process of participatory production. Social capital, participation and empowerment are interlinked in projects of community building and social cohesion. The framework I propose is premised on the idea that participatory media practice not only functions well in communities with strong social networks (i.e. high social capital) but also contributes to the growth of social capital. In other words, it not only accesses local networks - bonding capital - but also extends it by enhancing the bridging dimension of social capital where communities can link with other communities across ethnic, gender, social, or geographic divides through dialogue and information sharing. Mechanisms and forms in social capital provide a viable theoretical framework within which to discuss PV as a tool for community building in the context of my research in Fiji because it allows for comparisons with concepts in local cultures as discussed above. As such this thesis addresses three key questions:

1. How do participants' social relationships and their levels of trust affect participants' involvement in the message making and consequently their ability to represent their lives and aspirations?
2. What are the dialogic benefits of video both horizontally within and between communities, and vertically to influence policy makers?
3. How do rural women invite cultural and social inclusion in content creation, thus challenging national discourses on race, gender and place?

In discussing Melanesian research methodology, Pacific scholars also point out the importance of communicating research outcome to the community. In finding a Pacific perspective in research, Fairbairn-Dunlop (2004:5) has noted that "community participation from design through implementation, monitoring and evaluation, is the Pacific preferred strategy and findings are usually presented verbally for public debate". She has further argued

that Pacific-based research should include a component of community awareness-raising: “As for all things Pacific, we must start with the community and take them with us” (Ibid).

Heeding this call, I embarked on a journey to find an innovative method of data collection and presentation within a qualitative framework for media research, which provides an important narrative for communities on the way in which their stories and cultural practices can be documented and used for community development. In designing the research, I became convinced that an ethnographic study should include a visual method of data collection, such as visual ethnography in the form of video documentation, which would become an important resource for a variety of purposes. The use of visual methodology allows the research results to be made accessible to both literate and non-literate members of the community, such as the research participants. The visual documentation may be used as a resource by community development workers, non-government organisations and policy makers, as well as future researchers in the field.

Once the visual documentation was completed there was an issue of how best to present the visual data, so that the research participants had a voice in, and ownership of the findings. A documentary structure with a voice-over of the researcher would produce a narrative constructed from an outsider’s perspective. For the ethnographic findings to reflect the workshop activities, participant viewpoints and the process as closely as possible, I have decided to present the visual data in segments, as observational footage, capturing the most important phases in the production process with limited editing, and narration added only as links between segments. This is in keeping with the PV format which Colin Low has described as vertical films (Crocker, 2003) consisting of a series of short segments each featuring a singular topic or interview, and is in contrast to the ‘horizontal’ structure of traditional documentaries which use crosscutting and montage from different scenes and

interviews to represent an issue. The visual ethnography is presented as the Findings chapter on DVD thus becoming an integral part of the thesis. The video content produced by the participants does not aim for a polished professional look but has retained the genuine ambiance of a community video as it was produced in the field without the aid of sophisticated production equipment and post-production software. These are included on two separate DVDs, as an outcome of the production process. Viewed together one gains a complete picture of the production process within this ethnographic action research project.

The Research Context

I conducted my research with a group of rural women from diverse cultural backgrounds in Navua, a small river town, in July 2005. The participants belonged to the Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group (NRWTG), a multi-ethnic organisation. They were engaged in small income generation schemes such as handicraft and local food production, which were sold on the Internet "instead of selling them by the roadside" (T. Anthony, pers. comm., 2005). The organisation was set up as the first pilot project in Fiji through an initiative of the Ministry of Women. However, things had not gone smoothly and they had lost the Internet connection.

When I approached the women about conducting the video workshop within their group they quickly recognised its benefits to them. The women wanted to use their newly acquired production skills to create a promotional video which would help them expand the market for their products to hotels and tour company operators. As a participatory project, women would have control over the video production process and programme content. The videos created by the women as well as my own observational video have become part of the visual ethnographic data which is submitted as a substantial part of this PhD thesis as discussed above.

The decision to undertake participatory action research for the express purpose of gathering data for my dissertation came after much personal deliberation about my own role and influence in the research and experience as facilitator. I decided to adopt this approach after two preliminary research visits to Fiji to identify my focus group. During this period I visited peri-urban squatter settlements and resettled farming families as well as established community media operators such as femLINK Pacific's mobile radio project for women, and Radio Pasifik, the student radio station at the University of the South Pacific. Each of these communities and media projects had their own merit. However, I chose to work with a group which was ready and enthusiastic for such intervention. Within Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group, I found a community which exhibited a readiness to *adopt* video technology for their own needs and a desire to *represent* themselves and their work to a specific *audience* whom *they* had identified.

By studying the process of PV production within a multi-ethnic organisation, this project allowed me to observe how communities can engage in bridge building and how community media can be integrated within projects of reconciliation in Fiji. Rodriguez asserts that "communication is the raw material for peace" and community media can play a central role in peace building efforts and conflict resolution (2000:147). By sharing knowledge and skills, and exchanging information, participants actively engage in communicative processes that lead to increased dialogue and cross-cultural understanding. Thus community media can become an important tool in nation building by reflecting the spirit of goodwill and the voices and aspirations of the common people in Fiji.

Personal Reflections

My own media career began at the age of seventeen as a cadet journalist working for the *Fiji Times.* Over the years, working in both mainstream and alternative media, I have come to realise the power that journalists have in telling stories of human adversity and achievements. I gained first hand knowledge of what proactive use of video can do for marginalised groups after working as a community media activist in Sydney with non-English speaking background communities at Community Television Sydney (CTS), a free-to-air channel on UHF 31, from 1994 to 1996. CTS represented diverse things to diverse groups who came to use it in their own particular context and largely as a constructive social force to further their own agenda. For the ethnic groups it was a democratising force, a place to establish channels of communication denied to them in the mainstream media; for the women it was a place relatively free of patriarchal decision-making; for the left-oriented groups it was a place to counter hegemony. Rodriguez calls these the "silent voices" who, through the "mediating" power of video, may increase their collective strength through "processes of identity deconstruction" and reconstruction (Rodriguez, 2001:127). Whatever the issues of audience reception and reach might be, one thing is undeniable; for all involved it was a transformative social and political experience.

As a media educator, I have realised the inherent power of media as a catalyst for change, be it in the political, social or economic realm. The insights and experiences that I accumulated in community media have influenced my teaching philosophy in alternative video production, which in turn has shaped the form of my thesis. I combine these here with my knowledge of Fiji and specific research for this project.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter One begins with a discussion of the theories which have underpinned participatory media research and how these have influenced the debate on participatory video. It looks at emerging frameworks that have attempted to reposition the discourse from the binaries of alternative/small/local media vs global/commercial/professional media to participatory media as a tool of empowerment and transformation. The chapter also engages in the definition and discussion of participatory video and its uses by communities. In the final section, I identify the theoretical framework which links indigenous knowledge with the concept of social capital and enables the discussion of ethnographic research data gathered during the PV workshop.

Chapter Two 'Fiji - a Society in Need of Dialogue' provides an overview of the cultural and social systems in Fiji, along with the mediascape. The discussion brings insights into a politically unstable nation in which race has been manipulated by the ruling classes at the expense of dialogue and community cohesion. The chapter also provides a contextual understanding of the role of women and the developing community media sector.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology and project design and provides a rationale for the chosen methodology. It gives an account of my journey to find a group with whom to conduct the research, as well as the details of the research design.

Chapter Four is presented in audiovisual form and includes the ethnographic data collected during the production process. This visual ethnography of the video production process on DVD is presented in sections with titled chapter markers. A viewing guide and an explanatory outline of the DVD is included as Chapter Four in this written component. The Introduction sequence includes geographical and socio-economic information about Navua district. Pre-production includes the training, viewing, and story development sessions in the first week. Production

includes footage from the location shoot together with participant interviews. Post-production includes the editing session and community feedback. The conclusion has highlights of videos shot by members of NRWTG during the post-research period.

In Chapter Five the concept of social capital and its key elements, such as trust, reciprocity, networks and bridging are discussed in relation to the themes that emerge from the findings. Links are drawn with local knowledge, norms and practices and how these influenced the production process and engagement of communities.

The Conclusion includes key findings of this research and supports the proposition that participatory media production such as PV can foster dialogue and contribute to community building and social cohesion when embedded within projects of reconciliation and peace building efforts in Fiji.

CHAPTER 1
Communication, Local Community and Social Change

> When we study communication, therefore, we study people – relating to one another and to their groups, organizations, and societies; influencing one another; being influenced; informing and being informed; teaching and being taught; entertaining and being entertained. To understand human communication we must understand how people relate to one another (Schramm and Porter, 1982:23).

This chapter provides an overview of the participatory communication paradigm and defines the related concepts of empowerment and transformation as well as the concept and practice of participatory video. Through the examination of relevant literature, the chapter identifies the broader conceptual framework within which this research project may be discussed. By studying the various communication approaches and sifting through the scholarly discussions, one is able to develop a roadmap to one's own research. A survey of participatory communication literature as well as emerging theorisation of participatory media gave me an understanding of dialogic aspects of communication as well as the significance of local community and cultural identity in content development. The second section charts the development of participatory video, provides examples of best practice around the world and discusses its implications for change within a community. In the final section, I identify the theoretical framework which best enables the discussion of ethnographic research data gathered during the PV workshop, and links indigenous knowledge with the concept of social capital and its key mechanisms.

I. Communication Research Approaches

The use of communication in development has undergone a series of changes over the past 50 years from Modernisation and Growth Theory of the 1960s (known as the dominant paradigm) to the Dependency Theory of the 1970s, to the current discourses in Communication for Social Change. In the post WWII period mass communication became an integral part of policy formulations by nation-states, non-government organisations and international donors to encourage economic growth and modernisation in developing countries of the South. The dominant paradigm, based on the seminal research of Daniel Lerner (1958) and Wilbur Schramm (1954) argued that mass media and the introduction of media technology were principal agents of development, which would promote social change leading to modernity in the Third World. The Dependency Theory emerged in the 1960s as a critique of the Modernisation paradigm with scholarly influence from Latin American social scientists. The Dependency Theory advocated a change in the International Order and the strengthening of indigenous models of development. Amongst other things, it led to a call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which campaigned for a more just and equitable balance in the flow and content of information globally. The MacBride Commission, set-up to study "the totality of communication problems in modern societies" (MacBride and Roach, 1993:4), laid down the foundation for ideas about democratisation of communication. In this regard, the MacBride Commission recommended:

> Communication needs in a democratic society should be met by the extension of specific rights such as the right to be informed, the right to inform, the right to privacy, the right to participate, the right to participate in public communication – all elements of a new concept, the right to communicate. In developing what might be called a new era of social rights, we suggest all the implications of the right to communicate be further explored (MacBride, 1980:265).

Towards this end, the Commission called for the increased integration and participation of individuals and communities including women, children and minority groups in the communication process. The MacBride report noted: "Man does not live by bread alone. The

need for communication is evidence of an inner urge towards a life enriched by cooperation with others" (Ibid:15).

This move to democratise communication at international, national and local levels led to ideas of access and participation by the grassroots in communication systems. It also led to the emergence of horizontal communication models which were decentralised, focused on the receiver instead of the sender, reflected the cultural identity of communities and used alternative production methods.

Instead of the linearity of the sender-receiver process (Lasswell, 1948; Schramm, 1954; Shannon and Weaver, 1949), communication is now understood as transactional, where communicators are engaged in a fluid and relational process of mutual meaning-making, drawing from their fields of experience such as their culture, education, emotions, experiences, etc. (Tyler et al., 2005:21). In this approach "communication is truly something we do *with* others and not *to* them" (Adler and Rodman, 2003:28). As such, it is an ongoing dynamic process of building relationships influenced by the social worlds which we inhabit. Williams (1989:143) explains transactional communication within the context of interpersonal communication as follows: "The main positive effect of interpersonal communication is the development of close human relationships, ones based on trust, respect and shared motives, and even love." Transactional communication places great importance on how meaning is constructed in one's mind and upon reflective feedback and reflective listening. Participation and dialogue emerge as key elements and according to White these processes are important in achieving transformation (White, 2003).

The phenomenological approach to communication gives significant attention to issues of interaction, social relations with a focus on networks and "interaction developed in social

networks" (Galindo Cáceres, 2006:536). Servaes points out that this perspective has influenced modern communication research to be studied from the receiver's perspective (Servaes, 2001). Reception studies have found that people actively engage with media texts individually, constructing their own "preferred readings" based on their experiences and their social context (Ang, 1999:371). Latin American scholars integrated a phenomenological approach in the study of development communication (Huesca, 2006a) and were strongly influenced by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy:

> The theoretical framework for participatory communication owes much to Paulo Freire. His books (from Education: The Practice of Freedom (1967) and Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) to Education for Critical Consciousness (1973)) have not only revolutionised the world of education, but also communication for social change (Gumucio Dagron, 2001:34).

The Empowerment Framework

Paulo Freire's seminal writings and his earlier work with impoverished people in Brazil were largely responsible for the emergence of the empowerment framework. He developed a method of teaching for illiterates and the oppressed, published in 1970 as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. It has become standard text for educators in both formal and informal education. Richard Shaull in his forward to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (trans., 1984*)* elucidates Freire's conviction:

> […] that every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" he may be, he is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter, he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it […] (Freire, 1970:13).

By gaining an ability to 'name the world', through a process of dialogue, human beings are able to free themselves from the broader ills or oppression. The following words by Freire reflect the basic tenets of participatory communication:

> […] no one can say a true word alone – nor can he say it for another in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words (Freire, 1970:76).

Dialogue, participation, praxis and the Subject are central to Freire's pedagogy of teaching and learning. The concept of conscientization in Freire's work is explained by bell hooks as "that historical moment that is the important initial stage of transformation when one begins to think critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstance" (1993:147). Transformation comes from a process of self-reflection. White describes transformation as "the process of moving from one state of 'being' to a new state of 'being''(2003:76). This is achieved through empowerment, which is a product of knowledge acquisition, and which leads one through a process which she describes as follows:

> It enables a person to think, to learn, to gain new skill, to reflect and analyze, to recognize relationships and causality, and ultimately to complete understanding. Knowledge provides the foundation for respecting one's self-worth, for formation of one's own points of view and opinions, and for building confidence to pursue one's goals. It builds the capacity for gaining control over one's own life and life space (Ibid).

Thus empowerment has been defined as the process through which individuals acquire the knowledge and skills to take control of their lives and thereby gain power since "knowledge acquisition is a liberative process which enables further knowledge generation, and that knowledge sharing increases the forces which catalyze action" (White and Patel, 1994:362). Students have to be actively involved, through praxis, for genuine learning to take place. Freire differentiated this from banking education where one person acts on another. Dialogue is an important aspect of learning. But to achieve it a strong foundation of love, faith and humility was necessary which engenders mutual trust (Freire, 1970:79).

The Cornell Empowerment Group (In Melkote, 2002:431) defines empowerment as follows:

> An intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources.

Within the empowerment framework, Melkote (Ibid: 430) has identified communication models which are "nonlinear, participatory; used to convey information as well as build organizations; increased use of small media". Research methods best suited within this framework include participatory action research along with qualitative and quantitative methods.

Participatory Communication

A paradigm shift has occurred over the past 30 years with bottom-up approaches to social change finding favour with researchers and NGOs over uniform top-down approaches to development of the 1960s. Scholars see participation as a basic human right and have argued for a model where participation is seen as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end (Diaz-Bordenave, 1989; Melkote and Steeves, 2001; White et al., 1994). People must acquire the knowledge and develop their ability to be able to develop their own communities. White and Patel describe it as "equalitarian, transactive and dialogic" in nature (1994:363). Melkote and Steeves (2001:336) have identified communitarian theory along with post-structuralism and postmodernism as "assumptive basis for participatory strategies".

Participatory communication is people-centred, process-oriented and contextualised in a local setting, utilising local knowledge instead of top-down, professionally disseminated messages with a predetermined development agenda. White describes it as "a democratic process, characterized by dialogue, creative and consensual thinking, and collective action" (2003:20). Cultural identity of local communities is paramount. For change to occur within a community people have to engage in the message production and understand its implications within their own local context. Participatory theorists argue that communication is a horizontal process which engages members of a community to exchange views on a range of topics such as literacy, health, safety, agricultural productivity, land ownership, gender and religion

(Waisbord, n.d.). People for whom change is being sought have a say as to the ways in which they want this to occur. As such the process of message production is as important as the finished product. According to Servaes, the focus shifts from creating a need for the information being disseminated to one of disseminating information for which there is a need. "The emphasis is on information exchange rather than on persuasion, as in the diffusion model" (1999:89). In proposing a Multiplicity model of development, Servaes describes it as follows:

> The present vision is based fundamentally on interactive, participatory, and two-way communication at all levels of society. It is more concerned with process and context, that is the exchange of "meanings" and the importance of this process, namely the social relational patterns and social institutions that are the result of and are determined by the process (Ibid:83).

The participatory paradigm "promotes decentralization of decision-making and the development of the people's values and cultures […]. Here media's and communication's role is to promote critical self-awareness by mirroring people's life and struggles to themselves" and facilitating self empowerment (Chin, 2000:32).

The participatory approaches have been increasingly adopted in the area of policy formulation, development, and community building in both developed and developing countries. By the 1980s, the proponents of the modernisation /diffusion theories also significantly revised their views on development. Everett Rogers (1995) whose diffusion of innovation theory was an important element of the modernisation platform, included social and participatory aspects to the definition of communication.

Critique of the Participatory Model

Critique of the participatory paradigm has centred on its fragmented approach to theory and practice. There has been a "lack of strong theoretical framework as well as methodological tools" over the years as multiple approaches have emerged to meet the diverse needs of diverse

communities (Kothari, 2002:139). Scholars have struggled to develop a unified theory within which to understand participatory communication. As a long term proponent of this practice, White identifies this challenge when she states that "participatory communication as a practice is clearly lacking in meaningful conceptualisations and useful theory" (2003:29).

Kothari also cautions that by placing the participatory discourse within a binary framework of "micro against the macro, local against the elite and powerless against the powerful", a notion is created that power only resides in the centre and with the elite, thus simplifying highly complicated social relations. Employing Foucault's analysis that "power is everywhere… and is thus found in the creation of norms and social and cultural practices at all levels", Kothari cautions practitioners that participatory techniques may actually lead to "reassertion of power and social control not only by certain individuals and groups, but also of particular bodies of knowledge. What counts as 'local knowledge' is very often the effect of specific kinds of techniques of power, of regulation and of normalization" (Kothari, 2002:141, 142). This may happen through the acts of inclusion, self-exclusion and non-participation.

Conflict is another major area of concern in participatory projects. Chin points to the difficulty experienced by practitioners who had "sufficient facilitation and participatory communication skills but totally untrained in conflict management and resolution" (2000:31). The readjustment of power relationships, disagreement on priorities, goals, and methods of doing things, as well as larger underlying social issues facing the communities, may emerge as the causes of conflict, he notes. Rico Lie reminds us that "PC is about progressive, positive, societal change and, as such, not neutral as most sciences claim to be" (2003:167).

Defining Participatory Media

The core principles of participatory communication are highlighted in participatory media and its programme content. As a counter hegemonic project, participatory media empowers local producers from various backgrounds and provides a forum for addressing collective social issues that have been neglected or ignored in mainstream media (King and Mele, 1999:605). It also nurtures local knowledge, encourages cultural expression and facilitates community discussion and debate (WACC, 2002). The field of community media or public access television which emerged in the United States during the 1970s had its conceptual origins in the National Film Board of Canada's Challenge for Change program (Higgins, 1999:625).

Members of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC, n.d. :webpage) point to a range of characteristics in defining their own community radio stations. *Alliance des radios communautaires du Canada, ARC*, a Canadian community radio station, notes "Community radio is an element of closeness, a bridge, a step toward the other, not to make the other like us, but to have him become what he is." Or this from AMARC Africa's community radio resource guide: "It should be made clear that community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself i.e., owning and controlling its own means of communication."

Earlier debate about participatory media centred on notions of democratisation, or the right to communicate. This was a reaction to the commercialisation and monopolisation of the privately owned media, as well as the centralism and bureaucratisation of public broadcasting. Public access channels gave voice to individuals and groups who were excluded in mainstream media, thus ensuring access and participation of the grassroots. Raymond Williams has "highlighted three aspects of democratic communication; decapitalization, deprofessionalization, deinstitutionalization" (Atton, 2002:4).

In the developed North, participatory media is seen as a site of resistance which challenges established and institutionalised politics (O'Sullivan et al., 1994:84) and builds solidarity and networking against the power structure (Downing, 2001:xi). In the developing South, participatory media is employed primarily in the development of communities such as its use in agricultural extension work by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (Coldevin and In collaboration with Extension Education and Communication Service Research Extension and Training Division Sustainable Development Department, 2003) using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods, as well as the Fogo Process discussed later in this chapter. In both cases participatory media is used as a tool for emancipation and progressive social action.

One of the dilemmas facing scholars is that this form of media cannot be tidily defined because of its range and diversity. In fact one of the defining characteristics is that it is diverse as Paiva notes – "what we call alternative media is a heterogeneous set of media practices developed by very diverse groups and organizations, in specific and different contexts, and employing a great variety of media" (In Rodriguez, 2001:12). Downing aptly describes it as a "media tapestry" which exhibits the following characteristics – "generally small-scale, in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives" (2001:v). To illustrate the multiplicity and richness of radical media, Downing draws from a wide range of practices such as public speech, dance and songs, graffiti and dress, theatre, performance arts and jamming, the press, satirical prints, photomontage, posters and murals as well as the traditionally recognised media channels such as radio, film and television and increasing Internet use. "Community media is distinguished by its aspirations and motivations as much as by its methods and structures" (Rennie, 2006:4). For the purpose of this study I shall concentrate the discussion of participatory media within the context of community television and video instead of its use in radio and print media, online activism or other forms such as performance arts.

Scholars have also noted the negative characteristics of alternative media. O'Sullivan et.al. (1994:10) point out that this model faces considerable problems of survival due to lack of funding and the fact that it is unattractive to advertisers and the mass commercial market. Downing (2001) highlights the ephemeral nature of alternative media, which varies in quality and is generally dismissed as irrelevant, and points to its use by fundamentalist, racist or fascist forces as well as constructive forces.

Communication for Social Change – Emerging Frameworks

While earlier discussion of participatory media occurred around the concept of media democratisation arising from binary frameworks, recent discussion has focused on its transformative potential such as communication for social change. In this reading, researchers seek to understand how an individual or group's engagement in message production increases their ability to critically understand oneself, the community and the wider society, drawing on Freire's key ideas of dialogue and "grounding pedagogical exercises in the lived experiences of the students" (Huesca, 2006b:528). Engagement of participants within this alternative framework becomes more than a place from where to challenge media conglomerates. It is a place for self-representation, self-expression and self-empowerment and considers the influence of social norms, values, culture and context (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte, 2006). In her discussion of community media, Rennie (2006:143) posits that by "reframing it as a means of empowerment instead of development", which has imperialistic and paternalistic overtones, grassroots participation in community-based media is now seen as a means to social change.

Citizens' Media

In *Fissures in the Mediascape* (2001), Rodriguez questions the binary frameworks in which

alternative media has been conceptualised. She terms this "oppositional politics" and explains it as follows:

> Framed within the debates of NWICO…much of the academic literature on alternative media emanates from specific concepts of power and democracy….power is conceived as a binary opposition between the powerful and the powerless…Framing their analyses with these types of categories, several academics study alternative media in terms of their success or their failure in balancing the power equation between TNCCs and powerless communities… (Ibid:11).

Proposing a new approach to the study of what she terms 'citizens' media', Rodriguez urges researchers to analyse the transformative processes media brings about within participants and their communities. Here tools of communication such as radio and video frame the 'lived experience' of participants. Her discussion of the Colombian video project with women highlights this role: "The women took the camera for the first time, and as they focused it on one of their women friends, on her house, or on her barrio, a qualitative shift in her self perception occurred" (Ibid:118). Rodriguez resists the use of the term alternative which, she argues, makes participatory communication alternative to something. Instead she locates her research in Freire's philosophy of transformation and the feminist theory of radical democracy to theorise 'citizens' media' as a process of personal empowerment for the human subject. This extended excerpt from an article in *Media Development* encapsulates her theoretical position:

> Instead, citizens' media articulates the metamorphic transformation of alternative media participants (or community media, or participatory media, or radical media, or alternative media) into active citizens. That is, citizens' media is a concept that accounts for the processes of empowerment, conscientization, and fragmentation of power that result when men, women, and youth gain access to and re-claim their own media. As they use media to re-constitute their own cultural codes to name the world in their own terms, citizens' media participants disrupt power relationships, exercise their own agency, and re-constitute their own lives, futures, and cultures. Citizens' media is a concept inspired by Chantal Mouffe's theory of radical democracy and citizenship; here, Mouffe defines citizenship as the ability to gather forces to shape one's symbolic and material world, and not on the basis of the liberal tradition (Rodriguez, 2004:2).

Chantal Mouffe argues that besides addressing the crucial question of pluralism, citizenship must affirm not only political but also social rights. She further adds: "A radical democratic

citizen must be an active citizen, somebody who *acts* as a citizen, who conceives of herself as a participant in a collective undertaking" (1992:4). Mouffe questions the concept of the political subject as a unified and homogeneous identity and conceives social subjects as having heterogeneous and multiple 'identities':

> […] the challenge that we are facing today is precisely that of developing a view of citizenship which is adequate for multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies. We have to accept that national homogeneity can no longer be the basis of citizenship, and that pluralism must allow for a range of different ethnic and cultural identities (Ibid 8).

While Mouffe's arguments may be relevant within a western multicultural society, they can also be extended to tenuous democracies with multi-ethnic populations such as Fiji where politics of identity dominate the political process. In this environment, citizenship becomes a contested term when state laws favour one group over another as in the case of Indians in Fiji (and Chinese in Malaysia) as discussed by Eriksen:

> In both countries, moreover, this has resulted in overtly discriminatory laws favouring 'natives' over 'immigrants' – the inverted commas are deliberate, as it is difficult to define someone as an immigrant to the country in which he or she was born (2002:151,152).

As such those denied legitimacy within the political process are able to express their identity as active citizens in their everyday lived experiences. The process of production plays an important role in giving voice to these identities and creating an avenue for dialogue.

This expression of citizenship is used by Forde, Meadows and Foxwell (2002) in their analysis of the Australian community radio sector. They argue that a more accurate description of the sector would be citizens' media, which acknowledges the pivotal role of citizenship and democracy. "In these formulations, democracy and citizenship are (in part) seen as concepts that people articulate and practice in the course of their daily lives"(Ibid:19).

Communication as a Process

Dervin and Clark (1993) have suggested a framework which shifts focus from 'studying communication' to 'studying communicating'. They argue that the tendency to study democratic communication either within the macro level approach (who - ownership, power, access) or cultural stream (what - culturally transmitted norms, rules and understanding) have ignored the communicating individual or the 'hows' of communications (how do individuals connect to and make sense of self, other, society, culture, institutions; how do societies, cultures, institutions connect with individuals and with each other). In this way the practice of communicating can become more than an 'art'form and is "informed by scholarship and the understandings of practitioners" (Ibid:113). They add:

> In a world where sense is not given, every relationship involves daily acts of constructing via communicating. The individual needs to relate to self, to other individuals, to collectivities; collectivities also need to relate to self, other individuals as well as other collectivities" (Dervin and Clark, 1993:114).

This concept of communicating has been further expanded by Dervin and Huesca (1997) who have proposed a model for participatory communication which is focused at the "in-between" of communication; what they term as the 'verbing' perspective. They argue for a "methodological refocusing of attention from states and entities to processes and dynamics…from participatory communication to participating and communicating" (Ibid:64).

Multiplicity Approach

Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2002:39) point out that theorising alternative media has proved to be "highly elusive" within any one theoretical framework and propose using different approaches towards the definition of community media to adequately capture the diversity that characterises community media. Towards this end they have developed four approaches which they suggest ought to be used simultaneously in analysing community media. These are:

> **Approach I.** Serving the community – media centered and autonomous. Locally driven used by a community to serve its own needs.
> **Approach II.** An alternative to mainstream – media centered and relationist. Media here is used in opposition to mainstream using horizontal structures and offering discourses which vary from the mainstream.
> **Approach III.** Part of civil society – society centered and straddles autonomous and relationist. Democratization through media
> **Approach IV.** Rhizome – Society centered and relationist. Deepening democracy by linking diverse democratic struggles

More recent community media debate has been linked to the liberalisation and globalisation agenda of media conglomerates, somewhat related to the earlier concerns of media centralism. It is argued that the very essence of media in democratic states – its role as the Fourth Estate – has dissipated due to the advent of globalisation and the expansion of media companies which have global economic interest. This fourth power, once perceived as the friend of the citizenry, has become exploitative. There is need now for a 'fifth power' and "this fifth power, many argue, has to be the community-based media, which is not driven by profits nor is it subservient to the government," argues Seneviratne (2005:2).

A BBC story about a community radio initiative in Gujarat India illustrates this notion of the fifth power. A human rights activist, Stalin K, began a revolutionary program to expose corruption after the Gujarat earthquakes in January 2001. He trained rural semi-literate people as reporters who covered stories and conducted interviews with a range of public officials. *BBC News Online* reported:

> The programme became a sort of public watchdog - and issued a warning to those tempted to abuse their position that somebody was watching. A more aggressive style of reporting involved so-called "radio raids", where a whole team of reporters would focus entirely on one particular issue[…] "It's not only changed the public's view of reporting but it's changed the people's expectation of accountability within the authorities," says radio reporter, Binu Alexander (29 September, 2005).

As media technologies change and as people's own knowledge grows about how to use media to achieve specific outcomes, there is no doubt that the original conceptions of media as a tool for empowerment and democratisation will become further crystallised. It may be that there is

not only one but many uses and, as Carpentier et al. point out, many ways to theorise this powerful practice. Or to quote Meikle in his discussion of tactical media:

> 'Tactical media', like 'alternative media', is best seen as a set of options rather than as a monolithic approach. It is a way of thinking as well as a way of doing; a range of tendencies and potentials (2002:121).

II Participatory Video (PV)

Participatory Video (PV) projects put video technology in the hands of the most marginalised in society for self-representation and social reform. Communities around the world have realised the power of video and incorporated it into their everyday struggles for cultural preservation, representation, dialogue and activism since the invention of portapaks. It was first used as an empowerment tool for community development in the Fogo Island project in Newfoundland and its many incarnations around the world as the *Fogo Process* in places like India, Tanzania, Vietnam, Latin America and the Philippines to name a few. From the Kayapo Indians in the Amazonian rainforest (Turner, 2002) to the Australian Aborigines in the Northern Territory (Buchtmann, 2000; Michaels, 1986a; Michaels, 1987), from Video SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) (Stuart, 1989) and the Deccan Development Society (Satheesh, n.d.) in India to the Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) use of video for agricultural development (Gumucio Dagron, 2001), "video power" is now well recognised.

Video's popularity subsided after the initial enthusiasm as cost of production and especially post-production became untenable when working with remote and under-privileged communities. Study of community media also became unfashionable as community media projects floundered due to lack of funding and the seeming lack of 'professionalism' in production and content. However the 1980s and 1990s saw a revival in the use of video as a tool for activism as newer, smaller and cheaper handycams became available. The Rodney King beating, which was captured on video by an amateur, George Holliday, became a defining moment – the catalyst – and gave birth to a whole new generation of video activists. As people around the world watched rather shaky footage of police brutality meted out to a black motorist, they began to understand the true power of the small handycam, which had

become an essential addition to every family celebration. Inspired by the Rodney King incident, musician and media producer Peter Gabriel set-up *Witness,* a New York based NGO, which provides video technology to human rights activists around the world for social justice and political activism work (Witness.org, n.d.).

Video has become a powerful weapon in the hands of the citizenry to fight corrupt local structures, monolithic bureaucracies and industrial giants on a global scale, or an empowering tool to give voice to non-literate indigenous communities by bridging "the oral with the technical" thus allowing their voices to be heard in global forums (Guidi, 2003:253). Citizens' video collectives have sprung up to support the work of video activists around the world with online presence through the incredible success of video distribution websites such as *YouTube*. Videos are available to international audiences through vodcasting and video streaming on websites spanning the many human rights and advocacy efforts of organisations such as WITNESS. org, Oneworld.org, UN.org, Ourmedia.org and countless others. As Wintonick and Cizek observe:

> Some of the images gathered by camcorder campaigners may only be for local community consumption; some amateur video documentation may result in changing national public policy and law; some of it ends up in human rights alerts on the net, educating a world about various issue-driven campaigns. Some camcorder material ends up as visible testimony at world courts and war-crimes tribunals. And some of it ends up filtered by independent journalists and mainstream broadcasters through to the world's most important news-nets (*Seeing is believing*, 2002).

Anthropologists have also informed scholarly understanding of cultural representation and media production by indigenous communities (Deger, 2003; Michaels, 1986b; Ogan, 1989; Turner, 2002). Anthropological research has made significant contribution to the understanding of visual media through ethnographic filmmaking and the subsequent emergence of the sub-field of visual anthropology. As this study is framed around the participatory and empowerment paradigm, the chapter will not engage in an extended discussion of video within the field of anthropology.

Defining PV

PV has been given a variety of labels such as community video, alternative video, grassroots video, process video or direct video. White recognises the deeper implications of video as a tool for social change when she states that "Participatory video as a process is a tool for individual, group and community development"(2003:64).

Harding gives another description of a video activist as "a person who uses video as a tactical tool to bring about social justice and environmental protection" (1997:1). Video has become a favourite medium in the field for many reasons. The digitisation of the technology has led to smaller and lighter models of video cameras with inbuilt microphones and tape compartments. A handycam coupled with a good quality external microphone has given the single video producer in the field an ability to gather high quality images and sound. It must be noted however that the U-matic portapacks which began the video revolution would be considered quite cumbersome in comparison to today's portable equipment. This tendency of the market towards miniaturisation of technology has assisted video's revival - or its second coming - as a tool for activism. Video also accords the producers and participants an ability to review their work instantly. This facility for feedback has made it ideal for empowerment and therapy work. But video has also been enlisted by negative forces in society such as dictators, terrorists and neo-Nazi groups to build up support for their own cause (Cizek and Wintonick, 2002).

My definition of participatory video draws on discussions of various scholars such as Shirley White, Clemencia Rodriguez, Bernard Huber and Lars Johansson. When a video professional goes into a community and makes a video about issues facing that community it is not deemed a PV. If a video maker goes into a community and actively engages them in the process of story development about the issues facing their community and the resultant

program production, it is deemed to be PV. The video professional's role here is one of a facilitator rather than a producer. One PV producer has aptly described herself as a 'media midwife' who assists communities in bringing to life their own messages (M. Mollison, pers. comm., 2006). As a tool for constructive and progressive social action, PV has the following characteristics: Process oriented, participative, uses local setting and local knowledge, utilises small media, empowers individuals and communities.

Lars Johansson et al. provide a practical definition, which integrates many of the principles above:

> We define PV as a scriptless video production process, directed by a group of grassroots people, moving forward in iterative cycles of shooting-reviewing. This process aims at creating video narratives that communicate what those who participate in the process really want to communicate, in a way they think is appropriate. This definition emphasises PV as a means for people to reach out and make themselves heard (Johansson, 1999b:webpage).

Bernhard Huber, in his 1998 Masters thesis, explored the functions and implications of participatory video projects in developing countries and found that it had been used for numerous purposes around the world with little cross germination of ideas and models. Huber (1998:19) delineates three types of participatory video approaches which I have summarised in the discussion below.

Therapy. Video is used to develop participants' confidence and self esteem. By recording their own stories and seeing them played back, participants can see through video, used as a mirror, how they are perceived by others. Thus options for social change are not directly addressed in therapy-type video projects, although the reflexive experience can of course be empowering and motivate for political action.

Empowerment. Empowerment is located somewhere in the middle between 'therapy' and 'activism'. It integrates the two approaches by using the full potential of both, the people and

the development communicator. The boundaries between subject, producer, and viewer collapse with this approach. Everybody is involved in the three key activities: filming, performing (being filmed), and watching the film. In addition, the development communicator plays an active role as a facilitator, but is also involved in the communication and learning process. People have a double responsibility: their active engagement is required in the production of the video and also in the distribution of it. If a participatory video project of this kind succeeds, it can be expected that people have been truly empowered.

Activism. Video is used as a tactical tool to bring about social justice and environmental protection. Early examples include the use of video by the Kayapo Indians in Brazil in the 1980s to record their protest against the development of Amazonian rainforest thus "controlling news about their situation" (Ogan, 1989:4), as well as the Rodney King video discussed earlier.

Huber indicates that "there is a poor specification of what PV can achieve, what dangers and pitfalls it involves, and for what purposes it has proved appropriate" (1998:9). This view concurs with White's assertion that an informed link needs to be developed between theory and the practice of PV. The shortcoming in theory is also exacerbated by the fact that most PV projects are short term and facilitated by people who are focused on a community outcome rather than research. My study of PV is situated within the empowerment paradigm and attempts to draw links between theory and practice during the production process, thus addressing this gap.

The Fogo Process

The history of participatory video began 30 years ago, involving Fogo Islanders in Newfoundland under the National Film Board of Canada's *Challenge for Change* program.

Stephen Crocker (Crocker, 2003) has documented its development. In the late 1960s, community development worker Donald Snowden and filmmaker, Colin Low chose the isolated communities of Fogo in which to base the project. Low had intended to produce documentaries exploring the reality of poverty in rural Newfoundland and in the process teaching the islanders the art of filmmaking. After several months of filming Low decided to show the villagers the material he had shot. The participants gave feedback on the films allowing for community involvement and empowerment. Low produced 28 short films, which he described as 'vertical' films. Each was 10 minutes in length and consisted of a single interview or occasion, and each was representative of the wider community view. This was radically different from the 'horizontal' structure of traditional documentaries, which are highly constructed through editing of scenes and interviews to represent an issue. Thus the larger story dominates with individual interviews being made to fit into the structure and theme of the documentary, which the filmmaker has scripted. The Fogo process, as it became known, created several precedents which gave birth to the participatory approach. Some of the key points are summarised below as discussed by Crocker:

- The field worker, who knew the community and its problems, was used as a mediating link between the filmmakers and the community. It was the field worker who helped to focus and guide communication on the part of the community and helped to lead discussions.
- The immediacy of video, as opposed to film which requires processing time, created a feedback loop allowing communities to see what was shot, how it could be changed and how the material would be edited, thus having final say on its own image. Each context was unique and each individual was important, thus giving each process its own character.
- The process of production, which encouraged community involvement and empowerment, became more important than the finished product itself. The

empowering act of seeing oneself on the screen led to self-reflexivity, thus promoting feelings of self confidence, self worth and better self image amongst participants.

- By sending the video to bureaucrats living in metropolitan centres, the video established channels of communication between marginalised communities and the decision makers. Video was also used as dialogue between sparsely populated isolated communities, who began to see themselves as a collective.
- Information took precedence over the aesthetic and creative elements of filmmaking. No special emphasis was placed on higher production values and the use of sophisticated equipment, which may be intimidating to communities.

The Fogo process has been successfully duplicated in many parts of the world. Before his sudden death in 1984, Donald Snowdon wrote a précis of the *Fogo Process* to accompany the film *Eyes see; ears hear*. His observation has become the bedrock of PV theory upon which projects continue to be analysed. Researchers have framed their discussion within concepts of participation, dialogue, representation, media demystification, empowerment and transformation to extend our understanding of PV.

There have been innumerable uses of participatory video in projects of empowerment around the world. The best practice case studies have been documented by various authors (see Braden and Huong, 1998; Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Johansson, 1999a; Riano, 1994; Rodriguez, 2001; Satheesh, n.d.; WACC, 1989; White, 2003). There are also hundreds of PV projects which have gone undocumented.

The Pacific region is one area where PV has not been used to any great extent by NGOs or media activists. FemLINK Pacific, a women's media NGO based in Fiji, has been an exception here. Since its inception in September 2000 it has used various forms of media –

print, video and radio - to initiate grassroots participation of women. Although it does not produce PV projects in the true sense of the term where participants make their own videos, FemLINK producers actively incorporate the participants' ideas and reflect their views in the production process:

> Our strategy was to use the community videos as a way to bring women together. …the idea was to distribute the videos to women since most women can access a video deck. It was also an opportunity to bring them together to dialogue on the issues that would be raised by women like themselves (S.B. Rolls, pers. comm., 2005).

(*More discussion of community media in Fiji takes place in Chapter 2*).

This section has provided an overview of the participatory communication paradigm and has discussed the related concepts of empowerment and transformation, as well as the practice of participatory video through the examination of relevant literature. A comprehensive discussion of participatory video, its beginning in Canada and its form and practice around the world has allowed an understanding of the field.

III. A Framework for Analysis

My readings thus far provided a theoretical understanding of the participatory communication field but without a clear theoretical framework within which to locate my findings. The literature in participatory communication highlighted the importance of community relations and the local context, as well as respect for local knowledge and cultures in participatory projects. This inspired me to undertake further readings about Pacific cultures, and research the emerging field of Pacific epistemology. Here I found concepts which straddled social capital, local knowledge and participatory approaches thus providing a viable framework in which to discuss the findings. This section also discusses key terms and concepts which have assisted in identifying a theoretical framework. These include social capital mechanisms such as networks, reciprocity, trust, shared norms, social agency, bonding and bridging relations as well as concepts of community and social relationships in the indigenous framework.

The Indigenous Framework

In Fiji the notion of community has been defined by ethno-specific grouping. The Fijian sense of community comes from their belonging to the traditional kinship structure while the Indo Fijians' sense of community is linked to their membership of socio-religious organisations as well as strong neighbourhood bonds especially in rural areas.

In the first instance, I draw my definition of community from the social sciences as framed in community media and social capital discourses. This definition integrates the idea of community within a geographical location and connected to social networks. Ife and Tesoriero highlight the elusive nature of the concept, "community is essentially a subjective experience" and further elucidate:

> It is more appropriate to allow people to develop their own constructions of what community means for them, in their own context, and to help them to work towards the realisation of a form of community that meets the criteria (2006:100).

Scholarly writing on Pacific epistemology and development shed light on the important role of community within local cultures. Works of Gegeo (1998), Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2002), and Huffer and Qalo (2004) emerged as rich literature to harvest for studying community action and community building within the Pacific context.

In his discussion of rural development in the Solomon Islands, Gegeo has argued that change and transformation in development "may involve borrowing from outside knowledge or ideas, but in a very essential way it emerges from their [the villagers] own perspectives, cultures, and languages" (1998:291). This is also true of participatory approaches to development whereby practitioners and scholars urge making links to local knowledge, norms and practices when conducting participatory projects in developing communities.

Meanwhile, Huffer and Qalo (2004) turn to specific concepts within Samoan and Fijian culture and value systems in an attempt to develop Pacific theoretical thought. In the Fijian context they discuss the concepts of *vanua* or land and *vakaviti* or the Fijian Way. They cite theologian Ilaitia Tuwere (2002) who argues for a new reading of Fijian values and concepts within the context of contemporary Fiji. One of these is the concept of *vanua* and its various components which encourage dialogic opportunities. Tuwere's proposition is paraphrased in Huffer and Qalo as follows:

> ...The capacity to allow oneself to hear the other is known as veirogoci and making allowances for other is veivosoti" (173-174). All of these components point up different aspects of the key vanua concept: one is that it "provides the governing principle in the ordering of life in the community" (173); another is that it evokes a large dose of humanitarianism, selflessness, and humility; and third is that it is "intrinsic to community building" (175). A large part of learning is dependent on the ability to hear what the other has to say, and a large part of understanding the other is dependent on listening to them (2004:97).

Huffer and Qalo continue:

> Tuwere is concerned with building bridges between communities in Fiji. As he sees it, "The task is to identify new modes of discernment that will permit another reading of the speaking-hearing experience of the vanua in a multi-cultural context. The experience that has proved constructive and useful must re-define itself in a new situation" (175). It is hard to disagree with Tuwere on this point. But if these values are to be upheld, they must be understood and promoted until they permeate all of society (Ibid).

Qalo himself has argued for the integration of the concept of *vakaviti* in development. Citing his earlier research (Qalo, 1998) the authors proffer – "*Vakaviti* should be viewed as social capital" and proceed to discuss the various concepts within it "which enhance the common good more than the self-interest" (2004:108). These are:

Veilomani (genuine concern for one another)

Veikauwaitaki (caring and expressing concern for the well-being of others)

Veivakaliuci (placing others ahead of oneself, supporting or looking up to them)

Veidokai (honoring, respecting, and upholding someone).

These efforts by Pacific scholars present exciting opportunities for the conceptualising of participatory media within the context of local culture and community. Social capital offers a framework within which traditional communities as well as participative action can be discussed and offers a link to local knowledge and cultural practices through ideas of social networks, reciprocity and community building. Thus, social capital, participation and empowerment are inter-linked in projects of community building and social cohesion.

The Social Capital Framework

Since the 1980s modern theories of civil society and community building especially in the West have been theorised in ideas of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 2000; WorldBank, 2002) and have been aligned to a range of fields such as economics, sociology, education, political science and towards sustainable human and economic development. For the purposes of this study, I draw my definitions of social capital

from the social sciences as framed in the discourses of Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam and the World Bank. In this context, I'll first define social capital and then discuss its key elements or the mechanisms that generate social capital; networks, reciprocity, trust, shared norms and social agency (Leonard and Onyx, 2004).

Although ideas of social capital first emerged in the 1800s, the term's contemporary usage in the social sciences is attributed to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who gave it "structural definition" by extending the notion of capital from a purely economic realm of "mercantile exchanges" to cultural and symbolic forms (Herreros, 2004:6). According to Bourdieu, an understanding of the way various forms of capital are distributed in society leads towards a greater understanding of the "structure and functioning of the social world". Bourdieu defined social capital as the product of social obligations (connections) through membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. Continued maintenance of social networks is crucial for this form of capital to accrue and for one to access it quickly. Cultural capital, another form of capital discussed by Bourdieu, can be discussed in relation to the technologies of production, the skills and knowledge derived from the process of producing content i.e. the tangible hands-on use of cameras as well as the ability of the women to use these skills to produce cultural goods such as community videos (information) which can be exchanged for monetary gain. However only social capital will be discussed within the context of my research findings.

James Coleman gave the term further structural definition by examining the various forms of "useful capital resources" that are constituted in social relations and social structures (Coleman, 2000). He has identified three forms of social capital. The first one is the obligations and expectations that people accumulate through reciprocal exchanges based on

"trust that people have in each other". If I do you a favour, then I trust you to do me a favour sometime in the future. The second is the information-flow capability of social relations whereby people seek out from their network new information which can then become a basis for action. Community media can provide one form of network for this kind of information flow. Access to information is not the central reason for joining a social network but more a by-product of one's membership (Herreros 2004:14). The third form of social capital is the effective use of norms to both facilitate and constrain certain actions, e.g. rewarding of selfless actions and disapproval for selfish actions. Trust is one of the key mechanisms that generates social capital. When one chooses to participate in a social network, it is generally based on a latent belief or a "trustful expectation" (Ibid:9) that other members will also enter into a reciprocal arrangement with you.

Robert Putnam gave the term common currency when he used it to explain the decline in civic engagement in American society and the resultant loss of social capital. He identified the "technology of mass media", specifically television viewing of entertainment programmes, as the main reason for this loss. He defined social capital as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (2000:19). Putnam also discusses two important dimensions of social capital – bonding and bridging networks. While bonding networks "tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups" such as ethnic or gender specific groups, bridging networks "are outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages" and thus lean towards inclusiveness and "can generate broader identities and reciprocity" (Ibid:22, 23). However, strongly bonded groups are not problematic if they have people who have connections with other groups and can invite diversity. In this way it is not a single link but various links creating a "mesh" effect (Leonard and Onyx, 2004:185).

The World Bank definition of social capital is framed within a development agenda:

> Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together (World Bank, 2002).

The World Bank identifies bonding as horizontal connections and further elucidates:

> This view recognizes that horizontal ties are needed to give communities a sense of identity and common purpose, but also stresses that without "bridging" ties that transcend various social divides (e.g. religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status), horizontal ties can become a basis for the pursuit of narrow interest, and can actively preclude access to information and material resources that would otherwise be of great assistance to the community (e.g. tips about job vacancies, access to credit) (Ibid).

According to Matthews, social capital is not a concept but a praxis (2005). In participatory production, social capital results from collaboration in the process of production within the community of producers as well as with the larger community. Communities' active involvement or agency is essential in the production process as opposed to the product-driven video in which communities may feature but not participate. The involvement of grassroots video producers in production, in the first instance, is assisted by their social networks in the 'horizontal dimension' (bonding), which in turn, helps to strengthen their networks of influence within the 'vertical dimension' (bridging). The PV production process encourages collaboration which engenders trust and agency.

As such the framework for this study is premised on the idea that participatory media practice not only functions well in communities with strong social networks (i.e. high social capital) but also enriches social capital between heterogeneous groups. In other words, it not only accesses local networks or bonding capital, but also extends it by enhancing the *bridging* dimension of social capital where communities can link with other communities across ethnic, gender, social, or geographic divides, thus contributing to community building and dialogue.

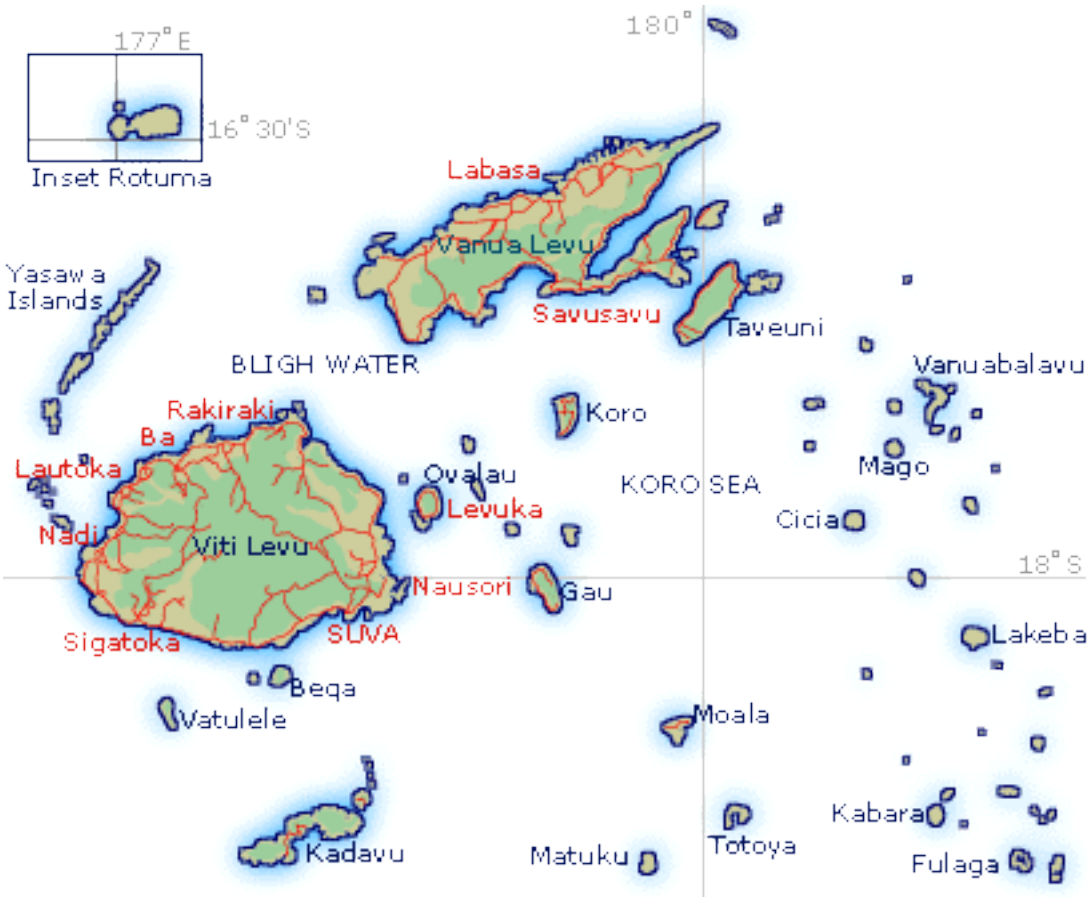
The bridging dimension of social capital allows for the accommodation of difference while building on the element of trust to initiate dialogue between ethnic groups.

While Bourdieu's discussion of social capital highlights how it can create inequality through elite networking, my extension of the concept to PV shows that when combined with appropriate cultural capital (a video product) it may be effective in gaining access to powerful positions, as discussed within World Bank's conception of the social capital which enables information flow. This may not necessarily create equality for the stakeholders, but establishes bridging form of social capital in gaining access to power elites. In this conception of social capital either an individual or a whole community may benefit. As mentioned above, social capital critique has recognised its liabilities such as creating exclusive networks and drawing heavily on one's resources (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted significant thoughts, movements and events, which have shaped the development of participatory communication and emerging frameworks in communication for social change. The New World Information and Communication Order promoted the concept of the 'right to communicate', thus allowing involvement of grassroots communities in message production. Over the last twenty years there have been innumerable community-based media projects in the area of radio, video and community television. Emerging conceptualisation of the field has moved away from binary frameworks of small media versus big media and locates the discussion of participatory media in ideas of empowerment and transformation, grounding it in the lived experiences of its users. Finally, the chapter presents a framework for analysis which links concepts in indigenous knowledge with social capital and participatory approaches to provide a basis for the discussion of the research data.

MAP OF FIJI



Source: Fiji Government Online Portal – Map of Fiji: http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/fiji_map.shtml

CHAPTER 2

Fiji – A Society in Need of Dialogue

This chapter presents the socio-cultural, political and economic overview of Fiji as a developing country in Oceania and the special challenges it faces as a multiracial society. The discussion brings insights into a politically unstable nation in which race has been manipulated by the ruling classes from the colonial period to the present time in order to maintain political power. However in the telling of this story I also recognise the everyday actions of the common people in observing civility and goodwill towards each other, and the work of women's networks in seeking social and political reform as well as enriching social capital at the grassroots. An overview of the local mediascape leads into the discussion of media's role in nation building during the 1970s, and a shift in the past two decades towards commercially driven content, dictated by the profit imperative of media organisations operating in the broader international climate of media globalisation. Examples of programming content are discussed, including the way in which these affect the national imagery of race, gender and place and how they reflect and reinforce urban formulated national discourse instead of promoting social change. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the emerging community media sector and ways in which it can reflect the aspirations of rural communities and encourage dialogue and cross cultural understanding within this post-conflict society. Sections of this chapter include reference to research undertaken by me in 1994 towards the writing of my Masters thesis titled "Television in Fiji: In whose interest?" (Sundar Harris, 1994).

I. Snapshot of a Nation

Fiji's 300 islands are scattered over an area of 200,000 sq miles of ocean (*see Map of Fiji*). Of these the two main islands, Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, account for 87 percent of Fiji's land mass and 90 percent of the population (Stanley, 1989). The Polynesian island of Rotuma to the north has been administered by Fiji since 1881. Viti Levu is the centre of economic and political activity and the main link for international air routes and shipping lanes. Fiji's capital Suva with the largest urban population lies on the eastern side of Viti Levu while towns like Nadi and Lautoka on the western side are important sugarcane farming areas and major points of arrival for tourists. The best communication infrastructure including roads, telecommunication services, and airports are on the island of Viti Levu to service the tourists who holiday at foreign-owned resort complexes and the transnational companies based in Suva, Lautoka and Nadi. Fiji's other islands, seen more as groups rather than separate entities, include the Lau group of islands to the east, the Lomaiviti group in the central area and the Yasawa and Mamanuca groups to the west. The scattered geography and mainly mountainous terrain have led to a sustained communication problem. Airplanes and cargo ships which carry food, medical and other supplies to remote islands are still at the mercy of tropical weather conditions. Cyclones or even a low pressure system in the island group can mean the cancellation of vital air and sea links until the hazard has passed. The archipelagic nature of Fiji and dispersed population has functioned as a barrier to national unity arising from a lack of integrated communication infrastructure and access to media.

Fiji's population is relatively young and distinctly divided by race and rural-urban living. This multi-racial mix, although adding a rich diversity to the cultural fabric of the nation, has also been responsible for considerable political tensions and national instability. A study of population figures sheds an interesting light on Fiji's changing demographics *(see Table 1).*

Table 1. Fiji – A Demographic Profile

Population:	827,900 (2004 est.)
Ethnic Groups:	57% Fijians 38% Indians 5% Europeans, Rotumans and others.
Women:	49% of total population
Median Age:	23.7 years
Literacy:	Males 94%, Females 91% (15yrs and over who can read and write)
Urbanisation:	51%
GNI per capita (2006):	$FJ4888 ($US3300)
Languages:	English (official), Fijian and Hindi

Source: Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics (2007) and UNICEF

The demographics of Fiji have changed substantially with the emigration of about 100,000 Fiji residents, mainly Indo-Fijians, to Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada since 1987. The country's largely youth population is entering adulthood, creating greater demands for employment and lifestyle changes. There has been a steady decline in rural population as people leave for urban and peri-urban areas, decreasing from 60 percent in 1986 to approximately 48 percent in 2004 (Bainivalu, 2001). This is due to two factors: the flow of young people to urban centres seeking better education, employment and more attractive life choices; and the displacement of hundreds of farming families following the expiry of native land leases. Many of these families and young couples live in corrugated shanties in the peri-urban squatter settlements bordering Suva or designated resettlement areas. About 100,000 people are living in over 182 squatter settlements around the country (Yabaki, 2007), placing extreme pressure on infrastructure such as water, electricity and sanitation (Chand, 2005).

Australia is Fiji's major trading partner, providing the biggest proportion of imports, followed by New Zealand and the United States. Australia also offers Fiji a substantial assistance package which amounted to $30.5 million during 2005-2006 (AusAID-FijiAusAID, 2005). Fiji enjoys a well-developed infrastructure compared to its regional neighbours. Sixty two percent of homes in Fiji are connected to electricity. Remote island communities use

generators for power. Just over one third of Fiji's households are connected with fixed telephone lines and mobile phone penetration rate is 11. 4 percent, mainly pre-paid customers, based predominantly in urban areas (Minges and Gray, 2004).

Agriculture accounts for 43 percent of the nation's foreign exchange earnings and provides 50 percent of total employment (Government of Fiji, 2004). Sugar, once the lifeblood of the Fijian economy, is in decline. Insecurity of tenure for tenant farmers and falling sugar prices in the international market, coupled with the removal of lucrative European Union subsidy to small tropical sugar producing nations, has brought painful reform to this once booming industry. Other natural commodities grown for export such as copra, cocoa, ginger, kava and dalo (taro) are beginning to replace sugar. Fisheries and forestry also make a significant contribution to the nation's GDP. Tourism provides employment for 15 percent of the total labour force. Concerted efforts by successive governments to encourage indigenous participation in business have failed to show any significant improvement. These include the development assistance schemes, establishment of the Fijian Education Fund and interest free loans to assist in the buying back of ancestral land.

Eighty three percent of all land in Fiji is classified native land and owned by indigenous Fijians, its protection guaranteed through the Native Land Act and the Fijian Affairs Act. About nine percent is State-owned land, eight percent is freehold of which about 80 percent is owned by Europeans. The Indo-Fijians altogether own 1.7 percent of the total land area in Fiji (Lal, 1986). Agricultural land in Fiji is found around the coastal plains, river deltas and valleys and comprises only 16 percent of the total land mass of 18,000 sq kilometers (Government of Fiji, 2004). Ownership of land and which groups are allowed economic rights over the land have become central to the power play in Fiji's identity politics. Whole communities of tenant Indo-Fijian farmers who have lived and farmed the same land over

several generations are now being displaced on short notice as indigenous owners assume control of their customary land hoping to make productive use of it themselves.

Navua and the surrounding district - the site of my fieldwork - is one of the areas which has seen the largest migration of Indo Fijian displaced farmers whose leases had expired in the cane farming districts of the Western and Northern Divisions. Over the past six years some 500 of these farming families have been resettled in Raiwaqa and Vakabalea on five acre lots of crown or freehold land on which they have built their homes and do small-scale farming. In many cases whole neighbourhoods have been transplanted. These farmers have turned adversity into an economic advantage by growing a variety of vegetables and root crops such as dalo (taro), the mainstay of Fijian diet, and selling these for local consumption. Their efforts have brought new opportunities for export and have made a major contribution to the economy in Navua.

Politics in the Coup-coup Land

Fiji's socio-political and economic foundation has been deeply scarred by four coups in 19 years. The first two coup détats occurred in 1987 led by an army officer, Sitiveni Rabuka, and the third coup, more accurately described as a putsch (Robie, 2001), occurred in 2000 led by a civilian, George Speight. The coup leaders and their supporters removed a legitimately elected government to stage demands for Fijian political supremacy, in what is now recognised as a misrepresentation of indigenous rights and framed within a misplaced discourse of identity politics, to benefit a few in the upper echelons of Fijian society (Field et al., 2005; Hassall, 2005; Teaiwa, 2001; Wilson, 2000). Teresia Teaiwa contests the nationalist stand when she postulates:

> The impoverishment and disaffection of indigenous Fijians are not a result of 12 months of leadership by an Indo-Fijian. It is the result of 30 fraught years of modern indigenous Fijian leadership that have sacrificed the economic and cultural well-being of a people for the advancement of a few (2001:34).

Or as Hassall proposes:

> Many of these conflicts have been analysed in terms of ethnic identity, although they can often be interpreted as a form of competition amongst political élites fuelled by uncertain relations between diverse communities, together with growing resource scarcity in the context of a seemingly predatory globalisation (2005:192).

The cumulative effect of these coups has significantly ruptured the fragile structures of social cohesion, deepening divisions which have existed since the colonial period.

The fourth coup took place on December 5, 2006 when the Military Commander, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, assumed executive control of the government after a prolonged conflict with the Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, over three controversial bills which had divided the nation, and claims of mismanagement.

Politics in Fiji always has been dominated by ethnic divisions. The British colonial administration ensured political representation and voting along communal lines (Robertson and Tamanisau, 1988) to appease indigenous Fijian demands for political control (Norton, 2002). This was given an official stamp of approval in the 1970 Constitution of independent Fiji whereby, 22 seats were held by Fijians, 22 by Indians and 8 by General Electors (other races). The two dominant political parties emerged - the Alliance Party representing indigenous Fijian and elite business interests, and the National Federation Party (NFP) representing the Indians with strong support from the cane farming community. Following independence, the Alliance Party, under the leadership of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and other chiefly elites from the Eastern Provinces, ruled Fiji for 17 years, primarily with the support of the General Electors. The Alliance Party's power base was eroded in the early 1980s with the formation of the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) which was racially integrated. With Indo-Fijian and urban-voter support, the FLP won the 1987 general election, led by Dr Timoci Bavadra, a commoner Fijian from the Western Division.

On 14 May 1987 a third ranking army officer, Sitiveni Rabuka staged Fiji's first coup to wrest power from the FLP. The second coup followed in October of the same year when Rabuka

declared Fiji a Republic and called for a new constitution ensuring Fijian supremacy. Two general elections followed in which Rabuka was returned to power as Prime Minister with popular support from rural indigenous Fijians. These elections opened up divisions within ethnic Fijians as more political parties were formed to represent Fijian interests. A split within Fijian voters allowed the FLP back in government again, this time led by Mahendra Chaudhary, an Indo-Fijian. Within a year of Chaudhary's reign, George Speight, supported by a group of soldiers from the Fiji Military Forces, staged Fiji's third coup, holding the Prime Minister and his cabinet hostage for 56 days in the Parliamentary compound. Wilson observes in *Fiji - the Burma of the Pacific*

> What makes this repeated pattern of illegality by indigenous Fijians so absurd is that the elections were lost each time, not because of Indian manipulation or money or numbers but because the indigenous Fijians keep falling out among themselves and handing the elections on a plate to the Indians and general electors (2000:webpage).

Instead of progressing towards an integrated agenda of multiculturalism, Fiji has regressed towards racism and religious bigotry. Opportunistic elements in Fijian society have targeted the ethnic Indian population in acts of violence such as the desecration and looting of temples, businesses and homes, as well as sexual violence against women (UNIFEM, n.d.). Speight supporters burned down homes and removed livestock of farmers in some rural Indian settlements leaving families homeless and leading to the creation of Fiji's first refugee camps. High profile political and religious leaders have continued to inflame ethnic sentiments through public statements which are divisive, instead of making a concerted effort to encourage dialogue between the two communities (Newland, 2007). A sense of alienation amongst Indo-Fijians has led to mass emigration, mainly of skilled professionals, while social ailments such as substance abuse and suicide are on the rise amongst those who see no way out.

After coming into power in 2001, the government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase focused on rebuilding Fiji's economy. However his term was not without controversy. In 2005 he

flagged a controversial Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill which would provide compensation to the coup victims but also grant amnesty to the coup perpetrators. The amnesty clause in the bill brought widespread opposition from many quarters of Fiji's society including the Fiji Military Forces head, Commodore Frank Bainimarama (Ratuva, 2007). It caused deep community concern, calling into question the government's motives and its efforts to bring about true reconciliation in a community where mistrust and a pervading sense of fear persisted for several years after the 2000 coup. After months of community consultations and hostile confrontations with the Military over the bill's passage through parliament, the government announced that it would shelve the bill until after the elections. In May 2006 the reigning Soqosoqo Duvata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) party led by the incumbent Laisenia Qarase was returned to power. A process of political consolidation led Qarase to revive the multi-party concept, promulgated in the 1997 constitution, by offering significant cabinet posts to the FLP. His action was widely supported by the people and the debate received significant coverage in the media (Fraenkel and Firth, 2007; Singh and Prakash, 2008; Singh and Prakash, forthcoming). However, tensions between Prime Minister Qarase and Commodore Bainimarama continued to escalate. Following the Qarase government's refusal to accede to a list of 19 demands made by the military commander, a gradual and well orchestrated military takeover of Fiji began in early December 2006 amidst international condemnation. On December 5 Fiji once again experienced a coup – the fourth in 19 years – this time led by Commodore Bainimarama who is now the country's interim Prime Minister.

Speaking at the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly, Bainimarama (2007) outlined his agenda for the nation. It promised to restore stability, law and order, and confidence; strengthen institutions for good governance including transparency and accountability and an independent and effectively functioning judiciary; carry out major reforms in the economy to

facilitate sustainable private sector-led growth; and convene free and fair general elections within a constitutional and governance framework that will ensure that parliamentary democracy is not only restored but can be sustained in Fiji. To achieve all this, the Interim Government has launched a major national initiative, referred to as the Peoples Charter for Change and Progress (PCCP). Through the PCCP, a broad cross section of Fiji's people have been engaged through consultation and participation to develop a comprehensive agenda of actions and measures, as Fiji's own way of addressing its problems. However the regime has been accused of intimidation of the press and outspoken civil society activists, and continues to be treated as a pariah within the international community.

Socio-cultural Practices

Although the Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities are racially distinct, they share many similar social practices and value systems which are fundamental to their cultures. Social hierarchy, respect for authority and family elders, a taboo on sexual activity outside of marriage and full clothing are intrinsic to both cultures (Plange, 1993). Religion plays an important role in both groups. Despite these similarities in norms and values, integration and intermarriage between the two races have remained minimal. British colonial policies which "fostered racial divisions and racial distinction", as Naidu points out, were largely to blame for this (in Prasad, 1988:5). The two races were kept separate in their places of residence and the education system encouraged ethnically segregated schools. Over a period, each race developed a common disdain for the other based on stereotyped images. The Fijians think of Indo-Fijians as individualistic and greedy because of their apparent economic success; the Indo-Fijians think of Fijians as undisciplined and lazy people who lack motivation to achieve. Yet, the two races co-exist peacefully in a network of economic and social interdependence, exchanging ideas for food and making lifelong friendships, especially in the rural areas. This theme is

reflected in the narratives of many writers as highlighted in this review of *Bittersweet* (Lal, 2004) a collection of essays edited by historian Prof. Brij Lal:

> What Bittersweet does brilliantly is reveal the normality of mid-century multiethnic life in Fiji, with many Indo-Fijians and Fijians living, studying, mourning, playing, and praying together. This message is not blazoned in subtitles or subheadings but is subtly revealed through the ordinary language of personal recollection and reminiscence. It offers a salutary lesson to readers that for much of the twentieth century there was a duality in Fiji, difference not between Fijians and Indo-Fijians, but between the politicized modernity of Suva and the accommodation and respect of rural Fiji. The coups of 1987 and 2000 emphasized the former and took conflict to rural areas, and this change in Fiji is revealed in most essayists' memories of days gone by[…](Quanchi, 2005:477)

The coups provided fertile ground for mass violence between the two races, but this was averted more through an innate respect for peace and a sense of goodwill amongst the common people towards each other rather than through any military intervention (Sundar Harris, 2000).

The Fijians

The ethnic Fijians are devout Christians. The majority, about 70 percent, are Methodists and the rest belong to the Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, or a variety of other churches. Since the coups, there has been an increase in Christian fundamentalist and evangelical churches in Fiji.There are over 300 different dialects in Fijian but one standard Fijian language called Bauan which is understood throughout the country and spoken on the radio as well as being used for reading and writing.

The Fijian social structure is based on hierarchy, strong kinship networks and a culture of reciprocity. The most important is the *vanua* (tribe) with the Ratu or high chief as its head. *Vanua* translated in English means land, but in Fijian terms, *vanua* has multi-layered meaning which encompasses the physical, social and cultural dimensions. Ravuvu explains it this way:

> It provides a sense of identity and belonging. One feels good and comfortable when he feels that he belongs to a particular vanua or a social unit identified with a

> particular territorial area in which its roots are established. It is the place where he and his forebears were brought up, and where he prefers to die (1983:70).

For example, during the process of video production described later in this thesis, the women who appeared in front of the camera introduced themselves not only by their name but also by their place of birth, i.e. the village where they grew up before their marriage.

Below the Vanua is the *Yavusa* or clan under which people are sub-divided into various social groupings according to blood and other kinship ties and who reside in a defined area known as the koro or the village. The next down the rung are the *mataqali* or sub clan and *tokatoka* or the extended family. Fijians trace their descendency through their father's *mataqali* or lineage and, as such, male babies were treasured and indulged. Traditionally marriage was arranged, with the boy's parents choosing a bride for him. Many of these customs are breaking down as children move away from villages. In some areas of Fiji brother/sister or cousins of opposite sex are not allowed to mix and have to 'observe specific rules of avoidance' (Ibid:7). In formal gatherings men and women usually sit apart. Most social visits are accompanied by gift-giving, which is symbolic of the recognition and honour one has for the other person.

Although Fijian homes these days are filled with factory-made furniture, it is more for show than use, since most families prefer to sit on the floor on mats. Media advertising is responsible for this type of consumerism of nonessential goods. The introduction of television has presented symbolic and physical challenges to the position of the chief within a communal setting. Paul Geraghty describes this dilemma:

> […] The very fact that TV is there has a number of consequences. One is the time that people would spend discussing vanua affairs is no longer there or is considerably reduced. To that extent the position of the chief could be considered to be eroded. Secondly, just the physical configuration of the house where the television set is (situated). Traditionally when you drink yaqona the bowl is here (in the middle) and the person of higher status is opposite the bowl. Now you can't do that if you're watching television ...Everybody's eyes are no longer on the chief, everybody's eyes are on the TV…so the television is the chief. If he wants to have

> a look at the TV he has to come down and sit with everybody else (Sundar Harris, 1994:30).

How these intrusions of the twentieth century will change Fijian culture remains to be seen. Some Fijians believe that their culture should not be seen as a museum piece, but something that evolves with time as all cultures do (Ibid). Others like Geraghty feel that television is just a novelty which, given time, will lose its social significance.

The Indo-Fijians

The fourth or fifth generation Indo-Fijians in Fiji today are direct descendants of Indian indentured labourers who were brought to Fiji by the British colonial government from pre-partition India to work on sugar cane farms between 1876 and 1916. The term Indian and Indo-Fijian is used interchangeably in this thesis reflecting its usage in different contexts. In Fiji the term Indian is almost always used, while scholars have adopted the term Indo-Fijian, which is also preferred by this author. The Indo-Fijians made up more than half of Fiji's population outnumbering the indigenous Fijians for almost four decades. However, rising fertility rates amongst Fijians and mass migration by Indo-Fijians has impacted on the demographics. The majority of Indo-Fijians are Hindus, a smaller proportion are Muslim and a minority are Christians and Sikhs. The Indo-Fijian culture, although retaining strong links with India, has developed a distinct local flavour because of the time and distance separating it from its origins. In fact, this difference was more visible about 30 years ago when global communication was not as easily available to the common person as it is today. People mainly relied on books or their memories for the religious or cultural practices as passed down to them from their parents. An increase in travels to India, and a huge inflow of Indian films available on video and cable television has led to cultural renewal. Although the films have exposed them to changing fashions, differences in language and social observances, it has not changed the Indo-Fijians' own language or social practices. The Indo-Fijians speak "Fiji Baat"

which uses more simple grammatical structures than the standard Hindi spoken in India, and a number of original words. "Fiji Baat" emerged during the days of Indenture as Kanwal explains in his book *A Hundred Years of Hindi in Fiji:*

> Almost all the indentured labourers were from the rural areas of India. They were simple and uneducated. They sometimes could not even express themselves effectively in their own languages. All these people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds faced the problem of communication. Under these circumstances a common language which could become their lingua franca was essential for their coexistence as Indians in the new land of Fiji (Kanwal, 1980:9).

A new form of language emerged borrowing from various Hindi dialects such as Bhojpuri and Awadhi, Indian languages such as Tamil and Telegu, as well as from Urdu, English and Fijian. Standard Hindi is used for writing and is spoken on Hindi radio programs or on formal occasions such as speech giving.

The harsh conditions of Indenture and enforced mixing served to break down the many social prejudices. People of various castes and religious backgrounds who had never mixed socially in India were forced to share the same living conditions in the ships and labour lines and work alongside each other in the canefields in Fiji. Their common enemy was the white overseer and the "tas" or task meted out by him to the labourers. As a result the caste system is non-existent within the Indo-Fijian community. The Indo-Fijians live in extended families, practice arranged marriages, and respect and care for their elderly. Three generations of the family live in the same household with grandparents taking on the role of babysitters and cultural guardians. Many of the schools in Fiji are run by Hindu and Muslim religious organisations and include cultural instructions in their curriculum.

The Indo-Fijian's sense of identity and place in Fiji has remained in doubt since colonial times. This theme of rootlessness is reflected in the writings of Indo-Fijian writers and poets (see Subramani, Satendra Nandan, Brij Lal, Sudesh Mishra) as expressed in this piece by Satendra Nandan:

> To belong is to be aware of the loss that is inherent in belongingness. The Indian-Fijian hadn't achieved that for he, more than most, didn't know other worlds. His attempts to belong, to be part of the national body politic, led to the coups of 1987. Suddenly he became homeless in his home. You wake up to the harrowing fact that you were excluded from the imagination of the nation (Nandan, 2000:104).

Or this observation from the author of this thesis:

> I have pondered about the place called home. Home is not a place where we can be arbitrarily told to belong or not belong. Home is that favourite tree in the schoolyard, or that bend in the river, or that lonely hill beyond—places of our childhood deeply etched in the memory. Chiefs and coup leaders in Fiji may tell the world Indians don't belong in Fiji, but we know that Fiji belongs to us (Sundar Harris, 2000:4).

Women

Women make up almost half of Fiji's population and have a literacy rate of 91 percent, one of the highest in the Pacific. However this does not guarantee them equal access to employment or spare them from the many social ills such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and poverty. Almost half of all suicides reported were related to domestic violence, which affects 66% of all women in Fiji and has become the biggest killer of Indo-Fijian women (UNIFEM, n.d.). A report on the status of women in Fiji by a women's NGO collective stated that political stability based on democracy was a pre-condition for the attainment of women's rights (Fiji Women's Rights Movement [FWRM] et al., 2002).

The most discriminatory laws affecting women's employment, practised during British colonial rule, were slowly changed after Independence in 1970 (Reddy, 2000). The status of women in Fiji depends upon one's chiefly lineage and educational accomplishment. Fijian women from a chiefly background can hold the highest title in the land as in the case of the Late Adi Lady Lala Mara, who was the Tui Nayau (High Chief) and was married to the former Fiji Prime Minister and President, the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. According to Reddy (2000:150), the lack of women in leadership roles is symptomatic of "the deeply rooted patriarchal system in Fiji in which women are always relegated to the background."

Women's civic participation is assisted by their membership and engagement in social and religious clubs which form a rich web of social networks in both urban and rural areas. The majority of Fijian and Indo-Fijian women belong to some form of club in their local area *(further discussion of women's networks takes place in Chapter 5)*. The National Council of Women (NCW) is the co-ordinating body for a diverse range of women's groups, clubs and organisations. Women's activists in Fiji have argued that many of these clubs are controlled by women of chiefly or middle class background and don't support liberal feminist views (Jalal, 2002).

Fiji has an active and outspoken group of women NGOs. One of the most inspiring acts of unity during the 2000 political crisis came from women activists who organised daily peace vigils, despite threats of violence by Speight supporters. An initiative of the NCW, the peace vigil contested the racist discourse by presenting a multi-ethnic face of unity. Their press releases and peaceful protest caught the eye of international media but local media failed to recognise the significance of the views being presented by a diverse group of women:

> It did not surprise me that whilst our daily media releases were published regularly by the local dailies, it was the international media that was actually drawn to look behind the scenes of the Peace Vigil which offered them the opportunity to provide to their audiences, the women-in-community perspective on the Crisis. Many of the local media were drawn to the Vigil in order to gain access to the hostages who, as they were released, joined the women of the Vigil in a combined action of solidarity. It became very clear, then, that there was a need to establish our own community-media initiatives in order to have our stories heard (Bhagwan Rolls, 2002:1).

However it should also be noted that some of the most enthusiastic supporters of the coup were also women who filled the parliamentary compound to provide food and entertainment to the perpetrators. This dichotomy of both neo-conservatism arising from traditional beliefs, and liberal activism of modern feminists within the community of women in Fiji has become a source of conflict in the campaign for women's rights. For example, in 2006 the Assistant Minister of Women, Mrs Nanise Kasami Nagusuca, caused a controversy when she blamed

"the concepts of human rights, women's rights, children's rights, individual rights and freedom of speech as issues that impinged on the Fijian national identity" (Nabulivou, 2005) while addressing largely rural women at the annual meeting of the *Soqosoqo Vakamarama i Taukei* (Fijian Women's Club). Statements such as Mrs Nagusuca's, albeit made within the context of a rural women's gathering, send contradictory messages to the community about government policy on gender issues. Various governments over the years have committed to policies and international efforts which support women's development. Fiji is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and has integrated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in its policy formulations.

Access to media and to media technology remain a barrier for women. In an informal stocktake of its membership, the NCW found that while many of its members "initiate, conduct and manage programmes and projects (through donor assistance) most lack the basic tools for efficient project administration, communication and information dissemination i.e. a computer, a phone or fax machine, let alone Internet connection" (Bhagwan Rolls, 2002:13). The national secretary, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, wants donor agencies to provide the appropriate technological tools to organisations in order to achieve better communication and gender balance in ICT access:

> Just as women are being encouraged to pick up a video camera or audio recording equipment to document and produce her-stories, so women need to be encouraged to acquire the knowledge and skills, especially in relation to accessing and using computers and the Internet, in order to effectively participate in global advocacy, lobbying and communication networks. This is one way to ensure the women's viewpoint, are shared across and throughout all the regions of the globe (Ibid).

Women activists continue to campaign for greater coverage of issues concerning women in the local media. In 2004 a media clause was adopted in the Pacific Platform for Action on women which looks at ways of advancing the welfare of Pacific Island women. It was felt that journalists could play an important role in educating members of the public on gender issues

(McGowan, 2004). Laisa Taga, *Islands Business* Editor-in-Chief, believes that traditional cultures in Fiji play a part in the lack of women, and women's issues, in the media. "Traditionally woman's place has been in the home, cooking the food and caring for the children" and not in the public arena, she notes (Pacwin Listserve, 2006). The flow of global television content with foreign concepts of the female body has affected the way island women perceive their own bodies. A 1998 survey revealed a disconcerting trend amongst teenage Fijian women. As they began taking their beauty cues from western role models on television, many felt that their bodies were too big (Dominick, 2002:488). Eating disorders, such as bulimia, virtually unknown in the islands before television, also showed a marked increase, especially amongst indigenous women.

II. Media and its Role in Nation Building

In Fiji the concept of nationhood has never sufficiently been articulated in a way which is inclusive of all races. Rather it has been disparate and disconnected. As Norton observes, "there has been little attempt to create a narrative of shared history and citizenship, and images of Fijian culture predominate in the public domain" (2000:87). Even during Ratu Mara's reign, the concept of the multicultural nation was used selectively on the one hand to appease Fijian ethno-nationalists and on the other to heed international discourses on human rights (Ibid). In her discussion of tradition vs democracy in Fiji, Lawson has been able to distill the essence of this dichotomy surrounding community and communalism:

> And in the absence of an inclusive political system which brings together the entire community, little has been done to develop a common perspective on pressing issues concerning the economy, education, industrial and infrastructure policy, and general social well-being. Instead, there is a widespread perception that security lies only within the bounds of communalism, and that people's interests 'are better served by inter-communal competition rather than inter-communal cooperation' [119]. This is the legacy of cultural politics and the deployment of traditionalism as a means to a political end (1996:75,76).

Norton has proposed a paradigm for nation-making that is "an accommodative vision mediating the two extremes" of Fijian political supremacy versus the equality of all citizens (2000:85). He posits:

> Of greater weight in national life is the mediating concept of political inequality supporting a partnership across difference. Recognition of the prerogative of Fijian chiefs in the Council of Chiefs is central to this concept, together with a reciprocal responsibility of indigenous people to meet the needs of the nonindigenous (Ibid: 112).

The vision allows communities to express their social and cultural distinctiveness and accommodates their various needs. However recent political manoeuvres have seen the authority of the chiefs diminished. After the 2006 military coup Commodore Bainimarama mapped out his vision for Fiji – "to develop a political and governance framework that is truly democratic, accountable, inclusive, equitable, non-racial, and which unifies Fiji's diverse communities as a nation" (2007:webpage). If taken at face value, this may set the course of nationhood in a new direction. But how will the media play into this debate? Events unfolding at the time of the writing of this thesis suggest that one is seeing a replay of past hostilities between the media and those in power.

The concept of the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) has never been articulated by the media in Fiji despite the Government brochure promoting media's role in Fiji as one of helping 'to increase social cohesion' and 'playing a pivotal and mutual role in nation building' (Government of Fiji, 2004). Instead of engaging in a project of nation building, the media has relied on formulaic programming within structures which exacerbate the ethnic division instead of creating innovative programming which can encourage national cohesion and dialogue between the races. The news director at CFL highlights this characteristic of media in explaining the station news policy:

> The Fijian station listeners want to know stories about ensuring that their culture is preserved, tradition, the Great Council of Chiefs, what's happening in the villages, what's happening in the Fijian Affairs Ministry, Fijian Affairs scholarships, Native Lands Trust Board (NLTB) so that will become paramount for them. Some of the

> stories from here may be used on other stations, but in a different form. For Navtarang and Sargam, [Hindi language stations] their main issues will be the sugar industry and the business community (AUSAID, 2006:147).

The nation building project has been complicated not only by the ethnic divisions, but also by the archipelagic nature of the island state which has impeded the information flow, creating disjunctures between the urban population and those living in remote areas. A Fiji One TV news director elucidates this fact in *Informing Citizens*:

> […] when it comes to outer islands like Yasawa and Lau, financially it is difficult, you need someone who has a camera, and then someone once they've got the shots to bring them back to Suva […] we take every opportunity when there is a government boat going to get somebody on the boat to get as many stories as they can (Ibid:147).

Although Fiji's media has enjoyed a relatively high level of freedom, its relationship with politicians has been problematic over the years (Singh et al., 2004). The media has also come under intense pressure during the coups of 1987, 2000 and 2006. In 1987, following the military coup d'etat led by Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, armed troops and police occupied the offices of the two daily newspapers, *The Fiji Times* and the *Fiji Sun* and ordered them to cease publishing indefinitely. The then owners of the *Fiji Sun* decided to close down their operation rather than publish in an environment of self-censorship. The *Fiji Times* owned by News Ltd continued to operate. During the attempted civilian coup d`etat of May 2000, the television studios of *Fiji TV One* were attacked and destroyed after the station aired a scathing analysis of the coup (Robie, 2004). Many senior journalists left Fiji following the coups in 1987 and again in 2000. The journalists who are currently employed are relatively young compared to their counterparts in Australia and New Zealand. The average age of journalists covering the May 2000 coup d'etat was 24. In their analysis of the conflict in Fiji, some commentators have highlighted lack of leadership in newsrooms, inability to correct misperceptions in reporting key issues, and tribal loyalties as significant factors which affected media reporting of the May 2000 coup. Fijian journalist, Jale Moala, points out:

> […] the perpetrators of the terrorist action, led by George Speight, received publicity that at the time seemed to legitimise their actions and their existence. Some argued that the situation may not have deteriorated as quickly as it did if the media had played a more responsible role (Robie, 2003:36, 37).

One of the enduring problems in Fiji media has been a lack of training for local journalists who are usually not tertiary educated and lack the ability to critically analyse and go beyond the event. Media executives need to invest more resources in nurturing the talents of news workers to form a core group of senior journalists who can write substantive commentaries and background analysis of events.

With the onslaught of foreign programming and reporting challenges facing the news media, it has become necessary to cultivate a media savvy public. Fiji Media Watch (FMW) was formed in 1993 as a media monitoring group in response to culturally insensitive media content, but it soon realised the need for media education. FMW's major aim now is "to create a media literate public" through a wide range of activities such as the training of teachers, community workers and parents, conducting media advocacy and monitoring workshop and high school visits. FMW media education co-ordinator, Agatha Ferei explains:

> People in Fiji generally use the media without really questioning its influence and impact, particularly on our young people, on our family life, on our communications skills and relationships with one another. Many in our society are submissive and readily accept what is given by mass media […] Through its media education programme, the organisation hopes to help our people with the critical thinking skills necessary to understand, interpret and evaluate information in order to be able to make informed choices (pers. comm., April 2005).

While media operators champion English language programming, University of the South Pacific linguist Paul Geraghty has raised concerns about the preference of English over either Fijian or Hindi, especially amongst the young, as well as its dominance in the media which, he argues, has led to an ill-informed community. Although many people are able to converse in three languages, they do not have a strong knowledge of any one language. Geraghty blames the elite for keeping the status quo through their preferential treatment of English:

> The obvious way for people of different cultures to get along is to learn about and respect each others' language and culture, not to attempt to communicate through a language which is foreign to both communities. There is also a more sinister reason for the persistence in the media and elsewhere of a language very few people speak — the existence of a post-colonial elite who believe it to be to their advantage to be more colonial than the actual colonists ever were. Many Fijian-speakers in positions of power do not want to see access to information or to government services made easier to ordinary Fijians through the use of their language, for the simple reason that the elite derive much of their own power from their knowledge of English, and expanded use of Fijian would make them redundant (2001:166).

Geraghty has proposed that speakers should develop a high level of competency in their native tongue before progressing to the use of English language. The sub-standard vernacular press lack in-depth analysis, but with proper resources and increased competency of readers in local languages, these could become the main source of information and education, he argues.

The Fiji Mediascape

As a developing nation, Fiji presents a challenge to most forms of media with its widely divergent audiences in terms of ethnicity, age, rural-urban divide and social observance. Yet Fiji enjoys a vibrant media environment compared to its Pacific neighbours *(see Table below)*. Media operators have to contend with significant blocks of audiences from a rural and traditional background who speak either Fijian or Hindi and the burgeoning young westernised group who speak mainly English. English programming, especially that targeting young urban audiences, provides a media space for crossover of ideas, albeit occurring within western programme formats and thus highly influenced by western values.

Radio is the most popular medium of communication in the islands and the only medium to successfully unite Fiji's vastly dispersed population. People in outlying islands depend on radio to keep informed about weather conditions, political happenings in Suva, health and agricultural development as well as for personal messages such as death notices to distant kin

Table 2. Fiji's Media Profile

Daily Newspapers
Fiji Times – main English-language daily founded in 1869. Now Owned by News Corporation. Also publishes the following weeklies: *Sunday Times* *Nai Lalakai* – Fijian *Shanti Dut* – Hindi *Kaila!* – Youth newspaper *Fiji Times Online*
Daily Post - began publishing in 1987. Government owns major shareholding of 44 percent. Also publishes *Nai Volasiga* – Fijian *Chinese Mail*
Fiji Sun – the original newspaper closed down after the 1987 coups when Rabuka brought in draconian media laws to silence the press. The new *Fiji Sun* is owned by Sun Fiji, a major merchant, C.J. Patel, with other local shareholders. Also owns: *Sunday Sun* *Na Sigavou* – Fijian
Magazines
Review – fortnightly magazine owned by Associated Media; also the owners of fijilive.com
Fiji Islands Business - business magazine published monthly incorporating *Islands Business*, which is distributed in the region
Radio
Fiji Broadcasting Corporation Ltd (FBCL)- a statutory government organisation which operates six stations. These include two public service stations - *Radio Fiji One* in Fijian - *Radio Fiji Two* in Hindi Four commercial stations - *Naba Dua Ena Sere* Fijian - *Radio Mirchi* - Hindi - *Radio Fiji Gold* – English - *2DayFM* – English
Communications Fiji Limited – privately-owned broadcaster owns - *FM 96* – English - *Navtarang and Sargam* – Hindi - *Viti FM* – Fijian - *Legend FM* – English
Television
Fiji One - national free-to-air station operated by Fiji Television Ltd with 51% shareholding by Yasana Holdings indigenous interests. Also operates Pay TV *Sky Fiji* – 3 channels – English, Hindi and sports *Sky Pacific* – 12 channels of programming delivered by satellite to Fiji and other Pacific countries.
US Christian television – distributed via satellite.

Sources: BBCWorld.com, Fiji TV.com, Fijivillage.com, Islands Business.com and Informing Citizens Report (AUSAID, 2006).

on Fijian, Hindi and English language stations. Lively talkback programmes provide the best barometer of community concerns on a range of social, political and economic issues. However a rough sampling of calls suggests a high representation of urban callers.

Before corporatisation, the national broadcaster, FBC, enjoyed a strong production base of development-oriented programming to meet the needs of rural farming communities. As a child growing up in the 60s and 70s with access only to radio, I remember listening to a diverse range of local programmes which featured interviews with rural people and local musicians. With increased competition and reduced funding the public service agenda of the national broadcaster has been replaced by popular music and light-hearted chatter.

Television is a relative newcomer to the islands, having been introduced in 1995. Fiji's eminent leader Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who ruled Fiji as Prime Minister for 30 years, gave TV a low priority in the nation's development plan. However through the 1980s video recorders became surrogate television as pirated videotapes carrying the season's top serials from overseas found their way into the island homes and on TV screens. The flow of foreign programming could no longer be controlled. In 1991 a temporary TV licence was granted to allow the broadcast of the Rugby World Cup and in 1995 the official nod was given by the Rabuka Government to set up Fiji's first television station. It was granted a 10 year monopoly which was removed in 2001(see Robie, 2004; Sundar Harris, 1994).

One of the recurring criticisms of Fiji TV has been its lack of initiative in producing local documentaries and dramas. Community views about television content demands increased local programming which is sensitive to the culture and values of Fiji society (Sundar Harris, 1994). Fiji TV currently produces a daily one hour news programme as well as news highlights and weekly news reviews in Fijian and Hindi, a weekly current affairs program in

English and also features local sports coverage. The most popular programme on Fiji TV in 2006 was *Shortland Street*, a family soapie produced in New Zealand. It has created a moral and cultural dilemma for parents because of the topics featured in the weekly drama, including disrespect by teenagers towards parents and sexual relations, according to Fiji Media Watch (Agatha Ferei, pers. comm., 2005). The entertainment driven format features American productions such as *Desperate Housewives*, *The Simpsons* and *America's Funniest Home Videos* as the standard fare of family viewing. Around midnight Fiji One takes a daily feed of the Australian ABC's Asia Pacific Television.

Fiji TV has 51 percent indigenous shareholding held by Yasana Holdings, which is owned by Fiji's 14 provincial councils, the Rotuma Island Council and the Fijian Affairs Board. In 2004 Fiji Television Ltd extended its satellite coverage, bringing free-to-air television to the nation's outer islands and pay TV to the northern division. The satellite footprint also covers Tonga, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Niue and parts of New Zealand and Australia.

Community Media Development

The Pacific region is beginning to realise the potential of community media. It is surprising that growth of the community media sector has been slow given that an earlier proposal to introduce television in Fiji included the concept of community video. In 1973, Ian Johnstone suggested an alternative model which would be more focused on serving rural communities and would avoid a centralised system dependent on western programming (Molnar and Meadows, 2001). Johnstone saw groups within the community such as teachers, and health and agricultural extension workers receiving training in the use of video equipment and playing an integral role in the production of community videos (Ibid:113). Attempts were also made by the government from mid 1984 to the early 1990's to bring a development message and locally produced entertainment to the people using the resources of the Fiji National

Video Centre (FNVC), but its success was limited. SPC (formerly South Pacific Commission now known as the Secretariat of Pacific Countries) also used video within a development orientation, producing programmes about health issues in the 1980s. However none of these organisations have used a truly participatory approach to message production. According to a recent study, of the 229 registered NGOs in Fiji, 17 are considered regular media producers and contributors. NGOs could make a valuable contribution to public debate on a range of issues (Molnar, 2008).

Unfortunately, ideas of community-led productions have remained just that – ideas on paper - while commercial media now dominates the mediascape in Fiji. However, community media may yet emerge as a strong alternative to the current media trend in the islands with the advent of small-format technology and with sympathetic government policies. Over the past six years there has been a steady growth of community media.

Community Television Fiji (CTV)

The removal of Fiji TV's television monopoly in 2001 paved the way for the establishment of a community television station in Fiji with the signal reaching local audiences in the Western Division of the main island of Viti Levu. CTV was started by a retired expatriate couple, John and Regina Yates, in response to the high percentage of "inappropriate" foreign programming on Fiji One. They wanted to offer more informational and educational programming with "a degree of access for everybody who wanted it" (J. Yates, pers. comm., 2003). CTV enjoyed strong support and success in its early years, producing many hours of informational and educational programming with local volunteers. During the 2000 putsch CTV became an important channel of communication for local people as they called the station's talkback program to express their opinions about the coup. However an officer from the licensing office called to warn CTV that it was contravening the terms of its licence and told Yates "we

would prefer you not to use television to express people's opinion" (Ibid) and CTV "respected" that request. This incident poses some interesting questions about what understanding policy makers and regulators have about community media's role in the nation's democratic processes and what safeguards exist in Fiji's media legislation to ensure that community media enjoys the same protection from censorship as mainstream media. Unfortunately CTV closed down in 2004 due to Yates' failing health and lack of a strong community presence in the station's management.

femLINKPACIFIC

The arrival of femLINKPACIFIC: Media Initiative for Women, an NGO based in Suva, has led to the production of important community videos highlighting the concerns of women. femLINK was born out of the Blue Ribbon Peace Vigil initiative during the 2000 coup *(mentioned earlier in this chapter).* "We found that women's peace initiatives as well as the women's voice was very much marginalised out of the mainstream debate on the reconstruction of Fiji," says femLINK founder and co-ordinator, Sharon Bhagwan Rolls (pers. comm., 2005). femLINK has produced a series of videos on a range of topics such as women with disabilities, women's viewpoint about Fiji's post-conflict reconstruction and their experiences during the political crisis. These are distributed to women's groups to provide information and initiate discussion and dialogue. Rolls explains:

> We weren't just producing documentaries for broadcast in the mainstream, but our strategy was to then use the community videos as a way to bring women together also. Because women do come together in times of conflict to work for peace, but are never given that opportunity after the height of the conflict, as we have experienced here in Fiji, to then regroup and caucus… So it was serving a purpose of not just creating a space for women to talk and discuss issues, but to also continue the bridge building that is so vitally needed, given that the politicians continue to play the race cards (Ibid).

femLINK also operates a mobile radio-in-a-suitcase project giving airtime to rural women and those with disability "visiting the women in their own rural communities and giving them an opportunity just to talk" thus filling a need unmet by mainstream radio according to Rolls:

> For women outside of the capital city and the other islands including Vanua Levu the information is all one way. So they don't see a reflection of themselves in the media nor do they hear themselves because they can't afford telephone, so they can't participate in talk back sessions (Ibid).

femLINK's media production is supported by funding from a range of international aid donors and has actively promoted UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which advocates the role of women in preventing and resolving conflicts and mandates UN member states to take steps to increase women's participation in decision-making.

Radio Pasifik

The first community radio licence was given to Radio Pasifik (FM 88.8), the campus radio for students and staff of the University of the South Pacific. It began broadcasting in 1996. In October 2004 the station went online using audio streaming and expanded its Pacific language programming. The station broadcasts in 11 languages and places a high priority on giving airtime to Pacific Islands music. This commitment has helped to increase the popularity of Pacific island bands and the cross promotion of island music on the campus, according to the station manager:

> Last year the buses started playing a Kiribati track and you never hear Kiribati songs being played. The Kiribati students came to me and said 'we're so proud. For the first time we feel like we are part of the University community'…This is a positive outcome of Radio Pasifik. This is part of what we're trying to achieve (V. Nadaku, pers. comm., 2005).

Radio Pasifik is currently restricted to a 100 watts signal and covers a radius of 7 miles from the campus, but is negotiating for a licence which will allow it to broadcast Fiji-wide using satellite.

The community media sector continues to grow with radio licences being offered to Christian stations operating in Suva as well as in other centres of Fiji. Unfortunately, local content on these stations is limited as they are largely dependent on taped programming from evangelical

broadcasters in the United States. As discussed by the community media practitioners, community media can play an important role in the reconciliation process in post-conflict Fiji to encourage dialogue and bridge building between estranged groups.

Internet

A review of Internet development in Fiji provides interesting insights into issues of access and participation. Internet use in Fiji has been growing steadily in recent years in the commercial and government sectors, but is making slow inroads into the domestic market. The first use of Internet in Fiji was at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in the late 1980s when it was used for intranet connection. As a result, the domain name .fj, registered in 1995, is held by USP, which is responsible for registering all second level domains in Fiji (Minges and Gray, 2004). The first Internet Service Provider (ISP) was set up by the domestic carrier Telecom Fiji. Internet usage is mainly limited to Government and business sectors, which were among the first to sign up as customers. Very few homes, even in the urban areas, have Internet connections. The costs of computers and of ISP connections are beyond the means of many people. One positive area of growth has been the Internet cafes which enjoy vigorous business from the youth population in urban centres such as Suva and Nadi. More than 70 percent of Internet users are young adults and school students who use it for emails, chat lines and to research school projects. The ISP, Connect, estimates that there are 50,000 users in Fiji representing a 6.1 percent Internet penetration (Ibid).

As a decentralised communication network, the Internet holds great promise for a diverse population. It can facilitate the preservation and sharing of indigenous knowledge, provide an essential network for information and communication exchange amongst the community sector and government agencies, and enable learning and skill-building for the growing youth population (Sundar Harris, 2006). It is important that the Internet accommodate alternative

uses of new media encouraging civil society participation and is not largely market-driven in the service of the global economy. In this regard, both local and diaspora Fijian communities have used the Internet during times of crisis for political agency and social networking. Having experienced four coups in 19 years, people have increasingly turned to the Internet to voice their concern, register their protest or simply to report about political upheavals beyond their control (Sundar Harris, 2007).

Conclusion

Through a situation analysis of the political process and the mainstream media in Fiji, this chapter has presented a portrait of a nation that has suffered significant social and political upheavals with no will towards nation building. Unfortunately, the ruling political elite has encouraged a nation of disparate identities through an essentialist political process. This has created two levels of discourse in Fiji – the dominant political discourse of identity politics prevalent in urban areas, and the day-to-day relationships based on interdependence and goodwill, especially amongst rural communities. Unfortunately, mainstream media coverage lends credence to the hegemonic discourses, thus reinforcing the fissures instead of the linkages. Ethnic divisions are so deeply entrenched in every facet of Fiji's society that building a truly reconciled nation with a common identity will be a tough undertaking for any government which dares to take on such a project. Fiji's media is structured to serve specific language groups. This means that Fijians and Indians see only their own cultural groups through the prism of their programming content and have very little opportunity to engage in cross cultural dialogue in a public space where many of the suspicions and misunderstandings can be discussed. Increased competency in local languages may assist in creating greater cross-cultural dialogue. As Geraghty argues, a good place to begin would be to encourage the major races to learn each other's language instead of communicating through a third

language. Within the context of Fiji, Jon Fraenkel voices his hope for increasing engagement between ethnic groups:

> Twice, almost a decade and a half apart, we have had two significant political upheavals. Our resilience is due in large part to the people and to their hope for a better future for their children, whatever their ethnicity. It is this vision that links all of us. We need to expand the vision to narrow the distances between us and draw us more closely together (Fraenkel and Firth, 2007:402).

In discussing the crucial components of good communication promoted by World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), Lee observes:

> Communication creates community. Genuine communication cannot take place where there is division, alienation, isolation and barriers that disturb, prevent or distort social interaction. True communication is facilitated when people join together regardless of race, color or religious conviction, and where there is acceptance of and commitment to one another (2007:4).

Media can do much to unite Fiji into a socially cohesive nation. Community media can play an important role in nation building by reflecting the spirit of goodwill and the voices and aspirations of rural Fiji, rather than becoming submerged in the din of urban discontent. As discussed by the community media practitioners, there is scope for dialogue and bridge building between communities within the reconciliation agenda. This can be integrated within the Peoples Charter for Change and Progress (PCCP), the Interim Government's nation building initiative which hopes to carve a new vision of Fiji which is inclusive of all races. If "communication is the raw material for peace" (Rodriguez 2000:147) then media can play a central role in peace-building efforts and conflict resolution. Community media with grassroots participation can encourage disengaged groups to work together in developing programs, sharing airtime and engaging in public discussions on issues that affect the whole nation.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and Research Design

This chapter discusses methodological considerations underpinning the research, and the research design. The study combines participatory action research (PAR) with an ethnographic approach for data collection. PAR has been chosen for the video workshop to invite active involvement of the subjects. Visual ethnography is used as a significant method of data collection using a video camera for observational documentation of the production process, and to record informal interviews with participants to obtain their views and insights into the activities at different stages of the production. Other methods include in-depth interviews with policy makers, an evaluation questionnaire to collect participant feedback on the process, and a reflective journal kept by me as the facilitator during the entire production phase (*please see Appendix B and C*).

The research design includes my own reflections and insights kept as a diary during my visit to Fiji in search of a group with whom to conduct my research. Other elements of the research design are the workshop schedule that provided a timeline and a guiding structure to the workshop, and a lesson plan which brings out the main themes of the training phase.

I. Methodological Considerations

There are several factors in this study that favour a qualitative and specifically interpretive methodology. The research is contextual and employs participatory or process video techniques which demand specific skills of collaboration, facilitation, and reflexivity. Kawaja's observation about PV is especially relevant in this context:

> Each process video is an intimate, transient and social relationship. Each project has its own set of historical and cultural circumstances and, therefore, outcomes. Each requires a new openness and flexibility in planning and facilitation, and each responds to my own investigation into myself and this medium in different ways. As the term implies, this type of production is part of a continuum that does not have an easily defined beginning, middle, and end (Kawaja, 1994:132-133).

These are processes that cannot easily be captured by quantitative methods. The participation of subjects in process video production is highly contextual and may be influenced by a range of socio-cultural, political, geographical and even historical factors. Jankowski supports the use of qualitative case studies of community media projects which he contends "may help in determining under what conditions community media can provide a specific alternative" as well as how its emancipatory potential may serve communities in the future (1991:173-174). Other scholars have also advocated qualitative research methodologies such as ethnography of media production processes and participatory action research to gain deeper insights into grassroots media production and the changes that result from it (Rodriguez, 2001; White 2003; Dagron 2001; Tacchi, Slater and Lewis, 2003).

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

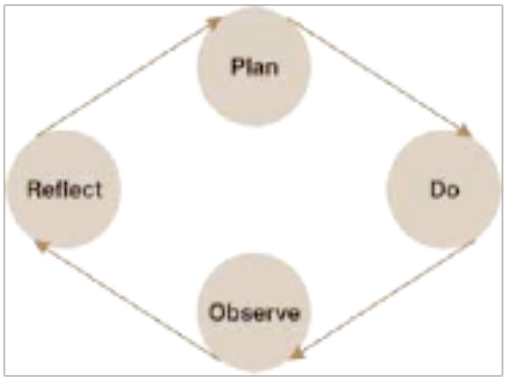
PAR is the methodology best suited for this study, in which the process of production demands a high degree of collaboration between the researcher and the subjects. Servaes and Arnst point out that PAR is 'people's research'. No matter who conducts the research the "results must be shared with the people among whom research is conducted" (1999:108, 109). They point to other common features of PAR, such as its bias towards the poor; the significance of the process in achieving conscientization and empowerment; awareness of the needs of people instead of being dogmatic about one's method; ongoing dialogue, discussion and collaborative reflection; and the cyclic pattern of study-reflection-action (Ibid:112).

Action research was first used by Lewin in the 1940s and 50s with community groups in the USA, but has since been used in various fields by educational researchers, in organisational

settings, and by non-government organisations. PAR in the development field emanated in South America, influenced by the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, and has found a niche in activism and emancipatory work (Noffke and Somekh, 2005).

Einseidel explains that the researcher needs a multi-paradigm perspective, as well as a range of skills and methodological approaches such as an ethnographic understanding of the community and in-depth process-oriented understanding of group interactions where the action-reflection cycle is at work. Thorough observation and documentation is the only way this process can be understood in its entirety, she contends (1999:375).

Tacchi, Slater and Lewis propose an 'ethnographic action research' approach in evaluating community based media initiatives, which integrates "a combination of ethnographic approaches with action research' (2003:1). In the ethnographic action research method the emphasis moves away from 'evaluation' and 'impact statement' to understanding "a research culture through which knowledge and reflection are constantly fed back in ways that help projects develop" (Tacchi et al., n.d.:4). The cyclic pattern is illustrated in the following diagram:



Source: Tacchi, Slater and Hearn (n.d.:119)
(http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/15722/1084293119513.pdf/13.pdf)

Involvement and participation of people in all four stages of planning, doing, observing and reflecting is an essential criterion of this approach. Tacchi, Slater and Lewis point out other salient features of this method:

> Our ethnographic research on media technologies demonstrates to us that there is not any one single model for local communication initiatives that can be applied universally, but that each place requires an approach to the development of projects tailored to local needs, which account of local lives and environments. The ways in which people use technologies such as radio and the Internet are defined in large part by their local everyday lives, the social, political, economic and cultural environment in which they live, and by the ways in which they appropriate these technologies (2003:2).

Although Ethnographic Action Research, as developed by Tacchi, Slater and Lewis, was not used as methodology for this research, various elements of this approach, as discussed above, confirm the validity of my chosen methods.

Visual Ethnography

The use of visual ethnography in this research is used in two ways - to gather participant observation data in the form of observational video footage, and to a lesser degree for textual analysis of the content produced by the participants. The observational video captures the group sessions during the training and story development phases, and participant observation data of interpersonal and group relations of the participants, their interaction with the technology, as well as my encounter with participants during the research phase. There are three main areas of observation during the ethnographic data collection – a place, actors and activities within a specified social situation, and their inter-relationship. This observation goes through a narrowing or selective cycle as the researcher becomes more attuned to the research questions emanating from the observation (Spradley, 1980). The video camera provides a powerful window into this world. The lens has the ability to capture not only what the participants are saying, but their body language and expressions within a given environment and social setting. Pink (2001) suggests that the camera design and the ethnographer's relationship with the camera as well as the video subjects can impact on data collection.

Small, unobtrusive camera design, which diminishes the importance of the technology, and the LCD screen, through which action can be monitored without the need for the researcher to be in close contact with the camera, help to create an environment which is more conducive to relaxed social interaction and data collection

Visual ethnography also provides a framework within which to interpret the content produced by the participants – the images and situations through which they chose to represent themselves and their communities – as well as the way the women employed video technology within specific social and cultural settings. It provides an important analytical tool in understanding how grassroots media can break down stereotypes and bring fresh interpretations of the way communities imagine themselves rather than media images created by outsiders. Pink states that "an awareness of the theoretical underpinnings of 'visual research methods' is crucial for understanding how those images and the processes through which they are created are used to produce ethnographic knowledge" (2001:2,3). As such visual ethnography has evolved from its earlier uses within a scientific-realist approach for the recording of data towards more reflexive uses (Ibid:77). Pink notes that video footage can be used both as a 'realist recording' to capture actions and events and as 'reflexive commentaries' about the changing relationship between the researcher and informant or their relationship with the technology (Ibid:149).

Other Methods

Interviews were conducted with policy makers and cultural commentators to understand the broader political and cultural influences affecting the research setting and subjects. Informal interviews were conducted with participants at different stages of the production to obtain their views and insights into the activities, and recorded on video. Open questions are helpful in generating reflexive accounts of the changes occurring within individuals. At the end of the

project an evaluation questionnaire was circulated to the participants to gain feedback about the process and its impact on individual women *(please see Appendix D)*.

II. Key Elements in the Production Process

Participation

A key element of the production process is participation of communities. It is clear that outside experts cannot 'develop' grassroots people, but that people must be in a position to develop themselves, becoming conscious of their own potential to bring about changes which they themselves feel are important (White and Patel, 1994:363). The community's involvement is required in the entire message-making process from the choice of topics and issues to the planning and production of media content, White and Patel contend (Ibid: 361). This active engagement or agency of individuals is the key to awakening one's self-awareness and developing a critical consciousness about one's circumstance, in what Freire identified as conscientization. The action of producing the message becomes empowering in itself as participants develop a range of media competencies such as technical and creative production skills, analytical skills in reading mass media texts, and a deeper understanding of their own communicative potential (Riano, 1994:125). Through their engagement in message development individuals also become empowered to find ways of solving problems in their own communities. Increased dialogue, collaboration and respect for others' ideas become elements in community building and social cohesion. Participation thus becomes "a developed form of self management" and a "force towards a more participative society" (White and Patel, 1994:361).

According to White, in reconciling differences, subjects need to identify what these differences actually are, then "own" the differences and be willing to resolve them through

constructive dialogue. They should also recognise that it is expected and normal to have differences within a group, and to respect each other's differences is a part of the process of transformation. The key was to cooperate, despite these differences, to achieve the task at hand (2003:79).

The Facilitator

As a facilitator of the video workshop, I am an active participant in the production process and as such critically aware of the values I may impose on the process and the finished product. It is worth heeding Kawaja's cautionary advice here:

> The facilitator experiences a constant struggle to find a balance between being directive and letting participants take initiative, between structuring and planning and letting things evolve spontaneously, and between authoritarianism and nondirective dialogical approach (In Riano, 1994:141).

Braakman and Edwards warn that the facilitator should be "content neutral", thus not having a stake in the outcome, yet strong enough to ensure a process which invites the participation of all involved and moves the group towards a common goal (2002). As such the facilitator's role is one of "enabling others" while maintaining the flexibility to relinquish his/her expert role and "become co-learners in projects" (White, 2003:39, 45).

Shaw and Robertson (1997:34) warn that an unstructured learning environment can be "disempowering" for the participants and can become "chaotic and meaningless". Facilitators play an important role in designing the workshop and bringing focus to group activities especially during the training phase. The researcher/facilitator is an important variable in the participatory message development process and as such must develop personal style and competencies to interrelate with people as well as to be willing to adapt and change direction, be able to function as a facilitator and have effective interpersonal communication skills.

I have to be aware constantly of my impact on the group as the workshop facilitator and

maintain an ongoing dialogue with members of the group to interpret their needs and motivations. Introspection and self-reflection are important aspects of my involvement within the cycle of planning, action, reflection and evaluation phases of the PAR methodology. I also recognise that I am in the privileged position of being a 'cultural insider' and as such have an advantage in relating easily with the participants as well as understanding community relationships, and their norms and values from an insider's perspective.

The Process

Participatory video is an open process within the bounds of each production and its implicit functions, purposes and aesthetics. Towards this end the workshop is open to a range of participants who want to become involved, without being exclusionary of those lacking in skills or talent; it is open to the ideas, voices and needs of the community so they have ownership over the product; it observes an open process of production which is not scripted and uses production values which reflect the norms of the community. Some PV practitioners see the production process as an end in itself and find it unnecessary for the PV projects to be turned into a completed product. However the product can become a valuable information resource shared with other communities who can model their own initiatives on the project, and can be given to bureaucrats to influence policy decisions or to inform them of community activities. In this research, the group has already agreed upon a self-defined purpose for the workshop – to create a promotional video for the Telecentre group.

By studying process we begin to understand what elements of people's involvement in media production are empowering, the way they go about determining their message production and how they reflect their worlds through mediated communication. The engagement between facilitator and participants can also influence the process. Galbraith further highlights this aspect:

> The most common elements of the transactional process are collaboration, support, respect, freedom, equality, critical reflection, critical analysis, challenge, and praxis. These features of the process hold true for both the facilitator and the adult learner who comprise the learning encounter. To incorporate these elements is to require facilitator and learner to scrutinize held values, beliefs, and ways of acting […] Another element in the transactional process involves accepting responsibility for our actions and beliefs (1991:3).

In her discussion of the transformation process skills White (2003:77) highlights the key areas as follows:

> Encouraging interpersonal skills
> Promoting dialogue
> Reflective listening
> Reconciling differences
> Reaching consensus
> Dealing with prejudice
> Conflict management
> Fostering cooperation

Shaw and Robertson highlight eight main elements in participatory video practice for the purpose of community development (1997:19-26). These are summarised below:

> *Participation*— doing rather then observing. Group work. Ownership.
>
> *Individual development* – self expression. Confidence and skill building.
>
> *Communication* – people talking to each other bottom-up and sideways.
>
> *Community building* – As a team activity video work promotes trust, understanding, co-operation and group cohesion.
>
> *Critical awareness and consciousness-raising* – we become more aware of our surrounding and community needs. Identifying problems and gaining a better understanding of issues can lead towards improvement.
>
> *Self-advocacy and representation* – enables the group to represent their viewpoint to a chosen audience and to produce a tape about their concerns.
>
> *Capacity development and self-reliance* – participants take responsibility for the direction of the project which assists independent thinking and action.
>
> *Empowerment* – people take action to influence society and transform their situation. The first seven elements prepare participants to take action.

Based on the above ideas, I have developed the following schematic which includes processes by which I can evaluate the success of participatory video production:

Table 3. Schematic for the Evaluation of the PV Process

Is the PV process facilitating the following outcome:	**Evaluate the outcome through the following video training and production exercises:**
Dialogue Communication amongst members and with others	Script development process
Respect and awareness of the 'other' and reflective listening Consensus building	Conducting interviews and the interview process Acquiring skills of production e.g. planning, collaborating, communicating etc.
Information sharing	Screening and distribution of the finished program
Self-Representation Self-expression Self-reflection	Video as a mirror - saying something about oneself on the camera
Feeling of importance	Group viewing session - reactions to the footage
A claim to an identity	The production team – producer, director, interviewer, camera operator
Finding a voice and expressing opinions	Taking ownership of story telling in the story development and interviews sessions
Capacity building Media literacy skills	A lesson on media literacy
Critical thinking	Discussion of media
Creative skills	Learning the visual techniques
Technological knowledge acquisition	Use of technology - camera training, microphone technique, tripod placement
Public speaking	Interview skills
Community building: Inclusion – acknowledgement of each person as valuable irrespective of gender, status, or ethnicity	The production process - contribution of ideas, skills and knowledge by each participant Reflecting diversity in content production
Collective action	Collaborative process of story development and location shoot and the inclusion of social networks
Community development and Consciousness-raising	Knowledge sharing through distribution of program content

Designed by the author based on her own observations and ideas sourced from White (2003); Shaw and Robertson (1997)

III. The Research Design

In the research design, I consider the factors which may impact on the various phases of the production process. These are as follows:

Pre-production: The work that happens before the camera roll

1. Contact with the community (trust building).
2. Decision by individuals to participate in the project (the mindset).
3. Becoming part of the team (network, collaboration and group dynamics).
4. Focusing the project (identification of aims, objectives and priorities).
5. Developing the idea into *their* story (what they want to say and how they want to say it).
6. Making the best fit production choices within the budgetary limitations and resources available to the researcher and participants.
7. Types of cameras and accessories – Small format consumer models for ease of operation - not too daunting and doesn't take away from actual message creation. Two sets of camera kits were bought each including:
    i. Sony DV handycam with built-in external microphone input
    ii. tripod
    iii. dynamic microphone
    iv. DV tapes

Production:

8. Training sessions. Interactions with technology – the mental and social blocks, changing individual perceptions of one's capability.
9. The crew roles. Who does what – producer, director, camera operator, sound. How is she chosen? Does this follow the social hierarchical order?
10. On location. Deciding where to shoot and who is included. Artistic decisions - camera placement, direction of talent. What is the group dynamic?

Post-production:

11. Editing. What remains and what gets left out? Who decides?
12. Screening the finished project – immediate community reactions.
13. Changing individual perceptions of one self.

Evaluation of the outcome

An evaluation of the workshop has been planned through a written questionnaire as well as short informal interviews recorded on video. The evaluation is intended to draw out participants' feedback about the process and what they gained individually from it.

In Search of a Group

I made my first visit to Fiji in relation to my doctoral study in 2003 to gather background research data and establish contact with media professionals and community groups. In April 2005, I made my second trip to Fiji still unclear about several aspects of my research. During this visit I wanted to identify the group with whom I would conduct the participatory video workshop. My ideas had evolved through further literature searches which included Shirley White's *Participatory Video: Images that Transform and Empower* (2003). My interest was now focused on participatory video and its implications for community empowerment and change. Strong links began to emerge between the research question and my long-term interest in community media. Research then became more than an exercise to collect data for my doctoral thesis, but an engagement with a community which would also benefit from the research. My professional skills in video production had included media training of disadvantaged minority communities in Sydney and more recently teaching video production within an alternative framework in the postgraduate programme at the Department of International Communication at Macquarie University. I had planned initially to base my research project with FemLINK, a women's media initiative in Fiji, which had recently gained a weekend radio licence for their mobile radio-in-a-suitcase project. However FemLINK was in a transitional phase which precluded my engagement with the community media producer. I began my search in earnest for a group with the following set of criteria that guided my selection process:

- Participants who had limited exposure to media and media technology.
- Preferably rural and disadvantaged community.
- A gender specific group was desirable but not essential. I was aware of the norms dictating both Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities where men and women generally belonged to separate social clubs. Cross gender influences may also hinder active participation of women.
- A sample that included a cross section of age and ethnicity.

I made my first contact with the Navua communities through Gita who had grown up in this rural river town and was actively involved in community projects there. She took me to Vakabalea, a community of re-settled farmers, to meet the local advisory council member, Niten Prasad. I briefly explained my project to him and requested to have a meeting with key community leaders. I asked if there was a *Mahila Mandal* (women's club) in the area as I was keen to include women in this project. Niten looked uncomfortable for a moment then said "Well that is the problem". It appeared that there was some conflict amongst the *Mahila Mandal* members after the government had given them a grant of musical instruments. The club president had claimed ownership of the items, which had led to disputes amongst the members and some had now formed a second club and were claiming those items for their use. The police had been called in and they had confiscated the items until a resolution was found. Niten said he was trying to resolve the situation but obviously he had not been successful. He said the government had promised to send someone to look into the matter. It was starkly apparent that there was no one in the community with even the most basic conflict resolution skills who could assist the members to reconcile their differences through a process of dialogue and mediation.

This set off some alarm bells for me. Did I have the necessary skills to work with a group that was already showing signs of conflict? White states "conflict is inherent in human relationships […] there is no change without conflict whether it be interpersonal conflict or conflict within oneself […] It is therefore imperative that facilitators are equipped with the necessary tools to bring about conflict management" (2003:81). I am a media researcher with few conflict management skills. I would have to work with a community worker who has appropriate training in working with grassroots communities.

Next Gita took me to see Kalisi who was the secretary of the Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group (NRWTG), a rural women's collective, engaged in small income generation schemes such as the making of jams, chutneys and local handicraft to supplement their family income. A search of the neighbourhood found her cooking jam in a neighbour's kitchen to augment their sales stock. As she hopped into the car, her first words were "Gita, we have a problem". It turned out that the women were impatient to move into a cottage in town which had been promised to them by the government, but there had been no progress. There was a long discussion about how they could secure these premises at the earliest possible time so that the women could have a common kitchen for the commercial production of jams and chutneys rather than cooking them in their homes. There was another minor problem for which the women had found a solution. The controversial club president's name popped up again. She had, allegedly, created major dissension in this group as well by using the organisation as a front to run her own business. The women had called a special general meeting and voted her out of the organisation. I was beginning to like the sound of this group. They seemed more proactive. I explained to Kalisi about participatory video and how I wanted to teach the women to use video cameras to record their activity. Her eyes lit up and I knew she had recognised the significance of such an exercise for her group. "That is what we want," she told me with conviction. The group needed promotional material featuring their products, to give to potential clients. I requested that she consult her members and I would return within a week to meet with them.

In Suva I continued my search for a group while waiting to meet with the NRWTG. I accompanied a retired high school principal, Diwan Chand, to a squatter settlement only ten minutes from Suva. Hundreds of Indo-Fijian families have moved to this area in search of jobs from rural Fiji including displaced cane farmers. When they leave they take with them not only their personal belongings, but the house itself – dismantling every piece of timber,

corrugated iron, nails, locks and anything else they can salvage. These become the building blocks for their next house, wherever that may be. Some have moved from one island to another - Labasa on Vanua Levu to towns on Viti Levu. My guide pointed out the houses that belonged to “Labasian”, a term used by Suva residents to describe the newcomers from Labasa. “I can tell by the colour of the tins” he told me. They were bright blue with unpainted stray tins nailed at intervals – shacks which were no bigger than a double bedroom in many contemporary Australian homes. Heavy tropical rain poured as we stopped at the Indian Temple, a central meeting point for the community. They had just finished Ram Naumi pooja (Hindu prayers), ending a week-long celebration which marked the birth of Lord Ram. Most people had dispersed. Only the main organisers had remained to clean up. In most Indian settlements, the Ramayan Mandali, a religious club with all male membership, is the uniting force. The men explained that their club provides assistance to needy families and is a forum for any community concerns. There was also a *Mahila Mandal* which met every fortnight at the temple for scripture reading. I explained my project and my search for a group. The president understood the importance of learning to create their own messages, which would give them a voice. He had some experience of being interviewed by the local media and realised that by producing their own video stories they could highlight many of the problems facing the community, such as irregular water supply or the need for larger government land grants so that families would have space not only for a house, but also a yard for the children to play and a vegetable garden to supplement the diet. They asked me to come back and talk to the women’s group.

When I woke up the next morning the president’s voice echoed in my head. I knew this was a needy community with many challenges and could benefit from a participatory video project. But as a student I did not have the financial and human resources necessary to focus the aims

of this community without losing sight of my own research goals. This work could become part of a long-term project with a local media NGO such as FemLINK.

A few days later, after another night of heavy rain, I headed for Navua hoping that the water level in the river had subsided and the women I was planning to meet had been able to travel into town for the meeting. Navua is a flood prone district. The meeting was organised by Nanise Gasara, the Senior Women's Interest Officer in Navua. After my first meeting with Kalisi, my contact was passed on to Nanise who became my prime contact. Nanise's office, located in the Provincial Council (Ro Matanitabua) office, was a temporary base for the NRWTG. The group met every Wednesday, but a special meeting had been called on Tuesday to hear what I had to say. I made my way into the room and met Nanise for the first time. She beamed me a smile and invited me to the table. Many of the women had already arrived and were waiting in the large meeting room. The women who sat around the table were from Fijian and Indo-Fijian backgrounds ranging from 30 to 60 years of age. After some preliminary discussions about the club, I explained my project proposal emphasising my aim to involve the women in the production process and the use of the vernacular. Based on my earlier conversation with Kalisi, I also explained how the video could provide an opportunity for them to promote their products by creating a promotional DVD. I explained the stages of the workshop and my planned schedule. At the end of my presentation I left the meeting so that the women could discuss the proposal and take a vote on it. When I returned, Nanise, speaking on behalf of the women, informed me that the group had considered my proposal and were enthusiastic about inviting me to join them, and hoped that this would be a positive move for their group. The women began to see other uses for the video technology – such as to record training workshops to share with other members who are unable to attend, and to record weddings and birthdays for income generation. I suggested that short videos could be made to teach women about nutrition or sanitation in their own languages. Suddenly this new

idea began to be adapted for the group's many needs. The video workshop would add to their multi-media skills while creating promotional materials for their products. The video could also be placed on their website once that was up and running.

Nanise later told me that my emphasis on the women's active participation in production had been a winner. They liked the fact that I would be open to *their* ideas and would train *them* in video production so *they* could produce *their* own stories. This affirmed to me that communities and individuals empowered with appropriate skills want to have ownership of their own story-telling instead of having outsiders tell their stories. Sarah Pink discusses the important aspect of "giving something back" within the tradition of visual ethnographic research.

> By focusing on collaboration and the idea of 'creating something together', agency becomes shared between the researcher and informant. Rather than the researcher being the active party who both extracts data and gives something else back, in this model both researcher and informant invest in, and are rewarded by, the project (2001:44).

The group had received a computer but they had lost Internet access after their dispute with the 'troublesome' former club president. Instead they were using the current club president's email. Nanise was providing administrative support and had become their manager by proxy. The women had not received any effective leadership or long-term strategic support from the Ministry of Women once the pilot scheme had been established. However they were unified in their aim to become independent of government influence. Finding their own premises was the first step in breaking that link. It seemed there were many loose ends and the women just wanted 'to get on with it'.

After sharing morning tea with the group, Nanise invited me to her office. On the phone she had asked me to burn some photos on a CD. The computer in her office did not have a CD burner. I imported the photos to my Apple Powerbook, burned it and checked on the PC to

make sure it worked. This seemed to impress the women. I had passed the test.

As I drove towards Suva, I wondered who had sanctioned my involvement with this group? What are the needs of the women and the organisation? What are my needs? One of the concerns that I had about my involvement with the NRWTG was its strong link with the government. The Ministry of Women is viewed with suspicion by many women's collectives and I had been warned to tread carefully and not let the government's agenda dictate my outcomes. However, I was clear about one thing - the decision to invite me into the group had come from the women themselves. Now we look forward to our partnership in July.

Navua Rural Women's Telecenter Group – A Background

NRWTG was established in May 2004 as a pilot scheme, initially called the E-chutney project, by the Government's Information Technology and Communications (ITC) Department with support from Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. It was part of a larger e-government plan to encourage rural economic development by opening telecentres in regional areas. The objective was to train rural women in the use of the internet and encourage them to sell their products via email to customers, mainly civil servants in Suva as described in this report:

> The women were given basic training in word processing, spreadsheets, and email, so that they could collect and collate orders and send high-impact HTML-format emails. To facilitate the finding of customers, the ITC Department provided its own email list of some 4,000 government civil servants working in Suva. The marketing strategy is linked to the Fiji government's payroll schedule, whereby civil servants are paid every 2 weeks. The women send emails for 3 days in the week before payday, collect orders, and then drive their van the 50 Km to Suva to make deliveries on payday (Mould, 2006:webpage).

Navua was chosen because women in the area had already had "a commercial track record in producing and selling on a local market" (Ibid). Initially called the E-chutney project because of the emphasis on chutney production, over the course of the year the women had diversified their products to include pillow-cases, sasa brooms, dalo chips, root crops, a variety of food products, etc. (Das, 2005). An assessment carried out in 2005 for the Ministry of Women highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the NRWTG as summarised below:

> NRWTG has set out to be a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural group and must be commended for doing so. The women members bring with them a variety of inherent skills and knowledge, which they are keen to share and learn from each other. It is this diversity that has enriched the group's functioning and has significantly contributed to the basis of information exchange within the telecentre structure.
>
> There also seems to be a lack of understanding as to what a telecentre is. At the moment it is clear that NRWTG does not function as a proper telecentre. While they aim to produce chutneys, jams etc. to sell via the Internet and e-mail, this is merely one aspect of a telecentre. It must be noted though that the women's perceptions of a telecentre are not entirely to blame. There have also been several logistical problems such as the lack of connection to the Internet and the lack of premises.
>
> Access to the Internet and e-mail are vital to the survival of NRWTG. The development of a website is also crucial to its survival and it is recommended that priority be given to this. A website will not only provide information about the Group but enable the members to display their products[…].
>
> Despite the many difficulties and obstacles NRWTG have faced in terms of getting the project off the ground, the women seem quite eager to persist with the development and expansion of the organisation. The NRWTG is at a critical stage in development and has the potential of being Fiji's first telecentre as well as a great model for socio-economic development
> (Das, 2005).

The PV Workshop

The project was designed to take place over five weeks. I developed a workshop schedule for that period *(see below)*, and sent it to Nanise, who was co-ordinating the pre-planning on my behalf prior to my arrival in Fiji. It was designed to be flexible and able to accommodate changes based on the women's own schedule, space availability and production flow.

The first week of training was designed as a media literacy session to increase the participants' knowledge of media, encourage discussion about participants' own experiences of media and provide a basic lesson in visual techniques, such as shot sizes and composition (*see Lesson Plan below*). This was prepared in the form of a power point presentation which I planned to deliver on my laptop. It was important that the participants should gain access to the cameras on the first day of training to maintain their interest in the workshop. The first exercise would allow each woman to hold the camera and take one shot. In the second exercise each participant would speak directly to the camera sharing something about herself, e.g. her family, her background, her strengths, her favourite food, her hobby, which would be recorded on tape by another participant. As women gain confidence and skill at using the camera, other formats, such as two-person and group interviews will be conducted, allowing them to use tripod and microphones. Participants would be encouraged to experience every facet of the production process with progressive transfer of knowledge and control from the facilitator to the group. A viewing session has been planned for the first week so that the participants can gain greater self-confidence by watching themselves on screen and to get feedback on their work.

Workshop Schedule

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Session 1 Overview. Lessons in media, and its role in community development. *Session 2* Women meet the camera. *Session 3* Some basic rules of video and group exercises.	*Session 4* Idea and story development *Session 5* Conducting Interviews *Session 6* Viewing	*Session 7* Finalise story ideas *Session 8* Location shoot *Session 9* Location shoot	*Session 10* Post-production: viewing and selecting *Session 11* Editing and (pick-ups) extra shoot if necessary *Session 12* Editing	*Session 13* Finalise *Session 14* Group viewing *Session 15* Public screening and Feedback

Lesson Plan

Day 1 (Seating organised in a circle)

We will gain an understanding of three terms: Media, Television, Video

Forms of media
- Folk media – Traditional forms of theatre and puppetry
- Print – newspapers and magazines
- Radio
- Television and video
- New media - computers – internet

Media to:
- Inform
- Educate
- Entertain

What is Video used for?
- News, current affairs and documentaries
- Drama programmes and film releases
- Family memories e.g. birthdays and weddings
- Video letters – to families overseas
- Social education and community development

But before we discuss that let us talk about our own experiences of media
How many of you have a television and video at home?

What types of things do you like to watch?
Have you ever thought about:
Who makes them?
Who is it made for?
Where are the programs made?
Who decides what gets made ?
How they are made?

People who make programs are called producers.
People it is made for are called audiences (segmentation 0-13, 13-24).

Driven by commercial interest and mass consumption – profits for programme makers, TV operators and advertisers. e.g. of soap operas to promote use of certain brands of soap powders to American women. Now what does it promote? Coke through the music programs
Television is passive and one way.

Our place within a Televisual world
Do these programmes reflect?

- our culture
- our values
- our faces
- our needs

If we want media to reflect our needs we have to learn to make media.

Video for Empowerment
Video as a development tool – Agriculture, Health, Preservation of culture and identity.
- some stories that women can read out aloud from C4C.

Video as recorder of our voices, our memories and aspirations.

We read video stories from other parts of the world. After the stories we'll have a short discussion. Think of ways we can use video in our community we write down our ideas on whiteboard or paper.

Exercise 1: women are introduced to the camera.
Everyone gets to touch and feel it and record one shot of what ever they like as they say their name.

Tea Break

Appoint one person from the group to operate the camera teaching them the basics.

Exercise 2: (We all sit in a semi-circle)
Each woman speaks, looking at the camera, telling us her name and sharing one thing about herself e.g. her family, her background, something she is good at, her favorite food, her hobby, or something memorable that happened to her (sad, funny or happy).
View the tapes if we can get a television set.
Discuss: How do they feel about appearing on video and seeing themselves on the screen?

Day 2
Why do participatory video?

Many Benefits
Participation - doing rather then observing. Group work. Ownership. (exerc 1&2)
Individual development – self expression. Confidence and Skill building.
Communication – people talking to each other bottom-up and sideways.
Communication – people talking to each other bottom-up and sideways.
Community building – a feeling of belonging through group work and cohesion. Video is a team activity. We have to listen to each other's ideas and respect it.
Critical awareness and consciousness raising – more aware of our surrounding. What our community needs are.

Examples of benefits:
Self concept - Video as a mirror (ex. 2)
Reflective listening (exercise. 3)
Dialogue (amongst members and others)
Conflict management
Collaboration (Location shooting)
Consensus building (script process)

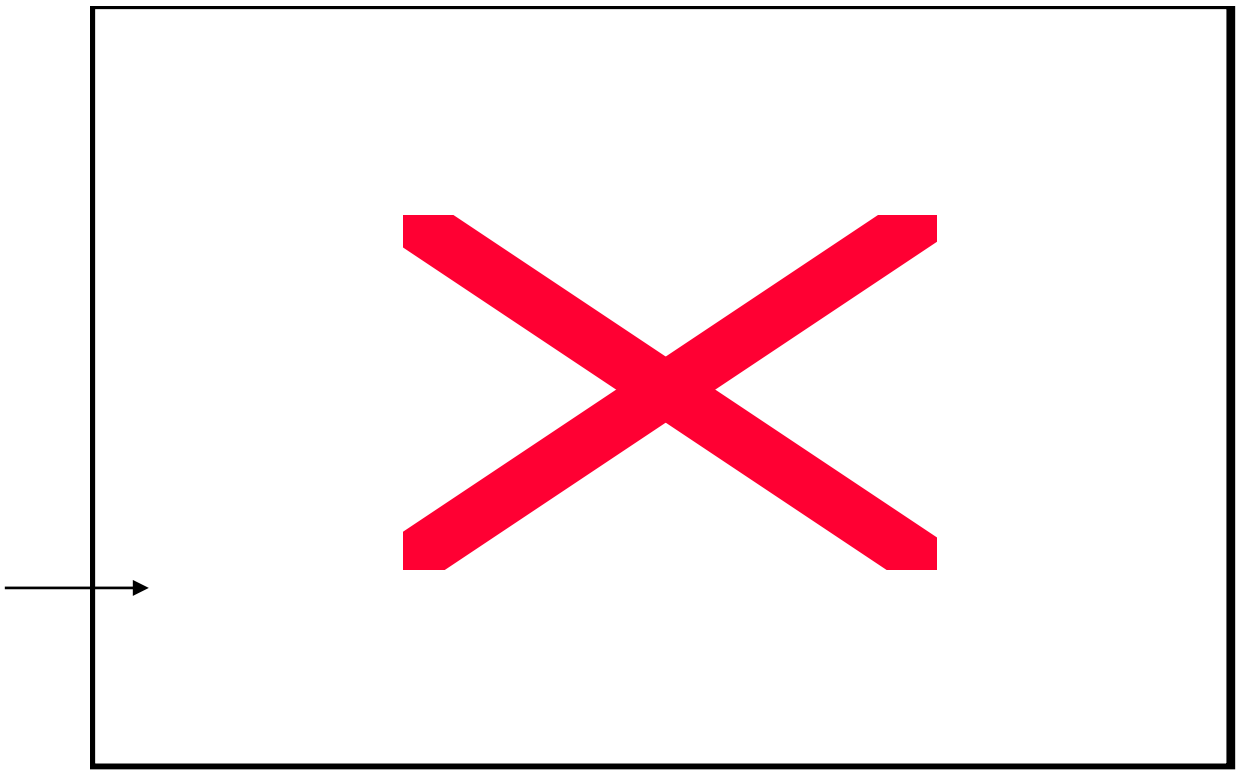
Lesson in creative techniques:
Visual - composition, shot sizes, camera movements and angles
Sound – microphone technique, directional cues

Exercise 3: Interviewing: One and two shot compositions. A host interviews two guests.
Topic: Women's work with the E chutney club. Draft questions.
Remaining class acts as audience and take turns at camera work.
(remind prod. assistant 3-2-1 camera roll then "action")

Exercise 4: Talk show. The women do further exercises with the camera learning to use the microphone and shooting for group situations. They record each other using the principles taught.
Questions: If you could talk to the Prime Minister what would you say?
Your reasons for wanting to learn video production? What do you want to achieve from the process?
Individual aims and Group aim

Day 3
Viewing: Watch what we have taped on a television set.
Discuss starter: How do you feel about appearing on video and seeing yourselves on the screen?

MAP OF THE CENTRAL DIVISION – VITI LEVU



Source: Fiji Government online Portal – Vitilevu – Navua [arrow inserted], Suva, Nausori
http://www.fiji.gov.fj/publish/page_788.shtml

CHAPTER 4

Transforming Images: Ethnography of the PV Process with Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group

This section provides an outline of the video segments on DVD. The visual ethnography of the video production process is presented in sections with titled chapter markers. At various intervals the researcher/facilitator provides narration to either link the segment or explain the process.

Duration 82 minutes

Viewing Guide: The navigation tool allows the viewer several options for watching the programme. To view the whole film activate *Play All*; to watch a separate sequence such as *Introduction* or *Pre-production*, activate the icon next to the word. Each sequence also has subsections with chapter markers which can be viewed individually. *The Main Menu* takes the viewer back to the main navigational tools.

INTRODUCTION

Navua - The narration provides an overview of the people, geography and socio-economic information about Navua district.

Toby's Town – Toby, one of the participants, introduces us to Navua town by giving her own interpretation of the people and places in her town.

PRE-PRODUCTION

In the following segments, I have presented the observational footage with limited editing. Narration has been added as links between segments and to explain the process where necessary. It captures the various phases in the pre-production process which includes three main sessions – discussion of media, the training phase and story development. The segment reflects the ebb and flow of the workshop session with quiet reflective moments and periods of lively discussion.

Women's Views about Media: Facilitator-led discussion about women's own experiences of media. Participants discuss their use of mainstream media and their views about television programmes.

Basic Lesson in Media Literacy – This is aligned to the lesson plan included in the research design.

TRAINING SESSION-
This includes camera training, viewing, and story development sessions in the first two weeks of the workshop.

Women Meet the Camera – the women's first contact with camera.

Group Training – participants learn how to use microphones and to conduct interviews.

The Viewing Session – participants watch themselves and their work on a television screen.

Story Development Session – to identify the theme and formulate a structure for the promotional video we begin with the group's understanding of their own organisation, its mission statement and objectives and how the promotional video will reflect these.

Taking Ownership of Storytelling – the women begin to find their voices and contribute to the story development by naming the activities and location which they would like to be included in the video.

PRODUCTION
This segment includes participant interviews with an overlay of the video footage shot during the location shoot.

Participants share their insights and experiences of the PV process

Information Exchange, Capacity Building and Media Literacy – Nanise Gasara

Moment of Conscientization –Vasiti Daveta

Knowledge Sharing –Bale Kautoga

Creative and Technological Skills – Eceli Gade

Self Representation: Voice of the non-literate – Nirmala Devi

Feeling of Empowerment – Kalisi Ligamas

Capacity Building and Community Development – Toby Anthony

Video as a Mirror – Nureen Das

POST-PRODUCTION
The editing session includes an explanation of the facilitator's approach during this phase.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK
This segment includes interviews with decision makers after they had viewed the DVDs created by the women.

Interviews with Policy Makers
Eseta Duinabua, Divisional Head, Ministry of Women
Maria Matavewa. Director Ministry of Women

Farewell – The wrap-up and farewell scenes.

CONCLUSION
This segment includes videos shot by members of NRWTG during the post research period together with the facilitator/researcher's observations.

THE END

CHAPTER 5

Capturing the Everyday Expressions of Community

For the analysis of the findings, I draw ideas from participatory theories discussed in Chapter One, the socio-cultural, historical and political context of Fiji discussed in Chapter Two and participatory methodology in Chapter Three. The research used participatory action research methodology with the research outcome influenced by the cyclic pattern of planning/action/observation and reflection involving both the participants and the researcher/facilitator. This cycle was influenced by the local context in which the research took place and the participants' own world view emanating from their everyday experiences. Visual ethnography as video documentation assisted in data collection as well as in identifying the themes and patterns that emerged from the recorded footage. A journal kept through the duration of the fieldwork, which included my own reflective self-critique as well as additional participant observation notes, became the basis for the discussion *(see Appendix B and C).* Based on my readings on Pacific epistemology I identified concepts within the local culture which could be inter-linked with key elements in social capital. Networks, social agency, community action, homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings and the cultural significance of community and norms of reciprocity provided a viable set of tools within which to analyse the findings. The discussion also draws from the empowerment framework, especially Rodriguez's thesis of 'citizens' media' as a dynamic site for action and transformation of ordinary citizens. Finally, the PV project is evaluated for its overall success in facilitating dialogue, self-representation, capacity building and community building within the wider context of Fiji's multicultural society.

Navua Women as Active Citizens

Social capital refers to people as active agents and creators of their social world. Rodriguez recognises this agency of community media producers when she argues for the reframing of the theoretical discourse from alternative to 'citizens' media'.

> However, despite their geographic, economic and cultural differences they all have one thing in common: they express the will and agency of a human community confronting historical marginalizing and isolating forces, whatever these may be (2001:63).

The conceptualisation of participatory media or Citizens' media as a 'lived experience' (Ibid) is explored through the ways in which community producers integrate aspects of local networks, norms and practices in their production process and content. The idea of citizenship here shifts from one practised in the context of the State to individuals and communities in their daily expressions of democracy which locate power to the people. Citizenship is a contested term in the Fijian political landscape where the State has promoted first and second class citizens through various policy formulations. The politics of identity has led to different interpretations of citizenship of different communities within Fiji. The true ideals of democracy based on equal rights, freedom of choice and freedom of expression have been elusive, as has finding a common identity for all Fiji 'citizens'. To quote Rev. Yabaki: "Fiji is the only country in the world that does not have a name for all citizens of this country. All communities and individuals need to feel secure in this country and for this to happen; we need to have a sense of national identity" (2007).

However if one shifts the discourse of democratic citizenship from the national to the personal there is greater freedom to engage in these concepts in Fiji. Through their active engagement with community-based media, people are able to capture the true engagement between communities. These expressions then filter back into the national imagination through grassroots media. Aspects of community building and social cohesion become the underlying themes in the production of local content, not driven by a top down agenda of reconciliation,

but through the portrayal of community action in the everyday lived experiences of the producers and the social networks in which they function. It is these types of experiences which are discussed in the collection of essays in *Bittersweet* (Lal, 2004), which recollects a bygone Fiji. As I've observed in Chapter Three, this Fiji is still alive and well in small rural towns, but absent in mainstream media where the hegemonic debates of dysfunctional power elites dominate the daily news headlines. Community based media such as participatory video with its powerful imagery is able to bring these everyday lived experiences into the public realm, celebrating the interdependence and the collective agency of diverse groups in their daily construction of community necessary for the social and economic survival of isolated rural people.

In the video segment entitled *Toby's Town*, Toby brings this classic interpretation of her town and people as she describes the scene in Navua on a busy Saturday morning. This segment brings to light the workings of a community through the eyes of one of its residents in a way which cannot be presented on mainstream media. Toby describes her town and the people that populate it with endearment. Her descriptions of space and location are identified through people from diverse communities who use them. For Toby, it is not the buildings nor the scenery, but the people who live and work in the surrounding rural areas that make this town. She is able to paint a picture of a community of people who collectively contribute to each other's livelihood: "It is that joint thing, they plant, they come, they sell, I buy, so we reap the benefit. I have something on my table to have and I give something to them in return in money." This recognition is important as it does not present these communities as disparate and disconnected, but as an organic whole which enriches the socio-economic system of the district and eventually the nation.

The Freirean pedagogy of 'naming the world', (Huesca, 2006b) is especially relevant here in catalysing community involvement and group dialogue. In naming their world grassroots, producers such as Toby reflect the true nature of their communities through their own lived experiences instead of those framed in hegemonic political debates. By recodifying the established norms and networks producers create new opportunities for dialogue and revitalise atrophied relationships within and between communities. Thus the processes of production and content development become a dynamic site for community building and reconciliation.

Social Agency and Community Action

Agency is the capacity of human beings to act upon their environment in order to bring about change. It is an empowering act by individuals who have developed an awareness about needs in their community. It is a process of conscientization as well as a result of it. "Agency can be understood as the way in which people act on, or assert themselves in, their world […] an element of self determined action" according to Leonard and Onyx (2004:23). They further state, "The development of social capital requires the active and willing engagement of citizens working together within a participative community" (Ibid).

Social agency and community action are the central themes that dominate films made by the women. In the promotional video the women wanted to be presented as active citizens who made significant contributions on a daily basis to the family income through the money they earned from their work, and to the community through their involvement in clubs. This is depicted in the montage sequence in the promotional video in which the working hands of the rural women - chopping, frying, mixing, weaving, knitting, sewing, dyeing – portray these women as aspiring individuals who are integral to the healthy functioning of their society. Stereotyped images of rural women usually portrayed in mainstream media within the bounds

of their home in scenes of poverty or domestic subservience are replaced by empowering images of women at work. In the interviews with women as well as the government officials, this engagement is repeatedly highlighted. In *Toby's Town,* when Toby stands by the river and points out the trees gracing the river bank as those planted by members of the community including herself, she is expressing civic pride of an involved citizen. The hard work that was once put into planting and landscaping was being recognised in the presence of the camera as an important collective action involving diverse groups.

Women exercised agency in other ways as well. The mere decision to participate in the workshop was an act of will, as it meant walking long distances or taking a bus from remote villages, as well as having the bus fare to get to classes. For example, two participants, Eceli and Josy, lived in Mau Village, which had only one bus service into Navua in the morning. When one morning they missed the bus, the women walked for more than an hour to the main road (becoming drenched in a tropical downpour), where they caught another bus into town enabling them to attend the workshop. Women who were widowed or whose husbands were working away from home displayed greater agency than those women who were in hierarchical relationships such as dominant husbands or mothers-in-law who emerged as strong deterrents in the women's involvement in the project. This was especially true in the case of the women from the resettled farming communities of Vakabalea. They not only had to observe strict cultural norms as practised in the socio-cultural environment of their previous abode in Labasa, but also had to learn the codes of behaviour and cultural norms of the communities in which they had been transplanted. Norms can be understood as follows:

> Norms are implicit rules of a given social community. They provide a set of recipes for social interaction. They provide meaning to those interactions. They also contain a judgement, whether of approval or disapproval, of specific forms of engagement (Leonard and Onyx, 2004:184).

In relation to low-status and marginalised groups, Leonard and Onyx observe that a lack of agency may be the result of them "not knowing the social rules of the dominant groups" and

"they may have to reject the legitimacy of current structures in society in order to achieve agency" (Ibid: 42). In the case of the Vakabalea women, the monitoring at home and an awkwardness with a larger community may have led to their lack of involvement in the early stages of the workshop.

Vanua and *Mandali* as Social Networks

Both Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities enjoy rich social networks. Indigenous Fijians enjoy strong networks through their kinship ties as discussed in Chapter 2. The concept of *vanua* in Fijian culture is an all-encompassing one; it refers to the land, the people of the land (Fijians), their values and beliefs, the natural environment as well as the supernatural world (Ravuvu, 1983:14,15). Every Fijian has a strong social bond through the *vanua* as Ravuvu explains:

> It also means a group, the members of which relate socially and politically to one another. They may be staying together in a particular place or scattered widely in various sized groups, each recognising its social and political relationships with the rest (Ibid: 14).

As pointed out earlier, the values embedded in the indigenous philosophy of *vanua* also encourage community building and dialogic possibilities.

Amongst Indo-Fijians of Hindu background the collective is represented through organisations known as *Mandali* or also referred to as *Mandal* which is a Sanskrit word meaning a group or company of people with similar interests and undertaking a common activity. The socio-religious groups in Fiji are known as the *Mahila Mandal* which literally translates as 'women's club', and for the men, the *Ramayan Mandali*, whose prime focus is the study and recital of the Hindu scripture, the *Ramayana*. Similarly, those of Muslim faith have networks through their mosques including socio-religious groups for women.

Women's Networks – A Storehouse of Knowledge

Women's civic participation is assisted by their membership and engagement in social and religious clubs which form a rich web of social networks in both urban and rural areas. The majority of Fijian and Indo-Fijian women belong to some form of club which meets weekly in their local area. Unfortunately, as is the case in most other social institutions in Fiji, there is very limited cross-cultural participation and membership is racially polarised. Fijian women generally belong to the *Soqosoqo Vakamarama ni Taukei* formed in the villages to encourage communal activities such as the making of traditional and contemporary handicraft, fundraising for village or church projects and to prepare feasts and ceremonial items during important traditional events within the village or at Provincial level. For example, during the period of this research, several women from the NRWTG were unable to attend the video workshop because they had been asked to weave mats, do flower arrangements and prepare the food at the opening of the new district courthouse in Navua.

Indian women generally belong to social clubs known as *Mahila Mandal* in the local settlements. Activities include the study of scriptures, religious and folk singing, sewing, and fundraising for the building and maintenance of local temples or community halls. Some clubs encourage members to begin a savings plan using the club's bank account. The patron of one such club explained to me that each woman deposits a small amount every week for a specific purpose. She may be saving for a festival, a family wedding or a club excursion such as a shopping trip to Suva. Meticulous records are kept by the club's treasurer in the presence of all members and funds are distributed as the need arises. For many women the club is their only outlet from the daily grind of home duties and farming.

Empowering message creation must have the critical elements of participation and inclusion of the community (White, 2003). By accessing their social networks, the women's club of

which they were members, the segment producers created dynamic scenes of collective action by the women in their villages and settlements and became active agents of community building. Vunibau village, which has a strong and active *Soqosoqo Vakamarama,* stood out as a good example of how a community rich in social capital can provide strong support for community-led production. More than 30 women arrived at the village community hall to show their skills at craft making. The one thing that impressed me most was the organisational skills of the participants. At every village and settlement to which we went, there was an amazing display of social cohesion. The success of each shoot was dependent on the networks each participant could access in her community. The producers used their strong links with their community to co-ordinate impressive displays of craft, invite participation of their club members and even organise lunch for the visiting crew. The club for these women represented a social lifeline, but in order to maintain their level of social capital they not only harvested its rich resources but also constantly supplemented that resource by giving something back, thus further enriching the network of interdependence, e.g. helping out during a death in the family or a wedding celebration. The resources available through the enabling environment of the club guaranteed the success of our shoots. The production process both enhanced and accessed social networks. The producers of the segment used their support network to create dynamic scenes for our shoots and in so doing gave to the community, especially women, a sense of importance and the ability to represent their lives through a display of their work and talents on camera.

Kerekere **as Reciprocity**

The practice of looking out for each other in times of need is practised in many traditional societies. "Through reciprocity people can learn to trust. Consciously or unconsciously, as relationships develop, favours may be asked for or offered and returned […] It is about a give and take between equals" (Leonard and Onyx, 2004:184).

The act of giving and receiving is entrenched within the traditional value system of the indigenous Fijians. One form of this is commonly referred to as 'kerekere' or 'borrowing favour' and arises out of communal practice. Reciprocity generates unity and continuity. As an important aspect of the Fijian social system Ravuvu (1983:250) presents the concept schematically in the following equation:

> Positive relationship = reciprocation = recognition, respect and appreciation = strengthening of the bond = incorporation and unity = continuity.
> Negative relationship = non-reciprocation = non-recognition, lack of respect and appreciation = weakening and breaking of the bond = separation and disunity = discontinuity.

Our visit to each village was marked by the giving and receiving of gifts in the *sevusevu,* the ceremonial exchange of kava. As visitors to the village, we took a gift of kava to the chief and in return the chief offered us a gift of kava as we explained our reason for the visit to the village and asked for permission to shoot in the village hall. It was also a mutual recognition and respect for one another.

Indo-Fijians in rural communities are also renowned for their generosity of spirit and exchange, despite the fact that they are stereotyped as individualistic. Although many of the norms of village life found in India have been lost through cultural isolation and forced integration during the indenture system, rural families show respect to visitors through the offer of a rich sweet milky tea (*chai*) within minutes of arrival at a house. A visitor also usually takes a gift of sweets.

The women strongly identified reciprocity as a strength of their club during the story development session, as the club president Bale noted: "It's give and take. Whatever I know I give and what ever they know they give". This exchange of skills amongst the women has led

to knowledge-sharing and capacity building which have improved their ability to earn an income as noted by Das (2005) in her assessment of the club's strengths.

Engendering Trust in the Displaced Community

Establishing trust with the community is vital to the success of participatory projects. Finding a community leader who has the trust of all sections of the community and the authority to engage with them is essential. In my case this person was the Senior Women's Interest Officer, Nanise Gasara who became the intermediary between the women and me. She had a close and personal relationship with the women and had their respect. Even men in the community trusted her well enough to allow their wives to go for the club meeting in town. Nani also became an important interlocutor in my understanding of the community, their norms and values.

Women from three different communities in Navua participated in the workshop – indigenous Fijian women who lived in the village and those who lived independently, Indian women who were long-term residents of Navua, and the re-settled displaced farmers from Vakabalea. It was interesting to observe the interplay between these three groups of women. The indigenous women and the long-term residents seemed to have an easy-going relationship with each other and were enthusiastic about becoming involved. They had a sense of ownership about the area in which they lived. The Fijian women were the most enthusiastic participants. The new settlers were reluctant and needed much encouragement to join the group, to the extent of my own door-knocking to persuade them. Their participation was a direct result of their trust in Nanise and they came to the workshop "because Nani had called us".

Here Kothari's (2002) critique of participatory methodology is especially relevant. She cautions researchers that participation can duplicate the social hierarchy at the grassroots.

This may happen through the acts of inclusion, self-exclusion and non-participation. The most marginalised may not participate through self-exclusion. This was true in the case of the resettled Vakabalea women who are the most marginalised group in the area. They had excluded themselves from the process, because of their weak links with the wider community and consequently a lack of trust. Their participation was assured through my own doorknocking and, more significantly, after Nani's phone calls and assurances to the husbands that the women would return home immediately after the meetings.

Further, Leonard and Onyx (2004) posit that isolated communities (such as the resettled farmers), do not need to 'shift' from bonding to bridging in order to 'get ahead', but may find other ways to forge links with other communities such as seeking the assistance of a 'trusted professional' who may become a valuable ambassador in this process. They further state:

> Clearly people with this professional status can play a strategic role in facilitating connections across groups. However, professional standing is not enough. In order to be a useful link, the professional needs to have demonstrated a commitment to the values of the community (Ibid: 70).

In this study, Nanise played this key role ensuring that women returned home in time, and gave assurance to husbands through phone calls if they were late. She also ensured community representation, facilitating a central training location and becoming an information conduit between the participants and me as the researcher/facilitator.

Uslaner and Conley (2003) distinguish between the types of trust based on people's engagement in either outward looking or inward looking groups. Outward looking people are *generalized trusters.* They are willing to trust strangers, and believe that sharing common values and social interaction with people unlike themselves can be rewarding. They are the ones most likely to form bridging social capital. Inward looking people are *particularized trusters*, who may play an active role within their own social groups but are less likely to participate in "civic engagement in the larger community" (Ibid:333, 335).

As per (Uslaner, 1997) the three-factor structure, which distinguishes between various types of trust, the Vakabalea displaced farmers exhibited a high level of particularised (thick) trust, preferring to network with friends and family and a lower level of generalised (thin) trust, such as relating to strangers and a minimal level of trust of government. This community was not as functional as the others, who demonstrated greater trust and consequently stronger relationships with other communities or government structures. However, they did have strong links within their own units of extended family members. A link between empowerment and social capital is apparent here. Lack of trust of the government, the wider community or the new situation can preclude marginalised communities from engaging in self-development and community action. I wondered how this same community would have performed if the video workshop had taken place in Labasa, their old place of residence in which they had a defined social structure and strong social networks. Their inclusion in the video workshop was facilitated by my own desire as the researcher to actively pursue them rather than through their own initiative.

Bridging the Divide with PV

Norris states that 'rich and dense associational networks facilitate the underlying conditions for interpersonal trust, tolerance and cooperation' (2002:3). In Fiji women belong to these networks through membership in clubs which are strong in the bonding dimension of social capital in what Putnam describes as "ethnic fraternal organizations" (2000:22), but weak in forging bridging networks, especially across ethnic lines, which is essential in trust building and social cohesion. The clubs are ethno-specific, formed along gender lines, and exclusive to local villages and settlements. With the formation of the NRWTG, membership was extended to cross cultural groups bringing exclusively local and ethnic groups together, thus creating a bridging dimension. This bridging network brought new skills and knowledge of individual members (human capital) into a common pool, which enriched the social capital of individual

members. The women met at a central location for their activities and established closer bonds with their colleagues who came from diverse backgrounds. Building on this resource, the video production then enabled the women to actually extend the bridging ties by visiting each other's clubs, villages and settlements leading to greater dialogue and understanding. The visit created a greater transference of knowledge and cross-cultural understanding. One participant of Indo-Fijian background noted: "Living in Navua, I've never been to a koro (Fijian village) before, but the camera allowed me to experience this opportunity" (Priya, pers. comm., 2005). Through her involvement in the production process, Priya was able to visit both Mau and Vunibau Villages during the course of the filming. She also formed closer ties with two Fijian girls from Vunibau Village who were also in the production team. One of the girls, Anna, who was planning to celebrate her 21st birthday in the village, invited Priya to her party. Unfortunately, cultural norms precluded Priya from accepting the invitation as most Indian girls are not allowed to go out in the evenings unless they are accompanied by a family member. Another participant, Josy, who was from Mau Village, asked me if she could be on the production team when we visited Vunibau Village "because I've heard a lot about that village but have never been invited to visit there". Similarly, Fijian participants also visited the homes of Indian women, especially in Vakabalea where they had never been before.

Dialogue and Knowledge Sharing Beyond the Kitchen Table

When people make their own content, their understanding of their own community grows. Video has the power to begin dialogue through group work and cultural exchange, thus assisting in reconciliation between communities which have experienced a history of conflict (Rodriguez, 2004). Video production encourages transactional communication through the various stages of the production process as an ongoing dynamic process of building relationships where "communication is truly something we do *with* others and not *to* them" (Adler and Rodman, 2003:28). True learning is based on dialogue between equals. But to be

able to achieve it, a strong foundation of love, faith and humility which engenders mutual trust is necessary (Freire, 1984:79).

The story development session turned into a dialogic encounter between the women as each shared her own perception of what the club meant to her. From these individual insights a theme for the video emerged. The story development exercise demonstrates that the process engaged the women in a constructive dialogue through which they identified the strengths and weaknesses of their club. Again, the multi-ethnic nature of their club emerged as the main strength. The cultural diversity of members allowed for a greater mix of knowledge and skills amongst the women. The Fijian women learned to make chutneys and Indo-Fijian women learned to make new types of jams. But this exchange was of far greater significance than mere activities at the kitchen table. Fijian and Indo-Fijian women were engaging cross-culturally and recognising each other's strengths instead of seeing each other through a prism of fear and distrust. The video images reflected this collaborative partnership between the two races and could be shared with other communities. Through a feedback loop of viewing and reviewing the videos, the participants also identified strengths and weaknesses in their own practice. For example, women realised that they had forgotten to use gloves and hair nets while cooking the dalo chips, an important aspect of hygiene required in the commercial production of food. During the script development phase, through the active participation of Nanise and community development worker, Nureen Das, the women also gained a clearer understanding of their club's main objectives and its mission statement.

At a meeting with the Director of the Ministry of Women, Mrs Maria Matavewa, I played the DVD which the women had produced. She instantly understood the power of the images as she responded enthusiastically: "I wish I had this DVD with me yesterday when I met with

the Prime Minister to show him what our women are doing." Matavewa also recognised the 'information sharing and knowledge dissemination' potential of video:

> I do believe that this technology is a must for our communication and information unit. Not only that, to be able to empower the women's groups that are out there, in terms of the social and economic empowerment program, I believe this must be a tool that must be owned by our officers that go out, and also to promote the use of this tool amongst the groups that they work with, to be able to document and have it as a living document for their future reference.
>
> I really and truly believe that if the facilities are to be sustained over the years to come than this technology must be owned by the community. But we must facilitate, in whatever way possible, that this technical know-how must be able to get out to the community at large (M. Matavewa, pers.comm., 2006).

By watching the women in action, the Director realised the value of community-based production in community development and dialogue. Seeing women proactively engaging in the process of production allowed her to link the use of communication technology to empowerment and community development through its knowledge sharing potential.

The act of sitting together and watching the finished product provided the group with opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. A sample of responses of the women in the evaluation questionnaire also provides examples of how they began to understand the benefits of video in the development of their community and themselves, besides using it to market their products:

> "It has allowed me to see that my community is of importance..."
> "It encourages the community as a whole to use video technology so that things taking place in the community are shown world wide."
> "By using this new skill, I'd record ceremonies like funerals, birthdays, weddings or village bazaars"

The women were able to apply their social networks to produce video stories which were important to them and their communities, and to dialogue on issues that concerned them. For example, during the interview session on the second day of the production workshop, the women discussed an issue that had gripped the nation and was widely reported in the media. Three sisters from an Indo-Fijian family had gone missing while on a picnic trip with a family

friend. It was front page news in the *Fiji Times* on the first day of our training and became a topic of discussion between the Fijian and the Indo-Fijian participants about the strict norms of the community and why this had broken down.

Representation or Self-presentation?

I argue here that these videos are not mere representations of women's lives, but powerful self-presentations by the women who made conscious choices about narrative structure and visual techniques throughout the production process; story development, choice of location, placement of camera, choice of shots, and editing decisions about what and who to include in the finished programmes. As a signifying practice representation has been framed in ideas of 'difference' and in the reading of the subject as the 'other' through the practice of stereotyping and media construction (Hall, 1997). On the other hand, presentation carries an intrinsic notion of control of the message by the subject. The fact that video is seen in the hands of a rural woman itself subverts the stereotype. The content can be understood as a reflection of the everyday lived experience of the presenter.

Sue Braden has argued that the camcorder has "offered *another* reading and writing and removes dependence on the mechanics of alphabetisation in order to record and transmit voices, images and ideas" (Braden, 1999). "The tapes can provide a conduit between under-represented, non- or less literate groups and those they would not normally be able to address" (1999:119). In the case of the NRWTG, the videotapes helped the bureaucrats to reassess their own views of the group. The recorded images created a vital shift in the imagination of the bureaucracy. Suddenly, the women's activities, as presented on video, gained in status and importance in the minds of the bureaucrats. People who sit in their offices making important policy decisions could now be included into this world of the women's everyday lives and aspirations. The video images legitimised women's work and became the catalyst for rural

women to be re-imagined by the bureaucrats. By their skilful use of technology and their confident appearance in front of the camera (something the bureaucrats themselves struggled with) the women re-presented themselves as active citizens capable of negotiating their own futures instead of state dependants who waited for top down mechanism to intervene. After viewing the completed video segments produced by the women, the visiting Divisional Head from the Ministry of Women, observed how participatory video projects like this can be integrated into the Ministry's policy and practice:

> We've been reading the reports, (rather) than looking at the actual output of what they've done… it tells a lot. This is a very good educational tool even for us, a very beneficial tool that we can use for other projects or issues such as violence against women. This could be a very good tool for mainstreaming women into the development process of the whole community (E. Duinabua, pers. comm., 2005).

People in positions of power saw for the first time what the women were capable of achieving. They were not just a women's group doing whatever women do within the walls of their home, but active, engaged and empowered people who had successfully used modern technology to present themselves and their talents to the wider world.

To own their media people must be able to relate it to their own language and socio-cultural practices. It has to be embedded in their everyday life experiences. Producing within their local context allowed the women to integrate the social and cultural values of their society and develop their own production culture, instead of using foreign production values. This was an excellent example of how technology can be made to conform to peoples' way of life. If these women had been brought into the studio to talk they would have been awed by the technology and the urban environment. Instead the camera came into their life space. The interviews took place in their homes, the community halls – familiar places in their lives. The cameras rolled as they sat on the floor where they feel most comfortable instead of on chairs. Location then became an important aspect of their presentation. The subject of discussion was their lives, their skills and their communities, about which they were experts and spoke about these things with great ease and delight. It validated their lives and the importance that camera

gave to it. With a new understanding of how communities can engage with video, appropriate government services can provide enabling environments in which communities have access to this technology for their own development.

The promotional video has become much more than a tool through which they can sell their products. It has become a development message in itself as the Divisional Head observed. Even the song *Chalo Chale Bahine Bisnis Karenge* penned by Nirmala Devi has a development message. The Fiji Hindi lyrics translate as follows:

Let us go sisters, let's start a business
Let us go sisters, let's start a business
Let us go sisters, let's make chutney
Let us make chutney in Navua,
Sell it in Suva and in Nausori
Let us go sisters, let's start a business
Let us go sisters, let's start a business
Let's make sweets and doillies
Let's make pickles and jam...

Nirmala, a woman who has no formal education, became an important aspect of the promotional video by writing the lyrics of the song above. This aspect of her inclusion and the validation of her skill as a folk singer added to her sense of pride. She told me during the recording process that she liked the fact that she could review the footage instantly after recording. The instant feedback allowed her to revise the lyrics by listening to the song instead of relying on others to write and re-read these back to her. This confirms Padma Guidi's assertion that video has given voice to non-literate women by bridging "the oral with the technical" thus allowing their voices to be heard (2003). In India *Video SEWA* members who are illiterate, self-employed women also found that one of the most empowering qualities of video was its instant playback feature, which encouraged collaboration between producers and subjects (Gumucio Dagron, 2002). Video offered a non-written form of communication through which the women could showcase their real talents without being constrained by the written word, over which they did not have mastery.

Media Literacy

In a 1997 study of the Cape Cod Community Television in Massachusetts, King and Mele shift their analysis of video from the "product" to its production. By documenting the experiences of the local producers, they found that the act of producing itself was "socially and politically transformational"(1999:605). By increasing their knowledge of production, volunteer access producers developed greater media literacy skills and an ability to critically examine mainstream media content. They note, "Within the prevailing reality of corporate media dissemination, the production of information – the transformation from idea to content – is itself a reflective process" (Ibid: 607).

The women recognised the top-down hegemonic structure of mainstream media when they voiced their frustrations at being unable to tell their own stories in mainstream media or influence media content in entertainment programming. For example, Toby wanted to celebrate local community effort to support the hospital after the floods in Navua by inviting the mainstream media to cover the event, but was unable to do so. Toby's experience led her to observe: 'My general opinion of the media at that time was very bad; either they build or they destroy'. She recognised the immense responsibility as well as the power of media in building social cohesion, or sustaining the rupture through their failure to report on issues and events, which highlight collective agency. Nanise also reflected this frustration when she commented on inappropriate entertainment programs such as *Desperate Housewives* and *Shortland Street* which infiltrate local cultures and values "because there is no other program to see...". Toby and Nanise, who had higher media literacy skills through exposure, were able to critically engage with mainstream media content. Toby was more adept at media filtering and meaning construction (Potter, 2004) while the other women recognised their lack of media literacy skills on the first day of the workshop session. However, as they engaged in the production process and began to understand visual grammar, they became critically aware of

the way in which story telling can be manipulated by the choice of shots or the questions they asked. The capacity-building aspect of PV was reflected in the women's aspirations to become part of technological change, as reflected in Vasiti's comment: "This day I'll never, never forget in my life". Kalesi described it as a "privilege" and realised how this type of training would be out of their reach - "only available at universities" - and very expensive to undertake.

Another study of community television in Columbus, Ohio, found that the volunteer's experience in media creation and video training leads to media literacy and media demystification (Higgins, 1999). This experience leads to a degree of empowerment for the volunteers who, through self-reflection, become aware of oneself, others and society. Higgins argues that this awareness extends out from the individual to the collective "transforming both in the process" (Ibid:641). However Rodriguez (2001:122) cautions that empowerment arising from media literacy should be evaluated against the "mythical" power which our society has bestowed on video and television technology.

By comparing their own 'performance' on camera with those of television reporters and journalists, the participants demonstrated that their initial contact with the camera was influenced by their past reading of televised images. For example, Bale affirms her own ability to perform on camera by her comment, "If they can do it then why can't I?", or Toby's concerns about why women had conducted their interviews sitting on the floor when on television people sit on chairs during interviews. I drew her attention to the fact that by choosing to sit on the floor the women were simply mirroring the everyday cultural practice in the village, where people sat on the floor instead of on chairs, thus incorporating the norms and values of their culture within the production process. Instead of slavishly copying mainstream production values, communities are willing to incorporate local cultural practices

within their production process once they gain insight into how these can express their cultural identity.

An essential exercise in relating media technology to community development and social change was to discuss examples of how other communities have used various forms of media for cultural preservation, information dissemination, or group empowerment in other parts of the world. By reading stories from *Making waves: stories of participatory communication for social change* (Gumucio Dagron, 2001) women began to understand the concept of communication for social change. Further, discussion of news stories reported in the local daily newspaper about issues such as suicide or depression brought insights into how these issues can be integrated in the production of community development messages. The women began to see new ways in which they could put this tool to use in their own storytelling. The facilitator's role here was vital in helping participants make connections with everyday challenges facing the community and ways in which media can be used for education through information dissemination and knowledge sharing.

The Facilitator's Role

As I re-read my journal almost a year after the workshops, I began to see interesting lessons in it for me as the facilitator of the video workshop. One of the main aspects of facilitating participatory video is to let the ideas come from the people – an organic process that feeds off the dynamism of the group process. I can see now that I was constantly worried about how things would work out – or not work out, how much direction should I give, who should shoot what, or how many participants should be allowed into the workshop. But in the end it worked out because these decisions came from the group. However, this does not mean that I took a totally hands off approach. As facilitator it was still necessary to create a road map and structure the workshop (Shaw and Robertson, 1997), but in a way that would allow a good

idea to be integrated, reflecting Galbraith's observation that the transactional process requires "collaboration, support, respect, freedom, equality, critical reflection, critical analysis, challenge, and praxis" from both facilitator and learner (1991:3). In this way, I also influenced the success of the PV process through my previous knowledge of community media as well as my own enthusiasm and ability to incorporate an egalitarian approach in the facilitation of the workshop. I also influenced the participation of Indo-Fijian groups who were initially absent.

Several women could not fully participate in the project due to the many demands of family and community. At first these absences irked me, but very quickly a realisation dawned that the club was only one part of their socially engaged lives. Each woman was also a mother who was involved in arranging her son's wedding or her daughter's engagement, or had to mind the village co-operative store, or attend the women's club of which she was president or secretary. They were not individual units but part of a larger community network which also needed their skills. As such, it was important for me as the facilitator to remain flexible and establish strong interpersonal communication with the women (White, 2003). I also realised that despite the women's enthusiasm, the project would have become a burden if it had taken place over a longer period of time.

My concern that the women may feel alienated from the technology or feel that the exercise was peripheral to their life dissipated as they responded with enthusiasm. Letting them handle the camera immediately and beginning shooting exercises on the first day of training gave them a sense of ownership. The importance of storytelling overtook the fear of technology. The point is not to overwhelm them, but give them skills in small bite-sizes whereby they can experience a sense of achievement. By allowing people to work in groups at their own pace, without the presence of an authoritative teacher figure, leaders, such as Priya and Nanise,

began to emerge. Those who had greater knowledge in the use of technology took on the role of teaching the others. For the long-term sustainability of the participants' skills, it is recommended that short intensive workshops (run over three days) be repeated within six months. In my case, this was not possible because of limited financial resources that I had at my disposal as the researcher/facilitator.

Empowerment and Transformation

Empowerment and transformation cannot be quantified, it can only be observed in the way subjects react to their own circumstances and the world around them. Small hints of changing self-image were represented in the way the women came dressed the next day; some wore make up, some flowers in their hair. The experience of seeing oneself reflected back on the TV screen leads one to identity construction and self-definition which are "necessary prerequisites for personal empowerment" (White, 2003:66). A moment of emerging community consciousness which stands out came during my interview with Vasiti Daveta. Vasiti is the daughter of a chief in Vunibau village and is married to a man who has a good job in the city. During the shoot in her village, Vasiti interviewed a woman who made sasa brooms from palm fronds to earn a living for her family. Vasiti had known this woman for many years, but for the first time, during the interview, she realised the dire plight of this family. As she related this story to me she could not hold back her tears. This was the moment when she became critically aware of her own community through the experiences of the people who inhabit it alongside her.

By locating the video training in the women's club, the technology was not appropriated by the village hierarchy; rather, it gained legitimacy within the recognised social structure and received support from the village hierarchy. The men saw it as "women's business' and did not become threatened by their new skills. Yet the camera had opened up a space for the

women to go places where they would not have considered going before, such as the official opening of the local court house, when young Josy sat in the front filming the opening ceremony. The camera also gave them the means to record what was familiar to them in their everyday lives in their own chosen language. This ownership over storytelling and the freedom to choose their own content, visual style and language empowered them as demonstrated by the participant interviews during the production phase.

Conclusion

The video content produced by the women did not address political or economic issues; rather, it represented women's work, their abilities, their skills and their potential as income producers, as well as their empowering networks. Participatory video assisted in shifting knowledge and power away from the elites and located it within subordinate groups. Toby, for example, recognised that video would give her the means to make her own messages instead of waiting for the mainstream media to tell her stories. Several women had already asked family members living overseas to send them a video camera. Kalesi's son, who was an officer in the British Army, had brought a video camera when he came home to get married. She told me with a glint in her eye "it is the first thing I'll grab from him before he returns to England". Having found their voices, the women were keen to use video to capture the "impressions and expressions" of their daily life to effectively communicate their hopes and aspirations to the world. Their knowledge of video production had opened up new ways of recording their voices. These women had proved that technology was no barrier to their storytelling. The knowledge they had gained had also quietly made them confident about the Information Age, as one of the participants said to me, "this is the era of technology and we've been invited to become part of it".

Conclusion

This research has found that community based media such as participatory video, with its powerful imagery, is able to bring the everyday lived experiences into the public realm, celebrating the interdependence and the collective action of diverse groups in their daily construction of community necessary for the social and economic survival of isolated rural people. Community media producers use media technologies such as video to reflect their communities in their daily interactions and in so doing allow the subaltern voices and images to surface from their hidden spaces to challenge the hegemonic discourses pervading the national psyche. These images represent people's lives and their interactions with each other, as well as their needs and aspirations, which are far removed from the divisive politics of urban elites.

Specifically, this research has found that participatory video enables:

1. bridging links between individuals and communities;
2. community cohesion through trust building and dialogue;
3. capacity building and knowledge accumulation through information exchange, ICT training and a deeper understanding of video's use in development;
4. community and individual representation through program creation and its exchange within and between communities.

The use of video by the members of the Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group highlights the connections rather than the disconnections between groups. By working collectively, Navua women invited inclusion across race, religion, age and socio-economic groups, thus ensuring 'fair representation and equal participation of women […] as active producers of

meaning' (Riano, 1994:452). By expressing their citizenship through the empowering process of production, the women were able to locate power to the people. Citizenship in this interpretation is not the politicised and contentious term in relation to state power or politics, but the expression of one's own agency in the individual's everyday lived experience. By engaging in the everyday expression of democracy, producers become agents of change, thus empowering themselves and their communities. This is the concept of citizenship that Rodriguez has used in relation to citizens' media.

Another significant finding of this research was the importance of encouraging multi-ethnic or heterogeneous social networks in Fiji in projects of nation building and reconciliation. The research participants observed that the multi-ethnic membership was the most important feature of their club. Women from various ethnic communities brought their diverse skills and cultural knowledge to the common table to be shared in reciprocal acts of sisterhood. The production process and the programme content brought into the public sphere this engagement of the women working in solidarity to improve their own lives as well as those of their family and community.

During the course of the project, I discovered a powerful use of video by the women within a dynamic environment of social relationships and community engagement by accessing the rich web of rural women's clubs in Fiji. The content produced by the women also became an important element in social cohesion, not only because it created new links, but because it also reflected the interactions, the goodwill and the inter dependence of diverse communities, thus capturing the true nature of community in Fiji.

For a society to prosper within a culture of peace and goodwill, it needs to encourage dialogic and participatory environment to create effective links between diverse and disparate parts

amongst its citizens. It is not enough for communities to have strong 'bonding' elements which bind homogeneous groups; 'bridging' dimensions which encourage associations across gender, ethnic, social and geographic divides are also necessary to engender inclusiveness and cohesion. Strategic action is required in multicultural societies to encourage this network of linkages to flourish. This can be brought about through participatory politics and planned intervention by the government by implementing community programs which encourage dialogue between alienated groups with an aim towards reconciliation. In the absence of a national policy of social integration, civil society organisations (CSOs) can play an important role in fostering bridging strategies. This may come in various forms such as face-to-face dialogue between groups and planned forums or through the strategic use of media technology. In this regard, the study supports the proposition that participatory video can be used as a tool within projects of development and reconciliation to link diverse communities and assist in building a cohesive society in Fiji. The use of PV as a strategic tool within larger projects of social change will also ensure its sustainability in the long term.

At the same time, this research also recognises that the Fijian society is profoundly beset by prejudice and mutual distrust between the two major ethnic groups, Fijian and Indo-Fijians, instigated by a history of political and social separation. These deep-seated fears cannot be erased from the national memory through the intervention of community-based media alone. However, participatory media which gives communities the power over message production can offer a valuable channel for dialogic communication, if managed within a reconciliation agenda, as Rodriguez has observed: "Indeed peace building is a process of message exchange among parties in conflict that escalates into tolerance, acceptance of difference, and negotiation. Without communication peace is unthinkable; communication is the raw material of peace" (2000:147).

As discussed by the community media practitioners, community centred media can play a vital role in the reconciliation process by opening discussions on issues that affect the whole nation and by reflecting the spirit of goodwill and the voices and aspirations of common people in Fiji. One media NGO that is making strides in this area is femLINK community radio for women which has been facilitating community radio productions within the agenda of Peace and Security, promoted in the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which invites gender perspectives in conflict prevention and peace building efforts. This work can be further supported by other civil society organisations such as the Fiji Media Watch or even high schools which can incorporate small media in projects of peace building to encourage cross-cultural dialogue.

On a personal note, this journey to find a way of connecting the two cultures through the use of communication technology was also transformational for me. As an Indo-Fijian child, I grew up in Fiji acutely aware of two ethnic groups living side by side with little knowledge of each other's culture and language. By undertaking this research and working alongside indigenous and Indo-Fijian communities, I have become aware of the richness of the two local social systems and the accommodating qualities of the Fijian culture. It has awakened in me a deep respect for Fijian traditions and knowledge systems which 18 years of schooling had not been able to provide in Fiji.

As a community we need to reinvent our relationships and find new opportunities to discuss indigenous cultural concepts of *vanua* and *vakaviti* within a wider public sphere, by aligning these ideas to contemporary dialogic exchanges and community cohesion within the context of contemporary Fiji, as discussed by Huffer and Qalo (2004), and Tuwere (2002). If a concerted effort is to be made towards intercultural communication between the ethnic groups in Fiji then core traditional beliefs which drive fear and suspicion between communities need

to be discussed openly, reframed and given new meanings within the context of the current conflict. Indo-Fijians also need to become more open to the core cultural values of the indigenous culture and knowledge.

In local media production, an attempt has to be made to understand how the production methodology and content can integrate local knowledge and epistemologies. Participatory video can become a tool for reinscribing oral and performance based cultures in the Pacific which are struggling to survive in the face of global media products and the transmigration of islanders. The idea of a networked and connected world has become a reality for Pacific Islanders with the rollout of broadband to the villages via the Rural Internet Connectivity Systems (RICS) being coordinated through the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). Community Media Centres (CMCs), with broadband Internet, a camera and a computer, can be set up in rural areas. Solomon Islands communications expert, Ashley Wickham, has suggested the use of small cameras in each village 'in a reality TV style' set-up with images streaming back to the Internet about important village events (pers. comm., 2008). My own recommendation is for more selective use of cameras, whereby small groups of women, men, and youth in the community can be trained in multimedia use and allowed equal access to the technology.

In the area of cultural preservation, groups can place a variety of content on the internet e.g. music by village bands, production of arts and craft, cultural practices and songs, and even weddings and birthday parties. Island diaspora communities in many parts of the world can become participants in these ceremonies or family events as they happen in real time as Wickham has alluded, or they can be placed as edited content to be downloaded and watched later. This type of content not only has personal benefits of linking diaspora Pacific communities with their homeland cousins, but is also significant in preserving oral cultural

practices. The networking ability of the Internet can further enhance social networking by linking hundreds of women's groups in urban and rural areas all over Fiji and across the Pacific region. Community media, which has a defined cultural exchange agenda, can make a significant contribution to cross-cultural understanding within the region.

Rennie observes: "With its focus upon social capital, as well as content production and training, community media" favours "'endogenous' development approach to ICTs and media" (2006:153). PV can enable the essential bridging dimension in social capital to link diverse communities. Through the channel of small-format video the women in this research found a way to record not only their own voices, but also those of other women in their communities. Healthy and functioning social networks which invite multi-ethnic membership, as in the case of the NRWTG, are essential structures within which the process of PV or other forms of participatory media can become embedded. It is a place where communities can link up, share their knowledge and communicate their concerns. At this point it is worth revisiting Latin American educator, Luis Peirano's (2006) appeal to development communicators – to 'make' a different kind of communication, which 'forms' rather than 'informs' the communicative capabilities of communities, transforming people and, thereby, their lives.

In the case of Fiji, participatory media can assist in forming alliances, forming united communities and forming a vision for a nation which is able to accommodate everyone, regardless of race or gender. When communities actively participate in communication processes they learn to engage with each other, thus improving their understanding of the other and the underlying concerns which drive their action. By watching the community of women from diverse backgrounds working together, other communities may also see the benefit of working cross-culturally to build their own personal skills as well as their

communities'. Unity in diversity can create not only a socially cohesive society but also one that is economically and politically viable.

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List of Interviews

The following interviews were conducted by the researcher between 2003 and 2006 during her various visits to Fiji. The interviews are available as video recordings and are in the researcher's possession.

1. John Yates, Founder and Station Manager, Community Television Fiji, 18 December, 2003.

2. Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Coordinator, femLINKPACIFIC – Media Initiatives for Women, 29 April, 2005.

3. Vili Nadaku, Station Manager, Radio Pasifik FM 88.8, 27 April, 2005.

4. Agatha Ferei, Media and Community Relations Officer, Fiji Media Watch, 28 April, 2005.

5. Eseta Duinabua, Divisional Head, Ministry of Women, 3 August, 2005

6. Maria Matavewa, Director, Ministry of Women, 19 January, 2006.

7. The personal communication with Mr Ashley Wickham, Solomon Islands Communications Consultant, took place in the form of a conversation during Asia Pacific Week 2008, Australian National University, 29 January-1 February, 2008.

Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Name of Project: **Participatory Media and Social Change in Fiji**

You are invited to participate in a study of participatory media process. The purpose of the research is to study the potential of participatory media production process and its capacity for individual transformation and social change. The study is being conducted by Usha Sundar Harris, Media Department, Macquarie University, NSW 2109. Australia Tel: 9850 8786. Email: uharris@scmp.mq.edu.au. (Fiji Mobile: 9330673) The research is "being conducted to meet the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under the supervision of Prof. Phil Hayward, Tel. +61-2-9850-9245, Department of Contemporary Music Studies, Division of Humanities, Macquarie University NSW 2109 Australia.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to join in a video production workshop for a six week period, 3 times a week to create a video documentary which will highlight a community concern or achievement. The content of the documentary will be decided by the participants through collaborative workshop sessions run by the researcher. The participants will progress through the various stages of pre-production, production and post production learning in the process to write a script, use a video camera, microphone and tripod, and digital editing software on an imac computer. The workshop sessions and the production process will be recorded on video by the researcher for the purposes of her own research and for inclusion in a video documentary. At different phases participants will be asked to share their feelings about their involvement in the project and the impact it is having on their understanding of themselves and their place within the group or community. At the end of the workshop, participants will complete a media product, the distribution of which will be left at their discretion. The researcher will use her own video footage towards a 30 minute documentary which will be submitted as part of her doctoral thesis. This will be in addition to the video documentary produced by the participants.

Any personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential. However the nature of the project demands that video footage shot by the researcher as well as by the participants may be publicly screened for community or study purposes. Any persons appearing in the video will have to be identified.

If you decide not to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I,……..have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name:
(block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____Date:

Investigator's Name: USHA SUNDAR HARRIS
(block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date:

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through its Secretary (telephone 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix B

Field Notes – Expanded Observations

(These notes provide supplementary information and may be read in conjunction with the Findings Chapter – the DVD).

Monday July 4, 2005 Video Session 1

Mrs Khan, the taxi driver, picked me up at 8.30am in her cab. The previous night I had carefully checked through the equipment – the two training cameras, the tripods, the cables, the extension leads and power board. I also checked my own camera to make sure all was in working order. Since I was unsure if there was a whiteboard in the training room, I prepared all my notes for a PowerPoint presentation. This proved to be a boon. I felt quite confident about the morning session. The training room was in the Ro Matanitabua Office, the regional administrative centre. It is a busy place with many different administrative offices. Groups of people were milling around the large entrance area outside as well as the reception hall inside. I wondered if my workshop had attracted such a crowd. To my relief the crowd was there to collect their monthly vouchers from the Social Welfare office. Inside the Navua Women's Interest Office I was greeted by two young girls, Priya, an Indian and Ana a Fijian. Both had been hired as volunteers by Nanise, the Women's Interest Officer, to provide facilitation support for the video workshop and the Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group (NRWTG). Nanise greeted me from her desk which had a computer and a large number of files. The girls took my equipment cases and carried them into the training room. The room was large, well lit and airy with louvered windows. Inside there were two Fijian women waiting at the large oval table with chairs around it. They greeted me as I entered. I decided to find my seat at one end of the table. Behind me I set up my camera which I could operate with the remote and set the lens on wide angle. This camera was going to record the workshop session. I gave some name labels to Priya for the participants to wear. The workshop was scheduled to begin at 9am but participants were observing Fiji time – about half an hour later than the scheduled time. I decided to show Priya and Ana how to set up the tripod and basic functions on the camera such as the record button, the effect of placing a gun mike and how to monitor sound through the head phone - a function which was on my camera but missing on the training cameras. Nazia Ali, a USP media graduate who was my research and production assistant, could not come today. Priya and Ana were going to help me set up if needed. 9.30am and there were only 4-5 women. Someone assured me that the women would be there by 10am

which is when they normally met. By 10am we had at least 12 women. Others arrived after the session began. In all we had 16 women including Nanise and the two young volunteers. There were three Indians and 13 Fijian women. This caused me some concern as I wanted a representative group.

The session began with a prayer and a word of welcome from Nanise. I thanked the women for inviting me to carry out my research with them and explained my project to them. The first session was intended to acquaint participants about media and its influences on society and culture. I invited the women's own perceptions of what they saw on their television. I began the session with a general introduction to media, focusing on television and video using the prepared PowerPoint presentation. I wanted to contextualise the workshop within a broader frame and demonstrate how this workshop could be of value to them as individuals and communities. (Mass media production within a global commercial agenda, cultural representation and preservation, social and community education.) The exchange was recorded on my camera after I gained participants' permission. As I could not be behind the camera it was left on a wide shot possibly missing some of the women out of the frame.

First exercise – everyone gets to touch and feel the camera and record one shot of whatever they like as they say their name. This exercise was not only to familiarise the women with the technology, but also to get them to hear their voices as they spoke.

Before the tea break, I decided to hand a camera to the women around the table. They were to hold it and learn one function – pressing the tiny red button to stop and start recording. This short exercise created confusion and hilarity. The women held the camera delicately in their hands. Their fingers, which were used to cooking, cleaning and planting, seemed a little at odds with this technology with tiny buttons. They seemed confused about what to press and where. But everyone became involved and supported each other. They called out directions from different ends of the table on how to switch on the camera and where to look for the red signal. Several of them said, "I'm going to buy a camera like this."

The second exercise: Place the camera on the tripod and ask each woman to appear in front of the camera and briefly say something about herself or her life. The exercise was to encourage self-expression, to develop a concept of the self (video as mirror) and value each woman as an important part of the process, and begin a sense of identity construction.

I split the women in two groups of eight and placed them on opposite sides of this large room. I asked Priya and Ana to start the exercise. They demonstrated how to set up the tripod. I then placed the shoe on the camera and showed them all how to slip it into the tripod hold. I first showed Priya and then Ana how to frame a shot and pan to the next person. Others joined in to watch. I followed this process with the other group. I found myself running between my own recording of this significant activity and supervising the women. In some ways this distance and the fact that I was not looking over their shoulder constantly gave the women a sense of independence. They began to figure out logically what needed to be done instead of waiting for me to tell them. Some seemed shy to speak, some like Bale and Toby were keen to appear on the camera at every opportunity. I was keen to catch these sequences on my own camera so I stood back and observed through my camera lens. An interesting thing happened as I watched. I began to see other women emerge in the instructional role. I noticed Nani begin to teach the women how to turn the camera on and off and how to change a shot from wide to close-up. I noticed Priya assisting the other women to achieve a good frame. I suggested that as each woman finished speaking to the camera, she come behind the camera and shoot the next person. They continued to shoot sequences of women working with the camera and I shot the observational footage, breaking away to give advice. Bale took naturally to being behind the camera. She was the one who earlier, in the first exercise, said that she was shaking at the thought of holding the camera. Women began to show more confidence at working the little buttons and framing the shots. They gathered behind the camera to watch their talent on the small screen and make suggestions. How did they know what was a good shot? Where did they learn the screen grammar? Was it just an instinctive feel for aesthetics gained in their craft work where balance and good design were also necessary? Or was it from watching TV and videos? Tomorrow we will see what they have shot and get their reactions.

When we ended the session, the women were in high spirits. Nani emphasised that the women should decide now if they want to stay with the workshop for the whole four weeks. If they did then they must commit themselves to be at training on time and be with the workshop until the end. We asked the women who had decided to stay to place their names on the list. Priya and Ana helped me to pack up. The session came to an end at 12.30pm. Many women had to catch the 1pm bus so that they could be at home when their children returned.

Session 2 Tuesday 5/7/05

When I arrived at 9am this morning there were already about 8 women around the table. I thanked them for being bright and early, even arriving before I did. First I asked my two volunteer assistants to take the cameras out and connect them to the mains so they could be charged. As I explained it to the girls I realised that the women sitting around the table looked with great interest. I included them into my circle. I realised at that stage that I may be favouring the younger girls and I could not be seen to favour the younger girls. To get the women involved I asked for some volunteers to set up the three tripods. That was achieved with ease.

Today we were going to view the footage the women had shot in the previous session. But we did not have a TV screen on which to view the footage. I could have shown it on my laptop but I decided against this as the impact of them watching themselves on TV was quite different to watching on the laptop. Kalisi had offered us her television yesterday. I asked Mrs Khan and Priya to go to Kalisi's house and get the TV. While we were waiting for the TV and others to arrive, I asked those present to form into two groups and stage some interview sessions. I showed them the set-up – a host either sitting on one side or in the middle. This was also a good opportunity to show them good microphone technique. I was again surprised at the ease with which the women appeared in front of the camera. When it was time for the younger girls, they seemed more shy and reticent to speak. With the second group I suggested that they may want to speak in Fijian and I recorded a mock interview between the three women as the others stood behind me to watch the framing of shots. The host, Vasiti, did an introduction and then addressed the woman to her right, Josy, who seemed much more at ease speaking in Fijian and spoke at length about her craft work. The host then introduced the woman to her left who began to speak first to the host then to the camera. I asked the women to wind up by circling with my finger, which confused the host and I realised that I had not taught them what it meant. At the end of the session one of the women watching behind the camera asked me if it was okay to look at the camera or look at the host. I explained that it was better to look at the host. This lesson taught me that I needed to cover my ground more thoroughly and give clearer instructions.

Once the television (20inch screen) arrived, the women organised themselves around the table and sat waiting to view the first pictures of their shoot. Their eyes were all focused towards the screen and an expectant silence descended in the room. As the video played they looked carefully at their footage. Some laughed out loudly, some sat rapt. At the end of the viewing

session I asked the women of their experiences of holding the camera. Many of them expressed nervousness at holding the camera for the first time. Eceli said that after the session "some of us were talking that our palms was sweaty before the camera reached us." Salote: "I was excited and nervous at the same time …I never dreamt of holding one… I always see other people holding it." Bale: "When I hold the camera, my mind go forward, I used to see the journalists and all the big photographers holding so why can't I, that was the first time. I was excited, happy and I knew I was going to go forward." Nani: "I felt like I was one of the TV workers…one of the cameraman and I felt so proud." Vasiti: " I was so nervous when I held the camera the first thing that came to my mind was that I might spoil the camera, if I did something wrong the ladies will laugh at me…"

The second viewing session showed footage of the women in medium shot to close-up talking about themselves. This also brought great hilarity from the group. It was interesting to see how animated the group became and the way they responded to the images on the screen. This was not a passive watching of the television. This was active engagement with what they saw. Bale: I'm happy when I see myself, but the action, I don't like it. I want to be professional like the way…the way I sit, the way I talk, like the one yesterday I don't like it." Vasiti: " After watching myself there, I know I made some mistakes, but when I was talking …like somebody's talking to me, I was confident." Priya: "It was exciting to see myself on screen" (more recorded on video).

After the viewing session the women organised morning tea. I realised that morning tea was an important social affair during these meetings. Groups of women organised morning tea on different days. An array of home made items filled the disposable plastic plates – cakes, pies, biscuits, cassava pudding, Indian savouries, bhuja. Nani told me that women were so keen to provide for the tea that they saved a few dollars of their own to buy tea leaves, coffee, or milk, at times even putting their bus fare money towards morning tea items. I had contributed a packet of biscuits towards the tea on the first day. Until that time it had not even occurred to me that attending the training meant finding the bus fare to come into town for these housewives. Later that day on my shopping trip to Navua I bought a packet of tea leaves, milk and several packets of biscuits for the next day's morning tea.

6/7/05 Session 3

Today I had planned for the women to get maximum practice with the camera. For them to gain ownership of these sessions I asked them to set up two production areas with the two

tripods and cameras. In this session the women were going to use the microphone and stage a talk show. Once again the younger ones gathered around the camera while the older ones staged the talk show. Again I showed the three shot, the two shot and close up sequences. I had decided not to show the women too many rules of film-making. I felt too many dos and don'ts would confuse them and may hinder their creativity and message creation. One of the key lessons in this exercise was the need for preparation before doing interviews such as learning the names of their guests, or preparing a set of questions before starting the interview. Once again, I was surprised at the ease with which these women appeared before the camera. For women the topic that came most easily was to talk about their work and their families. Their first choice of language for the interviews was their own native tongue – Fijian or Hindi. Today I began to see more confident use of the camera by Priya, who was now beginning to take on a support role training others who were less sure. Vasiti, Eceli and Salote were also emerging as confident users. Toby who was the most outspoken and seemingly confident shied away from the camera use saying that the compact nature of these cameras confused her. Josy and Vasiti, two of the quiet ones, were beginning to hang around the camera obviously interested in its operation. The practice session was interrupted by a power failure. We decided to take a tea break and then work on script development for the promotional video. Nureen suggested that I could briefly talk about Telecentre's role in general as many women did not have knowledge about it. I had put together a PowerPoint presentation from the pdf files that I had downloaded from various sources, but there was a power failure so I spoke generally about telecentres.

Instead of working on a formal script, I decided to find out what were the things the women valued about their club. We went around the circle and each woman was asked what she liked about the Telecentre. Their response was recorded on video and main points written down on large butcher's paper. A pattern began to emerge. What the women most valued about the club was the multi-ethnic nature of the membership. This meant that the women could learn new recipes and skills through cultural exchange. Ana: "We learned to make chutney. When I went to the village I made it and sold it to others in the village." Muneshwari: "I learned to make dalo and cassava chips." The skills they learned at the club translated into income generation. So the activities were a central part of their involvement in the club. I asked if the women would like to share on video their personal stories of what it meant to get that extra income, e.g. to buy books for their children or save towards something special. This would show the business community who will buy your products what it will mean to you if they purchased your products."

I suggested the video could also show their garden or a visit to the market from where they picked their produce. In order to understand the club we needed to know the history and asked who were the first members of the Telecentre. We could interview them. What about the community in which they lived and the town of Navua? In order to show these, the women would shoot activities in their own village and settlement. The women agreed and enthusiastically suggested: "We could show the river and the market…and our village where we live."

We then worked out a production schedule – where we would shoot on different days and who would be the crew. Two women from each village or settlement were asked to become responsible for their area. In other words they were going to produce and direct the sequences by deciding what was going to be shot, where and who was going to be in it. They would be totally responsible for developing a list of shots for that sequence.

Slowly a script was emerging. We had an opening sequence about the Telecentre and the community in which it was based, we had sequences of the various groups and we were going to have a conclusion about how the women would like to see their Telecentre develop in the future. I would have liked to organise another practice session with the camera for the women, but the training room was booked. Anyway, I reasoned, it was better for them to be on their own turf shooting (on location) then in a training room. Our next meeting was going to be at 9am at Vunibau Village. Vasiti and Ana were the co-directors. Salote, Ana, Priya, Ana and Josy were going to be the crew. I did not want a huge crowd at the shoot and asked that different groups shoot on different days. Josy had come up to me quietly after the session and asked if she could go as crew to Vunibau "because I have never been to that village and I really would like to go with the crew."

In the afternoon, we had scheduled to shoot at Vakabalea. Shyam and Sashi were going to produce this sequence, but because they had missed the first two crucial days of training I was going to also direct some sequences. Maria and Vasiti Seru wanted to crew this shoot as they lived near the Indian settlement. The rest of the week looked something like this:
Tuesday morning – the Muslim Janana League Women's Club. Although we had no one from that group participating in the workshop Nureen was keen to include them in the promotional video because they were members of NRWTG.
Tuesday afternoon – Makosoi Village to record Bale and Toby.

Wednesday morning – conference/ training room to shoot the sewing and craft
Wednesday afternoon - Naitata at an individual Indian member's house,
Thursday – Mau Village and afternoon at Naitonitoni at an Indian settlement.

I'm concerned that we may be packing too much in each day, but we will try and see if we can achieve this. Nureen reminded me that I'd have to take some sevusevu (a gift of kava) for the more traditional villages where we'll be shooting. At one stage I was planning to go to Vunibau earlier than others so that I could have a quiet time with Ana and Vasiti. Nanise however advised me that to observe good protocol it would be better if I accompanied Nanise. This reminded me of the special nature of the location where we were going to be shooting and to be aware of my own actions and cultural sensitivity while there.

13/7/05

I've not written any observations for the past few days. It has been a hectic production schedule, but things have flowed exceptionally well. I take that as a blessing emanating from all the prayers said at each location. We have covered seven locations and worked with three women's collectives and five individual members of the Telecentre Group. I have observed several strong talents emerging in the use of cameras. Priya keeps improving her skill and has now taken on the role of teaching others who are not as confident with the camera. Ana, the other volunteer, has been more reticent at camera work. She will shoot only if I specifically encourage her. Two women who have taken it on with gusto are Josy and Eceli. Vasiti Daveta continues to do well both in front of and behind the camera. I see her as an emerging leader with confidence and maturity on her side. I feel that Priya, Vasiti, Josy and Eceli have shown initiative and the ability to take risks without fear - latent qualities that have come into play during this workshop. It has assisted these four women to become more participatory.

We began our shooting on Monday morning 11/5 at Vunibou. When I arrived at Nanise's office, the contingent of volunteers numbered five, as well as Nani, Nazia and myself. We decided to hire a mini van, which is a popular mode of transportation in Fiji where big families and big physique is a norm. They charge no more than a taxi to transport up to 7-8 people at one time. The trip – a ten minute ride on the dusty unsealed road to the village - cost $6. The large community hall was the location for our shoot. It was still early and the village was buzzing with morning activity. Nani had reminded me the week before that we would have to take sevusevu (yagona) to the two villages where we were going to be shooting – Vunibau and Mau – and I had given her $10 to buy a few packets of yagona. We waited in the

community hall as women set up their crafts in various corners of the hall. After a short wait a group of men arrived in the community hall to receive us officially. Nani offered the packets of yagona and explained the purpose of our visit to the village. The Headman accepted these and gave us his permission to work in the village with the Soqosoqo Vakamarama (Fijian women's club).

We then went about setting up our equipment. Vunibau is a big village with a population of about 500. Gathered in the hall were weavers, patchwork makers and others. We had two cameras and two teams. I asked the teams to take each side of the hall and start shooting. Priya began shooting with the two Anas on one camera and Eceli and Josy on the other. I was amazed at the ease with which the two women used the equipment. The use of zoom function was slow and fluid. I felt that the women who were being interviewed were at ease because the camera work was being done by women; by people they knew, and the interviews were in their own language. They spoke easily about themselves and their craft. Vasiti and Ana who had produced the segment interviewed the women. Vasiti also interviewed the Roko (the village Headman), who played the official role of informing about the women's club. Ana interviewed the president of the club. I found it interesting that the crew interviewed all the women who had their craft displayed. All interviews were carried out sitting on the mat next to the women in a traditional fashion. At times I suggested that we change the location to get a better background or to gain better available lighting on the subjects. I decided to let the women use the camera independently as much as possible, coming around to offer advice if needed. It was a busy and demanding shoot. After we had finished the village women laid out lunch for us. Afterwards a representative from our group was chosen to officially thank the Vunibau women on our behalf. Another representative from the village accepted our appreciation. We were through by 12.30pm, which was earlier then I had expected.

Our next stop was Vakabalea ALTA settlement, the women's group from the resettled farming community – the Labasians or the Northern district resettled farmers - to use the local terms for them. We were early by about an hour and the women had not gathered. There was no community centre and one of the women opened her house for our shooting. This is a transitional community still facing complex group dynamics. It was here that the Vineeta factor emerged. The small group of women we were seeing today had split from Vineeta's group and had formed their own Club. It appeared that all the members were related. They had chosen to cook chutneys and sweets for the filming. The women helped their husbands in farming, growing vegetables and root crops which were then sold by the road side. These

farmers had contributed to economic growth in the area. One interesting aspect here was the way women presented themselves to the camera. They posed for the video as if they were posing for a still shot, gathered around as other members demonstrated their skills. The women put on afternoon tea after the shoot.

We learned that Vasiti and Maria had misunderstood our request to crew this shoot and were instead at their own homes waiting for us to come and shoot there. It was getting late and the crew were pretty tired after a hectic first day of the shoot and we decided to walk to Maria's. Her house was a short walking distance down the dusty road while Va's was further away. We later learned that Va was waiting for us and had prepared refreshments.

Mau Village 14/7

Mau Village was our last location. This is Eceli and Josy's Village. They have been keenly waiting for us to come to the village for the shoot. It is situated on a lagoon that opens out to sea about 20 minutes by road from Navua town. When I arrived at our base - Nani's office – I was surprised to see Toby waiting outside, Peniane was also there along with the two Anas, Priya and Vasiti, who had never been to Mau village. Kalesi arrived later. We were having some trouble locating a mini van to take our contingent to the village. Finally when it arrived a crew of 11 packed into the van. The road to Mau followed the old Navua–Suva road. It snaked around the hills on one side and a sheer drop on the other. It reminded me of my childhood when I took this road with my parents to visit relatives in Navua. Mau is a prosperous village with much bigger houses built of concrete or timber. The village is set in a picturesque location with the lush hills as a backdrop to the village, which is located next to a lagoon. A footbridge takes visitors across the lagoon and into the main village. We were invited first to go and meet the chief. This is a protocol where official visitors go to the chief and explain the reason for their trip and offer sevusevu (gift of kava). The receiving group was made up of the chief and the village spokesman. Our sevusevu was officially accepted and they offered their sevusevu or gift of kava to the guests. This exchange seals acceptance for our visit. We then headed to the community centre where the women were waiting for us. It is a large and airy community hall. Eceli and Josy havd decorated one corner with their handiwork of handmade purses, screen prints done on lace and on plain cloth for sulu, and some colourful fans. By now Priya and the two Anas were quite good at working, shooting independently. We also went to the home of Ciri, who has a horticultural business. I left the shooting to the two Anas, Josy and Vasiti. I noticed that Vasiti and Josy watched carefully what the girls were shooting, suggesting angles and things to shoot. Kalesi offered to

interview Ciri. Unfortunately, Kalesi was not a natural in front of the camera. She struggled with the interview questions. She also found it hard to get her head around the idea of doing cut away questions, which are shot after the interview is completed. However with some coaching she succeeded.

Back in the community hall Nani interviewed Josy and Eceli about her art. We found out that Eceli is a widow with four children. Her husband died in 2000 from hepatitis. Her only income is from the craft that she makes and sells. After shooting we were invited to lunch - fish in lolo, boiled fish, vegetable and tinned meat curry, stew, rice, dalo and cassava and budi in lolo for dessert. Another official round of thank you on behalf of the guests and the hosts brought this location shoot to an end.

18/7/07

This is our third week, and time to look at all the footage we have shot so far. I noticed that the turnout today was not as strong as in the past two weeks. Possibly the process is going too long. They are used to attending short three-day workshops. Nureen told me that some women were saying that it is taking a very long time. Some of the women could not come because they had other commitments in the village or with their own families. For example Josy couldn't come because it was her day to look after the village co-operative shop.

I also noticed that Ana (thin) was not present. She had attended all the shoots except the one on Saturday and I wondered why she was not there. Possibly the novelty was wearing off and it was becoming too much like work. The team included Toby, Bale, Muneshwari, Vasiti, Eceli and Jamilan along with Nanise, Priya, Ana and Nureen. The second Vasiti showed up today after two weeks' absence. On the first day of our shoot there had been a misunderstanding (she thought we were coming to shoot in the Fijian settlement in Vakabalea while I had asked her to crew the Vakabalea Alta shoot) and I felt she may have become disheartened. Peniana who had joined us late was there – as an observer. She had shown no interest in joining the production process but appeared to enjoy the socialising. I feel this is the week to determine who is really going to stick through the production process.

The women watched the footage. It was a quiet affair. They watched with quiet pride at their own images on the screen, or the way they had shot the footage. Nanise's first reaction at seeing herself and the other women on the screen was a delighted "Oh we look so good." On the whole we were all pleased with the result. We had two glitches with sound – one of

Vasiti's pieces to camera about her village and the other an interview with Toby – where there was no sound – the mics had not been turned on or the plug had come undone. As the camera had no input to plug in a headphone it was hard to monitor sound recording. Despite that it was a great result overall. The use of zoom by the women was exceptional. None of that aimless roaming or fast zooms. Although the camera moved it moved for a purpose – to follow the speakers or to show the items as they were mentioned (a common exercise by those who have not edited before) or to get an ECU of the working fingers as the weavers worked.

Nureen told me that some women had said that this workshop had gone longer than they had expected. I also noticed that the core group was mainly made up of single women (or widow in Eceli's case). Vasiti was an exception, but her husband worked in Suva and usually left very early and arrived home late. The women with families came and went according to the demands at home. The Vakabalea women came only once and have not appeared since, not even to view the footage. Kamlesh had stopped coming to the workshop and I was told she was busy preparing for her son's engagement.

19/7/07

We scheduled to have our first editing session on Tuesday with Vasiti and Ana. Usually Va was there by 9am, but today she was late. We waited for a while then decided to begin capturing the image. I explained the functions on the computer. I was faced with a dilemma about post-production. Should the women physically do the editing or should they sit next to me while I executed the shots they chose? Many of these women had never used a computer and to familiarise them with the keyboard and mouse functions was a training in itself and we were pushing for time. I was using my own laptop which also had all my research data. I decided to do the editing myself in consultation with the women. Vasiti was quick and decisive about what should stay and what should go. Some of Ana's comments were quite repetitive. We called her a "reflective listener". Vasiti also showed great impatience at times listening to some of the interviews and asked us expressly to leave one interviewee who she felt was "being negative". When I pressed her further, reminding that this is her opinion, but what would happen when the footage is shown in the village, she said, "okay just show her face but not the interview." Looking at the footage of the village shots, she commented that there were nicer homes further in and asked why we had to shoot these ugly ones. This showed that although she was responsible for this sequence she had not "seen the ugliness" before. I felt she would make a good producer with her organisational skills and quick decision-making. Young Ana turned out to be the quiet achiever of the group. I was beginning

to despair that she was showing no real inclination to learn or desire to do any shooting. While viewing the footage during editing I asked who had shot some excellent cut-ins of the women weaving etc. Priya pointed to young Ana. I was quite surprised at the excellent skills she showed in her shooting and congratulated her.

22/7/05

The women had their first public outing today at the official opening of the new Navua Courthouse. On Wednesday I had left the camera at Nanise's office and asked young Ana to shoot some extra footage of Kalesi and another member, Louisa, who had been unable to attend the workshop. (The reason was that she had been busy weaving the mats with other women from her village that was to be used for the opening of the courthouse.) Vasiti had asked that we bring the camera because her dad has requested it. He was the Chairman of the Board of Serua Province and the chief organiser of the function. We had not seen big Ana for a while because Vunibau village had been asked to do the cooking for the opening of the Courthouse. Vasiti introduced me to her father as I arrived at the function. She was to guide the girls as to what to shoot. She asked me if she could interview her dad and I said it was a good idea. Priya was shooting. I had noticed that she always was behind the camera. I think it's because she is the first one to take the initiative to set up when asked. However as the opening was about to happen we decided that the place where we were sitting would be the ideal place to set up the camera. Josy returned with the camera and set it up and began shooting. It was interesting to see her reactions – at times she was unsure where she could go with the camera. Nanise was always encouraging her to take the best spot. At times Nani was also shooting. After the longer ceremonial opening, the Attorney General, the chief guest, proceeded around the building to open the doors to the Courthouse. Nani encouraged Josy to go along with other official photographers. At first she was unsure but then she moved off with the camera. I followed her as I wanted to capture her on my camera. The camera had opened up a space for her to go places where she would not have considered going before. Afterwards she asked me about what types of cameras there were as she was thinking of buying one. Her sister had asked her to "go and get a camera on hire purchase from Courts." I wondered if I had introduced a technology and that had changed some of the members' priorities. Was my workshop having an adverse effect, of promoting a consumer product – a new toy? Would they now buy a video instead of meeting other priorities? Or had they suddenly become aware of recording their own lives and environment and re-presenting this through the mediation of a video camera?

27 July

Last Wednesday the women had gathered to see the edited programs and the rough cut of the promo. Many of their reactions are taped.

4 August

It's a wrap. Yesterday we brought this workshop to its conclusion. A strong attendance from the women, encouraged by the fact that two Ministry representatives also came to discuss the ongoing problems of email connection and the space issue.

Yesterday, most of the morning was taken over by the meeting. I had edited some changes and added extra footage making sure that all the women's faces were included. This was an important aspect of the production – to make sure everyone was included in some form or another. It became an important aspect of inclusion.

Nirmala – aspects of her inclusion and validation through the composition of lyrics. A woman who has no formal education became an important aspect of the promo creation, added to her sense of pride. She told me during the recording process that she had never been on video recording. She liked the fact that we could shoot and look at the footage so that she could make any changes to her lyrics or tune.

It was also interesting to see the reaction of the people from the Ministry as they watched the women talk on video. They were amazed at how much at ease they were with the technology as they spoke about their lives and activities. This was an excellent example of how, when technology is brought to the people, it conforms to their ways of life. The camera came into their life space. If these women had been brought into the studio to talk they would have been awed by the technology. But in this case the interviews took place in their homes, the community halls – familiar places in their lives. The cameras filmed as they sat on the floor where they feel most comfortable, instead of on chairs. Location then became an important aspect of their representation, their comfort with the camera. The subjects of discussion were their lives, their skills and their communities, at which they were experts, and they spoke about these things that were important to them with great ease and delight. It validated their lives and the importance that camera gave it.

For the promo we had decided to shoot some talking heads of women saying why the Telecentre was important for them. This exercise produced a totally different reaction to the one that we saw in their homes and villages. Here the women were much more conscious of

the camera. They found it harder to articulate their thoughts and were more nervous as they sat on the chair in the training room. Many decided to write what they wanted to say and read it out as it was held in front of the camera. Vasiti (Vunibau) was showing more signs of nervousness as she became more familiar with the equipment. In general I found people who were better educated and well versed with modern technology seemed most nervous about appearing in front of the camera such, as Eseta, the Divisional Head. She seemed more self-conscious and worried about her appearance than the women in the village. She marvelled at the way the women at village level were completely at ease as they spoke in front of the camera. I wondered if this would change as their familiarity with the equipment increased, as it seemed to have done with Va. Had video changed the way they imagined themselves? Can video change our self-concept in that moment that we interact with this technology, thus changing our behaviour. For people who were in powerful positions, video tended to cause a sense of nervousness - even disempowerment - at the same time as it empowered people at the grassroots.

5/8/05

I spoke to Nani on the phone from Nadi today. She told me that she had been in a meeting with the Provincial Administrators and had told them about the media workshop. 'When I told them how the women had used video cameras to shoot and produce programs about themselves, they were amazed." This conversation allowed Nani to ask the men to assist the women in the area by giving them a shelter to carry out their activities. Nani has actually called me to ask if I could send her a DVD of the rough edit so she could show the PA at their next meeting on Thursday. I had decided to bring back the program to Sydney for music and voice over. Nani's phone call motivated me to make further changes to the promo and burn it on a DVD so that she could at least have a rough cut for her advocacy work. I also wondered if it was necessary to have such a finished look of the other longer edits. Possibly it was not necessary if the work was to genuinely remain the women's production.

As I leave Fiji I feel that the transformational impact of the process on the women will be long term. Yes, the production itself had been empowering, but further transformations would come from the finished promo – the video product – and this would impact on the development of their organisation. People in positions of power were already seeing what the women had been capable of achieving. For them the concept of this group had changed substantially. They were not just part of a women's group doing whatever women do to entertainment themselves – but active, engaged and empowered people who had successfully

represented their everyday lives using modern technology. Suddenly their activities as represented on video had gained in status and importance in the mind of the bureaucracy. People who sit in their offices making important policy decisions could now be included into this world of the women's everyday lives and aspirations. The video program was creating a vital shift in the imagination of the bureaucracy. The video images had legitimised women's work and had become the catalyst for the women to be reimagined by the bureaucrats. By the capable use of technology and their confident appearance in front of the camera (something the bureaucrats themselves struggled with), the women were reimagined as active citizens capable of negotiating their own futures instead of state dependents who waited for top down mechanism to intervene. There was hope now that if the policy makers could change their attitudes towards the NRWTG they may, just maybe, change their thinking about the hundreds of women's groups all over Fiji which provided a vital networking and social link to the women of Fiji.

The importance of storytelling overtook the fear of technology. For these women it was important to record their everyday lives and the camera gave them that means. An important consideration for governments is to make channels of communication open to communities, where they can make their own programs. It is a place where communities can link up, share their knowledge and communicate their concerns. In a multiracial environment this could lead to greater understanding if there was a defined cultural exchange agenda to community media. These women had proved that technology was no barrier to their storytelling. Their knowledge of video production had opened new ways of recording their voices and enhanced the storytelling. The knowledge they had gained had also quietly made them confident about the Information Age. As some of them said, this is the era of technology and they had been invited to become part of it. Castells fourth world may not be the information elites, but at least they had found a way to make their voices heard through the channel of small format video technology.

Appendix C

Researcher's Reflective Journal

July 4, 2005 Session 1

I have a good feeling about the first session. I was worried the women may feel alienated from the technology or feel that the exercise was peripheral to their life. They responded with enthusiasm. I think getting them to handle the camera and start shooting exercises almost immediately was what peaked their interest. I hope as days progress they can keep their enthusiasm. The idea is not to overwhelm them, but give them skills in small bite sizes where they feel a sense of success. I also felt confident about the equipment and was prepared.

There were very few Indo-Fijian participants, which concerned me. I was especially keen to see some resettled farmers and market vendors. I thought of calling Nanise to express my concern, but then I thought I'd see what happens tomorrow. Having grown up in Fiji my instinct told me it was best to wait and see what tomorrow brings.

Tonight I had dinner with Nureen, the Peace Corp Volunteer in the Provincial Office. She had asked Nani why the members from the "Northern settlements" (meaning the resettled farming community) at Vakabalea were not present. Nani said she was going to call the members today. I'm keen to see this group involved in the workshop as I feel they are one of the most disadvantage groups in Fiji.

I was also worried about the selection process of participants. The first day had been an open process. Nureen could not see the whole group lasting the four weeks. As we walked back to my motel we spoke about the need to focus the group. I suggested that the script development session could be used to clarify the aims and objectives of the group. The women needed to be clear as to what their group was all about and where they wanted to go with it. Was this group about making jams and chutneys? If so why was it called a Telecentre? What did the term E-chutney mean? Nureen told me the idea was that the women would have their product on a website and gain their orders via email. The Government's ICT arm was going to construct the website for them. But there was no website. They were not even connected to the email yet. I suggested that the video workshop could provide the foundation and much of the material for the website.

Did the women know what a Telecentre was and what it did? Nureen didn't think so. Even Nureen was not sure what a Telecentre should do. I had some reading on elecentres on my laptop and showed it to her. I suggested that on Wednesday Nureen and I use the script development session to brainstorm ideas with the group and talk to them about Telecentres. We could use this process to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the Telecentre.

Who was going to be my core group? I kept thinking of the young women who were present. The young women could be trained in ICT use and become a media arm of the group to support their public relations aim. They can become responsible for the website and email as well as apply for funding to do further media training. This would make the group into a true Telecentre with ICT orientation. I was still worried about the number of people in the session and how I was going to supervise such a large group. On Wednesday I'll decide on my core group.

5/7/ 05 Session 2

Today after the session Nani, Nureen and I had a meeting to discuss some of the ideas that came up last night. I explained to Nani that in order to make the organisation a true Telecentre, they needed to focus the work more towards ICT. I suggested that possibly a core group of eight girls from the district could be chosen for further video training after this week. I was worried about how this skill would be sustained and could benefit the organisation for the long term. The women would have gained the basic knowledge of video and could still direct their pieces but the young girls could actually act as crew to shoot the sequences while the women showed their activity. It would be hard for the women to be on screen as well as to shoot. Nanise seemed unsure of this idea. In her mild and polite manner she told me about the women's enthusiasm for the club. "They were really keen to learn." Nureen said that the women's commitment to the club was eclipsed by their loyalty to their own club. Nani also wondered what would happen if the young girls left to go and work elsewhere. I suggested that with a young group the organisation could apply for funding for further training and have an ongoing training for other young people in the area. This interested Nani. We decided that tomorrow would be my last session with the women. The women could then come every Wednesday for the club meeting. On Monday and Tuesday I would work with the core group of eight young women, four Indian and four Fijian, and train them further. Nani agreed but I felt she was not too comfortable with the idea.

When I returned to my motel I looked through the footage of the women's reaction and their enthusiasm for the workshop. I began to feel uncomfortable with the idea of short-changing them with the training. I also looked at the younger women and although they were just as interested, it was the mature women in the group who were the greatest fans of this technology. They appeared sure of what they wanted to do with this technology. How can I take this away from Toby who wanted to use these skills and make programs with her club, or Ana who wanted to buy a camera so she could go on practising with it, or Bale who wanted to improve her way of speaking on the video. I'm beginning to feel that maybe there is a prejudice operating in me where I am favouring the younger women with the technology training. Have I worked for too long with young people in the university environment that I instinctively see them as "rightful" users of technology? For my own research I should stay with the group. I'll find a way of managing the big group. I think I'll get the women organised in groups of five and ask them to take the camera out for a day each and shoot sequences in their village or home, as they pleased. They would bring this footage and we would edit it into a small package. The young women's media group can still be formed alongside this project. I also realised that I was being influenced by the operational dysfunction of the organisation and it was affecting my own research. Although Nureen's discussion was interesting background information it should not influence my research. I was not here to solve the organisation's problems.

I decided that the selection process was going to be open. Those who had some training with the camera would continue with that work. Others who preferred to be talents would do that. I had not established any hierarchical production structure. Different crew teams would shoot different sequences. The two volunteers would come to all the shoots to assist as needed.

On Friday, Nureen and Nanise asked me to accompany them to a village where Nani had started a homeware project. Each female head of household was asked to gather a set of household items for a specific room in the house. According to Nanise, the women often gave money away to relatives, to village community halls, to the church, but did not save enough to buy things for their own house. When they had a special function, they were running to neighbours' homes borrowing anything from a table cloth to tea mugs. This project encouraged the women to have a complete set of pots, crockery and cutlery for their kitchen. Today, Nanise was going to view what the women had gathered and give prizes to the best collection. They women were gathered in the community hall and had laid out all their wares on the bright new tablecloth placed on the floor. They had six sets of dinner plates, mugs,

water glasses, forks, knives and spoons as well as water jugs, aluminium pots and serving spoons. Additional items included handmade napkins and tablecloth. I decided to videotape this. If I gave a copy to Nani she could show it to other villages.

When we returned, Nani invited me to join her for a cup of coffee in her office. We started to talk about the Telecentre again and decided that the email connection had to be resolved. She called Connect again this time to get their advice. She was told the connection had lapsed until the bill was paid. Apparently, the bill was incurred by the past president. Nani at times seemed overwhelmed by all the work she had to do. I suggested that she could ask if Nureen could spend two days working on the Telecentre project. Although she was seconded to the Provincial Office, her talents were not being utilised well there. Nani liked this idea and said she'd follow it through.

Nani and I began to talk about our families. She told me about her two daughters who were at high school last year and how they had gained entry into the University of the South Pacific. Her eldest daughter was a very good public speaker and has actually delivered an address at the Parliament.

Other insights

Nani also discussed the difficulty of getting young Indian women involved in community organisations. The family structure imposes strict codes of where the young girls can go and what they can do. The young people are also needed at home to perform a variety of chores in farming families. The new settler families who come from more isolated farming communities bring their own social codes. Nani also told me that husbands don't like their wives going out. However, she had built up a trust with some of the communities. " If the ladies tell their husbands they're going to a meeting with Nanise, it's okay. After the meetings I also tell the ladies to go home at a good time so that they'll be allowed to come to the next meeting." I wondered if this was the reason why the women from Vakabalea had not come to the workshop. Later when we made our visit to Vakabalea, I was told that the phone that Nani was calling is in Shyam's mother-in-law's room, which is locked and inaccessible. Nani then contacted Shyam's husband's mobile and left a message. It was then that Shyam received the message about the workshop – three days late.

Several people told me that there was a "big problem" of adultery amongst both Indian and Fijian communities. This had created a moral dilemma and an atmosphere of suspicion. This was impacting on where they went and what they could do.

A chat with Michael, the assistant manager of the hotel where I was staying, made me aware of other interesting aspects of the Indian community. I was telling him how it had been difficult to get Indian women to attend the workshop. He said that usually the information does not get relayed properly and in proper context. People are told to come for a workshop. Instead of attending the people shy away because they are not well educated and feel inadequate about being present at such things. People have to understand how it will make a difference to their way of life before they would commit to it. Michael is a Christian and active in the Catholic community, at present raising money for a new church in Pacific Harbour. He lamented that he was unable to even write his name in Hindi. He said Indians generally did not understand the language used for many of the religious rituals (as they are recited in Sanskrit). "You go to weddings, and nobody understands what the priest is saying, not even the bride and groom. If they don't understand the significance of this act how can they be asked to abide by it? The wedding should be translated in a language that we can all understand."

14/7/05

Today during afternoon tea at Priya's house I found out that Nani had asked Nureen about working for the Telecentre. Nureen seemed very happy about the idea and was already planning a to-do list. This was still to be approved by the Telecentre committee and the Roko,

Other introspection from reading my journal 28/9/06

As I re-read my journal almost a year after the workshops I begin to see interesting lessons in it for me. One of the main aspects of facilitating participatory video is to let the ideas come from the people – an organic process that feeds off the dynamism of the group process. I can see now that I was constantly worried about how things would work out – or not work out. But in the end it worked out because it came from the group. However, this is not to say that I took a totally hands-off approach. As facilitator it was still necessary to create a road map or structure of the workshop. This would allow a good idea to be integrated.

The one thing that impressed me most was the organisational skills of the participants. At every village where we went, the producers used their links with their community to co-

ordinate displays of craft, participation of their club members and even lunch for the visiting crew. There was an amazing display of social cohesion. The success of each shoot was dependent on the networks each participant could access in her community. The club for these women represented a social lifeline, but in order to maintain their level of social capital they not only accessed its rich resources, but also constantly supplemented that resource by giving something to the network, e.g. when there was a death in the family, or a wedding. The resources available through the enabling environment of the club guaranteed the success of our shoots. The video was both giving and taking social capital. The producer of the segment used her supportive network to create a dynamic scene for our shoot, and in so doing gave to the community and other women a sense of importance of their work and talents that the camera brought to it. This became essential to the production process as well as to lead to a successful outcome. Empowering message creation must have the critical elements of participation and inclusion of the community.

One community that demonstrated a break from this norm was the displaced farmers of Vakabalea. This community was not as functional as the others, who demonstrated greater trust and consequently stronger relationship with other communities or the government. However they did have strong links within their own extended family units. A link between empowerment and social capital is apparent here. I wondered how this same community might have performed if the video workshop had taken place in Labasa, their old place of residence, where they had firmly established social networks.

Appendix D

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Why did you want to be involved in a video production workshop?

Before this workshop did you think video production was out of your reach – only done by certain people?

Did having a camera in your hand allow you to go into places where you would not have gone before? Can you give examples?

What were some of the ways you felt empowered during the video production process. e.g things people said or the way they behaved towards you?

The way you framed your shots – did it come naturally or did you imitate what you have seen on TV?

How has it changed the way you watch television?

Did you view yourself and your village or home differently after the shoot?

What did you gain individually from the production process? Self confidence, creativity, consensus, feeling part of a team?

How has this workshop raised your awareness about yourself and your community? Needs of the community?

How do you want to use this new skill/knowledge? If you had a video camera what would you record …types of events in your home …in the community?

How can you use video technology to bring about changes in your community?.

Why should women have access to video?

How did the video process become a tool for understanding your own organization, your own practices within the micro enterprise, your place within it?

Was it worth participating in the project? Why?

How do you feel about the finished project?

How can we improve this workshop?

Appendix E

English Translation of interviews recorded in the Fijian language
For NRWTG Members' Video

KEY TO ABRREVIATIONS

S-I : Self introduction- when a speaker introduces herself without being prompted/ not in answer to a question.

I: The interviewer.

A: The answer of the interviewee.

Navua Rural Women's Telecentre Group

Individual

INTERVIEW 1

S-I*:* Thank you very much ladies. I would like to welcome you here today. My name is Bale Kautoga. I live here at Makosoi Settlement.

I: What activities are you involved in which have led you to join this club ?.

A: Thank you. At the moment, I am making jam from small cumcourt oranges. I make cumcourt jam and other things which I am selling to support my family.

I: Can you tell me about the changes you have encountered since you joined this club?

A: What I really enjoy is the multicultural make-up of our club. I have also benefited from the exchanging of information where we learn from each other and share our experiences with our Indian friends.

----------ENDS----------

SOQOSOQO VAKAMARAMA (Women's Club)

VUNIBAU VILLAGE

INTERVIEW 1

S-I: My name is Vasiti Daveta. With me is the Chairman of the Village Development Committee of Vunibau Village, Mr Josua Raikabakaba.

A: Greetings to all the members of the Vunibau Women's Club here.

I: This morning, I 'll ask you a few questions about the developments in this village. Is the women's club active?

A: I believe it is. It has been in operation for over 30 years now. The club initially started their work in a small hall and are now about to move to a larger meeting hall. Older members have passed on and current members are continuing with the work of the club.

I: What kind of support has the women's club provided to the community here ?

A: Their support has been tremendous. Right now, about 80 per cent of them actively participate our meetings and they also attend workshops in an effort to ensure that the club continues to prosper.

I: What specific developments has the women's club undertaken in the village ?.

A: Firstly, they are actively involved in fundraising for the village development projects on Vunibau Day. From the funds raised on this day, $10,000 was used for our new kindergarten building.

They also provided handicraft to decorate the Village community hall. They have plans and activities that will continue to be implemented in the coming years.

I: What does your role as the Chairman of the Village Development Committee involve ?

A: My main role is to assist the village headman and Head of our tribe, in the implementation of our development projects, and to liaise with the relevant government ministries to ensure that our projects are in line with the government's overall development plans; and especially to assist our women's club in their capabilities to earn more income so they can assist their individual families, while running a small business.

I: Do you have any wishes in terms of any other development to be done in the village?.

A: I believe that we need assistance from our government, and aid from other donor governments, to help our women in terms of providing equipment and resources they need, that will build their capabilities in their income-generating activities.

I: That concludes my discussion with the Chairman of the Vunibau village Development Committee on the developments undertaken by the Vunibau Women's Club.

----------ENDS----------

INTERVIEW 2

I: I'm about to interview the wife of the Head of the tribe in Vunibau Village. I will now invite her to introduce herself.

A: Thank you. My name is Matila Vitukawalu and I am the Head of the Noikoro Women's Club in Vunibau.

I: What is the status of your club since you were appointed as its head ?

A: I'm happy to say that the rate of participation of women in the club has been very encouraging.

I: Our club is a member of the Navua Rural Women's TeleCentre, which holds its meetings once a week. Can you explain whether any of your members attend these meetings in Navua, and also what benefits your members can get in terms of marketing their wares on the internet?

A: Yes, through our membership of the Telecentre, we are registered on the Internet. We have 2 members who attend these weekly meetings. Whenever orders for handicraft are received, they assist and advise us to prepare our wares. They also organise for the Women's Interest Officer in Navua to assist us when we need it.

I: I know that the women will be preparing for future orders and it will certainly provide income for their households. I see some wonderful handicraft in front of us here. When do the women have their weekly meeting to prepare their handicraft ?

A: Our club meets every Tuesday to create our art and craft wares.

I: In front of us are also some woven items: bedcovers, cushion covers and dyed items. Can you tell me how long it took you to make this bed cover ?

A: It took me 3 weeks, no actually 4 weeks, to hand sew this bed cover, as I have my other normal daily household chores to attend to. Otherwise, I think I would have just completed it in one week.

I: There is a beautiful mat here in front of me. How long did it take you to weave it with all its colourful trimmings ?

A: It took me 2 weeks to complete the mat.

I: That concludes my interview with the Head of the Noikoro Women's Club of Vunibau Village.

----------ENDS----------

INTERVIEW 3

Interview with woman smoothing dried pandanus leaf.

I: Can you tell me what it is that you are doing ?

A: I am always interested in doing Fijian handicraft work, especially weaving mats. Mats are an important item in Fijian households. I enjoy doing all the work involved in all stages of making a mat: from cutting the leaves off pandannus trees, boiling them, drying, rolling out and finally, the weaving of the mats. We, the older generation, like to teach and encourage our younger people to learn our traditional arts and craft making.

I: Are you able to sell your mats ?

A: Yes, I have no problem in selling them, but sometimes, I am unable to sell any of my mats at all, because we have our obligations to provide mats for our traditional functions and households.

----------ENDS----------

INTERVIEW 4

Interview with the older lady in the orange dress

A: My name is Litiana Mavoa

I: How old are you ?

A: I am 70 years old today

I: Can you explain what you are working on right now ?

A: I am weaving a cord made from bits and pieces that are discarded by the women weaving the mats. This cord will be used as a kind of support belt to be attached to a basket that is woven from a coconut leaf. The cord is like a handle, or the part that we use to carry the basket.

----------ENDS----------

INTERVIEW 5

S-I: My name is Walesi Dokonivalu. I am married to a Vunibau villager. I am from Lau.

I: You have made some beautiful handicraft displayed here like the bed covers and cushion covers. How long did it take you to sew these ?

A: It took me 2 weeks to make the bed cover. It could have taken just one week but because of other household chores I have to do, it took me 2 weeks to complete.

I: How long have you been doing this type of craftwork ?

A: As I didn't own a sewing machine before, I was motivated by my husband to do something else in my spare time so I decided to learn to crochet. I enjoy it very much as it allows me to make use of the talent that God has given me, and It can help my family in this way. God gives everyone a talent and women should use their talents and initiative to the best that they can.

I: Is your craft work providing you with some added income for your family ?

A: Yes, it has provided an avenue to earn extra income. I even got my hair done with the extra income from selling my craft.

----------ENDS----------

INTERVIEW 6

S-I: I am Vasemaca from Nadarivatu in Nadala village. My husband comes from this village.

I: You are weaving a small mat. How long will it take you to complete this ?

A: It will take just 2 days to finish.

I: Thank you.

----------ENDS----------

INTERVIEW 7

S-I: I am making a coconut broom from coconut leaves. I have nailed one end of the cord on, so that I can tie the rest of it tightly around its handle. This way, it will be firm and presentable.

I: Do you receive any income from making these brooms ?

A: Yes, I am able to buy things for my house, meet my children's needs for school and buy other things that I need.

----------ENDS----------

MAU VILLAGE TELECENTRE GROUP

INTERVIEW 1

I: This lady in Mau village makes and sells fans. I will ask her to introduce herself and to explain where she learnt the art of making fans.

A: I am Susana from Noco and my husband is from this village. I learnt to make fans from two ladies in Suva. When I came to Mau village, I bought most of the material I need from the shop, glue, paper, feathers and cloth material. I use bamboo as the handle of the fans. I started out making fans of different sizes and types. I started selling them and as time went by, the demand for it increased. It is now a good source of income for me.

I: There are different sizes of fans here. What prices do you charge for them ?

A: These small ones cost $2 each. Larger ones are $10 each. These types here are $8 each, so there are different prices for the different types and sizes for my fans.

I: That concludes my interview with Susana who makes and sells fans.

----------ENDS----------