Australian coverage of the Fiji coups of 1987 and 2000: sources, practice and representation

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Contents

LIST OF TABLES **9**

ABSTRACT **11**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION **13**

Summary of events **16**

Chapter overview **18**

Chapter 2. Making the news: processes, practices and outcomes 18

Chapter 3. Sources, themes and practice: a mixed methods approach 20

Chapter 4. Identifying the sources 22

Chapter 5. Thematic representations of Fiji 23

Chapter 6. The experiences of the journalists 24

Chapter 7. Sources, practice and representation 25

Chapter 8. Australia and Fiji: the role of the media 26

CHAPTER 2: MAKING THE NEWS: PROCESSES, PRACTISES AND OUTCOMES **27**

News as a process **28**

Why is it news? 29

Local news, national news, global news 32

The journalist: grumbling, censuring, influencing our understanding **34**

The pursuit of objectivity 37

Foreign correspondents: keeping an eye on the rest of the world **41**

Journalists and their sources: who is telling us the news? **50**

The influence of sources 54

Determining understanding: hegemony, the media and elite sources **57**

The Australian coverage of the Fiji coups **66**

CHAPTER 3: SOURCES, THEMES AND PRACTICE – A MIXED METHODS APPROACH 69

Quantitative, qualitative or both? 69

The sources: who said so? 74

The sources: research questions 75

Identifying the sources 78

Why focus on these particular newspapers? 81

The first week of coverage 84

Coding of characteristics 85

Major themes: perspectives on the coup 90

Identifying the prevalent themes 93

The interviews 95

Interviews: research questions 95

The interview process 97

The interview schedule 103

The interviews: selecting participants 105

Conducting the interviews 107

Conclusion 109

CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING THE SOURCES 110

Q1. What sources were used in the stories about the coups and what groups and institutions did these sources represent? 110

Q2. What kind of impact does geographic location, of both the sources and the journalists, have on the kinds of sources utilised in these stories? 119

Q3: In comparing the coverage in 1987 to that of 2000, were there any significant differences in the kinds of sources utilised? 129

Q4. Were there any significant differences in the kinds of sources used in the three different newspapers? 136

Source identity, themes and journalistic practice 141

CHAPTER 5: THEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF FIJI.................................. 143

Theme 1: From “paradise lost” to “arc of instability”.. 144

Article characteristics 145

1987: Paradise lost.. 146

2000: The arc of instability 152

Australian perspectives, old and new 158

Theme 2: How should Australia respond? 159

Article characteristics 160

1987: Calls for a military intervention.. 162

1987: Scoring political points 167

1987: Other responses... 169

2000: No soldiers, no political point-scoring.. 170

Constructing a dichotomy 173

Theme 3: The force of personality 175

Article characteristics 176

1987: The likeable coup leader 177

2000: The unlikely coup leader... 179

Likeable versus unlikely 182

The evolution of the Australia/Fiji relationship 184

CHAPTER 6: THE EXPERIENCES OF THE JOURNALISTS............................ 186

Motivation, training and experience.. 186

Situational factors.. 192

Background knowledge 192

Preparation time... 199

The media pack.. 204

Physical restrictions... 207

Restrictions on telecommunications.. 210

2000: Inside the compound 213

Finding reliable sources.. 216

The media as sources 227
1987: The myth of the holiday coup 227
2000: Random acts of violence 233
Indian Fijians as sources 234
Conclusions 238

CHAPTER 7: SOURCES, PRACTICE AND REPRESENTATION 240

Journalistic practice 240
Sources 243
Rabuka and Speight: sources for courses 245
Representation 250

CHAPTER 8: AUSTRALIA AND FIJI: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA 258

BIBLIOGRAPHY 262

Interviews 272

List of tables

Table 1A: Category of all sources 113

Table 1B: Most frequently quoted sources 114

Table 1C: Gender of all sources 115

Table 1D: Gender of front page sources 115

Table 1E: Category of female sources 116

Table 1F: Nationality/ethnicity of sources 117

Table 1G: Category of sources from main nationality/ethnicity groups 119

Table 2A: Location of sources 120

Table 2B: Location of Journalists 121

Table 2C: Location of sources: stories written in Fiji compared with stories written in Australia 122

Table 2D: Category of sources: stories written in Fiji compared with stories written in Australia 124

Table 2E: Category of sources: sources located outside Fiji and Australia 125

Table 2F: Nationality/ethnicity of sources: stories written in Fiji compared to stories written in Australia 126

Table 2G: Gender of sources: stories written in Fiji compared to stories written in Australia 127

Table 2H: Location of sources in front page stories 128

Table 2I: Location of journalists who wrote front page stories 128

Table 2J: Anonymous sources: location of source and journalist 129

Table 3A: Comparing 1987 and 2000: category of sources 130

Table 3B: Comparing 1987 and 2000: nationality or ethnicity of sources 131

Table 3C: Comparing 1987 and 2000: gender of sources 132

Table 3D: Comparing 1987 and 2000: gender of front page sources 132

Table 3E: Comparing 1987 and 2000: category of female sources 133

Table 3F: Comparing 1987 and 2000: location of sources 134

Table 3G: Comparing 1987 and 2000: location of journalists 135

Table 3H: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — gender of journalists 135

Table 4A: Comparing newspapers: number of articles.. 136

Table 4B: Comparing newspapers: category of sources 137

Table 4C: Comparing newspapers: location of sources 138

Table 4D: Comparing newspapers: nationality/ethnicity of sources 139

Table 4E: Comparing newspapers: location of journalists 140

Table 4F: Comparing newspapers: use of agencies 141

Abstract

For many Australians, Fiji is a place of holidays, coups and rugby. The extent to which we think about this near-neighbour of ours is governed, for most, by what we learn about Fiji through the media. In normal circumstances, there is not a lot to learn as Fiji rarely appears in our media. At times of crisis, such as during the 1987 and 2000 coups in Fiji, there is saturation coverage. At these times, the potential for generating understanding is great. The reporting of a crisis can encapsulate all the social, political and economic issues which are a cause or outcome of an event like a coup, elucidating for media consumers the culture, the history and the social forces involved. In particular, the kinds of sources used and the kinds of organisations these sources represent, the kinds of themes presented in the reporting, and the way the journalists go about their work, can have a significant bearing on how an event like a coup is represented. The reporting of the Fiji coups presented the opportunity to examine these factors. As such, the aim of this thesis is to understand the role of the media in building relationships between developed and developing post-colonial nations like Australia and Fiji.

A content analysis of 419 articles published in three leading broadsheet newspapers, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* and *The Canberra Times*, examined the basic characteristics of the articles, with a particular focus on the sources used in these articles. This analysis revealed that the reports were dominated by elite sources, particularly representatives of governments, with a high proportion of Australian sources who provided information from Australia. While alternative sources did appear, they were limited in number. Women, Indian Fijians and representatives of non-government organisations were rarely used as sources. There were some variations between the articles from 1987 and those from 2000, primarily an increase in Indian Fijian sources, but overall the profile of the sources were similar.

A thematic analysis of the same articles identified and examined the three most prevalent themes in the coverage. These indicated important aspects of the way the coups were represented: the way Fiji was represented, the way Australia's responses were represented, and the way the coup leaders were represented. This analysis found that the way in which the coups were represented reflected the nature of the relationship between Australia and Fiji. In 1987, the unexpected nature of the coup meant there was a struggle to re-define how

Fiji should be understood. In 2000, Australia's increased focus on Fiji and the Pacific region was demonstrated by reports which represented the situation as more complex and uncertain, demanding more varied responses.

A series of interviews with journalists who travelled to Fiji to cover the coups revealed that the working conditions for Australian media varied greatly between 1987 and 2000. The situational factors, particularly those which limited their work, had an impact on the journalists' ability to access specific kinds of sources and, ultimately, the kinds of themes which appeared in the stories. The variation between 1987 and 2000 demonstrated that under different conditions, journalists were able to access a more diverse range of sources and present more sophisticated perspectives of the coup.

In a cross-cultural situation such as this, the impact of reporting dominated by elite sources is felt not just in the country being covered, but also in the country where the reporting appears. It presents a limited representation, which marginalises and downplays the often complex social, cultural and historical factors which contribute to an event like a coup. Debate and alternative ways of understanding are limited and the chance to engage more deeply with a place like Fiji is, by and large, lost.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The role the Australian press has played in shaping Australian perceptions of Fiji stretches back to the early 19th century. On December 11, 1808, *The Sydney Gazette* published the first reference to Fiji in an Australian newspaper[1]. It told the story of Captain Campbell of the brig *Favorite*, and his experiences in the "Fejee Islands" in October of that year. The *Favorite* had been in the islands to harvest the sandalwood forests. Campbell was warned of a possible conflict with warring natives and he ordered his crew to return to the ship. On the way, they were intercepted by a fleet of around 140 canoes. Campbell and his crew were held prisoner for nine days, before they were released.

Campbell's description of the islanders, as reported in *The Sydney Gazette*, was less than complimentary. "These people are very avaricious and from the foregoing account must be considered insatiably cruel," Campbell stated . He found they were "barbarous" and mysterious: "…it is not easy always to determine their character" (1808).

Obviously Campbell's initial experience in Fiji did not deter him, and he soon returned for more sandalwood. On February 19, 1809, another report in *The Sydney Gazette*, with the headline "Skirmish with natives", told of more trouble for the crew of *Favorite* (1809), reiterating the perception that Fiji was a dangerous place. Fighting had broken out and 110 islanders, along with a sailor, Thomas Berry, had been killed. The report particularly noted that the islanders could not have been familiar with the "destructive efficacy of fire arms when they made the attack". Campbell explained that after they surrendered the natives then "heaped presents of fruit and vegetables beside the guns, which they worshipped in dread of their displeasure". On this occasion, *Favorite* returned to Sydney with 100 tons of the valuable sandalwood.

The next report which mentioned Fiji did not occur until four years later and again the focus was on violence and conflict. In 1813, *The Sydney Gazette* again reported on Fiji, under the headline "Massacre at Fejee Islands" (1813). The crew of the cutter, *Elizabeth*, had got into

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[1] Articles about Fiji from *The Sydney Gazette* and early issues of *The Australian* were traced by using the subject indexes held at the National Library of Australia.

a conflict with an army of "up to 8000 men" while on a journey to procure sandalwood. The massacre referred to the death of 10 Europeans. There was no mention of how many islanders had died. This article was also notable for the first mention of a European priest in the islands, and for being the first time Fijians were accused of cannibalism. The claim of cannibalism was repeated in another report about Fiji 28 years later. In 1841, *The Australian* newspaper carried a report by Captain Devlin of the brig, *Rapid*, which had been wrecked on a reef in the islands (1841). Devlin was concerned for the safety of himself and his crew, "…as I have always heard these men spoken of as cannibals…". For six weeks, Devlin and his crew skipped from island to island in their dinghies, trying to avoid trouble with the natives. Eventually, they were rescued, though not before some Fijians reportedly stole money and property from the crew.

Even in such a precarious position, Devlin threatened the natives that, on the sailors return to Sydney, "the Governor would despatch a man-of-war to the island, and take the thieves off and hang them in Sydney…". This report by Devlin evoked a strong outburst in the editorial of that edition of *The Australian*. Not only did the paper call for accurate surveys of the islands to be made by the British authorities, but it also requested the authorities to "inflict a severe punishment on the natives of Fiji", by sending a force which should "strike a wholesome terror" on the natives. "This punishment should be of such a nature as would serve as a preventative to future cruelties on the part of these savages." The editorial then went on to describe the natives as barbarous and murderous (1841).

Undoubtedly, many of the ideas and attitudes expressed in these early media reports reflected contemporary attitudes to Fiji and the rest of the Pacific. The Pacific islands were regarded as resource-rich places which were open to plunder. The inhabitants were naïve and ferocious, unknowing and cunning. The focus of the coverage was on conflict, particularly conflicts which effected or involved Australians.

These early media reports are very one dimensional in how they represent Fiji. The language is strong and the tone is not subtle. While modern Australian reporting of Fiji has moved on in many ways, it continues to depict Fiji in a limited way, which can arguably do great harm to both countries and to the relationship between the two countries. How is it that in a modern society, in a highly educated country, with a sophisticated media system, the portrayal of one of our near-neighbours continues to be narrowly defined? What are the

factors which limit the ways in which most Australians understand Fiji? How does the media contribute to the relationship between Fiji and Australia? These are some of the questions which first engaged my interest in researching the relationship between Australia and Fiji.

The media plays a significant role in this relationship, because it is the main way most Australians learn about Fiji. Australians don't often study Fiji, except in the context of a holiday. Australians don't read books or watch movies or see plays about or from Fiji. Obviously there are exceptions — there are no doubt some Australians who have highly informative connections with Fiji through their academic work, their businesses, or their family — but the majority of Australians only relate to Fiji through the news. Most of the news about Fiji comes to us through the coverage of critical moments, such as the coups. A simple search of Australian newspaper archives will reveal that outside of these critical moments, Fiji barely rates a mention. The coup coverage was intense, if brief, but provided sufficient material to base conclusions upon.

The intensity of crisis coverage, such as the reporting about the coups, presents a real test for the journalists. With limited preparation, they are expected to quickly comprehend the many factors which contribute to the conflict and connect with the sources who can provide reliable, rational arguments and analysis. These ideas led me to a series of questions about the work of the Australian journalists in Fiji, as they played a key role in how Fiji was represented. How did the journalists prepare themselves for such work? Did they have sufficient background knowledge and how did they prepare? Were there factors which limited the way they were able to cover the coups, and if so, how did they deal with them?

Apart from the opportunities they may have to provide commentary, as opposed to straight news reporting, journalists rely heavily on the sources to inform and frame the issues. If the journalists are the narrators of how Fiji is represented, the sources are the actors in the representation, the people whose words play a critical role in how we understand what is happening. The sources are the people a reader connects with, the individuals who can provide an insight into the human response to an event. As such, an approach which examines the role of the sources in the coup coverage is a necessary complement to the focus on the work of the journalists. Identifying the kinds of sources used and the kinds of institutions and organisations they represent is critical. Where do the sources' interests lie,

and how does this impact the way the coups and Fiji are represented? The relationship between the journalists and their sources is also crucial. In the telling of the story of the coups, who were the sources the journalists used most frequently and who were the sources who never appeared? Why were some sources favoured over others and were there specific factors which influenced the use or non-use of particular kinds of sources? Together, the sources and the journalists would be largely responsible for how the average Australian news consumer would interpret the Fiji coups, and ultimately how Australia and Fiji were able to relate to each other politically, socially and culturally.

Summary of events

In order to understand some of the situational challenges faced by the Australian media in covering the Fiji coups, and the way this might have impacted on the kinds of sources they were able to access, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the events relating to the 1987 and 2000 coups.

On May 14, 1987, when a group of masked, armed gunmen, led by Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, stormed into the Fijian parliament, the first military coup in the South Pacific caught the nation and the rest of the world by surprise. Rabuka expected this — his codename for the plot, Operation Kidacala, means “surprise” (Robie, 1989, p221). Part of the reason it was unexpected was that Fiji’s government, a coalition between the Fiji Labour Party and the National Federation Party, had only been in power since April 13, when Prime Minister Dr Timoci Bavadra was sworn in. Bavadra’s election win had defeated the Alliance Party, led by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who had been the only Prime Minister in Fiji since independence in 1970. The Bavadra government was also remarkable in that it was the first time in Fijian history that Indian Fijians had gained an equal role in the governance of the country. Nineteen of the 28 government members were Indian Fijian and the cabinet included seven Indian Fijians, six Indigenous Fijians and one European Fijian.

The election of the Coalition was not greeted with unanimous acclaim. Less then a week after the election, villagers in Tavua, in the west of Fiji, set up roadblocks to protest against the new government in Suva. Following this, protests began to gather pace across the country, including in Bavadra’s home village of Viseisei. On April 24, 5000 Indigenous Fijians marched through Suva, under banners calling for “Fiji for the Fijians” (Robie, 1989, p216), and demanding the removal of the Bavadra government, claiming it was dominated

by Indian Fijians. These nationalist sentiments, driven by a group known as the Taukei (which means 'our land'), were a significant motivating factor for the coup plotters. In particular, there was said to be a threat to the indigenous ownership of land, even though it was protected by the constitution. While race was a factor which was highlighted during the coup, in reality the coup was more a result of the loss of power of the traditional Fijian chiefs, who saw their control over the government slipping away.

In the days following the coup, the Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau formed an advisory council, which included Rabuka and Bavadra. Bavadra refused to participate on the grounds that the council was unconstitutional. Violence against Bavadra supporters and Indian Fijians increased and many white-collar Indian Fijians began making plans to emigrate. In September, with the support of Ratu Ganilau, Bavadra's Coalition and Ratu Mara's Alliance Party agreed to form a caretaker government under the Deuba Accord.

Rabuka, dissatisfied with the Deuba Accord, then staged a second coup on October 1, formally abrogating the 1970 constitution and sacking the Governor General. On October 6, Rabuka severed connections with the Commonwealth and declared Fiji a Republic, installing himself as the head of state. Almost 10 years of turbulent government followed. Rabuka served as Prime Minister from 1992 to 1999. Following a review of the Constitution in 1996, a multi-party executive was agreed to. In the House of Representatives, 46 seats were racially based, with 23 for Indigenous Fijians, 19 for Indian Fijians, three for other races and one for Rotuma Islanders, an ethnic group from within Fiji. A further 25 seats were open to all races.

In May 1999, the first election under the new Constitution took place, with a coalition between Labour, the Party of National Unity and the Fijian Association Party, known as the Peoples' Coalition, winning 31 of the 71 seats. Rabuka's Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) party won only eight seats. The first non-indigenous Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry, was sworn in on May 19.

Exactly one year later, following similar protests to those in 1987, George Speight, with rogue soldiers from the Army's Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit, stormed parliament and took the Prime Minister and the Members of Parliament hostage. Again, the coup plotters said they were motivated by the desire to protect the rights of Indigenous Fijians.

For 56 days, Chaudhry was held hostage by Speight inside the parliamentary compound. Supporters were welcomed into the compound, crossing through the barricade set up outside by the military. On May 26, the President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, sacked the hostage government for being "unable to act", and assumed control of the country. Two days later, Mara resigned, allegedly under pressure from the leader of the Fijian Military Forces, Commodore Frank Bainimarama.

Bainimarama announced he had taken over the government and declared martial law, later appointing Laisenia Qarase as Prime Minister. This government signed an accord with Speight, protecting him from prosecution, and all hostages were released by July 13. The government reneged on their deal and Speight and many of his supporters were arrested on July 27.

Chapter overview

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the chapters of this thesis, in order to provide a rationale for the research and an introduction to the connections between the main arguments.

Chapter 2. Making the news: processes, practices and outcomes

News can be regarded as a window on the world which allows the audience to understand events and places they may never experience otherwise. News is also a process, and examinations of this process can reveal much about the dynamics of both the media and the way it interacts with the rest of society. The news process has the potential to give an event or circumstance ideological meaning. News gives a circumstance the potential to become ideological. As such, those who play a significant role in the news process — the journalists, the media organisations, the political and social elites — also play a significant role in how society perceives its relationship with itself and with other societies.

Journalists occupy a critical position in the process of newsmaking. As Finley Peter Dunne stated, the job of newspapers is to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted (in Burns, 2001, p23), but journalists must do so within a complex and ever-changing social system. The practice of journalism demands a constant struggle between the ideological imperatives of the Fourth Estate and the practical considerations of a craft. A journalist must understand their role in a democracy and complete their stories by deadline.

The foreign correspondent is a special kind of journalist. Generally, they are more experienced, more senior, have more money spent on them, and are the subject of more myths than the average journalist (Tunstall, 1973). Foreign correspondents are at the forefront of the creation of public perceptions of the relationships between nations. For example, it is through the eyes of World War Two correspondents that many Australians first began to connect with Asia (Torney-Parlicki, 2000). There are fewer and fewer foreign correspondents, yet the expectation that they can simplify a complex crisis and capture the essence of whole societies in a few sentences simply grows. Driven by the changes in economic commitment, technology and the demands of the audience, foreign correspondence has changed dramatically in the last few decades, with less emphasis on providing deep understanding and more emphasis on speed. The rise of the “parachute journalist”, who drops into the scene of a crisis, stays around as long as the story is hot, then flies off to the next crisis, is an outcome of this new approach.

Foreign correspondents, like other journalists, also have to answer to the dictates of their professional ethics. The pursuit of objectivity, particularly, is said to have a strong influence over how journalists go about their work (Schultz, 1998, p130). The journalistic approach to objectivity has helped journalists segregate what they see or hear from what they think. Sometimes, as was most recently demonstrated in the coverage of the attacks on the World Trade Centre and in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, this objectivity can be tempered by nationalistic loyalty (McLaughlin, 2002, p152). In reality the pursuit of objectivity can only ever be an ideal, as the subjective nature of the many decisions made throughout the newsmaking process is evident.

Given all these factors — the way news is understood, the role of the journalists and foreign correspondents, and the pursuit of ideals like objectivity — it is apparent that the news sources play a crucial and often under-emphasised role in the newsmaking process. The most common kinds of news sources represent the most powerful political, social and cultural institutions in society. This reliance on regular, reliable sources is driven by economic necessity, the demands of the news cycle and the need for authoritative voices. But the outcomes of this reliance on these elite source are not as easily identified.

The reliance on elite sources lends a particular kind of tone to the news. It provides the thoughts and opinions of those who lead, as opposed to those being led. It leads to restrictions on dissent. And it legitimises the media in the eyes of the institutions they are dealing with (Meadows, 2001). Journalists become part of the power elite, as opposed to those reporting on the power elite. This thesis argues that this limited notion of truth helps to maintain the hegemonic boundaries within society. The way the media operates and the way the elite forces in society operate through the media, means that the dominant way of seeing or making sense of an event is more likely to be propagated and accepted. The news tells us not only what this representation is, or should be, but also tells us who has the authority to prescribe these views.

Journalists play a key role in the dissemination of these elite representations. It is not simply a case of the journalists being biased. They operate within a system and according to routines and rules which often work to support the dominant interests in society (Pavasaris, 1996, p111). This is particularly the case for foreign correspondents, who have a tendency to localise the foreign news for the domestic audience. Australian journalists working in other countries have often found themselves in difficult situations when they apply Australia standards or ideals to the reporting of other societies or cultures. Often branded as insensitive or arrogant, the Australian media is beginning to understand the implications news reporting can have on the relations between countries. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to add to that level of understanding, using the coverage of the Fiji coups as an example.

Chapter 3. Sources, themes and practice: a mixed methods approach

In order to understand the kinds of sources used to represent the Fiji coups, the kinds of themes presented in the reports and the way the journalists went about their work, this research relies on a mixed methods approach. Three complementary kinds of research tool were used in order to provide a broader understanding of the different factors which contributed to the way the coups were represented. Using three methods means that each method can provide specific insights into different aspects of the research. This approach to research relies on an epistemology of pragmatism. By using the most appropriate methodological tools in the most appropriate ways, researchers can concentrate on the consequences and meanings of their work (Maxcy, 2003).

This thesis examines the Fiji coups from three different perspectives. Firstly, there is a content analysis of newspaper reports of the coups. Secondly, there is a thematic analysis which identifies the prevalent themes in the articles. Finally, there are a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Australian journalists who covered the coups, as well as a more limited number of interviews with Fijian media, politicians and academics. Each of these methods provides different perspectives. The goal is not for one perspective to prove or disprove another. The goal is to understand the research problem without the limitations of a single philosophical assumption.

The content analysis was conducted using three broadsheet newspapers, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian* and *The Canberra Times*. All articles for the first week of coverage in 1987 and 2000 were analysed. Articles which mentioned Fiji were included, and a range of characteristics of each of these articles was recorded. Apart from some of the basic features of these articles, the main focus was on the kinds of sources which appeared. In particular, attributes such as the kinds of organisations they represented, their nationality and their location were recorded. Only articles from the first week of coverage were included. This time period is the most significant period in terms of dictating how an event was going to be represented, as it is during these times when immediate impressions are formed. It is also the time when the journalists are under the most pressure.

The thematic analysis utilised the same set of articles as the content analysis. The aim was to reveal the common themes and perspectives in the content of the reports. In particular, the contrast between the themes presented in 1987 and 2000 were highlighted. The relationship between the prevalent themes and the kinds of sources used in the articles which included these themes was also examined, with the sources examined on the same basis as the content analysis.

The third method utilised in this research was the interviews. In this case, the focus was on journalists who went to Fiji to cover the coups, as it was determined that their role in the overall representation of the event was more likely to be influential because the singular focus of these journalists was on the coups, as opposed to journalists reporting from Australia who would also have been working on other stories. The journalists in Fiji were also closest to the action, and subject to the situational factors emanating from the crisis situation. Being outside their comfort zone meant that these journalists had to respond in

ways which reveal much about the process of news. Interviews seemed to be the most appropriate tool for gathering this data, as journalists are very comfortable with the concept and practice of interviews (Weiss, 1994, p39-59.). Specifically, the interview questions related to three main themes: the journalists were asked about their background and preparation, their work and conditions in Fiji, and their approach to finding and utilising sources in Fiji. Additionally, a series of questions relating to these themes were generated for the interviews of Fijian media, politicians and academics.

Chapter 4. Identifying the sources

The content analysis found that the sources were dominated by elites in Australian and Fijian society. Government sources were the most common, followed by military sources. Indigenous Fijian and Australian sources were most prevalent, with Indian Fijian sources poorly represented, especially given they represented a significant proportion of the Fijian population. Some source categories were dominated by an individual source. For example, Sitiveni Rabuka accounted for 52 per cent of all military sources. Sources were much more likely to be male than female, and the few female sources were much less likely to appear on the front page or to represent one of the main social institutions.

Most of the sources were located in Fiji and Australia. The stories written in Fiji utilised sources from a wider cross-section of society, with the Australian-based sources more concentrated in the areas of government, tourism and business. There was a wide range of locations, with 19 different countries represented, though most appeared fewer than four times. The sources in countries other than Australia or Fiji were much more likely to be government sources. Sources located in Fiji were more likely to appear on the front page, and although more stories were written in Australia than Fiji, it was more likely that a story written in Fiji would make the front page.

There were some variations in the kinds of sources used in 1987 compared to those used in 2000. There were fluctuations in the categories of sources, with the greatest variation being reductions in the number of government and military sources. There was a reduction in the number of Indigenous Fijian sources and an almost equivalent increase in the number of Indian Fijian sources. There was also a decrease in the number of journalists and media used as sources. There was an increase in the number of female sources and an increase in the percentage of female sources appearing on the front page. The number of sources in Fiji fell

between 1987 and 2000, and the number of sources in Australia increased. The number of stories written in Australia increased slightly in 2000.

The biggest differences between the newspapers proved to be the variation between *The Canberra Times* and the other two papers. *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* generally utilised similar kinds of sources, while *The Canberra Times* displayed much less diversity in the kinds of sources they used. They relied heavily on government sources, sources located in Australia, stories written in Australia and stories written by news agencies.

Chapter 5. Thematic representations of Fiji

Three prevalent themes were identified in the thematic analysis:

From "paradise lost" to "arc of instability". This theme revealed the way in which Fiji was depicted. This depiction was a particularly Australian perspective, with these articles having a high concentration of Australian sources or sources located in Australia. The evolution of the way Fiji was depicted ranged from the 1987 idea that this tropical paradise had been shattered, to the 2000 perspective that Fiji was now just part of a much larger series of problems plaguing the Pacific region.

How should Australia respond? This theme highlighted the relationship between Australia and Fiji by focussing on the kinds of possible responses to the coup. Again, it represents a particularly Australian perspective. The simplistic responses of 1987 included the possibility of a military intervention, and the manipulation of events surrounding the coup into a debate between the Australian political parties. By 2000, the responses being discussed were based on a better understanding of the complexity of the situation, taking a much broader approach.

The force of personality. This theme examined the way in which the leaders of the coups, Sitiveni Rabuka and George Speight, were depicted, and how these depictions influenced the overall depiction of the situation in Fiji. Rabuka was described as a strong military leader who had Fiji under control. Speight was described as a failed businessman who was unable to get his way.

Overall, these highlighted the evolution of the relationship between Australia and Fiji. The perspective of Fiji moved from simplistic notions of a tropical paradise which had been shattered, to a complex situation which demanded more sophisticated levels of understanding.

Chapter 6. The experiences of the journalists

The interviews revealed a number of overall characteristics of the journalists who covered the coups in Fiji. In 1987, the journalists had very little experience of Fiji. They had little time to prepare and could not rely on external means for researching the situation — nearly all their preparation and research was based on wire copy or material from newspaper archives. Some organisations, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), were historically more committed to covering the region, and as such their reporters had more experience than most in the country. The other kinds of journalists who had experience in Fiji were those working for news agencies or those working more independently, such as freelancers. By 2000, the experience levels had increased overall, largely as a result of the continued media interest in Fiji since the 1987 coup.

The differences in the levels of experience between 1987 and 2000 might also explain the reported difference in the level of reliance on the media pack. In 1987, more journalists found that they were influenced by the actions of the other international media in Fiji. By 2000, more said they were able to strike out on their own, gaining access to more exclusive sources from a wider cross-section of Fijian society.

It is possible that this greater freedom was a direct result of the differences in the personal security and safety of the journalists. In 1987, there was an orchestrated campaign of harassment of the media by the military, whereas in 2000 the violence was more sporadic. Another significant difference revealed by the interviews was the changes in technology. In 1987, journalists were filing their stories by phone or fax, with connections going through hotel switchboards or the telegraph office. In 2000, many had satellite phones, laptop computers, mobile phones and access to the internet.

In relation to the sources the journalists were able to access, the interviews reinforced the results of the content analysis, which showed an increase in the number of Indian Fijian sources. The journalists said that one of the main reasons for this increased level of access in

2000 was the assistance they received from local media, which had been shut down by the military in 1987.

The situational factors, as described by the journalists, undoubtedly had an impact on the way the journalists were able to go about their work. It was apparent that the situational factors had an impact on the access and use of particular groups of sources and the themes which emerged in the articles.

Chapter 7. Sources, practice and representation

This chapter discusses the individual findings of the three different methodologies, examining both the specifics of each one and the broader relationships between them, and relates this to the existing knowledge outlined in the literature review.

Many of the commonly understood features of the practice of foreign correspondence were confirmed by this research. The journalists in Fiji had little background knowledge, they had little experience of Fiji and they were influenced by the pack mentality. They were also subject to situational factors, including violence and intimidation, which had an impact on the way they went about their work.

The kinds of sources identified in the content analysis also confirmed much of the existing knowledge in this area. The sources were limited, with a high number of government sources. The high number of Australian sources highlighted the tendency of foreign correspondents to localise international news for a domestic audience. In particular, the way in which two of the main sources, Rabuka and Speight, were depicted, demonstrated the kind of issues the journalists faced, the kinds of judgements they made and the kinds of representations which resulted.

The relationship between the three different aspects of this research, the sources, the themes and the work of the journalists, reveal the way in which Fiji was represented during the coup coverage. The limited perspectives identified in the thematic analysis were an outcome of a reliance on elite sources and the situational factors which restricted the work of the journalists. The description of the outcomes of this limited perspective is drawn from *Orientalism*, Edward Said’s 1978 study of the relationship between Islam and the West. While the scale of the relationships is clearly different, Said’s work offers a framework to

examine the relationship between Australia and Fiji. It reveals that this kind of coverage can have an impact in Australia, in Fiji, and in the way Australia and Fiji understands each other.

Chapter 8. Australia and Fiji: the role of the media

This concluding chapter summarises the findings of the thesis, which has established that there is a significant role for the media in developing the relationship between Australia and Fiji, or indeed, between similarly developed and developing post-colonial nations. It outlines how the three different components of this mixed methods study — the sources used in the articles, the prevalent themes in the reports, and the way the journalists went about their work in Fiji — each contribute specific detail about the nature of this relationship. It also discusses ways in which new approaches to news gathering processes, particularly the commitment of the news organisations, might lead to different outcomes.

CHAPTER 2: MAKING THE NEWS: PROCESSES, PRACTISES AND OUTCOMES

The aim of this thesis is to understand the role of the media in building relationships between developed and developing post-colonial nations like Australia and Fiji. In order to reach conclusions about the role of the media, it is necessary to understand certain principles and processes related to the construction of the news.

To begin, it is necessary to understand why an event such as a coup is regarded as newsworthy. By starting with the underlying principles of how news is defined, the importance and relevance of understanding news as a process is unearthed. Different parts of the newsmaking process — the work of the journalists, the use of sources and the themes present in the stories — form the basis of this research. Establishing what the existing literature reveals about the process of news, particularly what happens to news when it becomes part of the global communication process as was the case with the reporting of the Fiji coups, is an introduction to a closer examination of issues relevant to this thesis.

Understanding the work of journalists is paramount, especially the role of journalists in making news and the work of foreign correspondents. The practices employed by journalists, the pressures they face, and the limitations they have to deal with in the daily gathering of news all need to be defined and understood to provide a basis for scrutinising the work of the journalists who covered the Fiji coups. In particular, the journalistic pursuit of objectivity needs to be analysed as it is a contributing factor to the way journalists determine the most appropriate sources for their stories. The relationship between journalists and sources also warrants attention, as an investigation into the kinds of sources used in the Fiji coup coverage is an important element of this thesis.

Once a clear appraisal of the literature relating to the relevant parts of the newsmaking process is completed, it is necessary to focus on the kinds of outcomes which result from this process, particularly those outcomes which relate to the work of the journalists and their use of sources. This literature review will provide evidence that there is a strong relationship

between the kinds of sources used, the ways in which a news event is represented, and the role of news in reinforcing the hegemonic nature of society.

News as a process

> News is an institutional method of making information available to consumers… It is located, gathered and disseminated by professionals working in organisations. It is the product of a social institution and is embedded in relationships with other institutions — Tuchman (1978, p5).

Tuchman's simple but fundamental description of news elucidates the importance of process in creating and disseminating news, an idea on which this thesis relies. Tuchman suggests newsmaking is a process which delivers information, a process which is open to many and varied influences, a process which filters, modifies and manipulates. News is constructed, and the process of that construction is, according to this thesis, one of the most revealing aspects of news. As Tiffen has argued, news should be understood as a product of the processes by which it is produced (Tiffen, 1993, p172).

Understanding that news is a process does not preclude the idea that this process is influenced by many competing factors which result in different approaches to defining what news is. Alternative descriptions of what news is often encompass the idea of a process. For Navasky, any definition of the concept of news cannot ignore the Fourth Estate ideal which posits that news is a critical part of our society. "It is the circulation system of our democracy, the way we find out what's what. It is based largely on journalism that we make up our national mind" (Navasky, 2002, pxii). Goldman suggests that news presents a version of events "which occur 'out there' in the world" (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p111). For Ericson, news is the act of structuring reality (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1987, p11). The circulation system of democracy, presenting versions of real world events, structuring reality; all these descriptions imply the idea of news as a process.

Understanding specific elements of the newsmaking process allows us to examine how these elements might have a bearing on the outcomes of the newsmaking process. For example, an understanding of the process behind the construction of the news about the Fiji coup could provide insights into the way in which these reports represented Fiji to the Australian community. Researchers have highlighted the ability of the news to influence the way we

might think about an event or occurrence. Tuchman claimed that the explanation of events in the news may serve as the context in which news consumers debate the meaning of events: "News imparts to occurrences their public character as it transforms mere happenings into publicly discussable events" (Tuchman, 1978. p3). The terminology applied in the news, the individual words and phrases, often attest to certain ideological or political positions (van Ginneken, 1998, p8). Molotch and Lester counter that news does not reflect the world, only "the practices of those having the power to determine the experience of others" (Molotch and Lester, 1974, p111). Note that the practice, the way the news is processed, is still a critical part of this equation. By utilising these practices, by undertaking the newsmaking processes they have helped to develop, news organisations circulate and shape knowledge. They have the power to shape consumers' opinions on topics about which they are ignorant (Tuchman, 1978, p2). It is the practices and the processes which are the key to this potential power.

Why is it news?

The concept of news as a process can be better understood by an examination of the characteristics and qualities of news. Just as the existing theory points to the process-oriented nature of news, the characteristics of news and newsmaking reinforce the idea that news is constructed. The practical nature of newsmaking has led to a focus on determining the principles which define whether an event or circumstance is newsworthy, and how newsworthy it is compared to competing news events.

The Norwegian researchers, Galtung and Ruge set forth a number of hypotheses about the nature of the events which become news, factors which are sometimes referred to as news values (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, p65):

Frequency*:* Events which match the frequency of news production cycles are more likely to attract attention. For example, the reporting of sport has grown in volumes, partly because it is a frequently occurring event. Events which fall outside the boundaries of normal news production, such as events which take place over a long period of time, are less likely to become news.

Amplitude: News must involve or effect a certain number of people or money or incidents. An accident which kills one person does not have the same news value as an accident which kills 100 people.

Unambiguous: Events must have a clear meaning to be readily adopted as news. Complex events might become news but they are often stripped of historical or cultural significance.
Meaningful: Many people show little interest in the major issues of the day — social, political or economic — unless they perceive themselves to be directly affected (Pavasaris, 1996, p119). The barriers to an event being classified as meaningful may be geographical, social or cultural.
Consonance: Journalists pride themselves on being able to choose the best "angle" for a story — a news event has to match these expectations. For example, if there is a coup there may be an expectation that it will involve violence.
Unexpectedness: Dog bites man is not news. Man bites dog is news. In short, if an event is completely surprising it is more likely to make news.
Continuity: If an event has already been covered, then there is more chance of it being covered again. This might especially be the case when news crews have been dispatched to a distant location, as it makes sense to get the most value possible out of the costs associated with these assignments.
Composition: The question of balance is an important consideration. If there is a lot of political news, an editor may choose to drop some political stories for other kinds of news. If there is a lot of foreign news, an editor may decide to drop some foreign news for domestic news stories.
Elite nations: Nations which are seen as having major roles on the world stage are more likely to appear in the news. There is also a strong cultural association — nations which share our cultural standards and ideals are more likely to appear in our news.
Elite people: Like elite nations, important people are more often the focus of media attention. The definition of who is elite — is it a Prime Minister, a movie star or a sporting hero — therefore has a serious impact on the kind of news which is reported.
Personality: News events are understood through the actions of the individuals involved. A political election is not necessarily portrayed as a clash of ideologies — it is more likely portrayed as a clash between opposing leaders. Similarly, the impact of a complicated event which might impact on many people, such as a changes to the taxation system, is often reported by focusing on the impact it has on an individual.
Negativity: Bad news is almost always going to win out over good news. As Tunstall has noted: "Negative events fulfill some latent or manifest need of many people; negative news is more expected" (Tunstall, 1973).

Some important additions to this list of news values came in Gitlin's work (Gitlin, 1980, p263). He said that news involves the visible conflict, as opposed to the deep consensus (Gitlin, 1980, p263). News is always about what can be seen, not necessarily about what has to be explained in detail. Gitlin also claimed that news is about the fact that advances the story, not the one that enlarges it (Gitlin, 1980, p263). As a result of this, the historical or cultural context of an event does not generally warrant the attention of the newsmakers.

More contemporary research has been critical of Galtung and Ruge, suggesting that many stories do not include the identified values, and there is no accounting for stories which may emanate as a result of advertising or public relations activities (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001, p276). Instead, Harcup and O'Neill reformulated Galtung and Ruge's list, in some cases expanding and in some cases combining aspects of the original work in order to generate a modern variation which included: the power elite; celebrity; entertainment; surprise; bad news; good news; magnitude; relevance; follow-up; and newspaper agenda (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001, p279).

In contrast to these detailed explanations of what is deemed to constitute news, some researchers favour a much narrower approach. For Arno, news is simply defined by its conflict status (Arno, 1984, p2). There is an argument that conflict-focused news gives a distorted view of the world, but according to Arno, people don't read or watch the news to gain an "undistorted" picture of the world: "The human disposition to find alarming reports more stimulating than stories about what is right with the world probably accounts in part for the persistence of the species" (Arno, 1984, p2). As such, an event like a coup is almost instantly attractive to consumers of news.

Clearly, the application of these news values to an event or situation allows journalists to quickly determine how much attention they pay to such an event, and which events to ignore. Determining whether an event is newsworthy is learned behaviour and in experienced journalists this process may become second nature. In the case of the Fiji coups, many of these criteria were easily identifiable, which is partly why Fiji became a media focus. Once these criteria were satisfied, once the stories were starting to be written, the reporting of the coups entered the next stage of the newsmaking process – the dissemination of the news.

Local news, national news, global news

Once news has been constructed and published, it becomes part of the wider communication process and may be disseminated around the world. Research into how news circulates around the world led to the concept of "news flow". Initially, interest in news flow emerged from the increase in global connections within and between societies across the world. Researchers began to ask questions like where does news begin, where does it end and what causes it to flow in a particular direction? As well as examining the way news moves between different countries, researchers were interested in the effects of the flow of news. The earliest proponents of theories about news flow, such as Dan Lerner in 1958, were optimistic about the potential for research in this area to promote understanding and build nations (Lerner, 1958).

Reasonably quickly, studies began to show bias in favour of first world countries. News emanates from the major nations in the world, while countries deemed less significant, either economically, militarily, historically or socially, such as Fiji, are all but invisible in western media until they are highlighted in a negative context during a crisis such as a coup. For example, conflicts in Africa since the end of the Cold War accounted for 90% of all the world's war dead, yet Africa is the least covered continent in western media (Knightley, 2003). One of the main causes of this inequality has been the technological dominance of the west, particularly the rise of powerful international news agencies, such as Reuters, Associated Press (AP) and Agence France Presse (AFP). Content analysis of news items demonstrated that almost 80 per cent of the world news flow originated from the news agencies, which had a tendency to ignore third world countries (Hachten, 1981, p101). In the same vein, Hester suggested that international news flow is mediated partly by national and economic interests (Hester, 1971). More significant is the proposition that international news not only distorted how developed countries saw developing countries, but it also distorted how developing countries saw themselves (McNelly and Izcaray, 1986). Potentially, then, the coverage of the Fiji coups by the Australian media had an impact on the way Fiji regarded itself and its position in the world.

These kinds of assessments led many third world countries to feel deprived. Some of the major reactions to this information imbalance came at meetings of UNESCO in the 1970s. One of the most vocal critics was Mustapha Masmoudi, a former secretary for information

in the Tunisian government, who called for a New World Information and Communication Order (Masmoudi, 1979, p172). This was needed, it was argued, not just to increase the flow between developing countries and the western powers. It was also to increase the flow of news between developing countries (Hannerz, 2004, p40).

The verdict on the limited flow of news has, in some respects, been supplemented by subsequent research which suggests that despite the ever-greater interconnectedness of international communications, there is a strong tendency for media to frame international news to serve the needs of their local audience. For example, a study which examined stories from the *New York Times* in more than 50 countries found that there was a tendency to focus on issues in countries where the United States (US) had a strategic involvement or where there was a significant US presence (Caliendo, Gibney and Payne, 1999). Similarly, a study of CNN's reports of major elections from around the world demonstrated that an election was more likely to be reported when the country posed some kind of threat to the US (Golan and Wanta, 2003). While these two examples relate to the US media coverage, there has also been some research indicating the same kind of patterns are present in Australian reporting of international events. A study of the Australian reporting of the French nuclear testing in the Pacific supported the notion that domestic concerns are crucial to the way an international news event is reported (Putnis, 2006).

The role of the journalist in the localisation of international news is particularly pertinent to this thesis. Australian journalists learn and practice their craft within a western journalism culture, regardless of their location (Knight, 1995, p1). So for Australian foreign correspondents, domestic concerns determine how they cover international news (Tebbutt, 2000, p95). This doesn't mean that major events are ignored. But it may mean that events like the Fiji coups are framed in a way that is relevant to the audience in Australia.

If it was just a matter of appealing to the audience then there would probably be no real cause for concern in relation to the localisation of international news. However, Nossek has argued that the way in which a journalist approaches an international news story – is the story 'ours' or 'theirs', does the story concern our country or their country – has an impact on the professional values the journalist applies to the story. The claim is that the closer the reporters/editors are to a given news event in terms of national interest, the further they are from applying professional news values (Nossek, 2007, p42).

Clearly, this argument has particular relevance to the reporting of the Fiji coups. To what extent did the journalists "localise" the reporting of the coups, to what extent did they categorise the coups as "Australia's problem" and is there evidence that this might have determined the professional values they applied in reporting the events? Apart from indicating some interesting avenues of inquiry for this thesis, these questions also suggest that some closer interrogation of the work of the journalist is necessary.

The journalist: grumbling, censuring, influencing our understanding

> A journalist is a grumbler, a censurer, a giver of advice, a regent of sovereigns, a tutor of nations. Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets. — Napoleon, 1810.
>
> Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, comment and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be responsible and accountable. — Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Code of Ethics, 1997.

As the above quotations illustrate, any definition of what a journalist is or what a journalist does cannot escape the idea that it is a complex and varied role. This role is generally situated within the ideal of the press as the Fourth Estate, a pillar of democratic society. In this guise the press is meant to perform critical functions within society. At the most basic level, the Fourth Estate ideal is for the media to act as a conduit for information, ideas and opinions, and to contribute to good governance by reporting, analysing and criticising the actions of the government on behalf of the public (Schultz, 1998, p52). In this ideal world, a journalist's ethical obligations are to their readers, listeners and viewers, rather than to employers, advertisers or the state. Finley Peter Dunne summarised this attitude when he said journalists were obligated to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable (in Burns, 2001, p23). The role of the media as a watchdog has been critical to the ongoing existence of

a strong media system, despite related influential factors such as ownership, accountability and defamation laws.

By suggesting that media have political, social and cultural roles, and connections to Enlightenment principles such as freedom of expression (Schultz, 1998, p47), journalists are more easily able to describe their work as a profession. Critically, journalists themselves have generally adopted the Fourth Estate ideal, though their ability to implement the related principles has sometimes suffered due to the many competing forces within media organisations. A major survey of 247 Australian journalists in 1992 showed that 79 per cent of news journalists and 87.5 per cent of investigative journalists favoured the idea of the media as the Fourth Estate. However when asked what they thought the actual situation was, only 21 per cent of news journalists and 12 per cent of investigative journalists felt that the media fulfilled its role as the Fourth Estate. Around 20 per cent of all these journalists felt that, in reality, the media was "just another business" (Schultz, 1998, p51).

This relationship between the ideals of journalism and what happens in practice highlight the difficulty in defining the role of the journalist. For instance, journalists' understanding of their own role is important, as it is regarded as the basis for ethical judgements they may have to make (Tapsall, 2001, p1). A journalist who believes their role is to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth may be expected to act differently to a journalist who believes their role is to benefit society (Tapsall, 2001, p5).

In the same vein, surveys of journalists often highlight the disparities between the ideal role of the journalist and the reality of working as a journalist. For example, Tapsall and Varley have shown that 90 per cent of reporters in Australian newsrooms believe they should be responsible to the public, then to themselves and then their employers. The contradiction is that the same reporters believe that in reality they are responsible to their employers (60 per cent of survey respondents), to the public (20 per cent) and to their audience (15 per cent) (Tapsall, 2001, p7). This connection with the audience is crucial, as the journalist cannot function properly without considering the needs of the "readers over their shoulder", considerations which include the kind of stories their audiences want to see and the kind of information their audiences need to make stories intelligible and interesting (Windschuttle, 1999, p19). However, there is a suggestion that many Australian journalists have no clear sense of who their audience is. One journalist surveyed said he writes what he hopes his

friends will like, while another, a tabloid editor, said he has "no idea who they are", and a Canberra press gallery correspondent admitted that the gallery works on the basis that "we know best" (Conley, 1997, p55).

This disjunct between the ideal role of the journalist and the reality of journalistic work is often apparent in research which focuses on a particular group of journalists and their involvement in the newsmaking process, including the work of Gans (1979), Hess (1996), Pedelty (1995), Fishman (1980), Tuchman (1978), Tunstall (1973) and Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989). Additionally, these kinds of research projects often examine which participants in the newsmaking process are able to exercise the most influence over how a news event is depicted. Pedelty (1995, p182) argued that institutions and authorities have already framed the news in a particular way before the journalist makes his or her contribution. Pedelty examined the foreign correspondents in El Salvador, where he claimed the military, the internal press hierarchy, elite sources, reporting conventions, standard news narrative and the news organisations themselves restricted the kinds of stories which could be told (Pedelty, 1995, p186). Fishman agreed, saying that he regarded the practice of journalism as a navigating through a "bureaucratically constructed universe", where the organisational demands and the bureaucratic forces determine how journalists access sources and how they cover beats, and where the requirements of the organisations involved also controlled the relationship between the timing of an event and when it was to be reported (Fishman, 1980, p134).

While Gans took the overall perspective that there were many aspects of news organisations which influenced how an event would be depicted, he did suggest that by applying their professional judgements to the gathering of the information which becomes news, journalists are able to shape the news, particularly as they have a primary role in story selection (Gans, 1979, p79). Clearly, journalists occupy a key position in the decision making process. Indeed, it is my contention that it is what the journalist brings to the story, in terms of experience, motivation and understanding, which ultimately has a significant impact on how a story is constructed and then understood by the audience. Having won and largely maintained considerable discretion over their own work, journalists are in a position to make independent judgements about many aspects of a story (Taras, 1995, 746). Even if they are directed to cover a particular story, they can still apply their own interpretation on which aspect of the story is most newsworthy, which sources should be used, how particular

sources will be used, and what the implications of pursuing different approaches will be, both for the story and for themselves. As Molotch and Lester proposed, news can be viewed as the reproduction of newsworkers' understanding of news processes and political processes (Molotch and Lester, 1974, p101).

This is not, however, an all or nothing proposition. As Eldridge has argued, the media occupies a space which is “constantly being contested, which is subject to organisational and technological restructuring, to economic, cultural and political constraints, to commercial pressures and to changing professional practices” (Eldridge, 1993, p20). Journalists must respond to these pressures, and it is their responsibility to respond in the best way possible given the particular circumstances. One of the ways in which they attempt to maintain responsible standards is through the application of fundamental principles, such as the principle of objectivity.

The pursuit of objectivity

In journalism, the Fourth Estate ideal of objectivity proposes that the journalist remains apart from the action, that the story is not influenced by what the journalist thinks or feels, and that the story reflects the facts as they are understood at that time. Some prefer the Webster’s Dictionary definition, which states that objectivity means “uninfluenced by emotion, surmise or personal opinion”, and at the same time “based on observable phenomena” (Brown, 1998, p51). The journalistic definition of objectivity may also include notions of fairness. Being fair means trying to present two sides of the debate, or even three or four sides (Simons, 2000, p27). Under the idealised notions of the Fourth Estate, a journalist cannot sustain the claim that they are defending the public interest if they are not conducting that defence in an objective and fair manner.

The development of the concept of journalistic objectivity occurred after the First World War and was gradually adopted in Britain, North America and Australia, although more strictly in some locations than others. For example, Hampton has found that aside from particular institutions such as Reuters and the BBC, British journalists were more influenced by principles such as accuracy and truth, fair play and independence, rather than American-style objectivity (Hampton, 2008, p489). Even so, the influence of ideas related to objectivity, such as these British variations, was critical for the press in a number of ways. Prior to the First World War, the news reports were long-winded, one-sided and completely

dominated by the thoughts and feelings of the writer. The then new notion of objectivity changed the way news was written (Schultz, 1998, p131). The reports were much shorter, the journalists sought opposing views and they disregarded their own thoughts. With greater simplicity, neutrality and balance, newspapers were able to reach a much wider audience as they were less likely to offend people with differing political views. Reaching a wider audience was critical in the media's growing quest for advertising revenue. This market-driven journalism eventually changed the daily role of the journalist in making the news (Burns, 2001, p26). It also provided a framework which enhanced the routine nature of news reporting. The methods used by journalists to construct the story became bound by the concept of objectivity. It added discipline to the practice of journalism (Schultz, 1998, p133). Objectivity also allowed journalists to make decisions quickly, an important factor in the newsmaking process. If it is close to deadline and a journalist already has "both sides of the story", then that is often seen as sufficient (Cunningham, 2003, p25).

Apart from market forces, one of the primary reasons the concept of objectivity was adopted by journalists is that it allowed them to defend themselves against criticism. As Schudson stated, objectivity reduces "the extent to which reporters themselves can be held responsible for the words they write" (Schudson, 1978, p186). If the reports are made up of facts and comments from a range of sources, then the journalists can hardly be blamed if one of the sources said something contentious. By pursuing an objective approach to newsmaking, the media have been more able to produce news which is "beyond reproach journalistically" (Getler and Doyle, 2004, p44). As Tuchman has stated, objectivity has become a practical guide and a strategic ritual which is often invoked as a defence (Tuchman, 1978, p66). It has helped journalists to separate what they see from what they think. For Schudson, objectivity is "a faith in 'facts', a distrust of 'values' and a commitment to their segregation" (Schudson, 1978, p186). This promotes the idea of the journalist as the disinterested observer: "Objectivity is seeing the world as it is, not how you wish it were" (Cunningham, 2003, p25).

The pursuit of objectivity has become integral to the way in which journalists understand their work and their profession. Surveys of journalists continue to show that a significant majority believe that is possible to obtain a "true, accurate and widely agreed-upon account" of an event or issue (Cunningham, 2003, p26). Some journalists argue that objectivity is what distinguishes their reporting from "mere opinionated chatter" (Simons, 2000, p24).

Michael Schudson supports the idea that the self-image and the public image of journalists are closely related to objectivity: “Objectivity is based on the assumption that a series of 'facts' or truth claims about the world can be validated by the rules and procedures of professional community” (Schudson, 1978, p186).

However, it is clear that these “rules and procedures” are not always strictly adhered to. In particular circumstances, they can be temporarily suspended. Three conditions said to lead to such a suspension are tragedy, danger or a threat to national security (Navasky, 2002, pxv). Evidence of this stretches as far back as the Spanish Civil War, when, according to Knightley, some correspondents forgot about the facts and became mouthpieces for one side or the other (Knightley, 1997, p158). There are also more modern examples. In the emotional aftermath of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, broadcasting executives later said they had sometimes struggled to “find the correct tone” (Green and Maras, p18). Subsequently, three major American networks, NBC, ABC and Fox, agreed to media limits set by then US National Security Adviser, Condaleeza Rice, over their “war on terrorism” coverage (McLaughlin, 2002, p152). In a similar way, the major international network, CNN, has been shown to take a particularly partisan approach in their coverage of the “War on Terror”. During the coverage of the military action in Afghanistan and the Gulf War in 2001, CNN executives realised that their broadcasts to their American audience and their broadcasts to other parts of the world needed to be different: Americans didn't want any criticism of the war, and the rest of the world didn’t want pro-American coverage. So in the interests of protecting their global market, CNN President Walter Isaacson authorised two different versions of the news, one supportive of the USA and one more critical (McChesney, 2002, p94). Isaacson also ordered his reporters not to focus on Afghan civilian victims (Getler and Doyle, 2004, p45), and if they had to, always balance it against the deaths of Americans in the World Trade Centre (Cunningham, 2003, p25). Such examples demonstrate that, as John Pilger argued, the moment the media comes under pressure, they always do as they are told (McLaughlin, 2002, p152).

Most significantly, the pursuit of objectivity has created a paradox at the heart of newsmaking. It is obvious that the inherent subjectivity of journalism — an individual reporting what they have seen or heard — contradicts an emphasis on objectivity. As Simons has stated, reporters make subjective decisions all the time about “which facts are

the most important, and about what extra material the reader needs in order to make sense of those facts" (Simons, 2000, p26). One of the best ways to demonstrate this is to read alternative reports of the same event. Different journalists make different judgements about what to report and what to ignore, about which comment to include and which comment to exclude, about how to sequence and source and explain the who, what, when, where, why and how of a story. The journalists are not the only ones to make judgements which effect the production of a news story. Their sub-editors and editors make subjective judgements about which story goes on page one, which photo accompanies the story, what the headline is and how much space the story will occupy — in short, how important the story is (Simons, 2000, p26). So clearly, the very act of reporting is subjective and it is not only the subjectivity of the journalist which can influence the story.

This contradiction has some serious impact on the practice of journalism. Many journalists concede that the ideal of objectivity is a commendable one, but it can never be achieved: "in principle objectivity seems fair enough, [but] as a rule of practice its pursuit is illusory" (Green and Maras, p19). English correspondent Martin Bell makes the same point when he says that "objective, dispassionate journalism has its place, but not in the midst of some brutal war or human calamity" (McLaughlin, 2002, p153). Indeed, Bell argues that objective journalism is "bystander journalism" and that it does not properly equip the journalist for the modern requirements of journalism (McLaughlin, 2002, p153). It has turned journalists into "passive recipients of news, rather than aggressive analysers and explainers of it" (Cunningham, 2003, p25). Despite the apparent shortfalls of the pursuit of objectivity, an accusation which claims a journalist is not being objective is perhaps the worst kind of criticism, raising the hackles of any journalist, regardless of their definition of or level of devotion to objectivity (Cunningham, 2003, p25). When one of their own is criticised in this way, the tendency of journalists is to close ranks, as Margaret Simons noted:

> I sometimes think that anything in journalism that startles, anything that takes risks, any glorious failure or off-the-wall success, anything that surprises, anything that stirs you up or makes you cry or laugh, makes you angry or happy, or even makes you think — any such thing can and will be attacked by my colleagues on the basis that it is not objective (Simons, 2000, p27).

Alternatives to the pursuit of objectivity have been proposed. The obvious suggestion has been for journalists to acknowledge their subjectivity. According to Simons, taking a subjective approach was not simply a case of reporters declaring their political allegiance — that would be merely a reflection of "what sad and boring creatures we human beings have become, and how tenuous our engagement with public life" (Simons, 2000, p24). Instead, she envisages a more explicit kind of subjectivity, which might bring more fairness to journalism (Simons, 2000, p24). She suggests that journalists need to demonstrate that they are "intelligent, shockable, conscientious and perceptive", they need to "try to challenge the conventional ideas of what deserves notice", and they need to "pay attention to theme, meaning, character and underlying currents" (Simons, 2000, p24). Bell agrees that there could be an alternative approach to journalism, a journalism of attachment "that cares as well as knows" (Bell, 1998, p15).

For the average journalist, then, it is apparent that the pursuit of objectivity is simply that — a pursuit. Lippmann characterised objectivity as the method used rather than the content of what was written (in Schultz, 1998, p130), as "a means to an end, not an end in itself" (in McLaughlin, 2002, p160). It is also apparent that the sources a journalist uses play a key role in the pursuit of objectivity. Journalists can only hope to remain detached from a story if they are able to rely on somebody else to tell that story. This can be challenging in normal circumstance, but is probably most challenging for foreign correspondents, where they are outside their comfort zone, away from their routine contacts and sources, and subject to a range of other limitations, such as new cultures and different languages.

Foreign correspondents: keeping an eye on the rest of the world

> I call them vagrant journalists because no other term would be quite as valid. No two were alike. They were professionally deviant, but they had a few things in common. They depended, mostly from habit, on newspapers and magazines for the bulk of their income; their lives were geared to long chances and sudden movement; and they claimed no allegiance to any flag and valued no currency but luck and good contacts — Hunter S. Thompson (1998, p93).

In journalistic lore, the foreign correspondent is a glamorous figure, trotting the globe in search of small wars, assassinations and coups, nostrils never quite free of the exhilarating smell of cordite and danger. Downtime is spent swilling wine and

> whiskey in exotic cafes on the jungle's edge, bedhopping in casbahs and quaint hotels, haggling in pidgin English with picturesque natives, swindling employers with money dealings in the black market and, from time to time, fabricating tales for gullible foreign editors who wouldn't know Casablanca from Rangoon — Richard Harwood (1996, p19).

While one of the pinnacles of journalism is considered to be a foreign correspondent, as the above quotes suggest this probably has as much to do with myth as it has to do with reality. One explanation for this perception is that the cost of maintaining a foreign correspondent is far greater than any associated revenue, and therefore the level of prestige is naturally greater (Tunstall, 1973, p35). The reality is that the work of a foreign correspondent is different to the work of most other kinds of journalists. In 1965, when Jeremy Tunstall began the work which led to the seminal book, *Journalists at Work*, there were no other major studies of British journalism, let alone a study of a specialist journalist, like a foreign correspondent (Tunstall, 1973, p5). While Tunstall pointed out that there were a large number of studies of this kind in America, they were mostly at a local or state level. "There was also no satisfactory broad social science study of the occupation of journalism in the United States" (Tunstall, 1973, p5).

Tunstall, by first categorising foreign correspondents into one of his specialist reporter groups, then showing that they operated and were treated differently to other journalists, set a precedent for looking at foreign correspondents as a subset of journalism (Tunstall, 1973). Tunstall's work inspired other researchers to survey different groups of foreign correspondents. For example, Pollock studied a group of American reporters who worked in Latin America. The aim in this case was to understand how individuals learn to be foreign correspondents, and looked at their experience as reporters and also their earlier lives and experiences (Pollock, 1981). In the same vein, Stephen Hess surveyed over 400 US foreign correspondents about the way they went about their work. He wanted to know what information about the world is given through the mainstream media, how good it is and who delivers it (Hess, 1996, p3).

These kinds of studies are seen as important because they go beyond more quantitative analysis, which according to Pollock reveal little about the varied attitudes and behaviors of foreign correspondents (Pollock, 1981, p12). Instead, the more qualitative kinds of research

focuses on individuals, highlighting characteristics which may support or refute the many myths associated with foreign correspondents, and providing information such as the education, background, and language abilities of these specialised journalists. Prue Torney-Parlicki produced a comprehensive examination of the role of Australian journalists in the series of conflicts in Asia and the Pacific between 1941 and 1975. Although it had a wide geographical range of focus, it still stands as one of the most significant studies of the work of the Australian media in the Pacific region. While she concentrates on war correspondents, Torney-Parlicki argues that it is through the eyes of these journalists that Australians first began to connect with Asia and the Pacific (Torney-Parlicki, 2000). For example, she suggests that in the New Guinea and Timor regions in the Second World War, the close relationship between the indigenous people and the Australian soldiers was highlighted. “Media interest in the relationship between the Australians and the Papuans and Timorese who assisted them as carriers and guides offers no better example of the way such contact was used by commentators to characterise race relations” (Torney-Parlicki, 2000, p14). By extending the analysis of foreign correspondents, in this case by using a historical approach, Torney-Parlicki helps to underline the significant personal and political contributions made by these correspondents.

Studies of foreign correspondents have also highlighted the many and varied pressures which the reporters have to deal with as part of the newsmaking process. Undoubtedly, one of the pressures of being a foreign correspondent is the fact that there are less and less of them. A number of studies over the last 25 years have revealed declining numbers. Hess reported that while US newspapers tended to protect their foreign correspondents in the decade of cutbacks from 1986 to 1996, the television networks cut theirs by 50 per cent and the number of Time magazine correspondents decreased by a third (Hess, 1996, p59). This left less than 1500 correspondents reporting full time for the US media. As such, the idea that the world flow of information is more a series of trickles and spurts is very apt (Hachten, 1981, p51): “News is moved across borders by a surprisingly thin network of correspondents. The smaller countries are squeezed into rapid trips during lulls between major stories in the larger countries.” Peter Krogh of the Georgetown School of Foreign Service believes limiting the number of correspondents influences the understanding of the audience: “Over the past 25 years, the numbers of foreign bureaus and foreign correspondents have declined. Deeply informed individual insight from the field is fast disappearing” (Hachten, 2005, p131). Pollock suggests that the decline of foreign

correspondent numbers and the rise of the influence of international news agencies, means the work of a single correspondent in a single location can have a significant effect on the views of vast numbers of citizens (Pollock, 1981, p5). Tiffen notes that the same trends and outcomes exist in Australian journalism, where "reporting from the field, especially overseas, has been in decline in favor of informed comment and analysis, often originated domestically and locally produced" (Tiffen, 1992, p119). The rise of the news agencies, which operate 24 hours a day, may add considerable competitive pressure to the traditional foreign correspondents who remain in the industry. For example, the work of the news agencies is sometimes used as a threat to keep non-agency correspondents working hard (Tebbutt, 2000, p105).

The decline in the number of correspondents is reflected in an increased reliance on two different kinds of journalists. The "stringer" is a freelance journalist who is on location, but without the normal economic and professional support mechanisms granted to a full-time correspondent. The parachute journalist — also known as a "cyclone journalist", a "hurricane journalist" or a "fireman" — is a journalist who drops in to a hot news spot then flies off to the next hot spot as soon as the current one turns lukewarm. One of the main reasons that stringers and parachute journalists are used is because the expense of having a full-time correspondent located in another country is considerable (Hannerz, 2004, p52).

As Hsu has pointed out, the growing trend to send reporters overseas only when necessary makes in-depth reporting difficult, if not impossible (Hsu, 1982, p93). It tends to produce "highly emotional first-hand accounts", or "good cause journalism, journalism of affection, with the journalist as the hero of his or her own story" (Knightley, 2003). Apart from anything else, these kinds of media teams are often under significant time and economic pressure to produce as many stories as possible while they are in a particular location (Pavasaris, 1996, p110). While they may develop specialist skills, such as interviewing or negotiating skills, the journalists working in this kind of system have little opportunity to develop specialist knowledge. "They race from one humanitarian disaster to another, with little time or background knowledge to grasp the issues behind the conflicts they cover" (Knightley, 2003). There is some suggestion that "research" by parachute journalists usually consists of little more than reading newspaper clippings, most of which are written by other parachute journalists (Pedelty, 1995, p110). Hsu adds that the use of stringers is risky because their sense of loyalty, responsibility and commitment to an individual news

organisation may be questionable (Hsu, 1982, p93). In his study of El Salvador, Pedelty found that there were major differences in attitudes between stringers and journalists who worked for agencies. Stringers often held much more critical views of the US administration than agency workers, however the stringers often "self-censored" in order to make their stories more acceptable to editors and readers (Pedelty, 1995, p182).

The work of foreign correspondents can also be influenced by the likelihood of danger and violence. The fact that much of the work of foreign correspondents involves the coverage of crises, both natural and man-made, means they are more likely to be exposed to violence than other kinds of journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), a non-profit organisation based in New York, compiles annual reports of journalists killed in the line of duty. The reports show that in the decade from 1996 to 2005, 337 journalists were killed. Of these, 237 were murdered, 67 were killed in crossfire in a war, and 33 were killed in other violent clashes, such as demonstrations or riots. The number of journalists attacked is listed as around 200 every year. While these figures cover all journalists, and not specifically foreign correspondents, some of the CPJ data suggests that foreign correspondents are in greater danger. For example, in the 1990s, seven staff from Associated Press were killed while reporting overseas, which is more than in any previous decade, including the World War II and Vietnam eras (Strupp, 2000).

The nature of modern conflict may be partly to blame for the increased danger. Conflicts now often involve smaller, disorganised factions who are less inclined to respect international law and the Geneva convention, and less inclined to respect the role of the journalist as an independent, objective observer (Strupp, 2000). In some cases, though, it is not the smaller factions which are the cause for concern. Pulitzer Prize winner, Anthony Shadid, of the *Washington Post*, has stated that despite the ongoing threats from insurgents, many of the reporters in Iraq felt that their greatest danger was from US troops (Shadid, 2004). Indeed, many conflicts have been marked by serious threats to journalists from the military of the countries involved. During the civil war in El Salvador, nearly 40 reporters, mostly Salvadorans and Europeans, were killed by military forces, with many others forced to leave the country because of direct threats of violence from government forces (Pedelty, 1995, p48). Similarly, the government forces in The Philippines often used force and threats to control the media, with reports that the military had created secret dossiers on 77 foreign journalists in 1987 (Tebbutt, 2000, p107).

The other development which impacts on foreign correspondents and their work is the advances in technology in the last 50 years. For much of the last century, one of the major tasks of the correspondents was filing their report. In times of crisis, a telephone line or a telex were often unavailable, and stories would sometimes have to be sent out on the next flight with a co-operative passenger, sometimes referred to as a pigeon (Hannerz, 2004, p149). More primitive technology also meant that there was less direct communication between the reporter on the ground and the editorial staff, often leading to an increased level of autonomy for the correspondent (Hannerz, 2004, p149). As Utley makes clear, it is not just the use of laptop computers and satellites which have had an impact. “The advent of the Boeing 707 halved the time it took journalists to get to another continent” (Utley, 1997, p2). This resulted in a greater emphasis on speed. Where previously a correspondent gained credibility for his news organisation “simply by being there” (Utley, 1997, p2), the emphasis is now on being there first. The outcome, according to Eng, is that modern technology reduces the amount of time “to think about and verify” the news. “The new technology and the culture it has spawned often has meant reporting driven by immediacy, capsule summary and visual impact” (Eng, 1995). Expectations, especially audience expectations, now exceed the media's capability to validate and confirm reports, at least in the initial stages of crisis (Gowing, 2003, p235). Associated Press supervisor, Frank Bajak, agrees, suggesting that although his organisation “may be faster in getting and moving the news, we are not necessarily presenting and analysing events better” (Hess, 1996, p63).

The spread of the internet has also meant a major change for foreign correspondents. While newspaper and TV reports are probably the major sources of information on foreign affairs, (Pollock, 1981, p5), the public also have another choice, as Herbert points out: “Now the reader can call the tune. Now the internet reader can be active and track down more or less information about a story and supply an individual angle” (Herbert, 2001, p57). In addition, the use of the internet by reporters in the field opens up vast new sources and resources. The ability of the foreign correspondents to maintain a significant level of influence depends, according to Utley, on the ways in which they utilise and adapt to technology: “...she or he will have to possess a depth of expertise to satisfy the increasingly demanding, informed and technologically equipped consumer of the information age” (Utley, 1997).

Despite the constraints, many studies have shown that the foreign correspondents still manage to maintain a significant influence on how we interpret events from overseas. “In the initial phases of a 'critical event', when happenings are ambiguous, opinions unformed, and policy amorphous, the personal attitudes of a handful of correspondents may exert influence of global proportions on the shaping of public and official responses” (Pollock, 1981, p8). In some instances, it may even be that a significant crisis is first brought to the attention of the world by a single journalist, as they are able to move much more quickly than a government or international agency (Tunstall, 1973, p2). This level of independence has also reinforced the suggestion that foreign correspondents have more autonomy than other journalists (Tunstall, 1973, p272). Some editors may examine a reporter’s product before it reaches article form in a newspaper. But foreign affairs correspondents are typically the most trusted reporters, having served long apprenticeships before assignment overseas. And according to Tunstall, foreign correspondents are more aware of this power than any other kind of journalist (Tunstall, 1973, p272). This additional level of power may be due to the fact that what they write about is a lot more difficult to substantiate because of the distance between the reporter and the editor (Pollock, 1981, p5). Editors may know the history of their local politicians. They are unlikely, however, to know the history of a local politician in another country. As one leading foreign editor explained, “when bosses are more in touch, workers become less independent” (Hannerz, 2004, p149). That is not to say that foreign correspondents, even stringers, operate outside the normal structures of the newsmaking process. Pollock concedes that factors such as the reporter’s knowledge of the region, the availability of a variety of sources, the kind of crisis and the significance of the crisis to the audience, as well as the input of editors, demonstrates that the foreign correspondent does not make decisions in a vacuum: “But under conditions of crisis, when previous guidelines count for less and events move quickly, reporters may be compelled to rely chiefly on their own resources” (Pollock, 1981, p19).

The additional power of the foreign correspondent, in terms of their influence on the newsmaking process, may be partly responsible for an increased level of criticism of foreign correspondents. Two of the most common criticisms of foreign reporting is that it fails to provide any context and it lacks follow-up (Hachten, 2005, p129). For example, in 1989, the year of the Tiananmen Square uprising, the American television networks CBS, NBC and ABC broadcast 357 individual stories about China, a number which represented 14.6 per cent of their foreign reporting. This number was also greater than the total number of stories

they had broadcast on China in the previous decade. In the following year, 1990, the number of stories about China dropped to 1.4 per cent of all foreign reports (Hachten, 2005, p129). This kind of historical variation in coverage can partly be attributed to the dominance of the major international news networks, which tend to cover events using parachute journalists. The outcome is that the rest of the media tend to follow CNN's lead (Hachten, 2005, p131). Yet, according to Peter Krogh of the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, CNN is a flawed operation: "It provides unevaluated and sometimes exaggerated reports of developments abroad which drive a domestic rush to judgment and a correlated reaction (Hachten, 2005, p131). Others have also criticised the CNN coverage for often showing journalists trying to cope with the situation, rather than the situation itself (Eldridge, 1993, p11). As Eldridge explains, the "raw, unfiltered happenings", complete with shaky pictures and scratchy audio, suggest that these reports are, in the word's of the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) *Lateline* program, "immediacy without understanding, drama without information" (Eldridge, 1993, p11). Pavasaris summarises this criticism, stating that the issue of whether a particular country is covered is important, but so is the way in which a country is covered: "While the frequency of coverage of a certain area can give some indication of its importance, it is the nature of this information that is more important" (Pavasaris, 1996, p118).

The ways in which Australian journalists have reported events in other countries has been subject to scrutiny for more than half a century. Some of the earliest criticism came from within Australia. In 1938, Australian political scientist, William McMahon Ball, claimed that Australian press coverage of international affairs presented a "fragmented, unbalanced, and often incoherent view" of international events, and countries with few historical ties got scant attention (in Torney-Parlicki, 2000, p3). A particular problem at that time was the dependence on cable services like Australian Associated Press (AAP), which meant most of Australia's foreign news was selected in London or New York. In 1966, nearly 30 years later, Ball reiterated the same claims, saying little had changed (in Torney-Parlicki, 2000, p3).

The coverage of the Vietnam war, just a few years later, again emphasised how little correspondents knew about countries they were reporting on. Media commentator Robert Elegant said that the journalists in Vietnam generally knew nothing about the language, the history, the culture or the ethnography and economics of Indo-China, let alone China and the

rest of Asia (Elegant, 1981, p4). There were some journalists, such as the legendary Australian Neil Davis, who regularly went on patrols with the South Vietnamese, venturing into villages in order to report the views of the inhabitants, even when it was unclear whether the people they were talking to were friends or foes (Torney-Parlicki, 2000, p190). While the work of Davis and other specialist reporters proved valuable, Payne has suggested that the lack of news written in Vietnam by Australian reporters working for Australian newspapers was a major weakness in the coverage (Payne, 2007, p17). In particular, these specialist reports from Vietnam, especially reports that presented the Vietnamese perspective, were not always highly valued by newspapers: “Such reports vied not only with agency reports and syndicated American commentary, but also with the political news from Canberra and the political interpretation of what was important in Vietnam-related news” (Payne, 2007, p19). Overall, while the Australian reporting of Vietnam no doubt drew attention to Australia’s geographic location in Asia, it also emphasised how little Australia understood about the region (Kingsbury, Loo and Payne, 2000, pi).

In the post-Vietnam era, the criticism has continued. The Australian media portrayal of developing countries has been found to describe developing societies in terms of their struggles with development, with subjects regarded as newsworthy in western countries de-emphasised or ignored (Lowe, 2000, p113). Unfavourable news is highlighted (Pavasaris, 1996, p116) and it may be presented in a fragmentary way, without mention of the broader context. For example, the fact that some of the problems may relate to a country's colonial past can be neglected (Pavasaris, 1996, p117).

In some cases, the criticism has emanated from the countries concerned. Partly, this may be due to the advances in technology and the rising education levels in many countries, which now allow governments, corporations and individual citizens to receive and analyse western media reports almost simultaneously with the western audiences (Knight, 1995, p1).
The leaders of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore have all passed judgment on the work of Australian foreign correspondents at different times, often leading to considerable political and diplomatic friction (Kingsbury , et al, 2000, p17). One former Indonesian government minister even suggested that the issue of Australian journalism was the major difficulty which Indonesia had in its bilateral relationship with Australia (Kingsbury , et al, 2000, p17). According to Kingsbury: “In broad terms, the Australian news media have, according to regional leaders, behaved with insensitivity, ignorance and an overriding sense of cultural

chauvinism in their reporting of Australia's near neighbours" (Kingsbury , et al, 2000, p17).

The ignorance of foreign media systems and procedures can easily be interpreted as cultural arrogance (Knight, 2000, p1), but the potential for more serious consequences is also apparent. The image presented to the external audience represents the reality against which other actions are planned and executed. At the same time, the subject nation gains a greater appreciation of how it is viewed from an international perspective (McCracken, 1987, p183). A number of studies, including McNelly and Izcaray (1986), have shown that consumption of news about other countries generally leads to more favourable attitudes to those countries (McCracken, 1987, p184). Many in the media and in government now realise that not only is negative and stereotypical reporting inaccurate and ethically wrong, it can have a direct impact on national economies and international relations (Knight, 2000, p2). This is not simply a question of general attitude, but "also with regard to our security requirements, to our goods and services, to our appeal as a place to invest in, to migrate to, to visit, and so on" (Evans and Grant, 1991).

As the preceding section has demonstrated, the work of the foreign correspondent has been subject to many different kinds of influences, from the technical and economic to the challenges of understanding and explaining societies and cultures which may be basically unknown to themselves and their audiences. It is highly likely that the journalists who traveled to Fiji to cover the coups faced many of these challenges and it is also likely that in some way the way these challenges were addressed had some level of impact on the way in which Fiji was represented. It is the argument of this thesis that another significant challenge faced by all journalists, particularly foreign correspondents, has an equal if not greater impact on representation – the challenge of the relationship between the journalist and their sources.

Journalists and their sources: who is telling us the news?

For a journalist, some of the most exciting and challenging moments are when he or she is a witness to the news, when he or she is personally seeing or hearing an event as it unfolds. Unfortunately for journalists, this is not the case with most of the news they report. By and large, journalists rely on other people to tell them the news — news is not what happened, but what someone said happened or will happen (Sigal, 1973, p69). Journalists, like most other members of society, live in a "second-hand world", where they are aware of much

more than they have experienced (Said, 1981, p46). News becomes, according to Gans, the information which is transmitted from the sources to the audience, with the journalists summarising, refining and altering what is available to them to make it suitable for the audience (Gans, 1979, p80). According to Schudson, the outcomes of a range of studies on sources in a variety of settings essentially reveal the same thing: "...it matters not whether the study is at national or local level — the story of journalism, on a day to day basis, is the story of interaction of reporters and officials" (Schudson, 1991. p148). For example, a 1996 study of the Brisbane Courier Mail and the Cairns Post showed that even in stories about Indigenous affairs, Indigenous sources were only used about 20 per cent of the time (Hippocrates and Meadows, 1996).

Researchers have analysed the nature and characteristics of sources, and why journalists rely on certain kinds of sources, revealing significant detail about the newsmaking process. Not any source will do. The source a journalist uses has to have particular attributes: "...they need to be reliable, regular and credible suppliers of information" (Williams, 1993, p315). They need to be experts; they need to be able to explain and debate policy, and they need to simplify complex events and issues (McChesney, 2002, p96). The sources also need to have authority. If a news story is to remain objective, every statement needs to be attributed to somebody, and preferably somebody in authority (Bagdikian, 1983, p179). This is because journalists need to be writing reports that have credibility — they need material that "can be portrayed as presumptively accurate" (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p19). The extension of this idea is not that journalists require material that is absolutely correct or absolute fact — it is simply that the reader needs to be able to presume it is so. The best basis for such a presumption is for the journalist to rely on someone who, as a result of their occupation or office or position, should know what they are talking about.

As a result of this need for regular, reliable sources of information, newsgathering has become centralised. Media organisations cannot afford to have reporters in all places news could occur. They need to concentrate their resources in the places where news is most likely to occur: "The media need a steady, reliable flow of the raw material of news" (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p18). It is apparent that only other bureaucracies can supply enough raw material to satisfy the news bureaucracy (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p19). These centralised sources of information — the parliaments, the courts, the chambers of commerce and the "professionals, technocratic experts and government officials" (Goldman

and Rajagopal, 1991, p129) — have become “much like umbilical cords connecting the newsroom to the sources of its sustenance” (Tuchman, 1978, p19).

Of all of them, the institution which can most efficiently provide “regular, reliable and credible” information is the government (Williams, 1993, p316). Government sources have the advantage of “being recognizable and credible by their status and privilege” (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p19). A number of studies have shown that around three-quarters of all the sources in news stories are from government or official institutions. For example, Sigal showed that public officials accounted for 78 per cent of the sources in 2850 front page stories from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* between 1949 and 1973 (Sigal, 1973, p124). These officials, primarily high-level government representatives, appeared as sources in local, national and international stories, accounting, for example, for 54 per cent of stories from Saigon during the Vietnam War (Sigal, 1973, p124).

While the dominance of government officials as sources is clear, researchers have extended the understanding of newsmaking by examining how the journalist comes to rely on such authoritative sources. In order to select the most appropriate source, the journalist needs to understand the characteristics of the source. The groups, organisations or institutions sources speak for vary in scope, size, power and influence (Eldridge, 1993, p24). The orientation of a potential source — for example, how that sources fits into the political hierarchy and who they are speaking for — needs to be understood, particularly in relation to other potential sources: Miller refers to this as the “context of the competition” between sources (Miller and Williams, 1993, p139). The ability of the journalist to compare potential sources is critical in the pursuit of objectivity, and is open to different constraints and factors. A journalist working in an environment where there is a great diversity of sources, such as a parliament, may spend less time developing individual sources than a foreign correspondent in a situation where the sources are more limited (Tiffen, 1989, p37). The publicity needs of the source may also need to be considered — a government minister may want to be in the news and a crime boss may not (Tiffen, 1989, p37). The sources may also be judged on their eagerness to supply information, the amount of information they are able to supply, and their social proximity to the journalist: if, for example, the journalist is tertiary educated, sources who are also tertiary educated may be more accessible (Gans, 1979, p122). If a source was suitable in the past, it may be a fairly simple decision for the journalist to use the person as a source again. Journalists want to maintain goodwill with regular sources. Tiffen has stated

that for journalists "one of the safeguards in the system is that people you want to interview are people you are likely to want to interview again" (Tiffen, 1989, p37). As such, transitory sources do not get the same level of respect and/or commitment from journalists.

Even for events which disrupt the normal status quo — events such as wars, coups and revolutions, which are normally covered by foreign correspondents — the media will turn to their routine sources of information (Tuchman, 1978, p141). In some ways, foreign affairs reporting is more likely to rely on sources in the highest levels of power. In matters of international politics, "official sources" are almost interchangeable with the term "elites", as foreign policy is mostly the preserve of the wealthy and powerful (McChesney, 2002, p95). Many of these "wealthy and powerful" sources may not even be in the country where the news event is occurring. Media organisations covering events overseas tend to rely more on their own, locally-based sources, rather than the sources in-country. This was demonstrated in American coverage of the Vietnam war, when there was, according to Williams, a "battle between two press corps — Saigon and Washington" (Williams, 1993, p318). Some Saigon-based reporters complained that it was difficult to get their versions of events accepted by editors in Washington, and that reports from Washington were used to "offset" reports from Saigon: "Many editors ignored what their correspondents were telling them in favour of the Washington version" (Knightley, 1975, p376).

Australian reporters in Vietnam faced similar issues. For example, Payne found that while the Australian media gained substantial amounts of information from military sources in Vietnam, most of it was off the record: all military press releases from the Army in Vietnam were cleared by the Department of Army in Canberra (Payne, 2007, p298). More than 30 years after the Vietnam war, Bromley confirmed the continuation of the same practices in the Australian coverage of the war in Iraq. She said the most prolific sources of information on Australia's involvement in Iraq were said to be the military briefings taking place in Canberra (Bromley, 2004, p227). Of the correspondents who did travel to the Middle East, many were scattered around the region and few were close to any action. "The popular Australian perspective on the invasion of Iraq is likely to have been impacted, therefore, not just by the media per se, but by the media operating at a considerable distance from any direct experience of Australian participation" (Bromley, 2004, p227).

There is no doubt that, in times of crisis, such as a war, access to some kinds of sources may be limited, leading to reports which provide a narrow representation of the events. But sometimes, it is simply a case of the official source getting it wrong. This demonstrates that regardless of how much power the elites have, in an unfolding crisis their normal methods of filtering and validating information may not be efficient enough or fast enough for anyone involved to keep up with changing circumstances (Gowing, 2003, p235). In such situations, the entire newsmaking process can be more open to possibly misleading distortions, particularly from the sources.

The influence of sources

Journalists are susceptible to pressure from sources and vice versa. It has been suggested that sources, journalists and audiences coexist in a system that is closer to being a tug of war than a functionally interrelated organism (Gitlin, 1980, p251). Sources want to manage the journalists and journalists want to manage the sources. Gans likened the relationship to a dance, with the sources playing the tune:

> The relationship between sources and journalists resembles a dance, for sources seek access to journalists and journalists seek access to sources. Although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, the sources do the leading (Gans, 1979, p42).

Sources are only able to manage the media — manipulating the news so that it follows particular agendas — if they have a good understanding of the routines and requirements of the media (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p23). With this knowledge, they are able to dictate the terms of the interaction with journalists, including when the interaction takes place and under what conditions the information may be used (Hachten, 1981, p115). Sources are also attuned to the fact that with the rising number of news outlets, there is more demand for information (Hachten, 1981, p115). Indeed, the work practices of sources are almost the same as the work of the journalist, with sources preparing and disseminating material which will be easy for their "audience" — the journalists — to understand and use (Ericson, Baranek, et al, 1987, p9). The fact that many media advisers for Australian politicians are former journalists or media workers is possible because of the similarity of the work. Overall, there is no doubt that powerful sources play a crucial role in determining the output

of the news media (Miller and Williams, 1993, p139). The effect of the sources dominating the journalists can undermine notions of objectivity, fairness and balance.

Sigal coined the phrase “beat parochialism” to describe what happens to a journalist who is constantly exposed to and managed by powerful sources of information (Sigal, 1973, p49). Centralised sources of information meant newsworkers become wedded to particular beats or bureaus, such as the police beat, the courts round or coverage of parliament. The organisations involved became accepted as appropriate sites to gather legitimate information, which was then transformed into facts (Tuchman, 1978, p210). This reliance on elite sources leads to an acceptance of the “language, agenda and perspective of the political establishment” (Eldridge, 1993, p326). The most extreme consequence of “beat parochialism” is that reporters become a spokesperson for their sources, rather than objective, dispassionate observers: “They ask the questions appropriate to their sources' world” (Sigal, 1973, p49). As a result, these questions may “reconstitute not only a topic but a world” (Tuchman, 1978, p152). The journalists also become sloppy about recognising that alternative views may exist, and become less likely to dig out and include alternative views in their stories (Tiffen, 1989, p45).

Alternative views do get published or broadcast (Miller and Williams, 1993, p139), though that varies between the different strands of media. The press are able to achieve more “critical distance” from their sources than television, and within television, some areas, such as news, were more reliant on elite sources (Williams, 1993, p326). Indeed, television news tends to demonstrate an extremely limited range of sources. Ongoing surveys of American television news have revealed the overwhelming likelihood that sources on the evening bulletins of the major networks were white males. For example, in a 2001 study of the major America television networks, 92 per cent of sources were white and 85 per cent were male (Howard, 2002). Indeed, news sources are overwhelmingly male. Women are rarely used as sources in news stories of national or international importance, and when, for example, a women’s political movement is used as a source, it is often with pejorative labels or unfavourable terms (Armstrong, 2004).

The association with and reliance on elite sources does add to the reputation of the journalists, both individually and as a profession. It is the elite nature of these sources which bring status (Eldridge, 1993, p10). Ultimately, though, the reliance on elite sources leads to

"tight limits on the amount of dissent that can take place..., especially in a time of crisis" (Eldridge, 1993, p10). The extent of these limits varies for different theorists. Herman and Chomsky said that the reliance on elite sources is an essential component of their propaganda model, which focuses on the unequal power relations which allow the most powerful institutions in society to dictate to the media (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p2). The Glasgow media group rejected the idea of such a media conspiracy, and instead attributed the reliance on elite sources to the demands of the professional practices of journalism. The fact that journalists generally valued a sense of independence was some evidence of their rejection of influential sources "managing" the newsmaking (Eldridge, 1993, p10). The important concept here is that the journalists are predisposed to this kind of behaviour. The methods of journalism make journalists prone to this behaviour. Herman and Chomsky did accept this idea, though they reiterated that the "biased choices" were still being made: "Most biased choices in the media arise from the preselection of right-thinking people, internalised preconceptions and the adaption of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organisation, market and political power" (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, pxxi). According to Fishman, the problem is not necessarily that journalists use elite sources — the problem is that journalists are predisposed to treat what they say or write as factual. A newsworker will recognise an official's claim to knowledge not merely as a claim but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge (Fishman, 1980, p143). It becomes a moral division of labour — the officials have and give facts, the reporters get them.

Another significant consequence of journalists relying on elite sources is that the institutionalised use of sources legitimises the media in the eyes of the other cultural institutions they deal with, the same organisations who are often providing the sources. As such, these major cultural institutions create a two way process which legitimise and reinforce each other (Meadows and Ewart, 2001, p115). And not surprisingly, the news organisations become so closely interwoven with the source organisations, that news becomes nothing more than the communication between journalists and influential sources (Ericson, Baranek, et al, 1987, p9). It is this institutional nature of news which produces inequalities in the capacity to communicate (Tiffen, 1994, p58). This "reciprocity of interest" is the basis for investigations of the way in which journalists deal with the hegemonic forces within society (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p18). The claim is that news becomes a narrow depiction of events which is presented according to the needs of self-

interested organisations. The journalists and the audience are unable to see the news in any other way, and the idea of truth becomes severely limited (Ericson, Baranek, et al, 1987, p9).

In summary, it is apparent that the "overwhelming emphasis on established and official voices" means that the safest method of reporting news is to reproduce the words of those in authority (Bagdikian, 1983, p180). The outcome of this approach, the types of news it produces, and the kind of effect it has on the ways in which audiences understand an event, particularly an event overseas such as the Fiji coups, is an integral component of this thesis. In order to understand the consequences of this approach, it is necessary to explore the relationship between the media, elite sources and the hegemonic nature of society.

Determining understanding: hegemony, the media and elite sources

Karl Marx indicated the existence of a hegemonic aspect within society when he said: "the class which is the ruling material force in society is, at the same time, its ruling intellectual force". Marx was aware that other forces apart from the ruling forces could have an influence, that "superstructural organisations could influence the substructure" (Shameem, 1988, p6), but he left it to others to expand on these ideas. Althusser categorised the media as part of the "state ideological apparatus", which, along with education, politics, trades unions and culture, worked to ensure cohesion in society (Althusser, 1971, p143). Antonio Gramsci, the person most closely associated with developing the initial theoretical concept of hegemony, regarded a hegemonic ideology as a dominant way of seeing or making sense of the world (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p4). Hegemony is a historical process, where one representation of the world is systematically favoured over others (Gitlin, 1980, p257). The hegemonic institutions within society help to define the "mental horizon", a whole series of connections, relationships and ways of understanding (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p4). In particular, hegemonic forces maintain the existing social order in the face of "threats to cultural and moral hierarchy" (Jacubowicz , et al, 1994, p3). It was Gramsci's contention that the ruling classes used force and coercion to maintain their hegemonic dominance (Shameem, 1988, p10).

The modern concept of hegemony, particularly as it relates to the media, has moved away from Gramsci's strict ideas of manipulation and corruption (Liebes, 1997, p1). It recognises

that hegemony is not static, that it is subject to conflicting forces. As Marx initially alluded to, hegemony does involve the dominance of particular groups or interests, but it does not mean that the less powerful voices are completely silent (Pavasaris, 1996, p1). Hegemony is a "sophisticated process, a system of meanings and values, where alternative or oppositional voices may still operate as almost routine gaps in a wider platform which supports the dominant ideology (Liebes, 1997, p1).

In a sense, hegemony is a struggle for dominance which is more likely to be achieved through general consent, than direct force (Pavasaris, 1996, p116). Over time, the way that a representation is favoured or presented can change, especially as the hegemonic institutions adapt to the opposing forces, the alternative voices, and come to recognise the "new logic" of an event or situation (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p4). The hegemonic contest is a constant struggle to present different representations of reality.

By relying primarily on elite sources, the news tells us not only who has the authority to determine a representation of reality, but also what the authoritative version of reality is (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989, p3). Indeed, one definition proposes that news is the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality (Gitlin, 1980, p251). The struggle between the dominant institutions and the alternative voices is one of the reasons why a hegemonic framing of media criticism is valuable. By recognising the constant evolution of hegemonic frames, such an approach "accommodates the complex and evolving relationship between a society and its media and locates this within a broader historical context" (Pavasaris, 1996, p101).

Such an approach also encourages researchers to extend their view and understanding of the newsmaking process if they are to understand where and how hegemonic forces manifest themselves within and upon that process (Liebes, 1997, p2). This can prove difficult because hegemony is so fluid and pervasive that some media owners and media workers reject the suggestion that they produce any ideology, let alone a hegemonic ideology (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p5). Consideration of the "career of the text" and the people who produce can reveal the hegemonic influences (Liebes, 1997, p2). The various aspects and moments of the newsmaking process, as it occurs in time and under the influence of particular approaches to newsmaking, can present opportunities to appreciate how alternative voices and frames can appear or disappear. Examining the process may also reveal how readers are

similarly able to actively engage the text and consider their own role in the newsmaking process (Liebes, 1997, p2).

The examination of the processes of newsmaking is critical, as hegemony is not a product of bias or conspiracy, but an outcome of the routines and institutional practices of treating news as a commodity (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p5). Journalists, operating as the "organisers" of the representations which occur in the news, support the dominant interests through their normal work practices, such as the pursuit of objectivity and the way they define whether something or someone is newsworthy (Pavasaris, 1996, p111). As the values of the journalists are so inter-connected with the routines they follow, they are able to accept new information and integrate new facts, while still sustaining the hegemonic principles (Gitlin, 1980, p272). This is the basis for the argument suggested by Herman and Chomsky, who use Lippmann's phrase of "the manufacture of consent". In particular, they point to the people in the higher levels of media organisations, who have usually internalised the constraints imposed by proprietors, the market or governments, and are able to implement these ideas throughout the organisation (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, pxii). In many cases, it is not difficult or necessary for these media managers to directly impose their ideas on the journalists. For example, in a study of the Australian television program, *Foreign Correspondent*, Pavasaris found that there was no need for policy constraints or instructions from management, as they were entrenched in the normal work practices of the journalists (Pavasaris, 1996, p111). As long as a journalist goes about their work in a professional way, as long as they maintain the "banal, everyday momentum of their routines", the news remains compatible with the main institutional arrangements within a society (Gitlin, 1980, p269).

Clearly, the hegemonic process is responsible for framing reality through "patterns of selection and omission, emphasis of certain themes and interpretations (Pavasaris, 1996, p103). Attempts have been made to categorise the principles which the practices and routines are "skewed towards", the frames which support the dominant hegemonic institutions. Herbert Gans produced a comprehensive list of what he called "news values", although they differ markedly from the kind of news values which Galtung and Ruge categorised. Galtung and Ruge were interested in the factors which contributed to an event or circumstance being categorised as newsworthy (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, p64). Gans, was more interested in the kinds of values which emanated from the news, the themes present in

the news, as the following summary demonstrates (Gans, 1979, p42-63).

Ethnocentrism: News from within a country is favoured over news from other countries. This is not just the case when a country is at war or involved in some other kind of conflict with another country. It is also apparent in foreign news reporting generally, where news is often linked to the home country.

Altruistic democracy: This frame not only reinforces the idea that a democracy is the best form of government, it also highlights how and why a democracy should be maintained. Often, coverage of demonstrations against government policies or major corporations is a method of reinforcing the value of democracy.

Responsible capitalism: The news maintains the idea that while increased prosperity for all is a worthy goal, it must be done responsibly. The “scandal” of multi-million dollar salaries and payouts for corporate executives in Australia is one example of this kind of framing.

Small-town pastoralism: The ideal that rural values are somehow more worthy than urban values is supported in the media. This is particularly expressed in the ongoing framing of many aspects of urban life as problematic, and cuts across many issues, from crime to troubled transportation systems.

Individualism: Individuals who struggle against the system, self-made people, and those who overcome adversity are favoured over groups of people. Indeed, it is a common media tactic to explain how a new government policy may impact on an entire community by focusing on the effect it has on one individual or family.

Moderatism: The news maintains a frame of moderatism by highlighting excessiveness, whether it is highbrow or lowbrow.

Social order: News focuses on maintaining social order and dealing with threats to social order. It is possible to divide most straight news reports into two groups — stories about order and stories about disorder.

Leadership: This frame focuses on the dominance of news about leaders, and the idea that leaders shape a society.

Gitlin's summary of news values represent similar ideals. They include: the legitimacy of private control of commodity production (business and commerce); the legitimacy of the national security state (government and/or military); the legitimacy of technocratic experts (academia); the right and ability of authorised agencies to manage conflicts and make reforms (government); the legitimacy of social order secured and defined by the dominant elites; and the value of individualism as the measure of social existence (Gitlin, 1980, p270). While the precise definitions may vary, and while some values may be more critical or dominant in particular settings or societies, it is clear that, in essence, these are the hegemonic boundaries which the media maintain and, with the use of alternative voices, views or frames, the boundaries which are contested. So while the media thrives on conflict, while they visit a variety of "genres and sites", they always try to frame things in terms of the "known and comfortable" (Jacubowicz, Goodall, et al, 1994, p16). With the increased emphasis on marketing the news as a product or commodity, the media is not afraid of "heating up" the audience, but they always manage to maintain a sense of familiarity (Burns, 2001, p24). Ultimately, they represent society in a way that agrees with the identified world views and values of the dominant audience, preserving the "myths that a society deems precious" (Burns, 2001, p24).

One of the most obvious ways in which the preservation of "precious myths" manifests itself in news reports is through the use of stereotypes. The intent of a stereotype is to focus on "difference", to reduce it, to essentialise it, to neutralise it and to secure the definition of it (Hall, 1997b, p258). "It divides the normal from the abnormal. It fixes boundaries and excludes that which does not belong" (Hall, 1997b, p258). Stereotypes also satisfy the journalists and the audiences desire for regular stories with regular rhythms (Gitlin, 1980, p267). Stereotypes are derived from the professional and social networks of the editors and journalists, from principles and ideas which exist and filter through the media organisations, from sources, friends and spouses, and often from more prestigious media reports (Gitlin, 1980, p267). The news not only reinforces stereotypes, it depends on them (Gans, 1979, p201). If a person or situation can be summarised in a way that is quickly and easily understood by a majority of the readership or audience, then it is more likely that this summary will be used. As Gitlin explains, stereotypes solve a range of problems for

journalists, including pressures associated with time or space, the desire for regular stories with a predictable rhythm, and the presentation of an authoritative and accepted view (Gitlin, 1980, p267).

Stereotypes generally exist where there are inequalities of power (Hall, 1997a, p258). It is, then, no surprise, that stereotypes have particular significance in reports related to race. Hess has shown that television news reporting in the US often reinforced racial and cultural stereotypes, particularly in the coverage of crises — stories from Colombia were often about drugs, stories from Germany were often about neo-Nazis, and stories from Italy were often about the Mafia (Hess, 1996, p32). Australian reporting has been accused of the same actions. For example, a 1991 report into racist violence in Australia said the media coverage of Aboriginal issues emphasised negative themes such as tribalism, primitivism, the threat of crime and violence, that they were unable to cope with the modern world, and that they were undisciplined (Jacubowicz, Goodall et al., 1994, p39). Subsequent research reinforced the idea that Indigenous affairs reporting is unable to represent "the Other" in anything but stereotypical, patronising, assimilationist or ignorant terms (Meadows and Ewart, 2001, p116). As a result of such stereotypes, Hall has suggested that the victims can be trapped into "unconsciously confirming the stereotype by trying to resist it" (Hall, 1997a, p263). This resistance can occur on an individual level, but it also occurs, in a broader sense, on a cultural level.

Edward Said has demonstrated that the incomplete, often misleading, outdated and out-of-context picture of Islam presented by the Western media contributes to the demonisation of Islam and the countries regarded as Islamic by the West: "It is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed and apprehended either as oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world" (Said, 1981, p28). In particular, he says that the media are limited by a number of factors, including that: they rely on experts who may have vested interests; they rely on reporters who in many cases have no experience of the subject or cultures they report on; and journalists who stereotype and standardise the facts to create one-dimensional stories which have no sense of history and reinforce the hegemonic forces within society (Said, 1981, p40).

The consequences of such inadequate coverage are mulitple: a specific picture of Islam has been supplied; the meaning or message of Islam has generally continued to be circumscribed and stereotyped; a political situation has been created which pits "us" against "Islam"; the image of Islam has had consequences in the Islamic world itself; and the media representation of Islam reveals much about western culture, institution and policies (Said, 1981, p44). These consequences serve as an effective framework for research such as this, where the coverage of one country in a second country is being examined. Despite the differences in scale, it establishes a method for examining the media's role in the relationship between Australia and Fiji. Said's consequences of inadequate coverage go to the heart of Hall's claim that the media produces messages in code about the nature of society, the nature of productive relations within the media themselves and institutional domains and social processes (Hall, 1997a). More often than not, it is the elite sources who play such a significant role in delivering these messages.

The critical role of the elite source is an outcome of their power over knowledge, which is not only granted to elites by their occupation of high political posts but also by their expertise (Greenfield and Williams, 2001, p40). Ewart's definition of elite sources elucidates how intrinsically involved they are with the powerful institutions within society:

> They included elected government officials, top bureaucrats, high-ranking law enforcement and court officials, top education officials, professionals and experts, civic leaders and the officials voices of government entities, police departments, courts, schools and well-known businesses (Ewart and Massey, 2006, p105).

The combination of position and expertise allows elite sources to dominate the hegemonic contest. Ultimately, the production of knowledge is partly shaped by "what the socially advantaged groups in any society want to know and how it benefits them to understand and explain it" (Harding, 1996, p148). Elites are able to influence how an issue is defined and, through particular framing, they are able to emphasise particular aspects, simplify arguments and perspectives, and present knowledge in ways most likely to guide public opinion to their advantage (Koch, 1998, p211).

While the media is not adverse to questioning the authority of elites, and while individual journalists in particular see their role as a watchdog on government, the major media

organisations are a part of the hegemonic structure and have an interest in maintaining this structure. As Bagdikian has ably demonstrated, the fact that modern media companies are so embedded in diverse, multinational companies calls into question their ability or desire to report on the failings of these companies (Bagdikian, 1983, p10).

Additionally, the socialisation of journalists within the industry relies on a fairly rigid set of regulations which allow them to deal with a range of challenges, from deadlines to the pursuit of what they perceive to be objectivity to source confidentiality. These regulations operate within the ideology of journalism, producing news values which promote the legitimacy of social order secured and defined by the dominant elites (Gitlin, 1980, p271). It is not that the journalists freely give their consent to being controlled by elite sources. The consent is manufactured through the same processes which effect other agents throughout society. The media appear to be more susceptible to this manufactured consent primarily because a large part of their role is to disseminate the knowledge claims made by the elites.

Given that elite sources are more likely than other sources to limit, simplify and frame the news for their own advantage, it is critical to understand the impact this has on the societies involved. Said, who charted the history of the relationship between the West and the Orient, argued that the way that Oriental cultures and traditions were studied legitimised images and fantasies which confirmed the epistemic authority of the West (Said, 1978). The negative stereotypes which were part of this Orientalist attitude came to be accepted as the basis for Western ways of understanding in many parts of the world, including in Australia's understanding of the Asia Pacific region. Broinowski has argued that Australian settlers had the chance to become the English speaking people who were best informed about the Asia Pacific region. Instead, "Australians sheltered from the challenge, accepting Europe's Orientalist constructs as substitutes for knowledge" (Broinowski, 1992, p14).

The idea that different communities interpret reality in their own particular ways is a concept which Said referred to as "communities of interpretation": "…the media's Islam, the Western scholar's Islam, the Western reporter's Islam and the Muslim's Islam are all acts of will and interpretation that take place in history and can only be dealt with in history as acts of will and interpretation" (Said, 1981, p45). These interpretations are central features of the existence of the communities: they create, reveal and refine these interpretations, and they often form the basis of conflicts between different communities (Said, 1981, p45). The

interpretations are formed by the direct experience of the individual and the received interpretations which are drawn from the mass media, which, in turn, draws so heavily on the thoughts and words of the elite sources.

When events or issues arise at a distance, the media, our "representatives" overseas, become even more crucial conveyors of meaning (Hall, 1997b, p3). They are not just representatives of a community — they are "representors", those who define the way an event is given meaning. More than that, as Said argues, the media acts as a "communal core of interpretations", so that it is not just a picture of Islam which is generated, but an overall set of feelings about the picture, a context for the picture, is also produced (Said, 1981, p48).

An approach which may counter some of the journalistic practices which lead to the dominance of elite sources comes with ideas associated with standpoint theory. In short, standpoint theorists would argue that in order to provide deeper inter-cultural understanding, the media needs to invert their priorities when it comes to who they use as sources and focus on the least authoritative voices in society. Subordinate positions actually advance the growth of knowledge in ways which elite positions are incapable of (Harding, 2004, p25). This is particularly the case in inter-cultural situations, because there is often a much clear delineation between the elites and the non-elites, and because the existing levels of inter-cultural understanding may be low. Standpoint theory draws directly from Marx, who argued that the perspective of the economically disadvantaged provided a unique perspective on society. This perspective, sometimes referred to as the proletariat standpoint, posits that far greater insight into the way society operates are available (Calhoun, 2002). In more modern times, feminist scholars such as Dorothy Smith and Sandra Harding have argued that standpoint theory allows a way of "conceptualising reality from the vantage point of women's lives" (Hennessy, 1993, p1).

Harding argues that both the dominant and the subordinated groups develop characteristic consciousnesses, because their activities limit their ability to acquire new kinds of knowledge (Harding, 2004, p32). As such, the elites are only able to understand and explain events in the news — to make a knowledge claim — in light of their own position and interests. The problem is that "there are some perspectives on society from which, however well intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and the natural world are not visible" (Harding, 1996, p148). So the elite sources which dominate the way

an event is represented are unable to truly demonstrate an affinity with the less socially advantaged people who may be directly involved in the events, who may have to deal with the repercussions of the events, or who may simply be trying to interpret the events as media consumers.

The answer, according to standpoint theorists, is to generate knowledge claims from disadvantaged social locations, because they are "…less false than their competitors because of the greater comprehensivity, accuracy and criticism…" (Harding, 1996, p149). By operating from a position outside the accepted power structures, the subordinated perspectives are more able to make sense of the dominant discourses, to reveal insights into how power operates and to highlight the differences between what is claimed to be true and what people actually experience (Martin, Reynolds and Keith, 2002, p669). The methodology of standpoint theorists is to understand and adopt "outsider within" positions — the perspectives of groups who are included in dominant cultural practices but, for different reasons, may not be able or willing to participate in them completely (Lenz, 2004, p98). This approach of "starting thought from marginal lives" (Harding, 1996, p152) is, in theory, very easy to apply to the practice of journalism, particularly as it relates to sources.

The Australian coverage of the Fiji coups

The underlying question posed by this literature review relates to the role of the media in building relationships between developed and developing post-colonial nations like Australia and Fiji. By arguing for the understanding of news as a process, it is then possible to identify and examine the elements of this process which have particular relevance to this thesis. This includes the work of the journalists, particularly that of foreign correspondents, the relationship between journalists and their sources, and the consequences of a reliance on elite sources. The contention is that the theories identifying the hegemonic influences in society, and the way in which the media reliance on elite sources contributes to these influences, provides a solid basis for understanding the way the relationship between Australia and Fiji is represented.

The scale of this relationship is not the same as the relationship between the West and Islam. Said's theories on Orientalism draw on hundreds of years of global information exchange between many different nations. But it is possible that these theories can be applied to the developing relationship between Australia and Fiji. Does the contribution of the media in

international relationships of this scale have the potential to greatly improve the levels of understanding between such nations? Or is there greater potential for misunderstanding if the media do not understand their contribution to this relationship?

The tools for understanding the application of these broader ideas are the examination of the story sources, the prevalent themes and the work of the journalists. Individually, the outcomes of each of these areas of research can contribute specific detail which the existing literature does not already cover. How prepared were the journalists to cover the Fiji coup, what kinds of conditions had an impact on their work in Fiji and how did they go about their normal work practices, such as finding appropriate sources? Related to this line of questioning is a close examination of the sources used in the stories about Fiji. Is there evidence that there was a reliance on elite sources, and if so, who were these sources, and what was the impact of this reliance? How did the work of the journalists contribute to any reliance on elite sources? To what extent did the Australian journalists localise the reporting of the coups? A number of questions about the nature of the reports which emanated from the coup coverage are also warranted, given the contents of this literature review. What kinds of themes were present in the reports about the Fiji coups? What do these themes tell us about the way Australia related to Fiji at these moments?

Apart from the specific knowledge generated by these areas of investigation, the significance of the relationships between these factors also presents an opportunity to increase the existing knowledge about how the media operates. As with the broader theories, there is an element of scale in this area of investigation. Given the nature of the relationship between a large developed nation and a smaller developing nation, perhaps the role of sources is even more critical to the way an event is understood? Or perhaps sources are not as important if the work of the journalists is not limited by the situational factors? Is it possible that the themes generated in these news reports are not specifically an outcome of the kinds of sources being used?

In conclusion, based on the content of this literature review it is clear that there are some gaps in existing knowledge which can be addressed by a study of the Australian media coverage of the Fiji coups. These gaps relate to the broad themes of the role of the media in

the relationship between the developed and developing post-colonial nations, as well as the specifics of the circumstances and outcomes of the reporting of the coups.

CHAPTER 3: SOURCES, THEMES AND PRACTICE – A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

This thesis relies on three methodologies in order to produce knowledge about different aspects of the coverage of the Fiji coups in the Australian press. The first is a content analysis of three Australian broadsheet newspapers which published reports on the Fiji coups. This analysis focuses on the kinds of sources used in the stories, the kinds of organisations they represented and the location of sources and journalists. The second methodology is a thematic analysis of the same set of articles used in the content analysis. The focus here is on the common interpretations and perspectives present in these articles and the relationship of the identified themes to the kinds of sources present in the stories. The third methodology is a series of semi-structured interviews with journalists who covered the coups for Australian media outlets, including those reporting for the three broadsheet newspapers used in the content analysis, and some contrasting interviews with members of the Fijian community, including journalists and editors. The interviews focus on the capabilities of the journalists to access reliable and credible sources, and the kinds of limitations which might have impacted on how they went about this process.

This chapter will present a rationale for taking an approach which combines quantitative and qualitative methods — a process now generally known as a mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2003). It will begin with an examination of the advantages of conducting a mixed method approach, and how the application of such an approach is particularly suitable for this research. It will then move to an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative methods used in this research, the content analysis, the thematic analysis and semi-structured interviews.

Quantitative, qualitative or both?

Given the fundamental differences in the methods and motivation behind quantitative and qualitative research, it is no surprise that the research community has long engaged in what has been referred to as the "paradigm wars" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p320). The battle lines are drawn between the different ways that researchers think about knowledge and ways of knowing, and as a result, the way in which they approach an issue to be researched. The dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative — the "objective" versus

the "subjective", the "scientific and value free" versus the "empathetic, interpretive, and the politically involved" — has generally been strongly maintained (Porter, 1994, p69). While most approaches to research are situated somewhere along the continuum between purely quantitative and purely qualitative research, the last 20 years has seen the emergence of an approach which is now generally recognised as the third methodological movement (Johnson and Turner, 2003), mixed methods research.

A mixed methods study combines the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches into the methodology of a single project or sequential projects (Classen and Lopez, 2006, p99). Mixed methods research is not new. As early as 1959, Campbell and Fiske's psychological studies used what they described as a "multimethod matrix", an approach they encouraged others to explore and adopt (in Creswell, 2003, p15). Many other researchers did just that. The sociologist, Herbert Gans, conducted an ethnographic study of a new suburban community, Levittown, in the USA, utilising different methods, including interviews and participant observation (Gans, 1967). Gans subsequently took an interest in the media, producing the seminal text, *Deciding What's News* (1979). His research for this book was based on a content analysis, participant observation, and interviews. Also using three methods was the 1984 study by Eileen Barker into the way that the Unification Church — the Moonies — indoctrinated new members. Barker used in-depth interviews, participant observation and questionnaires (Barker, 1984). The reason researchers choose to use mixed methods is that the outcome is not simply a product of the different methods. It is more than the sum of its parts. Borkan has suggested that the power of mixed methods research is that it suggests, discovers and tests hypotheses, it gives new insights on complex issues, it allows researchers to explore topics from the point of view of numbers and narratives, and it adds rigor (Borkan, 2004, p4). The numbers provide potential for ensuring statistical reliability and generalisability, while the narratives provide detailed descriptions.

One of the most significant steps in the wider acceptance of mixed methods research was the development of paradigms which explained the epistemology of combining methods from different philosophical traditions. The most suitable paradigm, and the one this thesis follows, is pragmatism. Mixed methods researchers argue that research questions should be addressed by using the most suitable methodological tools available, an approach which follows the pragmatists credo of "do what works" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p320). According to Cherryholmes, pragmatic research is driven by anticipated consequences:

"…the choices about what to research and how to go about it are conditioned by where we want to go in the broadest of senses"(1992, p13-14). Researchers move away from a single consideration of knowledge and how something is known, and concentrate on the consequences of their work (Maxcy, 2003, p52).

This thesis examines the coverage of the Fiji coups from three different perspectives: the sources used in newspaper reports, the themes identified in the reports, and descriptions of how the journalists went about creating these reports. Each of these perspectives reveal different kinds of knowledge about the coup coverage: the kinds of sources relied on to tell the story of the coup, the way the coup is represented through the themes present in the stories, and the way the journalists were able to contribute to the process of newsmaking. The goal is not to use one perspective to prove or disprove another perspective. Rather, the goal is to understand a research problem without the limitations of a single philosophical assumption, and to produce as full an account of the subject area as possible within the timeframes and resource limitations of the project (Bryman, 1988, p140).

A pragmatic approach is closely governed by the context of the research. The pragmatic researcher "attends to the demands of the particular inquiry context and makes inquiry decisions so as to provide the information needed and maximise desired consequences" (Greene and Caracelli, 2003, p101). In many respects, this approach is very suitable for research about journalists, as it reflects the approach journalists often bring to the coverage of a news event. Different situations present different possibilities to journalists. The coverage of a sporting event is going to involve inquiry decisions which differ greatly from the coverage of a military coup, yet invariably the goal is the same — to make decisions which will result in the best possible story.

In short, pragmatism is a practical and applied research philosophy, (Greene and Caracelli, 2003, p21). As such, the pragmatism paradigm can be applied to the philosophy behind a mixed methods study, and also the way the study is carried out. Pragmatists consider the research question to be more important than methods or paradigms which underlie the methods (Greene and Caracelli, 2003, p21). By placing such importance on the research question, decisions about the more practical aspects of the study are more straight forward. For example, Teddlie has said that researchers adopting a pragmatic approach reject either/or dichotomies, and avoid the use of metaphysical concepts such as "truth" and

"reality" (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003, p21). For example, in this thesis, a debate over a concept such as "truth" could consume significant energy and ultimately lead to decisions which narrow the focus of the study. Instead, by taking a pragmatic approach and accepting there are varying approaches to understanding what "truth" is, the scope of the study can remain broad.

The pragmatic nature of mixed methods research can also be understood by examining the different methodological approaches utilised. According to Green, Caracelli and Graham, there are five main methods of combining the data from different philosophical methods: triangulation; complementarity; development; initiation; and expansion (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989, p255). Three of these methodological approaches are applicable to this thesis. Firstly, triangulation is a way of confirming and corroborating results using different methods to examine the same topic (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003, p353). The term triangulation may be used in reference to the triangulation of methods, the triangulation of data, or the triangulation of different theoretical perspectives (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p318). This thesis utilises the concept of triangulation in all these forms. First, there is a triangulation of methods, an intrinsic characteristic of a mixed methods approach. In this case, the methods are the content analysis, the thematic analysis and the interviews. The mixed methods approach also requires the triangulation of philosophical approaches, and accepting that different epistemological foundations can lead to different kinds of knowledge. In this thesis, these theoretical differences stem from the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, which leads to knowledge with statistical reliability and knowledge derived from interpretive analysis. There is also a triangulation of data. This is particularly pertinent to this thesis. The newspaper articles provide data for two different types of analysis, the analysis of sources and the more inductive analysis of the themes. Utilising the same data as the basis for two very different kinds of analysis goes to the heart of a mixed methods approach. Additionally, analysis of the third data set, the interviews, expands and informs the other methods.

The second rationale for pursuing mixed methods research is complementarity, which is seeking to understand and elaborate results from one method in conjunction with results from another method (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003, p353). Complementarity assists the discussion of the outcomes of this research because it allows conclusions to be drawn on the basis of different kinds of evidence. This ability to present arguments based on

complementary strands of the same research adds to the legitimacy of the approach taken and helps to present a "fuller understanding of the research problem" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p319).

The final reason for pursuing mixed methods research is development, which is utilising the results of one method to inform another method (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003, p353). In this thesis, the outcomes of the content analysis of sources helped to define particular aspects of the thematic analysis and subsequently the interviews with journalists. The reasons why the reports relied on particular sources and the ways in which these sources might have contributed to the generation of particular themes could only be revealed by interviewing the journalists involved and examining how they went about accessing sources. Additionally, the content analysis served the very practical purpose of identifying the journalists who covered the coups, so that they could be interviewed.

While triangulation, complementarity and development are all good approaches to mixed methods research, an equally important component is, according to Creswell (2003), a clear explanation of the specific strategy which is being utilised. Four main decisions have been highlighted which indicate the type of design model to be employed (Creswell, 2003, p211): *implementation* refers to the sequence of the quantitative and qualitative components of the study; *priority* is the weighting given to the different components; *integration* is highlighting the ways in which the different data are combined and when this occurs; and lastly, there is the issue of whether a *theoretical perspective* guides the overall design of the study.

In this thesis, the implementation is sequential. The analysis of sources informs the thematic analysis and the interviews. The analysis of sources assisted in the design of the subsequent methods. For example, by examining the kinds of sources revealed in the content analysis, questions about the ways in which the journalists attempted to utilise a range of sources were generated. The priority given to the different kinds of data is a balanced one. No single method — the content analysis, the thematic analysis or the interviews — is favoured, in order to gain a greater overall understanding of the topic.

The integration of the data will take place in the interpretation stage of the thesis. Each method will be analysed independently and the results of this analysis will be subsequently interpreted. This integrated approach to analysis mirrors the recommendations of Miller

(Miller, 2003, p427) whereby four dimensions of analysis — the quantitative, the qualitative, the inferential relationship between them, and the possibility of an overall pattern of analysis — are critical for mixed methods studies. That is not to suggest that the goal is to establish a causal relationship between the sets of data. Rather, they give information on three different things, the sources, the themes and the journalistic practice, and hopefully provide a meaningful response on all counts (Mason, 1994, p109). Finally, the theoretical perspective guiding this interpretation, indeed the entire study generally, is the role of the media in cross-cultural understanding. This is based on the theories relating to sources, the practice of the journalists, and the relationship between elite sources and the hegemonic nature of societal representations.

In summary, as Creswell argued, there are four main decisions which should determine the design model: implementation, priority, integration and the use of a theoretical perspective to guide the design (Creswell, 2003, p211). All these have been addressed in relation to this thesis. Taking this into account, the overall design of the research reflects what Creswell labels a sequential explanatory strategy (Creswell, 2003, p215). It is now necessary to explain how the individual methods were utilised.

The sources: who said so?

Content analysis is a proven method commonly used in communication science (Wester, Pleijter, et al, 2004, p495), especially for investigating issues related to the media. For example, Gans used a content analysis as part of his research into newsmaking, which culminated in the seminal media text, *Deciding What's News* (1979). Content analyses of major news outlets have also been used to examine the types of sources utilised. For studies of media, an advantage of a content analysis which utilises freely accessible reports, such as data from an internet archive, is that other researchers are free to peruse, cross-check or otherwise interrogate the data (Breen, 1996, p44). This goes some way to ensuring an acceptable level of verifiability.

Integral to the overall transparency of a content analysis approach is the systematic identification of the contents, and a clear explanation of the way the material is being examined. The criteria of selection must be established before the analysis takes place, it must by exhaustive and it must be applied consistently and rigidly (Berg, 2004, p268). Scott agreed with the thrust of this requirement, when he stated that the sources utilised in the

analysis needed to be comprehensive, and the categories being examined needed to be specific and clearly defined (Scott, 1990, p11).

The following sections outline how the content analysis of sources was conducted. To begin, the research questions which motivated the approach to the analysis are described. As stated above, the research questions guide pragmatic research. This is followed by a brief description of the content analysis, in order to provide context for the subsequent arguments. Finally, there is an explanation of the characteristics which were the focus of the analysis.

The sources: research questions

The research questions draw on the material presented in the literature review. It is my contention that the sources used in a story have a major impact on the way an event is reported. The sources provide the foundation on which the story is built. They are the voices of the story, providing facts, comments and analysis which is integral to the way an event or circumstance is understood. The literature suggests that the journalistic tendency to rely on elite sources helps to sustain and reinforce the roles of the major hegemonic institutions in society, which include the government, the military, the education system and, to a certain extent, the media itself. The hegemonic institutions are able to influence the media, and in some cases, influence the way situations and events are understood by the wider population. Ultimately, the kinds of representations which occur can create an interpretive framework which is unable to provide a deep level of cross-cultural understanding. The goal of focussing on the reporting of the Fiji coups was to see how these arguments could be applied to particular events. Based on these ideas, the following research questions were developed.

Q1. What kinds of sources were used in the stories about the coups and what kind of groups and institutions did these sources represent?

Categorising the different kinds of sources utilised is critical to this content analysis. As well as the individuals concerned, I was particularly interested in the kinds of institutions and organisations they represented, and their status or level of authority within these organisations.

Another characteristic which could help determine the nature of the sources is gender. A number of studies have shown that females are vastly under-represented as sources in news stories, regardless of which branch of the media is concerned. Males dominate as sources,

especially as representatives of the powerful institutions within society (Howard, 2002). As such, the presence of female sources in a story is one indicator that the reporting may be attempting to be more inclusive. Additionally, the gender of the journalist has been shown to be an indicator of whether female sources are used in a story (Armstrong, 2004). By classifying and cross-checking the gender of the sources and the journalists, this proposition can be tested.

The nationality and/or ethnicity of the sources can also be regarded as an indicator of their status. Given the differences in global economic and political power, the status of the more powerful nations in the region, such as Australia and New Zealand, may be reflected in the kinds of sources used to present the story of the Fiji coups. Additionally, given that ethnic tensions were, rightly or wrongly, blamed for causing the coups, the use of sources from the different ethnic groups within Fiji may also be significant.

Q2. What kind of impact does geographic location, of both the sources and the journalists, have on the kinds of sources utilised in these stories?

The media has been shown to favour news from particular countries. Generally, news is more likely to feature events and situations in developed countries, as opposed to news from developing countries. There is also an obvious relationship between geography and newsworthiness. The further away an event occurs, the less likely it is to make news. For example, the death of one hundred people on the other side of the world will probably generate less attention than the death of five people in the local region. Geographic proximity has particularly been shown to indicate the kinds of sources selected. If a news organisation is physically located near to a major news event, generally a greater number of sources will be quoted. Conversely, the further away a news organisation is from a news event, the more likely that fewer sources will be used, and they are more likely to be high-level sources (Voakes, Kapfer, et al, 1996, p584). Additionally, theories about the localisation of international news suggest that there is a strong tendency to frame international stories in the context of the home country. As such, an event in a foreign country is more likely to be reported if it is regarded as being of strategic interest to the home country. This too may have an effect on the kinds of sources used.

Not withstanding this idea, it is my contention that the journalists who are closest to the action, in this case, those in Fiji, should have access to a greater number and variety of

sources, particularly sources who are directly involved in the events. Tunstall has suggested that foreign correspondents are much less susceptible to management influence than other journalists. The physical distance between the foreign correspondent and their managers means correspondents are granted more freedom and authority than those working within the newsroom (Tunstall, 1973, p271). As a result, they have to rely more on their own abilities and their own assessments of how a situation is developing. They also have to rely on their own ability to determine and access the most appropriate sources. In such an intense atmosphere, these same journalists may be more susceptible to the influence of the media pack, with greater potential to be controlled or manipulated by forces involved in the crisis, which may impact on their access to sources. Conversely, there is some logic in the suggestion that a little distance from events can provide a more balanced assessment — a slightly less dramatic perspective — with journalists utilising sources who are more removed from the intensity of the situation.

Q3. In comparing the coverage in 1987 to that of 2000, were there any significant differences in the kinds of sources used?

By examining two similar events in the same country with a significant time period between them, the content analysis is able to examine whether any differences occurred in the kinds of sources used. It is possible that the reporting in 2000 had improved, in terms of the range and type of sources used in the stories. Perhaps there was a greater diversity in the nationality or ethnicity of the sources used, or perhaps there was less reliance on elite sources and more reliance on sources from organisations representing different sectors of the community. The 1987 coups were responsible for an increased media interest in the Pacific, and perhaps this is reflected in the ability of the journalists to access a greater range of sources. Or could changes in the kinds of sources be attributed to other causes, such as situational factors?

Q4. Were there any significant differences in the kinds of sources used in the three different newspapers selected?

Different newspapers are able to cover a news story with different levels of journalistic expertise, different levels of financial support, and different understandings of the importance of the event. Different newspapers also have different political orientations, and owners who impose different levels of control over the running of the business. Do these differences have any impact on the kinds of sources the competing journalists can access?

By studying the sources used by different newspapers to cover the same events, this content analysis can clarify the scale of these differences. Additionally, by examining the same newspapers' coverage of the two different coups, this analysis also reveals variations within the same newspaper over different time periods.

Identifying the sources

The content analysis of sources focussed on the reports about the Fiji coups in three Australian broadsheet newspapers, *The Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian,* and *The Canberra Times*. There were two different time periods: between May 15, 1987 and May 21, 1987; and between May 20, 2000 and May 27, 2000. These dates represented the first week of coverage of the Fiji coups in 1987 and 2000, from the date that the coup was first reported. There were 419 stories which made reference to the Fiji coups and all were included in this analysis. This included different kinds of stories from different sections of the newspapers, including page one articles, commentary, general news, editorials, features, business-related articles and sports-related articles. The goal was to include as many different kinds of sources as possible.

Two sets of data were compiled. The first set of data relates to the articles themselves. The characteristics of each article — the newspaper, the date, the page number, and the name, location and gender of the journalist — were recorded. The second set of data relates to the sources. For the purposes of this thesis, a source was defined as a person who was quoted in the article. This included those who were quoted directly and those who were paraphrased. A total of 794 sources were identified in the 419 articles. Names of the sources and other identifiable characteristics were recorded. Where a name was not included, the description of the person was recorded, based on any other identifying characteristics presented in the article.

The articles were sourced from microfilm copies held in the National Library of Australia, Canberra. Photocopies were made of all 419 articles, and the coding was carried out using these copies. The decision to rely on this source was made primarily because on-line newspaper databases, such as Factiva or NewsText, proved to be unsatisfactory, as searches

did not return all the articles found when sourcing the data by hand[2]. Additionally, the archive also included different editions of the newspapers. On the rare occasions when this occurred, comparisons of the two editions were made in order to check for any additional sources or relevant information.

The goal of this research was to examine the reporting of the coups by the most reputable media organisations, particularly those which take a serious approach to covering regional and world-wide events. By focussing on the most respected organisations, it was hoped that an understanding of the highest standards of reporting would be achieved. Despite the fact that reliance on newspapers as a source of news is declining, particularly in western countries (Hargreaves, 2005, p11), there were four major reasons for focussing on the sources which appeared in newspapers, rather than the broadcast media: newspapers and broadcast media cover events in different ways; newspapers are more able to cover complex events; sources in newspapers are more prominent and information about them is more accessible; and my personal understanding of working as journalist in the two different mediums.

It is clear that print and broadcast reports of the same event vary. According to Schultz, the accepted wisdom was always that news radio was best at handling instant, immediate news, that television added a visual dimension, with a focus on visible conflict, and that newspapers and magazines were best equipped to deal with the deeper context of the story, the facts behind the headlines, the explanation, analysis and comment (Schultz, 1998, p192). Print and broadcast media also differ in terms of the themes that they emphasise, in the level of detail and balance they offer, and in the way they focus on particular framing of a story, such as the human interest angle (Li and Izard, 2003, p206). Television and radio are, by their very nature, short-term media — the reports they present are fleeting. In McLuhan's terms, the electronic media are simultaneous, reactive, improvised and incomplete. Conversely, print is sequential, active, composed and complete (McLuhan, 1994). In aiming

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[2] The shortcomings of online databases have been identified by other researchers. A 1993 study designed to validate the use of online, full text databases as a research method revealed that the online searches of two databases differed from the hand search in unpredictable ways (Kaufman, et al 1993). This was attributed to the different methods newspapers used to submit stories to online databases, and the fact that stories might be selected from different editions of the newspapers (Kaufman, et al 1993).

for an understanding of the most informed reporting, it was felt that this thesis should rely on the more measured, more complete coverage offered by newspapers.

Print media is also much better at covering complex situations. This is especially relevant for this thesis, given that complexity is characteristic of most conflict situations (Abel, 1984, p63). One reason why print media copes better with complexity is related to time. Broadcast media is much more susceptible to "the tyranny of the clock" — the very limited amount of time allocated to television news, and to a lesser extent, radio news. In the case of television news, this leads to a collection of highly visual and highly compressed moments, with a general loss of perspective (Abel, 1984, p65). Those working within the television industry recognise the limitations. Robert MacNeil, executive editor of the renowned US current affairs television program *MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour* has said that the idea of television news is to "keep everything brief, not to strain the attention of anyone but instead to provide constant stimulation through variety, novelty, action and movement. You are required… to pay attention to no concept, no character and no problem for more than a second at a time" (in Postman, 1987, p144). Postman concurs, suggesting that it is simply not possible to convey a sense of seriousness about any event if its implications are exhausted in less than one minute's time (Postman, 1987, p144). Adding to the constraints of time, television news is subject to the powerful pull of the visual spectacle (Abel, 1984, p65). The result, sometimes, is that the more mundane aspects of a story or event, the important background and context which cannot be conveyed visually in a limited period of time, are ignored or glossed over. These limits on the coverage also limit the range of sources. The influence of the visual spectacle has also lead to the situation where "star" journalists — the faces the audiences apparently want to see — are flown into international news locations, only to be left "reporting" on the event courtesy of e-mail or other communications from head office (Hargreaves, 2005, p72).

Another reason why print media was favoured over broadcast media is that sources used in print stories have more prominence than the sources in broadcast news. Given that many news stories on television and radio rarely take more than 90 seconds from start to finish, sources in broadcast news are less able to reinforce their status and authority — often, they are lucky if a viewer or listener remembers both who they are and what they said. Sources in newspapers must stand up to much greater scrutiny. A newspaper reader can verify details about all aspects of the story, including the details of the sources. Tracking these details is

also much easier for print reports. Compared to radio and television archives, the availability of electronic newspaper archives is almost limitless. As such, all characteristics of the stories and the sources can be scrutinised cheaply and easily.

The final reason I chose print over broadcast is that my own experience as a journalist taught me that sources can be treated differently by the different strands of the media. My experience of working for newspapers is that the sources used in stories are more often subject to considerable scrutiny before they appear in print. They are also more likely to appear in stories which have opposing points of view, and which rely on three or four sources. My experience of radio reporting is that, primarily due to the time constraints, the sources are more likely to appear on air without such scrutiny. Stories often include only one or two sources. Obviously, these assessments are based on the specific circumstances of my experience. They do, however, reinforce the argument for focussing on the highest levels of reporting.

Why focus on these particular newspapers?

The aim of analysing the highest quality reporting also influenced the selection of the particular newspapers. These particular newspapers were chosen on the basis of four major factors: the nature of broadsheet newspapers compared to tabloids; the attitude of the newspapers to international news; the ownership of the newspapers; and the overall status of the individual newspapers.

All three newspapers are broadsheets. Broadsheet journalism has always been regarded as more serious and more focussed on international events, while tabloid newspapers have been seen as being more about entertainment. For example, William Randolph Hearst, when launching the *New York Mirror* in 1924, explained that the paper would present “90 per cent entertainment and 10 per cent information — and the information without boring you” (Hargreaves, 2005, p61). Largely, the differentiation between the quality press and the popular press in Australia suggested that the broadsheets were sometimes “dull and pompous”, while the popular press was “lively”, with a tendency to blur the lines between news and comment, as well as fact and fiction (Schultz, 1998, p37). Tabloids have also been found to portray attitudes rather than information. For example, Shaw found that in the coverage of the Kurdish crisis, British tabloids were full of patriotic hype and jingoism (Shaw, 1996, p120).

Broadsheet newspapers are also more likely to provide a more sophisticated interpretation of the news, particularly the international news, on a more regular basis (Shaw, 1996, p119). As far as the Pacific region is concerned, the willingness of newspapers to appoint Pacific-based correspondents is an indicator of their more serious approach to international news. The tabloids rarely appoint journalists to foreign postings, particularly in the Pacific. The only two newspapers which had Pacific correspondents on staff before or since the first coup in 1987 were both broadsheets: *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*. Such appointments reflect the commitment of the newspaper to developing expertise about the region amongst their staff, which can directly influence the range of sources which appear in their stories.

A factor which is often regarded as important in the determination of the direction a newspaper will take on particular stories is that of ownership. There is a well-informed perception that media owners can dictate the coverage their newspapers offer, particularly during elections (See Herman and Chomsky, 1994). One of the ways they are able to do this is by limiting the access of dissenting voices in the newspaper. Most worrying for media ethicists is when media ownership is concentrated in just a few hands, especially when these conglomerates also have diverse and significant interests in a range of related corporations and companies (See Bagdikian, 1983; Herman and Chomsky, 1994). With this in mind, the newspapers selected have been chosen with some regard to ownership. At the time of the 1987 coups, the three newspapers all operated under different owners: *The Sydney Morning Herald* was owned by John Fairfax Holdings Ltd, *The Australian* was owned by News Limited and *The Canberra Times* was owned by Federal Capital Press. By 2000, the only paper which had changed hands was *The Canberra Times*, which was taken over by Rural Press Ltd in September, 1998. John Fairfax is a major shareholder of Rural Press. Overall, these papers represented some of the most significant media organisations in the country at the time.

The final reason for selecting these newspapers is their status and reputation. Clearly, to meet the aim of examining the best reporting, it was necessary to focus on some of the leading Australian newspapers. The three newspapers represent a broad and influential sector of the Australian media landscape. Their status is reinforced by the fact that they have

a diverse and influential readership[3]. *The Sydney Morning Herald* serves the largest Australian city — Sydney, and the most populous state — NSW. Sydney is regarded as a leading Asia-Pacific metropolis and is one of the most popular destinations for migrants from the Pacific region (Millett, 2002). *The Canberra Times*'s position as the leading Australian newspaper is only seriously challenged by *The Australian*, the only national, daily newspaper in the country. When launched by Rupert Murdoch in 1964, *The Australian* was intended to be "a newspaper of intelligence, of broad outlook, of independent spirit" (Schultz, 1998, p177). While *The Canberra Times* serves a much smaller market than *The Sydney Morning Herald* or *The Australian*, it is still influential, mostly because of the ability to convey information to politicians, diplomats and government officials in the national capital.

An additional indicator of the status of these newspapers, and therefore their suitability for the aims of this research, is the ways in which journalists assess their worth. The journalists are close enough to the newsmaking processes to provide unique and valuable insights into the nature and quality of the reporting. In 1994, Henningham surveyed 173 Australian journalists and asked them a range of questions about their jobs, the organisations they worked for, and the media industry generally (Henningham, 1996). The results showed that the journalists had a higher opinion of the quality broadsheets than the popular dailies. Asked to rate the quality of each newspaper as high, medium or low, the journalists surveyed ranked *The Australian Financial Review* highest, followed by *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The Canberra Times* (Henningham, 1996, p13). Henningham also noted that *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* had been included in a 1990 list of the top 20 newspapers in the world, where they were described as among a "small group of serious and thoughtful internationally oriented newspapers" (Henningham, 1996, p16).

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[3] The circulation figures from 1987 and 2000 demonstrate the reach of these newspapers. In 1987, in the 6 months to September 30, *The Sydney Morning Herald* sold an average of 258,684 newspapers per day. In the same period, *The Australian* sold an average of 139,301 papers on the six days of the week it was published. For *The Canberra Times*, the average number of newspapers sold in the six months to September was 43,330 per day. In 2000, *The Sydney Morning Herald* sold an average of 231,000 Monday to Friday and 393,000 on Saturday. *The Australian* sold 130,000 copies Monday to Friday and 310,000 on Saturday. *The Canberra Times* sold 39,633 papers Monday to Friday and 70,881 on Saturday (All figures obtained from the respective newspapers).

Overall, the characteristics of broadsheet newspapers in general, and the individual characteristics of these specific newspapers, make them the most suitable choices for a study which aims to focus on quality reporting.

The first week of coverage

The reasons for concentrating on the period of reporting which covers the immediate aftermath of the coup relate to three different and critical players in the newsmaking process: the journalists, the audience and the sources. From the journalist's point of view, the period immediately following an event is the most influential time, when what they do and say and report can have the most bearing on how the event is perceived. It is also the time when they are under the most pressure to come to grips with the situation, understand the motivations of any competing forces, and explain all these factors simply and quickly. As Pollock explains, in the initial phases of a "critical event", when happenings are ambiguous, opinions unformed, and policy amorphous, the personal attitudes of a handful of correspondents may exert influence of global proportions on the shaping of public and official responses" (Pollock, 1981, p8). One of the ways a journalist can establish some level of understanding about the meaning of such an event is by relying on professional judgement to select the most suitable sources: those who are close to the event, those whose decisions may determine any response to the event, or those who have some expert knowledge which contributes to knowledge about the causes and/or outcomes of the event.

Equally, this is an important time for the audience, as they too are most open to being influenced, or at least more open to the agenda setting taking place in the media. For example, research on the reporting of the September 11 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon showed that amongst those surveyed, 97 per cent had learned about the attacks within 3 hours of it happening (Rosengard, Grusin and Utt, 2003, p1). With so little time for the consequences of such an event to be considered, an individual audience member could find it difficult to be fully informed about an event, especially one which might involve violence. Opinions are formed almost instantaneously, experts deliver verdicts before all the facts are known, and the news audience can be left confused and uncertain.

The period immediately after the occurrence of a significant news event is also an important time for news sources, particularly those from the major institutions within society. In a time of crisis, especially one within the region, it is important for the sources to react quickly to a news event in order to maintain their status. The confusion in the immediate aftermath of an event may also provide the opportunity for particular sources to push their own agendas or spread misinformation.

By focussing on the first week of reporting, it is also possible to study an intense period of concentrated coverage of a country which rarely appears in any serious news coverage in Australia. Indeed, apart from coverage relating to the coups, the most common subjects of stories about Fiji in any general search of a newspaper database, such as Factiva, are tourism and rugby union. Even the coverage of the coups did not sustain much medium-term coverage. A perusal of the second week of coverage in these newspapers showed a marked reduction in the amount of coverage.

Coding of characteristics

A content analysis is, essentially, a count of certain parts of a text. According to Berg, there are seven major elements which can be counted in a content analysis: words or terms, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts and semantics (Berg, 2004, p273). In this analysis, a number of these elements are being counted, in order to generate frequency distributions, expressed in raw numbers and overall percentages. For example, the counting of individual terms and words led to the collation of statistics of the names and titles of the sources. Categories relating to the kinds of organisations these sources represented were also counted. The items were also grouped according to which newspaper they appeared in and which page they appeared on. The counting of characters — specific people — also generated frequency distributions. These figures were tabulated in order to allow easy comparison and analysis in relation to the research questions, which were outlined previously.

Two sets of characteristics were coded. The first set related to the sources, and the second set related to the articles. Following are explanations of each of the individual characteristics, and any issues which needed to be addressed in the process of coding. There were also a number of characteristics coded which were subsequently disregarded for

reasons of irrelevance, duplication of other characteristics, or an inability to be coded consistently. These included headlines, source status, source involvement and article type.

For the purposes of this content analysis, a source was defined as anyone who was quoted in a story about the coups. This included direct and indirect quotations from people, whether they were identified or not. Multiple quotes from the same source reported within the one story were only registered as one count for that source. Six characteristics related to the source were coded.

Source title/name: This characteristic was relatively straightforward to code, as it is a standard feature of news reporting to include this information. When an official title or job title was not presented, any accompanying description was included as a way of better placing the individual in relation to the social, political or cultural hierarchy. This additional information was particularly important in describing and categorising anonymous sources. In total, there were 385 different individual sources, with titles and descriptions ranging from Prime Minister to protestor.

Source gender: In this variable, gender was determined by the name of the source. There were three units: male, female and unknown. The “unknown” unit referred to anonymous sources. In some cases, assumptions were made about the anonymous sources. For example, soldiers in the Fijian army could be regarded as male, even if the story did not state it implicitly.

Source nationality/ethnicity: There were 18 different units coded for this characteristic: Australian, Indigenous Fijian, Indian Fijian, Unknown, Other Fijian, New Zealander, American, Papua New Guinean, English, Indian, Brazilian, Ni Vanuatu, Solomon Islander, Malaysian, Japanese, Ghanian, German, and French. The categorisation of the nationality and/or ethnicity of the sources only referred to both characteristics when referring to Fijian sources. This was a way of examining the roles of the different ethnic groups within Fiji, as the coups were often regarded as a racially-based conflict.

The main problem with the categorising of sources arose in relation to George Speight, the leader of the 2000 coup. In the minds of many in the audience, Speight would have been considered an Indigenous Fijian. This was not only based on what he said — arguing that

the coup was perpetrated to maintain indigenous rights — but also in the way he dressed when appearing before the news cameras — in a traditional Indigenous Fijian *sulu*, a skirt for men. In fact, George Speight has part-European ancestry and, as such, he does not enjoy the traditional rights of the Indigenous Fijian, and cannot hold a chiefly position. As a result, Speight, and other sources known to be in the same situation, were included in the category of “Other Fijian”.

Source category: Before coding had begun, this characteristic was limited to four units — government, military, expert, other. However once coding started, it quickly became clear that these units did not provide a wide enough range to clearly portray the sources involved. The expansion of the list of units, which eventually totalled 16, was meant to give more detail of which kinds of organisations the sources represented. The full list was: Government; Military/police; Tourism/business; George Speight/spokesperson; Person on the street; Expert/academic; Journalist/media; Union/political group; Relative/friend; Judiciary/legal; Non-government organisation (NGO) or community organisation; Protestor; Sport; Other; Farmer; Taxi driver.

Again, the biggest problem with the coding of this characteristic related to George Speight. While he had aspirations to take over the country, he could not be regarded as belonging to the “government” category. While he had armed men working with him, he could not be included in the “military/police” category. As a failed businessman, he could not even be included in the “business/tourism” category. Yet, as a major source, he needed to be identified in some way. Finally, it was decided to include him in his own grouping, so his influence could be referred to directly. This grouping also included those identified as spokesmen for Speight.

At least two of the categories — “farmer” and “taxi driver” — were included specifically in response to conditions in Fiji at the time. Farmers in Fiji are generally identified as being marginalised and poor, and quite often Indian Fijian. As such, the quoting of farmers in news stories might indicate a more diverse range of sources is being utilised, possibly countering a focus on elite sources. Taxi drivers were included as a result of some criticisms of the coup reporting. It was claimed that some foreign media gained a lot of information, advice and quotes about the coups from their taxi drivers (See Field, 2000, p7). As such, counting the actual number of taxi drivers quoted may confirm or deny this contention.

Source location: The location of the sources was generally determined by scanning the text of the article. Even where a source was anonymous, it was possible to determine which country they were in. Again, an initial list which included the category of “other” was, after coding started, expanded to include more precise detail and actual locations. The full list included: Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, USA, PNG, England, Vietnam, Korea, Vanuatu, Greece, Cambodia, Brazil, Solomon Islands, Malaysia, Japan, India, Egypt, East Timor, and the Czech Republic.

The second set of characteristics relates to the articles. Articles were chosen on the basis that they made some mention of the Fiji coups. The aim was to gather information from as wide a range of articles as available, in order to understand the kind of sources utilised. Seven characteristics about each article were coded.

Newspaper/date/page number: These characteristics primarily allowed identification and tracking of the articles. This was supported by the use of a serial number, which was allocated to each article and cross-referenced in the database of the sources. The newspaper characteristic also allowed for comparisons between the different newspapers. The tracking of page numbers was included as a measure of intensity, working on the proposition that the stories on the early news pages, particularly the front page, demonstrated different characteristics to those further inside the newspaper.

Journalist: The recording of the name of the journalist demonstrated which individuals may be suitable for the subsequent stage of the research, the interviews. For the purposes of the content analysis, it was also utilised as a way of comparing the different newspapers, particularly the degree to which they relied on news agencies as the source of their stories. Where a news agency or agencies were identified as contributing the story, the story was coded with the identifier “agency”, followed by the agency or agencies, if named. For example, “Agency — AAP”. Where the journalist working for the agency was also identified, this was also included. For example, “Agency — AAP — Doug Conway”. Combinations of these entries also occurred, such as when the stories were attributed with the name of a staff reporter and the additional credit to an agency. For example, “Christopher Dore, agencies”. The aim was to include as much information as possible, based on what was presented in the newspaper.

Where there was no attribution, the story was coded with “Unattributed”. It was decided that this was a better description than the original choice, “anonymous”. The rationale was that “anonymous” more properly referred to someone who chose not to be identified, rather than simply the lack of identification supplied by another party, in this case the newspaper.

Location: The location of the journalist was deemed to be an important characteristic to record, particularly as a unit which could be compared with the location of the sources. In some cases, the stories were introduced with a dateline which stated the location. Often, the location was revealed within the first paragraph, courtesy of the journalistic tendency to state the “who, what, when, where and why” as part of the normal reporting procedure. In relatively few cases, it was not apparent which country the story had emanated from, so it was coded as “unknown”. In other cases, it was clear that components of the story were compiled in different locations, and, as such, both these locations were included.

Journalist’s nationality/ethnicity: The nationality/ethnicity of the journalist was included to provide a useful indicator of the role of different countries or, in the case of Fiji itself, different ethnic groups. For the Fijian journalists, ethnicity was determined by the most obvious ethnic marker available, the name of the journalist. For all other journalists, nationality was determined initially by the country they were reporting for: journalists working for Australian newspapers were presumed to be Australian. While this assumption could obviously prove incorrect, the determination of such an approach was related to the way in which a person reading the newspaper might respond. If the audience sees that the story is written in Australia for an Australian newspaper, they would likely assume that the journalist was Australian. In some cases the subsequent interviews with journalists revealed that, indeed, this assumption was incorrect. In these cases, the initial entries were corrected to reflect this additional information. In cases where nationality could not be determined, this characteristic was coded as “unknown”. The majority of these “unknowns” were directly related to a lack of any clear attribution in the story.

Journalist’s gender: The gender of the journalist has been shown to impact on the kinds of sources used in the story (Armstrong, 2004). In this instance, the gender of the journalist was determined by their name. There were a significant number of articles coded as

"unknown" for this characteristic. As in other characteristics, this was largely due to the lack of any clear attribution on the story.

As can be seen from the elements being counted and the particular characteristics being coded, this content analysis was designed to elicit basic information on the kinds of sources utilised. Primarily, the aim was to produce statistical comparisons of the frequency of particular terms and characters which related to the research questions.

Major themes: perspectives on the coup

The second methodology used to examine the reporting of the coups was a thematic analysis. Where the analysis of the sources in the articles relies on the quantitative collation of statistics relating to the characteristics evident in each story, the thematic analysis is a more inductive process which draws out the perspectives and ideas which are present in the content. The aim of this section is to provide an operational definition of a theme and outline the process used to identify the themes in the news articles.

For the purposes of this research, a theme is defined as a common interpretation or perspective which relates to the topic of a news story and summarises a particular way of understanding an event. This operational definition draws on a number of ideas about the nature of themes. At the simplest level, a theme is "a subject or topic on which a person speaks, writes or thinks"(Moore, 2004, p1482). The concept of themes has been utilised in various ways in academic research. One area where the use of themes is relatively common is in ethnographic studies where data from interviews is being analysed. A number of studies in this area have addressed how to define a theme, including Aronson (2004), and DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000). These studies draw on a range of ideas in a variety of disciplines, including nursing, clinical psychology, education, sociology, and cultural studies. These definitions contain common words, such as "recurring", "common", "patterns", and "essence". For example, in a discussion about thematic analysis of interview material, Morse and Field state that:

> Thematic analysis involves the search for and identification of common threads that extend throughout an entire interview or set of interviews… the theme may be beneath the surface of the interviews but, once identified, appears obvious. Once

> identified, the themes appear to be significant concepts that link substantial portions of the interview together (Aronson, 1994).

This definition has parallels with related research which is more specifically about the media. Iyengar's work on television newscasts included descriptions of two related concepts — episodic framing and thematic framing (Iyengar, 1991, p14). According to Iyengar, episodic framing depicts concrete events that illustrate issues, while thematic framing presents collective or general evidence (Iyengar, 1991, p14). For example, a media report about the low literacy levels in an individual school could be classed as episodic framing, while a report about how an education department is addressing low literacy levels in all schools could be classed as thematic framing. The major difference is in the context — episodic framing relates to one incident, occurrence or report, and thematic framing is common to a number of related reports.

As Iyengar's work demonstrates, there is a close relationship between a theme and a frame. In defining the concept of framing, Entman initially explained that to frame is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993, p52). Building on this definition, Ghanem identified four dimensions of media frames: the topic of a news item, the presentation, the cognitive attributes (details of what is included in the frame) and the affective attributes (the tone) (Chyi and McCombs, 2004, p24).

As the above descriptions indicate, there are a range of approaches and research methodologies which could fall under the heading of framing. An outcome of the existence of a broad range of definitions is that scholars from different disciplines "use the term 'frame' to mean a variety of disjointed and incompatible concepts" (Fisher, 1997). The contested nature of the term has seen Entman re-define his understanding of a frame, which he now describes as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007, p164). In this definition, there is an emphasis on an interpretation of a perceived reality, an emphasis which lies at the heart of a theme, as understood here.

Another feature of a theme which differs from a frame is that a theme may be explicitly referred to in a story, whereas a frame may be regarded as being “ontologically distinct from the topic of the news story” (D'Angelo, 2002, p876). For example, reporting of the 2003 war in Iraq might have relied on a frame which depicted the conflict as part of the “war on terror”, a broad concept which encapsulates all kinds of ideas, statements and events. The themes associated with this reporting might, however, include more focussed approaches to the ways in which the conflict might be explained and understood. For example, research into the Iraq War coverage by Tumber and Palmer (2004) examined seven themes, including ‘the situation inside Iraq’, ‘other nations’ policies towards the situation in Iraq’, ‘the relationship between Islamic fundamentalism and the post-conflict situation’, and ‘the impact of the war on the economies of the west’ (Tumber and Palmer, 2004, p114). Similar research about the same conflict examined themes including ‘Iraqi WMD capability’ and ‘response of the Iraqi people’ (Lewis, Brookes, et al, 2006, p121-122). Clearly, these kinds of themes are closely related to the topic of the news story and as such are likely to be explicitly referred to in the text of a news story.

This connection between a theme and the topic of the news story means there is direct relationship between the thematic analysis and the other elements of this research — the sources and the work of the journalist. As Altheide suggests:

> Themes are more basically tied to the format used by journalists who have a short time to “tell a story” that the audience can “recognise”, “that they have probably heard before,” and moreover, to get specific information from sources that can be tied to this (1997, p651).

It is the way a journalist or source views an event, how they process their own perceptions, which contributes to the way in which a particular reality is constructed. These particular realities — the way they are described by the journalists and the way they are established or reinforced by the sources — result in particular interpretations of the event. This is especially the case when reporting on a crisis such as a coup, as “journalists go into crisis mode and frantically search for any stories that can be thematically linked to the issue” (Worsfeld, 2001, p230).

There is a commonality borne of similar journalistic approaches, and, where sources are limited, a commonality in the kind of explanations and rationales being offered by sources. Themes are a key part of the generation of these interpretations. It is the common interpretations of the actors, the events and the themes which, when repeated in different media, lead people to accept a common point of reference: the news media provide a narrative structure for interpreting an event (Worsfeld, 2001, p229).

Identifying the prevalent themes

The data set used in the content analysis relating to sources was also used for the thematic analysis. As such, the rationale for selecting the types of newspapers, the time period, and other characteristics of the content analysis of sources, as outlined earlier, also apply to the thematic analysis. Clearly, there is an advantage in utilising two different kinds of analyses to examine a single data set. It is a clear demonstration of the pragmatic approach to mixed methods research, an approach which concentrates on the consequences of the work (Maxcy, 2003, p52). The main reason for relying on this data set was the potential for examining the relationship between the kinds of sources utilised and the kinds of themes present in the stories. The data set also provided considerable material, with a total of 419 articles available for examination. As noted in the content analysis methodology above, these articles were selected on the basis that they mentioned the Fiji coup in the text of the article.

The first step in identifying the dominant themes was to read and re-read the articles. This provided an overall perspective of the content of the articles and the opportunity to start to recognise the “regular recurring patterns” within the text (Aronson, 1994). This engagement with the text is a crucial stage in the research, as it is apparent that in a thematic analysis, more often than not researchers induce themes from the text itself (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p780).

Based on the recommendation that researchers start with some broad general themes and make adjustments as they go (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p781), from these initial readings a number of possible themes were identified. As the process continued, the most prevalent themes emerged. The aim was to identify themes which had specific relevance to the reporting of the Fiji coups. The reason for this approach was to draw out the connection between the ‘format used by the journalist’ and a ‘story that the audience can recognise’

(Altheide, 1997, p651). A broader theme would lose this focus and arguably have weaker relationships to the other components of this research, the sources and the work of the journalists.

Articles which were identified with a relevant theme were categorized as belonging to a sub-set of data specific to that theme, hereafter referred to as a thematic sub-set. In some cases, there was also a reference to the theme in the headline of the story. In particular, quotes from sources within the article which referred to a theme were an obvious indicator that a particular story belonged in the relevant thematic sub-set. It also exemplified the relationship between the sources and the themes identified.

Not all of the 419 articles were included in the thematic subsets. The aim was to examine the most prevalent themes, not all possible themes. In the event, three themes were identified as prevalent. Many articles did not refer to the most prevalent themes, or indeed, any other obvious theme. Characteristically, they were often brief items or a collection of smaller pieces of information which had been combined under one headline. These articles were set aside and, after the initial sorting process, re-examined to ensure their exclusion was justified. The articles which were originally allocated to a particular thematic sub-set were also re-examined, to confirm their inclusion in a particular sub-set was justified. At the conclusion of this process, a total of 107 articles had been allocated to thematic sub-sets. This represents 25.5 per cent of the total number of articles used for the source analysis.

The articles in each of the thematic sub-sets were also quantitatively analysed using the same method as for the overall content analysis. This included analysis of the characteristics of the articles and the sources, such as nationality or ethnic group, location and the kinds of sources. Examining these thematic sub-sets in relation to the overall content analysis data allowed comparisons to be made between the characteristics of all articles and sources and the characteristics of the articles and sources related to a particular theme. The purpose of this comparison was to identify if there were any trends in the article and source characteristics which might help explain the presence of a particular theme. For example, if the analysis of the thematic sub-set of data showed a much higher proportion of military sources than the overall analysis, this might partly explain a theme relating to the dominance of the military.

The interviews

The third method utilised in this thesis was the interviews. Journalists who covered the coups for a range of media outlets were interviewed about the processes and work practices which contributed to their reporting, particularly their access to and use of sources. The interviews focussed on the journalists who went to Fiji to cover the coups, as opposed to those who reported from Australia. While the content analysis revealed that many stories about the coups were written from Australia, it is clear that this work was part of the normal working day for the journalists involved. As such, they would have been able to rely on their normal practices and routines in gathering information from the most relevant sources. The output of these Australian-based journalists is significant, and worthy of consideration in other areas of this thesis, but the journalists who went to Fiji were in a vastly different situation.

They were outside their comfort zone. They had to rely on their experience, their initiative and their wits in order to find reliable and credible sources. Their actions and the way they responded to the different pressures would conceivably have far greater impact on the way the coups were reported than if they had been reporting from Australia.

As well as the interviews with Australian journalists, a series of interviews were conducted with journalists, editors and other interested media players from Fiji. The aim of these interviews was to gain a different perspective on the work of the Australian journalists in Fiji.

Interviews: research questions

The ideas and themes expressed in the literature review were a major motivation behind the formulation of the research questions for the interviews. In particular, the role and influence of foreign correspondents[4] was an area which appeared to warrant further attention. The

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[4] Most of these journalists would not be classed as foreign correspondents in the traditional sense of the term. Traditionally, foreign correspondents are posted to a particular location for a considerable period of time, where they get to cover the country and region they are based in. The journalists interviewed for this thesis were, by and large, Sydney or Melbourne based reporters who were on a foreign assignment to cover a one-off event. This kind of assignment is common for modern journalists. Many media organisations have cut back on

changing nature of the work of foreign correspondents, which has seen them move from long-term placements which allowed them to gain specialists knowledge to short-term crisis reporting which relies on very generalist skill sets, the influence of technology, and the critical relationship between foreign correspondents and their sources, all seemed to be factors of significant research interest. As well as a fairly limited range of studies about sources, there was also very little available research about Australian reporters working in the South Pacific region. Additionally, these research questions were partly motivated by some of the early findings of the content analysis. Gaining an understanding of the type and kind of sources used in the broadsheet newspapers helped, ultimately, to generate ideas about the ways in which the interviews with a wider group of journalists could be conducted.

The relationship between these research questions and those applying to the content analysis and thematic analysis is meant to be a complementary one. The aim is not to have one set of results test the other, or one set of results confirm or deny the other results. The aim is to add to the understanding of sources, the themes in the reports, the work of foreign correspondents, particularly the work of Australian journalists in the South Pacific region, and to include different kinds of information concurrently. The research questions which resulted from these factors are as follows:

Q1. What kind of preparation did these journalists have to cover the coups?

In choosing to research the actions of a group of journalists, it was felt that an understanding of the background and experience of the individuals would assist in the overall assessment of their actions. Firstly, I was interested in their initial training as journalists, including what kinds of motivation led them to journalism as a career, as this can be an important indicator of their overall approach to their work (see Tunstall, 1973, and Tuchman, 1978). I was also interested in whether they had higher educational qualifications, language skills, or other training which might have helped them cover the coups.

As well as their broader journalism experience I was also particularly interested in their experience of covering events in other countries, especially when the event was a crisis of

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the number of foreign-based correspondents in favour of flying in journalists as needed. As such, the term foreign correspondent will be used here in a general sense, rather than with the more traditional understanding.

some kind. It was felt that this kind of experience would have served the individuals well in Fiji. The final area which this question alludes to is the way in which the journalists found out about the coups, the preparation they had, and their experiences of travelling into a country in crisis.

Q2. How did the journalists go about their work in Fiji? What were the working and living conditions like? What were the constraints which might have impacted on how they were able to do their job?
Obviously, any major news event will have situational factors which separate it from similar events. Even in this case, where the reporting of two different coups in the same country are being investigated, there are still major differences in how the events unfolded. There are also a range of other factors which might impact on the work of foreign journalists, from the kinds of technology at their disposal and the kind of support they had from colleagues and head office, to the accommodation and living conditions and the level of competition from other media. The aim of this question is to examine the situations the journalists found themselves in, and the nature of the factors which had an impact on their work. By covering the two different coups, it was hoped that a comparison of these factors would draw out some of the constraints the journalists operated under when trying to locate sources or other information.

Q3. How did the journalists go about accessing and utilising sources in Fiji?
This research question is specifically interested in the methods the journalists used to find and interview sources in Fiji. Sources are a vital component in any news story. In a crisis, especially a crisis in a foreign country, the ability to gain access to credible, reliable sources can be crucial to how an event is represented. In Fiji, who were the people the journalists got to talk to, how hard was it to find credible sources, and how reliable did they think the sources were?

The interview process

Neumann has defined the interview as being a short-term interaction between two people, most often strangers, with the purpose of one person obtaining information from the other in (Bowd, 2004, p116). If such a broad definition of an interview is accepted, it could be argued that the interview is more common and more utilised in modern times than at any other point in history. Everything from surveys, polls and questionnaires, to applications,

conversations in a classroom and the taking of an order in a cafe, to media examples including quiz shows, chat shows, and news and current affairs programs, could all fall under such a definition.

However it is the nature of the information being sought, and the way the information is collected, which is of most interest to researchers. Most interviews, and particularly those with a more qualitative grounding, can be described as "meaning-making partnerships" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p128). The interview is "co-created" by the parties involved (Griffee, 2005, p36). Respondents are able to tell their own story in their own words, and the researchers are able to understand a situation or event through the perspective of those who lived through it. An effective interview can give the subjects the authority to produce their own stories in the manner of other experts (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p128). As Kvale put it, the strength of the interview process is the ability to "capture the multitude of subject's views of a theme and to picture a manifold and controversial world" (Kvale, 1996, p7).

The obvious subjectivity of the interview process has been highlighted as one of the main criticisms of the interview as a research method. The involvement of a range of individuals as subjects can lead to particular problems: the subject may not be able to say what they think, they may not be able to express themselves clearly, they may not have the desired information, or they may not have an opinion on a particular issue (Griffee, 2005, p37). Additionally, it is almost guaranteed that the influence of individual personalities, the accuracy of memories, and the passing of time, will mean different subjects will recall the same event in different ways. One advantage that this research has, as far as these kinds of issues are concerned, is that the interviews focus on a particular event. According to Weiss, when questions focus on a defined incident or event, as opposed to someone's feelings or opinions, there is less likelihood that answers will be modified as a result of the context of the interview (Weiss, 1994, p150). Even so, from the researcher's perspective the concern is that the respondents' accounts may be uncritically accepted as having validity and authenticity (Melles, 2005, p21), because of the perceived worth of people's experiences.

Recognising and addressing such shortcomings is the responsibility of the interviewer. Despite the cooperation of the interviewer and the subject to produce the outcome, the answers from an interview only have meaning subject to how they are interpreted by the

researcher (Griffee, 2005, p36). Taking a pragmatic approach allows the interviewer to report responses with due consideration of both the meanings produced and the processes used to produce these meanings (Melles, 2005, p23). This requires an understanding of the social, political and cultural positions from which a subject may respond (Melles, 2005, p23). Indeed, the role of the interviewer has a major effect on the kinds of information generated. Kvale has suggested two different metaphors for the role of the interviewer in research — the interviewer as a miner or the interviewer as a traveller. In the miner metaphor, the interviewer digs for nuggets of information, which, although they may be buried, are just waiting to be uncovered (Kvale, 1996, p3). In the traveller metaphor, the interviewer goes on a journey, returning to tell tales of the conversations with, and stories of, the real people he or she has met along the way (Kvale, 1996, p4). These different metaphors represent different concepts of how knowledge may be generated from the interview process, as well as alluding to different methods of revealing that knowledge. In this research, both these metaphorical approaches are engaged throughout the interview process, with some specific, direct questions designed to reveal particular information, and some more general, open-ended questions designed to allow the subjects to relate their experiences and their responses to the situations they found themselves involved in.

Kvale's metaphors can also be aligned with what most texts, such as Jorgensen (1989), identify as the two main kinds of interview structure. In some cases, they are labelled as formal and informal, or they may also be called structured and unstructured, or standardised or unstandardised. Regardless of the label, these two categorisations stand at opposite ends of the spectrum.

A structured interview is typically a survey or questionnaire. It is highly standardised, with no deviations from the wording of the questions, the level of language, or the number of questions, and provides no clarification or answering of questions about the interview (Berg, 2004, p79). At the other end of the scale is an unstructured interview, which is more akin to a casual, free-flowing conversation, where the questioning is "unencumbered by extensive preconceptions of what and how the topics will be discussed" (Jorgensen, 1989, p88). There is no set order to any questions, the level of language may be adjusted, questions may be added or deleted between interviews, and the interviewer may make clarifications and answer questions about how and why the interview is taking place (Berg, 2004, p79).

It is fair to say that the formal interview is more often aligned with quantitative research and the informal interview is more often aligned with qualitative research. As such, the formal interview generally returns specific data, closely related to hypotheses which have been generated prior to the interview, with the questions governed much more by issues of standardisation and quantification (Mann, 1985, p119). Formal interviews may be administered by a team of researchers, such as in a major survey, where everything about the interview is prescribed by a schedule, in order to provide consistency. The informal interview tends to rely more on the abilities and skill of the interviewer. Interviewers must be adaptable, generating questions appropriate to each situation (Berg, 2004, p80), as it is mostly concerned with the attitudes and experiences of the person being interviewed (Bryman, 1988, p47). The material produced from a series of qualitative interviews often contains detailed descriptions, with multiple perspectives and interpretations (Weiss, 1994, p9).

Given that these two kinds of interviews have divergent approaches and outcomes, it is not surprising that some researchers have established a method of interviewing which more accommodatingly covers the middle ground, known as the semi-structured, semi-formal, or semi-standardised interview. The semi-structured interview relies on predetermined questions and topics, with the interviewer granted some flexibility to probe and digress where it is deemed appropriate (Berg, 2004, p81). As a result, the outcome can be a mixture of more structured answers, such as biographical data, and responses to more open-ended questions. This is the kind of interview which is most commonly associated with journalism. Trainee journalists are advised to never go into an interview “cold” — to always have some questions prepared — but to be willing to follow leads which may arise during the interview. In a study where journalists are being interviewed, this familiarity with the overall process is an advantage, as it is important for both the interviewer and the subject to be comfortable with the process (Weiss, 1994, p39-59.). Additionally, experienced journalists are also more attuned to the kinds of things which might be asked of an interview subject, and they appreciate how the outcome of an interview can hinge on the “performance” of the interview subject.

However there may also be disadvantages to utilising journalists as interview subjects. Bowd (2004) is one of the few media analysts to have considered the methodological factors which determine the appropriateness, or otherwise, of interviewing journalists to gather data

for academic research. One of these factors is the journalists' understanding of the ethics approval process.

One of the modern requirements of any kind of academic research involving interaction with human subjects is the approval of the research methods by an ethics committee. As part of my application to the University of Canberra Ethics Committee, I undertook to seek the consent of all the subjects prior to the actual interview taking place. This statement described the nature and intent of the research, how the interview data would be included in that research, and a statement acknowledging that my methods had been approved by the Ethics Committee. In most cases, the statement was presented verbally, and consent was given verbally.

In my application to the Ethics Committee, I had noted that I would be interested in the reaction of the journalists to this statement, given that they had spent much of their working lives conducting interviews on a daily basis with no mention of any such thing. As Bowd has noted, there is nothing in journalism comparable to the ethics approval process required for academic research (Bowd, 2004, p117). While there were some interesting reactions to the reading of this statement [5], none of the journalists had any problem about being

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[5] There were two main kinds of reaction. The first kind was mild bemusement. Some of the journalists seemed genuinely uncertain about why I would preface an interview with such a statement, with a number putting it down to the mysteries of academia. The second kind of reaction was real surprise. In these cases, the subjects questioned me about what the statement meant. In some instances, I had to reframe the statement into terms more easily understood by the journalists, using common industry phrases such as "on the record" and "off the record", so that they were comfortable about the interview proceeding in a manner they were familiar with. Ultimately, the main purpose of the ethics statement became a way of "breaking the ice" with the subjects. Often, the joking and banter they responded with set a convivial tone for the interview which followed. From a methodological viewpoint, this experience suggests that one of the considerations of researching the media is not only accounting for a general scepticism amongst journalists about the processes of academic research, but there also needs to be scope to frame such statements in ways which are easily understood and accepted by the subjects. For most of these journalists, the statement was unnecessary because they already understood and practiced "the rules" associated with the ethical aspects of the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, regardless of which role they played. Fortunately, none of the journalists were sufficiently perturbed by the statement to cancel the interview, but this may be a risk which needs to be considered by media researchers, and the ethics committee members who approve their research, particularly if it relates to interviews with journalists or other professional who regularly use interviews in their work, such as police or lawyers.

identified and having the statements they made to me attributed to themselves in a published form. In all the interviews, there was only one time when a journalist chose to go “off the record”. This was only for a matter of minutes and was only to protect the identity of a third person.

Another factor which Bowd suggests may be important in the interviewing of journalists for research is the location and timing of an interview. This was particularly an issue with this research, as most of the journalists interviewed were still employed in the media, and often in senior positions. One of my goals was to try and arrange the interviews for a time when the journalist was not facing a deadline, or out of the office all together. This was not always possible, or, at the very least, difficult to arrange, especially as it could have been regarded as more of an imposition on the journalist’s life. In some cases, the journalists themselves recognised the value of being in a stress-free, more relaxed environment. For example, Christopher Dore was night editor of *The Australian* at the time the interviews were being conducted. This meant the best time for interviewing him was in the middle of the day, when he had yet to leave for work, a time which he himself suggested.

Other issues of timing also made the arrangement of some interviews more problematic. Peter Cave is still working as a foreign correspondent, flying in and out of the country constantly. Contacting him initially and confirming an interview time took considerable negotiation on both his and my part. Bernard Lagan was about to release his biography of former Labor leader, Mark Latham, which meant his interview was delayed. Other journalists were dealing with a range of issues, from the personal to the professional, which made their commitment difficult to confirm.

These limitations and restraints on the interview process are a normal part of research. Any series of interviews will have variations in the way people respond, in the way they recall events, or in the way the interviewer conducts the questioning. The important thing is to accept these variations without letting them interfere in the overall process. It is also important to take charge of the factors which can be controlled, such as the interview schedule.

The interview schedule

As recommended by Berg, the development of the interview schedule should begin with the outlining of the broad categories, followed by the development of specific questions for each of the categories (Berg, 2004, p84). The broad categories I created, the number of questions, and the rationale for these kinds of questions, are as follows:

Personal information (4 questions): these questions were designed to set up the interview by asking some simple, easy-to-answer questions which provided basic information about the journalist.

Brief history of working life as a journalist (7 questions): the rationale for these questions was to try and gauge the kind of work the journalists had done, their basic training, the kinds of experiences they had had, and how this related to their ability to gain access to reliable sources during the coups.

Experience of Fiji prior to the coups (4 questions): having experience in a particular country can obviously influence the kind of access a journalist could have to sources. In-country experience allows journalists to develop contacts and meet people who can contribute to their stories, both in an official capacity and off-the-record.

Reporting on the coups — operational factors (16 questions): apart from the actual work, there are a range of situational factors which might impact on the newsmaking process. For example, a journalist who has the full financial and professional support of a major media organisation, who is well accommodated and well remunerated, who has the support of colleagues, and who has the best available technology is more than likely going to be able to focus on the work at hand than a freelance journalist who is doing everything for themselves. The aim of these questions was to reveal some of these operational factors which might have impacted on the work of the individuals involved.

Reporting on the coups — the journalistic work (10 questions): the aim of these questions was to reveal the way in which the journalists went about their work. Everything from the ways in which they filed their stories to the kind of contact and discussions they had with their head office was considered as a possible influence on the work of the

journalists. These questions also focussed on any constraints the journalists might have operated under, which may have limited their access to particular kinds of sources.

Reporting on the coups — the sources (11 questions): as well as more general questions, it was important to specifically address the main focus of the content analysis, the sources used in the stories. These questions asked the journalists to consider the kinds of people they were and were not able to talk to, and the kinds of decisions they had to take about sources, in order to do the best job they could.

With a maximum of 52 questions, I estimated that the interviews would take approximately 90 minutes. In some cases, where the journalist concerned had covered the coups in 1987 and 2000, I required the journalist to answer the questions relating to 1987 and then I asked the relevant questions again, in reference to 2000. I thought this approach was important as one of my goals was to compare the experiences of the two different coups. However, I was concerned that this may mean quite lengthy interviews. As it transpired, the second round of questions generally took a lot less time than the first.

After a number of interviews had been conducted, I reviewed the schedule in light of the responses I had received. Some minor adjustments were made to the order of the questions, and one new question was added. Perhaps the most significant adjustment came as a response to the reaction to some of the more predictable questions. The nature and tone of some responses suggested that the journalist seemed to think that these questions, which in particular related to their working conditions, were naive. The questions were ones which I probably could have predicted the answers to, based on my understanding of journalism and, in some cases, my knowledge of the way in which media organisations in Australia operated. Examples of such questions included: Were you paid any special allowances? Did your company cover all costs of reporting from Fiji?

I felt that I needed to ask the questions in order to obtain verifiable data. I also suspected that by asking these “naive” questions, I may have been affecting my credibility with the subjects. I was conscious that I needed to maintain a certain level of “expertise” with the subjects, most of whom had a vast professional experience of journalism. As Bowd suggests, journalists commonly hold a negative view of academics and academia (Bowd, 2004, p120), so it was important to find a solution which maintained my credibility and

rapport with the journalists, as well as providing the information required. According to Mann, this kind of situation is not unusual: "Research studies which may seem quite practical to university people may seem very far removed from reality to practitioners..." (Mann, 1985, p108). Consequently, I composed a brief statement which I prefaced the interview with. The statement was the last thing I said in the introductory phase of the interview. It said:

> *There are some questions which might come across as naive. While I think I could accurately predict the answers, I still need to ask you these questions as I need to be able to verify what is assumed to be common knowledge.*

The outcome was very positive. Participants were definitely more willing to answer the more predictable questions, and I got the sense that my credibility was no longer being tested. From a methodological viewpoint, it confirmed the need to be flexible throughout the course of a series of interviews, and to be confident about making adjustments when issues such as credibility were at stake. In particular, by taking an honest approach and including the participants in the solution, I was able to maintain the rapport I had with the interview subjects.

The interviews: selecting participants

In order to address the research questions which related to the interview process, the main criteria for selecting journalists to be interviewed was that they had covered the coups from Fiji. This was necessary as one of the focuses of the research was the work of correspondents in the South Pacific region. The journalists who worked in Fiji were likely to be subject to the many pressures and influences which can arise in a tense situation like a coup. The operational factors and the impact of being close to the events, as well as the likelihood that they would be able to get access to sources at the heart of the conflict, meant these journalists would be able to provide material which addressed the themes presented in the research questions.

My starting point for gathering names of journalists was the database I had compiled for the content analysis. The database showed that less than 50 per cent of the stories about the coups were written by journalists who reported from Fiji. Of these, around 20 per cent were unsuitable, as they were written by journalists whose identity could not be verified, or by

journalists from Fiji. Eventually, I was left with a list of 17 names. When I started to track the whereabouts of these journalists, the list was narrowed further. Five of the journalists had passed away: James Oram, Brian Woodley, Ross Dunn, John Moses and Peter Hastings. Ross Dunn died shortly after I began this research. Of the remainder, four declined to be interviewed for various reasons, including one who said he never spoke on the record about journalism. This left me with an initial group of eight journalists who had the exact qualities I was after: they had all reported from Fiji during the coups and they had considerable experience as journalists. Although an in-depth understanding is possible with small samples, particularly where generalisability is not a major feature of the research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p70), it was felt that a larger sample might more readily provide the kind of deeper description and experiential knowledge being sought.

In order to increase the sample size, it was necessary to include journalists who had worked for other print media and the quality broadcast media. The main considerations in selecting these journalists was to maintain the focus on the best quality media outlets and to ensure that the research questions would be addressed. While there were good reasons for using broadsheet newspapers as the basis for the content analysis, this did not preclude me from using broadcast journalists in the interview stage of the research. The two different methods — the content analysis and the interviews — are not supposed to support or confirm each other. They are meant to inform each other. The research questions related to the content analysis are, necessarily, different from the research questions related to the interviews. Each method reveals different kinds of knowledge. As such, the justification for approaches to one method need not hinder the justification for approaches to a complementary method. In any case, the data from the content analysis was not being revealed to the broadsheet newspaper journalists involved, so it was not necessary to limit the basis of the interviews with the broadcast journalists in any way. Additionally, the inclusion of broadcast journalists as interview participants would almost certainly reveal further information about particular aspects of the work of the journalists, such as the use of technology and the influence of deadlines.

There were two broadcast organisations which had dedicated significant time to the coverage of the coups — the ABC and Radio National. They provided another five willing subjects for interviews who again, were all experienced reporters and had all reported from Fiji. The names of the three remaining subjects were secured through conversations with

some of the journalists I had spoken to, and included one print journalist, from the *Australian Financial Review*, one television journalist, from Channel Nine, and a freelance journalist who had been based in Fiji.

In summary, the 16 journalists I eventually was able to interview represented the most reputable, reliable and influential media organisations in Australia. At the time of the coups, the organisations these journalists worked for included AAP, AFP, ABC Radio and Television, *The Canberra Times*, *The Australian*, *The Age*, Channel Nine, Radio Australia, The Macquarie Radio Network, *The Bulletin*, *The Australian Financial Review*, *Pacific* magazine, and the New Zealand newspapers *The NZ Times* and *The Dominion*. Ten of them were in Fiji in 1987 and 12 of them were there in 2000. There were nine Australians, four Kiwis and two Englishmen. Only one of the journalists was female.

Conducting the interviews

Three different methods were used to conduct the interviews: in person, by phone and by e-mail. While my preference would have been to conduct all the interviews in person, this was not physically possible, as the journalists were located in many diverse locations. Within Australia, the locations included Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. Outside Australia, they lived in New Zealand, the Solomon Islands and Hong Kong. It may have been possible for me to travel to Sydney and Melbourne to conduct face-to-face interviews. However, given that I was not going to be able to interview all the participants in person, I felt that for the sake of consistency of approach it might be more beneficial to conduct as many interviews as I could in the same manner. Also, given the deadline driven nature of their work, and the fact that they often needed to dedicate their whole day to a breaking news story, the likelihood that a scheduled interview would be interrupted, and thus my interstate trip wasted, was quite high. Finally, the fact that journalists are very familiar with interviews being conducted by phone underlined the legitimacy of my approach.

In arranging the telephone interviews, I followed Berg's basic guidelines on the process: establish the legitimacy of the interviewer, convince the subject of the worth of the research, and ensure the information is detailed enough to contribute to the study (Berg, 2004, p93). These issues were dealt with in a number of ways. First, I always tried to speak to the journalist on the phone prior to the interview, as a way of introducing myself in person.

Where possible, I then followed this up with an e-mail which provided a summary of my research and the nature of the questions I would be asking in the interview. I also made available, on request, copies of journal articles and conference papers which I had written. Finally, by relying on a well-planned schedule of questions, and by being willing to adapt this schedule if and when required, I was able to ensure I was collecting valuable data.

The two interviews I conducted in person were both with journalists in my home town of Canberra. My experience as a journalist meant that I was comfortable and confident enough with the manner of this process. I had significantly less experience with the third interview method, conducting interviews by e-mail. Examinations of the literature did not reveal any reference to the use of e-mail for interviewing in academic research. However, some limited reference has been made to the use of e-mail by journalists. According to Garcia, e-mail has become a vital tool for journalists to gather information, though the preference is to not use it for interviewing (Garcia, 2001, p18). The main disadvantage is that it is a “one-way conversation” and, like telephone interviews, it is not possible to pick up non-verbal cues. Conversely, Garcia suggests that there may be some advantages to using e-mail for interviews: it can often be the fastest and easiest way to contact someone, it is difficult to misquote someone from an e-mail, and people may be more forthcoming and express stronger opinions in writing than they would in person (Garcia, 2001, p19).

The three interviews conducted by e-mail were all with people who lived overseas: Hugh Riminton, who works in Hong Kong for CNN; Mary-Louise O’Callaghan, who lives in the Solomon Islands; and David Robie, now an academic in New Zealand. Riminton and Robie were particularly busy at the time I wanted to interview them, and O’Callaghan did not have a reliable phone service, and only occasional access to internet services. As such, we agreed to pursue the idea of e-mail interviews. The process was that I sent through the schedule of questions, the participants responded, and then e-mails were exchanged back and forth to confirm or clarify any answers. There was often a considerable amount of time — up to eight weeks — between when the questions were e-mailed and when the answers were sent back. Fortunately, the deadlines for the collection of this data were not too strict and the delay had no significant effect.

Generally, the quality of the information provided in this way was equivalent to the material gathered by other kinds of interviews. On reflection, I would make some recommendations

about e-mail interviewing. Firstly, it would be more effective if you could develop a relationship with the person beforehand. In my case, I had previously met and corresponded with David Robie, so I was more comfortable about conducting an e-mail interview with him. Secondly, where possible, it would be better to limit the number of questions in one e-mail. Subsequent e-mails could include additional questions, or questions in response to the initial answers. This approach would bring some of the flexibility possible in face-to-face or phone interviews. This approach would depend on the willingness of the participant. In the case of these participants, it suited them to have all the questions in one e-mail, given their other constraints. Thirdly, the return of answers in an e-mail interview is not instant, in the same way as face-to-face or telephone interviews. If the research is subject to tight deadlines, then e-mail interviews may not be the most efficient method, simply because the control over when the response is forthcoming is in the hands of the subject.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified and explained the methods used to gather the data. Three different methods were used – a content analysis, a thematic analysis and interviews. Specific descriptions of each of the methods employed, as well as the rationale for the use of these methods, has been included.

CHAPTER 4: IDENTIFYING THE SOURCES

In order to understand the nature of the relationship between Australia and Fiji, and the role of the media in this relationship, it is necessary to examine one of the fundamental components of the newsmaking process, the sources who describe and shape this relationship. This chapter provides the results of the data analysis, which examines the characteristics of the articles and in particular the characteristics of the sources who appear in the coup coverage. These findings are structured around the research questions, which focus on the kinds of organisations the sources represented, the kind of impact geographic location might have had on which sources were used, the comparison between the 1987 sources and the 2000 sources, and the variation in source use between the different newspapers.

Q1. What sources were used in the stories about the coups and what groups and institutions did these sources represent?

Sources in the government category were the most frequently utilised sources in these stories, as demonstrated in Table 1A. They accounted for 44.7 per cent of all sources. The government sources included members of national governments, including Prime Ministers, Opposition Leaders, and leading cabinet members and opposition members, including those responsible for foreign affairs, defence, immigration, finance and education. There were politicians from smaller political parties, such as the Australian Democrats, as well as a number of Australian state political leaders. This category also included diplomatic and government officials, including ambassadors, high commissioners, embassy officials and departmental leaders. Finally, there were representatives of major international and commonwealth organisations, such as the United Nations.

The majority of the government sources were identified as Australian (43.4%), with Indigenous Fijian (26.8%), Indian Fijian (9.0%) and New Zealand (7.6%) accounting for most of the remainder. In total, there were government sources from 16 different nations or ethnic groups, including 2.3 per cent where the nationality/ethnicity could not be identified from the information in the article. There was a heavy concentration in the top four groups, with sources from the other groups appearing infrequently. Twelve nations or ethnic groups accounted for just 13.2 per cent of the total, with all 12 countries or ethnic groups being

identified on less than 10 occasions and 5 being identified on only one occasion. Clearly, Australian government sources dominated, accounting for 19.4 per cent of all the sources quoted about the Fiji coups.

Of the other main categories, the military sources were the most frequently utilised in these stories, representing 11.1 per cent of all sources. One source, Sitiveni Rabuka, accounted for 52.3 per cent of all military sources. As a result, most of the military sources were identified as Indigenous Fijian (79.5%), with only four other groups — Australian (6.8%), New Zealand (4.5%), USA (3.4%) and Indian Fijian (1.1%) — identified. The remaining 4.5 per cent were unknown.

The next most frequently used kind of source were representatives of tourism or business organisations, who accounted for 6.8 per cent of all sources. From the tourism sector, these sources included individuals from major airlines, such as Qantas, Air New Zealand and Air Pacific, cruise companies such as P&O, tourism resort operators, and representatives from tourism industry organisations. From the business sector, there were representatives of major banking, finance and investment organisations, as well as small business operators. While Australians again dominated, with 38.9 per cent of tourism/business sources, in contrast to the government category it was the Indian Fijians who were the second-most frequently used sources in this category, with 38.9 per cent. Only three Indigenous Fijians (5.5%) were identified in this category.

When a crisis with such a public focus occurs, such as a coup, often the people used as sources by the media are the first ones a journalist comes across at or near the scene. To some extent, this may explain the presence of 41 sources (5.2%) identified as a person on the street. Reinforcing the proposition that people on the scene can often be used as sources is the evidence that of these 41 sources, 26 of them (63.4%) were in Fiji at the time they spoke to the journalist. The remaining 15 were in Australia, most being tourists returning from Fiji or people at demonstrations opposing the coups. The sources identified as a person on the street were distinct in another way — only one of them was quoted more than once. Thirty-four were quoted once and five were anonymous. Additionally, more of these sources were identified as Indian Fijian (36.6%), with 24.4 per cent of unknown nationality or ethnicity, 22 per cent Indigenous Fijian and only 12.2 per cent identified as Australian.

A type of source which is often quoted in news stories are the experts and academics. This was not the case in the reports examined here. Experts and academics only accounted for 5 per cent of the total number of sources — less than the number of sources identified as a person on the street. Of the experts and academics used as sources, 40 per cent were Indian Fijian and 32.5 per cent were Australian, although the majority (60%) were sourced in Australia.

In the same way that people on the street can easily be utilised as sources simply because they are close to the action, journalists and other media can also be a commonly used source, particularly during a crisis. In Fiji, the physical harassment of some journalists by the authorities in 1987, as well as the fact that in 2000 some journalists lived with the hostage takers inside the Parliamentary compound for days on end, no doubt increased this likelihood. Overall, journalists and other media accounted for 4.5 per cent of the sources. While 75 per cent of the journalists used as sources were in Fiji at the time they were quoted, few were local journalists: more than half (56%) were Australian and 8 per cent were English. Of the local journalists quoted, 17 per cent were Indian Fijian and 8 per cent were Indigenous Fijian.

In a situation like a coup, where the most fundamental legal document, the constitution, is threatened, it might be assumed that the media would rely on lawyers and judges as news sources. In the reporting of the Fiji coups, this was not the case — only 19 sources (2.4%) identified as being from the legal profession were used, with 68.4 per cent being located in Fiji at the time they were quoted. This was one of the few categories where Indigenous Fijian sources dominated — they represented 47.4 per cent of legal or judicial sources, with the remaining 10 sources being Indian Fijian (3 sources), unknown (2), other Fijian (2), New Zealand (1) and Australian (1).

It is also clear from Table 1A that a diverse range of non-elite sources — those not representing the major social institutions — were used as sources, from taxi-drivers and farmers to protestors and people from non-government organisations. Given that seven of these alternative source categories (person on the street, relative/friend, NGO/community organisation, protestor, sport organisation, farmer, taxi driver) only represent 14.7 per cent of the total does underline that they are still very much in the minority.

Table 1A: Category of all sources

Category	n	%
Government	355	44.7
Military/police	88	11.1
Tourism/business	54	6.8
George Speight/spokesperson	47	5.9
Person on the street	41	5.2
Expert/academic	40	5.0
Journalist/media	36	4.5
Union/political group	32	4.0
Relative/friend	30	3.8
Judiciary/legal	19	2.4
NGO or community organisation	16	2.0
Protestor	11	1.4
Sport	9	1.1
Other	7	0.9
Farmer	6	0.8
Taxi driver	3	0.4
Total	**794**	**100**

While Table 1A provides evidence of the categories of sources used and the institutions and organisations they represent, it was felt that it was also worthwhile to see who the individual sources actually are, and how often they appear. Table 1B lists the top 20 sources, their job title, and the number of times they were quoted. Of the 385 individual sources mentioned a total of 794 times in these stories, these 20 sources account for 305 attributed quotations, or 38.4 per cent of all appearances. Given the data presented in Table 1A, it is no surprise that government sources dominate this list. Only six of the 20 are not government ministers. Of those six, one of them, Don McKinnon, was the Commonwealth Secretary General, one was a union leader, one was an academic, one was a journalist, one was a coup leader and one was the wife of the Prime Minister. Arguably, all 20 of these sources, apart from George Speight, represent a major social institution. Speight could also be included if, as many people have argued, he was merely a representative of other strong forces in society. Ten of the sources are from Fiji and 10 are from outside Fiji.

Table 1B: Most frequently quoted sources

Name and title (1987/2000)	Number of times quoted
Sitiveni Rabuka, Coup leader/former Prime Minister	52
George Speight, Coup leader	38
Bob Hawke, Prime Minister	28
Alexander Downer, Foreign Minister	28
Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, Governor General	27
John Howard, Opposition Leader/PM	24
Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, former Prime Minister	17
Timoci Bavadra, Prime Minister	12
David Lange, NZ Prime Minister	10
Timoci Tuivaga, Chief Justice	8
Gareth Evans, Acting Foreign Minister	8
Neil Brown, Opposition Spokesman on Foreign Affairs	8
Dr Brij Lal, Academic	7
Sharan Burrow, ACTU President	6
Kim Beazley, Opposition Leader	6
Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary General	6
Pratap Chand, Fiji Education Minister	5
Adi Kuini Speed, wife of Timoci Bavadra	5
Red Harrison, BBC Journalist	5
Mahendra Chaudhry, Finance Minister/Prime Minister	5

Many studies have highlighted the gender imbalance in sources appearing in the news, with the media generally favouring males. As Table 1C demonstrates, this data supports these research findings, with females accounting for less than 10 per cent of all sources. Closer examination of this data reveals that of all female sources, Australian and Indigenous Fijian females were favoured (both 32.9%), and that more female sources were in Australia (50.7%) than in Fiji (34.2%). Indian Fijian females were particularly poorly represented, at only 12.3 per cent of all female sources, and only 1.1 per cent of all sources.

Table 1C: Gender of all sources

Gender	**n**	**%**
Male	707	88.9
Female	73	9.2
Unknown	15	1.9
Total	**795**	**100**

When female sources did appear, they were not afforded the same attention as their male counterparts. As Table 1D demonstrates, the percentage of female sources appearing on the front page (4.6%) was half the percentage of female sources overall (9.2%). Additionally, Table 1E shows that the categories female sources belonged to were significantly different to that of the male sources. Categories which represent major social institutions, such as Military/Police and Expert/Academic had no female sources included in the stories. Another category linked to a major social institution, Judiciary/Legal, had only one female source. Indeed, it was more likely for a female to be speaking as an alternative voice than as a representative of a major social institution. Obviously, this is a not just a reflection on the way females are used as sources in the news media. It is also a reflection of the lack of presence of females as leaders and spokespeople for dominant social institutions.

The higher incidence of females appearing in the relative/friend category may be a situational factor. Given that in both coups the Members of Parliament were held under arrest for different periods of time, and given that the Parliament was dominated by males, it is understandable that there were more females in this category.

Table 1D: Gender of front page sources

Gender	**n**	**%**
Male	226	93.8
Female	11	4.6
Unknown	4	1.6
Total	**241**	**100**

Table 1E: Category of female sources

Category	**n**	**%**
Government	21	28.8
Person on the street	13	17.8
Relative/friend	11	15.1
Union/political group	8	11.0
Tourism/business	7	9.6
Journalist/media	6	8.2
NGO or community organisation	2	2.7
Protestor	2	2.7
Sport	2	2.7
Judiciary/legal	1	1.4
Total	**73**	**100**

As well as gender, the nationality/ethnicity of sources also supports the hypothesis that the characteristics of the sources indicate support for dominant social institutions (Table 1F). From an international perspective, the dominance of sources from developed nations is clear, with Australia, New Zealand, America and England accounting for nearly 40 per cent of all sources on an event happening in a developing country. The lack of sources from other Pacific nations, which would surely have an interest in the affairs of Fiji, is also clear. Pacific sources from outside Fiji only account for 1.5 per cent of the total sources. From a domestic Fijian perspective, while Indian Fijians comprised slightly more than half the population in 1987, and slightly less than half in 2000, this was not reflected in the sources utilised, which favoured Indigenous Fijian sources.

Table 1F: Nationality/ethnicity of sources

Nationality/Ethnicity	**n**	**%**
Australian	253	32.2
Indigenous Fijian	236	29.8
Indian Fijian	125	15.8
Unknown	47	5.9
Other Fijian	45	5.7
New Zealander	38	4.8
American	12	1.5
Papua New Guinean	9	1.1
English	7	0.8
Indian	5	0.6
Brazilian	5	0.6
Ni Vanuatu	2	0.2
Solomon Islander	2	0.2
Malaysian	1	0.1
Japanese	1	0.1
Ghanian	1	0.1
German	1	0.1
French	1	0.1
Total	**794**	**99.7**

Table 1G shows wide variations in the categories of sources within the main nationality/ethnicity groups. The Australian sources were most strongly concentrated in one category, with government sources accounting for 60.9 per cent of all Australian sources. Other significant numbers of Australian sources were registered in three categories: tourism/business (8.3%), journalist/media (7.9%), and union/political group (7.5%). In each of these three categories, Australians were the highest nationality/ethnicity group represented.

The Indigenous Fijian sources were more diverse than the Australian sources, although they were still dominated by the main social institutions, including government (40.3%) and military/police (29.7%). The next most common Indigenous Fijian source was

relative/friend (5.5%). Indigenous Fijian sources registered a significantly higher percentage than the other nationality/ethnicity groups in the military/police category. This is no doubt due to the over-representation of Indigenous Fijians in the Fijian military. The other categories where Indigenous Fijians recorded the highest percentage compared to the other two main nationality/ethnicity groups were judiciary/legal and protestor. In the judiciary/legal category, which had a relatively small number of sources, one person, the Chief Justice, accounted for 8 counts of the 19 sources.

The Indian Fijian sources were more evenly distributed across a range of a categories. While government sources were still the most common at 25.6 per cent of all Indian Fijian sources, compared to Australian and Indigenous Fijian government sources they were much less dominant. This could be attributed to the fact that in both coups, many Indian Fijian government politicians were being held in detention, with no access to the press. However the remaining sources are also spread more evenly across the categories. There were seven categories where Indian Fijian sources registered the highest percentage of the three main nationality/ethnicity groups: tourism/business, person on the street, expert/academic, relative/friend, NGO or community organisation, farmer, and taxi driver. This apparent dominance is balanced by the relatively low counts overall in most of these categories.

Table 1G: Category of sources from main nationality/ethnicity groups

Category	Australian		Indigenous Fijian		Indian Fijian	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Government	154	60.9	95	40.3	32	25.6
Military/Police	6	2.4	70	29.7	1	0.8
Tourism/business	21	8.3	3	1.3	15	12
George Speight/spokesperson	0	0	9	3.8	0	0
Person on the street	5	2.0	9	3.8	15	12
Expert/academic	13	5.1	5	2.1	16	12.8
Journalist/media	20	7.9	3	1.3	6	4.8
Union/political group	19	7.5	6	2.6	6	4.8
Relative/friend	4	1.6	13	5.5	9	7.2
Judiciary/legal	1	0.4	9	3.8	3	2.4
NGO or community organisation	4	1.6	2	0.8	8	6.4
Protestor	0	0	7	3.0	3	2.4
Sport	4	1.6	3	1.3	2	1.6
Other	2	0.8	1	0.4	2	1.6
Farmer	0	0	0	0	5	4.0
Taxi driver	0	0	1	0.4	2	1.6
Total	**253**	**100.1**	**236**	**100.1**	**125**	**100**

Q2. What kind of impact does geographic location, of both the sources and the journalists, have on the kinds of sources utilised in these stories?

The geographic location of the sources is dominated by Fiji and Australia, which account for nearly 90% of all locations (Table 2A), with 52.3 per cent located in Fiji and 37 per cent located in Australia. While the remaining location totals are, overall, quite insignificant, the pattern reinforces the dominance of post-colonial and world powers. Apart from PNG, the only source locations of any significance were New Zealand, USA and England. Sources from within the Pacific region, excluding the main post-colonial powers, only accounted for 1.8% of all sources.

There is a wide range of locations, with 19 different countries represented, however many appear infrequently. Thirteen countries appear four times or less, and account for only 2.5 per cent of the total. The more unexpected locations warrant explanation. Some countries appear because Australian politicians were visiting these countries when they made their comments about Fiji. In 2000, Prime Minister, John Howard, was visiting Korea and Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, was in Vietnam and Cambodia. In 1987, Foreign Minister Bill Hayden was visiting the Czech Republic. The inclusion of Greece was due to comments made by an official from the Olympics, as the Olympic torch relay was due to pass through Fiji soon after the 2000 coup. The presence of Brazil was also due to the Olympics, as the sources were attending an Olympic committee meeting there.

Table 2A: Location of sources

Location	**n**	**%**
Fiji	415	52.3
Australia	294	37.0
New Zealand	26	3.3
USA	13	1.6
PNG	12	1.5
England	11	1.4
Vietnam	4	0.5
Korea	4	0.5
Vanuatu	2	0.2
Greece	2	0.2
Cambodia	2	0.2
Brazil	2	0.2
Solomon Islands	1	0.1
Malaysia	1	0.1
Japan	1	0.1
India	1	0.1
Egypt	1	0.1
East Timor	1	0.1
Czech Republic	1	0.1
Total	**794**	**99.6**

The location of the journalists is also dominated by Australia and Fiji (Table 2B). However, in contrast to the location of the sources, the location of the journalists shows that more stories about the coups were written from Australia (49.8%) than from Fiji (41%). The only other journalist locations of any significance were, again, in dominant regional and global countries, including New Zealand, the USA, and England.

Table 2B: Location of Journalists

Location	**n**	**%**
Australia	210	49.8
Fiji	173	41
New Zealand	18	4.3
England	5	1.2
USA	5	1.2
Unknown	3	0.7
Greece	2	0.5
South Korea	1	0.2
PNG	1	0.2
Japan	1	0.2
India	1	0.2
Egypt	1	0.2
Brazil	1	0.2
Total	**422***	**99.9**

*Some stories were partly written in two locations. Each location was counted once, which accounts for the discrepancy in the total number of articles, compared to the other tables.

Stories written in Australia utilised sources from a wider range of locations than the stories written in Fiji, as demonstrated in Table 2C. Specifically, 18.5 per cent of the stories written in Australia utilised sources in Fiji, with 8.5 per cent of the sources located in countries other than Australia or Fiji. In comparison, only 10.4 per cent of the stories written in Fiji relied on sources in Australia, with 3.5 per cent of sources from countries other than Australia or Fiji. The concentration of Fijian-based sources in those stories written in Fiji is further reinforced by the finding that they represented 43.8 per cent of all sources, compared to the Australian sources in Australia, which represented only 30.4 per cent of all sources.

This may suggest that having some distance from an event, away from all the intensity of an incident such as a coup, might allow journalists to access a wider range of sources. However, this result needs to be considered in light of the other data relating to the kinds of sources being accessed, not just their location.

Table 2C: Location of sources: stories written in Fiji compared with stories written in Australia

	Stories written in Fiji (a)			Stories written in Australia (b)		
Source location	**n**	**% of (a)**	**% of all sources**	**n**	**% of (b)**	**% of all sources**
Fiji	348	86.1	43.8	61	18.5	7.7
Australia	42	10.4	5.3	241	73	30.4
USA	2	0.5	0.3	7	2.1	0.9
New Zealand	3	0.7	0.4	6	1.8	0.8
England	1	0.2	0.1	5	1.5	0.6
PNG	4	1	0.5	3	0.9	0.4
Vietnam	1	0.2	0.1	2	0.6	0.3
Korea	1	0.2	0.1	2	0.6	0.3
Solomon Islands	0	0	0	1	0.3	0.1
India	0	0	0	1	0.3	0.1
Czech Republic	0	0	0	1	0.3	0.1
Cambodia	1	0.2	0.1	0	0	0
Vanuatu	1	0.2	0.1	0	0	0
Total	**404**	**99.7**	**50.8**	**330**	**99.9**	**41.7**

In contrast to the data in Table 2C, it is clear that the sources in stories written in Fiji were from a wider range of categories than those in the stories written in Australia, as demonstrated in Table 2D. The comparison between the individual categories, especially the categories which represent the main social institutions, help to illustrate this point. For example, almost half the sources in Australia (49.7%) are government sources, whereas only just over one third (36.7%) of sources in Fiji are from the government.

The difference between Fiji and Australia in some categories could simply be put down to the issue of access. For example, the sources in Fiji are 9% more likely to belong to the George Speight/spokesperson category. Obviously gaining access to Speight from Australia was either too difficult, or not necessary, as the reporters on location could perform this task. Similarly, access to sources from a number of other categories, including relative/friend, journalist/media and judiciary/legal, appears to have been easier for the journalists in Fiji. Conversely, the higher incidence of use of tourism/business and expert/academic sources in stories filed in Australia could also be a result of how easy they were for journalists in Australia to access.

However, the relationship between location and ease of access to sources does not necessarily explain the disparity in the military/police category. Given that there was a military involvement in both coups, the higher incidence of military/police sources in Fiji (15.1%) compared to Australia (6.4%) is perhaps understandable. Yet the existing research shows that military and police sources, especially in a time of crisis, are often amongst the most frequently used kinds of sources. It would be expected that the journalists in Australia would have easy and frequent access to them, and therefore that military and police sources from Australia would feature more prominently than they do.

Table 2D: Category of sources: stories written in Fiji compared with stories written in Australia

	Stories written in Fiji (a)			Stories written in Australia (b)		
Category	**n**	**% of (a)**	**% of all sources**	**n**	**% of (b)**	**% of all sources**
Government	146	36.7	18.4	156	49.7	19.6
Military/Police	60	15.1	7.6	20	6.4	2.5
Speight/spokesperson	41	10.3	5.2	3	1	0.4
Person on the street	25	6.3	3.1	17	5.4	2.1
Journalist/media	24	6	3	11	3.5	1.4
Tourism/business	21	5.3	2.6	32	10.2	4
Relative/friend	19	4.8	2.4	10	3.2	1.3
Expert/academic	15	3.8	1.9	22	7	2.8
Judiciary/legal	12	3	1.5	6	1.9	0.8
Union/political group	11	2.8	1.4	19	6	2.4
NGO/community org.	6	1.5	0.8	7	2.2	0.9
Protestor	5	1.3	0.6	5	1.6	0.6
Other	5	1.3	0.6	2	0.6	0.3
Farmer	5	1.3	0.6	0	0	0
Taxi driver	3	0.8	0.4	0	0	0
Sport	0	0	0	4	1.2	0.5
Total	**398**	**100.3**		**314**	**99.9**	

When the sources were not located in Fiji or Australia, they were much more likely to be government sources. The percentage of government sources from countries outside Fiji and Australia (77.6%) was 33 percentage points higher than the overall percentage of government sources (Table 2E). This evidence is in line with the existing research which suggests that the greater the geographical distance between an event and a source commenting on that event, the more likely it is that the source will be representing a major social institution.

Table 2E: Category of sources — sources located outside Fiji and Australia

Category	**n**	**%**	**% of all sources in this category**
Government	66	77.6	44.7
Military/Police	6	7.1	11.1
Sport	4	4.7	1.1
Tourism/business	3	3.5	6.8
NGO or Community organisation	2	2.4	2.0
Union/political group	1	1.2	4.0
Protestor	1	1.2	1.4
Journalist/media	1	1.2	4.5
Expert/academic	1	1.2	5.0
Total	**85**	**100.1**	

The nationality/ethnicity of the sources in stories written in Fiji and Australia quite predictably favour the respective countries (Table 2F). This is particularly the case with the stories written in Fiji. If all Fijian sources are grouped together, irrespective of ethnicity, then the concentration of Fijian sources in Fiji (83.9%) is more than 30 percentage points greater than the concentration of Australian sources in Australia (53.6%).

When represented as a percentage of all sources, comparisons of the two dominant nationality/ethnicity categories — Indigenous Fijian and Australian — reveal some similarities. The percentage of Australian sources in stories written in Fiji (7.9%) was almost exactly the same as the percentage of Indigenous Fijian sources in stories written in Australia (7.8%). The percentage of Australian sources in stories written in Australia (22.3%) was very similar to the percentage of Indigenous Fijian sources in the stories written in Fiji (21.2%). The major variations came in the comparisons of other Fijian ethnic groups. In the stories written in Fiji, 9.1 per cent of the sources were Indian Fijian sources, and 4.5 per cent were Other Fijian sources. In the stories written in Australia, only 5.9 per cent of the sources were Indian Fijian, and only 1.3 per cent were Other Fijian sources.

Table 2F: Nationality/ethnicity of sources — stories written in Fiji compared to stories written in Australia

	Stories written in Fiji (a)			**Stories written in Australia (b)**		
Nationality/Ethnicity	**n**	**% of (a)**	**% of all sources**	**n**	**% of (b)**	**% of all sources**
Australian	63	15.6	7.9	177	53.6	22.3
Indigenous Fijian	168	41.6	21.2	62	18.8	7.8
Indian Fijian	72	17.8	9.1	47	14.2	5.9
Unknown	31	7.7	3.9	12	3.6	1.5
Other Fijian	36	8.9	4.5	10	3	1.3
New Zealander	14	3.5	1.8	8	2.4	1
English	5	1.2	0.6	4	1.2	0.5
Brazilian	5	1.2	0.6	0	0	0
PNG	4	1	0.5	2	0.6	0.3
American	2	0.5	0.3	6	1.8	0.8
French	1	0.2	0.1	0	0	0
Ni Vanuatu	1	0.2	0.1	0	0	0
Indian	1	0.2	0.1	1	0.3	0.1
Ghanain	1	0.2	0.1	0	0	0
Solomon Islander	0	0	0	1	0.3	0.1
Total	**404**	**99.8**	**50.8**	**330**	**99.8**	**41.6**

The analysis of the gender of sources in the main locations shows that females appeared more often in stories written in Australia and than they did in stories written in Fiji (Table 2G). This reflects the kind of institutions at the centre of the conflict in Fiji, particularly the government and military, and the dominance of males within these organisations.

Table 2G: Gender of sources — stories written in Fiji compared to stories written in Australia

	Stories written in Fiji (a)		Stories written in Australia (b)		All stories	
Gender	**n**	**% of a**	**n**	**% of (b)**	**n**	**%**
Male	368	91.1	289	87.3	707	88.9
Female	28	6.9	36	10.9	73	9.2
Unknown	8	2	6	1.8	15	1.9
Total	**404**	**100**	**331**	**100**	**795**	**100**

Sources located in Fiji were more likely to be quoted in front page stories (Table 2H). The percentage of sources in Fiji who appeared in front page stories (63.5%) was more than 10 percentage points higher than the percentage of sources in Fiji overall (52.3%). Conversely, the percentage of sources in Australia who appeared in front page stories (30.7%) was six percentage points lower than the sources in Australia overall (37%). These results suggest that sources closer to the action are regarded as more significant and deserve greater prominence.

Reinforcing this argument is the additional evidence that shows that even though more stories were written in Australia, it was more likely that a story written in Fiji would appear on the front page (Table 2I). The percentage of journalists in Fiji who wrote front page stories (57.1%) was 16 percentage points higher than the overall percentage of journalists who wrote stories in Fiji (41%). Conversely, the percentage of journalists in Australia who wrote front page stories (39%) was 10 percentage points lower than the overall percentage of journalists who wrote stories in Australia (49.8%).

Table 2H: Location of sources in front page stories

Location	**N**	**% of all sources on the front page**	**% of all sources in this location**
Fiji	153	63.5	52.3
Australia	74	30.7	37
USA	4	1.7	1.6
New Zealand	3	1.2	3.3
Vietnam	2	0.8	0.5
Korea	2	0.8	0.5
PNG	1	0.4	1.5
England	1	0.4	1.4
Cambodia	1	0.4	0.2
Total	**241**	**99.9**	

Table 2I: Location of journalists who wrote front page stories

Location	**n**	**% of all front page stories**	**% of all journalists in this location**
Fiji	44	57.1	41
Australia	30	39	49.8
New Zealand	2	2.6	4.3
Unknown	1	1.3	0.7
Total	**77**	**100**	

There were significantly more anonymous sources in the stories written in Fiji than in the stories written in Australia. Of the 93 anonymous sources recorded, 64.5 per cent were located in Fiji and 24.7 per cent were located in Australia. The greater majority of the stories utilising anonymous sources were written in the same location as the source: 54 of the 60 anonymous sources in Fiji (90%) appeared in stories written in Fiji, and 19 of the 23 anonymous sources in Australia (82.6%) appeared in stories written in Australia. This demonstrates a greater willingness of journalists to rely on anonymous sources when they are in the same location as the source.

Table 2J: Anonymous sources — location of source and journalist

Location	n	% of anonymous sources	n of stories written in same location	% of stories written in same location
Fiji	60	64.5	54	90
Australia	23	24.7	19	82.6
USA	3	3.2	3	100
England	3	3.2	3	100
PNG	1	1.1	0	0
Japan	1	1.1	1	100
India	1	1.1	0	0
East Timor	1	1.1	0	0
Total	**93**	**100**		

Q3: In comparing the coverage in 1987 to that of 2000, were there any significant differences in the kinds of sources utilised?

The use of government sources was lower in 2000 than it was in 1987 (Table 3A). In 1987 government sources represented 47.7 per cent of all sources, but by 2000 that number had dropped six percentage points to 41.6 per cent. There was also a reduction in the number of military and police sources used in 2000, compared to 1987. In 1987 military and police sources accounted for 15.4 per cent of all sources. In 2000, that percentage had dropped by 8 percentage points to 6.5 per cent. This variation was no doubt an outcome of the presence of George Speight, a civilian leading a coup carried out by a group of rogue soldiers. If Speight was counted as military, there would have been a 3.3 per cent increase in military and police sources.

There were notable variations in two other categories. The use of journalists and media as sources decreased by nearly 4 percentage points, from 6.4 per cent in 1987 to 2.6 per cent in 2000. The use of sources from unions or political groups increased by nearly 3 percentage points, from 2.7 per cent in 1987 to 5.5 per cent in 2000. Apart from these deviations, the 12 other categories registered variations of less than 2 percentage points, with 6 registering increases in 2000 and 6 registering reductions in 2000, compared to 1987.

Table 3A: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — category of sources

	1987		**2000**	
Category	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Government	195	47.7	160	41.6
Military/Police	63	15.4	25	6.5
George Speight/spokesperson	0	0	47	12.2
Person on the street	22	5.4	19	4.9
Journalist/media	26	6.4	10	2.6
Tourism/business	26	6.4	28	7.3
Relative/friend	14	3.4	16	4.2
Expert/academic	21	5.1	19	4.9
Judiciary/legal	10	2.4	9	2.3
Union/political group	11	2.7	21	5.5
NGO or community organisation	6	1.5	10	2.6
Protestor	5	1.2	6	1.6
Other	6	1.5	1	0.3
Farmer	1	0.2	5	1.3
Taxi driver	2	0.5	1	0.3
Sport	1	0.2	8	2.1
Total	**409**	**100**	**385**	**100.2**

The greatest variations in the nationality or ethnicity of the sources between 1987 and 2000 occurred within the Fijian ethnic groups (Table 3B). The number of Indigenous Fijian sources fell by 9 percentage points, from 34 per cent in 1987 to 25 per cent in 2000. Conversely, the number of Other Fijian sources rose by 10 percentage points, from 1 per cent in 1987 to 11 per cent in 2000. Most of this variation could be attributed to George Speight, who has been classified here as Other Fijian because of his mixed heritage. There was an increase of 7 percentage points in the number of Indian Fijian sources, from 12 per cent in 1987 to 19 per cent in 2000.

There were only four other variations of statistical or absolute significance. There was a 3 percentage point decrease in the number of Australian sources between 1987 and 2000.The

number of sources from PNG went from 9 in 1987 to zero in 2000. The number of sources from England went from 6 in 1987 to 1 in 2000. Finally, the number of Brazilian sources went from zero in 1987 to 5 in 2000. In total, there were exactly the same number (14) of nationality or ethnicity categories represented amongst the sources in 1987 as there was in 2000. Four that appeared in 1987 (Papua New Guinean, Ni Vanuatu, Japanese and French), did not reappear in 2000, being replaced with four new categories (Brazilian, Malaysian, Ghanaian and German).

Table 3B: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — nationality or ethnicity of sources

	1987		**2000**	
Nationality/Ethnicity	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Australian	138	34	118	31
Indigenous Fijian	139	34	97	25
Indian Fijian	51	12	74	19
Unknown	26	6	21	5
Other Fijian	3	1	42	11
New Zealander	20	5	18	5
American	8	2	4	1
Papua New Guinean	9	2	0	0
English	6	1.5	1	0.5
Indian	4	1	1	0.5
Brazilian	0	0	5	1
Ni Vanuatu	2	0.5	0	0
Solomon Islander	1	0.5	1	0.5
Malaysian	0	0	1	0.5
Japanese	1	0.5	0	0
Ghanaian	0	0	1	0.5
German	0	0	1	0.5
French	1	0.5	0	0
Total	**409**	**100.5**	**385**	**101**

While they were still very much in the minority, there was almost double the number of female sources used in 2000 than in 1987 (Table 3C). In 1987, 25 sources, or 6 per cent,

were female. In 2000, 48 sources, or 12.6 per cent, were female. There was also a decrease in the number of sources of unknown gender, from 2.9 per cent in 1987 to 0.8 per cent in 2000. There was a slight increase in the number of female sources used on the front page, from 3.7 per cent in 1987 to 5.7 per cent in 2000 (Table 3D).

The greatest variation in the category of female sources was in the relative or friend group, which dropped by 25 percentage points, from 32 per cent in 1987 to 6.3 per cent in 2000 (Table 3E). There were significant increases in the use of female sources from the government category, from 20 per cent of all female sources in 1987 to 33.3 per cent in 2000, and in female journalist or media sources, from 4 per cent of all female sources in 1987 to 10.4 per cent in 2000.

Table 3C: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — gender of sources

	1987		**2000**	
Gender	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Male	378	91.1	329	86.6
Female	25	6	48	12.6
Unknown	12	2.9	3	0.8
Total	**415**	**100**	**380**	**100**

Table 3D: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — gender of front page sources

	1987		**2000**	
Gender	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Male	128	94.1	98	93.3
Female	5	3.7	6	5.7
Unknown	3	2.2	1	1
Total	**136**	**100**	**105**	**100**

Table 3E: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — category of female sources

	1987		**2000**	
Category	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Government	5	20	16	33.3
Person on the street	4	16	9	18.8
Relative/friend	8	32	3	6.3
Union/political group	3	12	5	10.4
Tourism/business	3	12	4	8.3
Journalist/media	1	4	5	10.4
NGO or community organisation	1	4	1	2.1
Protestor	0	0	2	4.2
Sport	0	0	2	4.2
Judiciary/legal	0	0	1	2.1
Total	**25**	**100**	**48**	**100.1**

The number of sources located in Fiji fell in 2000 compared to 1987, and the number of sources in Australia increased (Table 3F). The sources in Fiji in 1987 represented 54.3 per cent of the total, and in 2000 they only accounted for 50.1 per cent of sources. The sources located in Australia increased from 34.2 per cent in 1987 to 40 per cent in 2000. The was also an increase in the number of source locations, from 10 in 1987 to 14 in 2000. Five source locations from 1987 (PNG, Vanuatu, Japan, Egypt and the Czech Republic) were not registered in 2000. Nine new source locations occurred in 2000 (Vietnam, Korea, Greece, Cambodia, Brazil, Solomon Islands, Malaysia, India and East Timor).

Table 3F: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — location of sources

	1987		2000	
Location	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Fiji	222	54.3	193	50.1
Australia	140	34.2	154	40
New Zealand	14	3.4	12	3.1
USA	8	2	5	1.3
PNG	12	2.9	0	0
England	8	2	3	0.8
Vietnam	0	0	4	1
Korea	0	0	4	1
Vanuatu	2	0.5	0	0
Greece	0	0	2	0.5
Cambodia	0	0	2	0.5
Brazil	0	0	2	0.5
Solomon Islands	0	0	1	0.3
Malaysia	0	0	1	0.3
Japan	1	0.2	0	0
India	0	0	1	0.3
Egypt	1	0.2	0	0
East Timor	0	0	1	0.3
Czech Republic	1	0.2	0	0
Total	**409**	**99.9**	**385**	**99.9**

From 1987 to 2000, there was a slight increase, less than 4 percentage points, in the number of journalists located in Australia (Table 3G). All the other variations were less than 2.5 percentage points, with only 4 of 12 categories recording increases. There was also a slight increase in the percentage of journalists located in the two main countries, Australia and Fiji, from 88.4 per cent in 1987 to 93.4 per cent in Fiji. There was a reduction in the number of countries where journalists were located, from 10 in 1987 to 8 in 2000. There were five countries (USA, PNG, Japan, India and Egypt) recorded in 1987 which were not recorded in 2000.

Table 3G: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — location of journalists

	1987		2000	
Location	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Australia	107	48	102	51.8
Fiji	90	40.4	82	41.6
New Zealand	11	4.9	7	3.6
England	4	1.8	1	0.5
USA	5	2.2	0	0
Unknown	2	0.9	1	0.5
Greece	0	0	2	1
South Korea	0	0	1	0.5
PNG	1	0.4	0	0
Japan	1	0.4	0	0
India	1	0.4	0	0
Egypt	1	0.4	0	0
Brazil	0	0	1	0.5
Total	**223**	**99.8**	**197**	**100**

The percentage of female journalists who wrote stories about the coup in 2000 was more than double that of 1987. In 1987, 9 per cent of all journalists were female. In 2000, this jumped by 11 percentage points to 20 per cent of all journalists.

Table 3H: Comparing 1987 and 2000 — gender of journalists

	1987		2000	
Gender	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Male	139	61	116	57
Unknown	69	30	46	23
Female	21	9	40	20
Total	**229**	**99**	**202**	**100**

Q4. Were there any significant differences in the kinds of sources used in the three different newspapers?

The numbers of articles each of the newspapers published about the coups is related to the way in which the particular organisations were able to respond to the events in Fiji (Table 4A). *The Sydney Morning Herald* published a total of 174 stories on the coups, which was 41 per cent of all stories in these three newspapers. *The Australian* published 153 stories in total, which was 37 per cent of the stories studied here. Given the more limited resources of *The Canberra Times*, it is not surprising that the least number of articles (92) were published in this paper. Although they only published 22% of all articles, for a comparatively small news organisation they were still able to publish an average of 6 stories per day for the first seven days in 1987, and 7.1 stories per day for the first seven days in 2000. *The Australian* published 9.7 stories per day in 1987 and 12.1 stories per day in 2000. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, led the way in 1987, with 16 stories per day in 1987. In 2000, it dropped back by almost half, publishing 8.9 stories per day.

Table 4A also reveals that while *The Australian* and *The Canberra Times* increased the number of stories they published, the number of articles published by *The Sydney Morning Herald* fell quite dramatically, from a total of 112 stories, or 50.5 per cent of all stories, in 1987, to 62 stories, or a total of 31.5 per cent of all stories, in 2000. The size of this variation contributed to the overall reduction in the total number of stories between 1987 and 2000, from 222 to 197, a decrease of 6 percentage points.

Table 4A: Comparing newspapers — number of articles

	1987		**2000**		**Total**	
Newspaper	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
The Australian	68	30.6	85	43.1	153	37
Sydney Morning Herald	112	50.5	62	31.5	174	41
Canberra Times	42	18.9	50	25.4	92	22
Total	**222**	**100**	**197**	**100**	**419**	**100**

The Sydney Morning Herald and *The Australian* returned very similar results as far as the category of sources they utilised in reporting the Fiji coups (Table 4B). In the leading categories of government and military/police, there was less than 1 per cent difference

between them: in *The Australian* 41.5 per cent of the sources were government and 11.3 per cent were military/police, and in *The Sydney Morning Herald* 40.6 per cent were government and 12.4 per cent were military/police. The source category which showed the greatest difference between the two newspapers was tourism/business, with *The Sydney Morning Herald* recording 10.4 per cent, compared to *The Australian's* 4.9 per cent.

The sources used by *The Canberra Times* were more concentrated in one area, with the government category recording 56.3 per cent. The impact of this over-representation in a single category was that no other category represented more than 10% of sources. There were only two categories where *The Canberra Times* registered higher percentages than both of the other newspapers — person on the street and NGO or community organisation. In both these categories the number of sources was less than the competing newspapers.

Table 4B: Comparing newspapers — category of sources

	Australian		**SMH**		**Canb. Times**	
Category	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Government	110	41.5	141	40.6	99	56.3
Military/Police	30	11.3	43	12.4	15	8.5
George Speight/spokesperson	21	7.9	15	4.3	11	6.3
Person on the street	14	5.3	16	4.6	11	6.3
Journalist/media	15	5.7	17	4.9	4	2.3
Tourism/business	13	4.9	36	10.4	5	2.8
Relative/friend	15	5.7	11	3.2	4	2.3
Expert/academic	18	6.8	10	2.9	11	6.3
Judiciary/legal	8	3	9	2.6	2	1.1
Union/political group	9	3.4	19	5.5	4	2.3
NGO or community organisation	5	1.9	7	2	4	2.3
Protestor	0	0	8	2.3	3	1.7
Other	0	0	7	2	0	0
Farmer	1	0.4	4	1.2	1	0.6
Taxi driver	0	0	3	0.9	0	0
Sport	6	2.3	1	0.3	2	1.1
Total	265	100.1	347	100.1	176	100.2

There was very little variation amongst the three newspapers as far as the location of the sources was concerned — an average of 3 percentage points difference between the highest and lowest percentage across the 19 categories (Table 4C). The slightly lower percentage of sources in Fiji for *The Canberra Times,* and the slightly higher percentage of sources in Australia for the same newspaper, are perhaps the most noteworthy points. *The Canberra Times* also recorded the fewest number of locations, 10, compared to 11 for *The Australian* and 15 for *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Table 4C: Comparing newspapers — location of sources

	Australian		**SMH**		**Canb. Times**	
Location	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Fiji	142	53.6	185	53.3	85	48.3
Australia	100	37.7	122	35.2	69	39.2
New Zealand	8	3	10	2.9	8	4.5
USA	6	2.3	7	2	0	0
PNG	0	0	7	2	5	2.8
England	2	0.8	7	2	2	1.1
Vietnam	1	0.4	0	0	3	1.7
Korea	1	0.4	2	0.6	1	0.6
Vanuatu	1	0.4	1	0.3	0	0
Greece	0	0	1	0.3	1	0.6
Cambodia	0	0	1	0.3	1	0.6
Brazil	2	0.8	0	0	0	0
Solomon Islands	1	0.4	0	0	0	0
Malaysia	0	0	1	0.3	0	0
Japan	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
India	0	0	1	0.3	0	0
Egypt	0	0	1	0.3	0	0
East Timor	0	0	1	0.3	0	0
Czech Republic	1	0.4	0	0	0	0
Total	**265**	**100.2**	**347**	**100.1**	**176**	**100**

There was also little variation between the newspapers in regards to the nationality/ethnicity of the sources they used (Table 4D). The average difference between the highest and lowest percentage over the 18 different categories was 1.8 percentage points. In the top six categories, the average difference between the highest and lowest percentage was 3.6 percentage points. *The Canberra Times* used the lowest percentage of Indian Fijian sources (13.6%) and the highest percentage of Australian sources (34.1%), while *The Sydney Morning Herald* used the lowest percentage of Indigenous Fijian sources (28.2%) and the highest percentage of sources of unknown nationality/ethnicity (7.5%). *The Australian* used the highest percentage of Indian Fijian sources (17.7%).

Table 4D: Comparing newspapers — nationality/ethnicity of sources

	Australian		**SMH**		**Canb. Times**	
Nationality/Ethnicity	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Australian	81	30.6	109	31.4	60	34.1
Indigenous Fijian	80	30.2	98	28.2	58	33
Indian Fijian	47	17.7	53	15.3	24	13.6
Unknown	14	5.3	26	7.5	5	2.8
Other Fijian	20	7.5	16	4.6	9	5.1
New Zealander	11	4.2	17	4.9	10	5.7
American	4	1.5	8	2.3	0	0
Papua New Guinean	0	0	5	1.4	4	2.3
English	2	0.8	7	2	1	0.6
Indian	1	0.4	3	0.9	1	0.6
Brazilian	2	0.8	1	0.3	2	1.1
Ni Vanuatu	1	0.4	1	0.3	0	0
Solomon Islander	1	0.4	0	0	1	0.6
Malaysian	0	0	1	0.3	0	0
Japanese	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
Ghanian	1	0.4	0	0	0	0
German	0	0	1	0.3	0	0
French	0	0	1	0.3	0	0
Total	**265**	**100.2**	**347**	**100**	**176**	**100.1**

Compared to the other variables, the location of the journalists varied significantly between the newspapers (Table 4E), with an average variation between the highest and lowest counts of 9.9 per cent. The reports in *The Sydney Morning Herald* were more often filed from Fiji (47.4%) compared to the other two newspapers. Less than one third of the reports used in *The Canberra Times* (31.5%) were filed by journalists in Fiji, compared to 39.2 per cent for *The Australian.* The difference between the highest and the lowest percentage in this category, 15.9 percentage points, was the greatest variation for any of the locations. *The Canberra Times* used the highest percentage of journalists in Australia (55.4%), and *The Sydney Morning Herald* used the least (44.6%).

Table 4E: Comparing newspapers — location of journalists

	Australian		**SMH**		**Canb. Times**	
Location	**N**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Australia	80	52.3	78	44.6	51	55.4
Fiji	60	39.2	83	47.4	29	31.5
New Zealand	5	3.3	7	4	6	6.5
England	2	1.3	2	1.1	1	1.1
USA	3	2	2	1.1	0	0
Unknown	1	0.7	0	0	2	2.2
Greece	0	0	1	0.6	1	1.1
South Korea	0	0	1	0.6	0	0
PNG	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
Japan	0	0	0	0	1	1.1
India	1	0.7	0	0	0	0
Egypt	0	0	1	0.6	0	0
Brazil	1	0.7	0	0	0	0
Total	**153**	**100.2**	**175**	**100**	**92**	**100**

The Canberra Times used stories produced by news agencies more often than the other newspapers (Table 4F). Almost half the stories which appeared in *The Canberra Times* (48.9%) were provided by the agencies. For *The Australian*, the overall ratio was much less, just 11.1 per cent, and more consistent between 1987 (10.3%) and 2000 (11.8%). *The Sydney Morning Herald* had the lowest ratio of agency stories at 9.2 per cent. However there

was a significant shift between 1987, when the ratio was only 5.4 per cent, and 2000, when it nearly trebled to 16.1 per cent.

Table 4F: Comparing newspapers — use of agencies

	1987			2000			Total		
Newspaper	**n**	**paper total**	**%**	**n**	**paper total**	**%**	**n**	**paper total**	**%**
The Australian	7	68	10.3	10	85	11.8	17	153	11.1
Sydney Morning Herald	6	112	5.4	10	62	16.1	16	174	9.2
Canberra Times	20	42	47.6	25	50	50	45	92	48.9

Source identity, themes and journalistic practice

A number of obvious findings can be drawn from this content analysis. Overall, there is a lack of diversity in the kinds of sources that appeared in these articles. Elite sources, particularly those who represented governments, dominated. The elite nature of the sources is also reflected in other characteristics, including the nationality or ethnicity of the sources. The fact that Australian sources were as commonly utilised as Fijian sources indicates the elite role Australia plays in the South Pacific. There was also a lack of gender diversity, with an overwhelmingly disproportionate representation of male sources. Female sources were seldom used, and when they were used they were less prominently featured than male sources.

The location of the source and/or the journalists had little impact on source diversity. There were some variations between the newspapers, particularly in the number of reports published and the number of agency reports used.

There were some notable variations when the reports from 1987 were compared with those from 2000. The most significant of these were the increase in the use of Indian Fijian sources and the reduction in use of other journalists and media as sources. Overall, though, the comparison of the reports from 1987 and 2000 simply underlined the general lack of diversity.

These findings establish parameters which inform the related components of this thesis. Given the lack of diversity in the kinds of sources used, it is now possible to examine the nature of the prevalent themes and the relationship to the way the journalists went about their work. Is there a connection between the limited range of sources and the prevalent themes? Did the limited range of sources limit the kinds of themes present? Could the journalists have pursued methods which would have resulted in a more diverse range of sources? Were there factors beyond the journalists' control which limited their access to sources? These are some of the questions which this data analysis has helped to generate and which the remainder of the thesis will address.

CHAPTER 5: THEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF FIJI

The way in which news events are described, the tone and content of opinions expressed by sources and commentators, and the kinds of existing knowledge which news reports draw upon all contribute to the construction of different interpretations of circumstances and events. News, in short, is the act of structuring reality (Ericson, Baranek et al., 1987, p11). In the case of the reporting of the coups, these representations – the ways in which particular realities are constructed – encompass different ways in which Fiji can be understood as a nation.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the prevalent themes present in the content of the articles in the data set. As outlined in the methodology, the approach centres on identifying the "regular recurring patterns" within the text (Aronson, 1994), the common threads which help identify the significant themes. The three prevalent themes identified were:

1. **From "paradise lost" to "arc of instability".** This theme revealed the way in which Fiji was depicted. The evolution of the way Fiji was depicted ranged from the 1987 idea that this tropical paradise had been shattered, to the 2000 perspective that Fiji was now just part of a much larger series of problems plaguing the Pacific region.

2. **How should Australia respond?** This theme highlighted the relationship between Australia and Fiji by focussing on the kinds of possible responses to the coup. The 1987 responses included the possibility of a military intervention, and debate between the Australian political parties about responses to the coup. By 2000, the responses being discussed involved broader approaches to the situation.

3. **The force of personality.** This theme examined the way in which the leaders of the coups, Sitiveni Rabuka and George Speight, were depicted, and whether these depictions influenced the overall depiction of the situation in Fiji.

In total, articles including these themes represented 25.5 per cent of the articles which appeared in the first week of the coverage in the newspapers being examined. As such, they provide crucial insights into the way the coups were represented.

Given that the content analysis of sources and the thematic analysis use the same data set – the 419 articles from the first week of coup coverage – there is an obvious link between the two analyses. The source analysis relies on a quantitative examination of the details of the articles and the sources used, while the thematic analysis relies on a qualitative assessment of the content of the articles. As such, an exploration of how the most common themes might be related to the kinds of sources used in the articles is also warranted, particularly the extent to which specific themes are related to the use of specific kinds of sources. The articles in each of the thematic subsets of data were analysed according to the most relevant characteristics of the content analysis presented in Chapter 4 of this thesis, including the characteristics relating to the articles themselves, such as the location and nationality of the journalists, and the characteristics of the sources, such as the nationality/ethnicity, location and category of source.

Ultimately, there is also a connection between the findings from these analyses and the kinds of practices employed by the journalists, a topic being explored in the next chapter. In a sense, all three of these components, the sources, the journalists and the story themes, coalesce to construct a representation of Fiji. The balance between the influence of the sources and the input of the journalists is likely to have a significant impact on the kinds of themes which are generated. First, though, it is necessary to identify the themes.

Theme 1: From “paradise lost” to “arc of instability”

One of the most prevalent and distinct themes present in the articles relates to the way in which Fiji is understood as a nation. The propositions expressed in the articles in this thematic subset assign to the country of Fiji certain traits and characteristics which reinforce how Fiji was once imagined and suggest how and in what form a re-imagining may take place. According to articles which included this thematic narrative, Fiji went through a number of dramatic transformations as a result of the coups. This involved a transition from the nation of Fiji as a paradise lost to the intepretation of Fiji as a part of an arc of instability.

In this narrative, prior to the 1987 coup Fiji had been a peaceful, tropical idyll, albeit with some underlying social and political tension. The 1987 coup shattered the myth, bringing racial tension to the fore and signalling a new period of turbulence in Fiji and the region. Soon after the 1987 coup, the flow-on effects were still open to speculation. By the time of the 2000 coup, the coverage conveyed the idea that Fiji's problems were now endemic. As such, the 2000 coup was the realisation of the idea of an "arc of instability", stretching from East Timor and east through Melanesia and Polynesia.

Article characteristics

Of the 419 articles in the data set, a total of 37 articles were identified which included references to the idea that a transition was taking place in Fiji. Specifically, these included interpretations and perspectives which presented an image of Fiji as a shattered paradise. They also included descriptions of the impact of this transition on Fiji and on other countries in the region, particularly those which presented the image of a region which was now unstable. Typically, key words and phrases included "shattered", "unexpected", "transformation", "unstable region", "troubled region" and "former paradise".

Of these 37 articles, 19 were published in 1987 and 18 in 2000. The 1987 articles were published between May 15 and May 21 and include 29 sources. The 2000 articles were published between May 20 and May 27 and included 18 sources. Compared to the total data set used for the content analysis, which categorised 794 sources, this subset was a much more limited sample. However, in this thematic subset there was evidence that particular kinds of sources were more predominant, compared to the entire data set.

In the 1987 articles there were many more sources categorised as a person on the street (31%) compared to the number in all articles (5%). There were also fewer government sources (31%) compared to the overall total (47%), and more military or police sources (21%), compared to the overall total (15%). In certain respects, then, this range of sources might be said to represent a more diverse range than the overall total. In particular, the increase in sources categorised as a person on the street, and the reduction in the percentage of government sources indicates less reliance on the typical kinds of authoritative sources such as government officials, which in some research have been shown to represent up to three-quarters all sources in news stories (van Ginneken, 1998, p86).

While the location of the journalists who wrote this group of articles was comparable to the overall results, it is evident that the nationality of the journalists was markedly different. All of the journalists (100%) who wrote these articles were Australian, compared to only around three-quarters (81%) in the overall count. Clearly, then, the kinds of themes which occur in these stories must be understood as distinctively Australian interpretations of the events in Fiji.

In the articles from 2000, more sources were located in Australia (53%) compared to the overall result (40%), and less sources were located in Fiji (37%) than overall (50%). Other results followed this shift to more Australian-centric characteristics: there were more Australian sources (47%) compared to the overall total (31%), more journalists located in Australia (83%) than overall (52%), and more Australian journalists (94%) than the overall total for 2000 (70%). Again, these results emphasise that the themes which occur in these stories are of a distinctly Australian origin.

1987: Paradise lost

The first significant step in the construction of a new image of Fiji was the proposition that the social, cultural and political fabric of Fiji was "shattered" by the 1987 coup, and that the perception of Fiji as a paradise was now lost. This idea was expressed explicitly in a number of the articles. One editorial on the first day of reporting of the coup stated "…the peace was shattered yesterday morning" (*CT*, 15/5/87, p12). Three days later, the same idea was repeated: "All of that [17 years of the different ethnic groups putting aside their differences] has been shattered by last week's coup" (*Australian*, 18/5/87, p4). This image of Fiji being shattered was reinforced by comments relaying the level of surprise associated with the perpetration of the coup. "The stealth and secrecy of Rabuka's coup were remarkable. It took Fiji — billed in its own tourist promotions as "the way the world should be" — completely by surprise" (*Australian*, 15/5/87, p4). Another article suggested that part of the shock could be attributed to the fact that it went against the broader public perception of Fiji as a nation: "It is, to put it as briefly as possible, beyond understanding that this could have happened in Fiji" (*Australian*, 18/5/87, p4).

The expression of disbelief is highlighted by extracts from a May 19 editorial which demonstrated that four days after the coup it was still difficult to see what the outcome was going to be (*Australian*, 19/5/87, p12):

> The bewildering sequence of events in Fiji yesterday has it almost impossible even to guess at what is likely to follow.
>
> Last week's coup d'etat was so unexpected and its aftermath so mind-boggling that it would be reckless for the Australian Government to make any confident prediction as to what is likely to happen in Fiji.
>
> Fiji could sink into anarchy, autocracy or civil war.
>
> The sudden transformation of Fiji, which had appeared to be a model of rationality, stability, democracy and law and order, was not predicted by the Government's defence and foreign policy advisers.

Concurrently, some articles proposed that the coup should not have been a shock, as there had always been a level of hostility between the different ethnic groups. This was stated most unambiguously in a story headlined "Tension just beneath the surface in Fiji", written by a reporter whose byline included the information that the journalist named had "visited Fiji recently", an apparent attempt to add to the legitimacy of the opinions being expressed. The article began as follows (*CT*, 15/5/87, p2):

> Fiji's unique multi-racial integration appeared, on the surface, to be relatively harmonious. But the surface needed only a scratch to reveal the cultural, commercial and political tensions beneath.

The construction of the same idea was repeated in a different newspaper on the same day. It claimed the Indigenous Fijians and the Indian Fijians "have maintained an uneasy coexistence, with tensions never far from the surface" (*SMH*, 15/5/87, p12).

A critical component of the construction of the media's characterisation of Fiji were descriptions which reinforced what had been lost because of the coup. While there was no one article which sought to specifically compare the nature and characteristics of Fiji on a before-the-coup and after-the-coup basis, the loss of this holiday paradise was apparent. In the first week of reporting, this was conveyed primarily in articles which could be described

as "colour" pieces—commentary mixed with news written by the reporters on location who were apparently allowed greater journalistic licence.

In an almost holiday-brochure style, these articles often favoured references to the climate and weather conditions. A good example was a story with the headline "Polite and macho arrests on a balmy night in Suva" (*SMH*, 19/5/87, p11). It included details of the harassment and arrest of international media, an issue which subsequently attracted significant media attention. It began, however, with a description of the weather:

> It was one of those lovely South Pacific nights—warm, perhaps a touch too humid for some people, but with a breeze waving the palms and a bright moon lighting the water.

Similarly, an article covering a serious incident, a riot in downtown Suva, began with a reference to the beauty of the physical environment (*Australian*, 18/5/87, p4):

> Beneath the great spreading trees of Sukuna Park on the edge of Suva Harbour, the people gathered yesterday to pray for peace and a return to democracy.
>
> They stopped and sat in the middle of Victoria Parade, the broad boulevard that skirts Suva Harbour, chanting "We want democracy back".

Clearly, a physical description of a scene is not an uncommon journalistic device and one which can add to the picture a reader generates in their head. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that these kinds of descriptions had the potential to reinforce the before-the-coup image of Fiji as a tropical paradise, especially as these descriptions were often juxtaposed with descriptions of coup-related drama which alluded to the after-the-coup image of Fiji. An example of this kind of juxtaposition which illustrated the way in which Fiji had changed appeared in an article with the headline "The strange case of too many Indians and not enough Chiefs" (*SMH*, 16/5/87, p5):

> Staff at the Suva Travelodge wear frangipanis and hibiscus flowers behind their ears and offer their usual polite and cheerful service. Australian tourists sit around the

> pool drinking beer. Over the road at the Government buildings, troops wear balaclava masks and carry rifles and sub-machine guns.

In the same vein, reporting of the clashes in Sukuna Park also juxtaposed physical descriptions with calamity, as in this closing paragraph (*Australian*, 18/5/87, p4):

> And beneath the great spreading trees of Sukuna Park torn placards lay scattered—symbols of the destruction of Fijian democracy.

There were also instances where the use of paradise imagery more broadly indicated the sense of despair in Fiji. An article from the first day of reports included this comment: "When the tropical sun rises over Fiji today, God knows what will happen" (*Australian*, 15/5/87, p4). The opening line of another article stated: "SUVA, Friday: Today fell just short of being a hell of a day in paradise" (*SMH*, 16/5/87, p5).

As well as providing a useful means of contrast between the events and the setting, the use of descriptions of the tropical scenery also allowed the journalists to express some concept of hope for the future of Fiji, even if it was a forlorn hope. A week after the coup, a front page article suggested: "Tomorrow the sun will shine again on these Fijian islands and peace might well return" (*SMH*, 21/5/87, p1). Another article on the same day drew upon the tropical setting in a equally poignant way (*SMH*, 21/5/87, p11):

> While Fijians and a handful of Indians watched from Sukuna Park opposite, the still water inside the coral reef shivered, a ship cast its reflection, and it seemed that the coup d'etat of six days ago was just a bad dream.

This longing for the "good old days" adds to the evidence that the image of Fiji as a tropical paradise had been severely compromised by the 1987 coup and that a transition was under way. However, analysis of the content of the articles also produced evidence of a perception that this transition extended beyond Fiji and into the entire region.

According to these perspectives, the 1987 coup brought with it the realisation that Australia needed to be concerned with the growing potential for trouble in a number of South Pacific nations. All the editorials in the three newspapers on their first day of the 1987coverage

echoed this concept. *The Canberra Times* editorial, with the headline "Disturbing the Peace", began as follows (*CT*, 15/5/87, p2):

> The situation in Fiji today is growing evidence that the South Pacific is no longer a political backwater where nations like Australia and New Zealand can expect nothing but peaceful coexistence.

The SMH promoted a similar train of thought in an editorial with the headline "A wild bid for power in Fiji" (*SMH*, 15/5/87, p12):

> The confused events in Fiji over the last 24 hours must persuade even the most sceptical observer that the South Pacific is becoming an increasingly unstable region, both strategically and in the internal political affairs of a growing number of island states.

And *The Australian* called for an immediate reassessment in an editorial titled "Fiji shows the need for Pacific reappraisal" (*Australian*, 15/5/87, p10):

> However Fiji's present misfortunes are resolved, Australia must recognise that communal conflicts add to the dangers of our region… We do need to think through more thoroughly our approach to the Pacific's special problems and the events in Fiji indicate that this reappraisal is urgent.

Further evidence that the coup was a sign of a regional malaise were interpretations which included direct references to particular countries, both within and outside the South Pacific (*SMH*, 15/5/87, p12):

> The Suva coup adds a new and unexpected dimension to existing anti-democratic tendencies in the region, especially in Vanuatu. And the internal instability and communal strife it will produce can only encourage those outside powers and forces who want to export international ideological and strategic conflicts to the area.

This perspective also addressed the possible reaction of influential nations from outside the region (*SMH*, 20/5/87, p11):

> Overseas countries such as Japan are concerned that Australia and New Zealand could leave a vacuum in international relations with Fiji by taking too strong a stand against a Government which, whether legitimate or not, in its judgement will be ruling the country.

An article with the headline "Fiji coup a signal of troubles ahead" expanded on the concerns in the South Pacific, likening it to other conflicts in the regions around Australia (*SMH*, 17/5/87, p38):

> Far from being some minor peccadillo in paradise, which much of the insouciant comment now being bandied about suggests, the Fiji coup is in itself the most disturbing thing to happen in this country's immediate neighbourhood since Indonesia's takeover of West Irian.

Inevitably, the tacit acceptance that Fiji was now a part of a troubled region led to an exploration of the consequences of this situation. On one hand, there was the suggestion that the coup represented a critical juncture for Australia and how it related to the region (*SMH*, 17/5/87, p38): "Ever since World War II, Australians have been quite content to keep their intervention in the region to economic exploitation, relying, as always, on bigger powers to look after military matters." This perspective was championed in another article in the same paper (*SMH*, 19/5/87, p2):

> Australia will be largely to blame if the coup in Fiji is allowed to succeed and it emerges as the first of a series of Caribbean-style military dictatorships in the region, says Professor Al McCoy, a Pacific affairs expert.
>
> "Australia's inaction here could well be the turning point where it surrenders all influence in the Pacific and an era begins of healthy democracies being replaced by banana republics that are weak, divided client States of the US," he said.

A related interpretation was that while there was little Australia could do to help Fiji, there were some lessons to be learned if the region was to become stable once again (*Australian*, 19/5/87, p12): "The first is that we do not live in a part of the world where our security requires little, if any, sacrifice of ours. The second is that it is a complex region where the problems cannot be solved by glib slogans but need the serious and concentrated attention of our government."

Overall, it was apparently now well-established that "The Pacific region was going to be seen as an area of much greater instability from now on" (*SMH*, 19/5/87, p2). With hindsight, we can see that the perspective that Fiji was now to be imagined as a part of a troubled region was the beginning of the transition to the representation of Fiji as part of the arc of instability.

2000: The arc of instability

There were a number of significant differences between how Fiji was depicted in the 2000 reporting, compared to the reporting in 1987. In 2000, the perception that Fiji was a "paradise lost" was still present but to a much lesser degree. In one of the very few references to this idea, the suggestion was the damage to reputation was somehow contained to the capital, with the image of Suva as "the South Pacific's funkiest little town" being "shattered on Friday" (*Australian*, 22/5/00, p4). Similarly, the juxtaposition of tropical imagery with the post-coup dramas was not extensively utilised in 2000. When it did appear, it mostly focussed on the nature of the people involved (*Australian*, 23/5/00, p4):

> "You're from Australia? Welcome to Fiji, mate," Bill said with a warm smile. "We will have a hangi for you people — you are our guests today. You want coffee or tea?"
>
> His welcome was a typical example of Fijian hospitality — except the man cheerfully taking us into his new home is known as "Commander Bill", head of security for coup leader George Speight.

Another report, which described the looting of shops in Suva, also referred to the transition away from a tropical paradise (*CT*, 21/5/00, p5): "Paradise one day, a war zone the next. That is how dramatically the Fijian capital's appearance changed overnight." In the same

article, the way the relationship of the coup was compared to the previous image of Fiji was quite explicit, compared to some of the more descriptive allusions of some 1987 articles (*CT*, 21/5/00, p5): “The grim scene unfolded only a few hundred metres from the sort of sight Fiji is famous for — the sunshine, palm trees and blue waters of Suva harbour.”

The perspective that there was tension just beneath the surface was repeated, however the description was less dramatic. Where in 1987 the coup had “shattered” Fiji, by 2000 the view was “The thin veneer of racial harmony that had been pressed together in Fiji was splintered by yesterday’s coup” (*Australian*, 20-21/5/00, p20).

The perspective that Fiji was part of a troubled region was again popular in the articles from 2000. At times, though, the analysis was contextualised in terms of Fiji’s relationship to the entire region, not just Australia. For example, in one article Fiji was construed as the “big brother” of the smaller nations, and as such was depicted as critical to the way in which the region would or could develop (*Australian*, 22/5/00, p15):

> Whatever the outcome of the hostage crisis within Fiji, it will have an important impact on the rest of the South Pacific.
>
> Other island countries have often seen Fiji as a regional hub and as providing leadership in the region’s dealings with the outside world… There is a general sense that if Fiji is in trouble then the region is affected.

This article also made reference to PNG and the Solomon Islands. In 2000, direct references to the other nations within the region were much more common than in 1987.
An article with the headline “Regional flashpoints give policy-makers headaches” set out the situation and significantly it also included the first reference to the “arc of instability” (*Australian*, 20/5/00, p4):

> The attempted coup in Fiji is just the latest headache facing Australia’s strategic policy-makers as political instability continues to rack many of our northern neighbours.

> Defence strategists, who are dubbing the region the "arc of instability", believe the intractable communal violence in Solomon Islands poses a serious long-term problem, with a risk that it will erupt into wholesale civil war.

The phrase "arc of instability" was not constructed specifically to describe the regions around Australia. A search of the Factiva news database shows much earlier references to the phrase, as far back as 1988, but these stories relate to other regions of the world, particularly the former Soviet states and different parts of Africa. Later instances of the use of the phrase related to the Middle East and South Asia. Rather than an Australian construction, the phrase might more properly be considered as a western construction which has been co-opted for use by Australian strategists, politicians and policy makers and popularised through the media as a convenient descriptor.

The first application of the phrase "arc of instability" to the regions around Australia has been attributed to the academic Paul Dibbs in a September 1999 article in the security studies journal *Survival* (Dibb, Hale and Prince, 1999). Initially, the "arc of instability" was defined as the region stretching from Indonesia all the way east to Melanesia and Polynesia, a huge curve encircling the regions north and east of Australia. Later definitions wavered on the inclusion of all of Indonesia, but often included East Timor. In all cases, though, the proposition was that all the countries in this region were inter-related to the extent that political or military unrest in one country could quickly spread throughout the neighbouring countries.

The first use of the phrase in relation to the region around Australia was, according to Factiva, in a September 8 article in *The New York Times* by Thomas L. Friedman. It was quickly picked up by the Australian media. Michelle Grattan was the first to utilise the phrase in an article published in *The SMH* on September 17, 1999. According to Factiva, there were only 5 instances of the use of the phrase in Australian mainstream media before the 2000 coup in Fiji. However in the 12 months following the coup, there were 51 uses of the phrase and since then there have been a total of 286 articles which used the phrase[6]. Clearly, then, the mainstream media had a significant role to play in the popularisation of the

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[6] Searches of the Factiva database were conducted online on July 11, 2008. Searches in Australian media were limited to capital city daily newspapers, ABC reports, and AAP reports.

phrase “arc of instability”, and the reporting of the 2000 coup in Fiji marks the beginning of the wider usage of the term.

The first use of the phrase in relation to the 2000 coup, in the May 20 article in *The Australian*, helped to define the parameters of the phrase. It made reference to Bougainville, to other problems in PNG, to East Timor and to Indonesia. It also featured a diagram titled “Arc of violence” showing a regional map, including Australia, PNG and Indonesia, with the highlighted points of interest being Aceh, Ambon, Lombok, East Timor, West Papua, Bougainville, and Solomon Islands. The editorial in the same paper on the same day reiterated the perception of Fiji as part of the arc of instability (*Australian*, 20/5/00, p20):

> The Speight coup, however much lacking in organisation and backing, is a stark reminder that the Pacific island nations are not politically stable. From Papua New Guinea, across the Solomons and into the south west Pacific, democratic institutions are under pressure. Australia has the task of reinforcing the importance of democratic values against those who view the region with self-interest and opportunism.

In the following days, the references to the arc of instability, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, kept occurring. For example, a front page commentary varied the terminology slightly with the headline “Adrift in an ocean of instability” (*Australian*, 20/5/00, p20). The article included a more direct reference:

> The coup in Fiji is yet another of history’s terrible wake up calls for Australia. As strategic analyst Paul Dibbs describes it, we are surrounded now by an “arc of instability”. As one wag added, this arc of instability used to be our strategic shield. That is the transformation we now have to deal with.

This article included references to Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Bougainville, and East Timor. The same representation of Fiji and the region was inherent in an article with the headline “Trouble in the neighbourhood” (*SMH*, 23/5/00, p19):

> Then there is the South Pacific, the only area in international diplomacy where Australia is regarded as something of a super power. Fiji is in turmoil, Papua New

> Guinea (including Bougainville) remains unsettled, and the Solomon Islands has asked Cuba to provide military assistance in order to suppress ethnic tensions.

References to the concept of the arc of instability also came directly from sources with the highest levels of status and authority, Australian Government ministers. Direct comments from the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, warned that "Australia ignores the Pacific at its peril" (*Australian*, 22/5/00, p4):

> And he acknowledged growing official concern about security and stability throughout the region, pointing to an insurgency in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea's economic and social difficulties and the recent killing of a Samoan minister.

With the perspective promoting a region-wide discord now entrenched to some degree, the subsequent discussion of the causes of these problems began to take on a regional focus: (*CT*, 23/5/00, p11):

> The instability that now runs throughout the Pacific will not be easily overcome. The waves of economic and racial turbulence will continue to buffet the islands until a new, economically viable future can be carved out.

The relationship to the economic situation in many of these countries was reinforced in a later report in the same paper (*CT*, 27/5/00, p5):

> The roots of these crises can be found in the economic difficulties that the small countries are having as they attempt to integrate themselves effectively into the global economy. The flashpoints are usually as a result of ethnic clashes over the few resources available, compounded by cultural practices that are often ill-adapted to the newly emerging political systems.

While in many respects Fiji was now subsumed to some extent by the idea of the arc of instability, Fiji was now also represented as part of a much more significant problem which demanded much more significant action on Australia's part. The magnitude of the problem demanded a re-imagining of Fiji (*Australian*, 22/5/00, p2):

> Australia's strategic environment is seriously more complex, challenging and dangerous than we imagined a few years ago. This demands not only greater resources for defence but, if we are to influence that environment as we surely desire to, a much greater intellectual engagement with our region.

The focus of the perspectives about the outcome of the Fiji coup were now on what actions could be taken (*CT*, 23/5/00, p11):

> Australia must become urgently involved with the course of events in the islands. Rather than attempting to define what sort of international role we should be playing in other global forums such as ASEAN, we should urgently look towards emphasising and supporting the smaller governments that form our immediate neighbourhood.
>
> Assisting that transition is an urgent task for Australia. As well as being our moral duty (a term that is in risk of becoming unfashionable) ensuring a stable Pacific is in our security interests as well. We cannot continue to drift.

This was followed by a similar warning four days later (*CT*, 27/5/00, p5):

> The crisis in Fiji is just one part of a much larger danger, an instability that is emerging as a major threat to all the nations of the Pacific. Unless Australia becomes far more actively involved in assisting the island states that are battling to establish a future, analysts are warning that many more are at risk of disintegration and failure.

It was now becoming apparent in the text of these articles that a far more strategic approach was needed to deal with the problems in Fiji, and by default, the problems in the rest of the Pacific. Fiji was now being depicted not simply as a country with problems of its own, but as a country which might cause problems for Australian global interests: (*Australian*, 22/5/00, p14):

> Our main area of economic self-interest—and where our diplomatic effort of recent decades has concentrated—is East Asia. But as the surprising and confused coup

> attempt in Fiji demonstrates, there is much going on in the Pacific that threatens Australia's strategic interests.

Fiji's problems were now construed as Australia's problems, as interpreted in an article with the headline that implored "Don't ignore troubled islands" (*Australian*, 23/5/00, p15):

> Australia has certainly created the image that the South Pacific is its strategic backyard. With that goes the expectation that, if something goes seriously wrong, it will take the primary responsibility for resolving any problems.
>
> Failure to assist would undermine Australia's claims to regional strategic leadership.

At this point, the perception in the media that Fiji had completed a transition from paradise lost to part of an arc of instability was complete.

Australian perspectives, old and new

As the data on the characteristics of the sources and articles indicate, this theme draws on a particularly Australian perspective. The fact that 100 per cent of the journalists who wrote these articles were Australian, compared to only 78 per cent in the overall statistics, supports this assertion. It was Australians who had to find new ways of depicting and understanding Fiji in light of the social upheaval of the coup.

Fiji is initially understood as a tropical paradise, a simple place of great beauty where the stunning scenery obscured any lingering social or political problems. It is the Australian perspective which frames Fiji as a paradise and it is the Australian perspective which obscures any underlying problems. Following the 1987 coup, the way in which Fiji has been understood is called into question, and the contest taking place within the boundaries of this theme is a hegemonic contest, a struggle to recognise the "new logic" of an event or situation (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p4). By the time of the 2000 coup, this "new logic" is becoming more accepted in Australia, with the label of "arc of instability" serving as a useful media summary of how Fiji and the region can be categorized, and how Australia might respond to the challenges this new depiction presents.

The authority of the sources who appear in the 1987 articles of this thematic subset in some senses illustrates the struggle with contending with new ways of understanding and representing Fiji. In 1987, there are fewer government sources than would be expected and more people on the street. Perhaps this is a reflection of the difficulty of establishing a dominant, official perspective on the events, particularly given that these articles are all drawn from the first week of the coverage. Perhaps a week is not long enough for a government to "take control" of how a particular event, especially an unexpected event like the 1987 Fiji coup, is represented in an official, hegemonic sense. Or perhaps the greater percentage of sources who were people on the street is related to this uncertainty in the ways in which Fiji might have been depicted. Those with limited authority are potentially more likely to respond instinctively, rather than on the basis of some over-riding structural, diplomatic or organisational considerations.

While the Australian-centric nature of the source and article characteristics is sustained in the articles from 2000, it is not as completely dominant. This is, in some ways, reflected in the thematic representation of the situation. With the introduction of the phrase "arc of instability" there is now a short-hand method for imposing ways of understanding. The "complex and evolving relationship between a society and its media" has been given some broader historical context (Pavasaris, 1996, p101).

Theme 2: How should Australia respond?

An important component of the way in which Fiji was depicted in the reporting of the coups is the manner in which the relationship between Australia and Fiji was interpreted. The nature of this relationship is highlighted by the way in which the media reported Australian responses to the coups.

The possible responses to the coup identified in the 47 articles in this thematic subset are primarily immediate or short term responses. Arguably, these immediate responses are more likely to influence the way in which new interpretations might be formulated. For example, if the response to a civil war in a neighbouring country is an immediate movement of military into that country, the interpretation of the crisis itself, and the nature of the relationship between the two countries, would be significantly different to a response where no military action was taken. As such, articles which referred to less immediate responses,

such as ideas relating to long-term policy initiatives, were not included as a part of this theme.

As well as articles which simply outlined the immediate responses, articles which included content relating to debates about these responses were included. The possible actions to be taken by a government, and the alternative responses presented by opposition parties, commentators and other interested parties, and the tone of the arguments on these issues, are included here. They provide evidence of the “unstable equilibrium” of the contest for hegemonic dominance (Kulyk, 2006, p284).

In 1987, two main sub-themes became the focus of the reporting: the possibility of military intervention by Australia and/or other western countries, and the opportunity to gain local political leverage through dominating the debate about how to respond to the coup. There was also some attempt to report different possible responses, such as trade and aid sanctions, but comparatively these were much less significant. In 2000, the reporting was marked by much less focus on coverage of the responses to the coup, and less focus on the responses highlighted in 1987.

Article characteristics

Of the 419 articles in the entire data set, a total of 47 articles were identified which included references to Australia’s immediate responses to the coup. Of these 34 were published in 1987, between May 15 and May 21, and the 13 articles from 2000 were published between May 22 to May 27. In the 34 articles from 1987 there were 58 sources, and in the 13 articles from 2000 there were 36 sources.

Given that this theme relates to the way Australia is going to respond to the coup, it is hardly surprising that the content analysis revealed a concentration of Australian sources in this thematic subset. In the 1987 articles which referred to this theme, there were more Australian sources (74%) compared to the overall rate (34%), more sources located in Australia (72%) than overall (34%), more Australian journalists (91%) than overall (81%) and more journalists located in Australia (88%) than overall (48%). This dominance of Australian sources was reflected by a reduction in the Fijian sources, with less sources located in Fiji (19%) compared to the overall total (54%), fewer Indigenous Fijian sources,

14% compared to 34% overall, and fewer Indian Fijian sources, 2% compared to 12% overall.

The more interesting result in terms of nationality or ethnicity was the increase in the number of New Zealand sources. There were more than double the number of sources located in New Zealand, 7% compared to 3% overall, and more sources from New Zealand, up to 7% from 5% overall.

The most significant variation in the category of the sources was in the ratio of sources belonging to the government category. In the articles here, 81% of the sources were government sources, compared to 47% in the overall count. There were fewer military sources, down to 10% from 15% overall. Again, it would be a safe assumption that the way Australian responses are depicted would be determined by the most authoritative sources within Australia.

The concentration of Australian-centric characteristics was also apparent in the articles from 2000. There were more sources in Australia (60%) than the overall number of sources from 2000 (40%), more Australian sources (53%) than overall (31%), more Australian journalists (86%) than overall (70%) and more journalists located in Australia (85%) than overall (52%). There were related declines in the sources located in Fiji, down to 11% compared to 50% overall, and an even more marked decline in the number of Indigenous Fijian sources (3%) compared to overall (25%). There was also a reduction in the number of Indian Fijian sources, from 19% overall to 14% in these articles.

As with the 1987 data related to this theme, there were increases in the New Zealand sources. There were more New Zealand sources (11%) than overall (5%), and more sources located in New Zealand (11%) than overall (3%). As for the category of the sources in these articles, there was again an increased rate of government sources, up from 42% overall to 89% here. There were no military sources (0%) compared to overall (6%).

This concentration of Australian sources, and specifically Australian government sources, is not a surprising trend. Apart from the evidence which has already established the dominance of government sources, such as Sigal (1973) and Manoff and Schudson (1987), it is obvious that an Australian response demands input from Australian government sources. The

increases in the presence of New Zealand sources is potentially of greater significance. Is this evidence of a representation of the situation in Fiji as something which needs to be determined by the post-colonial powers in the region? Is the focus on Australia and New Zealand further evidence of the hierarchical relationship between developed and developing countries in the Pacific? Or is it an indication that this situation cannot be addressed by Australia alone?

1987: Calls for a military intervention

The manner in which the responses to the Fiji coup were reported constructed a particular interpretation of the relationship between Fiji and Australia. Analysis of the articles relating to this theme revealed that two responses were prevalent in the reporting: the first was focussed on possible military involvement and the second was focussed on local political point-scoring opportunities.

The focus on military intervention as a response was present in 14 of the 34 articles (41%) about responses to the coup. It began with articles which detailed the size, training, weaponry and general capability of the Fijian armed forces. For example, on the first day of coverage of the coup *The Canberra Times* ran an article across the top of the front page with the headline, “Coup leader gained military expertise in ACT” (*CT*, 15/05/87, p1). It noted that the coup leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, had trained at the Joint Services Staff College in Canberra, and that “the Fijian defence forces comprise 2670 regulars and about 5000 reservists” (*CT*, 15/05/87, p1). A similar article on the same day went into much greater detail, and included an assessment of the capability of the Fijian military in controlling the local population (*Australian*, 15/05/1987, p4):

> Fiji maintains a small regular armed force of only 2670, consisting principally of the 2500-strong army which is made up of three infantry battalions – one of which is a reserve unit – an engineers company and small support units.
>
> The army is equipped with small arms and 81mm mortars only.
>
> There is also a small navy of 170 men equipped with three modern United States 370-tonne coastal minesweepers, two main survey craft and one research vessel. A further 102-foot patrol craft is on order.”

> While the forces at his [Rabuka's] command are small, they represent the only major force in the country and could maintain control over the majority Indian community indefinitely unless confronted with a breakaway section of the armed forces or the two battalions overseas.

While the judgement that the Fijian military had no local opposition was accurate, wider comparisons were soon made. Specifically, a number of articles addressed the power of the Fijian military when compared to the Australian military, particularly those Australian forces who happened to be in the region at the time of the coup (*CT*, 15/05/87, p1):

> Coincidentally, Australia currently has a significant naval contingent in Fiji – and more ships on the way in scheduled goodwill visits – which represents a much more powerful force than the Fijian defence forces.
>
> The guided-missile frigate HMAS Adelaide is in Lautoka and the guided-missile frigate HMAS Sydney arrived in Suva yesterday morning at about the same time as the takeover occurred.
>
> The Fremantle class patrol boats HMAS Wollongong and HMAS Cessnock are due to arrive in Suva today.

Another article on the same day boldly stated that it was apparent that Fiji was a "lightly defended country" (SMH, 15/05/87, p8):

> Already its Navy is outgunned by the FFG-class frigate HMAS Sydney, which is anchored in Suva Bay on a goodwill visit. It is capable of 28 knots and is armed with 40 missiles as well as torpedos and deck guns.
>
> The spokesman said Australia had a 2000-strong rapid deployment unit which would be used in the event of Australian action to restore order in Fiji.

While this narrative established the relative superiority of the Australian forces compared to the Fijian military, at the same time it also presented and reinforced the perception that no

military action would be taken by Australia. In one article, the opposition to military action was stated by leading sources from Australia and Fiji (*SMH*, 15/05/87, p9):

> The Commander of the Fijian Armed Forces declared last night that he would fly home to resume control of the military.
>
> He said that he could not see any circumstances in which Australian military intervention was justified. He had not asked for any help but was pleased that Australia had offered support, he said.
>
> Mr Hawke said on Channel 7 last night: "I don't contemplate military involvement. The whole thrust of my Government's desires, and I would say the desire of the people of Australia is non-violence, non-military action."

In the following days, a series of articles repeated this opposition to military action. On May 17, a front page article headlined "No Australian troops", stated that the Australian PM had ruled out direct intervention "despite a reported plea for help from deposed Prime Minister, Dr Timoci Bavadra" (*CT*, 17/05/87, p1). On May 19, an article with the headline "Hawke rules out 'Rambo-like' military action" appeared in *The Australian* (*Australian,* 19/05/87, p8). *The Canberra Times* used the same quote from the PM (*CT*, 19/05/87, p1):

> The Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, said last night that Australia would not be rushing into any "Rambo" actions – such as supporting a counter-coup – in reaction to the overthrow of the Fijian Government.
>
> However, he added that if a request was made for outside assistance by Fiji's Governor-General, it would be considered.

The caveat in the second paragraph of the above quote seemed to prosper in some of the reports. The idea of a possible military intervention continued to exist in some articles, even where they might be initially seen as opposing this response. The best example of this was in an article with the headline "No sound reason to deploy our troops", which began as follows (*Australian*, 18/05/87, p4):

> Beyond the political factors which have led the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, to categorically deny that Australia would deploy troops to Fiji, there are sound military reason why such an action should not be taken.

Yet at different points further into the article, it continued to express reasons against an invasion alongside details of how an invasion might occur, as the following two extracts demonstrate (*Australian*, 18/05/87, p4):

> Both Australia and New Zealand have Operational Deployment Forces which could be used, and the air transport capability to deliver them, but such an action could, and would, rightly be construed as a hostile act and could run the risk of heavy casualties.
>
> Any uninvited military intervention would either have to go in by sea or take the risk of deploying into an unsecured airfield which could be presumed to be covered by the 81mm mortars the Fijians are known to have in their armoury.

This "each-way bet" approach was also apparent in the placement of related articles. For example, a front page article proclaimed in the headline the news that "Hawke dismisses 'Rambo action'" (*CT,*19/05/87, p1). However, immediately below this story was another article with the headline "RAN ships extend visit", which stated that the four Australian Navy vessels in Fiji ports would be "extending their 'goodwill visit' until the situation in Fiji was clarified" (*CT,*19/05/87, p1).

Interestingly, the approach to the involvement or non-involvement of Australian military applied equally to the reporting of the possible intervention of the New Zealand military, which also had forces in the Fiji region at the time of the coup. Again, the reference to existence of potential force was moderated by an unwillingness to exercise this force (*CT*, 15/05/87, p5):

> The New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr Lange, has ruled out direct military intervention in Fiji unless New Zealand is asked to act by the Bavadra Government or the Fijian Governor-General.

> Mr Lange told reporters that a New Zealand naval frigate, the Wellington, was on standby 400 nautical miles south of Fiji.
>
> "It is absolutely not the intention of either Australia or New Zealand to be involved in anything as undemocratic as the usurpation of the Government of Fiji by force," he said.

Follow-up articles also emphasised how New Zealand forces were prepared for trouble, as in an article headlined "Wary NZ increases its naval squadron" (*SMH*, 21/05/87, p10):

> New Zealand sent a second warship to the Fiji area yesterday and continues to hold its armed forces at "a high level of readiness", the Prime Minister, Mr David Lange, said yesterday.

As well as similarities in the approaches to reporting Australian and/or New Zealand military involvement, there was also an inherent interpretation which put these two countries on the same side in any potential conflict. This fact that both countries had forces in the region made it seem almost automatic that they were united (*CT,* 17/05/87, p1):

> Colonel Rabuka's apparently loyal soldiers are almost equalled at present by Australian and New Zealand forces in Fiji itself aboard the RAN FFG7-class frigates HMAS Sydney and HMAS Adelaide and the New Zealand frigate HMNZS Wellington. The fire-power available to the Australian and New Zealand elements is massively greater than Colonel Rabuka's, with reinforcements and re-supply only three hours distant by air.

This relationship was again highlighted when the Australian Navy vessels were ordered to leave Fijian waters once their permission to visit had expired. This news was tempered with the disclosure that NZ forces were sending reinforcements (*The Australian,* 21/05/87, p4):

> Four Australian navy warships yesterday left Fijian waters after the Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, refused to extend permission for them to stay in port. The ships were now on station just outside Fijian territorial waters…

> Meanwhile, New Zealand yesterday sent a second warship to the Fiji area and continued to hold its armed forces at a "high level of readiness", the Prime Minister, Mr Lange, said.

1987: Scoring political points

The second prevalent response noted in these articles from 1987 was the coverage of the debate between Australian political parties about how to respond to the coup. Indeed, the coverage of the political point-scoring in Australia was just as prominent on many days as the coverage of the actual events in Fiji. Of the 34 articles identified, eight of them (23.5%) related specifically to debates between the Government and the Opposition.

The catalyst for much of this debate were the comments made by Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Neil Brown, in the immediate aftermath of the coup. The basis of argument was an initial statement by Brown recommending a particular kind of response to the coup, as explained in an article headlined "Sack Brown over coup comments, Hawke demands" (*Australian,* 16/05/87, p1):

> The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Howard, has been seriously embarrassed by comments from his deputy, Mr Neil Brown, lending implicit support to the new regime in Fiji.
>
> Mr Brown's comments made in a series of radio interviews yesterday drew an immediate call for his dismissal from the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, who was clearly outraged by the Deputy Liberal Leader's remarks.
>
> Mr Brown commented that Mr Hawke's "fury" about the present regime did not "seem to be matched by equal fury about governments in other parts of the world who also are not elected".

Asked which government Australia should recognise, Mr Brown replied: "I think it's too early to make that decision.

This began an intense period of scrutiny of Brown, his relationship with his leader, John Howard, and related aspects of this debate, as the following extracts demonstrate:

> He [Mr Brown] stands condemned by every reasonable Australian for what is his quasi-endorsement of the coup in Fiji," he [Mr Hawke] said. "Mr Hawke should try doing something constructive about the situation instead of abusing me," Mr Brown said… (*CT*, 16/05/87,p1)

> The Opposition Leader, Mr Howard, faced yet another division in his ranks yesterday, with his deputy, Mr Brown, contradicting him on the military takeover in Fiji. In a series of interviews, Mr Brown seemed to accept the takeover and said that Australia should not now take a partisan position (*SMH*, 16/05/87, p5).

The editorials also joined the chorus. In an article headlined "Fiji's elected Govt must be restored" most of the focus was on the comments made by Brown (*Australian,* 16/05/87, p16):

> Its tragedy lies in the implied endorsement which he gave as an Australian politician speaking on behalf of this country's official Opposition to the unconstitutional, armed overthrow of a democratically elected government.

> In this context, Mr Brown's remarks have to be taken as an expression of approval of the seizure of power, or at least of moral indifference to it.

The Canberra Times also used Brown's comments as an entry into a discussion about democracy (*CT,* 16/05/87, p3):

> The Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr Neil Brown, took an extraordinary position on the coup in Fiji yesterday.

> But somewhere along the line Mr Brown appears to have forgotten the basic principle to which democracies must cling.

Brown's proposed response to the coup was not well-received. As could be expected, the following days saw Brown go back on the offensive – "Brown explains and defends

himself" (*CT*, 17/05/87, p5) – and further speculation on the impact on the Opposition Leader — "Howard toughing out Brown conflict" (*SMH*, 18/05/87, p7).

While this strand of the theme on responses to the coup came and went within three days, it was deemed important enough at the time to be included in preference to articles about the events in Fiji itself.

1987: Other responses

There were other articles within this thematic subset which highlighted different ways of responding to the coup, apart from the military option and the chance for political point-scoring. These responses covered a range of options, including trade embargoes, tourism bans, economic sanctions, the suspension of civilian and military aid, air and sea blockades, and moves to have Fiji suspended from the Commonwealth.
A noticeable trend in the reporting of these calls for sanctions is that they primarily came from secondary groups or organisations, not the Government or Opposition leaders. For example, the left wing of the Labor Party called for trade embargoes and the expulsion of Fiji from the Commonwealth (*CT,* 21/05/87, p5), the ACTU imposed sanctions (*SMH*, 18/05/87, p7), and Members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence called for actions such as suspending aid (*SMH*, 20/05/87, p11). There were similar calls from a former Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser (*Australian,* 19/05/87, p8):

> Mr Fraser, a long-time and outspoken advocate of economic sanctions against the white minority Government in South Africa in his role as co-chairman of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, said in a radio interview that such sanctions "certainly ought to be contemplated".

One Australian political party did take a strong public stand (*SMH*, 19/05/87, p8):

> The Australian Democrats have called on the Prime Minister to use a sea and air blockade to end the coup in Fiji. The Democrats' spokesman on Foreign Affairs, Senator Mason, also advocated sending troops to restore the Bavadra Government.

> "Mr Hawke should, as a first step, call a Commonwealth conference to plan ways of restoring democracy and also to put the coup leader, Colonel Rabuka, on notice of intervention," he said.

Overall, though, the call for sanctions was less prominent than the other kinds of responses, not just in terms of the number of articles but also in the position of the articles: none of these articles about the use of sanctions or embargoes as a response appeared on page one. This was one of a number of significant differences between the reports from 1987 and the reports from 2000.

2000: No soldiers, no political point-scoring

In 1987, there were 34 articles which dealt with responses to the coup, while in 2000, there were only 13 articles. This represents a ratio of 2.6 to 1. Compared to the overall number of articles from 1987 and 2000, a ratio of 1.1 to 1, this is a significant variation. There are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, the focus on a military intervention in 1987 was virtually non-existent in 2000, and when there was reference to this idea it was not afforded great significance. For example, in one instance when military involvement was mentioned, it came in the 23rd paragraph of a 25 paragraph story (*SMH*, 22/05/00, p1):

> The Australian Government said yesterday that it had no plans to get directly involved in the conflict, and military assistance had not been considered.

The only other time military intervention was mentioned was following a statement by the Foreign Affairs Minister, Alexander Downer. While one article which included Downer's comments featured the headline "Downer rules out sending troops", there was only one paragraph in the 16 paragraph story which related directly to the headline (*Australian*, 24/05/00, p4):

> But he [Mr Downer] virtually dismissed any prospect that Australia could use its troops to help resolve the crisis, saying: "I can't see that there's any value in Australia getting somehow militarily involved."

In the articles from 2000, there was no description of the composition of the military forces of Fiji. There were no comparisons with the Australian or New Zealand military. So while the statements refuting the idea of a military intervention were similar to 1987, and while the sources making these statements were of a similar status, the media response was quite different. There was even evidence from 2000 that the media focus on a military intervention in 1987 was open to ridicule by the media itself. An article with the headline "No Rambo-like plans this time around" drew on the memoirs of Bob Hawke to make the point that military intervention was always an unlikely prospect (*CT*, 25/5/00, p5):

> In 1987, when Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka staged his first coup in Fiji, Bob Hawke was the Labor Prime Minister of the day back in Australia. At the news of the coup, two of Mr Hawke's senior ministers panicked and adopted what he later described as a Rambo-style plan for intervention.
>
> As Mr Hawke recalled in his memoirs, defence minister Kim Beazley and acting foreign minister Gareth Evans "produced an amusing excess of enthusiasm" by suggesting that the Royal Australian Navy rescue deposed prime minister Timoci Bavadra with a helicopter.
>
> "I thought they had been watching too many Rambo movies…" Mr Hawke said.

The other main strand of the reports about responses to the 1987 coup which was similarly absent in 2000 was the political point-scoring. Obviously, the lack of any inflammatory statements, such as those made by Neil Brown in 1987, contributed to this situation. Instead, most of the focus in the 2000 reports was on the use of sanctions and embargoes, and other possible responses: four of the 13 articles referred to sanctions in the headline of the story and six of the 13 articles referred to sanctions or embargoes in the body of the article.

Within these articles, a variety of possible responses were canvassed. Initially, the Federal Government "offered the Fijian President 'any reasonable and practical support that Australia could provide' to try and resolve the crisis" (*Australian*, 22/05/00, p4). Within four days, and following on from some significant events in Fiji, considerably more detail about possible actions were released (*CT*, 27/05/00, p1):

> Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer will ask Federal Cabinet early next week to consider a comprehensive set of political, economic and sporting sanctions against Fiji unless the Great Council of Chiefs reverses its decision to back George Speight's coup.
>
> Not only would Fiji face sporting sanctions, cuts to defence ties, and trade sanctions, but Mr Downer said yesterday that it would also be suspended from the Commonwealth and possibly be excluded from this year's Olympic Games in Sydney. There was also the possibility that the Olympic torch would not be carried through Fiji on its way to Australia for the Games.

Additionally, a response from the ACTU was also being reported (*SMH*, 27/05/00, p21):

> Australian unions would mount a "swift and sharp" blockade of Fijian trade and services unless the elected government of Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry was restored to office, the president of the ACTU, Ms Sharan Burrow, said yesterday.
>
> Ms Burrow said unions had prepared a "game plan" that would halt Fijian shipping, airlines, mail and financial services.

As well as these responses by Australia, there were also reports of international responses to the situation in Fiji. As well as reports of moves to suspend Fiji from the Commonwealth, there were other international initiatives (*CT*, 27/05/00, p1):

> …Mr Downer explained that Australia was co-ordinating and international effort against the Speight coup, and that the nations which might get involved would include Europe, the United States, and New Zealand.

The United Nations also took action (*SMH*, 24/05,00, p20):

> The United Nations yesterday sent its East Timor representative, Mr Sergio Vieira de Mello, to Fiji as international condemnation of the hostage crisis grew.

> Mr Vieira de Mello met en route in the Solomon Islands with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Don McKinnon. Both men were to arrive in Suva late last night.

Overall, the range and variety of the responses to the coup being reported in 2000 were more limited than in 1987. The more limited coverage of responses may have reflected a variation in the kinds of responses actually being proposed. Or perhaps this was an outcome of different kind of approach by the media, an approach which interpreted the situation in Fiji as being so complicated and inexplicable that it was difficult to formulate a coherent response?

Constructing a dichotomy

The manner in which the responses to the Fiji coup were reported in 1987 constructed an obvious dichotomy between Australia and Fiji. The first way in which this interpretation was constructed was through the immediate and ongoing focus on the possibility of a military intervention. Framing the relationship in this way obviously appealed to the media as it offered a fairly simplistic way of explaining how Australia might respond. In terms of news values, it exemplified some of the accepted characteristics of news as identified by Galtung and Ruge (1965): it was unambiguous, meaningful, unexpected, negative, and it drew Australia, an elite nation, into what had begun as a story which featured a non-elite nation, Fiji. It also focussed on the potential for a visible conflict (Gitlin, 1980, p263).

The number of stories about possible military interventions dominated this group of stories. Of the 34 stories, 15 were about possible military interventions, 10 were about political point-scoring and nine were about sanctions. A number of the military intervention reports were able to draw on available facts and figures, including descriptions of military hardware and capabilities, making it easy to compare the two sides. Additionally, potential tactics and strategies could be scrutinised. As noted, there was some blurring of the lines between Australian and New Zealand forces, suggesting that the level of superiority could be applied to any western nation. This particular approach only lost traction when it became patently clear that a military intervention would not proceed. Arguably, though, by this time the dichotomy between Australia and Fiji was clearly established.

Adding to the interpretation of a dichotomous relationship was the second major strand of the 1987 reports relating to responses, the focus on political point-scoring within Australia. A considerable amount of space was devoted to reports on the contest between the Government and the Opposition about responses to the coup. The fact that this news story gained precedence despite the fact that it was tangential to the actual coverage of the coup implies that the debate in Australia was more important than the events in Fiji. It also closely mirrors the theories relating to localisation, which argue that domestic concerns determine how foreign correspondents cover international news (Tebbutt, 2000, p95).

The number of stories and their prominent placement both within the newspaper and on individual pages is evidence that the coups became a way for the Australian political parties to demonstrate their grasp of international affairs, or, more precisely in this instance, to demonstrate their opponents lack of ability in this area. These reports did nothing to advance understanding of the causes or outcomes of the coups, except to suggest that they were not as important as the debate between the Government and the Opposition.

Finally, the fact that comparatively less attention was paid to more diplomatic or accepted responses to the situation in Fiji added to the perception that the actual well-being of Fiji was somehow of secondary importance. Not only were these kinds of stories less prominent, they relied on less prominent sources: the leading government and opposition sources were apparently not as interested in talking about sanctions and embargoes, compared to the possibly more “exciting” topics of military intervention and political point-scoring.

The dichotomy between Australia and Fiji was apparent in the characteristics of the sources and the articles. The swing towards Australian sources in stories written in Australia by Australian journalists, was reflected in the movement away from sources in Fiji and sources from Fijian ethnic groups. There was also a swing towards more New Zealand sources. The blurring of the lines between the role and influence of the Australian and New Zealand military was only pertinent in as much as it added weight to the idea that the Fijian military would be unable to maintain control if a military intervention, particularly a joint military intervention, were to take place. As such, the increase in New Zealand sources demonstrates that there was a perception of western military dominance.

Given the considerable coverage afforded to possible military intervention and political point-scoring, it might be feasible to argue that, in the absence of these particular strands of the theme, much more significant attention would have been paid to the reporting of other possible responses, such as the use of sanctions or embargoes. The reports relating to responses in 2000 demonstrate that this is not necessarily the case. There was a significant reduction in the overall number of articles about responses, which dropped from 34 in 1987 to only 13 in 2000. While eight of the 13 articles (61.5%) in 2000 were about sanctions or embargoes, it was still less than the nine articles on sanctions and embargoes in 1987.

Within this more limited number of articles, though, the content suggested much more measured responses to the situation in Fiji. The fact that the idea of a military intervention was treated so differently by the media is a clear indication of the kind of role the media has in portraying a response to events like these. Based on the comments from the sources, which were very similar in 1987 and 2000, it would have to be concluded that the media had given more prominence to this possible response in 1987. Whether this was a decision made by the media, or whether it was something which was being promoted by other hegemonic institutions, such as the military, is difficult to confirm. By 2000 there did appear to be a different attitude. It is possible that the way Fiji was understood in Australia, both in the media and within the wider community, had moved on from more simplistic notions which could be justified by a military response. However this shift in the prevailing attitude does not seem to be related to the use of more diverse sources within the articles, as the tendency for a greater concentration of Australian sources and sources in Australia is prevalent within the articles relating to this theme.

Theme 3: The force of personality

Another significant component of the way the coups were depicted was through the descriptions of the coup leaders. Focussing on the interpretations of the personalities involved allows for exploration of how our understanding of these individuals might have contributed to overall perceptions of the coups, particularly the manner in which the crises might be resolved. This focus on the coup leaders reflects Galtung and Ruge’s news values (Galtung and Ruge, 1965): the coup leaders are newsworthy because they are regarded as elite people – if not before the coups then certainly as a result of their actions, and as powerful personalities they allow the media to frame a complex story through the lives and actions of individuals.

As such, these articles focus on the descriptions of the two coup leaders, Sitiveni Rabuka and George Speight. It is acknowledged that there has been significant speculation about the possibility that other individuals had actually orchestrated the coups from behind the scenes, particularly in 2000. However, the focus here is on the individual leaders as they were depicted in this group of articles. For these purposes, Rabuka and Speight were identified as the coup leaders. The articles selected here were chosen on the basis that they contain a substantial amount of content describing the personality traits of the men leading the coups, both before and during the events being reported.

In 1987, the descriptions of Sitiveni Rabuka generally acknowledged his long military career, his physical and mental strengths, and his leadership skills. While there were a few exceptions, Rabuka was generally described as a competent, personable man with the best interests of Fiji at heart. In 2000, the descriptions of George Speight were far less praiseworthy. He was variously described as a failed businessman, a bankrupt and a fraud.

Article characteristics

The sample size for this theme, a total of 23 articles, is the smallest of the three themes being studied here. As such, the conclusions being drawn need to be considered in light of the sample size. In 1987, there were 10 articles describing the personality of Sitiveni Rabuka. These 10 articles only contained 8 sources. The publication dates of the articles ranged from May 15 to May 21, although six of the 10 were published on May 15.

More than any of the other themes, the characteristics of these articles was focussed on Fiji. Compared to the overall figures, where 34% of the sources were Australian and 34% were Indigenous Fijian, within the subset related to this theme, 87.5% were Indigenous Fijian and none of the sources were Australian. The remaining 12.5% were from New Zealand, compared to 5% in the overall total. The data on the location of the sources followed this focus on Fiji. A total of 62.5% of the sources were located in Fiji, compared to 54% overall, while only 12.5% were located in Australia, compared to 34% in the overall total. Finally, 50% of the journalists were located in Fiji, compared to 40% in the overall data, and 40% of journalists were located in Australia, compared to 48% in the overall count.

There was one other notable variation in the data on the characteristics of the 1987 articles related to this theme, compared to the overall statistics. The category of the sources used did not follow the overall trends. In this group of sources, 62.5% were military or police sources, compared to 15.4% in the overall set of sources from 1987. There was a decrease in the number of government sources, from 48% overall to 25% in this group of articles. And there was an increase in the number of sources classified as a relative or friend, from 3% in the overall group of articles to 12% here.

In the 13 articles from 2000 describing George Speight, the analysis of the article and source characteristics revealed probably the most diverse results of any subset of articles studied as part of the thematic analysis and equally diverse when compared to the overall statistics. This diversity was particularly apparent in the nationality or ethnicity of the sources and the category of the sources, where a more even distribution of the main nationalities or ethnicities was apparent. In these articles, 25% of the sources were Australian, compared to 53% overall, 15% were Indigenous Fijian (25% overall), 20% were Indian Fijian (19% overall), and 35% were Other Fijian (11% overall).

The category of the sources in the 2000 articles related to this theme was also more diverse, with more even distribution between the main categories. There were less government sources in this group (10%) compared to overall (42%), less military or police sources (5%) compared to overall (6.5%), more sources who were relatives or friends (15%) than overall (4%), more sources in the judiciary/legal category (15%) than overall (2%), more sources who were experts or academics (10%) than overall (5%), and more sources from NGOs or community organisations (5%), than overall (3%).

One characteristic of the articles from 2000 related to this theme also demonstrated a focus on Fiji. Of the journalists who wrote these articles, 61% were located in Fiji, compared to 41% in the overall figures, and 38% were located in Australia, compared to 52% in the overall figures.

1987: The likeable coup leader

According to the descriptions which appeared in this group of newspaper articles, the character of the leader of the 1987 coup, Sitiveni Rabuka, relied on three influences: his military experience, his powerful physical presence which included his fondness for sports

like rugby and golf, and his work as a lay preacher. These characteristics offered an easy entry point for journalists, as these examples show:

> Fiji's new military strongman and Methodist lay preacher, Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, eased his powerful frame into the Prime Minister's chair yesterday with an air of supreme confidence (*Australian*, 15/5/87, p4).

> The soldier leading the Fijian military coup, Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, is a big, friendly, lay-preaching, former rugby player about whom it is difficult to elicit a harsh word from those who have known him.
> "He is quiet, a thoroughly good soldier and extremely likeable," according to Major Peter Fry, a New Zealander who did a three month course at Waiouru with Colonel Rabuka in 1968. "He always did his best. He would always put his back totally into anything that was asked of him" (*Australian*, 15/5/87, p11).

In particular, Rabuka's military experience was frequently referred to, particularly his leadership abilities. He was described by a classmate from a military training course in New Zealand as "an outstanding officer" (*The Australian*, 15/5/87, p4). One profile described his time as head boy of his high school, stating that "Even at that age, he showed exceptional leadership qualities and won the school's leadership prize" (*SMH*, 15/5/87, p9). There was also mention made of the fact that Rabuka had been awarded an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1981 for his work with the Fijian military in Lebanon as part of the United Nations forces (*SMH,* 18/5/87, p5).

One article, headlined "Coup leader gained military expertise in Canberra" (*CT,* 15/5/87, p1), tried to suggest that being trained in Canberra was integral to Rabuka's development. Clearly, while most of Rabuka's military expertise relied on experiences in Fiji and the Middle East, the article did make the link between Rabuka's military career and the likelihood of the coup being a success:

> The leader of the military takeover in Fiji, Lieutenant-Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka, trained at the Joint Services Staff College in Canberra in 1981.

> While Australia has trained comparatively few members of the Royal Fiji Military Forces, other countries, most notable New Zealand, have provided considerable training and technical assistance.
>
> Because of such training and experience in joint military exercises and in United Nations peacekeeping forces overseas, the Royal Fiji Military Forces is regarded as the most capable – and the largest – defence force among the independent South Pacific island nations.
>
> There is little doubt that the military leaders are capable of maintaining their grip on government if they desire.

Rabuka's religious convictions were also noted in a number of articles, including one with the headline "Rabuka 'relies on religion'", which noted Rabuka utilised "the Christian religion as a basis for the building of standards and the maintenance of discipline" (*CT,* 15/5/87, p4).

There were some negative descriptions of Rabuka, primarily in two articles in *The Sydney Morning Herald.* The first, with the headline, "The soldier who stole a Cabinet", stated that Rabuka was "motivated by resentment at the way he was passed over for the leadership of Fiji's armed forces nearly seven years ago" (*SMH,* 15/5/87, p1). Another article, with the headline "Strong personal grudges may have sparked coup", claimed amongst other things that Rabuka had difficulty in addressing the differences between military authority and chiefly authority, that he still held a grudge over being passed over for the leadership of the military, and that he had been investigated when a large sum of money had gone missing when he was president of the officers' mess (*SMH,* 18/5/87, p5). Even so, this same article described him as "an excellent soldier, dedicated and long serving", and "a former member of the Fiji national rugby team and at 38 still in superb condition" (*SMH,* 18/5/87, p5). In summary, apart from a few instances, the descriptions of Rabuka were generally positive.

2000: The unlikely coup leader

The balance between positive and negative profiles moved sharply towards the negative when George Speight appeared. Speight had a very suspect record as far as his business dealings were concerned, but the analysis of his personality and character were quite

scathing. On the first day of the coverage of the coup, he was pilloried, being described as everything from "politically naïve" to a "bullshit artist".

An article with the headline "Ambition runs out of control" categorised Speight as the most unlikely of coup leaders (*Australian*, 20-21/5/00, p1):

> Although he is an ambitious man, he is a businessman with no military background.
>
> He was a rising corporate star in Fiji until the fall of the last government, in which his father, Sam Speight, was a member…
>
> He is reported to have lost a mahogany hardwood contract and blamed the government. Fiji lawyer Timothy Naidu said Speight had "come off second best as a result of the change of government".
>
> He was sacked from Heath [an insurance broking firm] last year over allegations of misuse of funds.
>
> "George Speight was always a big bullshitter," said the [anonymous] Sydney insurance executive. "He was big on talk but no delivery."

Other articles also impugned Speight's record in business. Some were speculative: "Speight appeared also to have been involved in a pyramid selling scheme in Queensland" (*SMH*, 20/5/00, p9). Some were more forthright: "George Speight is an undeclared bankrupt. A week ago he pleaded not guilty in the Fijian High Court to extortion and exchange rate charges" (*SMH*, 22/5/00, p9).

Apart from his business dealings, the criticisms of Speights character began to accumulate. One of Speight's claims about himself was that he was a "son of Fiji", a proud nationalist. A number of articles condemned this claim (*Australian*, 22/5/00, p1):

> The people see him as a fraud, a would be dictator with a few guns and hostages but no credibility. A delusionist who issues decrees that go entirely ignored and almost unremarked.

> Sitiveni Rabuka, a master of coup making by comparison…, really put the boot in when he derided the fourth generation descendant of a white colonist as someone who cannot speak the native Fijian tongue.
>
> Speight promotes himself as a model of Fijian nationalism, while people laugh at his European name.

Speight's inability to speak the Fijian language was particularly noted, as it was an obvious indication of his heritage (*Australian*, 23/5/00, p4):

> Speight is not full Fijian either and he cannot speak the formal version of the language fluently. "He sounds like an American trying to speak Fijian," one who knows him well said yesterday.

As the coup progressed the media reports began to highlight Speight's increasing inability to deal with the pressure associated with being a coup leader. He was described as "an apprehensive and testy would be coup leader" (*SMH*, 22/5/00, p9) who was conducting "increasingly tiresome and uninformative media briefings" (*Australian*, 26/5/00, p5). His mental state was also called into question (*Australian*, 22/5/00, p1):

> There is increasing concern over Speight's mental health, which a diplomatic source called a "major worry".
>
> "George Speight is extremely tired and highly nervous and medical authorities are worried that he is losing his judgement," the source said.

The focus of Speight's ongoing coup was the parliamentary compound where the hostages were being held. The compound, which was filled with Speight's supporters, soon became a part of the picture which depicted Speight as on the edge and/or out of control, as evidenced by an article with the headline "George Speight's surreal garden party" (*CT*, 23/5/00, p7):

> George Speight took time out from his coup d'etat today to host the Fijian equivalent of an afternoon garden party.

> The world's latest terrorist or newest prime minister, depending upon your point of view, sat in the sunshine drinking kava with supporters on the lush green lawn of the Parliament he had commandeered at gunpoint.
>
> It was to those same lawns a few hours earlier that gunmen had dragged Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and held a gun to his head.
>
> Mr Speight wore open sandals, shorts and a floral shirt. Men kissed him, women hugged him. They all sang. Sitting cross-legged, they sent the refrain of island songs wafting through the tropical air…

One of the major concerns seemed to be the inability to predict how the events inside the parliamentary compound would proceed. An article which described the compound as "parliament-cum-political prison-cum popular playground" (*Australian*, 26/5/00, p5) enunciated the uncertainty involved:

> It pays to expect the unexpected in Speightworld, the latest fairground attraction of the South Pacific.

In summary, the events within the compound helped create the impression in the media that Speight and his fellow coup plotters were unlikely to succeed (*Australian*, 27-28/5/00, p21):

> Frankly, Speight's coup d'etat is a coup de farce – nothing short of a three-ringed circus, with all the regular freaks, possibly barring the Indian Rubber Man.
>
> The compound…, has all the hallmarks of Jonestown meets Hogan's Heroes, and all the illogical nuttiness and deceit of a One Nation rally.

Likeable versus unlikely

The depiction of the leaders of the respective coups within these articles could undoubtedly be considered as a significant factor in the overall impressions created about Fiji. The overwhelming image of Sitiveni Rabuka as portrayed in the articles from 1987 is that he is a man who is in control, and that being in control is a situation he has experience with and has

excelled at. One connotation of this kind of image is that, despite the dire situation in Fiji, despite the criminality associated with Rabuka's actions, his experience as a leader of men – as a military leader in Lebanon, as a physical leader on the rugby ground, or as a spiritual leader as a lay preacher – meant that some semblance of order would soon be restored to Fiji.

It is apparent that these descriptions of Rabuka are related to two of the characteristics described by Gans when he summarised the kinds of values which emanate from the news (Gans, 1979, p42-63). Gans suggested that two of the common themes are altruistic democracy, which reinforces the idea that democracy is the best form of government and that it should be maintained, and social order, which reinforces the idea that threats to social order should be dealt with (Gans, 1979, p42-63). Rabuka's role as a coup leader cannot be said to reinforce the cause of democracy, yet this is counter to the suggestion present in these descriptions that, given the strength of his personality and the depth of his experience, he has been able to maintain order in Fiji.

These contrasting notions are, to some extent, reflected in the contrasting kinds of sources which appeared in this subset of articles, especially when compared to the overall profile of sources, and to the profile of the sources in other thematic subsets. The description of Rabuka as a strong man, as a man in control, relied on articles which included significantly more military or police sources, significantly more Indigenous Fijian sources, and more sources located in Fiji, compared to the overall range of sources. Clearly, these kinds of sources are drawn from three areas where Rabuka had strong ties – from within the military, from within the Indigenous Fijian community and from within Fiji. It is, then, perhaps not surprising that such a positive depiction of Rabuka resulted, particularly a description which drew on the idea that social order was being maintained.

The depiction of George Speight in 2000 was at the other end of the extreme, compared to the 1987 depiction of Rabuka. The overall impression of George Speight as depicted in this subset of articles was as a man who lacked support, as a man who was dishonest, and as a man who had little hope of succeeding. He was seen as out of control, and, as a result, the future for Fiji seemed to be hopeless. The descriptions of Speight's personal flaws far outweighed descriptions of more positive characteristics.

The relationship between these descriptions and the kinds of sources which appeared in the articles which presented these descriptions is again a reflection of the influential nature of sources. The articles which portrayed Speight as unlikely to succeed generally drew on a more diverse range of sources, compared to the overall characteristics of all sources. The diversity was particularly apparent in the nationality or ethnicity of the sources, and the category of sources. Clearly, by drawing on a wider range of sources, with a wider range of relationships to the central protagonist, the impression created reflected a greater diversity of opinions, and perhaps a more realistic assessment of the character of Speight.

While acknowledging that the individual experience of each of these men – their careers, their successes, their personal attributes – no doubt contributed to the ways in which they were depicted, it is also apparent that different kinds of sources can focus attention on particular areas and highlight different kinds of characteristics.

The evolution of the Australia/Fiji relationship

For the purpose of this thesis, a theme has been defined as a common interpretation or perspective which relates to the topic of a news story and summarises a particular way of understanding an event. In a news story, the themes are a significant component in the version of events “which occur 'out there' in the world” (Goldman and Rajagopal, 1991, p111). If, as Pavasaris has argued, the hegemonic process is responsible for framing reality through “patterns of selection and omission, emphasis of certain themes and interpretations (Pavasaris, 1996, p103), then it is important to understand which themes have been emphasised in a given set of news stories. This has been the purpose of this chapter.

The three themes highlighted here were identified through a qualitative process which relied on accepted methodologies for a thematic analysis. This “search for and identification of common threads” (Aronson, 1994), was focussed on identifying perspectives which were closely related to the topic of the story, because this provided an obvious link to other aspects of this research, the analysis of the sources and the work of the journalists. Ultimately, these three themes were identified as the most prevalent in the data set – they appeared more often in this set of articles than any other theme.

The common characteristic of the themes discussed here is that they each demonstrated the evolving nature of the relationship between Australia and Fiji, and to a lesser extent,

between Fiji and the rest of the world. The first theme presents a clear interpretation of this transition, with evidence showing that Fiji was depicted and understood as a paradise, then as a paradise lost, and then as a part of the arc of instability. The second theme also depicts a transition, from responses based on limited understanding of the situation and domestic political point-scoring, to responses which suggest a more complex relationship based on a broader understanding of the causes and implications of the 2000 coup. Finally, the third theme also demonstrates a shift in the relationship. In 1987, the interpretation was that order needed to be maintained, and that Rabuka was a suitable candidate despite his illegal actions. In 2000, there was much more speculation, and almost a tacit acceptance that the troubles in Fiji were beyond control, especially given the erratic nature of Speight.

Obviously, as the themes and the profiles of the related sources demonstrate, these are all Australian interpretations of the coups. The themes are therefore common to the way Fiji is being understood in Australia. As such, evolution of the interpretations of Fiji are also Australian. It is the way Australia understands Fiji which has evolved. In many respects the fact that the initial and simplistic media depiction of Fiji has evolved into an interpretation of Fiji as a much more complex society in a more complex region is evidence of the deeper levels of understanding. The contest of ideas about Fiji, has broken down the old ways of understanding Fiji, rearticulated these ideas, and new ways of expressing ideas about Fiji have been formed (Turner, 1996, p197).

In expressing these new ideas, the media utilise new terminology to help build particular interpretations. The emergence of the phrase “arc of instability” is a good example of how the media can adopt and, to some extent, adapt the terminology of another hegemonic force within society, in this case academia. Seizing on a phrase which suited their purposes, in this case providing an excellent and appropriate shorthand summary description, the media were able to reinforce the rearticulated interpretation of events in Fiji.

CHAPTER 6: THE EXPERIENCES OF THE JOURNALISTS

In a mixed methods approach to research, such as the one used here, different methods of research with different epistemological foundations are used in conjunction with each other in order to present a "fuller understanding of the research problem" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p319). In pursuing such an approach, one of the accepted requirements is to establish complementarity between the different methods. It is not necessary for one set of data, such as a content analysis or thematic analysis, to be proved or disproved by the other set of data, such as the information gained through interviews. Instead, the goal is to be able to understand and elaborate on the results from one method in conjunction with the results from another method (Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, 2003, p353).

With the results of the content analysis and thematic analysis already presented, it is now necessary to see how the results of the interviews elaborate and increase the understanding of the other findings. How are we able to understand the main findings of the content analysis — an overall lack of diversity, a decrease in the use of the media as sources in 2000, and an increase in the use of Indian Fijian sources in 2000 — through the thoughts and experiences of the print and broadcast journalists who covered the coups in 1987 and 2000? Can the experiences of the journalists help to explain some of the main themes identified in the thematic analysis?

The examination of the experiences of the journalists will be organised around the different situational factors they faced while trying to do their work in Fiji. Subsequently, a focus on their efforts to find suitable sources will be presented. However, as an introduction to the interview material which relates specifically to the journalists' experiences in Fiji, it is worthwhile to more broadly examine the motivation and training of the journalists, in order to try and establish a picture of how the individuals approached their work.

Motivation, training and experience

Motivation is an important indicator of a journalist's attitude and approach to their work (see Tunstall, 1973, and Tuchman, 1978). A journalist who is motivated by a strong ethical or moral belief may be much more diligent in the way that they work, compared to a journalist who is motivated by the opportunity to advance their career. This kind of motivation often has its genesis in the reasons why a person chooses to become a journalist. A person who

chooses to become a journalist because they want to be famous is going to produce a different story to a person who chooses to become a journalist because they believe in the Fourth Estate ideals of the media.

Not surprisingly, the range of motivations amongst this group was diverse. For Doug Conway, the plan to become a journalist hit him like a bolt from the blue when he was about 18 years old. “I was reading a newspaper and it had a bloke’s byline in it. It suddenly dawned on me, for the first time in my life, that actual human beings write these things from different parts of the world. It seemed like a pretty exciting thing to do and afforded the opportunity to travel,” he said (Interview, 20/07/2005).[7]

Some had the desire to be reporters much earlier in their lives. Rowan Callick’s parents were in the media business — they owned a newspaper shop in England, which proved inspirational for their son (Interview, 5/05/2005). A natural sense of curiosity was also a common factor. Hugh Riminton said that as a child he was fascinated with the idea of exploring the world. “It was a curiosity to know how things worked,” he said (Interview, 14/9/2005). Trevor Watson was the same. “I like being involved in just about anything that’s going on in the world. I like talking about it. I decided when I was about 13 that I wanted to be a journalist and I worked on nothing else,” he said (Interview, 1/06/2005).

Family and upbringing was a significant influence, particularly on the way some understood the role of the journalist in society. Bernard Lagan came from a family with “a strong sense of social justice” (Interview, 6/04/2005). Michael Field wanted to “change the world and expose injustice”. “Coming from small town Whangarei, New Zealand, it was easy to see that getting the council to fix up potholes was just a small step from bringing about world peace,” he said (Interview, 21/06/2005). Mary-Louise O’Callaghan reiterated the role of the media as a watchdog. “I was interested in being on the inside, finding out the story behind the story… I believed that if a journalist was doing his or her job diligently, it was an important role to play in a democratic society,” she said (Interview, 10/10/2005). Hugh Riminton was also attracted by the status of the insider. “I had the sense that being a journalist would allow me to ‘know things’,” he said.

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[7] In order to maintain readability, referencing for the interviews conducted for this research will only occur in the first instance. A full list of interviews is included in the bibliography.

An aptitude for writing and English also influenced these future journalists. Malcolm Brown, Jim Shrimpton and Bernard Lagan all said that they liked writing, as did Mary-Louise O'Callaghan. "I enjoyed expressing myself in a written form," she said. Peter Cave worked on his school newspaper, and Rowan Callick did the same at university. Sean Dorney edited the James Cook University student newsletter, *Bullsheet*, while studying economics. Christopher Dore also studied economics. "My university education is in economics but I always had in the back of my mind an interest in newspaper writing," he said (Interview, 20/07/2005).

As well as these traditional kinds of motivations, the journalists also had fairly traditional career paths within the media. They started out with a variety of organisations, ranging from major media outlets in Sydney and Melbourne, to smaller, more community-focussed enterprises such as *The Nunawadding Gazette* (Doug Conway), and *The Daily Liberal* (Malcolm Brown) in Dubbo. Hugh Riminton joined Radio Avon in Christchurch, New Zealand, straight out of highschool. Bernard Lagan, also from New Zealand, got his first job at *The Dominion* newspaper. Jim Shrimpton's first job was as a copy boy at *The Evening Despatch* in Birmingham England in 1947 at the age of 15-and-a-half years. Peter Cave is similarly long-serving, almost entirely with the one organisation. "I started as an ABC cadet in 1970 when I was 18 years old. I've been with the ABC ever since, apart from one year," he said (Interview, 20/05/2005).

Some almost fell into the occupation. Sean Dorney's mother saw an advertisement for ABC cadetships and told her son about it. He applied and got the job (Interview, 20/04/2005). Richard Dinnen was studying law when a "happy accident" led to his journalism career. He got a job as a traffic reporter. From there, he ended up in the newsroom and decided he liked it (Interview, 20/04/2005). Good fortune also played a part in Jim Shrimpton's career. He was working as a journalist in his then home country of England when he got a surprise inheritance of 300 pounds from a great aunt he'd never met. Shrimpton decided to use the money to see the world. When he came to Australia, he met his future bride in Melbourne and, after further travel, ended up coming back to work for AAP in 1962 (Interview, 20/05/2005).

Regardless of where they were and how they entered the field, most of these journalists started at the bottom, as copy boys, cadets or, in Patrick Walters' case, a graduate cadet (Interview, 6/04/2005). It was, as Jim Shrimpton suggested, training via the stereotypical "school of hard knocks". The work experiences covered the many standard rounds of the young journalist, including general news, police, government and sport, working their way up to features, financial and investigative reporting.

The training took place on-the-job and included the basics such as shorthand and, for the broadcast journalists, voice work. The traditional view that on-the-job training was the most appropriate method was clearly supported by Trevor Watson, who was quite adamant that the best way to learn to be a journalist is to do a cadetship. "I come from the old school and I feel very strongly that journalism is learnt on-the-job," said Watson. He described himself as "very sceptical about academic courses". "I think that the most important attribute of a journalist is being perceptive. And I'm not sure you can learn that in a university environment," he said.

The actions of some of his contemporaries would seem to support this proposition — a number dropped out of university to begin work as a journalist. Christopher Dore completed a Bachelor of Economics, but cut short his journalism degree at the University of South Australia to move to Sydney for his first journalism job. Sean Dorney "did a couple of years of first year economics" before making the switch. Bernard Lagan started out studying surveying. David Robie did two years of a forestry science degree. Both Graeme Dobell and Mary Louise O'Callaghan only partially completed media degrees at RMIT. Michael Field did one year at Wellington Polytechnic. Some did complete their university education. Malcolm Brown initially dropped out of medicine, but went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts at Sydney University (Interview, 20/04/2005). Rowan Callick completed a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Theology and Sociology.

Later in their careers, some returned to university studies. In some cases, there was a general recognition that they needed to broaden or update their knowledge. Some may have also recognised, as Gans pointed out, that tertiary educated journalists may find it easier to access and relate to sources with a tertiary education (Gans, 1979, p122). Additionally, as mid-career journalists in an industry where most entry-level journalists had degrees, some of the journalists recognised that they needed to stay ahead of their pack. Graeme Dobell got a

Master of International Relations from ANU (Interview, 20/07/2005). Hugh Riminton did a Masters at Macquarie University in media. Mary Louise O'Callaghan got a Bachelor of Arts from Armidale. Michael Field was awarded a one year fellowship to study at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. David Robie has a Masters in Journalism from University of Technology, Sydney, and, more recently, a PhD in History/Politics from the University of the South Pacific. However not all were successful in trying to take up formal studies later in life. "I once tried to sign up for a journalism course at Queensland University," explained Peter Cave. "They said they'd rather have me teaching, so I ended up teaching rather than studying," he said.

Overall, it was common for the journalists in this group to have some university or higher education. However when it came to the specific tasks of the journalist, such as how to work as a foreign correspondent, on-the-job training was the only option. Christopher Dore said he did some internal training with *The Australian,* where there was a "strong transfer of information" between their foreign correspondents. Hugh Riminton also pointed to the support of colleagues. "I had an eminent mentor in Robert Penfold, Australian commercial television's longest serving foreign correspondent, who was my boss when I started in London," he said. Graeme Dobell underlined the lack of any systematic entry into foreign correspondence, with the story of a well-regarded and well-travelled BBC correspondent. Dobell explained that this correspondent was selected for his first foreign assignment — covering the Falklands War — when he was sleeping off a hangover in the office. After performing admirably in the Falklands, the correspondent's career blossomed.

While the journalists interviewed had education and training in many areas, none of the them had any formal training about Fiji or the Pacific region prior to their coverage of the coups. Only one, Rowan Callick, mentioned any language training — he did some training in Chinese and pidgin. The traditional role of the journalist as a generalist stands in the way of specialist types of training, such as language training, particularly as the work of a leading journalist does not allow much time for anything but on-the-job training. While language training may not have been hugely beneficial in the reporting of the Fiji coups, it is noteworthy that a group of correspondents who travel so widely has barely any language training.

The same people who would argue for on-the-job training of journalists would also undoubtedly suggest that there is nothing as valuable as experience. A journalist who has been to a war zone before is so much better prepared than a newcomer, as was demonstrated in some journalists' comments here about the difference between 1987 and 2000. The level of experience of this group of journalists was quite extensive, and reinforces the idea that these were amongst the best journalists in Australia at the time. Many had lived overseas as correspondents. Christopher Dore worked for the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong in the early 1990s. He also worked for two years as the Pacific correspondent from Wellington in New Zealand. Rowan Callick was also in Hong Kong, as the China correspondent for *The Financial Review.* Mary Louise O'Callaghan spent two years in China as a foreign correspondent, before switching her focus to the Pacific in 1987. Malcolm Brown worked for 18 months in London. Peter Cave had postings in Japan for three years, London for five years and Washington DC for two years. Graeme Dobell worked for the ABC for 3 years in London and 3 years in Singapore. Doug Conway also did a three-year stint in London for the ABC. Jim Shrimpton was London bureau chief for AAP on two occasions. David Robie also had significant overseas experience. He was the chief sub-editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* in Johannesburg, worked as features editor for the Aga Khan's *Daily Nation* in Nairobi. After travelling overland across Africa as a freelancer, Robie eventually settled in Paris and joined AFP (Interview, 9/11/2005). Significantly, the experience some journalists gained in covering the Fiji coups helped them to gain subsequent work as correspondents. For instance, after covering the 1987 coup for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Patrick Walters went on to set up the Indonesian bureau in Jakarta for *The Australian* in 1993, and lived and worked there until 1998. Hugh Riminton, who covered the 2000 coup for Channel 9, later got a job with CNN in Hong Kong. David Robie eventually started a freelance news agency focussing on South Pacific politics and social issues. His stories were sold to *The New Zealand Times*, *The Australian*, Radio Australia, *Pacific* magazine and other publications.

As well as being posted overseas as international correspondents, some journalists had significant experience as "parachute journalists", flying into locations where a major news event was occurring and then coming home afterwards. Bernard Lagan reported on the New Zealand Prime Minister's visit to Africa for *The Dominion,* then stayed on to cover an insurgency in Zambia. Malcolm Brown covered the controversial South African Springbok rugby union tour of New Zealand, and the 1991 Gulf War. Graeme Dobell reported on the

Falklands War in 1982 for the ABC. Some said they favoured this kind of work. Peter Cave's first such experience was when he flew into Darwin to cover the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy. "I decided I liked doing that sort of thing, where I flew in and out of major stories," he said.

Situational factors

There were a range of situational factors which had an impact on the way the journalists went about their work in Fiji. These included their background knowledge and experience of Fiji, their preparation time, the influence of the media pack, the restrictions on physical movements around Suva and Fiji, the restrictions on their telecommunications, the difficulty of reporting from inside the parliamentary compound in 2000, and the different kinds of physical threats and intimidation they faced in 1987 and 2000. Each of these situational factors will be explored, particularly their relevance to the lack of diversity amongst the sources and the kinds of themes which emerged in the stories.

Background knowledge

One of the longstanding criticisms of foreign correspondents is that they lack adequate background knowledge. As Knightley has suggested, "they race from one humanitarian disaster to another, with little time or background knowledge to grasp the issues behind the conflicts they cover" (Knightley, 2003). It is not surprising, then, that the same comments were made about the Australian media in Fiji. Vijendra Kumar, the editor of *The Fiji Times* in 1987, said most journalists had absolutely no idea. "Very few of them knew very much about Fiji, except that it was a South Sea island where they went for a holiday," said Kumar (Interview, 22/03/2005). "Very few of them knew much about the political system or the names of the leaders. So it was a surprise for us, and I think it was a big learning experience for the Australian and New Zealand journalists," he said. Another Fijian journalist, Laisa Taiga, recalled that in 1987 the critics of the media coverage of the coup suggested that the only reason some journalists were selected to go on assignment to Fiji was that they had a valid passport (Interview, 26/05/2004).

While such criticisms cannot be applied across the board, it is true that in individual cases, some journalists had very little or no experience of Fiji. Two had never been to Fiji prior to 1987 — Malcolm Brown and Bernard Lagan. Some had only experienced Fiji in the way which most foreigners experience the country — as tourists. Doug Conway had been there

on holiday, and so had Graeme Dobell. "I had been there just as a tourist, but I'd never been there for the ABC," said Dobell. Mary Louise O'Callaghan was the same. "Prior to May 1987, I knew Fiji only as a holiday destination," she said, though she was aware of the recent election of a Labour Government. Hugh Riminton had also visited as a tourist in 1985, though his first trip to Fiji had occurred in the 1970s, when he was still at school. "Curiously, my uncle had been Fiji's chief magistrate in the 1970s and my family visited there when I was a child. Through this I had a better-than-standard awareness of the race and political issues," said Riminton.

The lack of experience with Fiji was partly because generally the Australian media ignored the Pacific. "Australian newspapers never reported anything that happened in Fiji as far as I remember, unless it was something sensational," said Vijendra Kumar of *The Fiji Times*. The sparse amount of coverage was very event-centred, and primarily when such events were seen to directly involve Australia. The news was about "us", not "them". For example, Patrick Walters covered visits by the Australian Foreign Minister, and major government-to-government meetings, like the South Pacific Forums. "I was not an expert in Fijian politics," said Walters. "I was well aware, in the run up to 1987, of some of the tensions with the Bavadra government," he said.

In contrast to those journalists who had little experience of Fiji, there were a number who had been interested in the Pacific, both personally and professionally, for a significant amount of time. One of the first to demonstrate a professional interest in the South Pacific was Jim Shrimpton. "In the 1970s, the South Pacific was not being covered. There were no correspondents based there," said Shrimpton. He tried to convince AAP management that the coverage they were getting from places like Fiji was sub-standard. "You had to rely on stringers, who get off their bums late in the month, realise they haven't sent you anything, and send 20 stories in the last three days of the month and expect to get paid for them. And of course, they were all either out of date, or they lacked all the facts necessary for a comprehensible story on AAP's wires," he explained. Eventually, his arguments were taken on board and AAP agreed to send him to Suva on a three-month trial in 1980, to see if a Fiji-based correspondent was viable. Shrimpton said he worked as hard as he could during the trial period, and finished by writing a comprehensive report recommending a permanent correspondent in Fiji. He was then posted to London for two years. When he returned to Australia, he "started nagging again" and was eventually sent on a two year posting to Suva,

becoming the first Australian-based correspondent in Fiji in May, 1986. “I had been following Fiji affairs and had a good idea of what was going on. I started developing sources as soon as I got there,” he said. Twelve months later, the first coup took place.

AAP was not the only international news agency interested in the Pacific — AFP often sent their correspondent, Michael Field, to cover events in the region. “I first visited Fiji in 1974 and have made numerous and extended trips to Fiji ever since,” he said. David Robie, had also reported on the Pacific for AFP, and had worked as a freelance reporter in the region. “I had visited Fiji several times and had covered at least three general elections, including the 1987 one immediately prior to the first Rabuka coup,” said Robie.

The ABC were also committed to Pacific coverage. Trevor Watson was South-Pacific correspondent for ABC and Radio Australia — he’d been to Fiji four times in 1987, including to cover the election. “Once the Labour Party had won the election, I knew there would be problems with an Indian-dominated government,” he said. Another long-serving ABC Pacific Correspondent, Sean Dorney, had first got interested in the region when he went to PNG to work with the National Broadcasting Commission of PNG. He then got the job as the ABC Correspondent in Port Moresby and eventually served 12 years in that position. Although he was never based in Fiji, Dorney did cover events in PNG’s Pacific neighbour. He had been to Fiji a number of times and had spent two weeks there covering the 1982 election. As well as maintaining correspondents in the region, the ABC also occasionally sent journalists from Australia to covers specific events. Peter Cave had reported on a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Fiji, which allowed him to develop a “passing understanding of Fiji and their people”. “I got a good impression of some of the racial undertones and the power plays that were going on there,” he said. Similarly, Sean Dorney said he travelled to Fiji to cover the fallout from a 1999 *Four Corners* report which claimed that former Fijian Prime Minister, Ratu Mara, was the descendant of cannibals.

Like Dorney, Rowan Callick was also based in PNG. Callick worked for 11 years with Word Publishing, a company which owned the pidgin newspaper *Wantok* and the *PNG Times*. During this time, he also worked as a freelance correspondent for *The Financial Review* and *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Callick visited Fiji a number of times and had

done some preliminary planning to launch a newspaper there. "I'd become somewhat familiar with the place," he said.

The experience of covering the 1987 coup led some journalists to maintain their new-found interest in their Pacific neighbour. In the period between 1987 and 2000, the exposure levels to Fiji were, not surprisingly, quite significant. Mary Louise O'Callaghan said by the time of 2000 coup, she had an extensive knowledge of the country and many contacts within the islands. As Pacific Correspondent for *The Australian,* Christopher Dore travelled from his base in Wellington, NZ, to Fiji, to write a story on the Fiji textile industry. Malcolm Brown, from *The Sydney Morning Herald,* had spent a week in Fiji to cover the 1999 election that saw Mahendra Chaudhry win the Prime Ministership. Although he had not covered the 1987 coup, the increased media interest in the Pacific meant Richard Dinnen, from Radio Australia, had been to Fiji a dozen times, covering critical issues like the process of constitutional reform. "Being there through that was very informative," he said.

Conversely, there were other journalists who admitted to a basic lack of knowledge. "What had triggered the coup, where it was going, who was really backing it, where was the Army, were they really behind it, why weren't they doing anything, what was Ratu Mara's position — all this was actually pretty baffling," said Rowan Callick. "You are trying to report the absolute fact of what's going on as best as you possibly can," said Doug Conway. "You are trying to paint a picture of not only what's happening but how it's happening — the flavour of the moment and the atmosphere and the feeling in the country. It's a rapidly changing and broad canvas you are trying to take in," said Conway. Even someone like Sean Dorney, who had a lot of experience in the Pacific, wasn't immune. "I have got an enormous amount of sympathy for someone who is tossed into a story when they are really floundering for information," said Dorney.

As far as the general level of understanding of Fiji was concerned, the journalists with New Zealand origins argued that they had closer ties with Fiji and the rest of the Pacific than their Australian-based counterparts. "Even at high school in New Zealand I had personal contact with Indigenous Fijians. And I have had long and close ties with Indo-Fijians for over 30 years," said Michael Field. Bernard Lagan said there was always a lot more interaction between New Zealand and the Pacific countries than there was between Australia and the island nations. "There was a lot more Pacific island migration to New Zealand. I had gone to

school with Fijian boys. So I knew at least something of the country before I went," said Lagan. This closer relationship also extended to the news reports they produced. "Living in Auckland kept me far more in touch with issues generally in the Pacific than would have been the case had I grown up in Australia, " said Hugh Riminton. "Auckland was then like the Pacific's Manhattan, and Pacific issues were treated almost like domestic issues," he said. Vijendra Kumar supported this suggestion. "The New Zealand journalists had a little bit more knowledge about Fiji than the Australians, because New Zealand had closer contacts with Fiji," he said. "Fiji got a lot of coverage on New Zealand radio and in New Zealand newspapers even before the coup," he said.

Even though this closer relationship between New Zealand and Fiji may have had some cultural value, it didn't necessarily lead to more concrete knowledge of the place. Bernard Lagan, a Kiwi, was one of the journalists who admitted that he did not know about the Indian Fijian side of Fijian society. "I didn't really know very much at all about the history of Indian migration to Fiji or the very big role they play in Fijian society," said Lagan. "And I certainly did not know much about the tensions between the ethnic Fijians and the Indians," he said. Others, including Australians, were similarly uninformed about Indian migration before they first started reporting on Fiji, including Mary Louise O'Callaghan and Christopher Dore. "Obviously, when you end up covering an event like that, you pick it up pretty quickly," said Dore. The exact nature of this information and where it is "picked up" from is uncertain. Is it from other journalists or from sources?

The different levels of understanding and experience of Fiji meant the journalists had a range of preconceived notions of the country and its people. "My preconceived ideas were probably only the general tourist one — that Fijians were big, happy, friendly people," said Peter Cave. Doug Conway wasn't sure if he had formed any opinions of the place prior to covering the coups. "If I did, they would have all been really positive ones. I thought really highly of the people there and really loved the country," said Conway.

Rowan Callick said his ideas about Fiji were not the typical tourist images of an island paradise. "I saw Fiji as a middle-class Pacific society in which utilities and opportunities were moderately high. Education was pretty good. And the colonial legacy seemed to be a positive one," he said. Hugh Riminton acknowledged that his experience in Fiji changed his opinion of the country. "One misconception I had was that ethnic Fijians were a gentle

people, with an easy-going, smiling nature, without a skerrick of violence in them. Such notions are as stereotyped as any other form of xenophobia. When it came to it, they could be very violent indeed," he explained. Mary Louise O'Callaghan had the same myth shattered, but the disjunction occurred in the time between 1987 and 2000. "In 2000 I was taken back by the level of violence engendered by the coup. My 1987 experiences had been of 'gentlemen's' coups, with one or two exceptions," she said.

Malcolm Brown suggested that having preconceived notions was not in keeping with the most traditional, impartial, approach to journalism. "I had no preconceived ideas," he stated. "I just took it as it came." However it was clear to some locals that many international reporters did have preconceptions about what a coup was and how it might proceed. "My impression of the foreign journalists was that they had a very slim idea of what Fiji was about — about our political system, about the reasons for the coup, about the racial makeup of the country, about the land situation — they had no idea about all of these things," said Vijendra Kumar. "Most of them were expecting to see violent demonstrations and upheavals of the worst kind. I think quite a few of them were disappointed there was no bloodshed," he said. According to Fijian journalist, Robert Keith Reid, the same kind of attitude prevailed in 2000 (Interview, 27/05/2004). He said Australian journalists went to Fiji with a "Pacific burning" mentality. "They came here with a pre-conceived notion of what they were going to report about and that's what they reported," said Reid. Laisa Taiga, a Fijian journalist who covered the 2000 coup, noticed the same problem. "When they come with no knowledge of the country, they have preconceived ideas. A coup in Africa? A coup in Fiji. It was reflected in some of the footage they used," said Taiga. Josephine Prasad, another local journalist, said that there was a clear sign that some foreign journalists had pre-conceived notions about Fiji (Interview, 24/04/2004). "You could tell by the questions they asked," said Prasad. "They did not understand the issues involved," she said.

For the leader of the 1987 coup, Sitiveni Rabuka, the preconceptions of the international media which had the most significant impact on the way the coup was reported were their ideas and beliefs about the standards expected in a democratic society. "My main bone of contention was that it was a western type media looking at an indigenous problem in an Asia Pacific area, that was basically run by western values, that are now the values of Australia and New Zealand because of the dominance of the European communities in those two countries," said Rabuka (Interview, 25/5/2004). "Because of that I felt that it was a

patronising attitude. The treatment of the indigenous Maoris and the indigenous Aboriginal people by the media and the people in the countries themselves, I felt that we would be subjected to the same sort of prejudice," said Rabuka.

As these Fijian commentators suggest, these kinds of preconceptions are borne out of a lack of experience. Patrick Walters acknowledged that many Australian journalists were unprepared. He also highlighted the link between a lack of background knowledge and the kinds of themes in the stories. "With hindsight, of course, if you'd had a much better grounding in the politics of Fiji and first-hand knowledge of the protagonists in this drama, we would have served our readers considerably better than we obviously did," said Walters. Other journalists' comments also made this connection between background knowledge and the way important elements of the situation were represented. Hugh Riminton admitted to an ignorance about the ethnic Fijian social structures and the beliefs and standards of the society. "I over-estimated the attachment ordinary ethnic Fijians had to the idea of democracy. Many ethnic Fijians saw democracy as just another colonial trick to go along with the use of indentured Indian labourers," said Riminton.

The lack of experience also had a direct impact on the kinds of sources which could be accessed. "It's very hard just to arrive in the middle of a crisis and then develop sources who are going to trust you," said Rowan Callick. "You can find those people, but only through being led to them by people they already trust," he said. Malcolm Brown said he understood why potential sources were wary. "Any intelligent person getting a foreign journalist ringing them up and not knowing the background is going to be cautious," said Brown. "The hardest thing was coming in cold," said Patrick Walters. "We certainly didn't have the personal knowledge and network of Fiji and indigenous leaders that we would have liked to have had to have made a really good call on the way things were going to turn out," said Walters.

It was also clear to some that even a modicum of experience in Fiji would have been advantageous. The size of the country meant journalists could potentially gain insights relatively quickly. "It's a very small place," said Trevor Watson. "It's a very good environment, in that sense, for journalists, because it is not difficult to get to know a lot of very senior people in a short space short of time," he said. Another advantage, according to Patrick Walters, was that the culture is reasonably open. "Even in those difficult circumstances, there was a degree of openness that you wouldn't have found in similar

situations in other countries," said Walters. "That's not to say that the Great Council of Chiefs were particularly talkative. But individuals, once they got to know you, could give you a reasonable steer on the way things were moving," he said.

Further evidence of the value of background knowledge, preparation time and in-country experience is demonstrated by the work of Jim Shrimpton, who had been based in Suva for 12 months prior to the 1987 coup. Not only was Shrimpton the first journalist to report the coup to the rest of the world, he also got the exclusive story about the release of the politicians who had been held hostage by the coup plotters. This key moment in the story of the coup came at a time when Fiji was saturated with international media. Yet it was the journalist who had been on the ground the longest who got the story, thanks to a tip-off from a contact he had established during his time in the country.

Preparation time

For a journalist, nothing beats being on the spot. Colonel Rabuka and his armed soldiers walked into the Parliament and declared their intentions at 10am. At about 10.20am, Jim Shrimpton drove past the government buildings and noticed an army truck parked outside. "That's not unusual. The Army plays football in the park next door," said Shrimpton. He then went into town to chase up a press release at the Sugar Growers Council office. The office girl asked him why he wasn't down at Parliament House. "Colonel Rabuka's taken over the government in a military coup," she said. In light of the dominance of the elite sources in most aspects of the coverage of the Fiji coups, the fact that the first piece of information emanated from a non-elite source — an office worker — is somewhat incongruous. Within minutes, Shrimpton was at the Ministry of Information, where he collected a one-paragraph statement. Then he raced home to send out a telex, letting the rest of the world in on what was happening in Fiji. Having spent the previous 12 months in Suva, Shrimpton was arguably the best prepared of all the journalists who covered the coup. Comparatively, his competition in Australia were sent into a kind of frenzy in trying to prepare for this assignment.

When Shrimpton's telex hit the news agency wires on the eastern seaboard of Australia, one journalist was, at that very moment, writing an article about Fiji. Rowan Callick, of the *Australian Financial Review*, had recently completed a series of articles about the economy and politics in Fiji following the election of the Bavadra government. "I'd actually said that

the Fijian elite appeared to be giving the new Labour government the benefit of the doubt. Even business was saying ‘lets see how they go — it doesn’t seem to be revolutionary’. And I was just writing a tourism piece, saying it was a good place to visit,” explained Callick. Then the phone rang. It was his boss, Alan Kohler, who told him there had been a coup in Fiji. “And I said ‘You’re joking Alan’. And he said ‘No, no. It’s not a joke. Get on the next plane.’” Callick had always perceived Fiji to be a model for other Pacific region countries, so he was very surprised about the news. “It was a terrible shock.”

Shrimpton’s telex sent many journalists running. Malcolm Brown at *The Sydney Morning Herald* was given an hour to get to the airport. Others who were quickly making plans for the flight east were Hugh Riminton at Macquarie Radio and Trevor Watson and Peter Cave at ABC. Bernard Lagan from *The Dominion* in New Zealand was driving to work when he heard the report on the radio. He got to the office as quickly as he could.

The management decision on which of their journalists would be sent to Fiji needed to be made quickly. The decision was generally based on a combination of two factors: experience and timing. “I was considered a good hand and had some knowledge of the issues,” said Hugh Riminton. “And there was a Qantas flight leaving for Nadi in three hours time,” he added. “I was probably the most experienced on-the-road reporter available,” said Peter Cave. Bernard Lagan decided he would put his hand up, and he was chosen to go. “I had some experience and seniority, but it was really the luck of the draw,” said Lagan.

Patrick Walters had to take matters into his own hands. When the news of the coup first broke, he was in a meeting with a bureaucrat. “I got the news when I got back to the office, so I was a bit behind the eight ball,” said Walters. His paper had already chartered a Lear jet and was filling it with a range of journalists. “I was a bit concerned about this because I was writing defence and foreign affairs. I was a bit concerned I wouldn’t be on the list,” said Walters. He was prepared to plead his case and his argument relied on his personal relationship with a potentially important source: he knew the captain of the Australian Navy ship which was in Suva at the time, and he suggested that this might be helpful, especially as far as communications were concerned. This helped convince management, and they gave him a seat on the jet.

Others also put themselves forward for the job. Mary Louise O'Callaghan had just been appointed South Pacific correspondent based in Wellington, New Zealand, but at the time she was on leave in Melbourne. When the news broke, she raced to the phone, but the first call was not to her office. "As soon as I heard about the coup I booked myself on the next international flight. And then I rang the office to ask if I should go," she said.

There was very little time to do research. By chance, Mary Louise O'Callaghan had recently asked the librarian in the Canberra bureau to make up a file on all of the South Pacific countries, in preparation for her new job as South Pacific correspondent. She grabbed this file on the way out the door. "I read this on the plane on the way over, but it was not much use as there was so little coverage of Fiji and nothing at all in depth," she said. Most others, though, could only rely on wire copy. "There was no internet, no time to visit a library or bookshop — even if useful titles had been available. And the newspapers had not come out before I was in the air and on my way," said Hugh Riminton. This self-referential approach, relying on other journalists to provide background and research, was also in evidence in the number of journalists used as sources, particularly in 1987. Malcolm Brown joked that his research consisted of being briefed by the taxi driver on the way to the airport. He also had a pile of briefing notes from the SMH library, as well as the wire service reports.

Peter Cave was another who grabbed all the available wire reports. He then left on the first available flight, via Auckland, with fellow ABC reporter Trevor Watson, and Red Harrison of the BBC. When they landed in Auckland they found out that the NZ pilots union was not willing to allow its members to fly into Nadi because they considered it a war zone. The overnight delay wasn't a complete waste — Cave went into Radio New Zealand and read everything he could about Fiji. This trio arrived in Nadi on the morning of May 16, which was within 24 hours of them first hearing of the coup.

Despite the lack of time to prepare and a lack of sources in Fiji, some journalists filed stories before they left Nadi for the capital Suva. "I filed for the first edition of the paper from Nadi airport and then jumped on the last flight to Suva," said Mary Louise O'Callaghan. Indeed, the content analysis revealed that the three newspapers filed 33 stories on the first day of coverage, May 15. It was the third highest number of stories filed on any day of the first week of coverage. The characteristics of the 55 sources used in the May 15 stories were more limited in comparison to other days of coverage. While overall, the sources belonged

to 16 different categories, only 5 categories were represented on the first day: government, military/police, person on the street, relative/friend, and journalist media. Overall, sources were located in 18 different countries. In the reports from the first day, they were located in only 6 countries: Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, PNG, England and Japan. Finally, 10 of the 33 stories filed on May 15, 1987 (30%) were attributed to news agencies. This was the highest number of agency stories used on any day of the coup coverage, including the 2000 coverage. Together, these findings reinforces the idea that there was too little time to prepare adequately.

The journalists saw a direct relationship between their limited preparation time, the sources they used, and the content of their stories. "In 1987 the greatest challenge was trying to get an understanding of a country I knew so little about under enormously tight time constraints," said Mary-Louise O'Callaghan. "My lack of established contacts meant I had to spend a lot of time trying to find people who could not only give me information but explain things to me and then assess if I could rely on them. There was not enough time to do this and keep up with, and file on, the day's events," she said.

Malcolm Brown said that being parachuted into a place with little or no background knowledge is a common problem for journalists, and ultimately it can be disastrous. "You can't see things in perspective. You just don't know anyone. You can make dreadful blunders," said Brown. Patrick Walters found it difficult to get an overview of the power struggle taking place, particularly the roles and motivations of the different players. In particular, Walters said that in the first days of the coup it was difficult to establish how much support the coup leaders had from the indigenous political elite. "That was quite difficult to read in the first few days, I think," said Walters. "You knew Rabuka obviously had the support of a core group of military. But trying to ascertain whether he would sustain the support of the Great Council of Chiefs, for me, coming in cold, was probably the biggest issue." Hugh Riminton also found it difficult to judge the influence of the different players. "The murky Taukei movement remained misunderstood and unmeasured for that critical first week to ten days after the coup," said Riminton.[8] "The role of the Great Council of Chiefs was also underestimated — by me, at least — in the early stages of Rabuka's coup,

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[8] The Taukei movement is a controversial indigenous nationalist group who claim to represent the rights of Indigenous Fijians, particularly in relation to land rights.

although it should be recognised that Rabuka played up the significance of the council to give legitimacy to his actions," he said.

The lack of preparation was similar in 2000, particularly for those who had not covered the 1987 coups. As Pacific correspondent for *The Australian*, Christopher Dore was based in Wellington, New Zealand, in 2000. He heard the news that there was a coup in Fiji at about midday on May 19. He took the first plane to Auckland and then the first plane to Suva, arriving on the night of the coup. The transition from the safety of normal working conditions to a potentially inflammatory situation was fairly swift. "The day of the coup I started in the office in Wellington and by 11 o'clock that night I was in a car in Suva with fires burning outside and a pretty tense situation," said Dore.

Doug Conway was in the AAP newsroom in Sydney. "The Editor in Chief came to me and said 'There's been a coup in Fiji — you better get on a plane.' And that's exactly what I did," said Conway. Conway said he was chosen for the assignment on the basis of seniority. "One of my briefs is to do major Australian and regional events," he said. Michael Field was the same. "Fiji has always been my patch — no decision was needed, it was simply a question of the next plane," said Field.

Technology was to play a major role in the coverage of the 2000 coups compared to 1987, including in the way journalists were able to prepare. "In 2000, there was much more research material readily available, including the Fijilive.net website," said Hugh Riminton. "I boarded with a solid file of print-offs from websites, much of it from official sites, plus wire copy," he said. Doug Conway printed off all available wire copy to read on the plane. "So by the time I hit the ground I was as fully briefed as I could possibly be, in that short time, about what was happening. You've really got to hit the ground running in a case like that," said Conway. Even so, the reliance on this kind of information, which is often written by other journalists, is a common criticism of foreign correspondents (see Pedelty, 1995). Arguably, this reliance on recycled information also leads to a recycling of sources and themes.

For the journalists who had been in Fiji in 1987, there was less catching up to do. "I had followed events in Fiji more closely after 1987 than I had before, so I had maintained a working knowledge. I had read a number of books on Fiji in the interim," said Hugh

Riminton. Some had even had recent experience in Fiji. “I had 10 years of direct covering of Fiji for AFP: I had been in Fiji just a month before the coup on assignment,” said Michael Field. Rowan Callick said in 2000 he had more contacts in more varied places. In particular, Callick spent some time at the exclusive Fiji Club, with business and government representatives. Overall, he felt his sources in 2000 were better. “They were new people and probably in a better position. Clearly, in my view my coverage of the 2000 coup was much better than my coverage of 1987, for that reason,” said Callick. This idea that sources are better because they are more connected to the elite sections of society, for example the kinds of people who might attend an exclusive social club, reinforces how the media often favours status of sources over diversity of sources.

The media pack

Another factor which potentially limited the range of sources and led to the emergence of particular themes was the influence of the media pack. In situations such as these, where the majority of the journalists are ‘parachuted’ into an unfamiliar location, it is no surprise that they tend to congregate. From a work perspective, they attend the same press conferences and seek information from the same people. This professional familiarity often extends to the out-of-work hours, particularly when they are accommodated in the same hotel. In any crisis situation, particularly in small countries like Fiji, it doesn’t take long for a particular hotel to become the accommodation of choice for international journalists. In Suva, the obvious choice was the Travelodge.[9] “It was in Suva opposite the parliament building,” explained Hugh Riminton. It soon become the home-away-from-home for many international journalists, including Rowan Callick, Patrick Walters, Bernard Lagan and Mary-Louise O’Callaghan.

In 1987, the ABC reporters, with the BBC’s Red Harrison in tow, had tried to get into The Travelodge, but couldn’t get a series of rooms together. Instead, they chose The Courtesy Inn, on a hill on the edge of Suva. “One of the reasons we chose it was because it’s got a good view of the whole town,” said Peter Cave. As it turned out, there were other advantages in not being at The Travelodge. “It separated us from the ‘Scoop’ atmosphere down there. It wasn’t a huge policy decision. But it did mean that we were sometimes not

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[9] In 1987, this hotel was called The Travelodge. By 2000, it had changed owners and become The Centra Hotel.

caught up in some of the waves of emotion that wash over the press," explained Graeme Dobell. The other advantage was that the military didn't initially know where they were. "They weren't organised enough to know. They thought all the international press were down at The Travelodge. We managed, at least for a few days, to stay clear of them," said Peter Cave. The journalists at The Travelodge were much more at the mercy of the military. "When the curfew was imposed, everyone there was locked in," said Dobell. Apart from any action by the military, there were times when it appeared to local journalist, Laisa Taiga, that some foreign media were unwilling to venture out from the hotel. "I thought they were very confined. They just stayed at The Travelodge. I think they must have been fearing for their lives," said Taiga. Robert Keith Reid, then editor of *Islands Business*, agreed with this claim. "It's 80% fair to say that they reported from the bar," said Reid.

Individual journalists soon began to form into little groups, which were sometimes based around the different kinds of media, such as broadcast or print, or whether they were in direct competition with each other. Hugh Riminton said he made a "friendship of convenience" with Leon Gettler of the (then) *Sun News-Pictorial* and New Zealand-based radio reporter, Andrew Shenton. "We covered each other's backs and shared information. I had no other co-worker from the Macquarie network," said Riminton. Patrick Walters said he also had good support from other journalists, particularly Malcolm Brown and Mary-Louise O'Callaghan, who worked for the same company as Walters.

Bernard Lagan said there was a good level of camaraderie, particularly at The Travelodge hotel. "Rabuka's aides would bring a statement to the hotel and *The Herald* people or *The Australian* people would go and photocopy it for everybody and hand it around," said Lagan. In particular, Lagan recalled the cooperation amongst the photographers. "All the photographers from New Zealand and Australia tended to assist each other quite lot," he said. "I think they ended up building one big darkroom (at the hotel)." Obviously, this kind of camaraderie can be hugely beneficial in a crisis situation, especially for the less-experienced reporters, but clearly it contributes to a lack of diversity amongst sources used in the news.

Invariably, the concentration of foreign media, particularly at The Travelodge, led to accusations that they operated as a pack. "There was a pack mentality and there always is," said Malcolm Brown. Brown said he tried to steer away from it and keep his reporting

objective and fair. Peter Cave said the pack mentality was worst at The Travelodge, and the military took advantage of this. “We made a decision to stay away from them, because we knew there was a certain amount of manipulation going on there,” said Cave. David Robie agreed. “At the Suva Travelodge they were very influenced by roundabout gossip, perceptions and the influence of a few old hands,” said Robie. “It didn't matter that the perceptions might be wrong, there was a sort of consensus view of the coup,” he said.

Mary-Louise O’Callaghan said the pack mentality is partly the nature of the beast and partly an outcome of the situation they were in. “Most of us did not have much knowledge of the context in which things were happening, making things hard to predict. Everyone was frightened of missing something, missing the next big development,” said O’Callaghan. The lack of experience in and of Fiji exacerbated the problem. Rowan Callick, who had more experience than most in Fiji, said the lack of familiarity and the competitive nature of the media were definitely factors. “For people for whom it was a strange country with intense competitors next to them, they were always understandably worried that they would miss out on an important development in the story,” said Callick. “So invariably, there was a lot of sitting around in the hotel watching who went there,” he said.

At least one journalist felt that the claims of a pack mentality were excessive. Hugh Riminton said that most journalists will not give away their story ideas to others. “Nor, in television, do you tend to see your rivals’ product. Nor do you read their newspaper articles or listen to their radio bulletins. In international reporting, even in our own region, there is much more room to move, many more lines of approach in covering the story, and far less interest in what other people are writing,” he said. Despite Riminton’s objections, the ability of journalists to pursue different kinds of stories using different kinds of sources is not reflected in the results of the content analysis, which showed a marked lack of diversity.

There were, however, some clear exceptions to the “pack rule” mentality. Michael Field was adamant. “I made it a point not to work with other foreign media,” he said. Mary-Louise O’Callaghan was also cautious. “Regarding colleagues from other papers, I tended not to hunt with the pack,” she said. David Robie, a freelancer, also avoided other media. “I sought to be as independent as possible and especially tried to not be influenced about what other journalists might be reporting. I relied on my own judgement and experience,” said Robie. This independently-minded approach, which included an emphasis on securing exclusive

sources, meant these journalists were able to write stories with more depth and relevance, according to the local journalist, Laisa Taiga. “I think you could notice that these were different kinds of stories, compared to the ones from the pack,” said Taiga. In particular, the pack approach drew criticism for ignoring the complexity behind the reasons for the coup. “They had to simplify it into something that they could understand — the race issue,” said Taiga.

The journalists who returned to Fiji in 2000 again recalled good support from the other members of the international media. For Hugh Riminton, who was working with Channel Nine by this time, it was partly to do with the size of the crew he travelled with. As well as his own television crew of three people, he worked in co-operation with producer Nick Farrow and cameraman Les Seymour from Nine’s *Sunday* program. “As the week progressed we were reinforced by reporter Simon Bouda and another cameraman, Cameron Harvey,” said Riminton.

Bernard Lagan thought the difference between 1987 and 2000, in terms of how the media behaved, was that it was more vigorous and had less of a pack mentality. “I think people were more competitive in terms of trying to get their own material,” said Lagan. “Everyone was covering the daily events in the compound, so it was pretty hard to get anything out of there that was exclusive, although it was all important,” he said. In Lagan’s opinion, the television crews were more likely to operate as a pack.

Others extended this criticism more widely. “It (the pack mentality) was bad and it was responsible for some shocking and inept journalism in Fiji,” said Michael Field, who later wrote extensively on the shortcomings of the coup reporting. Sean Dorney agreed. “It’s just one of those constants about journalism — you’re going to have people flung into a situation with very little background and very little knowledge trying immediately to become total experts,” said Dorney. “People are desperate to find out what everyone else is doing,” he said. Clearly, in finding out “what everyone else is doing” there is a greater likelihood that sources will be less diverse and the same themes will be more prevalent.

Physical restrictions

One of the easiest ways for the authorities to control the press in a crisis is to limit their ability to move around freely. The more physical restrictions placed on journalists, the less

likely they are to be able to access a diverse range of sources for their stories. In 1987, Rabuka's troops set up roadblocks and checkpoints all over Suva, which made it difficult for journalists to get access to people who they wanted to talk to. Bernard Lagan said it was hard to travel around Fiji during the 1987 coup. "The military had the place under control. They had the roadblocks pretty well set up. The press could get out but were mostly confined to the immediate surrounds of the hotel," said Lagan. "In 1987 there were some no-go areas for journalists and their vehicles, notably around the Parliament and radio station — and *The Fiji Times* office once it had been taken over by soldiers," explained Hugh Riminton. "There were also roads blocked near the PM's residence, where Bavadra and his Cabinet were initially taken as prisoners," he said. The journalists would try and use their media credentials to get through such roadblocks. "At times these worked at other times they didn't," said Mary-Louise O'Callaghan.

The restrictions were worse for those journalists staying at The Travelodge. Peter Cave, who stayed at The Courtesy Inn, thought The Travelodge crews were under much more surveillance. "They were, to a large extent, under the direction of the soldiers who controlled the front doors of the hotel," said Cave. "There were a couple of times where there were riots and people were beaten up, and they just didn't let the journalists out of The Travelodge while it was going on. Because we were at The Courtesy Inn, we were able to get there and get back and file," he said.

There was also the night-time curfew to contend with. Rowan Callick said it was a limitation to be "stuck in after dark", as sources could often be developed at social gatherings. "The usual free socialising, which is a great way of getting information in Pacific countries, was slightly closed down," said Callick. Of course, the kinds of sources who would be "freely socialising" with western reporters and the kinds of places where this socialising took place, such as the exclusive Fiji Club, would suggest that this kind of networking would only result in journalists getting access to elite sources. The military soon introduced a ban on most activities on Sunday, which added to the frustration of the journalists. "Nothing could be done on Sundays. It was totally overboard," said Jim Shrimpton.

Many of the foreign journalists did not travel beyond Suva. "Some of them did go out into the villages and into the rural areas to try and gauge the reaction from the people. I think they got a mixed bag of reactions," said Vijendra Kumar. "It wasn't that easy to get up into

the back blocks," said Bernard Lagan. Rowan Callick and the English reporter, Robert Milliken, from *The Independent,* hired a car and travelled to the west of the main island, Viti Levu, as well to the main city on the northern coast, Raki Raki. "I tried to get out of town to get some view of how people felt about events further afield," said Callick. "But because telecommunications were so hard, I was a bit nervous about getting too far away," he said.

Perhaps the most significant physical restriction was not imposed on the journalists, but on a group of potential sources. Most members of the government were being held hostage by Rabuka. Some journalists were able to maintain indirect contact with the hostage politicians. Peter Cave was in touch with a journalist who was a relative of Prime Minister Bavadra. "He was someone we knew professionally. He was the only conduit that anyone had to the Prime Minister," said Cave. "I relied pretty heavily on some people at the New Zealand High Commission who I wasn't able to identify. They were in touch with some of the incarcerated cabinet, through informal channels through Rabuka," said Bernard Lagan. Even when the incarcerated politicians were released, they were still not often used as sources. "They (the international media) were not able to get hold of the Opposition people," said Vijendra Kumar. "I don't think any of them were able to get hold of Dr Bavadra, for example, and have a full interview with him," he said.

In 2000, the journalists felt that they had a lot more freedom to travel around Suva and the rest of Fiji. "In 1987 there were troops and they were policing everything. In 2000, that was not the case," said Rowan Callick. "There were villages and other places that put blocks up. But mostly it was a bit bizarre because the events happening in the parliament were like in a bubble. A sort of life carried on vaguely as normal in the rest of Fiji and even in Suva," he said.

Initially, George Speight's men established roadblocks around the parliamentary compound. Police and soldiers also established their own roadblocks in the same area. "It wasn't always clear in whose interest some roadblocks were erected," said Hugh Riminton. "Sometimes it was not possible to get through to the Parliament. Initially, the army sealed off the parliamentary precinct, but they later relaxed that rule, re-applying it occasionally from time to time according to caprice," said Riminton.

Some journalists were issued with media passes. “I was issued with a pass that said ‘Coup Two’,” said Rowan Callick. He used his pass to get through any roadblocks. A night time curfew was also in place, but the enforcement of it was not very strict. Doug Conway said he went and got a curfew pass. “Then it dawned on us that we were supposed to have a new curfew permit daily, which was ludicrous. You just didn’t have time. I just ended up creatively altering the dates on mine,” said Conway. At one point, after his pass had been altered four or five times, Conway was stopped by a policeman. “He just laughed when he looked at it,” he said. In the end, he said that the curfew didn’t effect how he did his work.

The only place where media credentials were deemed necessary was to gain access to the parliamentary compound. “There was no problem getting around Suva, except getting in and out of parliament,” said Peter Cave. “The Speight gang demanded credentials before allowing journalists into the parliamentary precinct,” said Hugh Riminton. Ultimately, though, having Speight confined to one part of Suva opened up opportunities for the journalists. “I was both better informed and helped by the imprisonment, in effect, of George Speight at the parliamentary precinct,” said Hugh Riminton. “Because he couldn’t move, it was much easier to travel around the rest of Suva interviewing a range of people,” he said. Indeed, Malcolm Brown said this was how he was able to access exclusive sources. “Everyone was focussed on Suva and the rest of Fiji was suffering,” said Brown.

Restrictions on telecommunications

The differences in technology between 1987 and 2000 had an impact on the way the journalists went about their work. In 1987, the technology used by journalists to file stories was almost primitive, compared to modern standards. There were no mobile phones, no laptops, no internet, no satellite connections. Indeed, the very first news of the coup was transmitted to the world from a bedroom at Jim Shrimpton’s Suva house on a teletype transmitter at a speed of 50 words a minute. Even for 1987, this was a fairly basic method for transmitting stories. “It was a pain, really, because it’s a very old-fashioned way of doing it,” explained Shrimpton. “But had I got the new-fashioned way, you wouldn’t have heard about the coup for two days,” he said.

To this day, Shrimpton is still not sure whether the authorities knew about his transmitter. This was a huge advantage as he was thus able to avoid the telecommunications problems faced by the rest of the foreign media. Rowan Callick said that it was a “nightmare” to try

and file stories. “It was very difficult to file, physically. There were very few lines,” he said. Callick had a contact in the PNG High Commission who helped him to file some of his early reports by fax. “I did receive a complaint from someone at head office who said ‘Why have you filed by fax. Couldn’t you have filed by direct input?’ And I said ‘When was the last time you covered a coup?’.”

For the rest of the media, the most common way to file was to phone through their story, usually at their hotel. The reliance on such a basic method of telecommunication meant the journalists ability to communicate with their head office, primarily to file their stories, was open to manipulation by the military. The hotel switchboards soon became a point of control. The soldiers regularly disconnected the lines when journalists were phoning through their stories. “The hotel phones were monitored by goons at the hotel switchboard, and the calls were cut off at the first hint of anything they didn’t like,” said Hugh Riminton.

Some journalists tried to avoid the hotel switchboards, but they didn’t always avoid the trouble. “To escape the hotel censorship I went to a public phone in a boarding house, where I was filing when soldiers came in and arrested me,” said Hugh Riminton. Malcolm Brown, was trying to phone through his story on Fairfax’s open line to Sydney when he was cut off. So he went down to the central telegraph office to continue the call. “I saw soldiers then but I went in and booked my call,” said Brown. “As soon as I got connected with the Herald copytaker and started to dictate my story, a soldier came and told me I was under arrest. I told the copytaker, who was quite alarmed. And then they packed me up and took me back to the motel.”

While this kind of primitive censorship was frustrating, according to Graeme Dobell the reality was that the military were unable to shut down the foreign media in the same way that they had shut down the local media. “They couldn’t really control us too much. The only way they could do that was by not letting us into the country. The censorship model that the Israelis and others practice is that if you don’t submit to censorship you will not be allowed to stay in the country,” said Dobell. “The Fijian Military were making it up as they went along. They never got to the point of being sophisticated enough or organised enough to be able to actually run a censorship model. And they couldn’t really control all the phone lines, because if they did that everyone else in the country would suffer,” he said.

The Sydney Morning Herald used their considerable financial resources to solve the telecommunications problem. “Because phone connections out of the country were so hard to get, Fairfax (the parent company) kept a phone line open all day from our hotel to the Sydney office,” explained Mary-Louise O’Callaghan. From a management perspective, the cost of the open line would no doubt have been offset by the amount of time the journalists were able to dedicate to other aspects of reporting.

The journalists who were not staying at The Travelodge had more luck avoiding the attention of the military. “They were restricting phone calls in and out of The Travelodge,” said Peter Cave. “Until they realised we were there, we weren’t under those restrictions at The Courtesy Inn,” he said. Bernard Lagan tried a different tactic. He typed out his stories and took them to the telegraph station to be faxed in. “I’m pretty sure it was being read by military censors,” said Lagan. “I never suffered, in terms of not getting anything through, but I think one or two of the Australians said they did,” he said.

For the broadcast journalists, there was the added obstacle of trying to get their tapes out. “TV tapes were being confiscated,” said Hugh Riminton. “It was only through considerable ingenuity that any TV pictures got back to Australia,” he said. Peter Cave from the ABC explained how they got some of the more important tapes back to Australia: “We had to resort to subterfuges, like sending tapes out with pigeons — finding a tourist or someone who was leaving that day and giving them a tape to take out,” he said.

Overall, the more limited kinds of technology available to the journalists in 1987 had a significant impact on their work. Essentially, in order to deal with the problems associated with filing their stories, the journalists had to commit a considerable amount of time to this task — more time than they would normally require. As such, they were not able to dedicate time to other tasks, such as accessing and developing alternative sources.

The advances in technology made filing stories a much easier proposition in 2000 compared to 1987. Peter Cave had mobile phones and satellite phones. “Most of the landlines were either cut or intercepted but mobile phones worked,” said Cave. He also used the internet to file his stories using FTP (file transfer protocol). “There wasn’t the general move to shut everything down,” said Cave. Bernard Lagan used the same kinds of technology. “So filing was an awful lot easier and a lot faster,” said Lagan. Michael Field, who filed using his

computer, said it was impossible for any local censorship — if the local network was down, he had the back-up of the satellite phone. While the internet could have been used for research, most foreign reporters did not bother as connections were still quite slow. “I didn’t really use the internet but I was able to download directly into the Sydney mainframe. I can’t remember really big problems establishing a line,” said Rowan Callick.

While the technology was more advanced in 2000, on occasion it led to different kinds of problems. Christopher Dore, who stayed for long periods of time in the Parliamentary compound with George Speight and his supporters, found filing by mobile phone a little precarious, as he had to read out his stories in front of the people he was writing about. “I basically had to write my stories in a notepad and I had a mobile phone and I called the copytakers. I had to literally sit there on the phone and call my stories in — read them out loud with people around,” said Dore. “I don’t know whether they understood or listened too closely. Certainly they would have heard key phrases,” said Dore.

Graeme Dobell said the new technology, particularly mobile phones, changed the way journalists went about their work in Fiji, with an almost constant dialogue between the journalist and the head office, regardless of the location of the journalist or the time of day. “It ties you to the (editor’s) desk much more closely, which in some ways means you have to file more often. I was filing a lot more in 2000 than I ever did in 1987,” said Dobell. The added pressure to file meant, again, that time was at a premium. In this sense, the instant communication with Australia did help save time in certain circumstances. “The one great thing it does do is that they (the editor’s desk) can ring you up with a stupid idea and you can tell them there and then ‘this is a stupid idea’, and have the argument with them, rather than them sitting there for three hours working out how they are going to use this stupid idea,” he said.

2000: Inside the compound

The bizarre situation whereby supporters of the Speight coup in 2000 were let inside the Parliamentary compound where the hostages were being held, presented some unique challenges for the media, especially when they were also given permission to enter the compound. Peter Cave said the media were obligated to go into the compound. “It was the only way to find out what was happening in there,” he said. “In many ways it was a collective decision,” said Christopher Dore. “There was a lot of foreign media there and

there were a lot of locals who went in. I guess in that situation you feel a bit more comfortable," he said.

Graeme Dobell said that the decision to go into the compound was not a tough one to make, although it was a well-considered one. "Journalism in a conflict situation is always about balances. What are you prepared to risk, what is your return?" said Dobell. "I am a very cautious correspondent. I have always said that good correspondents are cowards," he said. To that end, Dobell instituted a few basic rules to try and reduce the risk. "One of my rules was that, by all means, we were going to go back and forth across the lines into Parliament, but that we were not going to linger on the line of control. There aren't many basic rules in conflict journalism, but one of them is that you never situate yourself on the lines of control. That's when the shooting incident happened — it was because cameras were situated right on the line of control, which is, I think, always a very dangerous place to be. If you have to cross the line of control you make sure everyone knows you are going across the lines of control and you do it very openly." Additionally, Dobell said he tried not to spend too much time inside the compound. "We didn't hang around inside. If we wanted to interview Speight, we'd go in and do it and then we'd get out," he said. At times, Dobell did stay inside Parliament longer periods of time, but he tried to stay aware of what was happening. "You just try and remember that there are real stakes. The stakes are real, there are guys with guns, don't let your guard down too much and play by a few basic rules," he said.

Christopher Dore was surprised that journalists were invited into the compound. He was amongst the first group of media to go in. "At that point I made the decision that I would not leave the compound, not knowing whether they would let us in again," said Dore. "So I spent the first week living inside the compound, even sleeping in there. There was a radio guy from Australia who was there for part of that period. And there was certainly a number of Fijian journalists working for the local media — radio and the two local papers — who did the same thing," he said. "I think we actually slept in the parliamentary canteen, or certainly where the kitchen was. They basically cooked the meals for everyone, including the hostages and the hostage takers. I think there was food available from there (for the media) but I actually can't remember having food there. I think some of my colleagues also brought some food in, when they came in for press conferences."

Inside the compound, where many supporters of Speight and the coup plotters had also gathered, the atmosphere was often tense. “Certainly, there was a nervous anticipation about what we might be confronted with,” said Christopher Dore. “When you were inside there with Speight, these guys were pretty red-eyed, hyped up. It was really hard to know what was in their minds. It was uncomfortable to be inside with them,” said Rowan Callick. Christopher Dore said he was particularly cautious about the villagers and other supporters of Speight who had been let into the compound. “The guys who were holding the guns, more or less, their leadership knew who we were, what we were doing there and were using us to get their message out. In that sense, they were not going to harm us. But it wasn’t so clear that some of the villagers who came in there were aware of that, or understood the dynamic of it as much,” said Dore. “There was certainly a degree of tension, because there were just so many people and so few of us. It was really unclear what was going to happen,” he said. “There was lots of speculation about special forces — British special forces, Australian special forces, and the Fijian military — raiding the compound at any time. So there was quite a lot of trepidation at times.”

Adding to the tension inside the compound was the fact that, with the media being so close to the coup plotters, there was a suggestion that the journalists could be unduly influenced by Speight and his supporters. This kind of situation can lead to the so-called Stockholm syndrome, whereby hostages who spend a long time in captivity can begin to adopt the views of their captors. For a journalist, this would be a clear risk to their ability to stay objective. However, Christopher Dore said he never felt compromised, and he didn’t think other international media could be accused of such behaviour. “My reports wouldn’t reflect any sympathy towards Speight at all. I can’t think of any foreign journalist who would have,” said Dore. He did recognise that there might have been some concern in this regard with the local media, who were more susceptible because they were closer to the story and potentially influenced by the tribal and ethnic powers which they had grown up with. “The one case that I have in my mind, that sticks out the most, was an Indigenous Fijian radio guy being too close to some of the ideas of the coup leaders, and this caused tension with some of his fellow Indigenous Fijians,” said Dore.

Contrary to claims of an outbreak of Stockholm syndrome, the journalists who stayed inside the compound for considerable amounts of time were often physically intimidated by the coup plotters. “George Speight's gang held me and several others hostage one night,” said

Michael Field. “Occasionally, journalists were held hostage for varying periods of time,” said Peter Cave. Following these incidents, the tension levels increased. According to Graeme Dobell, a couple of the younger New Zealand journalists took fright. “Basically, all of the New Zealand journalists got in their cars and fled. They filed stories saying we are under threat and we are leaving. They actually flew home to a heroes welcome,” said Dobell. “I had a couple of legitimate phone calls from editors in Sydney saying ‘When are you pulling out?’. And I said ‘We’re not. There’s absolutely no reason to pull out. I know what the New Zealanders are saying and I know why they are saying it but I think it is a very silly bit of poor judgement.’ It wasn’t a great moment for New Zealand journalism,” he said.

As the days passed, the atmosphere inside the compound swung from threatening to farcical. “The entire coup became, in many ways, very comical — especially the fact that there was incredible access and daily press conferences,” said Christopher Dore. Individual feelings of impending doom sometimes coalesced into moments of high collective stress for the media. “At one point, I was genuinely concerned about my safety and considered leaving. The feeling I got, and it was passed to me from local journos, was that something was going to happen,” said Christopher Dore. “And at that point, I think every single foreign journo left. I considered leaving, but decided not to. It was a weird moment in the conflict in many senses. It just kind of built to a crescendo of almost panic, then nothing materialised,” said Dore. Even so, the heightened levels of tension and the close contact with Speight’s supporters had the potential to influence the kinds of themes presented in stories by the journalists who had spent considerable amount of time inside the Parliamentary compound. Naturally, it would have also limited their ability to gain access to a range of sources.

Finding reliable sources

The search for reliable sources was influenced by many of the other situational factors, such as the limited experience of Fiji, the limited time to prepare, the influence of the media pack, and the physical restrictions placed upon the journalists. In combination with the normal journalistic standards of source suitability, which inevitably favour elite sources, there was a clear connection between the lack of reliable sources and the lack of diversity amongst the sources.

In 1987 there was a very limited amount of information from official sources within Fiji. Jim Shrimpton said this made the process of checking the reliability of any such statements very difficult. “It was a challenge at first. It was hard to get information,” said Shrimpton. “Some of my esteemed colleagues who dropped in from Sydney, not getting the information they wanted from either side of the political spectrum, would talk to Indian taxi drivers,” he said. This claim that taxi drivers were commonly used as sources of information was a common one, though not something borne out by the results of the content analysis, which showed that only 3 of the 794 sources were taxi drivers. The content analysis probably does not fully reveal the extent to which the journalists relied on sources like taxi drivers for their information. The accusation that a journalist relied on information from a taxi driver is a cliché, and almost certainly used to disparage the journalist involved. Under the normal practices of journalism a taxi driver is not likely to be regarded as a reliable or reputable source, as they would be lacking in status and authority. This kind of attitude amongst journalists could contribute to the potential for the news to reinforce the status quo by only relying on elite sources. However, it would not preclude the journalist from using a taxi driver as a source of information and not necessarily a source to be quoted in a story.

A major cause of the lack of reliable information in 1987 was the decision by Rabuka to close down the local newspapers and Radio Fiji. There was only limited amounts of co-operation between Australian and Fijian media, and mostly it was an outcome of the fact that *The Fiji Times* was owned by the Australian media company, News Limited. “What did happen was the local journalists, who were far more clued up on what was happening, became a sort of conduit of information for the foreign journalists,” said Vijendra Kumar. “A lot of them would come and talk to us and get background information and find possible contacts to talk to. That was how they went about getting their information,” said Kumar.

While some of this information exchange with local media occurred on the spot, some had its origins in longer relationships. Trevor Watson said his experience as the South Pacific correspondent had allowed him to develop relationships with local journalists. “I’d developed a rapport with the journalists in Fiji, and an understanding that we all believed in the same kind of thing,” said Watson. Rowan Callick said that his prior experience in the Pacific also counted in his favour, and he had particularly good relations with journalists from *The Fiji Sun* and *Islands Business*. “It was helpful having that organic link with people from some time before,” said Callick. David Robie said his relationship with local media

was based on mutual cooperation. “My local colleagues were helpful, but I was also helpful to them in other ways,” said Robie.

A number of other journalists had very positive support from the local media, including Patrick Walters, Bernard Lagan, Peter Cave, Graeme Dobell and Mary-Louise O’Callaghan. Primarily, the local journalists provided advice and access to their contacts. “Most were extremely helpful and valuable in assisting me with information, contacts and understanding of events,” said O’Callaghan. Clearly, the local media were able to appreciate the kinds of sources which would be most suitable, making the international journalists’ jobs much easier.

As well as assisting the international media, the local media would also, on occasion, provide criticism. Graeme Dobell was friendly with the staff of Radio Fiji and would often drop into the station. “They’d tell me what they thought of what I was doing,” he said. This kind of gentle criticism sometimes leaned towards bitterness, according to Trevor Watson. “Commercial media outlets in Australia had to scramble to get people to Fiji to cover the story — people who had never thought of Fiji as anything other than a nice place to go for a holiday, and who knew absolutely nothing about the place, about its history, its cultural makeup, its ethnic makeup and so on. Certainly, I can understand how there was a degree of resentment on the part of local journalists,” said Watson.

Some of this resentment may have also stemmed from the feeling that the local journalists were being taken advantage of, particularly in relation to the issue of translation. At various times, some international journalists relied on locals to translate particular materials, although, as Patrick Walters pointed out, the translators were never paid. “We relied on local journalists to help us with that,” said Walters. Hugh Riminton said translators would have been valuable in monitoring the local Fijian-language radio broadcasts. “It was through some unofficial translation that I learned that Rabuka declared the foreign media were telling lies and were an obstacle to the rightful aspirations of the Fijian people. This led to a distinct change of mood among the ethnic Fijians and I have reason to believe contributed directly to the subsequent violence directed against journalists,” said Riminton. Clearly, the value of translating the Fijian-language reports was recognised, but the ethnocentric tendencies — not having the language skills themselves but not being prepared to pay for translations — meant a potentially valuable source of information was not fully utilised.

The level of interaction between the foreign media and the local journalists was much greater in 2000. Generally, there was a lot of praise for the work of the local media. “I think that, overall, the local media in Fiji covered the story a lot better than the visiting media. The visiting media relied enormously on the local media for leads, ideas and things to follow up,” said Sean Dorney. “The local media had become educated, they’d become a very serious local media, particularly the Indian reporters,” said Bernard Lagan. Graeme Dobell said the diversity of the Fiji media in 2000 was unique to the Pacific. “It was probably the richest media mix in the Pacific, much richer than Papua New Guinea, much richer than anywhere else by a long shot,” said Dobell.

Doug Conway said it was great to have co-operation from the local journalists. “The big proviso is that you are dealing with people you can rely on,” said Conway. He said the local journalists were happy to trade information and sources, but also helped with logistical aspects, such as where to get good meals. “Time is so valuable that anything you can do to save time and help each other is a real boon,” he said. Christopher Dore said the locals gave him a much better understanding of the situation. “Because there was a lot of speculation about the motivations, the local journalists were very helpful in getting more of an insight into the issues Fiji and Fijians were grappling with,” said Dore. Michael Field said his relationships with local media were “completely invaluable”. “I was enormously grateful for the fact that all my years of coming to Fiji, of sharing news and contacts and resources with them, and just being plain friends, paid off,” said Field.

In particular, Hugh Riminton found the staff of Fiji TV to be very astute. “I spoke frequently with the very able news chief, Richard Broadbridge, and one of his senior reporters in particular was a very sharp observer of the political undercurrents,” said Riminton. Graeme Dobell said the Fiji TV bulletin was worth watching. “With their resources, they were doing a bloody good job. Channel Nine thought so — they were buying exclusive rights to the service,” said Dobell. He was also impressed with the radio services. “Radio Fiji was doing a pretty good job. And the commercial FM station had a couple of good reporters who broke a lot of good stories,” he said.

The closure of the local media in 1987 had an intriguing effect on the circulation of information in the local community, an effect which became a problem for the foreign

journalists. Hugh Riminton said the population resorted to a series of increasingly enthralling rumours, many of which were relayed to journalists. “On one day, the Indians in Suva lay in terror, awaiting the rumoured arrival of an army of Fijian thugs from outlying areas walking to town with cane knives. Reports of deaths and ethnic murders spread everywhere,” said Riminton. Jim Shrimpton heard similar rumours from seemingly reputable sources: the Indian Fijian politician, Krishna Datt, told Shrimpton that seven Indian Fijian bodies had been found in a field. Shrimpton’s other sources said the story was not true, and he chose not to go ahead with it.

Other rumours were sometimes reported. Hugh Riminton recalled that a New Zealand reporter, Barry Soper, reported that Prime Minister Bavadra had been smuggled onto a New Zealand naval ship in Suva Harbour. “Soper was a well-respected NZ political reporter, and his story caused a buzz of checking, but I certainly did not report it because I couldn’t confirm it,” said Riminton. “As it turned out, the report was false,” he said.

The main source for many journalists in 1987 was the leader of the coup, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka. “From the Army’s point of view it was a fairly carefully controlled message, but we had daily access (to Rabuka),” said Patrick Walters. “The primary source was Rabuka, because he would have a press conference at least every day, sometimes two,” said Bernard Lagan. While press conferences were reasonably regular, getting a one-on-one interview with Rabuka was more difficult. Peter Cave described it as “hard, but not impossible” to talk to Rabuka. At press conferences and in interviews, Rabuka was able to display the strength of his character. Jim Shrimpton said the force of Rabuka’s personality did have an impact on journalists. “Most of us liked him. He was a twinkling-eyed rascal,” said Shrimpton. As AAP correspondent in Fiji for 12 months prior to the coup, Shrimpton had played golf with Rabuka and occasionally met him at social gatherings, so perhaps he was more susceptible to the charm of the man. However, Rabuka also seemed to generate an immediate hold on the journalists who had just flown in to cover the coup, particularly the female journalists. “Rabuka was very approachable — he impressed the female reporters especially,” said Robert Keith Reid.

Hugh Riminton found Rabuka to be a reliable source of information. “He spelled out his motivations, what he had done, what he intended to do. Events proved him pretty much spot on,” said Riminton. In this sense, a person who says they will do something and keeps their

word could be classified as a "reliable" source, regardless of whether the actions they are taking are morally or legally acceptable. Peter Cave was more sceptical, perhaps because initially he had determined that the actions of the coup plotters had a direct influence on whether they could be trusted as reliable sources. "I don't think that a lot of the military briefings were reliable. At the time, I regarded the coup as illegal. As a result, you were very careful of what you were told by the military," said Cave. As the coup progressed, Cave's opinion of the military sources declined further. "They were in a fair degree of disarray. During dealings with them, they often had arguments between themselves about what they were going to do," he said. According to Cave, many military officers were scared that if the coup collapsed, they might face the death penalty.

In 2000, it was perhaps no surprise that the international media were again drawn to a charismatic Indigenous Fijian at the centre of the conflict. George Speight had many qualities which made him an ideal source. "George was made a bit of a hero, come anti-hero. Everyone was agog with Georgie. He was the sort of star of the show, and that was understandable at first," said Rowan Callick. "For many people, he was the start and end of the story. He was loquacious in English, he'd lived in Australia, he appeared to have this huge grudge, and he'd captured the whole cabinet. To be fair he was understandably commanding quite a lot of attention," said Callick. Even the 1987 coup leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, recognised the attention paid to Speight. "In fact, at times I felt that Speight was the hero in a lot of the things that were going on. Maybe it was his visibility, to put his view across, and the fact that he was more friendly to the media…," said Rabuka. The other important aspect which reinforced Speight's media profile was that, despite the fact that the coup plotters were holding hostages inside the Parliament, they were still accessible. "It was possible to go into Parliament and talk directly to George Speight," said Peter Cave. "He made himself available. It was possible to talk to his various Lieutenants, as we did, to put them live to air on mobile phones," said Cave.

Very quickly, though, Speight's media performances began to falter. "With every would-be dictator there is degree of hyperbole," said Bernard Lagan. "In Speight's case, there was a hell of a lot of it," said Lagan. "He was very keen to talk and give his views on everything in the world — Castro-type ranting that went on and on," said Rowan Callick. Hugh Riminton said Speight loved muddying the waters with vague conspiracy theories. "His aim, I think, was to inflate the level of support he had in official circles, and also to hint that other key

figures were involved whom he would name if necessary," said Riminton. "This presumably was, subtextually, to warn his enemies that he could otherwise 'expose' them as co-conspirators. He was also keen at different times to assert his own primacy in the coup — when things were looking good — and spread the culpability, when things were not," he said. Rowan Callick said that, apart from anything, Speight never had anything new to say. "After reporting his views once or twice, they became very repetitive. And then he contradicted himself constantly, so he became not so hugely valuable," said Callick. "But the captives were still there, so obviously you had to keep an eye on what was going on inside that place," he said.

Ultimately, most journalists decided that Speight was just a spokesman for the real forces behind the coup. "I don't think anyone ever believed that George Speight was the leader of the coup. As we sat there listening to him talk about it, I don't think anyone believed a word he said on that front. In fact, I don't think anyone really believed what Speight said about anything," said Christopher Dore. Towards the end of the hostage crisis, Speight's press conferences descended into a farce, and often became quite heated. "They became quite bizarre — journalists having arguments with him about some of the stuff he was saying," said Dore. "In many cases, it was the foreign media who just couldn't believe some of the stuff he was saying. It just didn't make sense. It didn't add up. And he was up for the fight. I think he was getting pretty bored by the end of it as well," he said. "He held some of these extraordinary press conferences inside the Parliament for those of us who were, strictly speaking, hostages," said Doug Conway. "He wouldn't let us out either and we there at the point of a gun," he said. Hugh Riminton said that Speight played up to the international media from within his own bunker, but was unable to sustain the performance. "He was amusing to the media, but for all his theatrical flair, was unable to control it. He would have been a clown but for the hostages he held," said Riminton. The lack of credibility extended to Speight's representatives, particularly his press secretary, Jo Nata. "He just talked absolute rubbish the entire time. They contradicted themselves constantly, and I certainly pointed that out in a number of stories," said Christopher Dore.

Obviously, Speight stood in the way of the media talking to the hostages. "There was no real, reliable, accurate word about how the hostages were being treated, exactly how many of them there were, who they were, what condition they were in, were they being mistreated? There was very sketchy information about that," said Doug Conway. Speight

and his supporters also acted as a buffer between the media and those who were actually behind the coup. “We had trouble getting access to the rebels themselves. Speight and his people took it upon themselves to speak for them,” said Bernard Lagan. “It would have been much better if we could have spoken directly to the people carrying the guns, to understand their motivations,” said Lagan. “I still think, to this day, that they haven’t admitted what was really going on and what was really motivating them,” said Christopher Dore. In particular, Dore said he would have liked to have spoken at length to Ratu Timoci Silatolu, a Member of Parliament who Dore described as a “shady character”. “He did appear, in many ways, to be leading it, and was a little more difficult to talk to,” said Dore.

With their main sources proving inconsistent at best, the search for alternative sources began, with most journalists turning to the military. Christopher Dore said he found the military commanders to be efficient and reliable, even though there were lots of conflicting rumours about the role of the military in the planning of the coup. “I think they were pretty straight forward and they were obviously managing the situation. They were very good to deal with,” said Dore. “There were regular briefings from the rest of the military and from the police, and from the remnants of the government,” said Peter Cave. “They were all direct sources — you didn’t have to report second hand. All the principal players were available, so to a certain extent it was quite open,” said Cave. Sean Dorney thought the availability of the military was “a little astounding”. “They were very media savvy,” said Dorney. “The Fijian Military actually have a far greater understanding of your needs as a journalist than, say, the Papua New Guinea military, who can be incredibly obnoxious and restrictive,” he said.

Dorney also found the police to be reasonably accessible. “And I knew a few of the politicians and other people,” said Dorney. The High Commissions were also tapped for information. “We did try to get comment from the Australian High Commission in Suva, but while they were extremely helpful in behind-the-scenes ways, they did little or nothing on the record,” said Hugh Riminton. Bernard Lagan had more luck with the NZ High Commission. “The New Zealand embassy moved quite a lot of their people into the hotel, because they felt that their building may not be secure. So that made for a bit more interaction,” said Lagan.

Other members of the Fijian hierarchy — the public servants, the leading businessmen, the ethnic leaders — were not so approachable. “A lot of the people in positions of authority saw the media as something that you avoided at all costs,” said Richard Dinnen. “Whether it was a deliberate strategy or whether it was just that they didn’t feel comfortable doing it, the fact was that for people like us who rely on a high standard of confirmation of material and being able to subsequently prove it if we were challenged, it would often kill the story for you because you just couldn’t get the right degree of certainty about it.”

Clearly, though, the reliability of any source was subject to various forces, and it had to be constantly re-evaluated. “Some sources were more reliable on some areas of information than others, on some days more than others. Like all sources, as a journalist you needed to assess where your source was getting their information and what their motivations were,” said O’Callaghan. In order to account for these differences, one of O’Callaghan’s practices was to test what one source said by running it by another, more trustworthy source. Rowan Callick suggested the reliability of sources had a cultural element to it. “It does actually happen to be the case that in the Pacific sometimes people will say things that they think you want to hear, or make claims that they have no way of being able to fulfil,” said Callick. Tendencies such as these were particularly challenging for many journalists, particularly as the coup plotters portrayed their actions as a conflict between different ethnic groups. The ethnic origins of potential sources became a consideration, though not an overriding one. For example, no ethnic group was immune to the accusation that they were spreading rumours. “There were, of course, Indian spokespeople talking about armed revolt. I discounted that from the start,” said Rowan Callick. “You had to work out what weight to give them. That’s always harder for journalists in places you don’t know,” said Callick. Bernard Lagan heard the same story from a different perspective. “There were one or two members of the Great Council of Chiefs who insisted to us that there would be a local uprising of canecutters — the canecutters were going to advance on Suva,” said Lagan. “I remember we wrote stories on this and attributed it to them, and it never happened. Really, in the end, it was a fabrication and it was never going to happen,” said Lagan.

If anything, ethnicity was less of a consideration in 2000. “I don’t think it was an issue about race. It was a political issue,” said Christopher Dore. “On the surface, I think it was played up a little bit by the hostage takers for the benefit of some of the village people they brought into the compound. I think they exploited any lingering racial issues that exist in a society

like that," said Dore. Michael Field said he was seldom conscious of the ethnicity of his sources. "That is the thing about being part of the Suva scene — ethnicity only rarely comes into personal contacts," said Field. This did not mean that the journalists were not conscious of people taking sides. "In any situation like that you'd know that there are two very clearly delineated sides to the conflict and that is obviously going to colour the views that you are hearing," said Doug Conway.

Even in a crisis situation, journalists were able to rely on some fundamental reporting methods in order to find sources. When Graeme Dobell landed in Nadi in 1987, the first thing he did was hit the streets with his tape recorder and microphone. "I walked down the main street of Nadi and it was completely deserted. There were no tourists, nothing. It was quite extraordinary for Nadi," said Dobell. "A couple of the shopkeepers would not talk to me. Finally a copper came up to me and said 'Just piss off. Get out of here. You're not welcome.' I thought, well, if I just hang I'll get something." Eventually, an Indian Fijian man beckoned him over and he was taken away to meet a leading member of the Indian Fijian community, a man who became a reliable source. "It was a classic example of how if you trawl with a tape recorder, you'll get a bite," said Dobell.

At the other end of the scale, more drastic measures to access sources were considered. Many journalists were desperate to speak to the Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau in 1987, because so much rested on his shoulders. However, he was taken away to a remote island by the military. When Peter Cave found out about this, he considered following him there. "Red Harrison, the BBC guy, was a pilot. We actually made enquiries about hiring a light plane to fly to the island," said Cave. "We were dissuaded because we were told we would be shot down. In the end we didn't do it," he said. Ultimately, though, the search for reliable, informed sources was a question of persistence. "If you were assiduous enough, there were certainly people willing to talk," said Patrick Walters.

While finding reliable sources was possible, there was a good chance that other journalists were also talking to them, particularly given the influence of the media pack. As such, finding exclusive sources was a much more difficult proposition. Again, Jim Shrimpton was ahead of the pack in this regard. "I had the huge advantage of developing sources for a year," said Shrimpton. The strength of his local contacts was demonstrated when he was tipped off about the release of the imprisoned politicians by a former Attorney General, Sir

Vijay Singh. AAP had this scoop to themselves. Mary-Louise O'Callaghan said exclusive sources were hard to come by, but not impossible. "I did this through sheer determination and by having an open mind as to who and how I might contact someone," said O'Callaghan. Patrick Walters said he had a number of exclusive sources, including some chiefs, a military contact, high commission staff, and some contacts at the University of the South Pacific (USP). "There were people there who really knew the lie of the land," said Walters. Others, such as Bernard Lagan, said he was unable to get access to sources exclusively. "I don't think I can claim, in the first coup, to have done that," said Lagan.

To some extent, exclusive sources were easier to find in 2000, although Hugh Riminton found that they did not always agree to being quoted. "We gained access to a senior Ratu, closely tied to the old Taukei movement," said Riminton. "This gave some insights into how they viewed Speight — with affectionate admiration rather than awe — which in turn gave clues as to how the crisis was likely to develop," he said. Christopher Dore said he definitely had exclusive sources while he was inside the compound. "I don't think there was ever any real difficulty talking to people. I think the difficulty might have been getting the real story, and I still think that's a problem today," he said. Bernard Lagan said that it was more than likely that he got some exclusive sources, but he could not be completely certain. "There were sources being used by the pack, common sources, and there were other sources who weren't known to everybody," said Lagan. "I couldn't say I had them exclusively, but certainly they were talking to a vastly reduced number of reporters," he said.

Hugh Riminton did manage to get the first exclusive interview with George Speight, although it was more down to good timing than anything else. "As it often is with these things, it was pure luck. I returned to the parliamentary precinct to pick up the *Sunday* crew who were without a driver. Everyone else had gone to file, as I had just done, and a dump of rain had cleared away any stragglers," said Riminton. "Thinking the coast clear, Speight had come out to greet a handful of Fijian supporters. I didn't even see him — the driver pointed him out. But there he was, and I bagged him," he said.

The preceding evidence about the challenges the journalists in Fiji faced in trying to access a range of sources may go some way toward explaining some of the outcomes of the content analysis of sources, particularly the reliance on elite sources. The limitations on the way in which the journalists were able to go about their work undoubtedly led to restrictions on

their access to some groups of sources. The possibility of a link between these two facets of this research, journalistic practices and sources, and the perspectives identified in the thematic analysis also needs to be examined. The ways in which two different groups of sources, the Indian Fijians and the media themselves, were utilised by the journalists in Fiji, exemplifies how this connection might be established.

The media as sources

One of the main findings of the content analysis was the variation in the use of journalists and media as sources between 1987 and 2000. Journalists and other media accounted for 6.4 per cent of the sources in 1987. By 2000, that number had dropped by nearly 4 percentage points to 2.6 per cent. This reduction was significant in relation to the other categories analysed — of the 16 categories, 12 registered variations of less than 2 per cent. The statistical variation alone may have warranted further investigation in the normal course of a content analysis. Given that the mixed methods employed here also allowed for analysis of other factors related to the coverage – the work of the journalists and the themes in the stories – the investigation of this variation in the use of the media as sources is even more pertinent.

The situational factor which had the greatest impact on the use of the media as sources was the level of intimidation and violence suffered by the media in 1987. This meant that individual journalists became an intrinsic part of the story — they became involved to an extent that they were regarded as legitimate sources by all media. Attacks on media freedom, especially in a time of crisis, would always be regarded as newsworthy, and who better to tell the story of such circumstances than the journalists involved? The fact that many of the international media were finding it difficult enough to access reliable sources only increased the likelihood that their fellow journalists, often accommodated in the same hotels and thus very accessible, would start to appear as sources in the news stories. To explore this notion further, it is important to understand the nature of the violence directed towards the media, how the journalists coped with it, and how this changed between 1987 and 2000.

1987: The myth of the holiday coup

The level of intimidation and the potential for violence were real concerns for the journalists as they tried to go about their work in 1987. “There was amongst the foreign press a level of

apprehension about violence that may have broken out," said Patrick Walters. "In the end, there was very little violence. But at the outset, there was no doubt in my mind that a number of foreign journalists were very worried about the prospect of rioting which could be directed at Australians, as much as the Indian community," he said. "The threat of violence and arrest was also greater than the "holiday coup" image spun out by the brave columnists of the newspaper offices in Sydney," said Hugh Riminton. Many journalists were arrested and detained a number of times, with one, Trevor Watson, being deported.

The military checkpoints and roadblocks around Suva were the main point of control. "We had our gear taken off us, confiscated, twice," said Peter Cave. "We had to go out and buy new gear from the markets to keep working," he said. "Tape recorders, notebooks and the like were routinely confiscated by soldiers loyal to Rabuka. Even pens would get taken," said Hugh Riminton.

This often frustrating intimidation quickly lead to a series of arrests. Patrick Walters was arrested in the middle of the night with a group of journalists. "We were being marched down to the central police station in the middle of the night and a couple of the females who were arrested were getting very, very anxious about what might happen," said Walters. One of the Fijian soldiers who was escorting us said quite clearly 'This isn't Uganda and my name's not Idi Amin'," he said. "We were arrested and harassed by soldiers. We were dragged out of bed at gunpoint a couple of times," said Peter Cave. Graeme Dobell was arrested near the airport. "I was doing some vox pops in the market a couple of weeks after the coup. One of the local coppers didn't like what I was doing." Dobell was detained for a couple of hours, his car and equipment were searched, and then he was released. Mary-Louise O'Callaghan was also arrested, though she said there was no hint of physical intimidation. "I think I was detained twice during the 1987 coups. Once, I had my passport confiscated and sat in Suva jail for a few hours," she said.

Three journalists came in for some particularly close and menacing attention from the military. Trevor Watson and Peter Cave, who were reporting for Radio Australia and the ABC, had been working with Red Harrison of the BBC. On their first day in Fiji, Watson and Harrison had gone to the home of Prime Minister Bavadra and interviewed members of his family. "One of the children said they had been to see their father in prison and they had smuggled out a letter from him," said Watson. "We asked if we could see the letter. It was

an appeal to (Australian Prime Minister) Bob Hawke for Australian assistance," he said. Both Watson and Harrison then reported the details of the letter in their next stories.

While the reporting of the letter was a scoop for both reporters, it would come back to haunt them. Both the ABC and the BBC were being broadcast in Fiji on short-wave radio services. "I think they singled us out for particular attention because we were the only independent source of news which was widely available in Fiji," said Cave. "The issue was that I represented Radio Australia," said Watson. "The action against me was really a case of wanting to silence Radio Australia. I don't think it was anything to do with me personally," he said. "Radio Australia, for a while, was the domestic radio station. If you wanted to know what was going on in Fiji, Radio Australia was actually quite important. At least half of the population was totally hooked in," said Graeme Dobell, who was only sent to Fiji after Watson was deported. "The way Fiji found out that it was being ejected from the Commonwealth was a report from Radio Australia broadcast on Radio Fiji," he said. Indeed, the reach of Radio Australia extended to the highest levels of government. "The funny thing was that every day when I went to the Information Ministry, I would hear 'dah, dah, da-dun dun dun dun…' (the ABC theme) booming down the corridors because they were all listening. And in fact it got to the point where we were having a long distance debate. Radio Australia would report something and that afternoon or the next day the Information Ministry would put out a statement reacting to it," said Dobell. The military were obviously desperate to control the transmissions. "They did at one stage try to confiscate every short-wave radio on the island, but gave up," said Peter Cave. They also turned their attention to the journalists.

The warning signs were soon clear to Trevor Watson. "I'd attended a press conference on the Saturday with Sitiveni Rabuka and it was quite clear that there was a degree of animosity on his part towards me," said Watson. Later that day the manager of the hotel he was staying at, The Courtesy Inn, approached Watson. "He said: 'I've been told by the Army that if I put any more international calls through to your room, they'll close my hotel down'. I said: 'Are you talking about me, Trevor Watson, or the press corps in general?' And he said 'I am talking about you, Trevor Watson'."

Watson turned around and went back into town, arriving shortly after a local friend of his had been severely beaten by coup supporters. "When I went back to my hotel, I noticed that

there were Army trucks arriving at the hotel and there were soldiers positioning themselves around the hotel. I had this silly feeling that they might have been there after me. So I went down a fire escape, down some stairs on the outside of the hotel, and went down to The Travelodge."

At about 4am that morning, he got a phone call tipping him off that the military was out to get him. Moments later, soldiers in balaclavas stormed into his hotel room and ransacked the place. Inexplicably, one of the few things they left alone was Watson's typewriter. Later, when Watson was in Peter Cave's room, an Army officer knocked on the door and soldiers took him away. "They took me to the Government Guest House, which is the place where they would normally accommodate visiting Presidents and Prime Ministers and so on," said Watson. After one night there, and following discussions between the Australian High Commission and the authorities on his behalf, Watson was taken to the airport and deported. "I thought it was a bit of an ignominious end to a reporting assignment. I was there to do a legitimate job. I wasn't out to knife the Fijians," he said. On a return trip to Fiji in September, Watson was again arrested, held overnight in the Suva Police cells, and deported again.

Peter Cave and Red Harrison were obviously preparing for the same fate. A few nights later, they were in their hotel room at midnight listening to the radio when armed soldiers stormed in. "The officer told us that our actions were endangering the coup and that they were there to stop us," said Cave. The officer and his sergeant then had an argument, partly in Fijian and partly in English. "They seemed to be arguing about witnesses," he said.

"In any event we were pushed at gunpoint out of the room, down a back stairway and down to the basement where we ended up against a locked door. The soldiers crouched down in firing position and rammed home the magazines in their automatic weapons. It seemed they were about to execute us. But the argument between the sergeant and the officer continued and we were pushed into separate trucks and driven out into the dark bush," said Cave. There was another argument and they were driven to another clearing in the bush. "Finally we were taken to Suva's central police station and put into separate cells. We were left in the charge of Indian Fijian police who were kind enough to tell us that the soldiers had gone to get higher authority to shoot us... but they did offer us some kava, which they assured us would ease the pain," he said.

Eventually, Cave and Harrison were visited by the Australian High Commissioner, who persuaded the police to let them go. “We told him the story of the mock executions and he was a bit sceptical. He got us released and, as we were walking out, the people who’d put us through the mock execution grabbed us and him, threatened him at gunpoint and threw him in a cell as well. So he certainly decided that we might have been right,” said Cave.

Cave said he understood, though he had never been able to confirm it, that the arrest of the High Commissioner resulted in some harsh words from the Australian and New Zealand governments, and a potentially dramatic response, particularly as there was a New Zealand warship in Suva harbour at the time. “Certain threats were made that unless they released the Australian consul there would be a military response from New Zealand and Australia. And he was released and we were released as a result of that,” said Cave. The only other evidence of the possible truth to this story came as a result of the then ongoing surveillance of Cave and Harrison. “We noticed that everywhere we went there was a guy with a ski jacket on — and we’re talking fairly hot days there — with a sub-machine gun under his jacket. Eventually, we went up and said ‘What are you doing?’. He told us his name was Lieutenant Volovolo and he’d been ordered to shoot anyone who tried to hurt us, because they had promised the Australian government we’d be looked after.” As well as troubling the journalists, there is no doubt that the presence of an undercover soldier with a sub-machine gun would also have deterred any potential sources from approaching these particular journalists.

Apart from the threats by the military, there was also the general threat of violence from unruly elements on the streets. “There were quite large groups of roaming ethnic Fijians — they tended to be youths from the poor villages who had come into town — and they did seem to be looking for trouble,” said Bernard Lagan. Malcolm Brown witnessed random attacks on Indian Fijians by Indigenous Fijians and had to lie about who he was to avoid being assaulted. On the morning after the release of Prime Minister Bavadra, Hugh Riminton and some colleagues were lucky to escape a rampaging mob. “I narrowly escaped a serious beating and my friend and colleague, Leon Gettler, suffered a nasty head wound from a thrown lump of concrete,” he said.

On May 20, many journalists narrowly avoided an outbreak of violence during a protest meeting in Sukuna Park, directly opposite The Travelodge. “The Fijian Army were there watching it, and some Fijian police,” said Bernard Lagan. “And this big group of Fijian youths charged into the crowd and the police were not able to stop them. They started to bash people up — they really, really started to take to people. I remember it was the Army that brought that under control,” said Lagan. Indeed, Lagan said the police did not try and control much of the mob violence which erupted on the streets. “There were a couple of situations on the streets of Suva where Indian guys had taken on the Fijians and the police tended to stand by. I felt they were a bit stand-offish,” he said.

Hugh Riminton found at least one policeman who was willing to assist. The second time he was arrested he was with another New Zealand journalist, Andrew Shenton. “We were taken to the police station, where we were held for some hours awaiting ‘interview’ by the thug who had ‘mock executed’ the BBC and ABC journalists,” said Riminton. “We were sprung out by a senior Indian Fijian policeman, who at some risk to himself, escorted us to the ‘interview’ by an open door and told us to get out of the country. We stayed with the story but were more wary,” he said.

The journalists said that the intimidation and threats of violence did not change the way they went about their work. “It didn’t make my reporting any less direct. I simply reported the intimidation,” said Riminton. These kinds of responses are in line with the ideal of the journalist as a watchdog, intimidated by no person. In reality, the likelihood is high that journalists in this kind of situation and under these kinds of pressures would find ways of refocussing their work and the daily habits in order to try and avoid trouble, without necessarily feeling as though they have succumbed to the pressure. Any risk assessment of the situation would normally have concluded that the journalists needed to avoid trouble, avoid going too far from the safety of their hotel, and avoid travelling to areas where they were not known and not invited. This kind of behaviour would limit access to alternative sources and potentially lead to even greater reliance on the most accessible sources, which were invariably the elites.

Additionally, the response to “just report the intimidation” would clearly have an impact on the themes present in their stories. The perspective becomes a focus on the impact of the coup on the group of international media, rather than on Fiji itself. In terms of a hierarchy of

concern associated with the impact of the coup, it puts the international media ahead of the people of Fiji.

2000: Random acts of violence

Intimidation and the threat of violence affected the journalists covering the 2000 coup, but in a different way to 1987. For Malcolm Brown, the unpredictability of the 2000 coup was a concern. “There was no civil control,” said Brown. “The Police Commissioner was hopelessly compromised,” he said. “There was no general control of the place,” said Peter Cave. “The plotters were, more or less, holding hostages at Parliament House. The personal danger, in that case, came when you went into Parliament House, as we did. It was more like covering a hostage situation than a coup, I think.”

The main incidents of violence occurred when Speight’s supporters left the Parliamentary compound and rampaged through the streets of Suva. The first time it happened was quite a frightening moment. “The night that Speight’s boys came charging out of Parliament and shot that copper, that was not a good night,” said Graeme Dobell. As well as shooting the policeman, the coup supporters ransacked a television station, and fired shots outside the house of the President, Ratu Mara. Some journalists found themselves in particularly dangerous situations. Hugh Riminton was only 30 meters from the policeman who was shot dead. “I helped herd a group of about a half a dozen journalists, including at least one local, when we were cut off from the hotel by the gang that trashed the TV station and killed the police officer,” said Riminton. “I had some years of experience to lean on, which was useful in assessing the dangers and getting us safely back to base,” he said.

The mob soon moved onto The Centra Hotel, where the threat was the greatest Doug Conway had seen. “They were definitely after the media,” said Conway. “I remember I was actually filing at the time,” said Rowan Callick. “I was hearing the shooting and the ricocheting — the noise was very, very loud from the lobby.” Callick, who said there had been phone threats against some journalists, retreated to his room. He opened a window and planned to flee into the ocean if things got bad. Doug Conway was also looking for escape routes. “The police were telling us to stay in our rooms and bar the doors,” said Conway. His room was on the ground floor and he didn’t feel safe. Eventually, he fled the hotel and jumped down the back of a wall near the waterfront. “Some Fijian women who worked at The Centra Hotel had taken the same safety route. They were all talking in their native

language, which I didn't understand. I asked them to speak in English, because I did feel it was a matter of life and death," said Conway.

This was not the only occasion that the Speight gang left the compound and took to the streets. "A couple of times when they came out there was gunfire. I was knocked down and hit a couple of times by people once," said Peter Cave. Another of these incidents saw a cameraman shot in the shoulder. "There was gunfire at one stage when they came out of Parliament House and we all ducked for cover. A mate of mine was hit in the shoulder," said Cave. "Basically, that seemed to be when the danger period came — when they decided on a couple of occasions to come out of Parliament and march around the streets. On at least two occasions there was gunfire and bullets whizzing around. They weren't the most professional troops in the world," he said.

Overall, while the random violence on the streets in 2000 was a major concern, there was no orchestrated harassment or arrest of journalists as there was in 1987. In 2000, the military was attempting to secure the safety of journalists and the wider community, as opposed to 1987 when they took it upon themselves to intimidate and threaten the international media. The result was, consistent with the finding of the content analysis, that the journalists and other media appeared much less frequently as sources in the news stories. No doubt, other situational factors played their part in this outcome. As suggested, one of the contributing factors to the high levels of journalists and media as sources in 1987 could have been the fact that the media were often physically contained by the military, often in their hotels. In 2000, they had much more freedom to move around Suva and Fiji, which meant they did not have to rely on other journalists as sources, and were potentially more open to exploring more diverse thematic content for their stories.

Indian Fijians as sources

The findings from the content analysis demonstrated that there was a significant variation in the way Indian Fijian sources were utilised between 1987 and 2000.
In 1987, the Indian Fijian community represented 49 per cent of the population of Fiji, with Indigenous Fijians accounting for 46 per cent (Chandra and Bryant, 1990, p173). However, the content analysis revealed that of the 222 sources located in Fiji in 1987, only 38 (17%) were Indian Fijian. Conversely, 116 of the sources (52%) were identified as Indigenous Fijian. Some of the characteristics of these sources were noteworthy. Of the Indian Fijian

sources in Fiji in 1987, 21 per cent were anonymous, compared to 11 per cent anonymous sources overall; 31 per cent were government sources, compared to 44 per cent of government sources overall; and 13 per cent were classified as a person on the street, compared to 5 per cent in the overall figures. So why was it that a group with a majority of the population was so infrequently represented in the reporting of the 1987 coup, and when they were used, why were non-elite sources more prominent?

An over-riding influence on the number and characteristics of the Indian Fijian sources was the fact that in the first week of the 1987 coup — the time period which the content analysis covered — all the leading Indian Fijian politicians were incarcerated by the coup plotters. As such, the journalists had no access to a group of sources who would have been the most authoritative and reliable members of the Indian Fijian community, and those most likely to have had experience dealing with the media.

The coup plotters also maintained that their actions were racially motivated — they felt that the Indian Fijians were dominating the society and they wanted to maintain the rights of the Indigenous people. This rationale had first been raised during aggressive demonstrations by the Taukei movement, an indigenous rights group, in the weeks leading up to the 1987 coup. The confrontational statements of the coup plotters were designed to instil a high degree of fear in the Indian Fijian community, a goal which led to a reluctance on the part of Indian Fijians to speak to the media. “The Indian Fijian population was very, very worried, and quite distrustful of us too,” said Bernard Lagan. “There was a level of apprehension on the part of the Indian Fijian community, which meant that they were more constrained in talking about what had happened, particularly anyone who had any connection to the government that had been deposed,” said Patrick Walters.

While the Fijian Army was almost exclusively Indigenous Fijian, there were greater numbers of Indian Fijians in the police force. They too were fearful of possible repercussions. “We were dealing with Indian police officers who had military officers threatening to kill them if they did anything or provided any information or gave us any help. It was a fairly confused situation,” said Cave.

By 2000, the ethnic characteristics of the Fijian population had changed, with Indian Fijians now accounting for only 44% of the population (Robie, 2000). The content analysis showed

the use of Indian Fijian sources increased overall, from 12 per cent of all sources in 1987 to 19 per cent in 2000. However the number of Indian Fijian sources located in Fiji increased only slightly, from 9.3% of all sources in 1987 to 10% in 2000. The main increase related to the use of Indian Fijian sources in Australia, which increased from 3.2% in 1987 to 8.2 per cent in 2000. This could probably be put down to the high numbers of white-collar Indian Fijians who emigrated to Australia after the 1987 coup.

Some things did not change. Once again, many members of the government, which was dominated by Indian Fijians after the 2000 election, were being held hostage by the coup plotters and the media could not get access to them. Doug Conway said that at one stage, George Speight was going to let a delegation of media inside to speak to the hostages but changed his mind. “Even anyone who had been allowed to see the hostages was difficult to get to,” said Conway.

Race had played a major role in the 1987 coup, and in 2000 it was again utilised by the coup plotters to whip up their supporters, particularly as a way of promoting disorder on the streets. Some journalists were witness to this kind of behaviour on their entry into the Fijian capital on the first day of the coup. “We arrived in Suva on the Sigatoka Road, to find looters nonchalantly picking their way through the trashed Indian commercial buildings near the market,” said Hugh Riminton. “They didn’t stop, even when we put a camera on them,” he said.

Naturally, the Indian Fijian community were still quite fearful. According to Bernard Lagan, some Indian Fijians felt they might be targeted by whoever took control of the country. “In some cases, what they were looking for was some assistance with their own situation if things became very bad. That was working in our favour to an extent,” he said. As it turned out, these fears proved justified. “At least one of the people that used to assist Radio Australia ended up having to leave the country as a result of work that he had done during that period,” said Richard Dinnen. “The last I heard of him he was applying for a protection visa in the United States,” said Dinnen. Sean Dorney said that many Indian Fijians in the government were willing to provide information, but unwilling to identify themselves or offer comments on the situation. “Within various Ministries there were Indian Fijians who were quite prepared to talk to you off the record,” said Dorney. Indeed, Bernard Lagan, who thought the level of interaction with Indian Fijian sources in 1987 was “not what it was in

2000", said he found the Indian Fijian sources in 2000 were more reliable than George Speight and his supporters.

Part of the reason for the perceived increase in the use of Indian Fijian sources, according to Bernard Lagan, was the increased levels of contact with Indian Fijian reporters. Unlike 1987, in 2000 the local media outlets continued to operate. "The local media had become educated, they'd become a very serious local media, particularly the Indian reporters," said Lagan. In particular, he said that the Indian Fijian reporters were able to assist greatly in getting access to sources within their community. "They put us in touch with various lawyers who had a human rights bent, Indian lawyers with a constitutional bent. They put us directly in touch with people who had been victims," said Lagan.

The 1987 coup had also allowed particular organisations to establish a good reputation in Fiji. Richard Dinnen felt that the Indian Fijians were much more likely to talk to Radio Australia because of the short-wave service that was broadcast into Fiji. "Amongst the Indian community particularly, Radio Australia had a lot of goodwill and support going back to the '87 coup," said Dinnen. "Some of the most senior people in the Fiji bureaucracy through the '90s were people who grew up and practised their English listening to Radio Australia as teenagers. If I'd gone there as someone from Channel Seven I fully imagine that I would have got nothing except from the people who wanted the novelty of appearing on television. I think we had a name there which helped us along a bit," he said.

The journalists' greater levels of access to Indian Fijian sources in 2000, compared to 1987, helps to explain the increased use of Indian Fijian sources revealed by the content analysis. It also confirms the relationship between journalistic practice, sources and the themes present in the stories. In 2000, the journalists were more exposed to the ways in which the coup was impacting on a large section of the population, increasing the likelihood that their articles would more accurately represent the situation in Fiji. The fact that some of the increased number of Indian Fijian sources were sources located in Australia does not rule out the argument that the reports contained different perspectives. There was still an increase and it still would have led to more balanced reporting.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to present the findings of the interviews with the journalists and examine the ways in which they allow a greater understanding of the findings of the content analysis and the thematic analysis. There are three major conclusions which can now be drawn. Firstly, some of the situational factors, as described by the journalists, undoubtedly had an impact on the way the journalists were able to go about the work. In particular, there was an emphasis on the factors which placed limits on the practices of the journalists, such as the levels of threats and violence, the physical limitations, and the technological limitations.

Secondly, in some cases, it was apparent that these situational factors had an obvious impact on the access and use of particular groups of sources. The variation in the use of two different groups of sources, the media and Indian Fijian sources, were a reflection of the different working conditions. In 1987, when the use of sources from the media was more common, there is evidence in the interview material that a strong pack mentality existed. With limited experience of Fiji and suffering harassment from the military forces, it is perhaps not surprising that the media contingent looked within for sources, particularly when the violence against the media became a common angle in their stories. By 2000, when the media generally had more experience in and knowledge of Fiji, and when they did not suffer the same levels of harassment, the use of other media as sources was less common. Additionally, the number of Indian Fijian sources became more common. With fewer limitations on their movement around Suva and the rest of Fiji, they were able to gain more access to Indian Fijian sources and, arguably, construct stories which had different kinds of themes.

Arguably, there is also evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between the situational factors experienced by the journalists and the evolutions of the themes discussed in the thematic analysis. In 1987, the limited experience of Fiji and the situational factors which limited their work practices may have contributed to the limited kinds of thematic interpretations which appeared in the stories. Limited knowledge and limited working conditions can clearly be connected to limited versions of reality. The evidence also suggests that, with more access to different sources and with more experience of Fiji, the

journalists were able to produce stories which presented more complex interpretations of the events surrounding the 2000 coup.

Chapter 7: Sources, Practice and Representation

Three main elements of the newsmaking process form the core of this thesis: the way in which the journalists went about their work in Fiji, the sources which appeared in the coup coverage, and the kinds of representations which occurred. This chapter aims to discuss different aspects of these elements, taking into account the existing literature and how it compares to the evidence collated here about the Fiji coup coverage.

Journalistic practice

Many of the known characteristics of the practice of foreign correspondence were highlighted by the way the journalists went about their work in the coverage of the coups. In 1987, they began on the back foot, "with little time or background knowledge to grasp the issues behind the conflicts they cover" (Knightley, 2003). Any research they were able to conduct had a very narrow scope, usually consisting of "little more than reading newspaper clippings, most of which are written by other parachute journalists (Pedelty, 1995, p110).

While the situation had improved somewhat by 2000, with many of the journalists noting an increased interest in Fiji, there were still obvious shortcomings. By and large, the standard criticism of foreign reporting — that it fails to provide any context and it lacks follow-up (Hachten, 2005, p129) — applied to the coup coverage. Pavasaris has noted that a lack of context and the often fragmentary approach to presenting background material in foreign reporting means that some of the problems, such as the impact of a country's colonial past, can be neglected (Pavasaris, 1996, p117). This was certainly the case in the Fiji coup coverage. Explanations of Australia's role in the colonial-era policy of introducing Indian workers to the sugar-cane industry in Fiji, which was clearly a relevant factor in the context of the coup, was virtually non-existent in the coup coverage.

Given that 49.8% of the stories were written by journalists who were located in Australia, the trend in Australian journalism, where "reporting from the field, especially overseas, has been in decline in favor of informed comment and analysis, often originated domestically and locally produced" (Tiffen, 1992, p119), has been confirmed. In some studies of foreign correspondents, the balance between the stories written in the home country and the stories written in the country concerned has favoured the stories from the home country. For

example, Payne found that during the Vietnam War, the cause of one of the major weaknesses — a lack of specialist reports from Vietnam — was because these reports "vied not only with agency reports and syndicated American commentary, but also with the political news from Canberra and the political interpretation of what was important in Vietnam-related news" (Payne, 2007, p19).

Payne's findings present an interesting point of comparison. Certainly, there was a significant amount of news reports about Fiji supplied by news agencies. *The Canberra Times*, in particular, relied heavily on agency reports, with almost 50 per cent of their stories emanating from the agencies. The number of agency reports in the other two newspapers examined here, *The SMH* and *The Australian*, were around the 10 per cent mark. Given that *The Canberra Times* is a relatively small newspaper organisation in comparison to *The SMH* or *The Australian*, this reliance on agencies is perhaps not surprising. And given that some of the journalists working for agencies, including Jim Shrimpton for AAP and Michael Field for AFP, were amongst the most experienced reporters in the region, the use of agency reports is understandable.

The analyses of the article themes and sources also identified that overall there was a large number of articles (43.4%) which featured Australian government sources and their reaction to the events. In the 1987 coverage, this high number of Australian government sources was clearly related to the content of the articles. For example, the thematic analysis demonstrated that the coverage was briefly dominated by the contest between the political parties over Neil Brown's alleged support of the coup perpetrators. The conflict being described was between the Government and Opposition parties in Australia, not the Government and the coup leaders in Fiji. Rabuka and Bavadra were competing for newspaper space with Hawke and Howard. This domestic focus may have been deemed highly relevant to the domestic audience but there is little doubt that it had an impact on the prominence of the reporting from Fiji and the themes of the overall coverage.

However, while there is evidence that shows that Australian domestic concerns dominated the coverage at particular times, and that overall almost half (49.8%) of the Fiji coup stories were written in Australia, very few of the journalists who were on the ground in Fiji complained of not getting editorial support for their version of events. It is possible that the journalists in Fiji were not able to gain daily access to their newspapers or broadcasts,

making an assessment of their overall contribution difficult. It might also be the case that, being experienced with the newsmaking process, the journalists recognised the motivation for devoting significant space to the domestic reaction. It is also possible that had the Fiji situation extended over a more significant period of time, as was the case with the Vietnam War, the weaknesses identified by Payne could have become more pervasive. Overall, while the localisation of international news is almost a given in modern reporting, the situational factors clearly play a significant role in the process of localisation.

This general focus on the domestic reaction to the coup was supplemented by a focus on the situation being faced by the Australian journalists in Fiji. In 1987 especially, there was evidence of what Knightley called “highly emotional first-hand accounts”, where the journalist was depicted as “the hero of his or her own story” (Knightley, 2003). The threats of violence and intimidation against the journalists were obvious and blatant. It certainly became a major concern for the international media and it certainly had an impact on the way they went about their work, particularly in relation to the sources they used. For example, in 1987 journalists and media represented 6.4% of the sources, the third highest total of all source categories behind government and military.

This higher than expected use of journalists as sources blurred the line between the news and the newsmaking process. This is best summarised by the comment from one journalist in regard to how the threats of violence affected his reporting: “It didn’t make my reporting any less direct. I simply reported the intimidation” (Riminton, 2005). While the reporting may have been direct, the consequence was that the focus of the reporting again shifted away from the context of the coup. The coverage showed the journalists trying to cope with the situation, rather than the situation itself, which is likely to produce reports which have “immediacy without understanding, drama without information” (Eldridge, 1993, p11).

The use of journalists as sources also demonstrated the pack mentality which some parts of the media engaged in. This pack mentality was identified by many of the journalists interviewed, with some highly critical of the situation. Michael Field said he was “pointedly and publicly not part of it (the media pack)” (Interview, 2004), and wrote in protest of it at the time (Field, 2000). Robie said that most of the media pack at the Suva Travelodge were “very influenced by roundabout gossip, perceptions and influence of a few old hands. It didn't matter that perceptions might be wrong, there was a sort of consensus view of the

coup," said Robie (Interview, 2005). Field suggested that the international journalists were not up to the same standard as the young, inexperienced locals: "The domestic media does a much better job on the Fiji story than the international media does. And they do it because they live here, they care about it, they know people, they raise their children here and, unlike most of us, when it is all over they live here. We fly off home" (Field, 2000). In particular, Field suggested that the inexperience of the media pack meant they were open to all kinds of influence: "So if you really want to bug the international media get a camera and notebook and run like hell through the lobby of The Centra [hotel]. Dozens of reporters and cameramen will run after you — because you will look as if you know what the next story is. We of the international media don't have a clue." (Field, 2000).

In summary, it is apparent that much of the literature on journalistic practice has been confirmed by the evidence collated here about the Fiji coup coverage. It would probably be unfair to summarise the work of the journalists in Fiji as "insensitive, ignorant and with an overriding sense of cultural chauvinism", as some regional leaders have claimed in relation to other instances (Kingsbury, 2000, p17). However the shortcomings were apparent, particularly in their approaches to sources.

Sources

The lack of diversity among the sources, as identified in Chapter 4, concurred with much of the research in this area. As Schudson stated, "the story of journalism, on a day to day basis, is the story of interaction of reporters and officials" (Schudson, 1991, p148). The Fiji coverage was dominated by government sources (44.7%), with more limited representation of alternative sources, such as Indian Fijians (15.8%). The added experience and background knowledge gained in 1987 made a marginal but not highly significant difference to this fact in 2000.

Arguably, there were some good reasons for the lack of alternative sources. As the interviews with the journalists revealed, there was not always a lack of desire on their part to speak to alternative sources. In the case of the Indian Fijian sources, it was a simple case of not being allowed to gain access to the Indian Fijian leadership, many of whom were being held hostage. In 1987, the restrictions on movement around Suva and Fiji which were imposed by the military had a significant impact on the kinds of sources available to the journalists. In 2000, when there were less restrictions, there was a recognisable increase in

the number of Indian Fijian sources, from 12% to 19%. Herman and Chomsky claimed that: "Most biased choices in the media arise from the preselection of right-thinking people, internalised preconceptions and the adaption of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organisation, market and political power" (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, pxxi). In this case, though, what might have been recognised as a "biased choice" — the favouring of particular sources — was partly an outcome of the situational factors.

Apart from issues like the physical restrictions placed on journalists, the likelihood that more alternative sources will appear in the news depends to an extent on the willingness of such sources to do so. Standpoint theory claims that different individuals have different perspectives on how a society operates, and thus they have different views of reality (Calhoun, 2002). Utilising sources from all levels of society, from the elites to the least socially advantaged, would thus provide a more realistic assessment of that society. As such, standpoint theorists would argue that in the coverage of the Fiji coups, it would have been advantageous if the journalists started more of their stories from the standpoint of the least socially advantaged people involved: the cane farmers, the indigenous commoners, the dispossessed members of the Indian Fijian community, and the women and children.

There is some evidence that journalists gained new insights into the situation when they were exposed to different kinds of sources. For example, Hugh Riminton said that during one of the few opportunities he had to travel beyond Suva, he picked up a hitch-hiker and struck up a conversation with him about the coup. "Over the next 45 minutes, David made clear to me how many ethnic Fijians felt about the Bavadra government, which they saw — rightly or wrongly — as a threat to their hold on the land. It was only then that I understood that Rabuka was a hero to many ethnic Fijians, who ardently wished him success," said Riminton (Interview, 2005).

While opportunities to engage with alternative sources may prove valuable, it assumes that these kinds of sources would actually want to speak to the journalists. In many cultures, the people on the margins of society have been conditioned not to speak out. It is easy to imagine that the wife of an Indian Fijian cane farmer in rural Fiji would be reluctant to speak to a foreign journalist at the best of times. During a period of crisis, when personal safety was a concern, the associated risks to her family and her livelihood would make this even more unlikely. The only situation where such a source may speak out is if the journalist has

already established a relationship of trust with the person. The only way this is going to happen is if the journalist is a local, or a foreigner who has been based locally long enough to develop such sources. Overall, while the idea of including alternative sources does appear to be beneficial, the practical implications hinder the likelihood of it occurring. The result is that journalists continue to rely on accessible and authoritative sources.

Rabuka and Speight: sources for courses

The treatment of two particular sources during the coverage of the coups helps to demonstrate the kinds of issues the journalists faced, the kinds of judgements they made and the kinds of representations which resulted.

In 1987, the most commonly quoted source was Sitiveni Rabuka. In 2000, the most commonly quoted source was George Speight. Little was known about either man in the lead-up to the coups. At first glance, they were similar kinds of characters with similar kinds of motives. They were also of a similar appearance, being well-built, dark-skinned, with close-cropped hair, big smiles, and favouring the Fijian dress style of the sulu — the male skirt — and the business shirt. The focus on Rabuka and Speight allowed the media to interpret the events in the context of common news values, such as leadership and individualism (Gans, 1979, p42-63). Yet Rabuka's and Speight's ongoing relationships with the media was influenced to a great extent by some fundamental journalistic understanding about the nature of sources.

As the leader of the 1987 coup, Sitiveni Rabuka immediately captured the attention of the media. In 1987, he accounted for 8.3 per cent of all sources overall, and 54 per cent of all military/police sources. There were certainly good reasons for his popularity amongst the press. Firstly, there was the strength of his actions. He had just overthrown a government with virtually no bloodshed. He had the country at his mercy. This bestowed on him an obvious and immediate sense of power. This image of power was boosted by his connection to three of the most powerful social institutions in Fijian society — the military, the church, and the system of chiefs.

Rabuka was a high-ranking soldier, an experienced commander of men who had served overseas. Some of his authority derived from the fact that he had received military training in Australia. On the first day of its coup coverage, *The Canberra Times* led the front page

with a story which explained that Rabuka had gained military training in Canberra, at the Australian Defence Force Academy, alluding to the idea that because he was trained in Australia he was somehow superior to an average Fijian soldier. In the early days of the coup, he sometimes appeared in uniform, which reinforced this connection to military power.

It also became common knowledge that Rabuka was a lay Methodist preacher, a fact that was often promoted in the media. This was important in the context of Fijian society, which has been significantly influenced by the authority of the church since the arrival of Christian missionaries as part of European settlement of the region. The influence of the church, and Rabuka's recognition of this, was exemplified when his interim government banned most activities on Sundays so that people could attend church services.

Finally, through his indigenous heritage, Rabuka could also draw on his chiefly authority. This authority was later exemplified by his appointment as the Chair of the Great Council of Chiefs, a body which has constitutionally sanctioned powers over the formation of legislation in Fiji, as well as significant influence on the lives of Indigenous Fijians.

All three of these institutions had significant influence in Fijian society, and by and large this significance came through in the reports. In particular, Rabuka's links to the military and church would have been easily understood by Australians. The importance of the Great Council of Chiefs was perhaps more difficult to realise, even for the journalists in Fiji. At least one journalist admitted to underestimating its significance (Riminton, 2005) and as sources the Chiefs often proved reluctant or impossible to talk to. Even so, it quickly became clear that Rabuka's links to the chiefs was a significant part of his authority.

In a practical sense, Rabuka's appearance and manner suited the needs of the media. His deep, resonant voice worked well, especially for the electronic media. His fondness for the sulu was also advantageous. The sulu matched western media perceptions of what a proud Indigenous Fijian man looked like. It was a cultural shortcut, an obvious visual sign of identity. Rabuka often wore the sulu in combination with a business shirt and tie, presenting an image which, drawing on both traditional and modern attire, reinforced the idea that he was both a little frightening and a little commanding. This western/indigenous combination

also illustrated a point of difference, which is an important feature of a stereotype (Hall, 1997b, p258).

While Rabuka's appearance initially appealed to the media, according to those journalists interviewed it was the force of Rabuka's personality which ensured that the media continued to rely on him as a source. His charm and charisma was, according to some, particularly appealing to the female members of the international press. But the men were also entranced — one went so far as to suggest he came across as "a twinkling-eyed rascal" (Interview, 2005).

On a field trip to Fiji in 2004 to conduct research for this thesis, I made enquiries about the possibility of interviewing Rabuka. I was told by a number of people, including one who had worked with him quite closely, that if Rabuka thought that he would get his name in the media, he would probably agree to the interview. The suggestion was that, after all the media attention he had received during the coups and in his political career, he was missing the limelight. It was surprisingly easy to obtain a mobile phone number for Rabuka and when I rang, he was very personable, agreeing to meet with me in a few days time.

After speaking with him in person, it was easy for me to understand how the international media could have fallen under Rabuka's spell. I was conscious of the fact that I would probably never again share a conversation with anyone who had performed such a lawless act affecting so many people on such a wide scale. I could not admire him for what he done but I couldn't deny that he had the courage of his convictions. He was in no doubt that what he did was the right thing for his people. He was clearly unrepentant for those who suffered at the hands of the military, and was basically dismissive of what appeared to be a highly orchestrated campaign of harassment and violence against the international media. He was adamant that he had been treated harshly by the international community, who he said had little understanding for his motivations. In short, it was easy to appreciate how this captivating character could easily have any group of people, including a gathering of seasoned international journalists, completely hanging on his every word. It was no surprise that Rabuka was also called on as a source by the western media during the 2000 coup.

Many of the characteristics which made Rabuka a suitable source were also, initially at least, applicable to George Speight in 2000. Statements attributed to Speight or his spokespeople

accounted for 12.2 per cent of the sources in 2000, which was significantly more than Rabuka's 8.3 per cent in 1987. Speight was the most frequently quoted source in 2000 with 38 individual attributions, he was quoted more times on page one than any other source, with 19 per cent of all page one appearances, and he made a huge initial impression on the journalists, one of whom described him as "the star of the show" (Interview, 2005). Even Sitiveni Rabuka recognised the saturation coverage of Speight and the resulting impressions. "At times I felt that Speight was the hero in a lot of the things that were going on. Maybe it was his visibility, to put his view across, and the fact that he was more friendly to the media, some of whom lived in the Parliament with him," said Rabuka (Interview, 2005). In fact, Speight's dominance as a media source eventually did more harm than good, especially in the Australian media coverage.

Speight's legitimacy was partly to do with the nature of crisis reporting. In moments of uncertainty, media can be drawn to strong, vocal personalities at the centre of the crisis, without really interrogating why they are granting these individuals such authority. Unlike Rabuka, he had no connection to major social institutions, such as the military, the church or the Chiefs. The general levels of confusion and uncertainty, particularly the opportunity for the media to cross the lines of control into the parliamentary compound, aided Speight's momentary rise to prominence and his initial acceptance as a leader. One journalist felt that this level of attention boosted Speight's credibility: "The media, in fact, fuelled the crisis and gave Speight a false idea about his importance and support — it gave him "political fuel" (Robie, 2000). It also helped that Speight was a confident media performer, and had assistance from the one-time journalist, Jo Nata, whose undergraduate journalism education took place in Australia. He was criticised by some journalists for many of his statements, but he certainly understood the machinations of the media machine and how to meet the requirements of the journalists.

It is likely that Speight benefited from the image presented by Rabuka in the 1987 coup. Both were solidly built men and both spoke with deep, resonant voices. Like Rabuka, Speight favoured the sulu/business shirt combination. The stereotypical image which Rabuka had first presented in 1987, made it more likely that the international media were going to gravitate towards someone fitting the same image. The first impression was that Speight was cast from the same mould as Rabuka.

Despite all these advantages, and the initial interest in Speight, he soon lost the respect of the journalists. As more became known about Speight, and as journalists spent more time listening to what he had to say, the practical considerations which are necessary for journalists to use a source began to fall away. Sources “need to be reliable, regular and credible suppliers of information” (Williams, 1993, p315), and journalists need material that “can be portrayed as presumptively accurate” (Herman and Chomsky, 1994, p19). Speight was not reliable: journalists said that the more he spoke the more he contradicted himself. He was not in control: it soon became apparent that Speight had to consult other behind-the-scenes players on matters of any importance.

The main thing Speight had going for him was that he understood the news production cycle: the journalists could always rely on him to say something controversial, and mostly at very suitable times as far as their deadlines were concerned. Sources are only able to manage the media — manipulating the news so that it follows particular agendas — if they have a good understanding of the routines and requirements of the media (Herman and Chomsky, 1994) p23. Speight understood the routines but that is as far as it went. Even though he continued to wear the sulu, even though he continued to “fit” the stereotypical visual image, his behaviour and his words no longer met the requirements of the assembled media.

The other factor which undermined Speight’s credibility as a source was that he could not draw on a relationship to the strong social institutions in Fijian society, such as the military, the church or the chiefs. Speight was, in the end, nothing more than a failed businessman. As a last-minute draftee into the coup plotters plans, he was a marginal force at best. Without the status of associations with the elite social institutions, his position as an elite source was almost certain to unravel.

The treatment of Speight emphasises the importance of elite social institutions in the eyes of the news media. But it also proves that journalists are not completely subsumed by a strong, charismatic personality at the centre of a news story. A source like Speight is only ever as good as their performance and status implies, and while it may appear easy to capture the media’s attention, an elite media source can quite quickly become a transitory source, unable to maintain the respect of the media (Tiffen, 1989, p37). If Speight had been backed by the military, the church and the chiefs, invariably the media would have had to take what he said

more seriously. Undoubtedly, that would have presented a different kind of perspective on the coup. Instead of the interpretation of Speight as a man trying to control the leadership, he might have been seen as a leader who was struggling to maintain control.

The fact that any legitimacy attributed to Speight quickly dissipated demonstrated that despite their relative inexperience with Fiji, and despite their lack of preparation, the Australian journalists were, within a few days, able to recognise the orientation of a potential source — how that source fits into the political hierarchy and who they are speaking for (Miller, David and Williams, 1993, p139) — and consider how the publicity needs of the source played a significant role (Tiffen, 1989, p37).

Representation

According to Edward Said, different communities interpret reality in their own particular ways, with these interpretations forming central features of the existence of the communities. The communities create, reveal and refine these interpretations, which often form the basis of conflicts between different communities (Said, 1981, p45). The interpretations are formed by the direct experience of the individual and the received interpretations which are drawn from the community, particularly through the mass media. On this basis, Said's concept of communities of interpretation suggests that knowledge depends on experience. The knowledge may be acquired first-hand, or it may be acquired through learning about the experiences of others.

In some respects, journalists form their own community of interpretation. They form a community that has its own ways of operating, its own rules, its own motivations. They reinforce their own history and culture, as exemplified here by the journalists who strongly supported the idea of "on-the-job training". This tendency to rely on other journalists' interpretations is also exemplified by the stated reliance on newspaper clipping archives, particularly in 1987, as a means of quickly developing a sense of the situation. These journalists were relying on how other journalists had interpreted the situation in order to inform their own interpretations. In effect, they recognised the "claims to knowledge" made by their fellow journalist not merely as a claim but as a credible, competent piece of knowledge (Fishman, 1980, p143). Similarly, the increased access to local journalists in 2000, a fact commonly identified by many journalists in Fiji, was an act of intra-community

interpretation. Local journalists were regarded as reliable interpreters of the events, primarily because they had an understanding of the codes and modes of interpretation.

Many communities of interpretation exist within a society, and not just between societies. However, the community of journalists is distinguished by its ability to influence how entire societies understand an event or circumstance — how a society interprets reality. This is especially the case for the way Australia understands Fiji, as the production of knowledge about Fiji occurs, for most Australians, almost solely in the media. The greater majority of Australians don't watch movies about Fiji, they don't read books about Fiji, they don't learn about Fiji except through newspapers and broadcast media. It could even be argued that apart from newspapers, the only things that many Australians read which give them some kind of impression about Fiji are travel brochures and postcards. The media is the dominant means of knowledge production about Fiji, and this provides more depth and resonance than usual because the message is rarely in competition with other knowledge claims. Fiji has become known to us, in modern times especially, through the newsworthy events which have occurred there and been interpreted for us by the journalists.

The Australian reporting of the 1987 coup reinforced the unexpected nature of the events. As the thematic analysis demonstrated, there was a strong sense that this previously unspoilt paradise had now been shattered by the coup. There were uniformed men with guns and balaclavas storming the parliament, roadblocks sprang up overnight, civil liberties were suspended, a curfew was put in place, and there was a military crackdown on the local and international media. In many respects, the 1987 coup in Fiji became the moment when the generation of western feelings of uncertainty about the South Pacific manifested themselves into a feeling which Fry refers to as the "doomsday mentality" (Fry, 1997), an attitude which saw Fiji and neighbouring countries as suffering from serious problems with democracy, security, economic performance, and social development generally (Teaiwa, 2006, p78). The proponents of the doomsday mentality compared the fate of countries like Fiji to the plagued states in sub-Saharan Africa (Teaiwa, 2006, p80). As Fry described it, these were not the views of ordinary Australians, who still held onto the myth of the Pacific paradise. They were the views of the bureaucrats, politicians, academic economists, and the foreign affairs journalists (Fry, 1997) — the same kind of people identified in the content analysis as among the most common sources used in the Fiji coup coverage. As such, the generation of the "doomsday mentality" epitomises how a newsmaking process which leads to reports

dominated by elite sources can limit the way an event is represented to and interpreted by a community.

This relationship between the kinds of sources used, the journalists, and the way an event is represented has other consequences. Said argues that the incomplete, often misleading, outdated and/or taken-out-of-context picture of Islam presented by the Western media contributed to the demonisation of Islam and the countries regarded as Islamic by the West. The five main consequences of the inadequate coverage of Islam by western media (Said, 1981, p44) were:

1. A specific picture of Islam has been supplied
2. The meaning or message of Islam has generally continued to be circumscribed and stereotyped
3. A political situation has been created which pits “us” against “Islam”
4. The image of Islam has had consequences in the Islamic world itself
5. The media representation of Islam and the cultural attitude to it tells us a great deal about Islam, but also about our own culture, institutions and policies

As a framework for the impact of cross-cultural interpretations presented by media reports dominated by elites, these five consequences serve as a good basis for discussion. Clearly, there is a significant variation in scale between the issues Said addresses in his examination of the media coverage of Islam, and this research about the Australian coverage of the Fiji coups. However, as long as the question of scale is recognised, it does not rule out the use of this framework to examine the Australian coverage of the Fiji coups.

1. A specific picture of Fiji has been supplied

The reporting supplied a fairly specific picture of Fiji: this was a troubled paradise, the conflict was racially based, and the potential for violence was great. By 2000, the situation had changed, but if anything it was now just another sign of a wider regional malaise.

The complex social, political and cultural motivations behind the coups were largely ignored, because they could not be presented simply by the media and because it was not in the interests of the elite sources to have them presented. For example, Australia’s involvement in the history of Fiji, specifically through the Australian company, CSR, which

was originally responsible for bringing the Indians to Fiji to work in the cane fields under an indenture system which echoed systems of slavery, was barely mentioned. The decontextualised picture of Fiji stripped away Australia's involvement and any suggestion of responsibility for contributing to the causes of the modern dilemma. It also meant that the strongest institutions in Australian society, the government and the military, were able to present themselves as having solutions to these problems, a critical position to take in an uncertain time.

2. The meaning or message of Fiji has generally continued to be circumscribed and stereotyped

The way in which the prevalent themes reflected both continuity and change between 1987 and 2000 suggests that the representation of Fiji was still being framed by a limited understanding of a complex situation. While the themes identified in the 2000 coverage showed that there had been some advance in the understanding of the situation, the situation in Fiji was still represented as a problem which needed to be solved via external pressure, either by Australia or by the wider international community. Despite the passing of 13 years, Fiji was still seen as a country which was still unable to cope with the demands of modern democracies.

Another way in which the meaning of Fiji had continued in the same way was the focus on two similar kinds of personalities who were leading the coups, Sitiveni Rabuka and George Speight. The stereotypical approach to the depictions of Rabuka were transferred, if only temporarily, to Speight, based on nothing more than that the two men were of similar appearance, of similar race, and with apparently similar motivations.

Indeed, the way Fiji was depicted continued a long history of negative views of indigenous culture in the Pacific region by European settlers. Hau'ofa argues that "the wholesale condemnation by Christian missionaries of Oceanic cultures as savage, lascivious, and barbaric has had a lasting negative effect" on peoples impressions of the region, both internally and externally (Hau'ofa, 1994, p149). The containment of a diverse cultural, social and political region spread over millions of kilometres within geographical boundaries, an outcome of the establishment of the South Pacific Commission by the colonial powers in 1947 (Fry, 1997), makes it much easier to generalise about the region. It isolates the islands

from the rest of the world and from each other, confining their peoples to tiny spaces (Hau'ofa, 1994, p155).

This idea of smallness is critical, as it grants the “big” nations, like Australia — big in terms of both physical size and economic production — a natural authority. According to Hau’ofa, being seen as small means places like Fiji are regarded as lacking power, and unable to think for or explain themselves (Hau'ofa, 1994, p155). Being small also means that a place like Fiji can be “relegated to the corners of our minds” — nothing ever happens there (De Ishtar, 1994), apart, of course, from holidays and coups. Over time, the media is unable to illuminate the depths of Fiji — the social, cultural and political depths — because they only ever go there when “something” happens. Invariably, that “something” has to be worthy of attention — a crisis, a tragedy or a disaster. The coups were all three.

3. A political situation has been created which pits “us” against “Fiji”

The extent to which the coverage reinforced a conflict between Australia and Fiji was not at the same level as the conflict between Islam and the West. This was not a clash of ideologies. Yet there was still an “us versus them” aspect to the situation, and it was apparent on a number of levels.

Firstly, there was the high proportion of Australian and/or Australian-based sources. However, it wasn’t simply that these sources were Australian or that they were in Australia – the prevalent themes of the reports, as identified in the thematic analysis, had a strong focus on the Australian attempts to understand and explain the situation, and to contextualise the coups in light of previous Australian perspectives of Fiji. This reinforces the concept of localisation of international news to suit a domestic audience.

As well as this broad focus on Australian perspective in the prevalent themes, there was also more specific evidence of an “us versus them” mentality. Most obviously, this was demonstrated in the continued discussion of a possible military intervention by Australian forces. The fact that Australia had superior military power, and the detailed explanations of the kinds of weapons, machinery and actions which might be involved in such a military intervention, continued to reinforce the divide between the two countries. To some extent, the descriptions of Rabuka which included a focus on his military training in Australia and

New Zealand, played on the fear that the training Australia had provided might be used against us.

To a lesser extent, there was also an "us versus them" element to the prevalence of articles which focused on the Australian political machinations about how to respond to the coup. The contest between the Australian political parties, and the opportunity to gain political mileage, were often given greater prominence than the actual events of the coup, adding to the perception that there was a divide between the two countries.

But apart from these examples, perhaps the most pertinent instance of the "us versus them" element was that Fiji came to be understood as a place where coups could occur, even on a regular basis. This was in direct contrast to Australia, a place of altruistic democracy, moderatism and social order (Gans, 1979, p42-63). In this way, Fiji was represented as a place unlike Australia.

4. The image of Fiji has had consequences in Fiji itself

In a July 1987 article, *Pacific Islands Monthly* reported some of the economic impacts of the coup on the Fijian tourist industry, which included a massive drop in the vacancy rates of 400,000 hotel rooms, the cancellation of flights into Fiji by the only US carrier, Continental, the suspension of flights by Air New Zealand, and the limits on flights by Qantas, which was mainly carrying Fiji nationals and reporters (*Pacific Islands Monthly*, 1987). Clearly, this and other severe economic impacts were not simply an outcome of the way the coups were reported. The economic downturn, the closure of factories, and the loss of jobs were an outcome of the international sanctions placed on Fiji as a result of the coup.

However, it is possible that if the Australian media had chosen to highlight the conditions as they related to potential tourists, the impact on one of the main industries in Fiji may not have been so drastic. In both 1987 and 2000, the majority of the violence was contained within Suva. Two hours to the west, the main tourist hub of Nadi, including the international airport and many of the popular tourist resorts, were almost completely unaffected by the security threats associated with the coups. The "trouble in paradise" mentality represented in many media reports exaggerated the level of threat by suggesting that nobody was safe regardless of where they were in Fiji, leading to the cancellation of many international tourist bookings.

The difference between the situation on the ground and the way it was represented in the media was also recognised by Fijians. A number of local reporters I interviewed recalled talking to their relatives in Australia and New Zealand during the coups, and having to convince them that it was safe to stay in Fiji. The international media reports were, according to these local journalists, portraying the situation as much worse that it really was, and the personal threat to individual safety was highlighted by repeating coverage of the same isolated incidents over and over again.

Similarly, a conversation I had with a local journalist who covered the 2000 coups revealed the kinds of outcomes which could result from the impression that the situation in Fiji was being exaggerated in international media reports. This particular journalist revealed that, while acting as an ad-hoc translator for some Australian media, he and other local journalists deliberately manipulated the translation of the statements made by the coup plotters in order to try and moderate the way the situation would be represented around the world. Perhaps this journalist was aware of the way in which the coup was framed in 1987 and was simply acting in response to this knowledge. Perhaps this journalist was exposed to the kinds of ideas and representations being discussed by the international journalists and saw the chance to act. This action could be regarded as questionable from a professional or ethical point of view. However, as well as demonstrating the potential for international media to be manipulated by local sources without even being aware of this manipulation, it demonstrates that the impact of the Australian coverage was being felt in Fiji.

5. The media representation of Fiji and the cultural attitude to it tells us a great deal about Fiji, but also about our own culture, institutions and policies

One of the features of the reporting of the coups which reflects most tellingly on Australian media coverage is the number of reports of the coup which were written from within Australia (49%), and the number of sources used who were located in Australia (37%). This epitomises the idea of "domesticating the foreign" — whereby the media in a foreign location relies on their own local standards, local authorities and local contexts in order to present a familiar frame or narrative to their audience (Putnis, 2006, p145). The task of fitting the foreign into a familiar frame suggests a cultural attitude which is unwilling to concede the possibility of different ways of knowing and understanding.

In postcolonial terms, Australia dominates the contest between the "imperial centre and the colonial periphery" (Baldick, 1996). Australia stays at the centre, assisted by journalists who favour the use of Australian sources located in Australia to represent what is happening on the periphery. Their stories attempt to uncover why these events are important to an Australian audience, which feels comfortable with news which refers to known sources and relies on familiar themes. Conversely, Fiji stays on the periphery, still imbued with the colonial imagery of an unknowable, unpredictable and sometimes dangerous place.

At the same time, the prevalent themes demonstrate an unwillingness by Australia to fully engage with the countries of the South Pacific. The strong focus on Australian perspectives create a barrier to long-term, broad social engagement with the region. Australia's approach is primarily reactive, trying to understand and address problems as they can occur. Such a short-sighted approach has implications for how we view ourselves and how we are viewed throughout the region.

In summary, while the global scale of Orientalism far exceeds the relationship between Australia and Fiji, clearly they share many elements. A specific picture of Fiji as a troubled paradise was generated and maintained over time. This representation of Fiji had an impact in Fiji and in Australia, including the reinforcement of a divide between the two countries.

Ultimately, the coverage indicated the extent to which the relationship between Australia and Fiji continues to be limited by a one-way exchange of knowledge. This one-way exchange is not simply a consequence of the practice of journalism, or an outcome of the pressure exerted by dominant hegemonic institutions. It is also a consequence of cultural and historical factors which continue to influence how Australia and Fiji relate to each other.

CHAPTER 8: AUSTRALIA AND FIJI: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

This thesis has established that there is a significant role for the media in developing the relationship between Australia and Fiji, or indeed, between similarly developed and developing post-colonial nations. The focus has been on the Australian coverage of the Fiji coups, a focus which allows particular scrutiny of the methods and outcomes of the way in which Fiji was represented at two critical moments in its history. The three different components of this mixed methods study — analysis of the sources used in the articles, of the prevalent themes in the reports, and of the way the journalists went about their work in Fiji — each contribute specific detail about the nature of this relationship. However, the outcome of a mixed methods study is not simply a product of the different methods. It is more than a sum of its parts. In this thesis, the connections between the different components bring new insights into the "mediatised" relationship between Australia and Fiji. This conclusion will summarise both the details of the specific components and the broader significance of the overall thesis.

The findings of the content analysis demonstrated that there was a limited range of sources used in the articles from three Australian broadsheet newspapers in the first week of coverage of the coups in 1987 and 2000. The sources were dominated by representatives of the elite social institutions, primarily the governments, with a significant number of Australian sources and a significant number of sources based in Australia.

The findings conformed with the findings of much of the existing research into news sources, including the dominance of elite sources, the dominance of male sources, and the limited use of alternative sources in reporting international crises. In particular, the findings of the content analysis demonstrated a limited use of Indian Fijian sources, at a time when Indian Fijians represented around half the population of Fiji.

The comparison between the reports from 1987 and 2000 revealed some shifts in the kinds of sources used. There was an increased use of Indian Fijian sources and a reduction in the number of media used as sources. Overall, though, these were not hugely influential on the overall finding of a dominance of elite sources.

The prevalent themes in the stories, based on the thematic analysis of the same set of articles used in the content analysis, demonstrated the major perspectives presented in the articles. Three prevalent themes were identified.

The first theme, *From "paradise lost" to "arc of instability"*, revealed the ways in which the depiction of the situation in Fiji varied between 1987 and 2000. In 1987, the shock of the coups led to the perception that this former paradise of Fiji had been shattered. Often, the articles relied on a juxtaposition between the tropical imagery associated with the location and the reality of the threatening situation. In 2000, this perception of a shattered paradise was no longer as prevalent. The depiction of Fiji had begun to rely on the short-hand phrase "arc of instability", which posited that Fiji was now just part of a broader regional problem.

The second theme, *How should Australia respond?*, demonstrates the differences in the reported reactions to the coup. In 1987, the response is highlighted by two main sub-themes, the possibility of a military intervention and the focus on how the Fiji coup becomes an issue used by the Australian political parties for scoring political points. In 2000, the responses were not as simplified as 1987, with more emphasis on how the complexity of the situation in Fiji demanded more sophisticated approaches than those suggested in 1987.

The third theme, *The force of personality*, focused on the depiction of the two coup leaders, Sitiveni Rabuka in 1987 and George Speight in 2000. In 1987, Rabuka was represented as a strong leader, and in 2000, Speight was depicted as being uncertain and lacking control. The description of these two individuals was related to more wide-spread perceptions of the situation in Fiji at the time, and how these situations might be resolved.

Overall, there was evidence of a relationship between the kinds of sources which appeared in the stories and the prevalent themes. The themes generally presented an Australian-centric perspective on the coups, and this was reflected in a stronger concentration of Australian sources in the subset of articles relating to the themes, compared to the overall results of the content analysis. There was also some evidence to suggest that with the changing profile of sources there were changes in the kinds of themes present. This was particularly evident in the themes relating to Rabuka and Speight. The limited range of sources presented a conservative picture of Rabuka, whereas a more diverse group of sources appeared to

present a more varied assessment of Speight.

The third component of this research, the interviews with the journalists, highlighted many well-known aspects of the work of foreign correspondents. In particular, it showed that overall the journalists had little knowledge of Fiji, and they had some preconceptions about the country of Fiji and what might occur during the coup. In 1987, they also had to contend with situational factors which, in some cases, prevented them from traveling in and around Suva as freely as they would have liked. They were also subjected to intimidation from the military, which ranged from preventing the filing of stories to physical harassment, detention, and in one case deportation. In 1987, the combination of these factors was reflected in a more limited range of sources and more simplistic themes.

In 2000, the situational restrictions eased somewhat. Additionally, the ongoing media focus on Fiji because of the 1987 coup meant the journalists had an improved understanding of the situation. There is evidence that there was a more diverse range of sources used, particularly an increase in the use of Indian Fijian sources. The outcome was that the themes were framed from a more complex perspective, with more sophisticated approaches to understanding and resolving the situation presented, especially compared to the more simplistic treatment of the themes of the 1987 reports.

Overall, the findings of this research reinforce the idea when the media is exposed to only a limited range of sources, or their access to sources is restricted in some way, the outcome is that the representation of an event will be equally narrow. With an expanded range of sources and with greater background knowledge, there is potential for a broader perspective of the event. In a situation like the Fiji coups, it is not always within the power of the journalists to access a wide range of sources. Even those journalists with significant background knowledge and experience can succumb to the pressure of physical intimidation and be restrained by the actions of military forces.

At the same time, the journalists abide by established practices which have a significant impact on the way an event is represented. The reliance on elite sources is an efficient and reliable approach, but it limits the perspectives presented. Even though many of the journalists recognised the advantage of a diverse range of sources, the stories included sources who were primarily drawn from the main social institutions, particularly the

government. The impact of this approach in a situation like the Fiji coups is that the depiction of a complex social, political and historical situation is presented in a simplified way.

Additionally, the focus on the localisation of international news to suit a domestic audience can also lead to a simplified understanding of complex events. Localisation tends to build on existing stereotypes, especially in a crisis situation when the need to provide domestic perspectives tends to strip away the context and background knowledge required to gain a more sophisticated level of understanding.

The media organisations have a particular role to play here. A significant step would be allowing correspondents to spend more significant amounts of time in Fiji and the Pacific countries generally, either on a permanent basis or on longer assignments. This would allow the journalists to develop on-the-job experience, to make personal connections with the people in these countries, and to broaden the coverage of the Pacific beyond the scope of the limited "crisis coverage" approach. For example, News Limited, which owns media outlets in Fiji, could rotate Australian journalists through the Fiji office, allowing them to work on stories for both the local outlets and the Australian ones. The Australian media could also take advantage of the fast-developing standards of Pacific journalism and employ Pacific Islanders to report on the events in their own countries.

The willingness of media organisations to commit to such programs would invariably be dictated by economic imperatives. While it may be difficult to argue that these kinds of commitments would lead to increased financial success for the media organisations, this must be weighed against the societal implications of a narrow depiction of events which limits community understanding of Australia's regional neighbours.

By not engaging with Fiji more fully, we limit understanding. If we never make strong, mutual connections with the people of Fiji and the Pacific generally, then we will always view them as a problem, as an issue to be dealt with when a crisis occurs. Our limited exposure to Fiji also denies us the opportunity to gain from the cultural depth and knowledge inherent in the Fijian communities. We don't just cut ourselves off from their problems, we cut ourselves off from their successes, their ways of understanding, their hopes and desires.

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