Chapter 1

Setting the Scene

> *We cannot know the village where we are going unless we know the village from whence we came. (Chinese proverb cited in Henry, G. 1992, p. 14).*

Introduction

This chapter introduces the topic of the research that is the focus of this thesis and the preceding quote provides a point of departure. It reflects my position at the crossroads of Indigenous and Western knowledges, as an Indigenous Fijian researcher in the field of early childhood education, looking to where I would want Indigenous Fijian children to be. I believe the Chinese proverb reflects a feeling shared by those of us who have been colonised and trying to re-claim our cultural identity in the wider world.

The chapter begins with a brief account of colonisation impact on Fiji's education system. This is followed by a brief account of my background to assist the reader to more fully understand my interest in this research topic. This is followed by a comprehensive representation of the research topic, formulated research questions and assumptions. The chapter then offers definitions for a broad range of terms and concepts used throughout the thesis. The significance of the study within the international context is then demonstrated and the theoretical and practical positioning of the study within this context is identified. In order to highlight the specific context and practical importance of the research, an overview of Fiji is then provided, focusing on the key challenges the country faces, because of its colonisation history and the contemporary hegemony of Western society. The final section of the chapter introduces the later chapters in the thesis.

Colonisation impact on the Fijian education system

Indigenous Fijians cannot refute the fact that they have been heavily colonised ever since the Westerners arrived into Fiji's shores in the late 1800s. Thus the

inherited colonial processes for example, the structures of schooling have continued in neocolonial and hegemonic formation, despite the fact that Fiji has been politically independent for over four decades (Puamau, 2002). Western assumptions, knowledge and outlook formed the basis for the interpretation and representation of the history of Fiji. The Western curriculum was institutionalised during colonial times and the Indigenous Fijians were forced to learn these new Western concepts, labelling our own as backward and useless. The missionaries played a big role in the dissemination of 'white supremacy notions' where all learning types and acompanying activities were controlled (Puamau, 2002). Further, English became the mandatory language of instruction, which formed the heart of Fiji's education curriculum and this is still much in practice today. Indigenous Fijians today in this post-colonial era have tried to resist colonisation blankets and the next section provides a brief discuss of this.

Post-colonisation

Fiji today has been redefined and there is a need that a culturally inclusive, culturally democratic curriculum is developed, which has its foundation the notion that educational settings such as early childhood and schools must build on what students already know or ought to know about their values and beliefs, their histories and worldview, their languages and their knowledge systems (Thaman, 1992). Having said that, Early Childhood Education (ECE) curriculum guidelines have followed the Western neigbouring countries' curriculum like Australia and New Zealand until recently in 2009 when Fiji developed its own curriculum guidelines, *Na Noda Mataniciva* (Ministry of Education, 2009). This curriculum lacks formal cultural components of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges of learning, knowing and doing, which is the essence of Indigenous Fijian identity (refer to Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight). Having said that, it further contradicts to 'holistic' mentioned in the current vision of the Fijian Ministry of Education. This aroused my thoughts as I tried to reconceptualise and rethink of ways Indigenous Fijians could revive our cultural identity in institutions like schools. The next section locates the research and my intensions as a researcher.

Locating the research and the researcher

My research interest as an Early Childhood (EC) educator, former Early Childhood Senior Officer in the Ministry of Education in Fiji, and currently a teacher-educator within academia, has evolved from a long-held passion for children and how they learn (Tiko, 2015). My interest in early childhood education was further sparked by the growing concern of Indigenous Pacific researchers who were advocating for the recognition of Indigenous Pacific culture. In particular, these Pacific researchers have focused on the changes that needed to be made in schools and in tertiary curricula to make them culturally appropriate for Indigenous Pacific students (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Thaman, 2001). The *Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific Peoples by Pacific Peoples* (RPEIPP) movement supports this idea (Sanga, 2011), in proposing that Indigenous people take ownership of the processes of education. It also proposes a re-examination of the curriculum processes, at all levels of education, in what is a largely Western-style education system across the Pacific (Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Sanga, 2011). Within education systems across the Pacific, there is a dissonance between the reality of current educational provision and recent public and research demands for decolonising educational processes and the development of more culturally-appropriate educational tools (Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Sanga, 2011; Thaman, 2009; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012).

This thesis contends that such an agenda ought to begin at the foundational level of early childhood education and the research that is presented focuses on Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges of child development and its practices, as these knowledges are important for children to acquire and comprehend as they grow in this diversified world where personal identity is essential. Likewise adults working with and teaching children also need to have a thorough knowledge of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and practices. The initial interest for the research was further strengthened during my engagement in the *veitalanoa-yaga* (focus group: refer to Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii) with Indigenous Fijian superiors, particularly Associate Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and Doctor Tupeni Baba. These mentors expressed similar ideas concerning the need to strengthen the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges of Indigenous Fijian

children at the early childhood level, including a focus on mother-tongue language or village dialects.

The term *Indigenous Fijians* in this thesis refers to the First or Native people of the Fiji Islands. The alternative Fijian term, *iTaukei*, (refer to Table1.1, pp. xv-xviii) may at first glance appear more appropriate, but this term refers to any Indigenous people from any part of the world. So, for example, an Aboriginal might be called an *iTaukei* of Australia, or a Maori, an *iTaukei* of New Zealand. For this reason the term *Indigenous Fijians* is preferred as opposed to *iTaukei* (refer to Table1.1, pp. xv-xviii).

This doctoral research has facilitated my professional development and further learning and I hope it may become an educational resource related to Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges for young Indigenous Fijian children. The following section outlines the research focus of the thesis.

Introducing the research topic

Indigenous people throughout the world possess implicit cultural beliefs and explicit practices related to young children and their early childhood education but they tend to undervalue these ideas because of centuries of colonisation. Tobin (2011) argues that a broad range of forces at individual, community, national and global levels continue to endanger these cultural beliefs and practices; for instance, the intent to rationalise and modernise early childhood education systems, most government policy makers increasingly circulate intense global early childhood practices. As the most powerful and legitimate international organisation, the United Nations recently took a step in recognising all Indigenous people through the *United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People* (UNDRIP; UNESCO, 2008b). This document affirms that Indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognising the right of all peoples to be different, to consider ourselves/themselves different and to be respected as such. While there are other obligations within this document, the main emphasis is on the ‘rights’ to be an Indigenous and this will encompass the whole world of the said people. Thus, making this declaration a further important step forward for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights and

freedoms of indigenous peoples. In addition the 'development of relevant activities documented in the United Nations system in this field' (UNESCO, 2008b, p. 2).

Based on the obligations set out in this United Nations (UN) document, this thesis argues for the necessity of recognising children's development in terms of culture survival and the sustainability of minority cultures in a contemporary ever-changing world (Ritchie, 2012). Indigenous Fijian child-rearing beliefs and practices, which were once part of the Indigenous Fijian people's everyday world, seem to have disappeared under the introduction and influence of Eurocentric ideas that were introduced through colonisation. In this thesis, this Eurocentric focus on child development is challenged. The research described in this thesis is a response to the changing nature of the world, which is leading to a respect for human diversity (Cologon, 2014) and social inclusion (Sims, 2011a). The perspective of dehegemonisation following decolonisation (Childs & Williams, 2013; Tuhiwai- Smith, 1999; 2012) has informed both the aim of the research and the formulation of my research questions, as outlined below.

Research aim

The primary aim of this study has been to examine child development in a specific cultural epistemological framework, in particular it seeks to explore how Indigenous Fijian people use their Indigenous epistemology and ontology to construct and theorise their knowledge of child development practices. In order to pursue this stated aim, Indigenous Fijian notions of child development are taken to mean understanding children's ways of learning, knowing and doing, including the implications of these for government policies and practices in relation to the early childhood years of education.

Research questions

Based on the stated aim of examining child development in the specific context of Indigenous Fijian child-rearing beliefs and practices, the following four research questions were formulated:

1) *What are Indigenous Fijian notions of child development?*

2) *How are these Fijian notions of child development used in teaching?*
3) *How can policy and practice reflect the importance of Indigenous Fijian knowledge concerning children's development?*
4) *What future possibilities or appropriate and meaningful alternatives might inform such policies and practices?*

Findings in response to these questions are presented in Chapters Five and Six which are dedicated to outlining the research data, and Chapters Seven and Eight, include interrogation and further discussion of the findings.

In qualitative research such as this, assumptions rely on reasons about what, why and how things have happened in a particular way (Liamputtong, 2010b). Thus, the following three foundational assumptions relative to the research questions were formulated, with accompanying explanations of their meanings and relevance.

Assumption One

There is currently limited connection between Indigenous Fijian knowledge of the child development and government policy and practice.

Early theories of child development such as those of Piaget (1957), Erikson (1993), Bandura (1977), Freud (1991) and Skinner (1953) tended to create universality in concepts of child development, which pay little attention to the diversified nature of societies across the world. Thus, in Fiji, the policy and practice of the Ministry of Education (Learning Together, 2000), which was based on these theories, lacks recognition of the importance of Indigenous Fijian child development knowledge and the necessity to increase integration of this knowledge into the early childhood curriculum. This government level policy gap regarding Indigenous Fijian notions of child development, appears to show a lack of understanding of later, more contemporary socio-cultural approaches to child development (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978) and their implications for policy and practice. The contention of this thesis is that this situation is an ongoing outcome of past colonisation. Such a perspective is supported by Gegeo and Gegeo (2001) and others (Chilisa, 2012a; Kovach, 2010; Martin, 2008; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Thaman, 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012),

who argue that colonisation has continued to undermine Indigenous knowledge bases, including ways of knowing and customs, as well as the theorising, constructing and encoding of this knowledge for future generations. Furthermore, Thaman (2003) asserts that colonial masters were decisive about elements of the school including the early childhood education (curriculum) that created boundaries around how and why things should be done.

Assumption Two

Indigenous Fijian knowledge of child development, like all other knowledges of child development, is ever changing and dynamic.

As change is a consistent feature of all human societies (Fulan & Langworthy, 2014), people's ways of knowing change with time, and with increased integration of kmowledge, change is inevitable. Consequently, it is assumed in this study that Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies of the people who participated in this study continue to adjust and change as their society changes and that Indigenous Fijian people will continue to redefine, construct and re-vision their knowledges and lives.

Assumption Three

There is a need to contextualise early childhood pedagogy in terms of both policy and practice.

Socio-cultural theories (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010; Rogoff, 2003) reflect the notion of contexts as a focal point for consideration in understanding children's development. In terms of the present study, 'context' refers to the Indigenous Fijian culture and this frame is used in a manner similar to that of Li (2011), and Tobin (2011), who argue that culture is a process for defining the learning boundaries of young children. The importance of the cultural element within child development has been recognised by a variety of researchers and academics, including Edwards (2009), Fleer (2006), Heine (2008), Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Rogoff (2003); Thaman, 2003 and Thomson (2012).

In Fiji, policy and practice relating to early childhood education pedagogy and learning can and should promote contextualisation to make the content and

delivery more meaningful for Indigenous Fijian children. Pacific academics (Thaman, 2001 and Nabobo, 2000) support the need to develop and implement more culturally-relevant early childhood education and school curricula. In order to do this, there is a need to decolonise the minds of people (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012; Gegeo & Gegeo, 2001) in the education profession, especially teachers joining the Ministry of Education but also in the whole Indigenous Fijian community. It is essential for everyone to know his or her origin and to understand the importance of their cultural identity as part of personality development, well-being and effective functioning in the world.

Definitions of terms used in this thesis

The following terms and phrases are used widely in the thesis and in Table 1.1 (pp. xv-xviii), a list of glossaries of Indigenous Fijian terms and phrases are documented to assist readers in the clarification of their English equivalents. I particularly placed the glossaries list upfront soon after the Table of Contents and before this Chapter One to illustrate my bicultural stance outlining the importance of Indigenous knowledges in the research world.

Early childhood

In general, childhood is seen to encompass the period of life from birth to the age of seventeen years. This thesis argues that the period of early childhood is the most crucial since during these years children experience tremendous growth and change across all areas of development. The stage of early childhood covers the early years of life from a dependent newborn to a child able to satisfy his or her own needs independently. In the Fijian context, I have distinguished four age groups involved in early childhood education as follows:

1) Child care: birth to 2 and 3 years
2) Preschool: 3 to 4 years
3) Kindergarten: 5 years
4) Early years of school: 6 to 8 years

Thus, the term *early childhood*, as used in this thesis, encompasses the period of life from birth to the age of eight (Berk, 2012).

Child development

There are many definitions for the concept of child development but the term generally refers to the ways in which children grow over time in terms of physical wellbeing, social and emotional development, cognitive development and other aspects of human growth (Berk, 2012; Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014). Every human being undergoes this developmental journey. A precise analysis and understanding of child development provides insights into an individual's past and present, allowing some predictions to be made concerning future behaviours (Berk, 2012). As for the present study, the term *child development* is mostly associated with family child-rearing and the concept includes the epistemological and ontological processes of how Indigenous Fijian children are raised and thus developed.

Early childhood education

The notion of early childhood education is defined here as a branch of educational philosophy, theory and practice that sets standards and principles for teaching young children under the age of eight (Arthur et al, 2015). The key focus of early childhood education concerns children learning within education and care environments before they start compulsory schooling (Anning, Cullen & Fleer, 2009) at the age of six years. Children are more likely to advance their learning, if they possess a strong sense of identity and if teachers appreciate their cultural backgrounds (Fleer, 2010). Therefore, the present study uses the term *early childhood education* to refer to a child's learning experiences that occur in either formal childcare or early childhood or kindergarten settings.

Community

In this present research study, the term *community* refers to a specific group of Indigenous Fijians living together in a commune or village. In Fiji, Indigenous Fijians live in village communities that are largely situated in rural areas. A Fijian equivalent term can be seen as *vanua*, which Nabobo-Baba (2005, 2006), notes as meaning the whole environment of which the human community is a part.

Family

The term *family* typically refers to the nuclear family of parents and children but sometimes the term is used to refer to an extended family, which includes grandparents and other family relations such as cousins, uncles and aunties (Bowes et al, 2013). Within the culture of Indigenous Fijians, the family takes a more pluralistic form, with families knitted together through close relationship ties, which are most evident in Indigenous village settings, where everyone is related to one another. In this study, Indigenous Fijian families encompass both the nuclear family and the extended family.

Indigenous Fijians

As noted above, the use of the term *Indigenous Fijians* refers to the first people of the Fiji Islands and has little correlation to the notion of *iTaukei*, which is used in the Republic of Fiji Islands Constitution (2013) to mean Indigenous Fijians. Literally *iTaukei* refers to the Indigenous people of the world, regardless of the ethnic group to which they belong. For example, Māori of New Zealand can be called *iTaukei*, because they are the first people of New Zealand. Since the focus of the present study is on the first people of Fiji, the term *Indigenous Fijians* refers to the custodians of Fiji, the notion used throughout this thesis.

Indigenous Fijian children

The term *Indigenous Fijian children*, means children born of Indigenous Fijian parents and registered under the *vola ni kawa bula* (Register of Births) as Indigenous Fijian. In Fiji, there are two categories of Indigenous Fijian children– the first category refers to children born of a chiefly status, while the second refers to the children of commoners. The present study addresses both categories of Indigenous Fijian children, with all portrayed generally as Indigenous Fijian children.

Epistemology

The general definition of epistemology is a branch of philosophy that studies knowledge. This branch of philosophy attempts to answer the basic question of

what distinguishes true (adequate) knowledge from false (inadequate) knowledge (Martin, 2008). In the present study, the term *epistemology* refers to the cultural knowledge and practices exercised by Indigenous Fijians. Thus, epistemology addresses the notions of situated knowledge and situated knowers (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). In other words, it is 'a study of differences', because it is about a particular epistemology that may emerge as a challenge to mainstream Western philosophies and paradigms of knowledge (Nabobo-Baba, 2006, p. 56).

Ontology

Ontology is a branch of metaphysics or philosophical study that seeks to explain the essence of things. As a branch of metaphysics, it deals with the nature of being, reality, or ultimate substance (Martin, 2008). For the present research, the term *ontology* refers to what it means to be an Indigenous Fijian. The key characteristic of ontology is its correlation to cosmology or the worldview, beliefs and practices that define people's values and ways of interpreting and engaging with the world (Chilisa, 2012b; Martin, 2008.). The current study refers to ontology as the totality of social and cultural beliefs, practices, and values that constitute the historical and contemporary Indigenous Fijian world. Why is this research important?

This study aims to increase understanding and awareness of Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledge and epistemology and to highlight the importance of such knowledge in offering transformative possibilities for facilitating greater understanding of knowledge production processes in a specific Indigenous context. Such understanding is particularly relevant and useful for Indigenous Fijian educators. Thus, this study supports Thaman's (2012; 2009; 2003; 2001; 2000; 1992) assertion of the need for cultural analysis in education, specifically a systematic analysis of Indigenous cultures, knowledge, skills, values, languages and environment in relationship to culture and curriculum in the Pacific, of which Fiji is a part.

The research explores the Indigenous Fijian worldview as an essential component of culturally sensitive child development education. From a socio-cultural perspective, the worldview possessed and expressed by a certain cultural group

determines and shapes an individual's entire attitudes and perceptions of life, including notions of knowledge, epistemology and education (Bowes et al, 2013; Fleer, 2006). Therefore, through illuminating the cultural knowledge or the worldview of Indigenous Fijians, the study addresses potential implications of Indigenous Fijian values and concepts across the field of early education.

The study may well bring new knowledge and insights to teachers and other parties interested in children's development, learning and wellbeing. It has clearly revealed Indigenous Fijian notions of children's development that are of significant psychological value and which should be considered important in other child-related research. Indigenous studies carried out in the Pacific by Nabobo-Baba (2005), Thaman (2009) and earlier studies (Puamau, 2002; Sanga, 2002; Singh; 2002; Teaero, 2002 & 2003) indicate that Western education makes Indigenous people think differently from the realities they actually face day to day. These pioneering works aroused my commitment to offer an in-depth insight into how Indigenous Fijian knowledge and skills can be, and should be, integrated into Fijian educational processes in order to make learning more realistic and meaningful for younger Indigenous Fijian children. Furthermore, the findings of the study may be a useful resource for developing an early childhood teacher-training curriculum. The findingsof the research set the foundation for designing alternative capacity-building frameworks for both teachers and Indigenous Fijian communities.

It is essential to clarify that this study does not reject the achievements and values of the Western world, nor does it deny the positive impacts of globalisation. In aiming to sustain the traditional culture of Indigenous Fijians, the study has attempted to bring together both Indigenous Fijian and Western notions to create a uniquely Indigenous Fijian synthesis. This study highlights cultural processes and meanings around issues that matter to Indigenous Fijian children, in order to help them be active and successful participants in the educational process from early childhood. In addition, the study findings might be helpful and useful to policy makers and educationalists in planning and implementing a more culturally appropriate curriculum and relevant pedagogies for young Indigenous Fijian children. If this were to occur, the government would demonstrate a

bicultural approach, where Indigenous Fijian children are seen as knowledgeable in both their own cultural knowledges and Western knowledges. The perspective adopted in this study is that biculturalism is one of the most feasible and successful strategies in achieving Indigenous Fijian cultural revival.

As previously stated, Indigenous Fijians are the *iTaukei ni vanua* (inhabitants of the land) of the Fiji Islands, and their cultural knowledges and epistemologies have experienced assault from colonisers and proponents of Western-world hegemony for many years. From this viewpoint, the study includes a proposal for reviving Indigenous Fijian culture and its epistemological knowledges (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) through a bicultural approach in the highly diverse multicultural context of Fiji. Multiculturalism is further discussed in Chapter Three to substantiate the claim that biculturalism is preferable in this context for reviving the cultural knowledges of Indigenous Fijians in relation to child development.

Arising from this research is an early childhood education model that employs a bicultural approach to address the contemporary diminishing cultural identity of Indigenous Fijians. Centuries of colonisation by Britain and neighbouring countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, have imposed education policies that have threatened the viability of the Indigenous Fijian culture and importantly its language (Taufe'ulungaki, 2003). If not addressed now and from the early childhood years, both the culture and the language are at risk of extinction. In this context of raising awareness of Indigenous Fijian origins, biculturalism provides a tool for supporting the cultural needs of Indigenous Fijians. The proposed solution is not innovative, considering documents such as *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), which was also developed out of the struggle to challenge cultural oppression (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012; Ritchie, 2012). *Te Whāriki* is a bicultural early childhood curriculum for New Zealand that fully recognises Maori culture. For example, Ritchie (2005; 2008b; 2009) and Ritchie and Rau (2004; 2005) have continued to emphasise early childhood biculturalism as a way forward in attempting to revive and sustain Māori culture. Another example is the Singaporean education system, which emphasises a bicultural approach in its curriculum, *Nurturing Early Learners: A Curriculum For Kindergarten in Singapore* (Singaporean Ministry of Education, 2013). This

document places Singapore's cultural heritage and values at the forefront of the kindergarten curriculum document. Therefore, in this thesis, I argue for an early childhood bicultural framework that acknowledges Indigenous Fijians and their status as Fiji's first people, an approach that would provide a pathway for significant revival of the original cultural knowledge system (some of which has been altered due to colonialism) within the Western education system.

Thesis overview

The thesis comprises nine chapters that provide in-depth insights into the entire scope of the study, beginning with the research aim and the accompanying research questions. **Chapter One** has set the scene for the study, representing the researcher as a professional in the field of early childhood education and giving a brief overview of other academic works in early childhood in terms of alignment with Indigenous Fijian culture, values and traditions, in order to explain what prompted the initial research interest.

Chapter Two provides a theoretical framework that presents the conceptual lens and guidelines for the overall research. Here, attention is drawn to theories concerning colonisation and oppression. This precise analysis of colonisation and oppression does not only focus on the Fiji Islands, but includes a more global context. The impacts of these practices on educational systems, children's development and educational outcomes are presented at a global level. Later, the discussion is refined to colonisation and oppression as experienced in Indigenous Fijian society and the resulting outcomes that are reflected in young Indigenous Fijian children's development and educational progress. In order to further substantiate the research questions and potential contributions of this study, I provide a personal story reflecting on the impacts of colonisation and oppression. Some of my related stories are also reflected in McCrea's book (2015a) *Leading and Managing Early Childhood Settings*, specifically in Chapter Five (pp. 113-114), Chapter Six (pp. 142-143) and Chapter Seven (pp. 159-160).

Chapter Three presents a comprehensive literature review related to the study topic. This chapter provides a brief overview of Western theories related to child development, including examples of universal colonisation and oppression. In

addition, the resultant impacts of these theories on education systems and children's development and educational outcomes are highlighted. Then socio-cultural theories of child development are presented as examples of the growing recognition of the importance of culture in all aspects of human life. Again, the impact of these theories on education systems and children's development is discussed. Despite the prevailing recognition of the culture in official Fijian policy documentation, the practice of child development still relies heavily on Western ideologies.

International education systems developed for specific cultural groups such as the ones for the Australian Aborigines, New Zealand Māoris, and the First Nations of Canada are examined. The chapter focus then narrows to the Pacific, particularly looking at the Natives of Hawaii, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and the Indigenous Fijians of Fiji. This section of the thesis incorporates some post-colonial theories and notions of *voice*, *other* and *hybridity* as a frame for the entire work in alignment with the chosen methodology. In addition, the chapter introduces the decolonising methodology of Tuhiwai-Smith (1999; 2012) and the dehegemonising methods of Gegeo (1998) as a transition point to the next chapter.

Chapter Four illustrates the methodology employed in order to positively achieve the stated aim of the study. Following a brief overview of the selected paradigm, ontology and epistemology, the focus moves to the social constructivism of Vygotsky (1978). In-depth investigation of social world influences and the role they play in constructing the truth leads to a discussion and interrogation of an Indigenous Methodology. This chapter examines the concepts of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous epistemology from an Indigenous Fijian perspective. This is where a conceptual framework is designed and established, which is termed the Indigenous Fijian *Vakaviti-Vakaturaga* (IFVV). This framework reflects the Fijian *Vanua* Framework proposed by Nabobo-Baba (2005) and other similar frameworks, such as the *Kaupapa* Maori (Tuhiwai- Smith, 1999, 2012) and the *Kakala* Research Framework (Fua, Sitaniselao, Tu'ifua, Taufe'ulungaki, 2007). After clarifying the applied methodology for this research, the study participants, data collection strategy and

the overall research processes are outlined. In addition, ethical issues relevant to the current research prior to analysis are noted.

Chapters Five and Six present the findings gathered from the participants in this study, i.e. the *veitalanoa-yaga* (a focus group in the Indigenous Fijian context) and the interviews that were conducted with individuals as key people and within focus groups. In Chapter Five, a careful analysis of results reveals what people recalled about their childhoods. In addition, the cultural values, traditions and behaviours that Indigenous Fijians want to maintain in their lives and preserve for future generations are presented. Chapter Six displays the dichotomy between Indigenous Fijian knowledges and Western knowldges. Both Chapters Five and Six provide evidence from research participants to support the assumptions stated in this initial chapter.

Chapters Seven and Eight are dedicated to a comprehensive discussion and interrogation of the findings documented in Chapters Five and Six. The entire scope of the findings is exposed to comprehensive analysis, synthesis and professional evaluation of data themes that were discovered as the data was manipulated. In brief, Chapter Seven discusses ways in which early childhood and schools are colonised. Chapter Eight presents a bicultural early childhood education model that blends both worldviews, the Indigenous Fijian and the Western. Furthermore, the chapter applies the *Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative* (RPEIPP) to initiate a *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* as a culturally-appropriate early childhood education model for Indigenous Fijian children.

Chapter Nine draws together key conclusions and formulates the most relevant implications of this study. The conclusions serve as an overview of the study, including a synthesis of previous chapters. The implications are drawn with reference to the decolonising and dehegemonising frames discussed in Chapters Three and Four. Since the implications of the study are focused on early childhood educational settings, the chapter indicates the necessity for the Fijian Ministry of Education (MoE) to redesign current policies and practices to support and strengthen holistic approaches for teaching and learning of Indigenous Fijian

cultural knowledges with Indigenous Fijian children and others who are interested.

Reading the thesis

In this thesis, some Indigenous Fijian phrases and words are used, followed by English equivalents or near meanings and these are put in brackets. A glossary of Indigenous Fijian words and phrases is also provided at Table 1.1 (pp. xv-xviii) to help readers in their understandings of the meanings. This thesis is about the significance of Indigenous Fijian knowledges of child development. It is specifically focused on children's ways of learning, knowing and doing and the implications of this for policy and practice in the early childhood and further on into the early years of primary education. It is about including these ways into the world discourse of knowledges. It is in this spirit that the study privileges Indigenous Fijians and Indigenous Fijian words and phrases. This is done with the same rationale as other Pacific academics notably Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (2005; 2006) for Fiji, Konai Thaman (2009) for Tonga, and Mead (1996), Tuhiwai-Smith (1999; 2012), Ritchie (2012) for the Māori. Nabobo-Baba (2005) notes that Indigenous Fijian words do not necessarily translate directly to English, and on that note, Indigenous Fijian words are used in this thesis in order to capture more fully the many meanings a word or phrase might represent.

What is left out?

This thesis is about Indigenous Fijian epistemology and ontology, with a focus solely on the notions of child development. It attempts to reveal what is considered important in Indigenous Fijian culture and whether or not these notions are currently reflected in early childhood education settings and importantly in the Fijian Ministry of Education's policy documents. While this study may ring true to Indigenous Fijians in general, it does not suggest to be the only Indigenous Fijian authority on Indigenous epistemologies around child development. This research encompasses some accounts of people's voices from three selected Indigenous village sites within the three confederacies of Fiji, namely *Burebasaga, Kubuna* and *Tovata* (Figure 4.1, p.70). It includes the voices of some early childhood and early years teachers in selected education districts,

and a sample of selected key Indigenous Fijian people on Fiji's main island. It is does not suggest that this is the only way or ways of viewing Indigenous Fijian child development epistemologies, as there are certainly other views yet to be revealed and explored.

Chapter synthesis

This introductory chapter has signalled what this thesis is about and what the following chapters hold for the reader. It has outlined the source of the passion of the researcher to investigate the topic of Indigenous Fijian epistemology and ontology about child development. The main concern of the study, its assumptions and significance have been described and, in doing so, the chapter has also defined the terms that are widely used throughout the thesis. The chapter has also signaled the use of an Indigenous epistemology to promote the inclusion of the voice of Indigenous people in mainstream knowledge discourses.

Chapter 2

Frameworks and Contexts

> *People must study the past to recover their history, culture and language to enable a reconstruction of what was lost that is useful to inform the present. (Chilisa, 2012b, p.19)*

Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical and conceptual structures that guided this research study. It provides an overview of relevant theories of colonisation and oppression interlinked with dominant educational theories. The chapter also presents the voices of post-colonial writers and theorists who challenge the dominant discourse to promote recognition of the oppressed. The colonisation experiences of various Indigenous nations are explored and, in particular, the role that forces of colonisation and oppression have played in the changing lifestyles, values, practices and beliefs of Indigenous Fijian society. In these explorations there is a specific focus on changing views about children's development. I also incorporate my personal story of an altered, Westernised identity and partial loss of and distancing from my authentic cultural and educational Indigenous Fijian heritage. The personal story is included to illustrate the personal impact of colonisation and oppression on territories like Fiji. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the theoretical findings that inform the further analysis and review of relevant educational theories in later chapters.

Theories of colonisation and oppression

Theories of colonisation are significant in this study, since they inform and help to revive the pieces of cultural knowledge that have been overshadowed and diminished as a result of the hegemony of Western powers (Parker, 2015; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015). Though, Fiji became independent from the United Kingdom in 1970, the colonial legacies remains largely present throughout Indigenous Fijian culture, practices, values and beliefs. As Childs and Williams (2013, p. 5) state 'Western powers were still intent on maintaining maximum

indirect control over erstwhile colonies, via political, cultural and above all economic channels'. This is the case for Indigenous Fijians, as the Western colonialists presented their culture as superior (Parker, 2015; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015) to that of the Indigenous peoples of Fiji, who have been urged to step aside from their long-standing cultural values and practices. This deliberate attempt at cultural-annihilation was usually supported by either Cultural-Evolutionary or the Social-Darwinist theories (Gabora, 2013). These theories reinforced the attempt to control and reap economic benefits from colonised territories and within the framework of European imperial and expansionist policies to 'civilise' the Indigenous peoples (West et al 2012; Parker, 2015). Such practices led to the destruction of cultural knowledges (Parker, 2015; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015), including values congruent to the focus of this study, that is, Indigenous Fijian beliefs and practices around child development. Such *veika bibi* (important knowledge) is observed in the ways of *vakaturaga* (chiefly demeanor), seen in daily life and in interactions with others.

The following section presents literature focused on post-colonial theory that links with key concepts in the present study. These include notions of voice, Other and hybridity concepts that have been utilised to better explore and interrogate Indigenous Fijian knowledges and epistemologies.

Post-colonial theories and concepts

Post-colonial theories (Childs and Williams, 2013) have been accompanied by an increased involvement by Indigenous peoples in the revival and survival of their own Indigenous knowledges, as Battiste (2000b, p. xvi) notes:

> *As the twentieth century unfolds to a new millennium, many voices and forms are converging to form a new perspective on knowledge. Many of these voices belong to the Indigenous peoples who have survived European colonisation and cognitive imperialism.*

To engage with post-colonial theory means engaging with post-colonialism and its notions of history, agency, representation, identity and discourse (Childs &Williams, 2013). Post-colonial theories affirm and reclaim Indigenous voices, worldviews, languages, cultures and philosophies, as they broadly critique Indigenous experiences of colonisation and neo-colonisation (Childs & Williams,

2013). These notions provide an Indigenous framework for better understanding the colonial experience and for redressing it. In addition these theorists reflect a desire to imagine and work towards a better life in a post-colonial context. This aligns with Chilisa (2000, p. xix) when she states that 'Indigenous thinkers use the term post-colonial to describe a symbolic strategy for shaping a desirable future, not an existing reality'. Childs and Williams (2013) further emphasise that post-colonial societies do not exist, what exists is the continuation of colonial mentalities and structures in all societies and nations and neo-colonial attempts to resist decolonisation in today's world. Such post-colonial theories and concepts are needed to resist colonialism (Battiste, 2000a; Nabobo-Baba, 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012; Thaman, 2003) in favour of Indigenous knowledges and its imaginative processes (Friedel, 2011).

In addition to countering colonialism, Freire (2000) asserts that a more humane approach would involve the colonised and colonising cultures in open and respectful dialogue. Freire considers that such a dialogic approach represents an ability to liberate the oppressed culture and enable people to speak and develop openly. Kortright (2003, p. 3) similarly suggests the need to 'deconstruct the present Leviathan we live in and create a world based on cultural diversity, liberty and mutual aid'.

In New Zealand, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999, p. 80) voices strong opposition to colonisation and oppression and identifies colonial practices as 'they came, they saw, they named, they claimed'. Resistance in New Zealand created Kaupapa Māori theory, which was informed by both critical theory and anti-colonial concepts that countered the voice of the dominant coloniser (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012). This counter hegemonic approach has legitimised Māori ways of doing things and validated Māori ways of knowing and doing in academia (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; 2012). This theory signalled resistance, where Māori argued against inappropriate practices undertaken by non-Māori in researching what is Māori. Such a position has become a safeguard against further exploitation of Māori knowledges and materials (Bishop, 2008a). Further, Tuhiwai-Smith (1999; 2012) argues that this notion of fighting back does not apply only to Māori, but to Indigenous peoples across the world who can attest to

the devastating and dehumanising impact seemingly objective researchers have had on their traditional cultures (see Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Cram, 2001; Gibbs, 2001; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012; Spoony, 1999).

In her research on her mother's people, Nabobo-Baba (2006) also used a counter-hegemonic approach by privileging an Indigenous Fijian protocol in gathering data. Her Fijian *Vanua* Framework (FVF) is an attempt not only 'to decolonise, but also to dehegemonise the debate on Indigenous Fijian epistemology, and to do so from an Indigenous Fijian perspective' (Nabobo-Baba, 2006, p. 2). She further emphasised the need to counter the hegemonic education discourses of the West beginning with ECE as this is where all education begins. In Fiji today, the development of the ECE curriculum *Na Noda Mataniciva* (Ministry of Education, 2009) has created further drift in the Indigenous Fijian knowledge through heavy reliance on English as the medium of instruction to the young children. As an Indigenous scholar in the ECE field, I would particularly like to see the acknowledgement of the Indigenous Fijian as the sole owners of the land written upfront in this document. I would also like to see a balance of both worlds of the Indigenous Fijian and Western knowledge system in the ECE curriculum. Thus, this post-colonial time has further denied our Indigenous Fijian construct in the name of 'globalisation' and 'development' where the post colonial education focuses on quality, equity, sustainability, access and efficiency which is a masked to further marginalise Indigenous Fijian knowledges and Other Indigenous knowledges around the globe. Thaman's (2000) *Kakala* Framework, further developed as the *Kakala* Research Framework (Fua et al, 2007), an Indigenous (Tongan) way to privilege Tongan people's ways of doing things.

Informed by these views of oppression and its cultural consequences (Baszile, 2015; Freire, 2000; Kortright, 2003; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Parker, 2015; Said, 1995; 1978; Sillitoe, 2000; Thaman, 2003; Tuck et al, 2014; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012), this study seeks to liberate what has been suppressed, so that Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges around child development might be revived. In this way it may well contribute to the literature on child development, given that the universal notion of child development is refuted in favour of other views from different contexts (Fleer, 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Sims, 2011b;

Vygotsky, 1978). Evidence of suppression is apparent in the Indigenous Fijian context where the Western education system has played a major role and this is discussed in later chapters of the thesis. Thus, this study was guided by post-colonial theories in order to develop an approach that aligned with an Indigenous Fijian worldview in order to promote the importance of children's cultural knowledges and identity (refer to Chapter Four).

The Other

Freire (2000) and other writers (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995; Bath, 1995; Hodge and Mishra, 1991; Kortright, 2003; Said, 1995; 1978; Sillitoe, 2000; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, 2012) have envisioned oppression as the voice of the powerful to the powerless, leading to the powerless seeing their own ways as useless or overpowered. Spivak (1995) views this othering as the clearest available example of orchestrated epistemic violence and notes further that the subjugated knowledge of the oppressed Other reminds us of how an explanation and narrative of reality and (history) become established as a normative story (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Parker, 2015). Similar sentiments were presented rather convincingly in an earlier work by Trouillot (1995) entitled *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History,* where he demonstrated how the writing of history privileges only a certain past and silences the Other, for example, the failure of history writers to recognise the Haitian Slave Revolution. Said (1995; 1978) drew on the work of Foucault (1977) to demonstrate the relationship between power and knowledge, highlighting that knowledge about the Orient in the West formed a binary relationship between the West as 'occident' and the orient as 'other'. Sillitoe (2000) affirms this view in noting that to project Western scientific-knowledges as binaries opposite of Indigenous knowledges are inadequate and misleading.

It tends to depict science as more rational, better integrated, having a strong theoretical model and better grounded in evidence with controlled experiments etc. It may even suggest differences in thought processes and intellectual capacity between scientists and non-scientists, a disappointing conclusion after a century of anthropological research, which we might assume, had conclusively demonstrated the error in this view (Sillitoe, 2000, pp. 2-3).

Further, Sillitoe critiques the views of other writers as problematic (e.g. Antweiler, 1998; DeWalt, 1994; Wolfe et al, 1992) that present scientific knowledge and Indigenous knowledges as binaries and accept the superiority of science and later Taufe'ulungaki (2003) attempts the same interrogation. This point is important in the present examination of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges of child development, in the sense that for too long it has been sidelined and subjugated by colonial education, and now increasingly by global agendas (Baszile, 2015). This study draws a parallel with Said's (1995; 1978) notion of the oriental 'Other', with instances of Indigenous Fijians being treated as 'Other'.

The smaller Pacific Islands, Fiji included, have undergone major phases of representation as the 'Other' by the West and non-Pacific occident. For example, international aid for education has been part of a global agenda through which educational content, epistemology and pedagogy have been prescribed and driven by donor agencies (Nabobo-Baba, 2002; 2006; Puamau, 2005). The fact that educational aid to the smaller Pacific Islands is currently readily available has further compounded this situation. However the quality of that education is increasingly decided not by these smaller Pacific Island societies but by a global approach (Nabobo-Baba, 2003). This has further disempowered people as it continues to promote sustained dependence on donor agencies. Indigenous knowledge in such situations is discounted by donor agencies reflecting Foucault's (1977) notion of subjugated knowledge, Freire's (2000) revolutionary pedagogy of the oppressed and also reflected in the Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) (Parker, 2015; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

The process of othering in relation to Indigenous Fijian epistemologies are as much part of Indigenous Fijians life today as it was in the early 1800s, when the first Europeans arrived and educational settings such as early childhood education and further schools are agencies of othering. Nabobo-Baba (2006) argues that when Indigenous Fijian children do not see themselves in texts, in the curricula nor in the overall ethos of the school; rather, they experience their cultural knowledge as not valued and excluded. In essence, early childhood

settings are at best another world, quite different from the familiar sociocultural context (Rogoff, 2006) of the village, as Mead (1996, p. 6) explains:

> *By excluding us they tell us we don't exist, by representing us in particular ways they tell us that we can be controlled, by distorting our histories they tell us we don't matter, by naming us through language they tell us we cannot speak for ourselves, about ourselves and about the 'Other'.*

Voice

Researching Indigenous Fijian knowledge and epistemology, brings to mind what is perhaps Spivak's (1995) most pivotal question – 'Can the subaltern speak?' (Morris, 2010, pp. 1-8). Said's (1995; 1978) 'orientalism' reminds the reader of the need to be aware of how only certain voices, knowledges and versions of truth and reality are privileged by mainstream institutions of learning, prompting this researcher to go to the people in various Indigenous Fijian locales to hear and record their voices regarding Indigenous Fijian notions of child development. The clear intent is to privilege the knowledges and epistemologies of Indigenous Fijian people (refer to Chapter Four). This decision was based on the idea that voices of Indigenous people are important as they give alternative perspectives on knowledges, epistemologies and their associated ontologies. In support of this idea, Chilisa (2012b) argues that when voices of the colonised are heard, then new perspectives of knowledge are found. Indigenous Fijian notions of child development are important as part of world knowledges as they contribute to humankind's pool of child development knowledges.

Hybridity

Most writing on post-colonialism describes hybridised post-colonial cultures and peoples (Chilisa, 2012a; Kovach, 2010). Indigenous Fijians can be described in these terms because distinctive aspects of the culture have survived 'even the most potent oppression of imperialism' (Nabobo-Baba, 2006, p. 64). Agencies of such imperialism have been and still are schooling, missionisation, modernisation and globalisation (Childs & Williams, 2013), which are evident everywhere in Fiji. In the process of surviving colonialism and post colonialism, ways of learning, knowing and doing pertaining to Indigenous Fijian culture have

constantly evolved and changed, have constantly been reinvented and reshaped (Parker, 2015). Thus, new formations or hybrids have largely arisen out of the clash of cultures characterised by imperialism (Childs & Williams, 2013; Parker, 2015; Ledesma & Calderon, 2015; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; 2012).

Hybridity, as a concept employed in this study, means the blending of the inherited Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and epistemologies with new influences that have come through numerous and ongoing cultural contacts. Hybridity depends on the degree to which Indigenous Fijians now accept new impositions, as well as on how they deal with these impositions over time. Hybridity also depends on the nature of any new knowledge and how that knowledge affects local Indigenous Fijian systems. This is a two-way process that has to be lived through and negotiated daily by the people as they make everyday choices about what is important to them and what is not (Childs & Williams, 2013; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; 2012).

A feminist standpoint

Adopting a feminist standpoint in this study provides another theoretical perspective, through which colonisation and oppression are interrogated (Anderson & Collins, 2007; Harding, 2009; 2004; 1991). Feminist theoretical perspectives borrow from critical theory and are aligned with a post-colonial position that accepts diverse notions of reality and, specifically, what constitutes epistemology. Thus, this study draws on feminist epistemology, in particular Harding (2004, p. 113) who states that ‘knowledge claims are always socially situated rather than universalistic’. Feminist perspectives also influenced the Kāupapa Māori theorising about their own education (Mead, 1996), which aligns with Tuhiwai-Smith’s (1999; 2012) work on decolonising methodologies. Nabobo-Baba (2006) and other Pacific researchers (Taufe’ulungaki 2003; Teaero, 2003; Thaman, 2000; 2003) used feminist epistemology in their various studies in an attempt to more fully liberate knowledge that had been degraded by Western colonisers. Feminist theory may give credit to notions of knowledges that are neither Anglo-European nor recognised by mainstream epistemologies. Harding (2009) further argues that feminist epistemology can increase objectivity as it acknowledges the importance of both the social and historical contexts of

particular knowers. For Indigenous Fijians this rings true, as they are a product of a unique social and historical reality.

In the context of colonisation and oppression, education has continued to be a highly powerful instrument of impact because it directly passes on culture, values and beliefs from one generation to another (Hardings, 2009; 2004; Thaman, 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; 1999). In an earlier study, Sims, and Hutchins (1996, p. 66), state that values transmitted through education services are 'derived not from the generalised culture of a society but from the culture of the dominant group in that society'. This process of cultural transmission according to Nabobo-Baba (2006) results in children who are moulded by their experiences in educational settings such as early childhood and early years of primary schools, including an internalisation or acceptance of values and beliefs that reproduce existing power relationships including social and economic structures. Despite education serving the purpose of colonisation, it can also become a tool for liberation, particularly if Indigenous values and knowledges are embedded in curricula (Hardings, 2004; Thaman, 2003; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012). For instance, Salazar (2013), informed by both Freire's (2000) notion of the humanisation of education and Yosso's (2005) conceptualisation of the 'Community of Color', suggests that reinventing the principles and practice of educational settings such as schools and early childhood education would mean embedding Indigenous knowledges in curricula, which could begin a powerful journey towards liberation. She documented this in her study as a response to the way her people, and even herself, had experienced oppression under hegemonic pedagogies. To shed further light on the ideas of colonisation and oppression, some international experiences are drawn together in the section that follows.

International experiences of colonisation and oppression

Although direct colonialism may have ended in some locations, the ideology of colonialism still lingers in the identity of people within the cultural sphere, as well as within the practices of political, economic and social institutions (Childs &Williams, 2013). Similarly, Freire (2000) argues that colonised people continue to assimilate the contemporary hegemonic society and institutions of the conquering people. Drawing on this idea, this section outlines the experiences of

some international Indigenous communities that exemplify how colonisation and oppression are antithetical to the reality of the peoples' original and contemporary sociocultural perspectives.

For Australian Aborigines, colonisation and oppression have brought many changes to their epistemological beliefs and values, as well as to their everyday lives. This can be seen in the forced displacement of the people from their land and in the removal of children from their families, children who later became known as 'the stolen generation' (Sandri, 2012). The massive disruptions to Aboriginal traditional life led many groups of Aboriginal people to become fringe dwellers in European settlements, while other Aboriginal groups across Australia adapted to colonisation in various ways and established new independent lives amidst immense change (Sandri, 2012).

In addition, Aboriginal people were subjected to government policies that attempted over time to further displace, disperse, convert and eventually assimilate them into the 'white' ways of living and being (Dudgeon et al, 2008). An illustrative example of such assimilation is the attempts to educate Aboriginal people separately in traditional white schools, where education was seen as a process through which Aboriginal children would be civilised. Such an environment was totally new to the Aboriginal children and the worldviews that were imposed on Aboriginal people differed to their own, including their views of children's development and education (Harrison, 2013). A study by Sandri (2012) posits that the ways in which Aboriginal Australians and European Australians perceived reality were incompatible. Harrison (2013) argues that the incongruencies between the two cultures can be managed, provided alternative ways of teaching and learning are developed which are congruent with the Aboriginal sociocultural context.

In a similar manner to Australian Aborigines, Māori of New Zealand were also subjects of colonialism and oppression by European white settlers. Colonisation and oppression of Māori was exercised through the invasion of their land, the loss of language and the near demise of their whole identity (Ritchie, 2012). The Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 (Cox, 2002), though providing conflicting messages to Māori provided a different context to Australia. It contributed to at

least a partial restoration of Māori sovereignty, whilst at the same time according European inhabitants sovereignty rights of citizenship in New Zealand (Cox, 2002), with continuing conflicts around such colonial imperialism. This study draws support from the way Māori fought to restore some sovereignty (Coates, 2009) and the way they used European education and technology to their own advantage, while at the same time remaining steadfast to Māori traditions and culture (Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Hemara, 2000). Such persistence led to the development of *Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa* Schools and the development of *Te Whâriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), New Zealand's National Early Childhood Curriculum as a way of revitalising Māori culture. Māori experience has guided the present researcher and inspired an aim to help empower Indigenous Fijians to view their own Indigenous Fijian child development knowledges and epistemologies just as valid as Western child development knowledges.

The Canadian First Nations people also had similar experiences of colonisation as the colonists banned them from practicing their epistemological beliefs and values (Ball, 2004b). To further strengthen the ban, children were forced into residential schools where abuse was a routine way of reminding them of and reinforcing their inferiority (Milloy, 1999; Roberts, 2006). Today, this oppression is still felt by many First Peoples in Canada (Ball, 2004b) but amidst this oppressive treatment there has always been a strong counter-movement, which has now been recognised and acknowledged. For instance, the *Missing Children Society of Canada* (Roberts, 2006) was created to help heal the legacy of the residential schools and explore the disastrous crippling effects this policy has had on the psyche, self-esteem and collective and individual cultural identities of Canadian First Nations peoples. The healing process takes the form of people reclaiming their cultural and spiritual identity. In the education sector, this led to the development of a Generative Curriculum Model (GCM), which works towards restoring the epistemological beliefs and practices of the First People (Ball, 2005). The details of this model are discussed in Chapter Three.

As a final example, the Natives of Hawaii also faced a similar oppressive situation. According to Grace and Serna (2013, p. 4), initial colonisation, through

Western schooling aimed to civilise the Native Hawaiians through their children and from childhood, as the people were seen as 'heathen, indolent, sinful and in need of protection and enlightenment'. Thus, Western colonisers set up early missionary run schools that aimed to inculcate Anglo-Saxon culture, values and language, while at the same time establishing a social hierarchy in which the native peoples were relegated to the bottom. As a result, the Native Hawaiian language was denigrated and given low-socioeconomic status (Wilson & Kamana, 2009). Even the young Native Hawaiian children who attended kindergarten were 'interpolated into the Anglo-Saxon ways of speaking and behaving based on a deficit view of their own native culture and lifestyle' (Wilson & Kamana, 2009, p. 5).

In summary, the international practices of colonisation and oppression were mainly enacted through broad government policies that affected every aspect of daily life, including the imposition of Western educational systems on Indigenous communities. The aims were to disable the mechanisms whereby cultural knowledges and legacies were transmitted within Indigenous societies, and to assimilate Indigenous people into the society of the colonising newcomers, but as second-class citizens or even non-citizens. This was done specifically to make Indigenous peoples compliant with Western norms of lifestyle, culture and education and this colonising Western impact inflicted deep and lasting scars on oppressed people. Such scars are still present today in the education systems and in children's developmental outcomes, as discussed in the section that follows.

Impact of colonisation and oppression in Fiji

In Fiji, the ideology of two worlds, i.e. Western ideologies and Indigenous Fijian ideologies, has resulted in children, and even adults, preferring Western ideas and values. This continues to cause confusion as people grapple with defining themselves in terms of what and whose knowledges are considered worthwhile (Nabobo-Baba, 2003). In the contemporary education system this is particularly problematic as the two different worldviews present fundamentally different approaches to learning. For example, an earlier study by Thaman (2000) noted that Western school culture relies on universalism and intrapersonal relationships, promoting individual merit, while smaller Pacific Island cultures are still

generally based on the primacy of the group. Thaman (2001, p. 2) summarises this situation as 'at best schooling offers fortunate few access to the modern, monetised sector; at worst it is a recipe for cultural destruction and systematised selfishness'. Nabobo-Baba (2006) refers to this as a cultural power imbalance through which the white man's power is imposed over the ideas of the Other.

For Indigenous Fijians, the adverse effects of colonisation take many forms. For instance, from the researcher's own observations, Indigenous Fijian children prefer to speak English rather than their own Indigenous Fijian national language or mother tongue village dialect. In schools, those who do not prefer English are forced to speak English in order to avoid punishment (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Even in child development practices, Indigenous Fijian parents now prefer to go along with Western ideologies as they see them as superior to their own educational methodologies. In classrooms, parents prefer their children to do away with anything that is based in Indigenous Fijian culture as this is viewed as a stumbling block to their children's progress within the outside world.

The consequences of an education system that privileges Western theories and approaches and not Indigenous ways, is seen in the poor performances of Indigenous students and high-school dropout rates (Learning Together, 2000; Thaman, 2003). To address this situation, it will be necessary to redesign Indigenous Fijian curricula from early childhood, making it more culturally-sensitive, inclusive and anti-bias (Derman-Sparks, 2014). At the same time the curricula should enable students to grasp present-day globalisation realities, to ensure that Indigenous Fijian children are not left behind in their abilities to function successfully in a rapidly developing world (Nabobo-Baba, 2003).

In the 1990s, efforts were made to create educational contexts that accorded cultural respect and recognised the need for Indigenous communities to be supported by Indigenous forms of education. Notably, the United Nation World Decade for Cultural Development (1987-1997) served to strengthen this approach. In the Pacific context, a UNESCO regional seminar, held in the Cook Islands (Teasedale & Teasedale, 1992), provided an opportunity for the Indigenous people of smaller Pacific Island nations to reaffirm their need for some relevant ownership of their children's formal education in order to improve

their societies. Despite these efforts, the legacy of colonialism is still strongly embedded in the hearts and minds of colonised Indigenous peoples. As Freire (2000) identifies, successful colonisation is characterised by the oppressed taking on the identity given to them by the oppressors and the colonisation of Fiji has been particularly successful in this regard. Indigenous Fijians need more time and support to comprehend the true value of their own culture and knowledges, particularly as this applies to their understanding of how and what children should learn.

Indigenous Fijian villages today are different from those of pre-colonial days. As Ravuvu (1995; 1987) notes, colonialism has touched every aspect of Indigenous Fijian people's lives as colonial administrations even redefined village and provincial boundaries, thus altering traditional relationships. In the past, village dwellings were traditionally arranged into collections of extended families, though members of extended families could sometimes choose to build their dwellings elsewhere in the village, if they were prepared to face sharp criticism from their relatives. Today, Indigenous Fijian people build their dwellings where they prefer, with the majority preferring *tu vagalala* (to settle freely outside the geographical boundaries of the village; refer to Table 1.1, p. xv-xviii). Such liberalisation in terms of housing traditions suggests that Indigenous Fijians have been influenced by the ideas of individualism. Thus, while many may attend church services and other village functions, they are usually absent from the majority of village activities (Nabobo-Baba, 2005). Many Indigenous Fijians were urged to leave their communities to look for well-paid jobs to support their children's Western education, mainly because Western education has been considered prestigious and able to guarantee a highly paid professional occupation for children in the future. This was my personal experience when my father and I had to leave our village and travel two nights by boat so that I could continue my Western education. This was the Western value my parents prioritised, with their vision for me to obtain a decent job and be able to live a successful future life. In this way, life in Indigenous Fijian villages changed forever, with more and more Indigenous Fijians longing to adopt Western values and lifestyles.

Colonisation is also seen in other choices people made, for example, in embracing and upholding Christian values and beliefs. While Christianity was not part of pre-colonised Indigenous Fijian culture, Indigenous Fijians saw it as desirable; as Christian values and beliefs further complement and enhance Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. Christianity became part of the contemporary Indigenous Fijian identity and, today, thus, Indigenous Fijians embrace *lotu* (Christian worship; refer to Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii), as an important cultural knowledge. Children know how important Christianity is, as attending church services is a must in most Indigenous Fijian families. This is further extended in educational settings such as early childhood and early primary school settings as the first and foremost morning ritual is morning-prayer, before the formal early childhood and school learning begins. The next section discusses how Fiji's education policy has moved further in embracing Western knowledges in its post-colonial era.

Fiji's education policy in the post-colonial era

'Policies are essentially major general guidelines for current and future actions; preferably ones that are development-oriented' (Teaero, 2009, p. 161). To that effect, Fiji's education policy has changed dramatically since Fiji's independence from Great Britain in 1970. In addition, changes in government also saw changes in the education policies and specifically for curriculum and assessment; which could be seen as 'political' documents. Political in the sense that any government that comes into power bring with them their political manifesto they would like to pursue.

The current government's education policy ensues that Western concepts of learning and teaching is paramount and to the end where the Indigenous Fijian cultural values and beliefs are much marginalised (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). For example, English is the medim of instruction in Fiji schools, which has a 90% space in classrooms; Indigenous Fijian language is second-class. This means there is less emphasis on the Indigenous Fijian language as it is seen as a barrier towards development. The focus on 'development' – economic output of

education begins with curriculum, thus the curriculum remains largely Western as of today.

My personal account of colonisation

I am Lavinia Sauleca Tausere-Tiko, born and raised in a remote rural island setting in the village of *Mualevu, Vanuabalavu* Island, in the *Lau* group, which is to the north of Fiji's main island (refer to Figure 4.1, p. 70). I am always reserved telling about my life story, because I am always emotional to talk publicly about the struggles of life that my family experienced. However, my persistent colonised self has prompted me to write my life story here, and to continuously share this with my children to remind them that 'a good life' (Nabobo-Baba & Tiko, 2009) results from hard work and perseverance (Tiko, 2015). As I look back to my humble beginnings, I recall that I never dreamt that I would be where I am today, in life and in my career. Having gone through various educational processes in academia, writing a PhD thesis is my final departure point, one that is linked to my family and cultural heritage.

Being an Indigenous Fijian, as a girl and now a woman and mother, my life has been colonised in many dimensions and aspects that have shaped me into the person I am today. The first and foremost impacts I recollect are that of Christianity and schooling, the two most influential institutions in the story of Indigenous Fijian colonisation. Colonisers thought that the imposition of Christianity, as the only correct and civilised religion for Indigenous Fijians, would make them see the light and aspire to become educated. My family and the families of many other Indigenous Fijians were strongly influenced by this introduction of Western religion and modes of schooling. To my family, Christianity was and still is the foundation to our moral living, while schooling was viewed as fundamental to having a good life, which meant having a secure job with a promising future (Nabobo-Baba & Tiko, 2009).

Christianity

My family adopted the Christian faith, which I still find personally very beneficial. My faith presupposes strict observances of the Sabbath day, coupled with some food restrictions that are aligned to the teachings of the Christian Holy

Bible. As a child, I never missed church on Saturdays, which we called the Sabbath day. Not attending would see me punished, both within the family and the community school. Christian values and beliefs affected how I viewed my own Indigenous Fijian epistemological knowledges and prohibited me from taking part in any Indigenous Fijian cultural activities and rituals, as these were considered heathen. I have recently come to understand the cultural cost of that position, as certain parts of my being as an Indigenous Fijian have been lost by this rejection of my Indigenous Fijian roots. These personal reflections align with the view of Nabobo-Baba (2006) who states that Indigenous Fijians have suffered profound changes in all aspects of their lives because of colonialism. Similarly Ravuvu (1995; 1987) claimed that Western colonisers overpowered the millennium-old traditions of Indigenous Fijians relating to their family, community and educational concepts.

Through recent conscious effort I have realised the importance of my Indigenous Fijian culture and I am continuing to free myself from the full bondage of Christian indoctrination. After recognising the value of my unique Indigenous Fijian identity, I began to constantly question myself regarding my lack of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges arising from the indoctrinated beliefs of my family's faith. In fact, I have realised that I do not want my children to continue to be totally indoctrinated.

Schooling

Schooling was very important for my family and so my parents did whatever was necessary to provide me with a Western education, as they saw this as a pathway towards a better future. They could not often help with my homework, since they knew little English, but my elder brothers were there to help me learn how to read. Nevertheless, my parents always expressed much respect for and attributed much significance to the maintenance of our Indigenous Fijian heritage as well.

One impact of my schooling experiences was the development of my personal independence which, as noted earlier, runs counter to an Indigenous Fijian concept of interdependence. In Westernised schooling, all Indigenous Fijian children were urged to work independently and this was a real challenge for us

because of our traditional propensity to work collaboratively. This Western educational approach led me to being prone to work alone and to keep my ideas and accumulated wisdom to myself, instead of sharing them with others. At school, I would walk away from my friends and work on tasks alone because I wanted to be the best in the class. Throughout school, I always scored good marks in all subject areas. This reinforced the values of independent work and thus I continued to deviate from my cultural norm of collaboration.

As another cultural example, direct eye contact was seen as rude in my culture, but I had to learn to look directly at the teacher because this was the cultural expectation of the school. It took me a while to adjust to this and, even at this point in my life as an academic; I still find it difficult to look straight into the eyes of academic superiors during conversations. I have had to force myself to maintain Western ways of showing respect when talking to my PhD thesis supervisors. In relation to respect, the words *saka* (synonymous to *sir* or *madam*; refer to Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii) are always the way we acknowledge and address our teachers and work superiors, even today.

At this point, it is necessary to note that Indigenous Fijian culture was included in my primary school education as a specific subject. I studied a subject entitled *Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs* as part of the compulsory school curriculum. This subject confirmed the practices that I had experienced in my village and I remember that I was required to memorise all the Indigenous Fijian cultural ceremonial protocols. We were tested on them and failure warranted punishment.

However, such culture-sensitive teaching and learning gradually declined in my high-school years when I did not learn any more Indigenous Fijian culture, apart from traditional dances. Yet I never participated in the traditional dances because of my Christian faith, which associated traditional dances with evil spirits. Because Christian beliefs and values were important in most Indigenous Fijian families, this meant that these cultural activities were often relinquished for the sake of maintaining holiness, according to Christian beliefs. In this way, I feel my educational experiences created a larger cultural gap for me, stemming from the

fundamental differences in perceptions and understandings of the world held by Indigenous and Western cultures (Harrison, 2013).

My Village

My village has undergone rapid economic, social and educational changes from early colonisation. Housing styles have changed from traditional Indigenous Fijian thatched homes to ones with corrugated iron roofs and painted brick or cement walls. Few houses still resemble traditional Indigenous Fijian structures, as the majority of *Mualevu* people have continued to opt for changes in the name of *veivakatorocaketaki* (development; refer to Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii), because this is seen as leverage towards better life. Additionally, people who do not pursue these changes are seen as *gogo* (lazy; refer to Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii). Such a transfer from old traditions towards a contemporary Western mode of thinking about housing is another indicator of the negation of everything that existed in Indigenous Fijian culture prior to colonisation, reflecting a process described by James (2010) and Mafela (2013) and in earlier studies by Donnelly, Quanchi and Kerr (1994) and Memmi (1991).

Language

Colonisation has had a serious impact on my community linguistically. During my childhood, the Indigenous Fijian language was prohibited, as English was compulsory and had to be spoken by all school students. I feared this cultural fracture the most because I could not construct grammatically correct English sentences with this new language. To ensure all Indigenous Fijians adopted English quickly, the first lesson at school was always Oral English with teachers using rote-learning methods, which proved highly ineffective (Idrus et al, 2011). Almost in spite of the teaching, I persisted in learning English and would return home each day with an English book to browse and read with the help of my older brothers, which was a significant support. The imposition of the English language in schools has been identified by McKinley (2005), as the aspect of colonialisation that promoted the death of Indigenous cultures. This imposition of a language reflected the idea of negating Indigenous languages, mainly because it failed to consider the unique position of Indigenous people and their languages. Given that language and culture are integrally interwoven (Mafela, 2013;

Rassool, 2004; Taufe'ulungaki, 2003), a ban on using Indigenous Fijian language in schools contributed to the weakening of the Indigenous culture and this in turn contributed to the strengthening of Western concepts supremacy.

I now reflect on the opinions of Pacific academics (e.g. Associate Professor Nabobo-Baba, 2003; 2005; 2006; Professor Thaman 2003; 1999), who, have argued that Western education is responsible for changing the ways in which smaller Pacific Island nations think, (as in the case of this study, the Indigenous Fijians). I believe that I was subjected to the influence of Western forms of thought, with oral and written language being central to this process. My high-school learning transformed me further as I learned Western ways of eating, including how to use a spoon, fork and knife coupled with proper English-style table manners. I also heard the latest Western dance music and learned about fashion, including the latest hairstyles. Of course, I used English slangs and jargons and was attuned to various social media such as television, newspapers and radio, all of which influenced my everyday life. Although I was exposed to these Western influences, I was continuously cautioned by my parents to remember that I was still and would always be an Indigenous Fijian and this I do not deny. A part of my personal learning journey is reflected in this thesis.

From these personal recollections of my exposure to colonisation, I can only assume that I, like many Indigenous Fijians, was trapped between two worlds and that I still am. The ongoing impact of colonisation on my life has led to my current concern for a revitalisation of Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges. The research questions outlined in Chapter One provide a frame that helped me see how Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges around child development have nearly been lost, as a result of colonisation. This frame also helped me to see how it could be revived and blended into a new or hybrid educational discourse. Research suggests that understanding the cultural knowledge of a group of people is important in the teaching and learning processes for children of all ages, with a focus on early childhood (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2006; Ritchie, 2012; Sims, 2011b). Ensuring the incorporation of various cultural knowledges into early childhood curricula is part of quality pedagogy in teaching and learning (McCrea, 2015a; Sims, 2011b).

Having said that, Fiji today in its post-colonial era, has moved further on in its education policy, through aligning to the government of the day's 2013 constitution. In the constitution, education is for all people of Fiji regardless of race and ethnicity. While this could be seen as equity, it is also discriminatory, as it has further expanded the financial access assistance gap between the rural Indigenous Fijians from the rest of the ethnic groups who live in more accessible urban and semi-urban Fiji. Thus, financial assistance in Fiji's current MoE policy focuses more on urban schools where student enrolment numbers are high. In addition, the Indigenous Fijian language and its various dialects (mother-tongue) need a more robust policy to be in place so it is seen stronger in use in schools beginning from early childhood to Year 13; as the current policy is more inclined to the use of the English language. Other cultural activities too (refer to Chapter Eight) ought to be incorporated to strengthen its feasibility and to close both access and the achievement gap that has continued to exist in the previous years.

Cultural values, beliefs and practices are what make Indigenous people different and they must be preserved (Sims, 2011a; Tobin, 2011). Drawing on this idea, Berk (2012) suggests that no two children (even adults for that matter) are alike and, further to that, Sims (2011a) asserts that being different is natural and part of being human. Thus, I reject the notion of 'one size fits all' as highlighted in Sims's (2011b) Resource Sheet Number 7 for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, and Ndhlovu (2013). This is because human differences do exist everywhere and they ought to be protected and maintained, with education an important means for this acceptance of differences to happen. Such would be explicitly explained in the way of designing learning programmes in early childhood settings and in schools that cater for such individual differences (Sims 2011b).

Chapter synthesis

Taking into account the evidence presented in this chapter, including my personal story, one can see that Indigenous Fijian peoples used to live according to their own unique culture and lifestyle before the arrival of Western colonisers. The impact of these Western colonisers, through modern cultural and educational practices, has impacted heavily on the practices of Indigenous Fijians. Sadly, there were times when Indigenous Fijians were overpowered and thus accepted

the colonisation process, which resulted in a rejection and some near loss of Indigenous Fijian culture, legacy and traditions. At the present time, a massive process of reconceptualising, reconsidering and regaining a unique Indigenous Fijian identity is taking place and this research study and thesis aim to contribute to that process.

To support a process of anti-colonial liberation and an informed return to key aspects of true traditional Indigenous Fijian culture, the first two research questions would thus address this and they are:

What are Indigenous Fijian notions of the child development?

How are these Fijian notions of child development used in teaching?

The research plan was to explore an authentic Indigenous Fijian curriculum through identifying and understanding Indigenous Fijian notions of child development and education. The findings propose ways to support Indigenous Fijian practices without relying totally on contemporary white supremacy and post-colonial dominance. Rather, a reintegration of an Indigenous Fijian agenda that could inform Indigenous Fijian early education pedagogy and curricula is envisioned. An objective exploration of Indigenous Fijian notions of child development and how they might inform contemporary and modern Indigenous Fijian educational practices would be a step forward in closing the communicative and comprehension gaps that Indigenous Fijians have experienced in the past and still experience.

An authentic Indigenous Fijian culture is regaining its importance in the rise of post-colonial discourses about liberation and renegotiation of Indigenous identity. However, not all people exposed to and living with the purposive ruinous Western cultural impacts of the past are able to challenge their current adopted ways of thinking and acting. Therefore, it seems necessary to shift the possibility of incorporating authentic Indigenous Fijian notions of knowledges about children's development to the forefront of modern educational practices in Fiji, as such an action could help Indigenous Fijian communities more realistically restore their unique cultural profiles and practices. In addition, formal acknowledgements of Indigenous Fijian notions of child development could well

help promote families to not be ashamed of their authentic rituals and ceremonies and could support a renewed proficiency in the native language. To accomplish these aims, it was planned to develop practical guidelines for change in answering the third research question, which is:

How can early childhood policy and practice reflect the importance of Indigenous Fijian knowledge concerning child development?

Options for this task resulted in findings and ideas relevant to the final research question, which is:

What future possibilities or appropriate and meaningful alternatives might inform such policies and practices?

Before considering how these research questions were framed into a research action plan, it is important to fully explore ideas, concepts and practices of child development (Chapter Three) and the research design (Chapter Four).

Chapter 3

Applying Theory to Children's Development and Learning

> *Being different is part of being human and we need to value that difference and not be frightened by it. (Sims, 2011a, p. 9)*

Introduction

The last chapter outlined the conceptual framework for this study. This chapter will review Western theoretical and research-based literature about child development knowledges and practices, and consider the ways in which these theories have affected educational practices and curricula worldwide. The focus is on socio-cultural theories that recognise the importance of culture in understanding educational programs for young children. Multiculturalism is considered alongside these socio-cultural perspectives as a strategy for enacting culture into educational programs. Also some cultural frameworks are explained, especially those designed to create context specific educational pedagogies, such as the *Generative Curriculum Model* for the Canadian First Nations (Ball, 2004a). The Australian *Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009) is also presented, along with the *Keiki Steps* for Native Hawaiian children (Kahakalau, 2004). The chapter also discusses the work undertaken in New Zealand to facilitate the revitalisation of Māori culture through a focus on the early years in mainstream education settings (Ritchie, 2012).

The final section of this chapter is dedicated to the analysis of these educational theories and their meaningfulness for Fiji. All educational theory-related information is viewed through the lens of a *vale vakaviti* (traditional Fijian house), which is used as a metaphor for child development within Fijian culture. It provides a metaphorical lens through which the research findings and whole thesis can be viewed. This is to substantiate the connections and relationships that underpin the study

Western theories of child development

Western theories of child development are mainly based on studies of families and communities in Western culture, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These represent a particular way of conceptualising child development that, when applied to children in other cultures, can be regarded as a form of colonisation and oppression. For example, earlier and pioneering theorist, Piaget (1957) was the most influential developmental psychologist of the 20th century, and his ideas laid the foundation for a universal understanding of the stages and patterns of child development. Piaget asserted that children's development occurs along a universal developmental pathway that is biologically predetermined, clearly articulated and linear in terms of progress towards maturation (Berk, 2012). All children in the world were deemed to proceed through this universal process and to reach certain cognitive developmental stages in direct alignment with their chronological age (Arthur et al, 2015; Berk, 2012). Such a model of child development represents a form of universal, biological determinism and does not recognise the impact of sociocultural developmental determinants such as gender, ethnicity or historical contexts. The categorisation of children's developmental stages according to chronological age served to impose Western normative understandings about child development patterns and, in particular, middle-class white Eurocentric perspectives. This suggested that the cultural context was insignificant for all children (Fleer, 2010), positioning them as the 'Other' (Childs & Williams, 2013, p 10), which can be viewed as an oppressive stance, as identified by Freire (2000).

In contrast to Piaget's focus on genetics and biology in the child development process, Bruner (1996) and Vygotsky (1978) placed more emphasis on the environment in which children developed, and the social environment in particular (Fleer, 2010). Notably, Vygotsky (1978) in his socialcultural theory of child development claims that people, as social beings, develop in a social context. Hence, Vygotsky saw children's development as a highly social process that particularly relied on communicating with others. Moreover, Vygotsky made the first steps towards incorporating the element of culture into child development but he viewed culture from a particular angle, envisioning it only as

the impact of media, school and family. He did not include the ethnic cultural component as a determinant of child development (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010).

At the turn of the 21st century, scholars became more interested in developing culturally-sensitive theories of child development in reaction to the universalist claim about human development made by developmentalists in the 20th century, such as Piaget and Vygotsky (Arthur et al., 2015; Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2006). These scholars indicated that not all children go through the same sequence of development and to expect them to do so leads to incorrect assumptions about the intellectual, emotional and physical abilities of children. It is this position that led Sims (2011a) to argue that differences exist and must be accepted and respected. To me, as a novice researcher, this perspective prompted me to think more deeply about this processes for this research.

Another growing perspective in the twenty-first century is that human nature can be seen as 'an effect' rather than a 'cause' of a child's interactions with the environment and thus, culture is seen as an agent in that developmental process (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010 Rogoff, 2003). The environment in which education occurs is also recognised as having a culturally specific history, with different groups of people responding to the universal impact of Westernisation in different ways (Rogoff, 2003). Here, Rogoff (2006) views it as learning through participation specifically noting Intent Community Participation (ICP) as an example to emphasise the importance of culture and context with 'children observing, listening, anticipating and joining in community endeavours as underpinning of learning' (Arthur et al, 2012, p. 96). This is very much in the context of the Indigenous Fijian which today has been largely replaced the powerful hegemonic Western theories influence. The impacts of such hegemonic theories are evident in today's education systems including early childhood educational settings, with the following section reflecting on these impacts.

Impact of Western theories of child development on education systems

Chapter Two discussed how Indigenous people have repeatedly faced the forces of colonisation and oppressive that was predominantly imposed by standard

European and North American curricula. Such universal ideologies, and the over-reliance on them, have been critiqued in numerous studies (e.g. Bloch 1991; Burman 1994; Cannella 1997; Jipson 1991; Kessler 1991; Martin; 2008; Nabobo-Baba, 2003; Ryan & Grieshaber 2005, Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012; Thaman, 2003). So many of these ideologies are now viewed as limiting and the challenge for the field of early childhood education is to explore diverse frameworks in order to better serve positive educational outcomes for young children and to incorporate a range of meaningful pedagogical ideas into everyday practice.

Nabobo-Baba (2006), Grace and Serna (2013) and Thaman (2003) all state that educational outcomes for Indigenous children and Western children differ significantly, with Indigenous children generally performing less well. This poor performance is linked to the negative influence of Western curricula (Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Thaman, 2000; Taufeluganaki, 2003) with many Indigenous children entering educational settings with different ways of comprehending the world and acquiring knowledge. Thus, Western epistemologies do not serve them well in a Western-based educational system (Harrison, 2013). Such a process is evident in Australia, where the imposition of Western theories of teaching and learning, coupled with various government policies, resulted in a decline in the cultural knowledges among Aborigines. Much restorative work has been undertaken towards cultural revival since 2004 in an attempt to redress this incongruence (Harrison, 2013).

Similar differences in children's achievement in education are evident between Māori and Pakeha children (Nakhid, 2003), with Bishop and Glynn (2003) and Bishop (2008b) acknowledging the educational under-achievement of Māori students in New Zealand schools. All this evidence speaks to the destructive, adverse and degenerative impacts of standardised Eurocentric curricula within Indigenous communities, with their impositions of working individually and speaking correct English (Taufelungaki, 2003) and their bases in universal models of child development.

In critiquing Western ideologies, this study argues that the early childhood field in Fiji (and maybe the whole of the smaller Pacific Islands) has maintained allegiance to out-dated and limited developmental theories. There needs to be a

change in approach, leading to more appropriate and relevant practices that would better serve the rights (as in the UNCRC, 1989) and cultural needs (as in the UNDRIP, UNESCO, 2008b) especially of young minority children and thus improve their educational outcomes. This means planning for children's learning by fully respecting each child, which means that the child's learning is planned around social justice principles, social inclusion and total inclusiveness (Cologon, 2014; Sims, 2011a). Such an approach ought to be embedded and threaded into the cultural fabric as an important element of quality child-care and it should be integral to practice in sites of early childhood education. The importance of culture is discussed in the following section.

Importance of culture in child development

Culture matters and is central to understanding how children grow, develop and learn (Chilisa, 2012b; Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010; Harkness & Super, 2012. This includes childrearing practices philosophies and beliefs founded on cultural belief systems, which in turn shape parenting practices in home environments (Rogoff, 2003; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Harkness & Super, 2012). Specifically, Super and Harkness (2002, p. 271) state that 'culture organises the child's environment' or the 'development niche', which constitutes the 'physical and social settings of everyday life, the customs of childcare and the psychology of caretakers' (p. 546). Interacting in such settings helps children develop their social, affective, psychomotor and cognitive abilities and skills as they experience the world (Arthur et al, 2015; Berk, 2012).

This notion is supported by Chilisa (2012a, p. 87), who notes that culture shapes knowledge and is 'based on generations of folk wisdoms and experiences'. She further states that various Indigenous belief systems are based on varieties of different worldviews from the rational to the animistic. As such, these worldviews provide foundations that shaped culture in terms of cosmology, rituals, child-rearing practices and patterns of social exchange and, for these reasons, belief systems are thought to be deeply embedded within cultures. Having said this, academics in smaller Pacific Islands assert the importance of understanding culture being integrated into classroom teaching and learning

(Bakalevu, 2003; Nabobo-Baba, 2003, Teaero, 2003; Tau'felungaki, 2003; Thaman, 2003), which supports the purpose of the current study into beliefs around child development in Indigenous Fijian culture and the need to consider and incorporate cultural knowledges when designing learning programs for all children.

In an earlier study, Lee and Johnson (2007) wrote about the importance of culture and refuted the grand universal theories of child development. Various approaches that focus on culture make it clear that universalising the stages and patterns of child development is not appropriate for promoting children's growth and development. A growing number of early childhood leaders and educators (Arthur et al, 2015; Sims, 2011a; Tobin, 2011; Woodhead, 2006) have argued against such assumptions claiming that differences and diversities do exist everywhere. Thus, sociocultural approaches to children's development (Bowes et al, 2013; Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010; Rogoff, 2003) have provided alternative ways of thinking about appropriate educational programs for supporting children from different cultural backgrounds. This is now discussed in the following section.

Impact of sociocultural theories on early education and child development

There is a growing recognition of the importance of understanding the sociocultural backgrounds of young children when designing educational programs for them. Some child development theories from the Western world (such as Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, Freud's (1991) psychoanalytic theory, Erikson's (1993) psychosocial theory, Piaget's (1957) cognitive theory, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Bronfebrenner's (1986; 1979) ecological model) have stood the test of time in providing some relevant and useful frameworks for understanding children's development and learning (Arthur et al, 2015; Edwards, 2009). In fact, they are still used as foundations in contemporary curricula, for example, the national *Australian Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009) and the

New Zealand's National Early Childhood Curriculum *Te Whariki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996).

Consistent with this growing recognition of socio-cultural theories is Fleer, et al's (2006) evidence-based approach to early childhood pedagogy and practice with its focus on the importance of culture. This research advocates the need for early childhood educators to understand children from personal, interpersonal and cultural perspectives. Further, Fleer et al. (2006, p. 3) assert that such a pedagogical shift needs 'rethinking, reconceptualising and reinventing' the ways in which educators approach and plan for children's learning. A similar assertion is made by Edward, (2009), who postulates sociocultural ideas to support early childhood educators in understanding their work with young children. A way of integrating culture into early educational programs, policies and curricula is found in multicultural approaches to education developed in the 20th century, which are discussed in the section that follows.

Multicultural education

As clarified in an earlier study by Torres (1998), multiculturalism is a philosophical, theoretical and political orientation dealing with issues of race, gender and class relations in the broader society. Hence, multicultural education aims for equity in schools and early childhood education (ECE) settings, which means anti-bias curricula (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011) that promote fairness and social justice principles (Sims, 2011a; Map, 2014). The central component of multicultural education is educating for multicultural tolerance. Derman-Sparks and Ramsey (2011) and Williams (2011) note that multiculturalism emerged in advanced industrial societies such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, with their complex racial and ethnic populations, in recognition of the social need to enable the co-existence of diverse cultures (Sleeter, 2012).

In response to policies of multiculturalism, the importance of celebrating cultural differences was recognised within education as well the need to acknowledge that educational programs should be responsive to the characteristics of learners and educators (McCabe, 2011; May & Sleeter, 2010; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998).

McCabe also claims that multicultural education, beginning at the early childhood level, should address issues of racism, sexism, religious intolerance and xenophobia and not be limited to issues of cultural diversity alone. Young children's life histories, experiences and cultures should be placed at the centre of the learning process in pedagogies that seek to address the multiple ways through which young children learn to think, act and know (McCabe, 2011).

Holoen and Shelton (2011) note that multicultural education conceals certain weaknesses of the educational approach, such as the lack of attention to cultural diversity within a non-racialised, colour-blind educational discourse of human relations as radically discussed by McLaren et al (2010). Colour-blindness, according to Fryberg (2010), creates an environment that denies or rejects the cultural heritage of children and invalidates their unique perspectives. It implies there is something shameful about human diversity and the culture one is born into, which should not be talked about (Williams, 2011). Further, Holoen and Shelton (2011) suggest that colour-blind messages predict negative outcomes among whites, such as greater racial bias, and cause stress in ethnic minorities, resulting in decreased cognitive performances. Given how much is at stake, the question to ask then is whether all multiculturalism is colour-blind. While the answer could be yes and no, Williams (2011, p. 2) suggests 'its time to see', which would mean strengthening multiculturalism through the lens of total inclusion or specifically from an anti-bias curriculum perspective (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011). This would mean recognising and valuing and teaching and learning about differences (Sims, 2011b) and even fostering personal friendships (McCabe, 2011). This is also evident in the principles of Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics (The Early Childhood Australia *Code of Ethics*, 2006) which posits the importance of understanding the indigeneity of young children in early education settings.

Macfarlane et al, (2007) claim that multicultural education offers a range of benefits and is seen as a form of education that advocates for the equal opportunity and educational equity for all students. Zaldana's (2010) study of Mayan children notes benefits such as increases in children's language development, including vocabulary and greater gains in literacy and numeracy

skills. Children may also gain understanding and tolerance between cultural groups, promoting anti-racism and positive human rights perspectives among children, who become a beacon of hope and peace for learning to living together (Delores Report, 2000; 2013). However, given such benefits and equality, Banks (2013) argues that, in bilingual educational programs targeted at closing the achievement gap, language-minority young children often are disadvantaged because most programs are still primarily focused on the attainment of higher levels of proficiency in English, which is often challenging for young minority children. Given such status, Macfarlane et al. (2007) further states that, although young children are likely to benefit from being in a culturally-inclusive classroom, the culturally-inclusive, multicultural classroom concept differs substantially from the concept of a culturally-safe classroom. It is only in a culturally- safe classroom that young children may be who they are. Ritchie (2012) suggests that education with proper respect towards an Indigenous culture may reveal the benefits of multiculturalism only if it is responsive to the learning needs and cultural values of Indigenous young children. This study is aligned with a bicultural emphasis (refer to Chapter Eight) within multiculturalism, as a way of maintaining and preserving Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge in culturally-safe classrooms for young children.

Specific culturally-oriented learning frameworks

Perspectives of children and childhood need to reflect children's active engagement in many different worlds (Arthur et al, 2015) is a central issue children's development research and has indicated there are considerable developmental variations across cultural contexts (Chen & Eisenberg, 2012). Hence, it is appropriate for this study to consider various culturally-relevant educational systems and visions of children's development and learning that have emerged in specific geographic and cultural contexts. This reflects the recursive consideration of different frameworks that aim to seek new knowledges, as suggested by Freire (2000). The following specific frameworks are discussed as a way of acknowledging both Western and Indigenous knowledges.

Generative Curriculum Model (GCM) from Canada

The *Generative Curriculum Model* (GCM) (Ball, 2004a) was developed within the framework of the *First Nations Partnership Program* (FNPP) at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. It was developed in response to numerous requests from First Nations communities for the creation of a culturally-relevant education program that focused on the revitalisation of their cultural identity. Components included traditional language and the culturally-distinctive values and practices of the Canadian First Nations people. The benefit of the FNPP for First Nations people was in the development of a multicultural, co-constructed approach to education that did not prioritise or privilege Western knowledge. Thus, the GCM proved extremely effective in increasing education completion rates for First Nations students and in promoting a wide range of services for young children, youth and families (Ball, 2004a).

Ball's (2004b) research with Canadian First Nations found success of young children's learning with the use of culturally-relevant resources. This included using elders as supports to teachers or, in other words, the use of the 'community of learners approach' in the education program (p. 32). The research suggests that where different knowledge and experience are identified, valued and built upon children demonstrate successful learning. Ball and Pence (2006) further note the importance of using the same GCM model to incorporate Indigenous ideas into early childhood programs for First Nations children in British Columbia. It is clear from the research that when educational programs include the worldviews of the ethnic group, there is a positive effect on the learning and educational achievements of Indigenous children.

The success of the GCM can be explained in its culturally-sensitive constructivism approach to understanding children and programs for their care. It also incorporates community-friendly perspectives and specifically ensures that the local voices of young Indigenous children are harmoniously combined with Western scholarly resources for education. Moreover, the GCM initiative is seen as an instance that counters concern about how top-down, Western-centric developmental approaches fail to work with Indigenous communities. Thus, it manifests a victory over Western hegemony in educational perspectives.

Successful implementation of the GCM curriculum has shown that Canadian Indigenous cultural insights and Western approaches to education can be harmonised, where both are given an authentic, meaningful place in the construction of pedagogically-relevant educational programs (Ball & Pence 2006; Moyles, 2015; Sims, 2013; Pendergast & Garvis, 2013).

The GCM is a significant step towards sustaining and preserving the cultural knowledge of the British Columbian First Nations People of Canada. The experience of the GCM project suggests that it was only through good faith efforts and co-operative willingness to explore paths less taken that the educational needs and desires of the First Nations Peoples were adequately met (Ball & Pence, 2006). This again implies that differences exist, as in the claims made by the Native Hawaiians in the framework designed to help restore some of their heritage, described below.

Keiki Steps for Native Hawaiians

The *Keiki Steps* (Kahakalau, 2004) is a state wide native Hawaiian educational framework that determines how early childhood education is delivered to children. For example, it encourages an ethics of care where the participation of parents, grandparents and community is strongly embraced in the education of young children. The framework also incorporates Native Hawaiian culturally-safe approaches to teaching and learning that affirm children's culture and identity (Naone & Au, 2010). Significant concepts of the *Keiki* model provide children with culturally appropriate learning opportunities, such as 'learning through their eyes' and carefully observing elders as sources of knowledge (Naone, 2008, p.12). In this way, it strengthens and prepares children to adapt successfully within Native Hawaiian communities. Although there has not been a study to substantiate the impact of such a framework, Naone and Au (2010) note positive impacts in terms of social and emotional development whereby children are able to socialise and enjoy the company of other children in the program. It has also been observed that young Native Hawaiian children who access the program score higher in assessments of vocabulary and social skills and language skills (Naone & Au, 2010).

Another approach used in Hawaii is 'immersion' education programs (Kahakalau, 2004; Naone, 2008) that are similar to those used in New Zealand for young Maori children. Studies (e.g. Gay, 2002; Kana'iaupuni et al, 2010) reveal that young children who attend the Native Hawaiian immersion preschool programs show greater local and national achievement test scores in their primary and secondary education compared with children attending non-immersion schools. In addition, Native Hawaiian students who receive bilingual education (not immersion education) also score better on achievement tests than students who have English only language instruction (Jensen, 2014). This again clearly demonstrates the significance of understanding the sociocultural milieu of young children when designing educational programs.

Australia's Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming

Australia's political and policy context in 2007 and the global notion of expanding government-led curricula for young children aged from birth to five years, led to the development of *Australia's Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) *Belonging, Being and Becoming Framework* (Sumsion & Grieshaber, 2012). Such development was also encouraged and propelled by the vision of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) that recorded the ideal that 'all children [as having] the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 5). The framework states that it is 'socially and culturally' aligned to the diversities of Australian people, having an utmost recognition and respect for Australia's Aboriginal people (DEEWR 2009, p. 3). This respect and recognition for diversity underpins the framework's principles, practices and learning outcomes.

While criticisms have been levelled against this framework for its lack of consensus about what constitutes a better childhood, Sumsion and Grieshaber (2012, p. 241) assert that it ignites 'questions about new aspirations, desires and dreams a curriculum might make possible'. However, their critique calls further 'discussions, debate and alternative visions and courses of action which offer

ways of exploring spaces between the possible and not (yet) possible' (Sumsion and Grieshaber, 2012, p. 241).

The effectiveness of this framework has been tested against the Australian National Quality Standards (NQS) and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA, 2014) which the report suggests there have been both implementation and assessment variations across the Australian states and territories. It is assumed that this may be largely due to state and territory differences in locales and in the quality of teachers' implementation of the framework and how state officers might view and rate different sites. However the ACECQA (2014) report provides an overview of the framework's effectiveness, which early childhood services in each jurisdiction would need to strengthen and adhere to, so that all young children become Australia's hope of the future.

There is no specific framework geared towards Australia's young Aboriginal children, similar to the *GCM* for Canadian First Nations and the *Keiki Steps* for Native Hawaiian children, however Australia's *Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming* does stand as a guide for teachers and therefore contextualises teaching and learning practices for Aboriginal children. I am of the view that in order to improve learning and learning experiences for children, those designing and teaching curricula must have the content knowledge of the children's cultures. This underpinning is crucial to understanding the sociocultural contexts surrounding early childhood education (Edwards, 2009; Fleer et al., 2006; Rogoff, 2003, Vygotsky, 1978). It supports Harrison (2013) and Martin (2008) who assert in their studies of Australian Aborigines that the incongruences between the two cultures can be managed, provided alternative ways of teaching and learning are developed which must be congruent with the Aboriginal sociocultural context (refer to Chapter Two).

The New Zealand Early Childhood Education Model

The movement for Māori cultural revival came as a result of the near extinction of their cultural heritage, particularly their language (Ritchie, 2012). The New Zealand Government supported this movement and the *Māori Language Act*

1987 was enacted, which gave *Te Reo Māori* (the Māori language) official status in legal settings such as in courts of law. The establishment of *Te Kōhanga Reo* (Māori Early Childhood program) and the *Kura Kāupapa* (Māori primary school program) were a key element in this revival. In these settings, Māori children and those who have Māori blood ties, learn Māori language and cultural values. In *Te Kōhanga Reo* initiative, families and elders are the backbone of each program, where their presence facilitates learning opportunities that are grounded in Māori culture, meaning the early childhood education setting is totally immersed in Māori principles and practices (Ritchie, 2012), with similar principles and practices also employed in *Te Whāriki* which is the national early childhood curriculum for all EC services in New Zealand (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996).

Research suggests that the inclusion of native language and culture into early childhood curricula is an important factor in young children's academic success (Cummins, 2000; Harrison et al, 2012; Sims, 2011b). In particular, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) note that culturally-responsive teaching pedagogies connect students' in-school and out-of-school experiences and support educational equity and excellence that empowers students by giving them the skills to effectively negotiate and impact the world around them. It is this type of teaching approach that strengthens academic achievement as it shows respect for young children's cultural knowledge now and prepares them for future roles (McCarty & Lee, 2014).

In addition to *Te Kōhanga Reo* (early childhood) were *Kura Kāupapa* (primary schools) and the Wharekura (Secondary schools). A Wharekura is a Māori immersion school where both educational philosophy and practice reflect Māori cultural values. In addition, there are also *Kura Tuakana* (Mentoring schools) and the *Kura Teina* (Mentored schools), which are all Māori established settings that aim at revitalising the Māori language for Māoris (Bishop, 2008a). The desire for cultural survival also resulted in the development of *Te Whāriki,* an early childhood curriculum that embraces a bicultural emphasis to strengthen *Teo Māori* (Māori language) for Māori children (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). This again clearly shows the importance of recognising the socio-cultural

context as a precursor to successful learning outcomes for children. This was evident in the 2008-2009 project report, entitled *Titiro Whakamuri, Hoki Whakamua–We are the future, the present and the past: Caring for self, others and the environment in early years teaching and learning* (Ritchie, Duhn, Rau & Craw, 2010), which incorporated Māori perspectives into early childhood education programs. The project report showed a substantial increase in the awareness of teachers in the re-thinking of curriculum. They took into account the 'pedagogy of place', which thus extended their 'boundaries of thinking space' (p. 55). This was evident in their documentations from the four different centres (in both rural and urban) that were involved.

The offering of Māori immersion programs in early education settings (*Kohāanga Reo*) has resulted in an increase in Māori young children's enrolments and an increase in Māori academic success in Kura Kaupapa schools (primary), which have risen from 15% to 75% respectively (May, 2013). This again further suggests that when educational programs are centred on students' sociocultural contexts from an early age, there are associated improvements in later school academic success in upper educational settings (primary, secondary and further to tertiary) as suggested by Naone and Au (2010). By considering what has been outlined thus far in this chapter, the study now turns to what this might mean for young Indigenous Fijians in Fiji.

What this means for Fiji?

It cannot be refuted that changes have swept through the islands of Fiji from colonial and post-colonial times to now. These changes have affected the cultural knowledges of Indigenous Fijians and their position in today's society. Therefore, the examples of specific curriculum models outlined above provide an opportunity to design a similar model that would be appropriate for young Indigenous Fijians (refer to Chapter Eight). The emergence of this study is timely in presenting the idea of a *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* (refer to Chapter Eight). This would be the first model ever designed for Fiji and, it would appear, the first across smaller Pacific Island countries. Having said that, the relevance and value of creating a specific model for young Indigenous Fijians would assist in the revival and the resurgence of

important cultural knowledges around early childhood development that is on the verge of disappearing.

Chapter One discussed the questions guiding this study with the intention of capturing Indigenous Fijian adult participant voices about Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges around child development, and how these cultural knowledges might be utilised in early childhood education contexts. If there are cultural gaps, then a critical reassessment of early childhood and early years pedagogy policy around curriculum and practice will be necessary, in addition to offering suggested future possibilities as a way forward. In setting the scene, the Indigenous Fijian concept of the *vale vakaviti*, which is a traditional Indigenous Fijian *vale* or house (refer to Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii) and as illustrated in Figure 3.1, is presented as an overall metaphorical lens for this study, similar to Durie's (2003) longstanding model of the Whare Tapawhā for Māori.

Figure 0-1: The Vale Vakaviti

Source: http://www.travelingeast.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/87486874.jpg. Retrieved 2nd December, 2014.

Vale vakaviti were the types of houses that Indigenous Fijians creatively designed from natural materials that were readily available in the environment before Western concrete and timber houses were introduced. Indigenous Fijian elders had special knowledges of the best traditional woods to use in order to build a

house. The *vale vakaviti* houses are effective in any season in that they are relatively cool in the hot summer months and warm during winter (Ravuvu, 1987). When there are signs of bad weather that may cause severe destruction to the environment, the elders carefully undo the posts and lay the whole house neatly down to keep the house from being blown away or torn apart. The house would be then re-erected in its original place after the severe weather passes. The overall process is sustainable and reflects Indigenous Fijian traditional wisdoms and knowledges.

The different parts of the *vale vakaviti* can be seen as reflecting the processes of this study (refer to Figure 7.1, p. 232) and each part and its metaphoric significance is discussed here. The **foundation** of the *vale vakaviti* depicts the *vanua* (environment including its people) and its epistemological significance. Each child is firmly rooted in the *vanua*. The **walls** signify the connectedness of children to relationships within the community, including families, clans and the broader community. The **roof** signifies Western knowledges of *lotu* or spiritual world that shelters and protects the child; and in the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model*, this reflects Western curriculum knowledges (refer to Figure 7.1, p. 232). The **indoor** and **outdoor** locations of the *vale vakaviti* represent a teaching and learning space for the child and it is here that the child develops and learns and further develops with immediate family members and elders who are birth relatives and teachers at the same time. The **windows** represent the documents that provide and acknowledge children as human beings, their rights; while the **doors** represent social justice principles and practices. All the Indigenous Fijian **possessions** in the *vale vakaviti* such as mats and precious traditional artefacts signify obligations that the child has with the traditions and that they must carry wherever they go. It is an identity obligation– the identity of being *vakaturaga* (chiefly and of status) and being proud of it. Therefore, in this *vale vakaviti*, the importance of culture as context is deeply rooted and must be respected in every aspect of teaching and learning with young Indigenous Fijian children. This cultural respect also extends to research and any other activity that is related to engaging with Indigenous Fijians. The traditional Indigenous Fijian *vale vakaviti* depicts the way of being *vakaturaga* as any Indigenous Fijian would know, thus, is a metaphorical lens here.

Chapter synthesis

This chapter has highlighted various child development and learning discourses of the West as representations of colonisation since they have continued to suggest universality. Such universality belittles and ignores children's development and also the various discourses of the 'other'. The chapter has discussed how the incongruences of these Western discourses have impacted on education systems and affected children's development and learning, as well as their educational outcomes. To counter such hegemonic ideas, more contemporary socio-cultural theories have been noted as ways to maintain and understand others' epistemologies. The idea of multiculturalism as a way to enact socio-cultural approaches in the early childhood years were also discussed and critiqued. Specific cultural models such as the *Generative Curriculum Model* for the Canadian First Nations (Ball, 2004a), *Australia's Belonging, Being and Becoming EYLF* (DEEWR, 2009), the *Keiki Steps* (Sarsona et al, 2009) for Native Hawaiians and the work undertaken in New Zealand to promote Māori culture and language were outlined to better situate the focus of this study. The impacts that these models have had on children's learning were also discussed. The chapter has noted the movement from universal notions of child development to more recent inclusive designs and what these ideas and models might mean for Fiji in terms of Indigenous Fijian children's leaning, knowing and doing. The *vale vakaviti* was presented as a metaphorical lens through which to view this study in the Indigenous Fijian context.

Chapter 4

The Research Design

> *To decolonise the research methodologies is to argue that people must enter the world of scientific and scholarly analysis from the path of their historically and culturally developed perspectives. These perspectives are not counter to the universal truth, but simply access the universal through the window of one's particular worldview. (Akbar, 1991, p. 248)*

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the methodological frames used to conduct the study and the methods used to collect data. Framed by an Indigenous Fijian methodology, the study employed an interpretive paradigm that embraces the ontology and epistemology of the people involved. In support of this, the chapter brings to the fore Indigenous studies that have used similar paradigms. The methods used and the systematic procedures to gather data are also discussed, which includes the selection of participants, the data collection strategies and procedures, ethical issues and the plan for data analysis.

Research design

The way in which researchers conduct their studies varies according to the different settings and social contexts. Over many years, Western research has dominated research principles and practices. However, this research study provides a contrary approach that upholds the principles and practices of the people studied, thus providing another way of framing research that is appropriate, relevant and rooted in an Indigenist framework. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999; 2012) argues for decolonising research to assist and support Indigenous ways of doing things. This assertion by Tuhiwai-Smith reflects what Akbar (1991) has to say in the quotation that heads this chapter. The need to view settings and social contexts through the eyes of the colonised is different to Western standardised ways of doing things, in particular when dealing with the researched and research activities.

This research is clearly qualitative and examines Indigenous Fijian notions of child development, that is, how children learn, know and do, with the findings having implications for policy and practice in early childhood and early years education. In this study, I attempted to capture 'the direct experience of people in specific contexts, and where social scientists understand, explain and demystify social reality through the eyes of the different participants: the participants themselves define the social reality' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 19). Taking into account what Cohen et al. (2007) say, this study uses an interpretive paradigm as this resonates with the researcher's philosophical stance and is one that could fully engage the research participants in reflecting on their past knowledge in order to inform the present. The paradigm choice is now explained.

Paradigm

In talking about paradigms, Weaver and Olson (2006, p. 460) state that they 'regulate inquiry within a discipline by providing lenses, frames and processes through which investigation is accomplished'. Others (e.g. Bunkers et al, 1996) see paradigms as frames that hold together related inquiries, while Patton (1990) sees them as worldviews. In the present study, the Indigenous Fijian methodology I employed also gave rise to an interpretive paradigm in understanding the topic being studied. This paradigm choice is important, as it has assisted me with thinking about the world; and has provided a frame of reference, including a set of values that could be used to make judgments. Sarantakos's (1998; 1993) work, which identified that a research paradigm is a set of propositions that explains how the world is perceived is an important consideration in this study, as it contains a world view, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world and informing researchers and social scientists in general about 'what is important, what is legitimate and what is reasonable' (p. 30). Guba and Lincoln (2005) define a paradigm as a particular view of the way the world operates or a guide to action, which is associated with four frames– ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology (Lincoln, Lynham & Cuba, 2011). These four frames are now further explained as they acted as a guide for exploring the present research context and creating an aim for this research.

Ontology

In Chapter One, a brief definition of ontology was offered. Wilson (2001a, p.37) defines ontology as 'the ways of being, what one believes is real in the world'. It is the 'nature of reality or the truth created by human beings as applied in research' (Lincoln & Guba, 2005, p. 37). These definitions informed the discussion of the ontology of Indigenous research as this study progressed. The ontology of this study was located within the social constructionist framework and traditions that underscore the pre-eminence of the individual and the importance of relationships (Martin, 2008; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999 & 2012). Such a notion of the importance of relationships is in line with the cultural knowledge of Indigenous Fijians. According to Martin (2008, p. 5), 'relatedness that is relationally grounded within people, that allow spaces to dialogue, thus further strengthened new forms of interdependence'. The present study was conducted within this framework of interrelatedness and interdependence within village communities.

Martin (2008, p. 81) further states that, 'an indigenist research paradigm is served by an ontology that anchors all experiences to relatedness, no matter what the contexts'. This is familiar territory for the present researcher, as the Indigenous Fijian worldview is also shaped by relatedness or the concept of *veiwekani* (relationship) that sees people as interdependent and interconnected. Indigenous Fijians do not exist alone. People commune and live together as evident in Indigenous Fijian village settings. Martin (2008) provides a workable explanation of relational ontology, as follows:

> *Relatedness furnishes the fore-structure for the condition of our immediate immersion in onrushing life ... we sense ourselves as both constituted by, and constituting, the other. In a certain sense, we are each other ... I owe all that I value to my relationships, and all that I find grievous can be altered only through relationship. Individual subjectivity, then, is not a mark of differentiation, but of relatedness (p. 10).*

Martin (2008, p. 82) further argues that relatedness is important in Indigenist research in that 'one third of the overall research is done' once the methodology and the methods are discussed with the participants prior to the research. In the

present study, a similar situation was experienced during my initial involvement with some research participants when discussing the focus of the research. Further, in this research, all research data experiences were contextually situated and related to the unique culture of Indigenous Fijians, thus, shaping the context and atmosphere and determining the interpretations and world perceptions.

Epistemology

Epistemology was also integral to the paradigm of this Indigenist study. Epistemology 'is concerned with how we know what we know' (Crotty, 2005, p. 8) or 'the nature of the relationship between the knower or would be knower and what can be known' (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 201). It provides a philosophical grounding for researchers in deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how to ensure this knowledge is adequate and legitimate (Denzin et al, 2008). It relates to how the truth is constructed and is closely related to ontology. Thus, this study was encouraged by what Martin (2008, p.82) suggests are 'the three knowledge bands of relatedness theory as a theoretical framework of an Indigenist research' project. They include the 'Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing' (p. 82). This relatedness influences what one does, especially in research that is Indigenous in approach.

The research epistemology was highly relevant for this study, since I needed to conduct an extensive re-examination of my being, and also capture my connections to the people from the selected settings for the research. For example, in all of the selected settings, relatedness through my relatives' marriage and blood ties was used as a set of strategies to walk respectfully and safely into the villages. In doing so, it strengthened the Indigenous Fijian cultural networks of relatedness (Martin 2008). Hence, this study of Indigenous Fijian notions about child development is also deeply embedded in the Indigenous Fijian conceptions of relatedness (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) as these shape our world image.

This research also strongly relies on Tuhiwai-Smith's (2012) concepts of decolonisation, which prioritise Indigenous people's ways as legitimate, 'centering our worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and

research from our own perspective and for our own purposes' (p. 39). These concepts give rise to the idea of social constructionist that claims that reality, as in the case of this study, is socially-defined as it is the individuals and groups who define it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In the case of Indigenous colonisation, outside influences have imposed ideas that have either added knowledge or replaced existing knowledge, meaning that reality is not only socially-defined by each individual, but also socially-defined by those who are more powerful, when they impose their perceptions of reality on those who are oppressed. Drawing on Tuhiwai-Smith's (2012), and Martin's (2008) ideas that while deconstructing and decolonising may appear to serve some purpose, there is a need to further refocus the lens of reframing on what has been critiqued and subjugated. Tuhiwai-Smith (1999, pp. 153-154) explains it in this way:

> *The project of reframing is related to defining the problem or issue and determining how best to solve that problem ... Reframing occurs also within the way indigenous people write or engage with theories and accounts of what it means to be indigenous.*

This study argues that the colonisers largely dismissed the Indigenous Fijian epistemology and ontology of child development and that such dismissal has continued to affect the thinking of Indigenous Fijians. These thinking are expressed in the narratives and stories of the participants in later chapters (refer to Chapters Five and Six). To help counter the previous impositions of colonisation, the study engages an Indigenous methodology to create a space that enables or validates Indigenous Fijian conceptions of child development.

Indigenous methodology

Indigenous methodologies are pre-existent to contemporary Western methodologies to ways of thinking about research processes and practices (Chilisa, 2012a; Martin, 2008; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Semali and Kincheloe, 1999; Thaman, 2001; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012). The following Indigenous methodologies assisted the present research study to capture authenticity and ensured that the research on Indigenous issues was accomplished in a more sympathetic, respectful and ethically correct fashion as discussed by Martin (2008). Moreover, this Indigenous methodology supported the creation of a space

where participants could comfortably reflect on Indigenous values and practices, rather than feeling compelled to talk about those imposed upon them by their colonisers (refer to Chapter Two).

Proponents of Indigenous methodology, as cited in the works of Tuhiwai- Smith (1999, 2012) and Martin (2008) (refer to Chapter Two) provide a strong grounding in resistance to Western discourses of research. Such resistance gave birth to the Kaupapa Māori Research in 'privileging Māoris to take greater control of their own lives and humanity' (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, p. 229) (refer to Chapter Two). Tuhiwai-Smith (1999 & 2012) and others (Chilisa, 2012a; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Thaman, 2000) claim that Indigenous people can use their own Indigenous ways of knowing to conduct research projects that actively involved themselves. Such actions are a way of decolonising and an act of resistance against 'neocolonising postmodern global formations' (Sandoval, 2000, pp. 1-2).

The Native Hawaiian scholar Louis (2007, p. 130) states that 'although Indigenous methodologies vary according to the ways in which different Indigenous communities express their own unique knowledge systems, they do have common traits'. She asserts that Indigenous methodologies challenge Western research paradigms, and yet also afford opportunities to contribute to the body of knowledge about Indigenous peoples. She further argues that providing a mechanism for Indigenous peoples to participate in and direct research agendas helps ensures that their communal needs are met. In addition to that, they learn how to build ethical research relationships within the community (Louis, 2007).

Other Indigenous scholars have used their own Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies to research their own peoples. Apart from the *Kaupapa Maori Framework* (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012) and the *Relatedness Approach* (Martin, 2008), Pacific academics, such as Thaman (2003), propose the *Kakala Research Framework* (KRF) that has been used widely by Pacific academics such as Koloto (2000) and Johansson- Fua (2006). Further, Thaman (2003) asserts that the *Kakala* metaphor embraces the notion of the importance of Pacific values and calls for Pacific educators to integrate this into their research studies. Thus, the framework provides an alternative way to Western thinking that continues to

dominate most work in educational institutions (Thaman, 2003; refer to Chapter Two). The *Kakala* framework has acceptance in academia, but one of the main drawbacks is that people have yet to consider it seriously as a way of privileging their own ways, meaning that people are yet to decolonise their own ways of thinking.

An Indigenous Fijian Professor and Academic, Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (2006), has developed and utilised an alternative Indigenous Fijian framework, the Fijian *Vanua* Framework (FVRF). She uses this framework in studying her mother's people (in Vugalei, Fiji) and, this framework has influenced the methodology of the present study, providing meaningful information about its key methodological components (refer to Chapter Two). According to Nabobo-Baba (2006), any research that is Indigenous Fijian in nature is *vanua* (people, their defined territory, their environment, their history and their epistemology – see Table 1.1, pp. xix-xxii) research, since it derives its data and validation from the *vanua*. It is *vanua* research also because it affirms protocols of knowledge access and acknowledges the pivotal role played by the *vanua* and their ontological realities in shaping the process and product of this research.

Informed by the Fijian *Vanua* Framework and the relatedness theory of Martin (2008), this study focused on the Indigenous Fijian *Vakaviti Vakaturaga* (IFVV) as it carries a more meaningful approach and consequently provided a cultural binding on the way in which the researcher must respectfully collect data in the selected research sites. It places 'relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation and rights and regulations' in motion (Louis, 2007, p. 133). It also brings together the ontological and epistemological positions of what the researcher has formulated as the methodological framework.

Axiology

Axiology identifies a researcher's underpinning values and ethics that are at the core. In this study, I tried to explore the cultural values and the ethics of my people. Christians (2005) asserted that being explicit about underpinning values and ethics was part of a new model of qualitative social science research. He

further argued that revision was long overdue and that an ethic of community collaboration, participation and engagement with values was required. Thus in this research study, I focus on the Indigenous Fijian cultural values as foundational to children's learning and development.

In this inquiry an Indigenous Fijian cultural and ethical approach has guided me to engage in research that promoted the values and the ethics of the Indigenous Fijians. Such values were embedded in the use of my newly developed framework, IFVV that was informed by Nabobo-Baba's (2005) FVRF. Importantly, such values and ethics as embedded in culture needs to be revisited and entrenched early with young children.

Thus, the axiology of the Indigenous Fijians needed to be sustained in village communities, or in any Indigenous Fijian for this matter, as this is an important component of cultural identity. In particular, my engagement as a researcher with the research participants in this study further facilitated the importance of axiology. As Rohan (2000, p. 270) stated 'A value is a ... principle constructed from judgments about the capacity of things, people, actions, and activities to enable best possible living' and in this instance the best possible, is knowing ones' identity. In the spirit of Christians' (2005) ethic of community responsibility reviving and sustaining cultural knowledge, a collaborative approach to reviving past (refer to Chapters Seven & Chapter Eight), including contemporary values (refer to Chapter Nine) for best possible teaching and learning within early childhood settings, informed and guided this research. Education for cultural sustainability is essentially about transforming or reaffirming one's values and so, conducting this study was vital in the revival and the sustenance of the Indigenous Fijian cultural notions of child development. Having said that, the importance of seeking a shared understanding in research is vital and this is the focus of the section that follows.

Seeking a shared understanding

Given the positioning of this study, a shared understanding about the research was sought with the participants. As an Indigenous Fijian researching my people's Indigenous Fijian child development knowledge, I used the Indigenous

Fijian *Vakaviti Vakaturaga* (IFVV) to frame me as a researcher as I stepped into the premises of my research participants. Using such an Indigenous Fijian frame means that Western methodologies were suspended while the Indigenous methodology was placed to the fore. I argue that the use of this framework also added strength to the research because the research participants were being accorded the Indigenous Fijian way of *veivakaturagataki* (a chiefly quality standard of respect). When one offers *veivakaturagataki*, it tells of high birth, high standing, a person of quality and a person who knows his or her own being (Nabobo-Baba, 2006).

In this way, the request to share knowledge for the research was approved in culturally-appropriate ways through a shared understanding. Adequate provision of information was guaranteed because of the respect towards myself, who was first of all a person with a strong Indigenous Fijian background. Thus, I felt obliged to clothe myself with cultural respects apart from sharing cultural relatedness with the Indigenous Fijians serving as study participants in this research.

Methods

This study examines Indigenous Fijian-related experiences through the method of *veitalanoa-yaga* and interviews. The *veitalanoa-yaga* was used in selected Indigenous Fijian village sites and also in selected families. *Veitalanoa-yaga* is birthed out of *talanoa* rather revolutionary since most studies in Fiji and the Pacific in general have utilised *talanoa* generally (Cavu, et a; 2009; Halapua, 2002; Nabobo-Baba, 2005) which literally means any type of 'conversation' such as taking with a friend, a group talk under a tree, sharing a joke or even gossiping. Tagicakiverata (2012) used *veivosaki-yaga* concept in his research, which is synonymous to *veitalanoa-yaga*. In this research, *veitalanoa-yaga* is priviledged because I needed to be specific and careful in selecting a culturally-appropriate method to obtain the data needed.

The interview methods were utilised through focus groups and through key individuals. I particularly utilised the focus group method with the selected focus groups because this is synonymous to the *veitalanoa-yaga* (refer to Table 1.1, pp.

xv-xviii) in the Indigenous Fijian context. This is a familiar scenario to the focus group research participants, which I assume would bring relevant and appropriate data needed for the study. The individual interviews with key people were also ideal because I wanted to hear stories on a one on one basis. The details of the three methods used are explained further on in the next few pages of this chapter.

I also had a Research Journal (RJ), which recorded information from some knowledgeable elders whom I interacted with regarding my research study. The RJ contained all the process I had taken in the research. The importance of RJ in any research is essential as it acts as a diary, which is useful for referrals in the writing process of any research.

Participants

The selection of villages and participants in this study grew from consultations with Early Childhood Indigenous Fijian experts and teachers who had experiences teaching in rural and remote village settings. Part of the choice was also influenced by the pre-service and in-service teachers reflections in course evaluations during my tenure as a teacher educator at *Lautoka* Teachers College (LTC) from 2002 to 2006 and at the University of the South Pacific from 2007 to 2011. Bringing all this background knowledge together, three villages were selected from each of the three confederacies, with *Naqarawai* village (NV) selected from the *Burebasaga* confederacy, *Nasautoka* (NS) from the *Kubuna* confederacy and *Mualevu* (MV) from the *Tovata* confederacy (refer to Figure 4.1, p. 70). Figure 4.1 shows a map of Fiji with its three confederacies of *Burebasaga, Kubuna and Tovata* and the village sites selected for the study. With the assistance of Kerry Gleeson, an information technologist (IT) specialist at the University of New England, the labelled black dotted lines were added to the source map to demarcate the three confederacies. The participants' settings are outlined in the map as follows:

- The three village settings for the Indigenous Fijian elders are labelled in blue as NS (*Nasautoka*), NV (*Naqarawai*) and MV (*Mualevu*)
- The red stars are the key people's authentic locales, though majority of them live around in central *Vitilevu* (Individual interviews-II).

- The numbered purple stars 1,2 and 3 represent the three families locales (1-FRR; 2-FSRU, 3-FU) while
- The two red circles represent areas of the focus groups (RST, EED, CED,ECO).

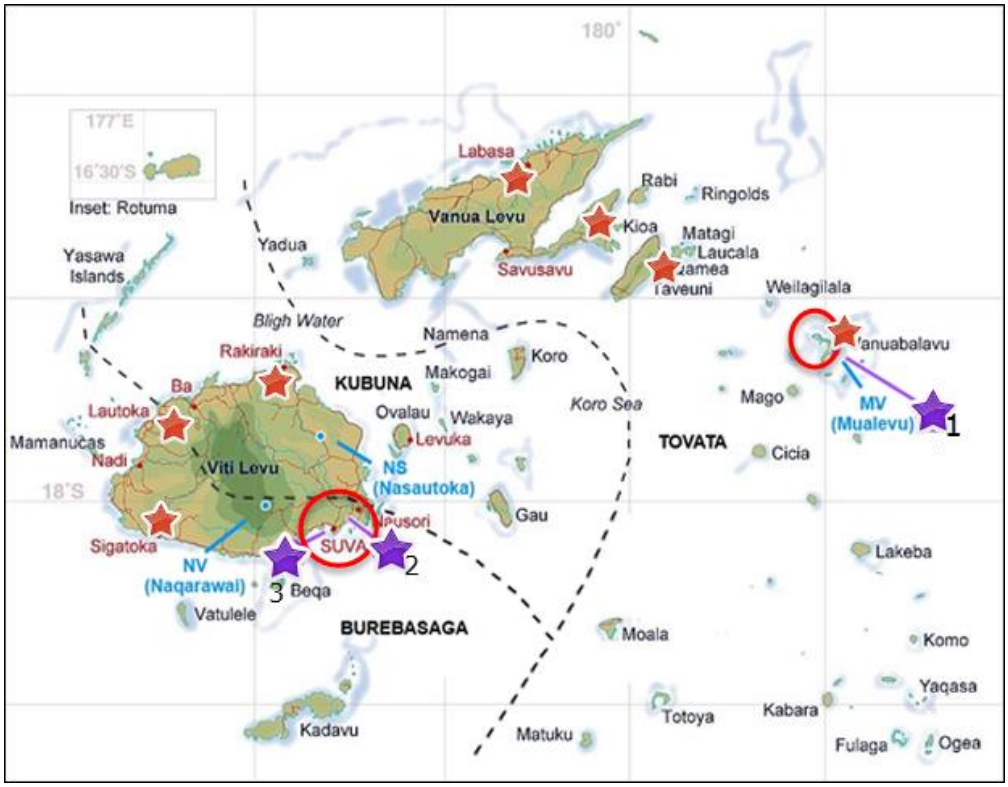

Figure 0-1: Fijian Confederacy and Research Methods settings Source: http://www.nztourmaps.com/images/imgs/fijimap.gif - Insertion of dotted lines, stars, and circle: Tiko & Gleeson (2015)

The participants in the study are discussed below. Liamputtong (2010b) suggested that sample size is much less an issue in interpretivist/constructivist research. It is not the size of the sample but 'it usually works best with small numbers … as qualitative research sample for meaning, rather than frequency' (Liamputtong, 2010b, p. 11). In this study, the sample was kept to a size that enabled the effective management of the data collection. Figure 4.2 presents the participant types that were selected for data gathering and the details are illustrated in Table 4.1.

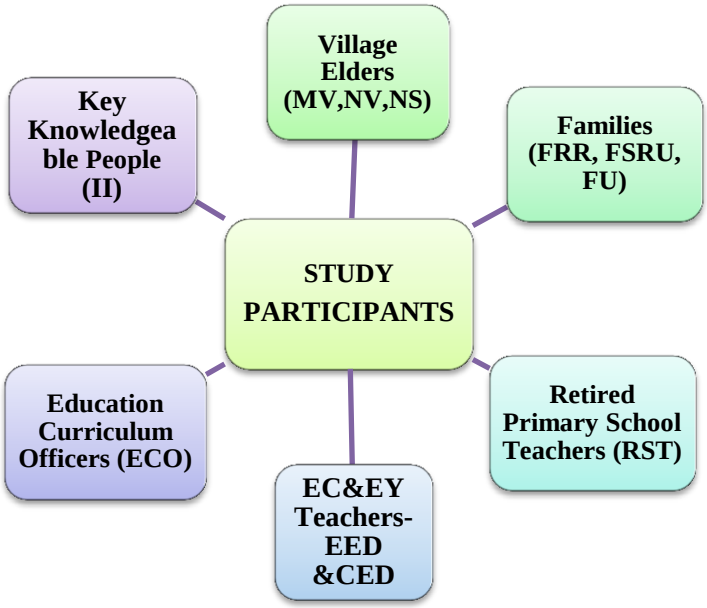

Figure 4-2: Study Participants

Village Elders

I chose the head clan elders in the three Indigenous Fijian villages (*Nasautoka* (NS*), Naqarawai* (NV*), Mualevu* (MV) because they are the repositories of cultural wisdom. Elders were born in an earlier time and their upbringing was more culturally- authentic and less contaminated by colonisation. These elders are regarded as authorities in Indigenous Fijian ways of knowing, learning and doing. Some clan elders were willingly pleased to have their names identified in the thesis, while others were undecided and passed the responsibility to decide to the researcher. One of the head clan elders in *Mualevu* particularly stated *vola na yacai keimami ni keimami soli itukutuku ena nomuni volavola* (write our names because we want to be seen as contributing to your study).

In *Nasautoka* village (NS), the chief was the only participant. This was the decision made by the chief, although I had wanted to be in the village to gather data from the clan and village elders too. The chief suggested that he was the only one to provide the data for the study because he represented his people, thus his voice is representative of his people. I respected his decision because this was culturally-appropriate and I considered it fortunate that a high chief had willingly given his time to provide the data needed for the study. He had no issue with his

name (*Ratu Semi*) being published in the thesis, as he had agreed to participate in the research.

In *Naqarawai* (NV) village, the six head clan elders chosen were all males and there were four additional female elders. These four females, although not clan elders, were considered as participants because of their traditional leadership roles (as heads of women's groups), their village birthright and as the descendants of the people in the village. While their inclusion may be seen as un-cultural, the clan elders themselves granted approval through a request from a spokesperson. Pastor Lutu was the spokesperson who thought that the inclusion of female elders created a balance of genders and thoughts, which was more appropriate in such forums. The *Naqarawai* elders had no issue with their names being published in the thesis. One of them said, *me vakatau sara ga vei kemuni na kena volai na yacai keimami. Ke volai na yacai keitou se sega, keimami vinakata ga me kilai na veika keimami tukuna ena veitalanoa-yaga qo* (We give you the consent whether to publish our names or not. All we wanted was that what we raised in this *veitalanoa-yaga* is documented in your study). I looked to the spokesperson and he asked the group for a consensus but the majority requested anonymity. The spokesperson said *tou sa na vakayagataka na yaca buli* (we will use pseudonyms instead). Thus all names associated with the codes NV1-10 are pseudonyms, including Pastor Lutu the spokesperson.

In *Mualevu* village (MV) six clan elders were invited, but five more wanted to be included, resulting in eleven participants altogether. The additional five participants were women who were interested in the study. One of them said, and I documented this in the research journal, *keitou via veitokoni tu ga ina omu sasaga* (we want to show our support in your study) (MV11: RJ12/07/12). This is expected in Indigenous Fijian villages and people will come invited and uninvited, especially when a project such as this is conducted. All names used in *Mualevu* village are pseudonyms though one of the clan elders had spoken up for their names to be identified. This was after a consensus was reached in which the majority requested that their names be withheld. However, they agreed that the village name could be identified.

Families

Any study of this nature would not be feasible if families were not included, as child development links to families and no one exists without a family. Thus, the choice to include Indigenous Fijian families was essential. Families were purposefully selected from three different locations. Purposive sampling is a strategy used when a project calls for in-depth discussion in order to increase the credibility of the results (Suri, 2011). In this study purposive sampling selected families on the basis of:

1. Their locale.
2. The family composition including the extended family members such as grandparents.
3. Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges.

Pseudonyms are used for the three families, as some family members were undecided whether they wanted to have their names identified or not. For example, in **Family 1**, the grandparents suggested that they did not object to their names being identified. However, a moment of silence signified a difference, after which, the family head kindly requested their names be withheld. There was no specific reason provided and this was respected. The Indigenous Fijian pseudonym for Family 1 is *Rokosau*. The family resides in Location 1–the remote rural island setting and is thus abbreviated in the results and discussion chapters of this thesis as FRR (family in remote rural setting). The *Rokosau* family consisted of four participants–Mr *Rokosau*, Mrs *Rokosau* and the parents of Mrs *Rokosau*, which together consisted of two females and two males.

Family 2 had four participants, two females and two males that consisted of the parents and the grandparents, who were Mr *Bolabola's* parents. This family took a different approach as three of the four participants, the grandparents and the wife, did not mind if their family name was identified. However, the head of the family asked for their names to be withheld because he feared what people would say if they happened to read the thesis. Thus the *Bolabola* as pseudonym was used. Family 2 resides in Location 2 and is abbreviated as FSRU (family in semi rural and semi urban setting) in the results and discussion chapters.

In **Family 3** both the parents requested anonymity and thus, the *Biauniwasa* pseudonym is used for this family. This family resides in Location 3 and is abbreviated to FU (family in urban setting) in the results and discussion chapters. There were only two participants, a male and a female in the FU *veitalanoa-yaga*.

Early Childhood Teachers

All participants in the early childhood teachers (EC) cohort were Indigenous Fijians, chosen because of their early childhood teaching experiences and cultural child development knowledge. There were two cohorts of early childhood teachers' chosen from two different locales–one from a remote-rural location and the other from an urban location. The remote rural participants were selected from the Ministry of Education's (MoE) Eastern Education Division that consists of remote rural outer islands (refer to Figure 4.2 which shows the Major Education Divisions across Fiji and Figure 4.3 which shows the locations where the focus groups were held). This cohort is coded as EED1 to 5 in the thesis. The urban early childhood cohort was selected from the MoE's Central Education Division and is coded as CED1 to10. The choice of locales was made through consultation with the MoE's Primary Education section, where the Early Childhood Section is located. The choice of locales was important because of the need to have a range of perspectives from different early childhood settings.

The teachers were invited to participate in the study through telephone calls from the MoE and via the Head Teachers of the schools where they work. As ECE services are under the jurisdiction of the MoE, the involvement of the Ministry showed the administration's support for the research. The invitation to participate was aired through the Fiji Radio Network because it was assumed that most of these teachers would have access to radios. This was not mandatory and teachers who participated volunteered.

In the remote rural setting (EED), eight participants were invited to participate but only five (four females and one male) attended the forum due to transport difficulties. In the urban setting (CED), eight participants were invited to participate but more than eight attended. Altogether there were a total of ten participants with eight females and two males, as the two extras were eager to

participate in the research study as well (refer to Table 4.1, p. 75-76). No one was turned away as this would have been culturally unacceptable and could have fractured relationships. In projects such as this, maintaining relationships is crucial in order for the project to move forward and achieve the intended outcomes.

Retired school teachers

The retired schoolteachers who participated in the study were also all Indigenous Fijians. Ten retired teachers, who had vast experience teaching in Indigenous Fijian schools, were purposely selected. They had been head teachers of primary schools with EC settings attached and had worked in remote rural, rural, semi urban and urban settings and thus they brought extensive knowledge about Indigenous Fijian child development to the study. The retired schoolteachers all currently live around the main urban centres, so they were easily accessible. Of the ten teachers invited to participate, six chose to participate, four of which were males and two females. Pseudonyms were used for this group of retired teachers, as agreed by all of them. They are abbreviated as RST (retired school teachers), throughout the following chapters, for example, RST1 to RST6.

Education Curriculum Officers

The choice of the Education Curriculum Officers was crucial. Eight potential Indigenous Fijians curriculum officers were selected and the five who participated included one EC curriculum officer, two officers in charge of the Indigenous Fijian curriculum, one officer from the English Curriculum Section and the head of the Curriculum Advisory Services. The final forum group included four females and one male with the other three not attending due to busy work schedules. The Education Curriculum Officers were particularly selected because they deal directly with the implementation of curriculum and because this study has potential implications for MoE policies and for classroom practices. Pseudonyms were employed for these officers, as they preferred this and they are coded with the abbreviation ECO and a number, for example, ECO1.

Key knowledgeable people

Eleven key knowledgeable people were also chosen from around the Fijian mainland to participate in the study. The choice of these people was strategic following consultations with Indigenous Fijian elder teachers in the FTA (Fijian Teachers Association) headquarters. These eleven key elders were identified as having Indigenous Fijian status, work status and Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge. In traditional Fijian culture it would not be seen as appropriate for females to contribute to this kind of research study, especially when speaking in groups of males. However, in contemporary Fijian society, this view is changing with women becoming more vocal and being seen as having an equal status with men. To ensure a balance of gendered knowledge and because more males than females had been included in the *veitalanoa-yaga* study cohorts, the key knowledge participants also included women. Encouraging the participation of females in projects addresses the subordination of women in society and encourages gender equity and equality (The Beijing Declaration and Platform For Action Turns 20, 2015), and in the case of this study, it ensures women's knowledge is included in the findings. Overall the study sample includes six males and five females. These key knowledgeable elders come from around Fiji's locales, marked as red stars in Figure 4.1, however they reside around the main urban centres due to work and other reasons such as retirement. These key knowledgeable people were abbreviated as II1 to 11 (Individual Interview) with pseudonyms used as requested.

Data collection strategies

Considering the nature of this study, it was important that the strategies used to collect data were relevant and contextual. An established understanding to use the *veitalanoa yaga* (refer to Table 1.1, pp. xix-xxii) meaningful/useful conversation in the Indigenous Fijian context) was shared and agreed upon with the research participants. The closest Western equivalent of the *veitalanoa yaga* is the focus group (Chilisa, 2012a). Again *veitalanoa-yaga*, which is a branch of *talanoa* is specific as *talanoa* is very general and for such study as this, I was trying to be explicit and specific in my choice of method. Further, to be culturally-appropriate, this was done through story telling or narrative research in Western

terms (Kovach, 2010). The village elders and family participants agreed to the *veitalanoa-yaga* because they were familiar with the method. Figure 4.3 and Table 4.1 illustrate data collection strategies and the participants' information.

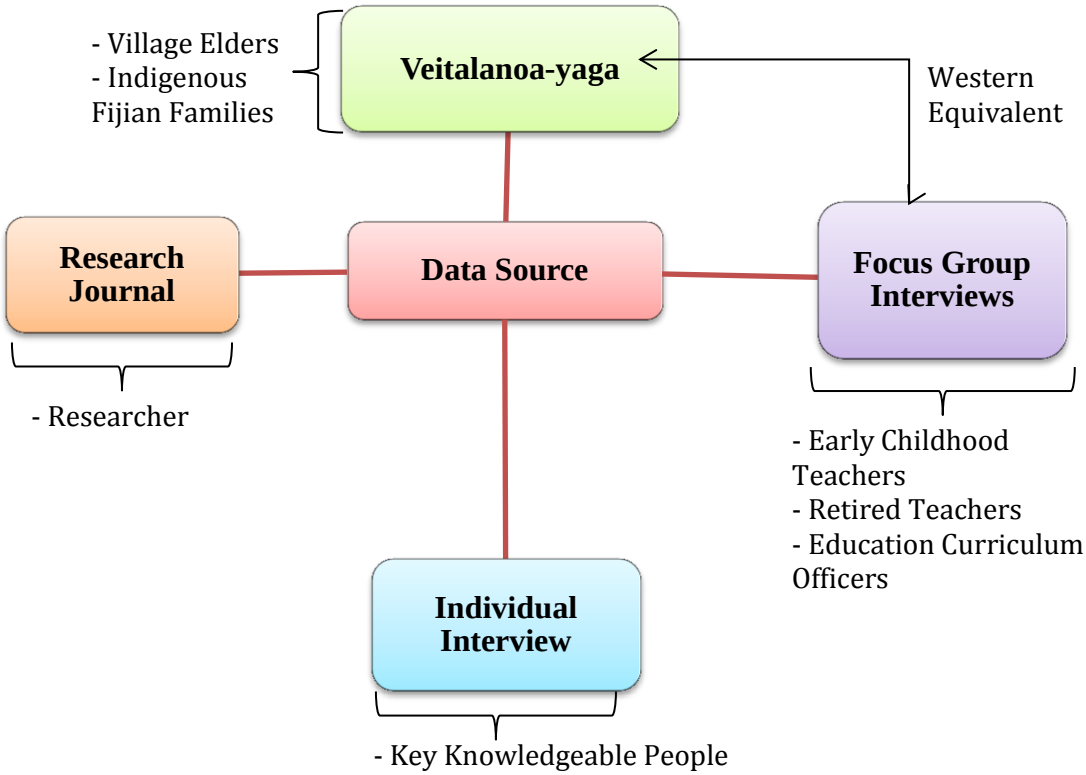

Figure 4-3: Data Collection Strategies

Table 4-1: Data Collection Strategies and Details of Study Participants

Participant type	Location	Data collection strategies	Gender	Total
Mualevu village elders	Remote rural	Veitalanoa-yaga	6 males and 5 females	11
Naqarawai village elders	Remote rural	Veitalanoa-yaga	6 males and 4 females	10
Nasautoka village chief	Remote rural	Veitalanoa-yaga	1 male	1
Family in remote rural	Remote rural	Veitalanoa-yaga	2 males and 2 females	4
Family in semi-rural/semi urban	Semi-rural / urban	Veitalanoa-yaga	2 males and 2 females	4
Family in urban	Urban	Veitalanoa-yaga	1 male and 1female	2
Retired school teachers focus group (RST)	Urban	Focus group	4 males and 2 females	6
EC teachers focus group-Eastern Education Division (EED)	Remote rural	Focus group	1 male and 4 females	5
EC teachers focus group -Central Division (CED)	Urban	Focus group	2 males and 8 females	10
Education Curriculum Officers focus group (ECO)	Urban	Focus group	I male and 4 females	5
Key Knowledgeable people (II)	Urban	Individual interviews	6 males and 5 females	11

Agreement

Similarly, further agreement was reached with participants in the focus groups and with key knowledgeable people in the individual interviews. Consent forms were used, as the participants were also familiar with the Western research approach, although a few of the participants questioned having to sign the consent forms because they thought that a verbal agreement was ample. However, in this process I had to apply myself as a UNE Australian PhD student researcher. Such questions signaled that verbal conversations are the preferred way for Indigenous Fijian people to engage with researchers. The importance of their consent signature needed to be explained, as this was required by UNE Research ethics (Refer to Appendix 3, p. 345). In response to this, a participant in one of the focus groups said *eda veitalanoa ga ena vakabauta kei na veivakadeitaki vakaweiwekani, ni oqo e bauta tu na noda itovo vakaviti. Baleta ni da sa mai ciqoma tiko na nodra vuravura na vulagi, sa da na cakacaka vaka kina* (We as Indigenous Fijians talk on the understanding of faith and trust through our relationships because this is what binds us as a group. But because we have embraced the ways of the White people, then we need to do likewise; RST1:

22/07/12). This was a challenge to me as a researcher who has been immersed in the both the Indigenous and Western worlds to suspend any prejudgments about realities and 'see it as participants see it' (Daly, 2007, p. 98). Carpenter & Suto, (2008) suggested similarly and perhaps, this is what research is all about, listening to the voices of chosen participants whom researchers think and believe will provide the relevant data for the research. Having said that, relevant data will emerge when researchers reflect on the research process in line with Wilson's (2013, p. 41) suggestions:

- *Figure out your ontology (what you believe is real)*
- *Figure out your epistemology (your way of thinking about that reality)*
- *From this develop your methodology (a tool to make your epistemology further inform your ontology)*
- *Do these steps within a framework of your axiology (ethics and values)*

Indigenous researchers around the world have used their own cultural ways to gather information about their own cultural contexts through strategies such as story-telling, yarning, talk story, re-storying and remembering (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Bishop, 1999; Chilisa, 2012a; Thomas, 2005). For example, Martin (2008) used yarning as a strategy in her study of Aboriginals and Bessarab and Ng'andu (2010) used a similar strategy with Indigenous groups in Australia and Botswana. Nabobo-Baba (2005) utilised *talanoa* in her Indigenous Fijian research about her mother's people and Kahakalau (2004) employed circle talk for a Native Hawaiian study. All these approaches use story-telling or narratives (to state their Western equivalent), but are different in different cultural contexts. Kovach (2010, p. 45) refers to all of the above approaches as the 'conversational method'.

For this research, consultation with my late *nana* (mother) and late *tata levu* (big uncle) provided a way forward for the use of *talanoa* (conversation), but according to them, this would need to be a useful form of *talanoa,* (RJ: 11/07/12). They argued that *talanoa* can mean any conversation such as jokes, gossips and normal conversations, which can either be formal or informal. They suggested that because I was doing something vital for the enhancement of Indigenous Fijian cultural child development knowledge, I need to be specific

and the term *veitalanoa-yaga* (useful conversation) would be more appropriate. *Veitalanoa-yaga* is derived from *talanoa* but is more meaningful than *talanoa*. It is narrative inquiry where the researcher enters the world of the researched and inquires into the inner world of the researched (Speedy, 2000). This interpretive paradigm is anchored in the Indigenous Fijian culture of relatedness and interconnectedness as defined by Nabobo-Baba (2006) and Martin (2008) also exemplifies this in her research with her Australian Aboriginal people. In this study, the preference is to use *veitalanoa-yaga* because it connotes a specific and explicit meaning for the strategy used. The following section argues in some detail the use of *veitalanoa-yaga* as opposed to just *talanoa*.

Veitalanoa-yaga versus *Talanoa*

Veitalanoa-yaga is derived from time-honoured Indigenous Fijian practices for generating useful knowledge from discussion. This is similar to *veivosaki yaga*, (Cavu et al, 2009; Tagicakiverata, 2012), but the Indigenous Fijian term *veivosaki* (not including *yaga*) is understood to denote a stronger or more forceful tone than that of *veitalanoa*. *Veitalanoa-yaga* therefore breaks new ground beyond both Otsuka's (2006) Pacific-oriented *talanoa* research and the standard focus group procedure used in Western research. The *talanoa* method proposed by Otsuka basically involves casual ad hoc talk and story-telling in a group to elicit information. Otsuka (2006, p. 3) states that *talanoa* culturally connotes talking about 'nothing in particular and interacting without a rigid framework'. Developing from the previous work of Vaioleti (2003), Otsuka considers *talanoa* as a culturally-appropriate design for group data collection in Fiji. However, this study suggests one needs to be specific (as earlier stated) as in *veitalanoa-yaga* while generally, *talanoa* might not be appropriate for gathering information on all topics in Fiji.

My experience as an Indigenous Fijian is that *talanoa* is merely casual talk in which people engage when drinking kava or meeting in a supermarket, on the streets or at large gatherings. The gist of the *talanoa* concept is in its literal and contextual Indigenous Fijian interpretation of story-telling and nothing more, as described by Otsuka (2006) above. This phenomenon is not limited to Indigenous Fijians but has cultural parallels with Indo-Fijian culture and the cultures of other

Pacific Island communities. The disadvantages of *talanoa* as a method include its overly casual nature and the difficulty in exercising control over the direction of the narratives in an information-gathering forum. As in any typical story-telling session among peers, the topics and themes change rapidly depending on the spontaneous contributions of the participants.

The fundamental weakness in both Otsuka's (2006) and Vaioleti's (2003) *talanoa* concept is that they have stretched the literal meaning of the term beyond its contextual cultural relevance. For example, a problem encountered by Otsuka in his *talanoa* fieldwork was that some participants were not honest in their accounts. A significant aspect that Otsuka (2006) fails to realise is that honesty and truth are characteristics beyond the boundary of a typical Indigenous Fijian *talanoa*. On the contrary, exaggeration is expected and hyperboles are plentiful. Moreover, out of respect for the foreigner (Otsuka is a Japanese researcher) some participants may not have been very forthcoming with Otsuka because they were merely facilitating and playing along with his desire for *talanoa.* The major methodological problem lies in how Otsuka's (2006) participants (Indigenous Fijians) most likely perceived the word *talanoa*, which in Fijian literally means casual story-telling.

Participants in *talanoa* are not bound by any rules or obligations other than their own interest in expressing themselves, often resulting in exaggerations. A former Indigenous Fijian member of parliament, EQ, explained to me (Suva, May 2009) that traditional methodologies such as *talanoa* could be effective in gathering data, however, he referred specifically to *muritalanoa* as a plausible approach. *Muritalanoa* may be loosely translated as following a story. It refers to people who listen in on village or peer story-telling sessions and literally take action as a consequence. However, a potential pitfall in using *muritalanoa* is that the participants are perceived as receivers of the message and not so much as initiators or creators. In other words, most people are just listening to a dominant person in the group expressing views and they do not necessarily express their own. The section that follows supports *veitalanoa-yaga* as a culturally-appropriate strategy for this study.

Veitalanoa-yaga

Veitalanoa-yaga is the Indigenous Fijian strategy used in this study to examine aspects of lived experiences of the participants through narratives. It appears that no researcher in Fiji or in the Pacific has used the concept of *veitalanoa yaga* (a branch of *talanoa* but yet specific) in previous research. Rather, as noted above, previous researchers have used the general *talanoa* (Halapua, 2002; Nabobo-Baba, 2005; 2006) and *veivosaki-yaga* (Cavu et al, 2009; Tagicakiverata, 2012). *Veitalanoa-yaga* literally means worthwhile conversation or useful discussion and implies a neutral sense of dialogue rather than just a normal conversation. *Yaga* literally means useful or worthwhile. Such dialogue is not a new concept in Indigenous Fijian culture and Indigenous Fijian participants are psychologically attuned to a form of communal dialogue that demands their serious consideration and focus in their responses. Elements of *veitalanoa-yaga* mirror the existing custom of *bose-vakoro* (village meeting), which is a formal village meeting chaired by a chief or the village headman and where village members speak to the agenda of discussion.

Research procedures

Introduction

It was necessary to undertake preparation work prior to the participant meetings, since such preparations presupposed not only data collection, but also rekindling personal relationships with the people involved. As an Indigenous Fijian, it was very important that I positioned myself within my Indigenous Fijian *vakaviti vakaturaga* framework. I carefully exercised Indigenous Fijian protocols in every village, family visit and interview. For example, I used *saka* (synonymous to sir/madam) throughout the interviews with participants, all of whom were older. Likewise I used *tabu saka yani* (polite address) when addressing a group or an individual regardless of status. Any Indigenous Fijian would know this is a cultural protocol and an obligation. Not following these protocols is disrespectful to the people and the land. At this point, it may be useful for the reader to refer back to Figure 4.3 illustrating the data collection strategies used in the study, as this provides a visual representation of the strategies in this Indigenist context.

Therefore, my two elder sons or other relatives accompanied me and acted as spokespersons in the *veitalanoa-yaga* sites. Spokespersons were needed in this research, as this is a culturally appropriate protocol. I could not go by myself as to do this would mean *ni sega na wekaqu,* (I have no relatives). In this study, having spokespersons was important as they played a crucial role in my entry and exit into the *veitalanoa-yaga* sites. This was in addition to the display of overall respect for the Indigenous Fijian culture and its carriers, including traditional greeting rituals. The *veitalanoa-yaga* session always started and finished with a prayer. After recording the sessions, I requested the participants to listen to the recorded conversations to confirm the information. As typical, meetings with Indigenous Fijian participants concluded with a feast indicating cultural respect and appreciation of the research. The following section illustrates the specific details of my visits and data collection experiences.

Veitalanoa-yaga sites

Nasautoka Village (NS)

Nasautoka village is located north east of Fiji's main island. I actually did not go into the chiefly village of *Nasautoka* as planned. The high chief of Nasautoka village, who happened to be a paternal relative, is one of the most knowledgeable and educated Indigenous Fijians in Fiji. He suggested to me over the telephone that it was best that only he be involved as he was the only elder with appropriate knowledge. In his words, *ni o vosa ga vei au, sa o vosa tiko ki na vanua o Nasautoka raraba baleta o au na kenai i liuliu vakavanua, kau gusudra tale ga na lewe ni vanua* (When you speak with me, you are speaking to my people and the whole of *Nasautoka*. I represent *Nasautoka* village, as I am their chief and so I am their voice) (NS: 20/07/12). This decision was respected and a visit to his urban residence in Suva was organised.

I prepared well for this visit, as I knew I was not only going for the purpose of collecting data, it was also a rekindling of our relationship. Accompanying me were my two elder sons, both of whom were trained by their father to always uphold Indigenous Fijian tradition and culture and to be able to conduct Indigenous Fijian cultural obligations wherever and whenever they were asked.

As customary, I took with me a *tabua* (whale's tooth), a bundle of *kava* (piper methysticum) and groceries, as a traditional token of entry into the chiefly home. A *tabua* (refer to Table 1.1, pp. xix-xxii) is the highest traditional Indigenous Fijian gift accorded to someone during ceremonies as a sign of respect. Its uses vary and it can be used as bride-price, during weddings and funerals and is the most valued traditional treasure for any Indigenous Fijian.

While a metre away from the chief's house, we did the *tama* (greeting) in our own traditional way, *mai na vakayaduwe* (a respectful cry of greeting when entering a house or a village). From inside the house, *Ratu Semi* (the chief) replied, *mai mai mai* (come, come, come inside). The spokesperson (who was my son) proffered the whale's tooth and the bundle of *waka* (root of kava/piper methysticum) and explained the purpose of our visit. One purpose was to show our faces as his relatives and the second was to show a token of appreciation for his health after his recent discharge from hospital. The third was an apology for my paternal links not being so culturally attached to their *vasu* (mother's village), where he is the chief. The fourth and main purpose was to seek approval to gather data from the knowledge he had in relation to the study focus. After formal acceptance of our *sevusevu* (traditional presentation) he welcomed us by outlining the family connection and the blood ties we had.

The chief had already prepared for the *veitalanoa-yaga,* as I had provided him with the research questions via an earlier telephone conversation. All the questions that I posed were answered through experiences and stories to make clear the meanings. Most of the time, the conversation was a one-way affair and I just had to listen. It was a conversation between two unequal, yet related, people. I consider this conversation a privilege as I particularly sought his contribution to the study. The chief, *Ratu Semi*, has had significant impact in Fiji through his writings, and is highly vocal about the importance of Indigenous Fijian culture, not only in homes, but also in educational settings such as early childhood and the whole school settings.

In concluding, *Ratu Semi* reaffirmed the importance of embracing Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge and epistemologies in our work, especially in researching topics regarding Indigenous Fijian epistemologies and ontologies. He

believed outsiders should learn to abide by the Indigenous Fijian protocols, when endeavouring to undertake research projects, as I had done. He encouraged me to work hard and to ensure that my study was read by the MoE, so that appropriate measures could be taken to embrace Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges which is our identity mark. In his open-mindedness, he also emphasised that Indigenous Fijian children need knowledge of the Western world in addition to their own Indigenous knowledge. The *veitalanoa-yaga* session lasted for two hours and I did not need to ask for clarifications as the chief had embraced all the research questions in his stories and narratives. I asked if I could play back the recorded *veitalanoa-yaga* for confirmation of the data provided. He agreed and said that all the information he had provided was true (NS: 20/07/12). His wife and two other male elder relatives from *Nasautoka* village, who were present in the house at the time, were requested by the chief to listen to the recorded *veitalanoa-yaga* for confirmation. While they listened because they were told to do so, it would be inappropriate for them to validate what the chief had said, because it would be perceived as disrespectful. However, they agreed that all that the chief had shared were true accounts of how *Nasautoka* people have lived and practised their village life. This verification process also lasted two hours.

The chief then concluded with a prayer, as this was part of our borrowed Christian culture, a result of colonisation (refer to Chapter Two). I offered a word of thanks before my son presented our *itatau* (farewell), which the chief, *Ratu Semi*, accepted and blessed before we left. I was impressed with the presence of the chief's wife and the other two *Nasautoka* elders who were able to support the chief in the *veitalanoa-yaga* process though they remained silent throughout. Their silence signalled their respect for the chief.

Mualevu Village (MV)

Mualevu village (MV) is situated on the island of *Vanuabalavu*, which is geographically north of the Fiji Islands (see Figure 4.1, p. 70) Prior to departure, I first contacted my late mother who was still alive at the time (she passed away 12 January, 2014) and she gave explicit instructions about what to do when returning to the village after such a long exposure to the Western world. In one of her phrases, she said *vakasulu rakorako, ko sa lesu tale tiko mai qori kina nomu*

vanua, a vanua ko a tauyavu kina, ka ra tiko kina ko ra omu (dress up appropriately, you are going back to where you were established and where you have your own relations). Perhaps, she was reminding me of the importance of culture, which is reflected in the way one dresses, and she was also reminding me that I have traditional roots of which I needed to be aware.

Visiting my own *Mualevu* village involved a one and half hour local flight to the island, and then a twenty-minute drive in a four-wheel vehicle along the gravel road to my village. For me the trip signified a mark of identity, firstly as a researcher and as a daughter of the *vanua* of *Mualevu*. The aim of the journey was two-fold; to focus on my research and to see my people after more than a decade. I had emotional moments as I thought of the people who had mattered in my life, but who had since passed on. These were the uncles and the aunties of my extended family. Deep were my thoughts, and the memories of my past seemed vivid as I sensed my two selves–the Indigenous me and the Western me.

I was the focus of the village talk amongst my people. The talk was about me as the first female in the village to venture into such a Western-based project. Also I was an Indigenous woman who had gone higher in the Western education system, and who had moved further in career by doing research and 'rubbing shoulders' with Western people's pedagogies. To my people, research is a Western concept that is only undertaken by Europeans. For me to conduct such an exercise meant a milestone in terms of education in the Western world which is seen as superior to our traditional Fijian ways of education. From their perspective, I had made the village proud. One of my cousins, an elder and a pastor of a Christian belief namely the Seventh Day Adventist church, told me 'you have set a pace that our children and future generations will need to learn from. I am amazed at how you have persevered to be where you are now considering the struggles that all of us face as Indigenous Fijian children growing up in our own Indigenous Fijian villages' (RJ: 13/07/12). To the people of *Mualevu* village, I was a role model to the current and future generations of my people. Also, my education had brought fame to the whole village community.

As is customary, I had to make my presence known to the village. An elderly male cousin of mine acted as a spokesperson and accompanied me to complete

all the necessary cultural protocols needed to declare my presence in the village. A bundle of *kava* and an envelope with a few dollars, as my *sevusevu*, were presented to the village chief. This was to show my presence and request approval to conduct my research activities in the village premises.

Early in the evening, the village spokesman announced throughout the village that the conch shell would be blown in the morning and that the villagers were requested to attend as there were important matters to be discussed. Included in the agenda was my research intention. In traditional Fijian villages, the blowing of the conch shell is a symbolic cultural call of the *vanua* for village people. When people hear the conch shell blown, they go to where they are required, for example to the village hall for a meeting. I went with my mother to attend the village meeting because the chief had send his *matanivanua* (literally chief's spokesperson) to tell my mother that I would be given time to share about my research in the *bose va-koro*. I then explained the purpose of my visit and this was done carefully and with respect since the village elders were listening and watching me attentively. There were questions, but only positive comments, which really encouraged me. I was happy that I was given the green light to do whatever was needed for my research. I then distributed the typed copies of pages with the questions for all to see and think about before the *veitalanoa-yaga*. I was fully supported by the chief and the elders of the village and they agreed that the *veitalanoa-yaga* would be conducted the next day. They were also aware of my limited time as there are unpredictable weather conditions and flights can be cancelled at any time.

The following day was the *veitalanoa-yaga* and the village community hall was packed with people who wanted to hear about my research. I have previously mentioned the selected six clan-elders and there were five other elder females who also wanted to show support for the study and who requested to attend. I invited these additional females to sit and listen, but I only recorded the data from the six people I had chosen. I sat beside my mother, while the males sat at the upper front of the hall and the females sat in a lower position, as is customary.

A male cousin, whom I had invited to be my spokesperson, was there to facilitate the *veitalanoa-yaga*. He was briefed on what to do before the *veitalanoa-yaga*

started. As usual, we had a Christian prayer before the *veitalanoa-yaga* began. It was obvious that the males dominated this *veitalanoa-yaga*, though the females also contributed. There was always an atmosphere of respect towards the person speaking and the words *saka* (synonymous to sir/madam) and *tabu saka yani* (respectful accordance) were used throughout. I only spoke when there was a need to elaborate on certain issues, for example, when one of the male participants asked me to elaborate on the fourth research question–*What are some future possibilities or appropriate and meaningful alternatives that may inform policy and practice?* I explained in my mother tongue so the participants could fully understand. In response to this, one of the elders particularly mentioned the need for collaborative partnerships between the home, the school and the wider system (MV1: 12/07/12). There was time for questions but there was absolute silence and everyone looked at each other, nodding, indicating satisfaction and signalling the end of the *veitalanoa-yaga*.

The spokesperson clapped three times, then asked if all agreed to the information. Everyone nodded whilst one of the most elder participants said *sa donu* (it is all correct). However, a request for a replay of the recorded *veitalanoa-yaga* was put forward by one of the male elders, so all could hear what was being shared. This request signalled to me that the participants wanted to hear what had been said to check that the right information had been shared. The participants listened to the recorded conversation and an air of excitement filled the room. This I believe was because the technology was new to them and hearing what they said was a relief.

The *veitalanoa-yaga* session was a success by all accounts. It had lasted for half a day and was concluded with a prayer and a lunch that my relatives had prepared for the participants. After the meal, I presented a few words of *vakavinavinaka* (thank-you) and my token of appreciation to the participants and to the *vanua* of *Mualevu* for my research approval and for my data. This was culturally appropriate and necessary to show my people that their contribution to my research mattered. It also depicted my status and my upbringing. In response, one of the participants said *o sa vaka e dua na senikau e se toka, ka sa mai vakaboivinakataka na vanua ko Mualevu – keimami dokadoka kina* (you are like a scented flower that has spread its scent in the village–we are so proud of this).

Naqarawai Village (NV)

The delegation to the final village of *Naqarawai* included my two sons and a family member who was from the village itself. This family is related to me through marriage, so the choice of this village, based on relationships, facilitated the data gathering exercise. The head of the family, my brother-in-law, was the spokesperson because he was from *Naqarawai* village, a son of a village clan elder and someone I thought was best suited to lead the *veitalanoa-yaga*.

Naqarawai is located in the interior west of *Vitilevu* (mainland), which is approximately 200 kilometres from the capital city (Figure 4.1, p. 70). The arduous three hours drive on the winding gravel road was nothing when compared to the warm reception I received from the people, including little children aged three to four years. My experiences in the village indicated to me that this village had a high regard for culture and I was reassured that its choice as a research site was the right one.

We arrived at the venue, on the morning of 19 July 2012. I was strongly affected by the cultural reception and the gestures that showed we were welcome in the *vanua* of *Naqarawai.* We waited for the village headman to arrive, and it was not long before we proceeded with a Christian prayer (always first and foremost in any Indigenous Fijian meeting), which was then followed by the cultural protocols of our *sevusevu* to the village. There was a difference in protocols and mother tongues in all three sites so, while I was fortunate to understand all of them, I had to seek validation from the groups and also the spokesperson, to ensure that what I heard and wrote down was accurate.

After the cultural protocols were completed, one of the clan elders said that they had been informed of my visit by the Provincial Council office, (an office that looks after the villages in the province). They had been asked to provide support and this was the reason for the people gathering that morning. Sitting in the village hall were the village clan elders and some women elders who were chosen to participate in the data collection. In Indigenous Fijian culture, men are considered superior to women, thus the decision to have a male leading the conversation. Whilst, these patriarchal notions have been challenged, in such a

situation as this, I preferred to maintain more traditional cultural and situational coherence and relevance. My brother-in-law was briefed about the research process and how he should maintain the conversation going. I stood back and I only spoke when there was a need, otherwise I listened while the *veitalanoa-yaga* proceeded. As a researcher, the choice of my brother-in-law was appropriate because he was able to translate between the national Indigenous Fijian language that I use and the specific *Naqarawai* dialect. This ensured coherence in the *veitalanoa-yaga* session without much hindrance. Information was translated into the national Indigenous Fijian language and then into English for the purpose of my thesis. With this in mind, I anticipate that one day the decolonisation process will see Indigenous research students writing up and relating their projects in their mother tongues. Personally, I had thought deeply about my project, how I research it in the Indigenous Fijian context and then document it in the Western English context. To me this still feels like oppression by academia and I hope one day to see thesis written in the language of the colonised. Thus in this thesis, I have interchangeably used Indigenous Fijian words and phrases with their English language equivalents to uphold my bilingual stance in this research. It also illustrated the importance of Indigenous contexts within Western academia.

In the *veitalanoa-yaga* all aspects of the research questions were considered and the participants shared their own childhood memories. I noticed the women occupying the lower end of the open-spaced room and listening only. When asked to share, they said they agreed with what the men had shared. One of the ladies particularly said *sa dou veitalanoa tiko ga na turaga, sa keitou vakarorogo tiko na marama, ka sa donu tiko* (you men can converse, it's all good and fine with us as we are listening; RJ: 19/07/12). This response from the woman captures the traditional village cultural respect for men, which today has been challenged by the idea of women's rights as outlined in the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW; United Nations, 1979). Despite Fiji being a signatory to the convention, the majority of Indigenous Fijian villagers prefer to follow Indigenous Fijian culture as evidenced in the situations described in this section.

Before the *veitalanoa-yaga* concluded, my brother-in-law, as spokesperson, requested the recorded *veitalanoa-yaga* be replayed so the participants could hear what had been recorded. In reply, one of the clan elders mentioned that in such Indigenous Fijian forums there is no need to replay a recording because what transpires during the conversation must be the true account of what is supposed to be. However, my brother-in-law, in showing respect, clapped three times, apologised and then insisted that the information provided ought to be replayed because it is part of research culture and everyone agreed. After listening to the recorded *veitalanoa-yaga*, all the participants clapped, to show agreement that the content were indeed true.

The *veitalanoa-yaga* went well and concluded with a lunch that the village people had prepared. Ashkenazi (2001) notes that food is a sign of relationship, bonding and support for, and of, the people and, in this case, the relationship-bond for the research delegation to the *vanua* of *Naqarawai.* I noticed all food was organic and unprocessed and, as it had been a long time since I had seen such an Indigenous Fijian local spread, I thought back to my early childhood days in my own village when I used to have the same kinds of greens with coconut milk at mealtimes. We then presented groceries as our token of appreciation and offered the *itatau* (farewell) to the *vanua* of *Naqarawai* before we departed later in the afternoon.

The *veitalanoa-yaga* approach also captured the views of three Indigenous Fijian families in three different locales of Fiji. These are outlined and explained in the section that follows. The Indigenous Fijian *Vakaviti Vakaturaga* Framework guided me in my role with the three selected families.

Family 1: Remote Rural (FRR)

The *Rokosau* family were familiar to me and I had chosen them because they belonged to a clan that normally are a *liga ni wau* (warrior clan) role with the chief of the village. As part of their role, they speak with authority during village meetings and also verbally discipline those who disobey village protocols. The *Rokosau* family has a high regard for Indigenous Fijian culture and this was evident in the way they interacted with people. The head of the family addresses

his relatives and others in the village, to which he knows this title is warranted, in respectful ways such as *Adi*, and also *Ratu*. His children do the same and I was thrilled to be able to witness this.

The *Rokosau* family welcomed my request for a *veitalanoa-yaga* and said *lako ga mai, kua ni vakava e dua na meca va ya* (just come, do not be bothered to do any cultural obligation). The spokesperson was my male cousin, and accompanied me in this research visit. As we came near the family's house, my cousin called out in the dialect *ia, keirau kerekere me keirau curu mada yani* (we are kindly requesting if we could come in; RJ: 16/07/12). From inside the house came the response, *mai, mai, mai sara mai loma* (come, come, come right inside; FRR: 16/07/12). We sat at the place that was made ready for us. As usual, a Christian prayer was first and foremost on the agenda followed by the cultural obligation of a *sevusevu*.

The spokesperson briefed the family regarding the reason for the visit, though they had known beforehand that I was coming to seek information for my research. The research questions were delivered the day before we had the *veitalanoa-yaga*, so the family would have an idea of what was required of them and be able to prepare. Before we could begin the *veitalanoa-yaga*, there was a welcome to the family by one of the male grandparents. For them, I was not coming as a visitor, but as one of their own blood relatives and I was granted permission to gather information from the family. The head of the family was also vocal and suggested that we deliberate on the questions so as to keep the *veitalanoa-yaga* flowing. The responses to all the research questions were completed in narratives and stories that kept flowing until the last question. I listened most of the time and I only probed when clarifications or extensions to points where needed. For example, in question three–*How can policy and practice reflect the Indigenous Fijian notions of child development?*–I was pleased with how the family responded as they reflected on their rural village childhood experiences and compared these experiences with today's childhood experiences. For this family, ECE settings were seen as an exit point from Indigenous Fijian knowledge and an entry point into Western knowledge. The family had noticed the change in childhood over time. As the stories unfolded,

the grandparents of the *Rokosau* family were listening and agreeing through nodding at the childhood memories that were being shared. They even shared their own childhood stories.

The *veitalanoa-yaga* lasted half a day and concluded with a lunch prepared by the family. The food was a sign of appreciation from the family for my coming, thus strengthening the relationship bond (Mason, 2002). The head of the *Rokosau* family asked for the recording of the *veitalanoa-yaga* to be a replayed and asked the grandparents to listen carefully to the replayed information. I appreciated the request, which suggested to me that the head of the family wanted to provide accurate information. The male grandparent said, *sa donu taucoko sara na veitukutuku e soli tiko. Sa levu sara meca sa kainaki* (all information provided is accurate. There has been a lot said; FRR: 16/07/12).

Family 2: Semi Rural/Urban (FSRU)

The *Bolabola* family was recommended by a work colleague because of their strong Indigenous Fijian family background and because they were living in a semi-rural, semi-urban setting where forces of modernity were more evident than in remote rural areas. I did not know initially that the family had known me through my work with young children in Fiji, and because of this they said that they would be delighted to have me in their home on the proposed date of the *veitalanoa-yaga*.

I took my son as my spokesperson this time and the IFVVF guided this visit. Again, our *sevusevu* was presented and accepted; then a Christian prayer was a priority before we ventured into the *veitalanoa-yaga* proper. My son introduced the reason for our presence in the home, and then we commenced with the *veitalanoa-yaga*. I read out the questions in the vernacular language because this was the family's preference. Like the *Rokosau* family, the *Bolabola* family too had grandparents living with them. They were the maternal parents of the *Rokosau* family, and in acknowledging their presence, the head of the family said *kalougata ni ra se bula na qase mera veivakatavulici ka veivakananumi tiko ena i tovo kei na ivakarau ni bula vakavanua vakaviti dina* (it is a blessing and an honour to have the old people around, as their wisdom and knowledge have been

useful and constantly reminding us of the importance of Indigenous Fijian culture in all we do; FSRU: 21/07/12). The family shared their version of the study focus, re-examining the past and contrasting it to the present Indigenous Fijian generation of children of whom the head of the family said, *sa veisau sara na gauna, ka sa kauta mai na veiveisau lelevu vei ira na luveda. Oqo na ka meda yadrava tiko na itubutubu kei na veiwekani. E sega ni ca na veisau, me qarauni ga me kua ni mai veisautaka na veika eda kilai tani kina na itaukei ni vanua* (times have changed and have effected the ways of our children. Change is not bad, but we just have to make sure it does not change our culture, our culture that we are known for. We as parents need to be wary of this; FSRU: 21/07/12).

The family dealt with the questions individually. The *veitalanoa-yaga* sharing progressed well, and I was able to probe at times to obtain more information. The older people also contributed and the grandmother, in particular, stated *e rua mataqali vuli au raica, dua vuli kemuni sa kitaka tu na gauna qo, duatani na vuli keimami sa sotava mai. O au vulica bula ni kila na cakacaka kece vakamarama, ka vakakina vei ira na turaga. Au raica ni vuqa vei kemuni na vuli ena vuli ni kua, sa kila ga volavola, sa sega ni kilai na veicakacaka e kilai kina se o tagane se yalewa* (there are two types of schooling, one that you are doing today (Western) and one we had in our time. I was taught in our school how to do female work while the males learned the male work. I see that most of you today only know how to write on paper and have not really grasped the work each gender is known for; FRSU: 21/07/12).

Before we concluded, as previously, I played back the recorded *veitalanoa-yaga* for verification and to check the accuracy of the information provided. The head of the family particularly asked the grandparents to verify what they heard from the audio-tape. To this, the grandparents said *oi ia ka kece sa tukuni au kila ni sa dodonu tiko* (oh, what has been said has been fine and correct). After listening to the recording, the male grandparent nodded, clapped three times and said, *sa donu vinaka* (it is all correct). We then concluded with food that was prepared by the host family from their own expenses to express their appreciation for the research visit. We were delighted to be accorded such respect. We then presented

our *itatau* (refer to Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii), with a few groceries as a token of appreciation to the family for their support given to the research.

Family 3: Urban (FU)

This family was not familiar to me, but after consulting with friends and Indigenous Fijian professionals, I was advised to seek data from this Indigenous Fijian family who had spent many years living in a wider urban area. The family held chiefly status and the male head of the house has a high administrative position in government. I was provided with a contact number and made initial contact with respect. Our telephone conversation was informal, though I was formal in my tone considering his status in the government and in his village. A proposed date, the 28 July 2012 at 7 o'clock in the evening, was agreed. During the telephone conversation, I provided the research questions to Mr *Biauniwasa*, as he needed these to prepare himself for the *veitalanoa-yaga*. I prepared for the evening with my son as spokesperson.

We did not knock but greeted with the traditional evening greeting *bog*i (it is night!). The greeting also meant that we were outside and requesting entry. From inside the house we heard *mai, mai drau gole mai* (come, come, you both come inside). We presented our *sevusevu* to the family and then briefed them about the research. We started with prayer and the family requested that the conversation be in our own Indigenous Fijian language, though English was their chosen home language. This made things easier because having the *veitalanoa-yaga* in our own language would be culturally-relevant, although I am not ruling out the use of English language in these situations. Mr *Biauniwasa* then said *totoka nai ulutaga ni vakadididke. Au sa na talanoa tiko ga yani ka me na umana taucoko tiko na veitaro era koto ena nomuni vakatataro*. *Ke qai via wasea e dua na ka o tinai keitou, ena vinaka sara* (I appreciate your research topic. I will be telling my story and it should cover all aspects of the research questions. My wife is also welcome to share her views; FU: 28/07/12).

As with the other two families, the *veitalanoa-yaga* went well. The family reiterated the need for Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge to be encouraged among children, if Indigenous Fijians wanted their culture to survive. Mr

Biauniwasa also suggested that policies ought to be in place in the country's constitution to enable Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge to be further practised. I asked for permission to replay the recording so they could again hear and comment on what had been said. This was welcomed and both Mr and Mrs *Biauniwasa* agreed that all they had stated were correct. We presented our *itatau* with some groceries as our token of appreciation for their time and show of support for the research. The family responded by inviting us to an evening meal they had prepared. I was pleased with the positive reception from the family and the data provided for the research.

The individual interviews

There were eleven key people interviewed including five academics and six knowledgeable Indigenous Fijian elders (refer to Figure 4.2, p. 71). The individual interviews were conducted in easily accessible locations favourable to the participants. Most of the interview sessions lasted for one hour. The questions (refer to Appendix 4, p. 348) were sent in advance via email or post, so they could prepare their responses in advance, though some preferred that the questions were posed to them only in the interview. Different dates were allotted to the participants, and the selected participants attended the selected venue on the set date (this is documented throughout the chapters alongside each participant with their code and the date). Half of the participants preferred that I visited their offices, while the rest chose other venues such as the Fijian Teachers Association Hall.

For the interviews, I did not take a spokesperson. This was not culturally necessary as the interviews only involved the participant and myself as per the standard Western interview method (Liamputtong, 2010b). At the same time, I was still aware of my being an Indigenous Fijian and the Indigenous Fijian *Vakaviti Vakaturaga* was my frame throughout. As a protocol, I introduced myself, although I knew most of the participants either personally or professionally. I then described what the research entailed and what I would be seeking from the interviews. Consent forms were provided to the interviewees for signing and their preferences for anonymity or not were noted. Pseudonyms are used for all of the eleven participants. The process went well and the participants

expressed delight to be part of the research. I noted that most of the key people in this individual interview cohort had similar sentiments regarding why I had sought hard copy consent and one of them said *Lavinia, keda na kai Viti eda dau veitalanoa ga ka dau veitarogi ga vaka- gusu, e sega ni ka me volai baleta na volavola e nodra itovo na yago vulavula* (Lavinia, we, the Indigenous Fijians have an oral tradition and we use this verbal norm in any situation. There is not so much on the written, because the written stuff belongs to the White people; II5: 26.07/12). So the accepted Australian UNE Research requirement for ethical information was explained and thus accepted by the participants.

The eleven interviews progressed well and I gathered ample data from each one. I observed cultural protocols as I had done in the previous *veitalanoa-yaga.* Although the interviews were just between myself and each individuals, I felt I still needed to show respect through my culture, as this culture is integral to my identity. In addition to the individual interviews, focus groups were also held, as described below.

Focus groups

There were four focus groups. The first group consisted of the EC teachers in the remote rural island school of *Vanuabalavu,* in the Eastern Division (EED). The second focus group consisted of EC and Early Years (EY) teachers from the Central Education District (CED) in the greater urban zone. Participants in the third focus group comprised retired primary school teachers (RST) residing in the urban area of the Central Education District and the fourth group comprised Education Curriculum Officers (ECO) from the MoE's headquarters. The breakdown of the focus group participants is now explained.

Focus Group 1: Eastern Education Division (EED) EC and EY Teachers

The first focus group for the EC teachers in the remote rural area was conducted at the *Mualevu* District School on the island of *Vanuabalavu* (refer to Figure 4.1), following approval from the Head Teacher and School Management, which was provided by the MoE. Eight kindergarten teachers and early years teachers were invited, but because of transport difficulties, only five teachers were able to

attend on the day. Five teachers signed the consent forms for participation and their preferences for using pseudonyms was respected.

The session started after the school day and, as always, we started with a Christian prayer. The school manager was also present in the midst of the participating EC and EY teachers, although he did not participate in the focus group interview. However, his presence showed his support towards the research study through organising the meal after the focus group interview. The teachers already knew me, and a few of them were familiar to me. To these teachers, I was seen as a professional mentor. The Head Teacher of the school had informed them about my trip and my presence in the village and they were looking forward to the meeting. I sensed that they had much respect for me, as shown through their gestures and how they addressed me, using the words *saka* and *kemuni* (this can be *you* or *many* as in the polite form of address). I tried to reduce this barrier because I knew that this high level of respect could negatively impact on the focus group interview, so I asked the teachers to see me as an equal. This created an easier informal atmosphere so that the participants could feel confident to speak but they still demonstrated respect.

I went through the research questions with the participants and informed them that I was intending to record their responses. They agreed and I sensed the excitement in the room. As we commenced, the participants continuously shared their thoughts through excerpts and narratives. Each question was dealt with individually as the participants reflected on the past and compared it to the present. They also particularly focused on educational settings, such as early childhood, as carriers of Western culture. This is, of course, made possible through the cultural policies of the Ministry of Education (MoE), which have demeaned the Indigenous Fijian culture. They stated that policies needed to be reviewed in order to bring back what is needed for Indigenous Fijian children to know, to keep and to maintain important knowledge. One of them particularly stated *ke rawa wale ga ni maroroi na veika baleti keda ena loma ni tabacakacaka ni vuli, sa na dua na ka uasivi* (if only the MoE maintained our cultural knowledge in the school curriculum, this would be great! EED2: 11/07/12).

Our focus group session lasted more than two hours, after which the head teacher suggested that the information they had provided ought to be replayed so they could hear and comment on it, if needed. I was personally amazed to hear this, as it showed that they wanted to provide true accounts of their experiences in relation to the research questions. They all agreed to hear and confirmed or correct their comment on the recording. The recording was replayed and the participants agreed that what they had provided were true accounts of what they meant and shared. The session ended with another Christian prayer, then we shared a small evening meal of *lovo* (synonymous to *hangi* - earth oven food) prepared by the management of the school. I was impressed with this support as I had not budgeted for the meal, but the District School Manager said *yai e dua meca vou vei keimami, e ka dokai vei keimami a omu tiko me ko mai valata e dua meca cecere me keta cecere kina a lewe ni vanua ko cavutu mai kina* (this is a new thing to us and we are so honoured that you can come and do such a research project on your own home soil to make all of us honoured; EED1: 11/07/12). I responded with a word of thanks and a small token of appreciation given to each of the participants and also an envelope with some money to support the school.

Focus Group 2: Central Education Division (CED)

The second focus group involved Early Childhood (EC) teachers in the Central Education Division and was conducted at the University of the South Pacific's School of Education Room H401, after approval was received from the acting Head of the School of Education. More than ten teachers attended, despite my initial request for six to eight participants. As a protocol, we started with a Christian devotion, and then I briefed the participants on the intention of the research and sought their written consent to participate through signing the consent forms. My two elder sons were present to make the recordings while the focus group was in progress.

The research questions were redistributed, although I had already distributed the research questions by email and face-to-face delivery to their educational settings. This was to ensure they would come prepared with answers. I also used a PowerPoint presentation to present the topic of my study and the research questions and to help create a focus. I was encouraged to see how the participants

in this focus group shared their experiences with stories and narratives that encompassed all the research questions. A few of the participants were silent and contributed less. When requested by the others in the group to contribute more, one of them said in the Indigenous Fijian language *dou sa vosa tiko na matua, sa keitou vakadodonu tiko yani na gone ena veika dou sa cauraka tiko* (our senior teachers are contributing, and we the junior teachers all agree with what they are saying; CED10: 23/07/12). I then asked for the recording of the focus group session to be replayed so they could hear and commented if need be. All appeared excited to hear what they had already said. The eldest participant said *na veika kece sara e talanoataki ena vakasokumuni tukutuku qoka, sa itukutuku dodonu sara ni veika e baleta na veitaro e koto ena vakadidike qoka. Io vinaka me rogoci tale me rawa ni da vakadinadina kina* (all said in this focus group conversation are true accounts of what people have experienced. However, it is good that we could hear our voices again so we can further confirm that what all we shared is true; CED1: 23/07/12). There were expressions of agreement through nodding, and the phrase *sa donu* (it is correct) was stated by the participants; CED1-10: 23/07/12). The session lasted more than three hours when we concluded with another prayer. We had an evening meal together, and I presented small gifts to each of the participants with a word of thanks for their support. I particularly thanked these participants for making time after work to participate.

Focus Group 3: Retired Primary School Teachers (RST)

The third focus group consisted of retired schoolteachers who lived in close vicinity to the Central Education Division (CED). They had been invited to participate by phone, with the support of the Fijian Teachers Association (FTA), of which I am a member. Ten retired Indigenous Fijian teachers were invited, but only six could attend on the day. The venue was the Fijian Teachers Association Hall, as approved by the FTA Board. At this focus group, I presented a *sevusevu* as a cultural protocol to show respect to these elder participants. My son was my spokesperson, and he presented my *sevusevu* to the group of men and women and this was received and accepted. As usual, the session began with a prayer and then I introduced myself, my study focus and the purpose of data collection to the

group. I received their signed consents and the anonymity of the participants was respected.

As with the other focus groups, I had previously distributed the research questions and asked them to share their thoughts and views, to reflect on their childhood experiences and to make comparisons with childhood today. The participants indicated how modern schools have disregarded the Idioms and Customs of Indigenous Fijians in educational settings, particularly in early childhood education settings. This group of teachers particularly emphasised that government policies ought to reflect Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge because Indigenous Fijians were the first people of the land and they deserved to be acknowledged in national documents and in all national activities. One of the participants particularly stated *ke sa rawa vei Ositerelia kei Niu Siladi me rau vakaraitaka na nodra dokai na itaukei ni vanua ena nodrau dui matanitu, e cava na kena dredre me cakava tale ga na matanitu vei ira na itaukei kei Viti?* (If Australia and New Zealand can express and acknowledge their first people in national documents and activities, why can't Fiji do the same for the Indigenous Fijians?; RST3: 22/07/12). The participants responded to all the research questions and there was much discussion about the ways children presented themselves today compared to when these retiree's childhood.

At the conclusion of this focus group, I asked if I could replay the recording so they could confirm the meanings of what they had shared during the focus group and further to confirm that the information they had shared was correct. I was reminded by one of the participants – *Lavinia, na ka kece sa cauraki ena veivosaki qo, sa itukutuku dodonu kece* (Lavinia, what has been shared in this conversation are our true accounts of our experiences) (RST2: 22/07/12). Perhaps this reminded me that I needed to trust what elders say and their indirect replies showed me that I have been too long in the Western world. In fact, I was relearning along the way with all the responses provided by the participants. The session ended with my vote of thanks and the presentation of an *itatau* and small gifts to each participant as a token of appreciation for their time and thoughts.

Focus Group 4: Ministry of Education (MoE) Curriculum Officers (ECO)

The fourth focus group engaged the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Officers, which required some organisational effort for the participants to find time, as they were the busiest people in the Ministry of Education (MoE). I was able to use a room within the MoE's head office in Suva to conduct the focus group. Eight people were invited, but only five could participate on the day due to work schedules. I introduced myself and my research delivered the consent forms and received their agreement to participate in the research. Since I had provided the research questions in advance, the interview progressed efficiently and the participants readily shared their childhood stories and narratives. They described changes that had altered the social fabric of Indigenous Fijian culture and where childrens' Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge was so much affected. However, because of their involvement in curriculum development, these particular research participants also faced a challenge in formulating improvements. They confirmed their educational blindness caused by concepts of Western education and one of the participants commented that the research had opened his eyes to see what was important for Indigenous Fijian children. He had always thought that Indigenous Fijian culture was a hindrance to Indigenous Fijian children's success in school, but he now realised how biased his previous thoughts were (ECO3: 24/07/12).

Each research question was discussed in detail and the participants took time in sharing and responding to each other and to my probing. I could sense that the participants were touched by the stories and narratives shared. Moreover, one of the participants declared that such a study were profound for the MoE, since they were all drivers of the curriculum (ECO4: 24/07/12). In conclusion, I asked for the recorded focus group session to be replayed so that the participants could hear and confirm the meaning of what they had said or even further commented if they needed to. All participants gestured approvingly, meaning that the data they had provided was what they intended to share and was true and correct. We proceeded with a prayer and I presented a small token to each of the five participants in appreciation of their time and support and considering the context of their busy professional work lines.

Ethical issues

Methodologically, a thesis should satisfy acceptable methods of enquiry and meet university research requirements. In pursuing this aim, I followed the University of New England (UNE) School of Education higher-degree research protocol of producing an acceptable research proposal and conducting a doctoral seminar confirmation of candidature. Prior to the research process, a UNE research committee discussion was convened, since the approach of data collection was Indigenous Fijian in nature and it challenged Western scientific methods of research. The head of the UNE's Oorala Aboriginal Centre participated in the discussion to justify the methods used for the research in collaboration with my supervisor and myself. The meeting concluded on a positive note with the support of the committee to allow the study to proceed upon completion of the UNE Ethics process.

All ethical requirements were addressed according to UNE Ethics and the Committee provided clearance for the research to proceed (Approval Number: HE11-220). Throughout the study process, I exercised key ethical principles of respect for people, beneficence and justice (National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007; Farrell, 2005). As a result, I applied two methods, one as an Indigenous person and one as a Western researcher. The Indigenous Fijian *Vakaviti Vakaturaga* Framework (IFVVF) was applied as a research protocol where I worked with the village people and sought approval for my study through the Indigenous Fijian way of verbal and gestural communication. In addition, I established collaboration with the district provincial council office of the individual villages and contacted village chiefs and headmen to seek approval for village entry.

From a Western approach, I developed and provided consent letters with study participants to confirm their agreement and to assist with data collection. Moreover, I sought approval from the Ministry of Education to engage Early Childhood and Early Years teachers in the research process. I used the telephone; post and email to invite academics, lecturers and key people to individual interviews and received signed agreement for their participation. Before each *veitalanoa-yaga,* focus group and individual interview, I took time to introduce

the research objective and myself. Copies of participant consent forms and approvals for the research project are included at Appendix 3 (p. 345).

There are differences in how the participants wanted to be identified in the study, as there were some that agreed to have their names identified and others who did not agree. For example, the sole participant for *Nasautoka* village, who is the chief, when asked whether he wanted his name to be identified in the thesis stated *e ka bibi me da vakaraitaki keda ena veika eda tukuna tiko, me kilai se o cei e vosa tiko, na cava meda vunitaka? E sega ni noda bula na vunivuni ka* (it is important that one be identified in what he is saying, so people know who is saying what. We are not people who hide away and why should we hide away? NS: 20/07/12). Here the chief expressed ownership of what he had stated and to him identification was a non-issue. However, some researchers (e.g. Wiles et al, 2006) suggested that signed consent is still needed to verify name/s used. This was not the case in this study as some participants in the *veitalanoa-yaga* waivered their right to anonymity by saying *sa donu* (yes) and in *cobo* (clapping their hands), although show of hands in the end showed majority for anonymity of names.

Findings analysis plan

A variety of frameworks guide analysis of qualitative research data, although no one framework is recognised as the most relevant or appropriate (Liamputtong, 2010b). Thus, this study utilises a 'constant comparative analysis' approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that allows the researcher to organise, describe, interpret and evaluate data collected from the three methods used. This constant comparative method involved breaking down the data into discrete incidents (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) or 'units' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and coding them into categories. This approach implied that words are the ways that most people come to understand their situations, where people 'create their world with words, explain themselves with words, defend and hide themselves with words' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.18).

The categories distinguished for the present study include data similarities and data contrasts out of the research questions in the three methods used (*veitalanoa-*

yaga, focus group and individual interviews). Thus, the approach promoted assigning meaning, structure and order to the data (Anfara et al, 2002), which were then colour coded to sort differences. Each colour represented a response to each of the research questions and a different colour code to the themes that emerged across the entire data. It was an on-going process of distilling, sorting and sifting, identifying patterns, themes or trends and seeking pertinent features and explanations (Mills, 2007; Stringer, 2008; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). This process was documented throughout the research study in my research journal

Data analysis exercise occurred simultaneously with data collection as an on-going process in the research fieldwork. Liamputton, (2010) suggested that each qualitative research work requires an accurate representation of the features of the phenomenon described, explained or theorised. And in the context of this study, the research focused on giving an accurate account of the study intentions through the data collected. Traditionally, qualitative studies have been critiqued in terms of the plausibility of the information and evidence provided (Angen, 2000; Padgett, 2008; Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002). However, as with any investigation, qualitative research studies 'seek respect and legitimacy, with their efforts deemed worthy of recognition and wider dissemination' (Padgett, 2008, p.179). St Pierre, (2014) also emphasised the same concept in her work. In order to promote the credibility of the study, input from the research participants has been incorporated into this thesis as comments given after listening to the recorded conversations of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, the focus groups and the individual interviews. In addition, there were reflections, discussions and evaluations of stories and narratives during the sessions to confirm and clarify what participants had said (Walsh & Gardener, 2005). Such attention to detail supported the research assumptions (refer to Chapter One) and further extended the amount of data for the study.

Further, and throughout the fieldwork, the *veitalanoa-yaga*, focus groups and individual interviews were transcribed just after they had occurred. The transcribed data was left in the vernacular in order to be able to quote directly from the data. For example:

> *Niu se qai tubu cake tiko mai, au sa dau vakadreti vei rau na noqu itubutubu kei ira na wekaqu ena ivalavala se itovo rakorako ni noda bula vaka iTaukei kei Viti dina. E dau tukuni vei au ni vakamadua ke dua e sega ni kila na itovo ni noda vanua. Au vakavulici ena itovo ni vakarokoroko, vakarorogo, yalomalua, kei na dau galu ni ra vosa na matua. E se dei vinaka tu ga vei au na veika kece qo, kau nanuma na nona vosa na tukaqu vei au ena dua na siga ka kaya, Makubuqu maroroya na itovo ni vanua baleta ya na ivakarau cecere vei keda na kai Viti.*
> (EED1: 11/07/12).

In addition to direct quotes, English translations were made to make the thesis readable for both Indigenous Fijians and English-speaking audiences as shown in the translated script of the above script.

> As a child, my parents and elder relatives would keep reminding me of all the village custom that I needed to know and follow when I was growing up. It is repeated over and over again. They always tell me that it was shameful when children do not know custom. I was taught the ways of respect: obedience, humility, a good listener, sharing and be silent when elders speak to me. I vividly remember what my grandfather said to me one day, *Makubuqu maroroya na i tovo ni vanua baleta ya na i vakarau cecere vei keda na kai Viti*. (My granddaughter, keep our custom because it is the dignified way of the Indigenous Fijian) (EED1: 11/07/12).

I employed this back to back transcription process to further substantiate my claim on the importance of my people's language in research, thus the inclusion of Indigenous Fijian phrases and words as a way to further decolonise research practices (refer to Chapter Three). This was also a reason why I placed the Indigenous Fijian glossaries (Table 1.1, pp. xv-xviii) upfront soon after the Table of Contents and before Chapter One to signify the visibility of its importance, instead of placing it in the Appendices page.

In-depth analysis after the data gathering followed. The recurring themes were identified and highlighted in the collated data. In addition, the meanings of the participant narratives were checked and rechecked in a continuous manner for example in the replaying of the audio record. While investigating the data, comments and interpretations were made to clarify the words of participants. Thus, the provisions of qualitative methodology, requiring data collection and data analysis were followed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Liamputtong, 2010). These processes in interrogating data from the research questions provided a way forward to the key ideas presented in Chapter Five and further onto Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine

Chapter synthesis

In this chapter, I presented details of the selected methodology, the research design and the methods of data collection and analysis. The interpretive paradigm was used as an overall framework as it bases scholarly study on the assumptions that the world are interpreted by different people differently, and that their personal, subjective visions of various aspects of their existence shape the world images and notions that govern their perceptions and practices. A specific ontology explaining the nature of truth was selected for this study, within the interpretive paradigm, which states that truth is created by each human being separately as a result of their quest for the truth based on their culture. The epistemology of this study, which delineated the ways in which truth is constructed and knowledge is comprehended, relies on the perspective of social constructionism. Through the lens of social constructionism, the social world is seen to influence the ways in which each person's truth is constructed, while each human still possesses an ability to create their own truth. This is not to exclude the importance of axiology, which creates social cohesion in people through their associated cultural values and ethics.

Further, this study was underpinned by an Indigenous epistemology, which is an approach that ties the social construction of reality and the idea of Indigenous Fijian oppression into a single frame of reference. A detailed overview of participant categories and the villages and contexts in which the study was performed has been provided in this chapter, along with a description of Fiji and

its culture to set the research context. The qualitative data collection was conducted through storytelling and narratives, which aligns particularly with the Indigenous Fijian method of collective communication termed *veitalanoa-yaga* birthed out of *talanoa.* This was apart from the Western method of interviews through focus groups and individuals. The chapter concludes with a discussion of research-related procedures and the ethical considerations of this study, as well as the analytical methods for synthesising data into meaningful categories and themes relevant to the central object of research, i.e. Indigenous Fijian notions of child development.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Acceptance and Change

> *Culture, is a seashell where we hear voices of what we are, what we were, what we forget, and what we can be. (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1992, p.15)*

Introduction

This chapter highlights what the research participants recalled their childhood experiences and how they saw things changing over time as a result of early colonisation and continued post-colonial practices and influences. It also highlights the sources and creation of Indigenous Fijian knowledges, the knowledges the research participants felt were important and the knowledges they felt were not so important. For the participants, important child development cultural knowledges included being *vakaturaga* (of chiefly demeanour). This was important to them as it defines who Indigenous Fijians are and where they belong. Furthermore, metaphorically *vakaturaga* is a safety net and this safety net is composed of strands of important knowledges. These include the knowledges of: *veiwekani* (relationship), *talairawarawa* (obedience, attentiveness and compliance), *vakarokoroko* (respect); and, *dauloloma* (kindness). They also include knowledge of *yalomatua* (mature in spirit), knowledge of *lotu* (spirituality/worship) and knowledge of *veikavakaviti* (Indigenous Fijian idioms and customs). All these encompassing child development knowledges are woven together as important principles and practices that guide the socio-cultural context of Indigenous Fijians. They were seen by the research participants as appropriate and of value and were identified as part of authentic Indigenous Fijian etiquette. These cultural ideas are explored in terms of acceptance and change overtime through the words of the research participants (refer Table 4.1, p. 77 for participants details).

Traditional Indigenous Fijian Childhood

Traditional Indigenous Fijian childhood knowledges existed before colonisation, which began in second half of the 19th century and has continued until today

(Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Ravuvu, 1987). These knowledges are embedded in Indigenous Fijian epistemological and ontological principles and practices that are *vanua* based (people, their defined territory, their environment, their history and their epistemology – refer to Chapters One and Two). However, it ought to be realised that these elements may not be truly reflective of an authentic past due to the influences of colonisation. The participant elders in this study also lived in times of more recent or contemporary colonisation (1950s and 1960s), although the influences they encountered were less pervasive than those that Indigenous Fijian children experience in contemporary Fiji. The elders' shared thoughts continue to reflect what they believe children should know and these are the *vanua*-based knowledges from their past (refer to Chapter Three). This is reflected in the following narrative told by a key participant during an interview.

> *I grew up in a traditional village context and I know a lot about culture because my father lived it and his family too. This was the same with my mother and her family too. As little children, we lived in an extended family because we were all related. There were lots of us and each morning we would sit around in a circle on a mat to have morning worship before we begin our little tasks like picking up rubbish and help cleaning the house and the compound. We would then have breakfast and after that we follow our fathers and uncles to the bush to do male jobs and the girls stay home with the mothers and aunties to do the female jobs. In these episodes, we learn from our male and female elders. I remember, for example, how we were taught to appropriately respond when being called. We were taught to say oo instead of aa. Oo response is considered more respectful than aa. I remembered how my mother reprimanded me when I responded with an aa. I know things have changed and some children today respond by a saying a cava? (What?), which is a totally disrespectful way of responding.*
> (II1: 28/07/12)

This story demonstrates the importance of extended families as a symbol of unity. It was one of the cultural aspects children were immersed in as they learned to behave in culturally-appropriate ways such as how to respond when being called. As shared by one participant that children learned from elders their specific gender roles, and these roles were culturally-defined. These gender

specific roles prepared one for his/her adult life, especially when preparing for a new family (II1: 28/07/12).

In one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* settings, the participants mentioned how they would follow their elders to village meetings and other venues to listen to what the elders or what the chief would say. In some instances, they would be taken to function sites to watch and at times participate in the activities.

> *My father always takes me to the village activity sites, especially when the whole village goes on a cleaning day. We the little children would each have a small basket to carry the rubbish. We would be playing and at times we would all sit on the grass and an elder will come and tell us stories. This was exciting to us and we always look forward to it. To be among the adults listening to their talk also helps us to know the right language to use. We get to know who are our relatives and our status in the village, like which clan we belong to, our clan's totem, fish, tree and animal. I also learn many male roles I needed to know as a little boy, this my father says that will help me as I get older.*
> (MV8: 12/07/12)

Along similar lines, another participant, Takayawa, recounted:

> *We always get together around our grandparents to hear folk tales, riddles, poems and songs. I remember the thinking games we always do and I like them, for example when asked 'how do people walk under the rain without getting wet'. The answer would be 'an umbrella'. All of us would have a turn each to answer when asked by our grandparents. After that, we would be asked to get a thinking phrase each and the others would guess the answer. Most of the time when we would be on our own, we would be playing this thinking game. We would be thinking for more thinking phrases to stir our thinking and then we would do it when we are ready to go to sleep or when we would be resting under the shade. It was always exciting when we would be trying to guess the answers.*
> (MV9: 12/07/12)

Participants recounted past childhood lives as being organised according to what the family or families planned for the day. Family plans were informed by the village plan so there were no clashes between plans. *Ratu Emori*, in one of the

veitalanoa-yaga explained how their lives as little children were organised around such plans.

> *My village was organised according to our customs. For example, we have our village clans elders meetings and there were many other little village meetings, like the mothers' group meeting. And twice a week, the whole village would have a meeting. Here the chief would address the whole village. We would be reminded about our valavala vakaturaga (chiefly behaviour), which was what defined us in our vanua. Learning was through observing my elders; who would be my grandfathers, my fathers, my uncles and those elder than me. As I do what I do, I am watched and corrected on the spot by my superiors. It was a life of learning that centred on respect and obedience, which is a part of vakaturaga.*
> (NV1: 17/09/12)

This narrative demonstrates the *vanua* curriculum, which to the Indigenous Fijians is a relational curriculum depicting *vakaturaga*. It directs how Indigenous Fijian people raise and develop their children to the required *vakaturaga* standards. Ravuvu (1995) discusses *vakaturaga* ideals when describing how Indigenous Fijians live in their socio-cultural settings. To not comply with the notions of the *vanua* is seen as disrespectful to the elders and to the whole village. It also defeats the purpose of *vakaturaga*, which is part of Fijian custom. Traditionally, custom is important and is referred to as *i tovo vakavanua* or *i vakarau vakavanua ka vakaturaga*. In talking about custom, an earlier study by Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001, p. 59) noted the following in their discussion of Kwara'ae epistemology:

> *Kastom embraces culture, tradition and norms and models of behavior; ways of thinking, doing and creating and, of course, indigenous epistemology. Anything born of the land and passed from generation to generation is part of kastom. Indigenous epistemology is an inextricable part of falafala (custom).*

This is true for the Indigenous Fijians. The elders were the sources of these customary knowledges and they played a significant role in the assimilation and dissemination of Indigenous Fijian knowledges to young people.

> *I remember how we had village functions and we would sit together as children to listen to our elders. We would*

> *be taught traditional chants and songs appropriate for various village functions, for example, a traditional installation of the chief. This is a solemn occasion and we would sit in silence as a sign of respect. I remember going out fishing with my grandfather and a few uncles who, when waiting for the tide to get low, sang a chant and I was following along. The chant was significant as it implied a wish for a good catch. I was learning and I still know this chant until today. As for the girls they would be sitting separately from us because they have different roles to play. Female elders would teach girls the female roles. Respect was important and we would be always reminded to show respect all the time for all people. The elders, fathers and mother, uncles and aunties were our village teachers. As I looked back, I have never regretted this because I know my traditional upbringing has contributed to what I am today.*
> (RST6: 22/07/12)

Nabobo-Baba and Tiko (2009) noted that Indigenous Fijian children learn about important traditional knowledge at home, as well as from all other clan members as part of everyday life. All members of a village can instruct, advise or reprimand a young child and parents are part of the whole village teaching fraternity. This means that while the village teaching may be scheduled or not, the child is always learning because there are established relationships and understandings of respect, commitment and service from adult to child and child to adult, as stipulated in village customs and cultural practices (Martin, 2008).

Rupeni, an elder participant in one *veitalanoa-yaga,* mentioned that childhood life revolved around the village customs. Importantly, children were guided by the Indigenous Fijian concept of *vakaturaga* in all that they did. For example, chores included walking through the bushes to fetch coconuts and edible green vegetables that could be boiled with coconut milk for meals. It was customary that they only took from bushes that belonged to the clan, as they were not permitted to fetch things from other people's land. *Rupeni* also noted that they would collect firewood for cooking, as they had no stoves in those days and rubbing two dry pieces of wood together would be the way to start the fire. He continued his story in this way:

> *We go fishing and catch crabs. We had no footwear in those days, so we would walk barefoot. We had no*

> *restrictions to where we went, but we will never take anything from other people's land. All that we take home were to be things in our own land otherwise we have to ask permission if we need some things from the other people's territory. There were no roads; we follow tracks that had been there ever since. At low tide, we would walk along the shorelines, feel the sea breeze and enjoy the beauty of nature. It was authentic, organic and a life that was undisturbed, compared to what we have now.*
> (MV6: 12/07/12)

Such images portray the reality of life in a traditional Indigenous Fijian setting. I saw an example of this in one of the selected village settings and recorded in my RJ, where I was amazed by the way the children greeted the research group. As we walked past houses in the village we were greeted concurrently with *ka-a-a,* (female greeting) and *du-o-o* (male greeting). As we came near the *rara* (village green), there were five children playing, three girls and two boys aged about five to six years. As soon as they saw us, they immediately stopped playing, sat on the grass, clapped three times and greeted us in the Fijian national language with *ni yadra saka* (good morning sir/madam). It was custom, a sign of welcome and a demonstration of respect towards the visitors. These children knew we were visitors, thus the use of the national Indigenous Fijian language and not their own dialect. In response, we all greeted them traditionally. I was speechless and felt disarmed because I held a different view of children today in this village. I thought this inland remote rural village would be similar to my own remote rural outer island village where Western influences were strongly present. Pastor *Lutu*, from that village, who was leading our research group, said that this was what children typically do when they see visitors. They accord respect, even to their parents and elders in the village and they carry the same respect to school (RJ: 19/07/12). Today the Indigenous Fijian traditional childhood has changed due to Western influences and the following section presents some of what the participants shared about these changes.

Western Impacts on Childhood in Fiji

Participants noted how the Indigenous Fijian childhood has changed from their own time (1950s). Changes were noted at the microsystem and macrosystem

levels (levels as defined by Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The following excerpts testify to these childhood changes.

> *My childhood days were different. These generations of childhood are different too. Things have changed, even in this village. There is a great contrast in children who are raised in the urban settings than children raised in the village setting. Preferences for the Western ideas are seen in our children's ways of doing things. I am worried that our generation of children would be lost. However, I believe that if children are taught our cultural knowledge from home, they will stand a good chance of making good decisions when change comes their way.*
> (NV2: 20/07/12)

> *The times we are living in have impacted on how children value Indigenous Fijian culture. Our children prefer Western ideas and values. We were fortunate that in our childhood days there were not much outside influence like today. Most of our children today have resorted to new ways of learning, knowing and doing and some of them have become viaviaqase (adult-like) in their ways.*
> (FRR: 16/07/12)

> *When I grew up, my parents always see that we were always neat and display ourselves well in the village especially in cultural ceremonies. This would mean wearing culturally appropriate clothes such as jaba (dress and long skirt) for females and males normally wear sulu vakataga (wrap round skirt) and a shirt. Today, this has changed and there are preferences for wearing jeans and longs pants in such formal ceremonies. Today, children prefer fashion in their dressing*
> (II7: 26/07/12).

> *As a child that grew up in the village, I learn different ways of cooking using firewood. We had our own open cooking fire space called valeni kuro (kitchen), where all cooking are done. Making lovo (earth oven, and hangi in Maori) was always special. Today's Indigenous Fijian children lack knowledge to make lovo, especially those that grew up in the urban settings, let alone how light a fire for cooking. This is because of the differences in environment. Children have been brought up in for example in the urban settings where such cooking practices are not practised. Unlike in the village, making lovo was a weekly chore for each family and all of the family members would participate. Today most*

> *Indigenous Fijian families cook in electric and gas stoves.*
> (FRR: 16/07/12)

The narratives demonstrate variations over time and the significant long-term changes they have brought. These changes influence and drive children as shared by *Makelesi*, one of the key participants in the interviews.

> *The changes and the new ideas our children see from sources such as the social media influence how they behave. For example, television, movies and even the Internet sites are easily accessed in mobile phones in addition to peer pressure. Children are only children and are prone into things that attract them. The question is how can we refrain our children from these things? While we may not be able to stop them, I believe there can be controlling measures, like I propose that we as parents make quality time to discuss things that would be issues to our culture. I mean not all changes are bad.*
> (II2: 22/07/12)

I noted in my personal research journal how *Tevita*, a village elder, spoke volumes about the changes that had filtered into village settings. He noted how the world had changed and due to these changes the rich culture of the Indigenous Fijians seems to have disappeared slowly in successive generations.

> *I have seen many of our children and youths have lost knowledge of culture in ways such as loss of respect for their elders, even to their parents. They prefer to live their own individual lives, separating themselves from their relatives. Fashion, movies and the use of slang words, even swear words used by actors and actresses influenced children and youths to bad habits. Even some young ones try to act the same as these actors do, which is very bad to our custom. The lack of morals, the influence of drugs and alcohols, less interest in Indigenous Fijian languages but rather use mixture of Indigenous Fijian and English languages. And the list goes on. It has left more questions to be answered.*
> (RJT: 20/07/12)

Along similar lines, a retired schoolteacher, *Kalivati*, in one of the focus groups added:

> *My father was a strict man and all of us obey his teachings. We never speak back when we are told to do something. But today, some of our Indigenous Fijian children speak back to their parents because this is what they are encouraged to do in school. This encouragement is not to be taken wrongly because I believe this talking and asking back is for the children's better understanding of the learning. Some of our children have taken this wrongly and apply the same concept in the village and home environment. This can be defined as disobedience in the Indigenous Fijian culture. You know, our world is not perfect but I think if the home upbringing is good, everything will be fine. This is what I think.*
> (RST2: 22/7/12)

Changes have affected the way children behave and this excerpt suggests the need to remind children of the importance of knowing culture in these changing times for Fiji and the many smaller cultures of the world. A *veitalanoa-yaga* participant also said *era sa sega ni vakavulici na gone mai vale, ka sa vuqa na veika vovou era taura mai tuba wili kina na veika eso e vakatavulici tiko mai koronivuli* (children are not taught well from home, therefore they have embraced new concepts from outside and also in schools).

Savenaca identified schooling as a major cause of change in terms of Indigenous Fijian knowledge and epistemology (Chapter Six details this). He cautioned that if change is too abrupt, it could cause problems amongst Indigenous Fijians, which is probably what is happening today. In replying to *Savenaca, Tuwai* highlighted that changes have occurred in relation to what some Indigenous Fijians consider as important knowledge. He noted too that children needed to be part of a world that is bigger than their own village.

> *I believe that changes will never stop. They will keep coming and as a people of a country, we need to connect ourselves globally. We cannot let ourselves be behind in this time of rapid globalisation. Our children need to be part of the bigger world out there, but at the same time we also need to be wary of our culture and weigh what is best to take and discard what is not so important. I think, it is all about thinking the right way and making the right decisions.*
> (MV2: 12/07/12)

This excerpt carries a powerful message, i.e. the idea of making right choices amidst change and at the same time considering that change is inevitable. In this regard, Indigenous Fijians would need to weigh up what important cultural knowledges to maintain and pass on. This proposition is discussed in the next section.

Keeping important childhood knowledges

Data from all the research sites consistently raised the importance of knowing and holding onto the Indigenous Fijians *vakaturaga* ways as appropriate core principles and practices to be imparted to children. *Emori*, a clan elder who participated in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, spoke of this in the following way:

> *I grew up with my big family and I spoke the dialect of our village. Our lives as children were centred on respect. My grandfather always says that people who respect others are people of quality. This I always remembered and have told the same to my children. There were special times in our family when we would be sitting in a circle and my grandparents would be reminding us of the important cultural knowledges we needed to know. Our grandfather's reminder to us, that we be gone itovo vakaturaga (children of chiefly demeanor). Our parents, uncles, aunties, grandparents and our clan elders teach us how to display respectful behaviours all the time. These included respecting older people, displaying humility, having compassion for others, having a good heart, displaying obedience, going to church every Sunday and many more. These are some of the things I believe has taken us far and has identified us as the Indigenous people of Fiji. We need to keep them and maintain them so our children can live by them and be able to pass on these good attributes to the coming generations. Times have changed and we need to help our children maintain our good cultural practices, as I believe they are appropriate values we as individuals must strive for.*
> (NV1: 19/07/12)

Along similar lines, *Dawai*, a village elder provided a glimpse of how he treasured Indigenous Fijian culture.

> *Life of veivakaturagataki (respecting each other) was part of our life when we grew up as children and even*

> *today I am accustomed to our cultural ways of doing things. Respect, obedience, humility, compassion, thoughtfulness are important Indigenous Fijian customary values that I share with my children. We need to keep these good ideas of ours, they are our values and beliefs.*
> (II3: 24/07/12)

Dawai suggested that Indigenous Fijians needed to understand that change will come and go, but as Indigenous people, treasuring what one's cultural identity for must be maintained (II3: 24/07/12). *Luisa*, a teacher respondent from the Eastern Education Division focus group, similarly shared this memory:

> *As a child, my parents and elder relatives would keep reminding me of all the village custom that I needed to know and follow when I was growing up. It is repeated over and over again. They always tell me that it was shameful when children do not know custom. I was taught the ways of respect: obedience, humility, a good listener, sharing and be silent when elders speak to me. I vividly remember what my grandfather said to me one day, Makubuqu maroroya na i tovo ni vanua baleta ya na i vakarau cecere vei keda na kai Viti. (My granddaughter, keep our custom because it is the dignified way of the Indigenous Fijian).*
> (EED1: 11/07/12)

The worldview of Indigenous Fijians encompasses values that have been a continuous part of their ways of knowing and doing. Some values include *vakarokoroko* (respect), *yalomalua* (humility), *veiqaravi* (service), *dauloloma* (compassion), *dauyalovinaka* (having a good heart), *talairawarawa* (duty/obedience), *daugalu* (quiet disposition), *vakaturaga* (of chiefly demeanour), *dauvakarorogo* (good listener), *duavata* (unity), *dau wasea na ka* (sharing of resources) and *dauveikauwaitaki* (thoughtful). Such values are also emphasised by Nabobo-Baba, (2006) and Ravuvu, (1995). *Sakiusa*, a clan elder in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained that if he was to live for another ten years, he would want to see the children of his village taught to treasure important Indigenous Fijian knowledges–the same important knowledges he and others were brought up with. He mentioned that he had lived long enough to see how children have been affected by the so-called influence of the Western world and he added:

> *There are things that are important to us and we must keep them or else we will lose them. I see that our younger generations of youths and children have displayed ways that are incongruent to our cultural ways. You know, while this may reflect the times we are in, it also shows the choices we have made and probably the weakness of our village elders and parents. I ask, what is happening in village meetings? This is the avenue where elders speak to remind people of the village and its cultural protocols. We need to be resilient, to keep what is ours, keep it intact so our children see the importance of knowing our cultural knowledge so they can do the same and further pass it on to the coming generations.*
> (NV2: 17/07/12)

One research participant questioned whether children even realised that Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges are important. He further pleaded for parents and elders to be more vigilant with children and to teach them about their Indigenous identity as this, in turn, would help them to treasure the culture of the land.

> *Our culture depicts an epitome of life that we believe in ... it is ours; it belongs to us (feeling emotional). We can see that most children do not practise our culture and it is shameful. I think children look to us for advice and [to be] mentors and if they see that we are weak, they will resort to pick up things they think are important. Times have changed and we, as elders, as parents, need to be exemplary to our children. From my heart, I am one that will stand firm on my culture. I will honor and maintain it because my culture is all about myself. This ought to be [the] same with our children if we want to maintain our cultural knowledge ... me ra vakatavulici tiko na gone ena itovo vakaviti-vakaturaga (Children need to be taught in the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge and values).*
> (NV2: 17/07/12)

This excerpt reminisces about a past childhood but also critiques the ways of today's children. It is a voice of concern, pleading for Indigenous Fijians to be wary of the Western influences that have intruded into people's lives and changed their cultural identity. In one *veitalanoa-yaga,* the *Bolabola* family reflected on change in this way:

> *There have been a lot of changes seen in our villages and in our homes. These changes have affected the way children decide things for themselves–those that are important and those not important. In the past, our Indigenous Fijian customs defined who we are in society; this includes all of us here, that is, you and me (pointing to himself and everyone). Our custom tells of our land and where we belong. We have to keep it, and let our children hold on to it, because they are our values and beliefs that guide how we live together here.*
> (FSR: 21/07/12).

Some participants in the teachers' focus group lamented the fact that in schools there has been a shift in how the Indigenous Fijian curriculum was positioned and structured (refer to Chapter Six). *Letila*, an early years teacher, noted that, in the past, there was a subject–*Indigenous Fijian Vernacular*–in the early childhood curriculum, which has been replaced by Conversational Fijian and Hindi. The conversational Fijian and Hindi curriculum does not reflect culture but deals directly with linguistic exchange. For example, children translate Indigenous Fijian phrases into Hindi phrases and vice versa. This initiative has created a gap between the children and the knowledge of their custom. *Letila* further stated:

> *Before I went to school, I was taught the custom of the land, by my family, that is; the itovo vakavanua or ivakarau vakavanua. Our school in those days had space to learn this as well. We normally have the Fijian custom curriculum after lunch and right throughout the afternoon. We learn[ed] how to count in our own Indigenous Fijian way, like 10 na ibe sa dua na sasa (10 mats is equivalent to a bunch of Fijian broom), 10 na vuaka sa dua na rara (10 pigs is equivalent to a an open space in the village green) and so on. We would compete in our counting, and we would work as teams of see which group knows more. We would learn the procedures of how to build a Fijian bure. We learn[ed] all parts of the bure by heart. We learn[ed] the different kinds of traditional fishing like yavi rau (using of leaves with lots of people to catch fish-this kind of fishing is done only once in five years), tu moka (kind of fishing that has big stones placed around a special area in the sea where there is an open space to let the fish in at high tide and then closed with stones once the tide goes out), tataga (fishing during low tide), cocoka (spear fishing), how to weave crafts like mats, bilo ni su (coconut bowls), bilo ni yaqona (kava bowls) even how to make tapa. Most of our*

> *learning was done through hands-on because our teacher had the knowledge and skills. We also were taught to learn our Fijian lessons by heart like itovo vakaviti (Indigenous Fijian behaviour) sevusevu (traditional welcome done by visitors), qaloqalovi (welcoming visitors by the people) etc. by heart as we were going to be tested on [it]. We were taught our own Fijian songs like the vakalutuivoce, the kinds of songs that are sung during fishing, songs that are sung when building a house or when a house is completed, lullaby songs for babies, even traditional dance songs - these we were able to sing and recite in school as we walk back home after school. It was a lot of fun. These things are still with me … but in today's curriculum, the Ministry of Education has place more emphasis on conversational Fijian and Hindi – this is not culture, it's basically trying to let our children be able to articulate in other language. I'm wondering why as it has taken away the essence of custom important to us - it is part of our culture.*
> (CED6: 25/07/12)

This narrative demonstrates a disconnection of the Indigenous Fijian child from his/her context, and the gap between the child and early childhood curriculum. Ignoring one's culture in the curriculum is an act of bias. Freire (2000) defined it as oppression, where Western notions of education rule and this is seen as a major instrument in silencing minority groups. Foucault (1977 p. 69) calls it power or the 'politics of knowledge'.

Mereisi, in one of the focus groups, recounted her schooling and mentioned that Indigenous Fijian customs were part of learning in the village system and this was carried across to the schools, as part of the school curriculum. The subject was called *Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs* and included important Indigenous cultural knowledges. In addition, the teaching focused on knowing oneself and knowing one's roots from both maternal and paternal families. The subject also focused on how to present oneself in traditional formal and informal ceremonies, with the use of a bundle of *kava* or a whale's tooth, depending on the type of ceremony. Teaching and learning were hands-on, for example, learning how to build a Fijian *bure* (house) (refer to Chapter Four) and traditional crafts such as carving a *moto* (spear) or a *tanoa* (kava bowl). Teaching and learning were extended to other environments as well; for example, learning how to fish at the beach or at sea. Under the shade of the trees children learned how to weave

baskets for certain ceremonial functions. Learning how to speak and use proper Indigenous Fijian phrases to address elders would be done concurrently with this practical learning. Teaching and learning were holistic and practical in approach in preparation for the future (Aidrich, 2010). *Vasiti* in one of the focus group discussions echoed similar sentiments concerning loss of culture:

> *All these cultural knowledges I knew when I was a child and I wonder how many of our children now know these today. I believe that while we cannot resist the changes that are coming in on us, we must at least persist to try and retain our cultural values and beliefs, as they are important to us. This is a big challenge to all of us as teachers, parents and village community members. It is not too late to do this to our children. We need to find time to sit as families to talk about how and where we can fill these cultural gaps because I am sure there is a way we can make things happened if our hearts are willing to. Look at New Zealand and Australia! They are trying their best to fill in these cultural gaps in their school curriculum. I think we are not as bad, but our children will come back when we as the elders provide avenues that will enable our children to know the importance of knowing their cultural knowledge.*
> (ECO: 24/07/12)

Participants in one of the *veitalanoa yaga* asserted that keeping important Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge is a right for children.

> *Indigenous Fijian children must learn to know and understand Indigenous Fijian customs. It is a right in itself and our children have this right to know. So I believe it is important that our children are provided with this right. It is really important that we as elders support our children to know our cultural knowledge. These would include important knowledge such as relationship, respect, obedience, chiefly demeanor and spirituality. They must be kept and sustained by our coming generations; it tells our cultural story.*
> (MV6: 12/07/12)

This right is also listed in the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous People* (UNDRIP; UNESCO, 2008). University academic, *Ilaitia*, spoke of the importance of holding onto custom:

> *I was brought up and educated in both the village system and the Western system. Though I am immersed in the Western ways of knowing, and so [are] my children, I still hold on to my customs because they are values and beliefs I was brought up with. No one can take it away from me. My children follow the same because I teach them at home to stick to our Indigenous Fijian cultural values and abide by them, for example, dress up respectfully at all times, know how to address people. Every year we visit our village and spend time with relatives and elders in the village. We join in the village life, chores such as going to the plantation, fishing and accompanying relatives to the forests for hunting. My girls follow their female relatives to do female chores. This way, my children know where they belong. I want them to know that, as Indigenous Fijian people, we have a village community that we relate to. This is where we have relatives that affirm our roots. I believe that if an Indigenous Fijian has gone up the ladder in his/her western career and forget[s] his heritage and its cultural knowledge, he/she is tamata sega ni yaga (useless). To me an educated Indigenous Fijian is when a person knows who he is and his roots in relation to the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge, apart from any other knowledge systems we have today.*
> (II4: 25/07/12)

It was also evident from the data that there were certain aspects of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges that participants felt must be preserved and maintained. All research participants particularly agreed that the customary ideals and practices of *vakaturaga* needed to be embraced by Indigenous Fijian children, even those research participants who had had a stronger exposure to Western values. These ideals were seen as appropriate and acceptable human values and the epitome of Indigenous Fijian life.

> *We were brought up in such [a] life because our father was the chief of the village. Our parents always reminded us that, as their children, we were to show respect to the village and the people all the time. We were to set good examples so that the village people will see and pay respect too to each other. Our house will always be full of people – this is expected in our culture, either people come to visit or in most cases people come to help my mother in preparation for special village functions. I always observe how my father will always give and share what we have to his people. He cares for everyone and he*

> *always remind[s] us that caring is important in order to maintain good relationship[s] because everyone in the village is related and as an Indigenous Fijian, the notion of relationships matters most to us.*
> (II5: 26/07/12)

Knowledges of *Vakaturaga*

Figure 5.1 illustrates the broad ideas of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge that the participants agreed children ought to treasure and preserve. They include the *vakaturaga* ideals, which have strands of obedience, respect, relationships and kindness. There is also the knowledge of *yalomatua*, knowledge of *lotu* (spirituality and worship) and the knowledge of knowing Indigenous Fijian idioms and customs. These important Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges are discussed separately in the sections that follow.

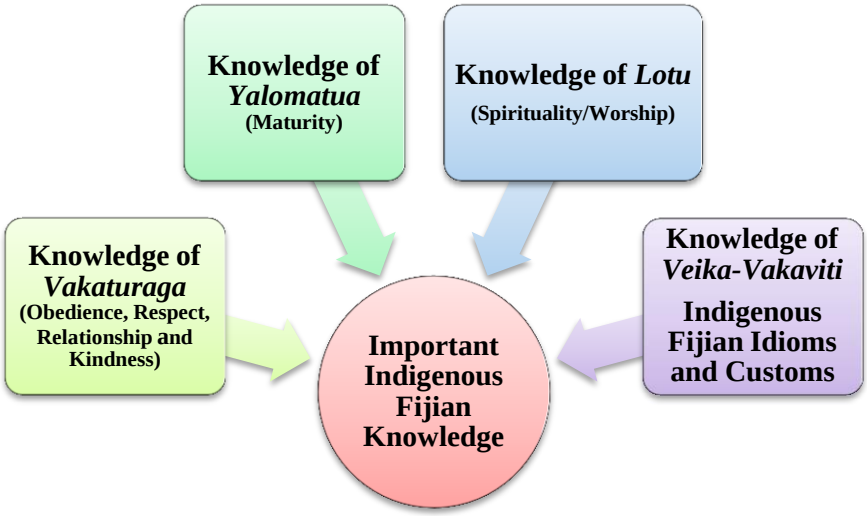

Figure 5-1: Important Indigenous Fijian Knowledges

Vakaturaga or *vakamarama* is defined as ideal behaviour as seen in one's actions and characteristics. The two phrases are often used interchangeably for both genders, but usually *vakaturaga* is for males and *vakamarama* is for females. These qualities or characteristics, as depicted in Figure 5.2, include *veidokai/ vakarokoroko* (respect/ deference), *vakarorogo* (attentiveness/compliance/obedience) and *yalomalua* (humility/kindness/caring). A person or a child for that matter who is referred to as *tamata tabu yani i tovo*

vakaturaga (a personality that befits the presence of the chief) must display these qualities in his/her actions in relation to other people (Ravuvu, 1983).

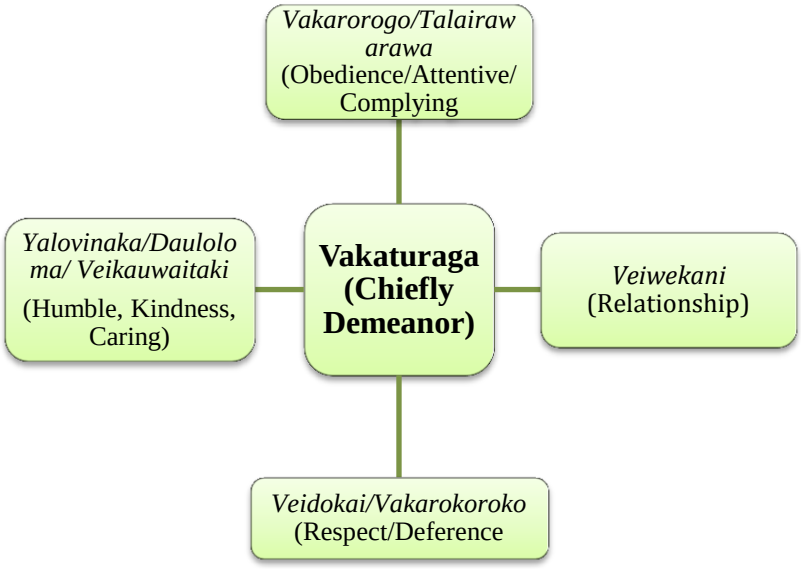

Figure 5-2: *Vakaturaga* Qualities

In reminiscing about *vakaturaga* qualities, *Luisa*, an elderly woman in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, shared these thoughts:

> *I was taught the Indigenous Fijian customary ideals and practices when I was a child. My parents and the elders in my whole extended families [taught] us how to behave appropriately in the village or anywhere at all times - and until now at this old age, I still maintain it and so as my other siblings that we grew up together. It is our way of life, a life full of respect, deference, compliance and humility. They are all part of vakaturaga. I teach these to my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. There is no better way of enjoying your teachings when you see your own siblings displaying what they have been taught. I am always smiling when I see my youngest great grandchild at the age of four saying tulou, tulou (lit: excuse me!) when walking in between two people. If all of our children were to maintain vakaturaga behaviours in all they do, this will strengthen and solidify our cultural knowledge.*
> (MV2: 12/07/12)

These comments show the importance of knowing one's cultural knowledges from an early age and how such *vakaturaga* knowledges, when passed on to

siblings, promote cultural continuity. Such cultural continuity is essential for keeping one's cultural knowledges alive, thus signifying its importance. Ravuvu (1995; 1987) asserts that all Indigenous Fijian people must possess *vakaturaga* qualities, as this is what Indigenous Fijians are known for.

The specific qualities of *vakaturaga* (refer to Figure 5.2, p. 126) were supported by all the study participants. For example, a prominent chief and retired civil servant, *Ratu Semi*, stated that *vakaturaga* are values and beliefs that guide how Indigenous Fijians live in a commune. Indigenous Fijian children must strive to keep, maintain and pass on these knowledges for survival and continuity to the next generation/s (NS: 20/07/12).

Veiwekani (Relationships)

An important aspect of *vakaturaga* is *veiwekani* (the closest English translation is relationship) and Indigenous Fijians consider *veiwekani* an important cultural value children must embrace. Relationship is either kin-based or based on other forms of tribal ties, as described by Nabobo-Baba (2012). One of the respondents commented *a meca bibi vei keta a veiwekani, me kua ni dauvakawaleni* (relationships are important and it matters to us, it must not be taken lightly; II3: 24/07/12). Today people still thrive on *veiwekani* practices and *Sitiveni*, a clan elder in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, drew on his personal experience when talking about relatives and relationships.

> *I always remember how Indigenous Fijian people say this idiom, ona liga balavu ni o kilai ira na wekamu (you will never go empty if you know your relatives and relationships). I was born and brought up in this village. As we grew up as brothers and sisters, we were surrounded with people who were my relatives. These relatives taught us culturally appropriate ways, for example, how to appropriately address those older than us, even how to appropriately address aunties, uncles, grandfathers and grandmothers. We were even taught to know our maternal and paternal [relatives] from both sides of our parents. Now as we have families, the same teaching that was done to us, I have passed them on to my children. My children do not call their elder sisters and brothers their names, they call their older siblings tutua meaning older than you. Today, we see children calling anyhow to those older than them. It signifies a change in*

> *time. We as Indigenous Fijians maintain and preserve relationships because it matters to us. It keeps us together as a family. As a father, I teach my children the importance of having to know their connections through people around us, our blood ties from all our generations here in the village and beyond our village. This is what we should keep and maintain all throughout our lives, no matter what. It is one of our important values as Indigenous Fijian.*
> (NV2: 19/07/12)

Veiwekani is also emphasised in ceremonial behaviour, both in rural and urban communities, and in most things people do, as they connect, reconnect, define and redefine relationships (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). As a clan elder, *Naca*, in the *veitalanoa-yaga* group stated *ni sa matua tabu-saka yani e dua, sa rabailevu na nona veikilai se veiwekani* (as one gets older, one's network gets larger and larger). The notion of *keitou/keimami* (us) and not *o au* (I) is exemplified here, which means, individuality is not popular but rather people exist in relationships and with respect to each other (MV1: 12/07/12). Relationship is diverse in Indigenous Fijian culture because *na veiwekani e kovuta tabu yani na tamata kece ga baleta ni veiwekani edau veiraici* (relationship embraces everyone, seeing and caring for others; II3: 24/07/12; CED4: 23/07/12). This is also seen in how people converse or greet one another. An example of this is ***ni*** *sa bula vinaka* which means *How do you do?* The word ***ni*** exemplifies the plural nature of the addressee and is a sign of respect for the relationship. The following example is a conversational exchange that occurred as the researcher entered the venue of one of the focus groups.

Group: ***N****i sa bula saka!* (Good day Madam!)

Researcher: *Dou bula vinaka* (Good day)

Group: Sa vakarau saka tu na **nomuni** dabedabe mai cake

(Your seat is ready at the front)

Researcher: *Isa vinaka vakalevu!* (Thank you so much)

(CEO: 23/07/12)

Ni and ***nomuni*** are plural Indigenous Fijian words, which mean 'many people'. When a person is addressed with plural phrases, it shows a respect for *veiwekani*

to the person. It is custom and it carries much value for *vakaturaga* as one relates through respectful phrases and words. It is a dignified way of addressing people regardless of their status.

Other examples are seen in food sharing in that when there is plenty of food one gives to others. These are strategies used to maintain and build *veiwekani*. *Veiwekani* is an important component of the *curriculum of life* shared with children and emphasised in daily practices. As I reflected on my early years in Chapter One, I remembered that, after the church service every Sabbath, my parents would prepare a few plates of food to be given to older relatives. This was part of our home culture and I continue to do it, my children do it and the people in our village still do it. In some instances, elders would call others around to jointly harvest fresh produce such as watermelons, big yams and kumaras from their plantations. These were shared amongst the people. They were all about relationships and relatedness as Ravuvu (1995; 1987), Nabobo-Baba (2006) and Martin (2008) maitained in their studies. In relation to this, one of the key people in the interview explained the *veiwekani* concept as follows:

> *Veiwekani is seen in caring. Caring is an important part of us. We look after each other. We care for one another. I just returned from attending a conference overseas. Upon arriving home, my extended family had gathered to welcome me traditionally. I was not surprised because I knew my relatives [would] do it as this has been our way of life as relatives ever since. My children even organise our own family gathering when one gets an award from school. We feast and worship to thank the Lord Jesus. Our life as Indigenous Fijian is all about caring, love and compassion towards others. These are all part of veiwekani influenced by our Christian beliefs.*
> (II3: 24/07/12)

Further, *veiwekani* is seen in *veisiko* (when people visit relatives, either a sick relative or a relative who had been away overseas for a long time). On such visits, gifts of food and Indigenous Fijian crafts such as mats are usually given. *Litia* explained that *siko* or *veisiko* (to visit someone) affirms *veiwekani* and is a sign of appreciation and affirming relationships with the person visited (MV3: 12/07/12). *Sakiusa*, a male clan elder in a *veitalanoa-yaga*, recounted the importance of *veiwekani* and shared his story:

> *I had been very sick for a long time. I was not able to carry out my fatherly role, so my wife and my mother were around to do the chores of our family. My father had died as well. It was one afternoon when a group of relatives, including children from my mother's village paid a visit [to] our family, as they knew I had been sick. They brought traditional gifts such as a bundle of mat and few bottles of coconut oil, including food. It was good to see my relatives. It gave me extra life and strength to move on and be courageous. We exchanged jokes with some of my cousins and the air was filled with joy and excitement. Before they left, my uncle spoke on their behalf to affirm our veiwekani once more. To reciprocate I presented a whale's tooth as a token of appreciation. You know this kind of thing is rarely done nowadays because times have changed and our people have their own ideas of how to live their lives. But one thing, I was happy to see children coming with their parents to this occasion. This is because these children are our next generation and what they see is to be a learning experience, which they will carry out in their time.*
> (NV2: 19/07/12)

I call this the 'blood stretch marks', meaning that relationships stretch out to where the blood flows and these marks are never forgotten. People will always remember where their roots are and they reciprocate when they are ready. Such reciprocities are done publicly for children to see, with the hope they will do the same in their time. This was explained by some of the participants in the focus group sessions in this way.

Life of Indigenous Fijians is a life of caring and part of *veiwekani*. Our ancestors did it. This is important knowledge and is passed down to the younger generations and carried on further as this is custom. I remember seeing my parents and relatives caring for others. Meals are shared with everyone in the village if there are special functions. I always observe all these things and today I do it myself. When I have more, I share with my neighbours. This is a value that we have to teach and affirm [for] our children to keep and honour this knowledge of *veiwekani* … however today some have decided to focus on themselves and their nuclear family only (CED4: 23/07/12).

This narrative shows that Indigenous Fijians have been and still are communal people, people of relationship, and they keep their links of *veiwekani* ties by celebrating together. However, some have tended to disassociate themselves from such communal ideas and prefer to be independent. This signals a way of life that is not Indigenous Fijian and such practice is disrespectful to communal living (II2: 22/07/12). Perhaps, this is a possible impact of colonisation that has made people think differently about *veiwekani*. Indigenous Fijian researchers and academics (e.g. Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Ravuvu, 1995; 1987) state that colonisation has affected the way people think and make decisions based on the concept of democracy and thus there are differences in the choices people make and the way they view things. However, some research participants still thought that knowing *veiwekani* is important.

> *Na veiwekani na ka e bibi (relationship is an epitome of our custom). In my family, I make sure that my children know and retain their knowledge of their relationships within our family from both sides of my parents and my husband's parents. What we do is, we go to the village[s] alternatively, one year to my husband's village and the following to my village. This way, my children get to know their relatives in both my husband's village and my village. It's always a look forward occasion for my family: it is a big time of get together to enjoy the companionship of relatives.*
> (EED4: 11/07/12)

> *Our ancestors passed down this important knowledge of honouring and affirming our relationships. Our relationship[s] can be traced to others around Fiji, for example, I am from Kadavu and according to my father we also have connections to the people of Beqa and Vatulele. In affirming that relationship, we did a Fijian protocol of cara sala (finding roots). We first visited Beqa and then to Vatulele. It was a solemn occasion when we were able to meet our relatives and affirm our relationship to the people whom we had ties with. One of the elders from Beqa lamented during the ceremony Dou sa mai vakaraitaka na bula ni veivakaturagataki, na bula ni kilai ira na veiwekani. E dodonu me da maroroya vinaka na noda itovo oqo baleta ni vakadeitaki keda tiko nit u na noda i sema ena veivanua eda lako kina (You have displayed a chiefly demeanour of tracing your relationship ties. Relationships affirm people -We need to maintain it*

(II5: 26/07/12).

Identifying one's roots has been a practice of Indigenous Fijians over the past centuries (Ravuvu, 1987). It was always associated with eventful celebrations affirming people's relationships and culture. In addition, it also portrays an act of obedience towards culture. Research participants valued the importance of obedience because it is also one of the cultural qualities of Indigenous Fijians.

Vakarorogo and Talairawarawa (Obedience/Attentive/Complying)

Ravuvu (1983, p. 104) notes 'one who is *vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa* knows his place in the society and complies unquestioningly with those who hold traditionally defined authority'. *Vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa* are synonymous with being attentive and compliant and this is important to Indigenous Fijians. They see it as a pillar of what adults want their children to achieve and maintain, no matter where the children are. Recognition of this pillar was clearly shared by one of the key interview participants:

> *It is our custom to obey. In our family, we grew up with total obedience to our parents, relative elders and those of superiority. Vakarorogo and talairawarawa is a sign of veidokai (humility). It is one of the principles of life for us Indigenous Fijians. You know, in the past those who disobey are dealt with accordingly by the clan elders. They get scolded during village meetings. We hear only one voice in the village and that is the chief's voice. Those who disobey are considered kawa-ca (bad roots). So in a village set-up people live harmoniously because we listen and obey our clan elders and the village chief. Life of vakarorogo and talairawarawa has been always our way.*
> (II4: 25/07/12)

The early years teachers made similar statements in one of the focus group interviews (CED1&5: 23/07/12), as well as by some key people in the individual interviews. They acknowledged that *vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa* have always been part of Indigenous Fijian culture both in the home and at school. *Vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa* are connected and are both valued; and they are recognised as a human value that children learn and emulate from elders (CED1&5: 23/07/12; II3: 24/07/12; II7: 26/07/12; II9: 24/07/12; & II10: 24/07/12).

The *Bolabola* family in discussing the importance of *vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa* in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* shared this explanation:

> *When I grew up, I never disobeyed my grandparents. I was taught to obey and listen to the teachings of my grandparents and elder relatives. Disobeying would mean punishment. And because of that upbringing and wisdom I have become the person I am today. I now pass that knowledge on to my children. We all know that village life is centred on vakarorogo and talairawarawa. A person who does not listen in the village is said to be tamata tani or vulagi (foreigner). Indigenous Fijians are known for their obedience; as they follow commands silently whether it is right or wrong. We listen and we do it because vakarorogo and talairawarawa compliment each other. They hold the intricate relationship of the traditional Indigenous Fijian society.*
> (FSRU: 21/7/12)

Similarly, *Mereseini*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, defined the role of *vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa* as that of a listener and a doer to the call of duty; it is custom, it is obligatory, and the individuals know that it is an honourable call to abide by all the time (MV2: 12/07/12). *Losena*, in the same *veitalanoa-yaga*, recalled her experiences:

> *Traditionally, vakarorogo and talairawarawa are part and parcel of our village communal living. We hear only one voice that is the chief's voice. I always make sure that I behave and do what I am told. I am scolded at and I am punished, if I disobey my parents. In school we get punished, if we disobey our teachers. I even get punished, if I disobey my elder brothers and sisters or anyone who is older than me. This is because it is custom to listen and obey. As a family man now, I teach my children to be obedient to the elders and at school to the teachers. And all parents would like their children to be obedient too.*
> (MV4: 12/7/12)

Ilikimi shared similar experiences, when he said:

> *I was brought up to listen to and obey the elders. Time has changed and it has changed the way people think too. However, as Indigenous Fijians, this is our way–we obey, we listen carefully and we do what we are told to do. Our children are children of obedient people and they must display likewise. All of us were taught by our parents to*

> *obey older relatives and older people, giving them the respect they deserve as elders and even teachers in school. Obedience is a human value and has been part and parcel of the ways of the Indigenous Fijian people ever since, regardless of whichever province.*
> (NV3: 19/7/12)

Ravuvu (1995) further notes that Indigenous Fijians are people of culture, full of humility and *veikauwaitaki* (recognise or have feeling for). They are people who comply with customary expectations and values *vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa* to elders or seniors in the communities, and especially to those in authority. As one of the many honourable pillars of communal living, the chief in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* explained:

> *Vakarorogo and talairawarawa are pillars of communal living. There is only one voice heard in the village; it is the chief's voice. In homes, the voices of the parents are heard. Grandparents' voices are heard too and the elders in the family lineage. The children are taught to know how to obey.*
> (NS: 20/7/12)

Listening to only one voice was the way of Indigenous Fijians. People obey only one voice as the participants in the following excerpts explain:

> *When the clan elders speak, we obey because we know we listen to the voice of land, which is the chief. Obedience is one of the principles of our Indigenous Fijian practice and has made us strong through collaboration and teamwork.*
> (RST5: 22/07/12)

> *In all we do, we are careful to follow Indigenous Fijian protocols. Our belief is such that good life comes when one listens to the superiors. These superiors are our elders and everyone hears their voices.*
> (EED4: 11/07/12)

> *Obedience is culturally desirable. In the past, we obey only one voice and that has helped us to maintain a harmonious living in the community.*
> (CED7: 23/07/12)

In contrast, *Ratu Semi* mentioned the effects of change on Indigenous Fijian children's allegiance to obedience:

> *Today, forces of modernity have challenged the intricate structure of the Indigenous Fijian. For example, human rights have degraded how children respect, listen and obey the elders. Such ways of disrespect is evident in communities and schools where students use the so-called rights as excuses to justify actions. I have heard from the people in my village that some children talk back to elder's orders. In traditional Fijian culture, this is a clear indication of disrespect.*
> (NV: 20/07/12)

Talaidredre (disobedience), as opposed to *vakarorogo* and *talairawarawa*, is evident in Indigenous Fijian children due to the forces of change, as explained by *Ratu Semi* above. Questions to ask are whether the introduction into schools of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989) can be blamed or whether parents should take responsibility for their children's actions. While many questions can be addressed, it is important that constructive dialogue is organised around such issues in order to create cohesiveness between Indigenous Fijian and Western ideologies. *Ilaisa*, a *veitalanoa-yaga* participant in one of the selected research settings, supports this approach and said:

> *Today there are a lot of talaidredre (disobedient) children and one of the main reasons is the lack of discipline done in the home. Our children have tended to quickly grasp modern changes and these changes have directly and indirectly affected how they view our ways of living. This needs to be sorted in a constructive way. Our children need to be reminded to treasure what we value.*
> (NV4: 19/07/12)

Veidokai /Vakarokoroko (Respect/Deference)

Research participants also spoke of *vakarokoroko*/*veidokai* as an Indigenous Fijian quality that must be preserved and protected and this section documents the participants' perspectives. Indigenous Fijians live a life of respect for one another in the family and within the community at large, to respect someone is to honour and obey willingly. 'It is manifested in how a person behaves, such as

manners that show qualities of dignity and composure' (Ravuvu, 1987, p. 103). In all the *veitalanoa-yaga* sessions, if an individual wanted to speak, they would clap two or three times and then there would be absolute silence. The silence shows respect and is followed by a response in a soft, gentle, hushed voice. The *veitalanoa-yaga* clearly exhibited this respect amongst the male clan elders and women participants. There is a sense of dignity in this process of *veitalanoa-yaga* in the villages and even within families. *Emori*, a participant in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, outlined this process:

> *Indigenous Fijians have so much vakarokoroko/veidokai for one another. In this house where we are doing this veitalanoa-yaga, we know who should speak first, who should be the next and so on and so forth. We do not speak anyhow. Before a person can talk, he/she will take into account his/her status in the village. We know ourselves first before we can open our mouth to say something, otherwise we will remain silent and let the others, who are eligible, to speak first. It is all about vakarokoroko/veidokai.*
> (NV1: 19/07/12)

Litia expressed similar understandings:

> *I would get up in the morning and vakayadra (say good morning) to all my family members and others in the community. This way I am showing vakarokoroko/veidokai. I make myself look presentable because how one look, is indicative of our values and beliefs we have and is respectable to show neatness in how we look. In this village, there is always an air of respect. I always observe my female elders, including my mother and grandmother dressed well before they start their day. I always ask myself, why? Then my mother said that we have to look clean and wear clean clothes before we start our day. This is village culture - this way we respect others and our own self. You know land have eyes as our ancestors always say. They need to be respected too. Nature watches over us everyday because they are living things too. (MV5: 12/07/12)*

Respectful calling is important to Indigenous Fijians and demonstrates the personality of the individual according to the form of call. Participants elaborate on the notion of respectful calling and respectfulness in the following excerpts:

Indigenous Fijians accord people they know in the proper way. The use of prefixes Adi, Ratu or Ro and Bulou in other parts of Fiji depict respect and acknowledging the chiefly status one has. In this village, these prefixes are not only for those of chiefly status, but also accorded to those elder in lineage in the family/families.
(MV2: 12/7/12)

We had to say saka (sir/madam) to our teachers in school. If any of us do not say this at the end of our sentences, we would be considered disrespectful. During ceremonial traditional functions, we would sit and watch our elders perform the rituals. We would sit very still because we are told that one day we would be doing exactly what we are seeing. We keep silent for the duration of the ceremony and we get up to go when we are told.
(MV6: 12/07/12)

There was a time when we were beaten at school with a few of my mates because we were being loud as we came near the chiefly setting. Our parents had to present a matanigasau (traditional apology) to the chief. This presentation is a sign of vakarokoroko/veidokai (respect) to the chiefly family and to our cultural system.
(MV6: 12/07/12)

It is custom in this village that when a child is purposely sent to another house to deliver a message or ask for something, the child is expected to display culturally appropriate ways. This child, for example, will accord a traditional greeting as he/she comes close to the house; walking with hands to the front, lowering oneself by squatting, sitting or standing in a stooped position, sit beside the door from outside, clap, then deliver the message. This is respect taught to children, and we must try to maintain this because it is a dignified behaviour. Even in the family, children are taught to respect each other's place in the family hierarchy. Children are taught to speak respectfully in all circumstances and keep respect intact at all times. Did you see the child that comes in this morning to ask for salt? That is exactly what I am talking about.
(NV1: 19/7/12)

We make way or stand aside when a chief or an elder comes on the same path as we are. Even at school, we do the same for the teachers. At home my children and grandchildren do this to their elder brothers and sisters.

(NV6: 19/07/12)

> *It is custom that when a child is purposely sent to another house, the child is expected to display culturally appropriate ways, for example, according a traditional greeting; sit beside the door, clap, then deliver the message. Even in the family, children are taught to respect each other's place in the family hierarchy. Children are taught to speak respectfully in all circumstances and keep respect intact at all times.*
> (II11: 29-7-12)

> *In the village, there are three most important things a child should know; veivakaturagataki (act in a chiefly way) through veirokorokovi (respect one another) and kila na veiwekani (know your relationship). They are important and are emphasised daily because this is what shows or identifies us as a people, as Indigenous Fijians. Showing a lack of proper custom or being disrespectful is lacking in the Indigenous Fijian knowledge and may be called sakasaka (stupid). I always emphasise to the parents in our village that it is important that children grow up learning the custom of the land or itovo vakavanua.*
> (NS: 20/7/12).

Vakarokoroko/veidokai are employed differently according to the circumstances. Children are taught these values when they are young and they are expected to use these correctly in various situations they encounter. Even when undertaking this research project, the researcher had to behave in culturally ethical ways as a demonstration of respect for the participants. This strengthened relationships towards the people and their cultural knowledges. In a *veitalanoa-yaga* in one of the selected families setting, it was explained in this way:

> *Village life is embraced with vakarokoroko/veidokai. In our family, my children respect each other. The younger ones respect the older ones and vice versa. This is the teaching in my family. Even when my children wake up in the morning, they will say ni yadra vinaka Ratu (good morning Dad) and ni yadra vinaka Nau (good morning mum), ni yadra Tutua (good morning brother/sister). This is what transpires in our family each morning everyday. I teach my children to respect one another in how they converse, with other's belongings to ask permission first before taking anything. When they are in the school, they do the same. They respect the teachers the way it should*

> *be. Likewise in the village, they must respect the principles and practices of the vanua.*
> (FRR: 16/07/12)

In addition, respect is shown in how one dresses, including the choice of clothing styles. A research participant suggested that young people today mainly prefer to follow the latest Western fashion styles (EED: 11/07/12). Participants in a focus group also noted the same views *sa veisau nodra isulusulu na luveda ka vakina nodrai i kotokoti* (our children's way of dressing has changed, including their hairstyles; EED3: 11/07/12; CED: 23/07/12, RST: 22/07/12, ECO: 24/07/12). They specifically mentioned that the girls' fashion now includes mini-skirts, mini-pants and boys also prefer long pants instead of the traditional *sulu* (wrap around skirt) and fancy hairstyles instead of the traditional hairstyle. These sentiments were echoed by some participants in the focus group (ECO3&4: 24/07/12; RST2: 22/07/12).

Yalomalua, Dauloloma, Veikauwaitaki (Humble, Kindness, Caring)

It was touching when some research participants lamented the loss of an ethic of care, including kindness, love and caring. *Kelera*, in one of the focus groups, emphasised that the world of the Indigenous Fijian encompasses such virtues, which may and may not be for all humans, as people do have differing views about kindness, love and care (CED9: 23/07/12). Data from the research participants confirmed how Indigenous Fijians value such virtues.

Participants mentioned the importance of *yalomalua kei na yaloyalovinaka, dauloloma* and *veikauwaitaki* as important ways of showing compassion in both words and in deeds and these values are integral to *vakaturaga*. An Indigenous Fijian idiom states *e dau soqovi ga na nodra vale na tamata yalovinaka ka yalomalua* (A kind person's house is always flocked with people; II5: 26/07/12). *Savenaca* shared the example of how his grandparents modelled such virtues to the local people:

> *My grandparents are well known by all in the village. They never ceased to invite everyone [in] that passed by their house. They will call them for a drink of water, to have food or have a rest. They were called as dauloloma*

> *(caring). They will accommodate all those visitors who come to the village whether be it a relative or not. [Their] house is always full of people. And in those days, money was not an issue as it is today. My grandparents had plenty in their garden and they were great fishermen too. Now they are gone and they have left a legacy on us - a man whose heart is so big. My grandparents always emphasised, that we need to follow Christ's teachings and we must never let anyone pass by without calling them for a rest or to have a meal as we never know, we may be calling angels from heaven. People who love, care and show kindness are those whose hearts are Godly – do that, you will be blessed abundantly – this is his teaching.*
> (MV8: 12/07/12)

Indigenous Fijian values were superimposed on Christian beliefs and values to create the context in which these elders were reared (refer to Chapter Two). *Yalomalua, dauloloma* and *veikauwaitaki* are also appreciated as moral values in human education. Thus, engaging people with *loloma* and *veikauwaitaki* creates relationships and practices that are central to the socio-cultural paradigms that inform early childhood education (as identified in Arthur et al., 2015; Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2006; Fleer, 2010). Takayawa, an elder participant in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* claimed that:

> *This is how we should live. Yaloyalovinaka, dauloloma and veikauwaitaki are moral values that are also stressed in the Bible. They are shown when we care for people, animals and nature. I know most of us here today know these as they are shown in our deeds to others. I must take this time to thank the men for their support in helping build my kitchen. It shows the spirit of yalovinaka, dauloloma and veikauwaitaki. I believe that if we continue to work with these kinds of hearts, we will be blessed. This must be taught and maintained in our children so they can carry on the legacy.*
> (MV9: 12/07/12)

Along similar lines, Salome, in one of the focus groups, referred the group to the Bible:

> *The story of the prodigal son in the Bible, to me shows the yalomalua, yaloyalovinaka, loloma and veikauwaitaki the father had for his son. After years of exile, and upon returning, he still loved and showed kindness towards*

> *him. Even Jesus died on the cross, sacrificing His life so that humankind like you and me can live eternal life. Kindness must not be in words only; it is manifested in what we do to others.*
> (RST5: 22/07/12)

The Education Curriculum Officers (ECO) also shared their views and stories and *Torika* in summing up the ECO focus group said:

> *I believe that yalomalua, yaloyalovinaka, loloma and veikauwaitaki are universal human values. Though we have different cultures, different views and differences in the way we do things, it is important that children are taught to possess them. As teachers and curriculum officers, our curriculum should enable our children to show kindness in all they do. Children must be seen as helping those who do not have books and other stationeries. At home this virtue must be strengthened like helping neighbours who are too old to pick up their rubbish. Kindness, love and care in the workplace like ours can be seen in how we help one another in tasks that require deadlines. We all know that we are people of kind hearts.*
>
> *I grew up with kindness, love and care as my parents lived it. I remember when my father returns from the garden, he shares his harvest to our neighbors. Even when my mother returns from fishing and has a good catch, she will share to relatives and those close by us. Even in village functions, they will always join in the food preparation and assist in whatever way. They tell us this is how Indigenous Fijians live, mo daliga levu ka mata levu (to have big eyes and big ears) in order to hear and see what is happening in the village and give a helping hand where needed. And we must also embed these qualities with our children, as we know times have changed and have also changed some of our ways. We need to be aware of these things and try to revive what we are known for.*
> (ECO2: 24/07/12)

Sharing and caring are acts of love and kindness. The research participants reflected upon these qualities because it seemed that they were slowly disappearing. Research participants asserted the need for awareness and the need to revive important cultural knowledges, as they are part of being Indigenous Fijian. And part of being Indigenous Fijian is learning to live together as explicated in the Delore's 2000 Report (Burnett, 2008). *Pita*, a key informant,

stated that people in his village are still reminded of such virtues during village meetings. He particularly mentioned *na matada ena tukuna na ka e dodonu me da cakava ni sa tiko e dua na vulagi, se sa dua e gadreva na veivuke ena koro* (our eyes will tell us what we need to do when there is a visitor or if someone needs help; II10: 24/07/12). Jone, a male early years teacher, who highlighted what his students did in an elementary school task, demonstrated a practical example:

> *We did a practical school-based assessment task that required children to do an earth oven in pairs. They were to cook any kind of food [that] must be cooked and tasted so they can be marked and graded. The kids got excited and there were ten earth ovens made; as there were twenty children, paired up in twos. After marking their practical work, all children suggested that some food be taken to the old people in the nearby villages because they are old and that will save their time from cooking dinner. So the children organised the dishing out of food and were taken to the old people in the nearby village. The next day, the village chief came to the school and thanked the children for their work; their show of kindness, love and care towards the older people. He was impressed because at a very young age, children were able to display such great values. I tell this because kindness, love and care are human virtues; and children must learn to show these to all people.*
> (EED5: 11/07/12)

Values expressed in action speak louder than words. The suggestions by the children to share food with the old people showed a *dauloloma, veikauwaitaki/veirairaici* value that Indigenous Fijians ought to be knowledgeable about and it reflected well on their upbringing. In the *veitalanoa-yaga* with one of the family groups, the *Rokosau* family suggested that the concepts of *dauloloma, veikauwaitaki/veirairaici* were aligned to the Christian faith as reflected in the Holy Bible. Mr *Rokosau* mentioned:

> *We are Christians and our lives as Indigenous Fijians are centred in the life of Jesus Christ. In my family, from my side and I do not know about my wife's side, it is our family culture to assist old people in the village. This will be in the form of taking food (whether cooked or raw) to them, washing their clothes, mowing their lawn and doing other errands they need. So in my own family, my*

> *children do it too. This is important, as its part of being human to look after one another.*
>
> (FRR: 16/07/12)

The *Bolabola* and the *Biauniwasa* families explained that they were taught good values or virtues for life when they were young. They were reminded as children that those who lacked these values were not godly and were un-Christ-like. At Sunday school they were taught the biblical principles expected of them (FSRU: 21/07/12). This example reflected Indigenous Fijian traditional values, intertwined with colonial Christian values, which today are seen as also part of the moral human values in education.

> *I was taught to show yalovinaka, loloma and veikauwaitaki to people and nature. My grandparents use to say people and nature are both living things because they are God's creation. Though nature does not speak, they have their own way of telling the world how they should be treated and let to live. We are always reminded to show kindness, love and care to all living things including all in the environment because we all belong to God. Our Indigenous Fijian children must understand, and know all these values.*
> (FSRU: 21/07/12)

> *What else should we do today? Our world has changed but one thing we should remember, we must never let go of our values, pedagogies and philosophies of Indigenous Fijian life. I am touched by some of the ways our children conduct themselves today as most have lost touch with their identity. Who do we blame? Is a question to ask! With my family, though we live in the urban village, close and in the vicinity of the Western world, my children still maintain their ways of knowing. Showing kindness, love and caring are part of their lives. As a father, I want to see my children live and share such important values to their friends, families and others they come in contact with. It is so important that our children keep these in their hearts.*
> (FU: 28/07/12)

Individual interview informants also emphasised similar ideas. In their narratives, they told of the importance of *yalovinaka*, *loloma* and *veikauwaitaki* values.

> *I was brought up in an extended family. My grandparents and my parents will always emphasise the importance of love. We were taught to love everyone in the village and it is custom to care for one another, as they believe that love surpasses everything in this world. In my family, we have never been separated as a nuclear family, we are always together as a big extended family because we believe that we need to look after each other and care for one another.*
> (II2: 22/07/12)

> *I will never forget this teaching in my life. I pass it on to my children and grandchildren because I know it is not only biblical but is a human value which we as the owners of this land are known for … it is a part of our cultural knowledge.*
> (II4: 25/07/12)

> *To be an Indigenous Fijian is to know our cultural knowledge, like caring and showing humility towards others are part of us. We are known for this and we must always try to live it.*
> (II8: 20/07/12)

Central to such values is the notion of *yalomatua* (maturity). Participants in this research considered *yalomatua* as an important knowledge (refer to Figure 5.1, p. 125). Their views are expressed in the transcripts and excerpts in the following section.

Knowledge of *Yalomatua* (Maturity)

For Indigenous Fijian, a person who is *yalomatua* is one who absolutely works hard in any life venture. That person believes that nothing of worth or significance can be obtained without hard work or the necessary effort (Baba, 1993). Good attitudes and sensitivity to the needs of others in the community are a necessary package of skills regarded as vital for living. A person with these concepts is regarded as being *tabu saka yani*, a *tamata yalomatua tabu yani* (literally meaning respectful way of addressing a person and *tamata yalomatua* – a person who is matured in soul).

Participants in this study regarded *yalomatua* as an essential wisdom for all Indigenous Fijian children. This was evident in one of the focus groups when

they collectively agreed that children must be taught to have *yalomatua* in all they do (RST1-6: 22/07/12). It is through *yalomatua* that one will have the ability to enhance one's quality of life and *Lagilagi* explained that *yalomatua* is an important element of any person's life whether he/she is Indigenous Fijian or not. It is a human value which one chooses otherwise that person will remain *yalowai* (immature) in life. She added:

> *Our ancestors provided us with a legacy of yalomatua, which during their time relied only on Mother Nature to compass their way in their environment whether be it the land or sea. They had a life of sustaining themselves naturally within their environment. Though times have changed, and we have experienced this in our environment and other things, the point is we need to learn from our ancestors in the way they embrace yalomatu, a virtue that can be inculcated in our children today. They need this in order to make decisions for themselves.*
>
> (II9: 22/07/12)

People can develop *yalomatua* if carefully modelled by elders. This wisdom is reflected in the things people do, in adherence to one's obligations and in showing respect for all things pertaining to what Indigenous Fijians are known for. The *Biauniwasa* family in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* explained:

> *Yalomatua is a possession we as individuals must strive for. Without yalomatua, things will not be as good as one expects. I always emphasise this to my children and I believe if children see this possession in us, they will definitely do it too. We are the role models of yalomatua to our children. This is also the epitome of good life to us. (FU: 28/07/12)*

Additionally *yalomatua* must be instilled in children, as having *yalomatua* will promote a sense of wisdom in the mind and in the spirit so that one will be able to effectively face the challenges of life. *Kalivati*, a participant in one of the focus groups reminded everyone:

> *I think as parents we need to be beside our children and help them choose wisely. Our children today need to be taught well and be instilled in yalomatua so they can make wise decisions about themselves now and in the*

> *future. Being yalomatua is a life essence that not only Indigenous Fijian children must have, I believe all children in this world must strive to attain it in the midst of life's distractions.*
> *(RST2: 22/07/12)*

Teachers in one of the focus groups agreed that *yalomatua* is at the core of traditional Indigenous Fijian education and that children must try to attain this. However, it can only be done when elders mentor children, display exemplary behaviours in the community and constantly remind children of *yalomatua*. Two of the focus groups summed up the importance of *yalomatua* in this way:

> *We parents are the most responsible people for passing on yalomatua to our children. Institutions like schools and the churches are seen as secondary avenues of transmission. A child who is learning will display yalomatua through humility and willingness to accept good advice of and from others. While we cannot force yalomatua onto children, we as parents have to continuously preach and help children attain yalomatua.*
> *(CED4: 23/07/12)*

> *Yalomatua is a necessary need for our children. They need it each day and every step of their way. When children embrace yalomatua, things will fall into order and they will be able to make wiser choices and decisions. They will be confident of themselves.*
> (ECO1: 24/07/12)

Some key people in the individual interviews shared similar underlying ideas.

> *Our village elders always reminded us that there is nothing second to someone who has yalomatua. A child who is yalomatua will display wisdom in all he/she does. At this University, I see that students need to have yalomatua sealed into them before they come to University. You see university life is freedom, whether they want to attend lectures, tutorials or not, it is up to the individual. Most of the students choose wrongly and that is why most of them fail because simply there is no yalomatua.*
> (II10: 24/07/12)

> *Yalomatua is wisdom. Our culture emphasises this wisdom to all of us, and the best time to do this is when children are still young. Even the Bible tells us that we*

> *need to teach children good values in life because when they grow up, they will never forget.*
> (II5: 26/07/12)

> *When I was a child, yalomatua was always the word my father used to all of us emphasising its vitality. Being a child who is yalomatua is built into our custom to direct how we make sense of what we do, make sense of our identity and affirm ourselves positively in culturally appropriate ways.*
> (II1: 28/07/12)

> *I will never forget my father and mother's advice that we need to be yalomatua in all we do. We were always told that only those who are yalomatua would be rewarded at the end of the academic year. It is striving to get the best and when one gets the best, he/she would have good life. To me an example of one who is yalomatua is one who can choose wisely from the many changes and distractions that are happening in our country now. To attain yalomatua, is to attain a fulfilling life.*
> (II4: 25.07/12)

Makelesi explained that *yalomatua* could be instilled in the very early stages of life, coupled with exemplary models from parents and elders (II2: 22/07/12). *Lomayaco* and *Dawai* explained it as fundamental to life's journey and they further argued:

> *Families are the main source of providing yalomatua to children, however in some cases families are not providing this sort of yalomatua to children. As such the schools have to take this responsibility. Indigenous Fijians believe that yalomatua is absolutely one of the vital components that help children become better citizens of tomorrow.*
> (II 3&11: 24/07/12; 29/07/12)

In reminiscing about her past, *Rusila* explained that she was punished if she displayed immature behaviour. People were reminded of the importance of *yalomatua* during their daily worship times (II8: 20/07/12). Other key informants shared similar beliefs about *yalomatua*:

> *Life of being yalomatua is always emphasised in our family daily. My father always say that only those who are yalomatua will be successful in life.*

(II6: 25/07/12)

> *The base of all great things that we do is through yalomatua. Without yalomatua, we will be nothing. At home I emphasise to my children that one who is yalomatua, will never go wrong.*
> (II9: 22/07/12)

Mereseini explained that all Indigenous Fijian parents would like their children to have *yalomatua*. Parents feel pride to see their children possess such wisdom. In Indigenous Fijian village settings, the elders of the community have a hand in instilling *yalomatua* in all the village children. It is an important component of cultural knowledge, which children must attain and always maintain (II7: 26/07/12). A similar emphasis was demonstrated in the *veitalanoa-yaga* family scripts as they stressed the importance of *yalomatua* and metaphorically likened it to a fountain of life (FRR: 16/07/12).

> *Our children need yalomatua. Yalomatua does not come anyhow; it comes when adults in the community teach children the knowledge they need, and when they see this knowledge in action by adults. In my family, I talk and I action my talk because I do not want my children to get confused. My wife and I make sure that our children are well behaved as we instill in them the concepts of yalomatua, which is based on the knowledge of our custom.*
> (FRR: 16/07/12)

> *I remember during my young days in the village, we would be called up in the village meetings to be encouraged by the village chief and clan elders on the notion of yalomatua. Displaying yalomatua is a sign of maturity and wisdom that all the elders would like to see in us.*
> *(FSRSU: 21/07/12)*

> *When a child has yalomatua, he/she will get far in life. This is always the advice I give my children. It was the same advice my parents gave to my brothers, my sisters and myself. One who has yalomatua has a good standard of life.*
> (FU: 28/07/12)

Ratu Semi, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, referred to *yalomatua* in terms of the *veisusugi vakavanua* (child-rearing in the Indigenous Fijian world).

> *One of the Indigenous Fijian theories of child development is that children are not the sole responsibility of the parents. From the time a child is conceived and when this child comes into this world and can walk around the village premises, it the role of the whole village to look after this child. Because people in the village are related by blood, it is their responsibility to see that this child is brought up in the appropriate way. The child has to be instilled in the notions of yalomatua to know what and how of village protocols. The elders teach yalomatua to children. Sometimes this is done during village meetings, family meetings or any time when there is a need. The elders keep watch over children all the time to see that they respect and align their ways to the appropriate village standards. If a child misbehaves, the child is called up front and gets reprimanded by whatever elder is there/around. This is how the child is taught, so he/she knows and understands the rules and regulations of the village. Me ra vakayalomatuataki na gone ena i valavala vakaviti dina (Children are to be instilled with true Indigenous Fijian wisdom.*
> (NS: 20/07/12)

Veisusugi-vakavanua is a way of bringing up an Indigenous Fijian child appropriately in the Indigenous Fijian way of life. Here the elders took responsibility for ensuring proper behaviours and cultural knowledges were taught to young children (Seruvakula, 2000). This process is important and is seriously undertaken by chosen elders who are clan elders. This imparting of knowledges is centred on *yalomatua* as Seruvakula (2000) suggested.

Knowledge of *Lotu* (Spirituality/Worship)

Research participants also highlighted the concept of *Lotu* (Spirituality) as central to life (refer to Figure 5.1). They saw it as a tenet underpinning the life of Indigenous Fijians, as discussed in this section. Spirituality is central to the lives of Indigenous Fijians. *Veitalanoa-yaga* participants in one of the chosen research settings explained that Indigenous Fijians are a people of spirituality and that going to church on Sundays is part of a spiritual and moral life (NV6: 17/07/12). Family morning and evening worship were typical in homes and people also

fasted together as families, clans or whole village communities. This was done to ensure they were aligned with God Jehovah and it further reinforced Christian beliefs that have been upheld since colonisation (NV1: 17/07/12).

Naca, Tuwai and *Losena* reflected that peoples' lives are centred on God and particularly mentioned how the people of Lau have a high regard for worship because they were the first people in Fiji to accept the beliefs of Christianity. They firmly believed that embracing *lotu* prepared one for the afterlife. They further mentioned that church leaders, such as the Pastors and Reverends, were highly respected as representatives of God. One tenth of all their harvests from their plantations, fishing and wages are directed towards the church and this is the practice to today (MV8: 12/07/12: MV4: 12/07/12). *Loraini* also emphasised how children in her village were encouraged to attend worship every Sunday morning, mid-week prayers in each family and Bible studies in the church (MV11: 12/07/12). Similarly *Ratu Semi* in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* said:

> *Emphasis is always on lotu and Indigenous Fijian children are encouraged to attend church services, family and clan worship times. In this way they are being reminded of the importance of such practice, which they will continue to pass on to the next generation.*
>
> (NS: 20/07/12)

Ilaisa mentioned that *lotu* or worship occurs first and foremost before any daily chores in a belief that, when God is put first, everything will fall into place and it will bring about the relevant knowledge needed in one's daily life (NV4: 19/07/12). According to *Rusila,* God alone can provide for the needs of the people, so worship is considered to be the doorway to fulfilling those needs (II8: 20/07/12).

Further, *Marika*, in one of the focus groups, stated that Indigenous Fijians are Christians and they should live exemplary lives as Christians. He argued that Jesus Christ brought light to our dark souls and this light has helped Fijians to be the kind of people they want to be. He further argued that Indigenous Fijians need to mold their children in such ways too.

> *Our children must learn all the Christian beliefs, keep them, maintain them, treasure them and pass them on to the younger generations. Our ancestors have lived it and we can do the same.*
> (RST1: 22/07/12)

This following section discusses the Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs (refer to Figure 5.1) that participants considered ought to be preserved and maintained with children.

Knowledge of *Veikavakaviti* (Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs)

Knowledge of *veikavakaviti* was also deemed important for Indigenous Fijian children. This was evident in the responses of almost all the participants who contributed to this study, although there were some who suggested a balance of knowledge between both Western and Indigenous worlds is necessary.

In all of the *veitalanoa-yaga* with the selected village communities and families participants thought that the importance of children's knowledge of *veikavakaviti* ought to be strengthened. In addition, they felt that children must know their mother tongue and the Indigenous Fijian ways of learning and doing things (NV1: 19/07/12; NS: 20/07/12; MV9: 12/07/12). In sharing experiences, *Naca* said:

> *Before I could go to school, I knew how to count in our own Indigenous Fijian way of counting for example: 10 pigs are equivalent to a village green or 10 mats are equivalent to an underlay. This I learned daily from my father and from my male relatives as I followed them in their routines. There were many Indigenous Fijian knowledges that I had known before I began Year One and I spoke my mother-tongue language only. I learned English at school only, it was hard for me but I tried and now I can speak it. Today most children cannot count in the Indigenous Fijian way or speak their proper mother tongue, but I know they could if these knowledges are revived and strengthened again in our homes and in the schools, our children should be fine with it.*
> (MV1-MV10: 12/07/12)

It is clear from this excerpt that, although most children have lost the concept of Indigenous Fijian counting, a sense of encouragement and positivity can be seen in the hope of reviving such knowledge. *Ciri*, in one of the focus groups, similarly explained that *veikavakaviti* knowledges embraces Indigenous Fijian identity and she recalled how, as children, they were taught by their grandparents and other related elders. She then reinforced the need to revive the knowledge and keep passing it on to the coming generations (RST4: 22/07/12). In the same light, *Salome* summed this up as 'children will only know their route, if they have a deep knowledge of their roots'. She further noted that the onus rests with the home environment, with parents and relatives and also teachers' knowledge and pedagogy is crucial (RST5: 22/07/12). Additionally, *Jone* and *Paula*, participants in two of the focus groups, particularly emphasised this aspect of Indigenous Fijian traditions:

> *We use to learn veikavakaviti knowledge from our parents and our relatives. I learned it too at school. This was good because it was just an extension of what I see, hear and do with my relatives. It seems that it is no longer in the school curriculum, or it may be there but has been ignored. The solution is we can work together as parents and teachers in reviving it to our children. We can teach it at home and reinforce again in schools. I know some parents want their children to learn only subjects relevant to them, thus ignoring the subject that has knowledge about Indigenous Fijian culture. I only wish they knew how important it is to know our own identity.*
> (EED5: 11/07/12)

> *Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs was my favorite subject in school. It was familiar to me because I practically saw it done in the village and in my family. This subject encompassed every aspect of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge. I love to be around my relatives when this sort of knowledge is talked about and practically done. I believe this should be further strengthened in the school curriculum so our children know their own cultural knowledge.*
> (CED8: 23/07/12)

Perhaps some parents may lean towards Western education but the excerpt above shows how other parents are in favour of Indigenous Fijian children knowing

what is rightfully theirs. The rights-based pedagogies and philosophies, as indicated in the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous People* (UNIDRIP; UNICEF, 2008) and in the works of Sims (2011a) offer possible frameworks to address this challenge.

The Education Curriculum Officers also reinforced the importance of *veikavakaviti* knowledge in early childhood settings and in the whole school curriculum, as teachers now seem to be ignoring it in their teaching. *Selai* asserted that this knowledge is vital and is owned by Indigenous Fijians. For this knowledge to survive, Indigenous Fijians ought to be proactive in reviving the knowledge, beginning in their homes. The whole village community could take part in this cultural revival and survival exercise. Indigenous Fijian elders could lobby the Ministry of Education for a reintroduction of *veikavakaviti* into the early childhood settings and into the whole school curriculum with a policy to promote implementation (ECO5: 24/07/12). Some participants, such as *Filise* in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, reminisced about past experiences of *veikavakaviti* and shared:

> *As I grew up and until today, I still know this knowledge. We use to be taught all these idioms and customs in our clan. The clan elder would call a meeting especially for this and we would sit around the mat while a presentation is done. In the process we would be observing and listening because all of us would then each have a turn to practice. It was fun though, but we learned how to choose the best words to use in specific ceremonies. Our young generations should be taught the knowledge and we, as elders, must make time to teach it to them. This knowledge needs to be sustained and passed on to today's generation of children and the coming generations of tomorrow.*
> (NV6: 17/07/12)

Knowing traditional songs, jingles, riddles and rhymes were also mentioned as part of the knowledge of *veikavakaviti*. These seem to have diminished and need to be revived, maintained and preserved as part of an Indigenous Fijian child's world as *Emori* explained:

> *When I grew up, I knew our traditional songs, songs that are sung after building a house, songs sung during*

> *fishing. Reciting riddles and rhymes were part of my evenings with my grandparents. These things seem to be diminishing. I remembered the song Daru lako tu ki soso, kauta mai na kakana (Lets go to the garden to fetch some food), Rhymes like Dua tiko noqu Pusi (I had a cat) and many more. All these things need to be revived and sustained.*
> (NV1: 17/07/12)

While teachers in the Central Education Division (CED) agreed to the revival and sustaining of *veikavakaviti* knowledge, some mentioned that traditional and cultural values varied amongst Indigenous Fijians, as *Anaseini* pointed out:

> *Knowledge of veikavakaviti differs in all provinces, but teachers can make a difference in developing appropriate learning experiences that can embrace all these differences. After all, knowledge of veikavakaviti is all about upholding aspects of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge.*
> (CED10: 23/07/12)

The three families in the three different locales agreed that learning *veikavakaviti* was crucial for children because early childhood was the most opportune time to cognitively establish these concepts (FRR: 16/07/12). This idea is supported by Sims's (2008b) study and earlier studies of brain development (Heckman, 2006; Lynch, 2005; Lynch, 2007; McCain et al, 2007; Schweinhart et al, 2005). The *Bolabola* family mentioned that, although their children have been exposed to Western knowledge, their children still maintained and preserved the knowledge of *veikavakaviti* because they had been exposed to these concepts in the home with their grandparents when they were very young (FSRU: 21/07/12). Similarly the *Biauniwasa* family noted that their children were able to understand *veikavakaviti* due to the grandparent's presence in their family (FU: 28/07/12). Grandparents are important people and their wisdom is a source of knowledge for younger people (Ritchie, 2014).

All participants agreed that the important Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges: *Vakaturaga*, *Lotu*, *Yalomatua* and *Veikavakaviti* were important and ought to be preserved. However, while the majority of the participants agreed about what ought to be preserved, there was a sense of discord around some components of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and practices, specifically around

'discipline' through corporal punishment, the concept of *Silence* and the idea of *Children's Rights*. These ideas were not fully supported by all research participants in this study.

Echoes of discord

Fiji has undergone a transition whereby people choose what is best for them as individuals and sometimes as families and as communities. The days are gone when people listened to only one voice. This study demonstrated that there were those who appear to be embracing change and there were those who do not. My observations during this research study showed that the majority of people are still trying to live a life of compromise between the two extremes of the Indigenous Fijian and the Western. Furthermore, given the pervasive influence of globalisation, today's challenge is to prepare children to choose from the best of what is on offer, without compromising the cultural knowledges of Indigenous Fijians, including the *vakaviti-vakaturaga* values. A key person in the individual interview stated:

> *Our people are going through a time of transition, the transition from the past to the present. I believe that some of our Indigenous Fijian practices needed to be reviewed in the light of today's fast moving world. The world has undergone rapid changes with new innovations and ideas so we may need to work on what is best for us so we are not left out in this big world. There may be some things we can hold onto, but it is evident that some things needed to be reviewed and changed.*
> (II7: 26/07/12)

This excerpt reflects a general view that change is inevitable and that there are ways of working out possible solutions that include the maintenance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. It was evident that there is a need to review some areas of culture that could be barriers to people's progress in this era of transition and globalisation. Along these lines, *Rejieli*, in one of the focus groups, stated:

> *We are living in a time where there are lots and lots of changes. I know some of these changes have touched the very fabric of our culture and for me, I firmly believe that we may need to reflect on what needs to be put aside,*

> *especially parts of our custom that tend to create barriers to our children's learning in schools, but we must not totally discard them as there are some values we need to hold on to, as they are vital.*
> (ECO1: 24/07/12)

Figure 5.3 diagrammatically illustrates the participants' areas of dissonances. These three areas include: discipline through corporal punishment, the ideas of children's rights and the concepts of *vagagalu* (silence). They are now concurrently discussed in the sections that follow.

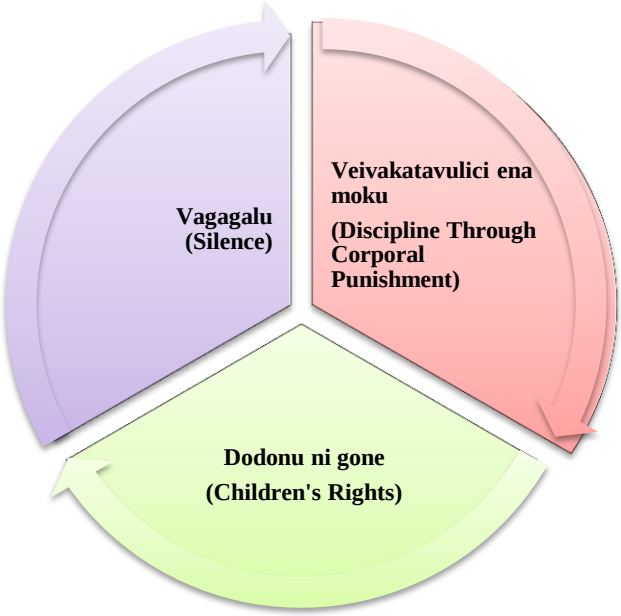

Figure 5-3: Echoes of Discord

Discipline through corporal punishment

All of the research participants saw discipline as a challenge, while at the same time there was some level of disagreement in how corporal punishment was now being used as a disciplinary measure in schools and in homes. Throughout Indigenous Fijian history, adults sought to regulate the orderly behaviour of children through various forms of discipline. One strategy was corporal punishment (refer to Figure 5.3 above), as a participant in one of the focus group interviews explained:

> *In the past, discipline was done both verbally and through corporal punishment. Corporal punishment will only be inflicted if the child disobeys frequently where he/she is being loud, rejecting orders from the elders and*

> *showing signs of disrespect in the village. Community members and parents display silence when corporal punishment is inflicted. The silence depicts community support because this is a traditional norm of discipline. Today corporal punishment is no more. It has now become illegal to beat even your own children. This system has to be followed or else we will face court. I see that it is important that we follow our legal system and I know for sure that there are better ways we can use instead of inflicting corporal punishment [on] our kids.*
> (EED4: 11-7-12)

While corporal punishment (Afifi, 2012) was an integral part of traditional Fijian life (Seruvakula, 2000), there were participants in this study who questioned its value in the modern world. *Ilaisa* drew on his personal childhood experience and explained the harsh discipline that he and his brothers and sisters had received, including physical abuse coupled with the use of demeaning words and phrases (Ferguson, 2013; Gates & Marafioti, 2014). They would remain silent, as this was considered culturally-appropriate and they knew they ought to listen and obey. He further explained that the harsh discipline had now paid off as all of them have good jobs, but he asserted that such negative kinds of discipline are inhumane and ought to be eliminated. He further stated that he had never used such an approach with his children, as he now considered it inappropriate (NV4: 19/07/12).

Corporal punishment, as a form of discipline in the Indigenous Fijian culture, was further strengthened by the Christian biblical verse 'whoever spared the rod, hated or spoiled the child' (Proverbs 13:24; Chain Reference Bible, 2010) *Rosita*, in one the focus groups, reflected on corporal punishment of children:

> *We always get beaten when we do wrong. Even when I was in high school, we get ququnipusi (a smack to the fingers) or we get big qou (a fist blow on the head), if I did not do our homework. We always think this is correct and sometimes when we know we would be beaten we would pretend to be sick. At home I get scolded and sometimes get smacks if I disobey my parents or my elder relatives. Now I am a schoolteacher and I do not like disciplining my students the way I was disciplined, neither to my own children. I just hated this kind of discipline.*

(CED3: 23/07/12)

Rosita further mentioned that teachers needed to respect the change and to abide by the policies of the Ministry of Education in terms of disciplining children. She asserted that corporal punishment must be eliminated and never used as a way of correcting children's behaviour, as there are other positive ways of effectively disciplining children (CED3: 23/07/12).

There were mixed views expressed in the older retired teachers' focus group. While a few of the participants reflected on how the government had legislated to abolish corporal punishment (in schools and even in the homes), other participants suggested that corporal punishment should be used when there is a need, but that it should be done in a compassionate and an educational manner as reflected by *Marika* in one of the focus groups:

> *I believed that corporal punishments are not to be done in a way to physically harm the child. It must be done in a loving way so the child knows why s/he is disciplined and that it must not be repeated.*
> (RST1: 22/7/12)

In contrast, one participant in the *veitalanoa-yaga* mentioned that many Indigenous Fijians youths end up in correctional centres and concluded that this was probably related to the kinds of harsh discipline they had received when they were growing up. (MV5: 12/07/12). Debate about corporal punishment also occurred in a *veitalanoa-yaga*, when an elder participant explained:

> *We have to listen and obey what the government have legislated. We cannot make our own rules, as corporal punishment is not allowed at all at school and I believe this applies to our homes too. We need to respect that. Though it has come against our cultural disciplinary beliefs, you know the world we now live in has changed and will continuously change. We need to try and adapt ourselves to this changing system and work out how we can refocus our disciplinary lens to suit the current situation. This is what I believe and I would suggest that we think properly in how we view changes.*
> (NV4: 19/07/12).

Similar sentiments were heard in another *veitalanoa-yaga* where *Losena* stated:

> *Corporal punishment has been taken away because it is seen as a negative way of disciplining children. We may need to relook at ways of disciplining our children. It sounds insulting to us, as the Western system has infiltrated into our culture and has messed up what we value … I believe we just have to go by the rule of law.*
> (MV4: 12/07/12)

Alternatives to corporal punishment do exist. Indigenous Fijian academic Nabobo-Baba (2006, p. 116) notes that family members 'instruct, advise, or reprimand a child. Children learn by being told things explicitly and by emulating adults'. Illustrative of this approach, *Selai* stated:

> *My father's strictness in seen in how we get to be disciplined at home. While we were never beaten, we get told off hard. No one will dare speak back and there is always an atmosphere of silence in our house. Sometimes when I know we will be getting scolded, I always feel like hiding somewhere because I am always scared at loud angry voices.*
> (ECO5: 24/07/12)

Such an approach to discipline was also mentioned by *Letila* in one of the focus groups when she used the phrase *me da sa veimoku ga ena vosa* (we have to discipline by words and phrases). The choice of words ought to be *laulau* (touching), so that children can realise the reason for the discipline (CED6: 23/07/12). *Makelesi* shared similar ideas and said:

> *I see corporal punishment as harsh and our children are human beings and they do not deserve harsh discipline such as corporal punishment. There are other better ways of disciplining children so we can achieve good outcomes. There are better alternative ways of discipline and we need to choose the appropriate kind.*
> (II2: 22/07/12).

Alternatives to corporal punishment were noted in the *veitalanoa-yaga* in one of the village settings and with one of the selected families.

> *In my village we get made to sit and get a good telling off from our parents or anyone in the family, an elder or a relative. When the offence is serious, we get caned, but it is not too harsh. We are always told that the caning is done for our good. I believe in today's world, corporal*

> *punishment and other forms of physical abuse no longer exist. People need to resort to other positive ways of disciplining children. It is now a culture of the globalised world. We need to abide by it.*
> (NV1: 19/07/12)

> *I used to be caned hard by my parents in those days and I know today they are no longer seen as good. This type of discipline must not be used. We must get away from our harsh ways of disciplining children through caning. This is what I call physical abuse. The olden days have gone and must go with all its ways. The dawn of a new era has its own ways and we need to go along with it. Today, the rights of people are expressed and most parents do not want their children to be disciplined by others. I would not want my child to be given harsh discipline, so I believe while we may disagree with today's ways of disciplining children, we as parents need to resort to looking at positive discipline as an alternative.*
> (FRRV: 16/07/12)

Times have changed and with this have come the need to change to better alternatives for disciplining children. Discipline strategies for children must be aligned with documents such as the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989). Research has also demonstrated that negative reinforcement used as a discipline is linked to low self-esteem, emotional disturbances and other associated negative effects (Strategies to guide young children's behaviour, 2010). It is not at all conducive to children's overall growth and development.

Children's rights

The concept of children's rights was also an area of disagreement between the participants (refer to Figure 5.3), as shown in the excerpts below. Indigenous Fijian children have rights and their rights are embedded in the customs and cultural knowledges embedded in *vakaviti-vakaturaga* (chiefly demeanour). The *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989) declaration appeared to provoke discomfort and mixed feelings among the research participants. *Naca*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga,* expressed disagreement with what were perceived as Western ideas of children's rights and argued:

> *In our days, we feel we belong to a community of people because we are cared [for] and looked after by everyone. Our rights as children were in the hands of our elders who looked after our welfare. Now the type of children's rights that has come today has totally insulted our ways. It has demeaned our custom and has brought inappropriate behaviour to our children. This village will never entertain this kind of behaviour in our children. There needs to be more consultation done regarding this idea.*
> (MV1: 12/7/12)

A similar explanation was given by *Vakacegu* in the same *veitalanoa-yaga* who stated that the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989) does not fit well in the Indigenous Fijian cultural system and he recommended that it be discarded (MV7: 12/7/12). *Litia* explained that Indigenous Fijians have been fooled by such new ideas and argued for the need to look carefully at the advantages and disadvantages of any new ideas before fully embracing them (MV3: 12/07/12). Such cautious reactions to new ideas are to be expected and are considered normal (Fullan, 2011) and consultation and dialogue may help identify the best way forward.

Veitalanoa-yaga participants in one of the selected village sites also expressed their belief that more consultation and constructive dialogue about the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989) should occur so that Indigenous Fijians could understand the meaning of the 'rights' of children as set out in the document (NV2; NV4; NV6: 19/7/12). However, *Emori* suggested that such rights have come about because children have been unfairly treated and he asked the *veitalanoa-yaga* group to view things in an open and positive way because such documents would not have been developed without evidence of the mistreatment of children (NV1: 19/7/12).

Ratu Semi reported how he had heard people in his village community say, *dui lewa ga na luvena* (boss your own children). He says that the phrase illustrated the changes that have resulted from a gap between the past and the present. He noted that a child born in the village belongs to the village and that the village elders and relatives should then teach the child culturally-appropriate ways of doing things and that this is how they will know their rights. The rights of the

child that has come to us from outside has trapped some parents into deciding to detach themselves from the way of Indigenous Fijians in trying to embrace a new culture. It is a matter of choice and he asserted the need for Indigenous Fijians to be positive and critically assess situations, as there are always solutions to challenges. *Ena dodonu me na tiko e dua na kena iwalewale e matau me da na ciqoma kina na dodonu oqo vei ira na luveda* (There is surely an available way that will allow us to embrace this *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989; NS: 20/01/12).

Similarly, *Pita*, a key informant, expressed the view that there were differences in rights for our Indigenous Fijian children and the rights of the Western world. However, he further mentioned that, although the *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989) contradicts Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges, there was a way to work out where the mismatch was and work out the best solution to embrace both knowledges without demeaning either (II10: 24/07/12).

Children are important to Indigenous Fijians and they are taught appropriate ways of behaving. All adults in the village have a role in influencing a young person as they grow up. The *United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989), while sparking mixed reactions amongst Indigenous Fijians, can be better understood with consultation and alignment to the context of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges.

Vagagalu (Silence)

Silence was another area of disagreement (refer to Figure 5.3), as documented in the excerpts presented in this section. *Vagagalu* is and has been demonstrated in many ways by Indigenous Fijians. Nabobo-Baba (2006) proposed an eighteen-point taxonomy of silence that is culturally-desirable to most Indigenous Fijians. In most educational institutions, these ways of *vagagalu* are evident and open to misinterpretation. For example, the absence of verbal replies, questions and comments from children is interpreted by some educators as a sign of stupidity or lack of participation, and is considered a problem:

> *I come from a family that, when our parents talk, we remain vagagalu (silent) whether they are right or wrong. I bring this notion of silence to school and therefore I listen to the teachers and I will not dare ask a question. While we need to maintain the importance of our custom, I think I need to point out that in situations such as the school we need to encourage our children to speak up and ask questions they need to [ask] in order that they understand what is being taught. This is important. (CED9: 23/07/12)*

Selai, an education curriculum officer in one of the focus groups, also stressed the need for Indigenous Fijian children to be encouraged to be vocal and engage in the teaching and learning processes. She asserted that Indigenous Fijian children today have to show that they are as competent as others in the classroom by being bold, asking questions and seeking clarification from teachers (ECO5: 24/07/12).

Similarly, *Rusila*, a key informant, asserted that this part of Indigenous Fijian culture (silence in the classroom) needed to be challenged, so children could explore possibilities in learning (CED9: 23/07/12). A teacher participant in one of the focus group shared her teaching experiences:

> *I have been teaching for the last twenty years. In all these years, I see differences in achievements of children of other races compared to the Indigenous Fijian children. What I saw was that our Indigenous Fijian children are always at the lower achievement scale compared to children of other ethnic groups. This may probably because our children pretend to know it all by not asking questions while the rest of the ethnic groups will keep persisting with me until they understand the problems. It is hard to encourage them to speak up.*
>
> (CED2: 23/07/12)

It is the notion of keeping *vagagalu* as a mark of respect for teachers that disadvantages Indigenous Fijian children in contrast to children from other ethnic groups. Some participants raised the need to challenge this concept so that children could be better positioned in the globalised world that requires them to speak up and be more autonomous and democratic (II4: 25/07/12; EED4: 11/07/12). This is similar to what *Mereia* mentioned when she said that

Indigenous Fijian children would be left behind and the cultural concept of silence should be challenged in educational settings. Similar dissonance around silence is also evident in the following excerpts from participants who stated:

> *I do not entertain the concept of silence to my children. I encouraged them to speak up at school and even at home.*
> (RST6: 22/07/12)

> *You know, in my school days, we never talked back to our teachers, or even asked for clarifications if there was something not familiar to us. As I thought back, such silence is not a good idea because it [keeps] us [from] knowledge that we ought to know. This notion of silence in the classroom must be taken away.*
> (CED5: 23/07/12)

Silence was regarded as an issue by most research participants. In the focus group with teachers in the remote rural (Eastern Education District-EED), they collectively agreed to eliminate children's silences in the classroom.

> *You know, as teachers, we try to understand, and we try our best to break that barrier, but it is difficult becaus*e *this has been part of our custom. We think this has to go away if we want our children to learn and to be just as competitive as the rest of the children in other ethnic groups.*
> (EED1-5: 11/07/12)

This section has discussed several Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges that some research participants think must be challenged in order for children to learn more effectively in both early childhood and in schools. These were areas where participants disagreed. However, in this study, I proposes that Indigenous Fijian children need to have a balance of their 'being' and how they can learn and grow to 'become' who they are in the future. This notion links well with the Australian *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) that identifies the notion of *Belonging, Being and Becoming* as key overarching concepts (DEEWR, 2009).

These notions links directly to the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and practices of *veiwekani* (relationship and where we belong) and where mentoring is part and parcel of the molding process to make ready a 'being' for the future (become) As mentioned earlier in the chapter that no Indigenous Fijian exists on

the basis of individuality as people are related and belong to a group. This is also where the being is bound to obey and respect the elders who are the superiors. As in the concept of the Australian *Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being And Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009); children must feel belong to the learning environment. It is in this learning environment the 'being' is developed in preparation for a good future (becoming). In other words, the elders or adult presence are vital for teaching-learning process of the young child. This is the similar kind of niche that prepares Indigenous Fijians for the future.

Chapter synthesis

This chapter captured what the Indigenous Fijian participants in the research study recalled about their childhoods and the beliefs, values and experiences they want maintained for their children into the future. All participants agreed that the *vakaturaga* ideals are important, even those who had greater exposure to Western culture. There were some Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges, participants thought was not as important in today's globalised world. This included discipline through corporal punishment and also the concept of demonstrating *vakarokoroko/veidokai* through keeping *vagagalu* (silence) in the classrooms. Echoes of disagreement were also seen in the issue of children's rights, as here some participants thought that children's rights are not 'right' as they contradicted Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge (refer to Figure 5.3, p. 156). Finding a way to navigate through these concepts contradictions are an ongoing challenges in this times of global transition.

Chapter 6

Dichotomy between Indigenous Fijian Child Development Knowledges and the Western Educational Knowledges.

> *How can we close the gap between the school as the carrier of an alien culture and that of the community as the custodian of traditional culture? (Teasdale & Teasdale, 1995, p. 12).*

Introduction

The previous chapter presented the important aspects of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges that the research participants wanted to see maintained and the aspects where there were some disagreements about their continuing relevance. This chapter presents the research findings that focus on the participants' understandings of what education was for them in the past and what it is today. From the data, it appeared that early childhood education was a less considered aspect of education in the past but was evident that schools beginning in the early years were a major transmitter of Western ideologies (Duenkel et al, 2014). These ideologies have affected child development knowledges and practices, particularly the ways in which families parent their children. Thus the key headings presented in this chapter include:

- Early Childhood Education/Schooling, its changes and challenges in Indigenous Fijian Educational ideas;
- The benefits of Early Childhood Education and meanings for Early Childhood Education settings and practices;
- Young children and educational settings today;
- Childhood Education /School and languages; Childhood Education /Schooling, thinking styles and knowledge systems; and
- Implications for young children and Childhood Education policies and practices

Early Childhood Education/Schooling: Changes and Challenges in Indigenous Fijian Educational Ideas

Two education systems have existed in Fiji from colonial times. They are the traditional education system of the Indigenous Fijians and the Western education system. Although Fiji became independent from the United Kingdom in 1970, the legacy of colonisation continues in Fiji's education system, as experienced by the research participants in this study. For example, *Ratu Semi,* in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga,* stated:

> *Our way of life changed dramatically, especially in the introduction of the Western ideas. In those days, schooling was not compulsory as of today. While some of us enjoyed school, most did not because the environment was so different. There were lots of drop-outs [paused] why? Yes because the system of education was different from our very own. These dropouts find their way back to our own traditional education system to learn life skills that will help them survive in the world; and my father said, he was one of those drop-outs. However, he knew how to survive in the natural world. But as for me, though I went to school and now I am retired from work, I am nowhere near in traditional knowledge my father had. I don't even know how to weave a proper food basket. I went to school in the church school and we did a lot of Bible study. There was less study about our culture. We studied a lot of Arithmetic and English and studied the History and Geography of Europe and other parts of the world. All these were not related to Fiji and I use to wonder why we had to study all these foreign countries.*
> (NS: 20/07/12)

This narrative demonstrates how hegemonic Western discourses enabled resistance and, at the same time, provided a leeway for children to quit school. The literature (e.g. Fleer et al, 2006; Rogoff, 2003) reinforces the importance of environment and contexts as potentials to drive learning. In sharing his experiences, *Marika*, in one of the focus groups, stated:

> *In my school days, learning was associated with things the missionaries thought were important to us. We learned how to read and do arithmetic. There was a lot of rote learning. Colonialism type of learning too promoted a conflict of the values for example working*

> *independently or the idea of individualism. As for me, I found it difficult to be just myself because I was brought up in the ways of the many and we collaborate in all things we do. I know this conflict still exists today.*
> (RST: 22/07/12)

Excerpts from the *veitalanoa-yaga* tell a great deal about the changes brought about in Fiji through colonisation, including how such changes affected traditional ways of knowing, learning and doing. The *Rokosau* family described the effects in this way:

> *Life in the colonial days as I remember was a total change in how we do things. For example we were told to go to school because it was good. The Western ideas of schooling as we were told by our parents will bring good life because we will be able to work and have money and be able to live independently rather than living communally as we have in villages where people bother each other.*
> (FRR: 16/07/12).

Pita, a key informant in the individual interviews, explained how colonisation infiltrated into village life. For him going to school was a totally new experience and, although he was not keen to go, he went out of respect for his parents.

> *I was only five years and was told to go to school following my older brothers and sisters. I tried my best to learn in the new environment. Everything was new to me. I struggled to speak the English language and I kept persisting to learn. It was different from my learning in the village. I felt so small and congested as we were confined to a small classroom and would come out only if we got our tasks all correct. I was too scared to ask questions because I did not know how to translate it to good English, but I kept trying.*
> (II10: 24/07/12)

Obviously, these excerpts demonstrate the struggles and, of course, the potential emotional disturbances that could occur in children in school settings that were new and totally different from home life in terms of language and ways of interacting. This illustrates the need to create meaningful transitions as a way to bridge the gap between the home and the educational settings (Hirst et al, 2011). During one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, *Temo* described his experience:

> *We were told to wear uniforms and stay long hours in the classroom to learn reading, writing and arithmetic. These three subjects were compulsory and we need to pass them in our exams. In addition, speaking in the mother tongue language was not allowed and would result in punishment, if spoken within the school premises.*
> (NV7: 17/07/12)

Similarly, *Isimeli*, a key respondent in the individual interviews, particularly mentioned that understanding and speaking English was crucial, as it was the language of learning in schools.

> *We were not allowed to speak our own mother tongue language, it was seen as useless. We had no option but to learn and speak English because it was made official language and the dominant language in classrooms. Most of us just spoke it anyhow, and in most times our sentence was grammatically wrong. In some cases, we would be mixing English and Indigenous Fijian language together in order to make a sentence. However, as for me I persisted because I do not want to get punished.*
> (II5: 26/07/12)

Generally, as found in the above narratives, there was discord between the Indigenous Fijian ways of knowing and the introduced English education of the Western education system. *Salome*, a retired schoolteacher in one of the focus groups, explained that the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were different from today and changes have impacted on the way people see things:

Our past had a different system as what we have today. Education to us dealt with lifelong learning and knowing – it is learning and knowing that is unique, meaningful and relevant to the environment and our societal set up. Our learning and knowing is shared within the village community right throughout the generations of Indigenous Fijian people. (RST5: 22/07/120)

Pita, one of the key informants in the individual interview, took a broader perspective:

> *We cannot resist change, however, we need to be wary of the positives and negatives outcome of change. I believe we need to take what is best for us. My time is totally different from today's time. To me, I am now looking at a*

> *new era of Indigenous Fijian people [pause] but if people are not careful, we will join the group of the lost generation because most of us now prefer to use the kaivalagi (European) ways rather than ours. It is all about choices.*
> (II10: 24/07/12)

This narrative demonstrates a perception about choice in choosing the type of change that best suits the context and the people. However, this ought to be change that will sustain Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges rather than one that diminishes it, as the *Bolabola* family in the rural remote village explained:

> *Our people have changed because of the changes that have infiltrated into our traditional system. I am wondering how the Indigenous Fijian culture will look like in the next century. Schools have brought much change to us – but I believe that we should use schools too as places where we can strengthen our culture – it all depends on the government of the day. As it is, our culture is a taken for granted subject in the school curriculum. I think my days at school were better because we learn the protocols of culture, we learn some traditional technology of gardening and even fishing.*
> (FRR1: 16/07/12)

This narrative reflects thoughts about a time when traditional knowledges seem to be vanishing. A more positive approach may come if early childhood settings and schools become agents of change, supporting cultural empowerment and sustainability. Davis and Elliott (2014) and Davis (2015; 2014) speak of the importance of sustainability in various ways, including culture. Ritchie (2012) and Miller (2014) assert the importance of including and embedding local Indigenous knowledges in early childhood education programs, in order to strengthen Indigenous understandings.

Rusila, one of the key participants in the individual interviews, recounted how she would sit and watch her grandfather as he carved and she further noted that today things have changed.

> *He had the wisdom of traditional technology and he knew the methods, techniques, skills, practices, processes and artifacts expected of a carved product. Though he did not attend any formal school, he had learned such handy*

> *work from his elders in the village ... We no longer do this kind of things, and seems that most of us have preferred the changes. Our elders have passed on and their wisdom and knowledge goes with them because we have not bothered to know them. Because of that, we are lost and it affects how we theorise our own knowledges and wisdoms.*
> (II8: 20/07/12)

Similarly, traditional hands-on and on-site learning were the ways of learning and education for Indigenous Fijians as reflected by *Siteri* in one of the focus groups. She further noted that in learning this way, she and her other siblings were able to learn how to weave mats and cooking on fire (RST6: 22/07/12). These concepts of learning are not emphasised in today's educational settings such as in early childhood, and early primary school years because the focus seemed to be more inclined on rote learning. Further to that, *Mereisi* noted:

> *In my school days, we were told to work on our own and never speak to anyone. This was new to me as I was used to being together and doing things together. Our belief is no one ever exists on his or her own. People work together all the time. Today this has changed and most of us prefer to be more individualistic.*
> (II6: 25/07/12)

This statement demonstrates that some Indigenous Fijians have accepted changes in the world around them and this has impacted on the way they do things, which in turn affects their understanding of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. *Isimel*i, one of the key informants, explained:

> *Change is fine and we just have to be careful that our ways of knowing and doing are not demeaned by the changes that are rapidly coming into our land. We need to be asking questions and looking for answers that will empower us to be strong in the midst of such change. It is our culture that defines us from the rest of the world. We may need to re-think and reconceptualise our space as we [tread] along with the new concepts.*
> (II5: 26/07/12)

While colonisation initiated this process of change, it is clear that people's choices are also a factor. Most Indigenous Fijian people know too well the difficulty of trying to reconcile the values of the formal school system against the

demands of allegiance to the traditions of the home culture. For Indigenous Fijians, the whole Western type of education is seen as important. Parents need their children to be educated in Western concepts because of the need to have a career that will see their children live a good life. A *good life* is commonly perceived as having a secure job and earning money, having a good family with good health and wellbeing (Nabobo-Baba & Tiko, 2009; Warr et al, 2013). However, coupled with this is a need to understand and embrace Indigenous Fijian knowledges. All the research informants pointed to the Western education system as the major transmitter of new ideologies, resulting in the consequent decline of their own and others' Indigenous knowledges. In relation to this, *Ratu Semi*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, argued:

> *In Fiji the model of teaching and learning is nothing more than a Western design and concepts, like individual rights and freedoms, independence, equality and access and also the notions of privacy. In addition, parents choose what they want for their children, and most of the changes seen in children are what they learn in schools, even beginning at the lower levels, which is early childhood. This is in contrast to the Indigenous Fijian ways of learning and knowing where learning is governed by the need to maintain group harmony, the values of cooperation, good relationship, consensus and respect lead[ing] naturally to congruent learning strategies such as the preference for working in groups, interacting with peers, and learning through observations, imitation and doing.*
> (NS: 20/07/12)

This excerpt reflects the reality that up to the present time the Fijian Ministry of Education has promoted *vuli* (schooling/education) in the Western concepts, which has continued to be determined by colonial legacies. *Rosana*, in reminiscing about what her father told of his school days, focused on this idea:

> *My father was admitted to school very late. In those early days in the 1940s and 1950s, age was not an issue, as all they needed to know was to read from the Bible, write their names and count properly forwards and backwards. Their afternoon program was filled with activities such as gardening, carving and collecting coconuts. In my time, it is different. We learned Arithmetic, a bit of Science and English, and Fijian Idioms and Customs. We did*

> *gardening and some building at the end of the day. We love doing this because they are familiar to us. Doing Arithmetic was very difficult for me and learning another language was hard enough but it was compulsory that we know English and we do as we are told.*
> (CED4: 23/07/12)

Marika explained that over the years there have been a lot of changes in the school curriculum. He noted that children learn several subject areas at primary level and choose subjects at the high-school level. The chosen subjects are to prepare students for their chosen career. The aim is to support a career that will give them money so they can live independently and successfully (Nabobo-Baba & Tiko, 2009). *Marika* further noted that there was little emphasis on culture and pointed out that Indigenous Fijians will now need to rethink and think deeply about their culture and where they were now heading. He further emphasised that Indigenous Fijian culture must remain in the minds and in the hearts of the people and must be practised for as long as they live (RST1: 22/07/12). *Peni* responded in a similar manner:

> *What is now taught in schools is not relevant to our culture. Our children need to be taught about Indigenous Fijian culture and be taught by teachers who have the knowledge of our culture. If teachers do not have the depth of our culture, then they can ask the elders of the community.*
> (RST3: 22/07/12)

Filise further noted that the school system has changed many of the ways of being in the culture of Indigenous Fijians. He noted the way his grandchildren seemed to ignore custom, though they knew and understand it very well (NV6: 19/07/12). On a similar note, *Temo* said that children today pretended not to know Indigenous Fijian culture and this is demonstrated in the lack of respect they show for the elders. He argued that the more Western educated Fijians become the more they *viavia kaivalagi* (want to be European).

> *Indigenous Fijian parents must have the time to teach culture to their children. I can see that schools are not giving our children the best of our culture, and if we want our culture to survive, the onus is on us parents to make space at home for culture.*
> (NV7: 19/07/12)

As mentioned earlier how change and school as a major transmitter of Western ideologies, *Savenaca* similarly noted that children choose the Western concepts introduced in schools because they want to have secured life from the jobs they would choose. The fact that schooling is accessible to all children also ensures that Western ideologies are widely shared. He noted that today, children are given more rights to choose what they want to study:

> *The world is open to the children as to what they want to be in the future. In schools, they are given the freedom of choice of subjects relevant to the career of their choice. Schools train our children to be independent beings.*
> (MV8: 12/07/12)

Again, *Ratu Semi* further noted that change in Indigenous Fijian culture has occurred partly because parents have chosen to change. They want their children to be educated in good schools, so they can have a good and stable future and these meant good life:

> *Parents choose educational settings they want their children to go to, and [the] majority choose schools according to the percentage pass level, and early childhood settings that prioritise English language. I have never heard a parent to say that they choose a particular school because they want their children to be exposed to Indigenous Fijian culture. To me this is a sign that shows that Indigenous Fijian parents want their children to be educated more in the western world. But little do they realise that they too must do their part of making time and space for their children to be wary of the things that go against our cultural norms. Our cultural knowledge is morally and ethically sound which I believe parents must be aware of in these changing times.*
> (NS: 20/07/12)

It is apparent from the *Ratu Semi's* comments that the school preferences of Indigenous Fijians were more inclined to the Western system of education rather than their own. He further noted *era sa sega ni vakavulici na gone, ka sa vuqa na veika vovou era taura mai tuba wili kina na veika eso e vakatavulici tiko mai koronivuli* (Children are not taught well from home, therefore they have embraced foreign concepts from outside and also in schools).

Sakiusa, an elder in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, also noted that the school system has brought differences in the ways in which Indigenous Fijian children conduct themselves. He explained how he saw his twelve-year-old son talking back to an elder saying *iko sega ni lewai au* (You don't have any ownership over me). This he explained was an insult to him as a parent since the elder was a relative and a clan elder. He noted what the relative said to him with regards to the conduct of his son, and he willingly approved for this to be documented.

> *Teach your son to behave like an Indigenous Fijian child who knows who he is in this village. Though he is just a child, it that does not give him the right to talk back to me. He is to be taught now; otherwise he can never learn the right way, that is our way of respect. Your son can turn out to be a very arrogant person in the future, if his manner is not addressed now. If children are not supposed to be of this type, teach him well and teach him the proper ways that we are known for.*
> (NV2: 19/07/12)

The words of this relative reflected how parents need to prioritise more time with their children, so that they could use this time to teach the appropriate Indigenous Fijian ways of doing things. Parents need to play a significant role in children's lives (Able et al, 2014), if the children are to display exemplary behaviours that fit with Indigenous Fijian society.

Similarly, *Marika*, in the same focus group pointed out how children in the village speak with each other. There seemed to be a lack of Indigenous Fijian lexicon used by the children, and children commonly mixed the Indigenous Fijian language with English to make complete sentences. He provided an example he had overheard from two children conversing:

Mere: *Jone iko lako ivei?* (Where are you going Jone?)

Jone: *Au lako na* ***shop*** (I am going to the shop).

Mere: *Iko baci lai voli cava? Au* ***gues****taka?* (Can I guess what you are going to buy?)

Jone: *Au lai volia mai e rua na* ***tin meat*** (I'm going to buy two tins of meat).

(RST1: 22/07/12)

Marika suggested that Western education has led children to mix codes between English and Fijian and how the emphasis on English has created a bias in how children speak. *Marika* believed this should be a concern to parents, because children must also be able to speak fluent Indigenous Fijian (RST1: 22/07/12). The assumption here is that a mix of languages in conversations signaled a lack of fluency in the Indigenous Fijian language.

In another account, *Mereseini*, a respondent in one of the selected *veitalanoa-yaga* sites, noted how children's knowledges, their relationships and blood ties have diminished. She recalled that one of her nieces was sent by her father to *Mereseini's* house to ask for sugar. Her nine-year-old niece stood at the door and said *au mai kau suka* (I'm coming to get some sugar). *Mereseini* considered this to be a signal of total disrespect, as the child did not accord her title as an aunty, *nei* (aunty), nor did the child ask politely using *kerekere* (please). *Mereseini* said she accompanied the child back to her cousin-brother's home and asked the parents to take some responsibility to teach his children appropriate cultural Indigenous Fijian behaviours (MV5: 12/07/12).

Research participants in the Central Education Division (CED) focus group discussed issues of privacy and viewed schools transmit this idea to children. *Anaseini*, one of the female participants, explained that privacy is not an Indigenous Fijian concept but a Western one that has been encouraged in the school system (CED10: 23/07/12). This works against the Indigenous Fijian concept of cooperation, consensus, sharing and inter-dependence. The notion of minding your own business is not part of the mind-set of Indigenous Fijians, because the business of a person is the business of all. Thus, a web of relationships exists in the minds of Indigenous Fijians regardless of the province they were from. Such notions were similarly voiced by research participants in the *veitalanoa-yaga* and the interviews, for example:

> *Today Indigenous Fijian people talk about their privacies. As a result some do not attend village meetings because they say they have their right whether or not to attend meetings or village gatherings. In the past, there is no such thing as privacy, we all hear only one voice and that is the chief's voice.*
> (NV6: 19/07/12)

> *We look after each other in the villages. There is no such thing as none of your business because everyone cares for everyone's business.*
> (II4: 25/07/12)

In reflecting on his concerns about the changes and challenges to Indigenous Fijian culture, *Ilaisa* noted:

> *I am concerned at the extent to which our education system sees culture. I believe that the Ministry of Education must uphold the culture of the people in its policies and practices so the knowledges, skills and values important to the people are maintained in our children. This is to ensure culture continuity, thus upholding our identity.*
> (NV4: 19/07/12)

With regards to this idea, educational settings such as early childhood and generally schools were repeatedly mentioned as the primary means of perpetuating the skills and knowledges of the Western world, which Indigenous Fijian children are required to learn, even though much of it does not seen to have relevance to the Indigenous Fijian way of life. *Ilaisa* and *Naca*, elders in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* noted that most of the Indigenous Fijian younger generation were losing the knowledge and skills of the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and, worse still, the skills of speaking formal Fijian. *Naca* further noted that knowing one's culture is essential and there is a need for the home environment and the school environment to work together in maintaining culture (MV1: 12/07/12). The schools must be reflective of the rights of children, as stipulated in the 1989 United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989) and in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous peoples (UNDRIP; UNICEF, 2008), to have their culture honoured and supported (NV: 20/07/12). Two elders, *Naca* and *Ilaisa*, further noted the need for dialogue between the two settings of home and school as the best way forward to ensure that children have the best authentic knowledges of both worlds (MV1: 12/07/12; NV4: 19/07/12).

Further, *Ratu Semi*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained how early childhood and school settings have mainly focused on Western ideas, while ignoring Indigenous Fijian ways of knowing and doing.

> *Through the concepts of schooling, it also brought adverse influences into our Indigenous Fijian system, for example, the respect accorded, like Adi and Ratu to children of chiefly status are not allowed in schools, this demeans our cultural knowledge of respect. This has been a school rule that all children are equal and such accordance can be done only out of the school premises or in the village.*
> (NS: 20/07/12)

Similarly, *Lomayaco*, one of the key informants, explained how in her school days she would be told to leave all cultural knowledges at home and to learn to abide by the school ethos when she enter the school premises.

> *As we travelled to school, we would be talking about the school rules and sometimes we would laugh along the way because we would be teasing each other how we speak broken English. The half an hour walk was all about talking of doing the right thing in school. Everything in school was new to us because we were taught of things differently from our home and village culture. As soon as we enter the school premises, we all switched to the school rules, its code of conduct, and have to be like that the whole day. For me, I always looked forward to the end of the school day so I can speak my own language.*
> (II11: 29/07/12)

Sera, in one of the focus groups, described her experience during her primary school days:

> *I remembered I was only five and half years old when I was told to go for muri vuli (follow school). There was no kindergarten at that time in our village. There were few others who were of the same age group as me. We were all placed in the grade one room to observe what the grade one pupils did. My experience was not good. We used to get punished every Monday morning for not attending Sunday church services. Monday was known as court hearing day, and those who knew they would get punished would be absent that day. I always feared Monday mornings. Amidst that, my parents would always keep reminding us of the importance of schooling and it always echoes to me today what they always tell us that we need to work hard so that we can get a good job and earn money to look after ourselves and our relatives.*
> (CED5: 23/07/12)

In another focus group, *Mereia* described how fearful she was when her teacher got angry during class:

> *When my teacher gets angry, I always look for the nearest exist so I can run home. School was scary for me because it was like a military setting. Teachers were always raising their voices. I never hear loud voices from home, as my parents and the rest of the family would always talk to us in a soft and loving way.*
> (EED2: 11/07/12)

Seini, in the same focus group, mentioned that she never asked questions in school, because she feared being ridiculed. So she always remained quiet and worked silently on her own. She noted that they were not allowed to speak with anyone or discuss answers with anyone, as they were required to work on their individual tasks and be able to think hard (EED3: 11/07/12). *Tuwai* in sharing his experience stated:

> *I always looked for reasons to stay away from class because it was boring. I prefer to be working outside, especially doing gardening. When our teachers asks us to get shoots of crops to plant the next day, I will not attend the rest of the classes and only turn up during the gardening session. When asked why I was late, I always say that I was looking for my shoots.*
> (MV2: 12/07/12)

People have different ways of viewing schools and the way the participants related their experiences tells us much about what school meant to them. However, today's generations have different experiences of school. While so many changes and challenges have been brought about by schooling, participants also saw potential benefits associated with elements of Westernised schooling. This are now discussed in the section that follows.

Benefits and meanings for early childhood education and schools settings and practices.

Schooling brought with it changes and new ways of thinking and some Indigenous Fijian participants saw these changes as having advantages (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). For example, *Sotia*, in one of the focus groups, explained:

> *I come from the Lau province and I believe most of us Lau people are taught to see schooling as an opportunity for the future. My parents had to work hard to see us do well in school. They use to say that we need to work hard in school so we can have a good job and be able to stand on our own two feet without relying on anyone. There are four of us in the family and we all did well in school. All of us are teachers in the primary schools today.*
> (CED2: 23/07/12)

Schooling was seen as important and leverage to a better life. This was my own experience, as discussed in Chapter One, where my parents struggled to get us to school in order that we might later secure a good job and be able to live a successful future life. The account provided by *Sotia* (and all the participants in this study) illustrated the struggles and particularly of *Lau* people to go to school because of the island's geographical scattered locations, coupled with limited resources that place such communities and schools in these islands at a disadvantage. Further to that, *Losalini*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained:

> *My father encouraged us to work hard in school because he saw it as good though he still thinks we still need to maintain our Indigenous Fijian identity. That was how my father saw schooling and the fact that we had only a small piece of land made him encourage us that if we work hard and get a good job, we can buy our own lands and work it out so we can get benefits out of it.*
> (MV10: 12/07/112)

Lau people generally prioritised schooling and religion in their families. This is probably why most *Lau* people are well-educated (in the Western system), having gained top positions in the government and in the private sectors. The majority of their children are selected for scholarships due to their academic achievements. However, these generalisations may be disputed by some Indigenous Fijians.

The *Biauniwasa* family also mentioned that schooling had positive impacts, which was evident in their own family.

> *Schooling is a good concept and I say this because all my children have achieved well in school and have now worked and earned their individual living. As a parent, I think I have parented them well and now they have earned money and they in turn are helping us back. This*

> *is why I see schooling as an investment for our children, but I understand some of us have failed – it's just that we are different in how we see things.*
> (FU: 28/07/12)

Participants contrasted their experiences during their education, which was after Fiji's independence from the United Kingdom to what is now currently happening in schools, as one elder in a *veitalanoa-yaga* said:

> *My parents supported my going to school. I was taught to learn English more. There was no emphasis on what I was taught from home. I struggle to learn things from other worlds like in Geography where I had to learn how agriculture was managed in the other parts of the world like New Zealand and United Kingdom. I did not ask why but had to learn because it was part of the school curriculum.*
> (NV1: 19/07/12)

Schooling after independence became more popular amongst Indigenous Fijians. Most had to leave their villages and travelled to the mainland to give their children higher education. This was especially so for people living in outer islands such as *Lau* and *Lomaiviti* (refer to Figure 4.1, p. 70) as these islands had no high schools.

> *We had to leave our island to come to the mainland to continue with our high-school education. Schooling was a fashion to us in those days. I studied subjects that were to prepare myself to the job I wanted to become.*
> (II2: 22/07/12)

Along a similar line, *Rupeni*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, stated:

> *We were made to go to school as our parents thought this was the light and the ways of the whites were better than ours. This light would take us to a better world where we will have to work to earn money and have a good life.*
> (MV6: 25/07/12)

Participants also shared their experiences of how some of the traditional ways of learning and doing were promoted during their school days, as *Mereseini*, one of the key participants, explained:

> *Traditional arts and craft works was part of our school curriculum and I find this interesting because it was familiar learning to us. We make kava bowls, small canoes and other Indigenous Fijian artifacts using wood, while the girls would weave some small size mats and plait other stuff using pandanus leaves.*
> (II7: 26/07/12)

This narrative demonstrates familiar cultural learning as a vital component in any educational program. While the importance of culturally-constructed settings, where children feel they belong and see familiar images is acknowledged (Fleer et al., 2006; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978), there were participants who only experienced the imposition of Western ideas that were promoted as superior to Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges (II11: 29/07/12). Also, teachers were viewed by participants as knowledge holders and providers. *Marika*, in one of the focus groups, explained:

> *Chiefs and clan elders saw that schools were important and for this reason teachers were treated as highly respected people in the village community. To me, they were second to the village chief and clan elders. They were provided all the support to teaching, even to the extent of supporting them to provide us disciplinary measures like corporal punishment – they say this was to make us better people.*
> (RST6: 22/07/12)

Teachers were respected by the community and thus provided support and this extended to disciplinary measures where parents approved of teachers inflicting corporal punishment. This is now illegal and is not a pedagogically appropriate way of disciplining children (Bear, 2010). Schooling also had its drawbacks, as expressed by the participants in this study with some examples discussed in the section that follows.

Young children and educational settings today

Research informants continued to compare what they experienced during their early primary school days to what they now see in early childhood education and schools. *Biau*, a curriculum officer in one of the focus groups, explained how the digital world has influenced children (Warburton & Highfield, 2012). It also

takes up much of children's time, which they spend indoors, making them physically unfit and contributing to their obesity (Kimbro et al, 2011). In his observation, *Biau* said:

> *Children today are part of a digital generation that has grown up in a world surrounded by technology and the Internet and they are using mobile phones, tablets, e-readers and computers on a daily basis. In our time, there was no such technology. These technologies are now used in schools as a tool for learning. However, the problem lies when there are no restrictions to Internet sites and so our children get access to things like inappropriate sites and other stuff.*
> (ECO3: 24/07/12)

Such a reflection has implications for primary schools and also for early childhood education in relation to the need to develop policies guiding the usage and security of the Internet with children. In contrasting past school days to the present, *Rokosau*, in one of the family's *veitalanoa-yaga*, commented:

> *In my school days, we used to play outside and even explore the hills around our village, picking up pebbles and other stones to play with and also we use them as our counters during math class. During recess we would play traditional hopscotch games whereas our children today are entertaining themselves with a variety of internet-enabled devices, and getting to grips with the latest technology. Most of our children today hardly go outside and they get stuck indoor and entertain themselves with all these games.*
> (FRR: 16/07/12)

It was also noted that contemporary children know important calendar events that are celebrated and are now expecting gifts that come with Westernised concepts of birthdays and Christmas. Indigenous Fijian children are no exception and they tend to remind parents of such events, especially the gifts that are relevant to such celebrations, as *Lomayaco*, a key informant in the individual interview, explained:

> *Even when Christmas time draws near, my kids would be reminding me of presents such as video games, smartphones and digital cameras. All these technological gifts like e-readers. I was surprised that even my little three year old girl asked for a smart game because she said her friend has one at preschool. I did not even go to*

> *preschool in my childhood days. I played with my friends and we played traditional games outdoor. Even during our morning and lunch breaks during our school days, we just love to play outside using our little stones and pebbles. We sit in pairs and challenge the other pair.*
> (II11: 29/07/12).

Change affects children as they assimilate the ways of today's world. Parents should address these generational changes explicitly, so children can understand why parents may not comply with their requests for gifts. Participants further explained that they had seen some instances where Indigenous Fijian children had told their parents outright that, by law, they were prohibited from using corporal punishment. *Kelera*, a parent and teacher in one of the focus groups, explained:

> *School children nowadays are vocal. My three children came home from school and one of them said I am not allowed to give them corporal punishment. They learned that from school and they also were told of their children's rights. I sat all of them down and told them, they will be punished, if they do wrong and I stressed to them that they have a responsibility to play in their rights. They agreed with me. This is what has happened in most schools, and if parents are not careful, these kids can run all over us, but we need to tell our kids of their responsibilities to their rights.*
> (CED9: 23/07/12)

The above narrative demonstrated a conflict of cultural interests in disciplining children in the Indigenous Fijian cultural ways and the Western. This study, while acknowledging the lens of how Indigenous Fijians view of disciplining children, it thus looks at alternatives and more meaningful ways that better serve how children learn. The model developed out of this study (refer to Chapter Eight) could foster better understandings, better affirmative ways and positive discipline practices, seeing discipline as a way of learning rather than a demeaning and harmful inhuman way as informed by the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989).

In another case, *Basulu*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained how sex education is now taught to young primary school children. Sex is a taboo subject in Indigenous Fijian culture and is not talked about publicly. However, because

of change, this has become part of the school curriculum where it is now discussed freely during classes. *Basulu*, is a particularly concerned parent who pointed a finger at the school as being responsible for the way children behave as they do:

> *No wonder our children go out in the streets and practise things they learned in schools. Young girls are getting pregnant at an early age and the schools should be blamed.*
> (NV5: 19/07/12)

In relation to this, *Ratu Semi*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, also explained:

> *Schooling in the past century is different to this twenty-first century. I want to share that the way we as Indigenous Fijians accepted schooling was because we were to get civilised in the European world as the early Missionaries thought we were primitive. To me this is wrong, we have been civilised in our own way. We can also call the Missionaries primitive too because they are not civilised in our ways. Well, my point is, our education system has dictated much of what our children need to know. Some of the things taught at school goes against our traditions and morals. A classic example is the teaching of sex education openly in schools. You know, this dilutes how we preserve our knowledge system.*
> (NSV: 20/07/12)

In another data gathering session with one of th ekey people, *Makelesi* shared this experience:

> *I remember how we got called into a clan elder's home one afternoon after school to be reminded of the way we dress. I say this because, I saw young girls wearing shorts in the village. I asked one of my relatives and she said not to care much because some today think that people need to mind their own business.*
> (II2: 22/07/12)

Ilikimi, a research participant in one of the *veitalanoa*-yaga sessions, said that the sad reality is that children are influenced by Western ideas that they learn in school and early childhood settings. *Ilikimi* further noted that while educational settings such as early childhood and primary schools cannot be blamed, one should consider 'gap influences', the gap between homes and educational

settings. This gap is also where children learn inappropriate practices especially from peers. As a consequence, some are caught in illegal activities, resulting in prosecution:

> *I saw in the newspaper the other day about three Indigenous Fijian school students been charged of rape. I ask, what has happened to our moral values? In the past this do not happen. Why? Because it was culturally inappropriate to talk about sex education openly. This knowledge is not for public dissemination. It was seen as secret and taboo. But the schools have allowed this to be taught and look at what has happened!*
> (NV3: 20/07/12)

Research participants continued to compare and contrast the learning ways of children in both schools today with their experiences in the past. There have been many changes in children's behaviour and attitudes, with some seen as good and some as bad. It is time for parents and families to think and rethink about what they want contemporary Indigenous Fijian children to be now and as adults in the future. Some questions that may be asked are:

- What kinds of knowledge parents want their children to study in early childhood settings and in schools
- How can these changes be managed in meaningful ways?
- Should Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge be ignored or exempted from educational settings such as in early childhood and primary schools or in higher educations?

Some major influences of early childhood education

Some other aspects of society that have affected Indigenous Fijians through dominant Western thinking styles and knowledge systems include: early childhood education/schooling and families, early childhood education/schooling and language, early childhood education/schooling and the social media in addition to the thinking styles and knowledge system. Participant opinions about these influences are expressed in the section that follows.

Early childhood education/schooling and families

Families are important and are a primary context for child development. Most children grow up in families and families have major impacts on children's lives, influencing their developing patterns of thinking, feeling and behaviour (Bowes, Grace & Hayes, 2013). In Fiji today, families have changed because younger parents have been through the Western-based-education system, from early childhood education into the primary school system and beyond, which has altered the ways families live. Some of the respondents in the focus groups mentioned that there is no value in children learning about Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge because of globalisation (ECO4&5: 24/07/12). *Sa oti na gauna va-koloni, qo sa gauna ni bula galala* (We have gone passed the colonial days and today is all about democracy; ECO1: 24/07/12). A majority of Indigenous Fijian families have chosen to embrace Western styles of being, some still choose to remain primarily as Indigenous Fijians and others have embraced a balance of both worlds.

The *Rokosau* family from a remote rural village explained that, even though they have come into contact with the Western world, the family remains steadfast to some Indigenous Fijian ways, such as living in an Indigenous Fijian *bure* (synonymous to house; refer to Table 1.1, pp. xix-xxii) without Western household furniture. They have only a few basic needs such as mattresses and kitchenware. Distance was a critical factor that resulted in less change further and their life was more connected to the *vanua* (whole natural environment). The father pointed out:

> *In my family, I have chosen to be just like the way I was brought up. You will see that we are just sitting on the mat and we do not have much in our house. I do not allow sofas in my house, as I want everyone who comes in to sit on the mat. We sit on the mat to have our meals too. We have a lot of space in our house; it metaphorically means a space for all; a heart that embraces all the people. Having a lot of furniture in the house lessens the space for people to move around, so for my family, I remain an Indigenous Fijian and teach my children just as I am the way now. However, I give choices to my children to which they would prefer, but I always emphasised to them that wherever they go, they*

> *must remember that they are Indigenous Fijian and they will be forever, regardless of how far they journey in the Western world.*
> (FRR: 16/07/12)

In contrast, the *Bolabola* family living in semi rural and urban setting, explained how they had made some alterations to their Indigenous Fijian parenting style with their now grown-up children when they were three, five, six and eight years old and some examples were.

> *We have family meetings and I give time for my children to talk about their day, what they like and what they dislike, but remain as respectful as always to the elders of the community. I also allow them to speak in English when they are doing their homework, but when I talk to them, in vernacular and I expect them to do the same.*
> (FSRU: 21/07/12)

Similarly *Paula*, in one of the focus groups, explained his approach:

> *I allocate two hours per week for my two boys aged four and five to play their video games. I also allow them to watch their favorite television program. Those are the only things I allow them to do during their free time, otherwise it's all about outdoor activities and helping mum and dad.*
> (CED8: 23/07/12)

Parents decide what happens in a family and several of the research participants were concerned about the ways some families have disregarded traditional Indigenous Fijian culture and have opted for Western ideologies as their way forward. *Pita*, a key informant in the individual interviews, explained that everything starts in the home and is reflective of the parents' ideas:

> *Some Indigenous Fijian parents prefer the Western ideas and have disregarded our Indigenous Fijian epistemology. Some have acquired that from their own parents and have continued to do so with their children for example speaking in English as the home language, accepting the latest fashion and design and the list goes on.*
> (II10: 24/07/12)

Temo explained that the way children acquire knowledge is the responsibility of parents and elders. In particular, he stated *na ka kece e tekivu mai Jeruisalemi* (all things starts from Jerusalem, which is also a colonial religious ideology – meaning all things starts from the home) and pointed out that it was a matter of choice whether to be Indigenous Fijian or to live outside the powerful influence of Western society. However, his words included major 'colonial influence' as fully accented and normalised but not problematised. He then cautioned that Indigenous Fijians needed to bear in mind the importance of identity, which should be first initiated from the home environment.

> *There are many things that children learn from school. Now they have Internet, and they can access the world at any time they like. Schools are the main source of new knowledge our children get exposed to and they take it on. However, we have a role to do as parents in our homes; we needed to develop in our children that our cultural knowledge matters; our children have to learn to know and understand.*
> (II10: 24/07/12).

As earlier mentioned in the chapter, being independent is a concept learned at school and some of today's Indigenous Fijian families have opted to stay away from their extended families because they see it as a waste of money and energy to have extra people in the house. Thus they focus solely on their nuclear families. *Rupeni*, an elder male in a *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained that this would be why most children do not know their blood relatives and their broader relationship ties.

> *It's a real pity to see that our children do not know their relationship ties with their own relatives, let alone their blood ties with the others. This is because parents have shifted away from their own culture and have taken the Western ways of viewing things, but you know, I believe not all Westerners are individualists.*
> (MV6: 12/07/12)

This reflection highlights a weakness in Indigenous Fijian children's knowledges of familial relationships or knowing ones 'blood stretch marks' as earlier mentioned (refer to Chapter Five). Knowledge of relationships are recognised DEEWR (2009) and in the *Te Whariki* (1996), New Zealand's national Early

Childhood Curriculum, as important in early childhood education and more importantly in families. This is because families have networks of relationships that children ought to know about so they can appreciate the diversities across families (Able et al, 2014) and be able to sustain these as they grow.

Participants shared their beliefs that family meals and diet are an area of change for most Indigenous Fijians. Some preferred to eat in restaurants and take-away food outlets because they were faster and tastier. They disregard the traditional ways of cooking foods and demonstrate stronger preferences for a Western diet. *Ciri*, a retired female schoolteacher in one of the focus groups, noted that even Indigenous Fijians living in villages often opt for Western ways of cooking, such as frying fresh fish in a pan instead of boiling or grilling the fish on charcoal with traditional *moli karokaro* (lemon), as their forefathers did. Young girls do tend to be conscious of what they eat and prefer to eat less to keep their bodies in shape (Libman, 2007). *Ciri*, further explained:

> *Schools have home economics lessons where they have cooking classes. This is where our children learn how to use refined salad oils to cook. The cooking recipes are all in English, which are all in the Western style of cooking all the way. This change is all that children learn because it is initiated in schools.*
> (RST4: 22/07/12)

Salome, in the same focus group, explained that peer pressure in schools is great and some children crave foods they see in other children's lunches and they then ask parents if they could have similar kinds of food. Tarunna and Donelly (2013) suggest that such food preferences or unhealthy food choices have less potential health and well-being benefits for the body. *Salome* further added:

> *Children today have food preferences culture. My nine-year-old grandson chooses to have chicken and chips every time we go to town. At home, he likes to have noodles, and at school he likes his egg sandwich. In my time, we have fresh fish with coconut cream and cassava, with fresh green coconut juice as our drink. Children have really changed nowadays.*
> (RST5: 22/07/12)

Similar views were shared by the *Rokosau* family and *Tuwai* in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*. They mentioned that what children learn from schools, in addition to what they see through the social media, affects the foods they choose and in turn the foods they desire and enjoy (FRR: 16/07/12); MV2: 12/07/12). In one of the focus groups, *Loraini* said that schools continue to sell unhealthy foods and children are lured by contemporary temptations and tastes, disregarding their own traditional diet (MV11: 12/07/12).

In one of the focus groups a curriculum officer reminded the group of the need to pause a little and see what is best for Indigenous Fijians, as individuals and for children generally. She noted that people could not be accepting all the things they see and hear, as there were pros and cons with every decision made. There is always a need to tread thoughtfully and carefully in this ever-changing world (ECO2: 24/07/12).

Siteri similarly explained that Indigenous Fijian ways of life are important and so parents and families must make wise decisions. She asserted the need to pause a little and look back to the past, rethink and reconceptualise what is best for Indigenous Fijians in order to become better families and better people in both worlds (RST6: 22/07/12). The next section discusses early childhood education/schooling and language.

Early childhood education/school and language

Indigenous Fijians have their own vernacular dialects and they use these to communicate more privately in their homes on a daily basis. However, in most Indigenous Fijian families the use of the mother tongue or vernacular is now less important, as English takes precedence. *Jone*, a male teacher in one of the focus groups, lamented how the vernacular language was gradually fading away:

> *Our language is slowly disappearing. In my time, we were all fluent in speaking our own mother tongue and the national Baun language. But now it seems that our language is eroding fast because of the preferences for our children as young as preschoolers in speaking in the English language. If we are not careful to preserve it, we may be like a lost generation that does not have an identity.*
> (EED5: 11/07/12)

Similarly, *Pita*, a key person in the interview, explained that most Indigenous Fijians opted to speak English to their children. Most seem to consider the Indigenous Fijian vernacular language as useless and meaningless because, in early childhood education settings and the primary schools, the language of learning and teaching is always English. She provided an example of how she overheard her neighbour's children who were Indigenous Fijians, conversing:

A: What did you people eat last night?

B: *Keitou kana ika kei na dalo* (We had fish and cassava.)

A: What?

B: *Keitou kana ika kei na dalo* (We had fish and cassava.)

A: I can't understand Fijian, please speak in English.

B: Hey, you want to be a *kaivalagi*? (Whiteman). You should learn to speak our own language. I'm telling you that we had fish and cassava.

(II10: 24/07/12).

Vasiti, in one of the focus groups, noted that in their days of schooling (1970s) the vernacular language was the medium of instruction in early years classes, from Year 1 to Year 3 (Learning Together, 2000). Now most teachers at these levels teach in English because they think English is more important for children to know (She asserted that this is not a good idea. She also noted how Japan developed so quickly because the Japanese language was and is still the medium of instruction in all areas of teaching from early childhood to tertiary education. She further explained that, even in school buses, children are speaking in English with only about one in every five Indigenous Fijian children speaking Indigenous Fijian vernacular language (ECO4: 24/07/12).

In another instance, *Mereseini* noted that today most Indigenous Fijian children scorn those who do not speak English correctly. Even at school, children laugh when someone speaks using incorrect structured English, which in Fiji is called *broken English*. She further explained that in her school days, which was in the

late 1960s and 70s, children were punished if they were found not to be speaking English or speaking a mixture of Indigenous Fijian and English.

> *It was hard on us because we were village kids and we were used to our own mother tongue. I know English was compulsory in those days and so it is today. To me, though I am a schoolteacher I still emphasise the importance of our language to my children. My parents do not speak English but they always remind me to speak in our mother tongue so children can understand what is required. The school has a different preference language our children should learn and it is a pity that we have to learn a language that is not ours, but children persist to keep learning the language amidst struggles.*
> (MV5: 12/07/12)

In an interesting case, a participant, in one of the focus groups, mentioned how she had used children in her own class to act to as translators for a child's *lingua franca* so that they could understand what the teacher was teaching. Another participant in one of the focus groups particularly mentioned *ena so na gauna era vukei au sara ga o ira na gone ena noqu kalasi ena kena vakadewataki eso na veika era tukuna mai na gone ena nodra vosa ga baleta niu sega ni kila na nodra vosa, me vakataka na vosa-vaka Idia* (At times children in my class interpret to me in English; for example when children speak to me in their own Fijian or Hindi mother tongue, as I do not understand either dialects). She believed that this was an advantage for children as they were bilingual (EED4: 11/07/12). The section that follows discusses how participants voiced concerns about how early childhood settings and schools encouraged children to use social media.

Early Childhood Education/Schools and the Social Media

One of the greatest agents of change is social media (O'Keefe & Clarke-Pearson, 2014) and McCrea (2015a) also highlights this broad concepts. Television, radio, telephones, computers and all related technologies such as video games take up much of children's time, time when they could be socialising face to face with others (MV9: 12/07/12). As a result, today's children have different lifestyles rooted in ways considered contrary to the traditional ways of knowing among Indigenous Fijians. *Tuwai*, an elder in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, said:

> *I know our children today do not know how to sing our traditional songs and chants. We used to sing them when we build a house, or when we are out in the ocean fishing. There are always songs and chants to sing in certain occasions. Today, I have not heard any of these songs even in schools. All I hear is popular music like rock and roll, jazz and others.*
> (MV2: 12/07/12)

In the same *veitalanoa-yaga, Isimeli* recounted how his grandmother always said that in the past they had no radio or television. Despite this, they knew weather and weather patterns through the signs of nature; for example, they observed the positions of the moon, the types of birds flying and the directions of the wind. They were never wrong and he added:

> *But, today we have radios and television and most of the time the weather prediction is wrong and wrong information causing people to lose lives. As I reminisced what I hear from my grandparents, I feel so culturally deprived because I have been too long in the Western school system.*
> (MV5: 12/07/12)

Another change seen in children today is that they talk, imitate and even associate themselves and what they do with what they see on televisions, with such examples as heroes and superheroes in cartoons. A teacher participant in one of the focus groups explained how in the village, children imitated *Superman*. Children would be sitting around in a circle and telling stories of what they saw on television or in the movies (EED4: 12/07/12). In a similar situation, *Filise*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained how his six-year-old son asked his mother to buy him a school bag that had *Ben Ten* or *Superman* on it. His son's reason was that most of the boys in his class had these kinds of school bags and he would like to have one too (NV6: 19/07/120). *Seruwaia*, one of the key informants, likewise explained how her granddaughter had wanted a pink bag with a picture of *Cinderella* and *Barbie* on it. This is associated with what early childhood professionals regarded as the 'pink ghetto' of being female (Ebbeck and Waniganayake, 2010). Her granddaughter told her that pink is a girl's colour and that she liked her stuff to be all in pink (II1: 28/07/12).

In comparing his school days and schools today, *Turuva*, a key informants in the individual interviews, explained how his children would laugh when he told them about how he grew up in the village and the struggles his family went through. He explained how different his children are today than those of his past. Children today, as young as five years and under seemed to associate themselves with the latest models of things they see through the social media (II4: 25/07/12). This is because of 'time' and the new ways of things that has come together with it (Ebbeck and Waniganayake, 2010). Participants also voiced their thoughts about changes in people's thinking styles and knowledge systems as evident in the section that follows.

Early childhood education/schooling, thinking styles and knowledge systems

Taufe'ulungaki (2003) described that the foundational thinking styles of the Indigenous people in the smaller Pacific Islands (Fiji included) focused on cooperation, consensus, respect, generosity, loyalty, sharing, humility, reconciliation, maintaining good relationships and fulfillment of mutual obligations and how they generally still do. This is called *vakaturaga* in the Indigenous Fijian way. This kind of thinking and acting has been and still is the epitome of life for Indigenous Fijians. However, Western democratic influences have infiltrated all aspects of contemporary society and are continuing to change how people think and what they think about.

Today, children are taught to think differently in schools. *Torika*, in one of the focus groups, stated most Indigenous Fijian children have been indoctrinated in many ideas derived from school. She mentioned the example of being autonomous and independent as opposed to interdependent in the Indigenous Fijian ways of thinking. *Torika*, further added:

> *My twelve-year-old daughter came home after school one day and she whispered into my ear saying that there are a lot of people in our house and they should go back to their homes. Mind you, these people are our own relatives. I looked at her, and she further said that they needed to be responsible for their own lives and not to come and bother our family.*
> (CED2: 24/07/12)

Torika's recount clearly demonstrated a different way of thinking about one's extended family and is an example of a child that has been influenced by the contemporary Western ideas of being individual and independent. This is not the Indigenous Fijian way, which embraces relationship (DEEWR, 2009) and togetherness (Martin, 2008; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). In another example, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* sessions, *Ratu Semi* claimed that the thinking styles of Indigenous Fijians are right-brain dominated. This thinking style tends to be creative, divergent, interpersonal and kinesthetic (Gardner, 2011), which may be similar to most of the peoples of the smaller Pacific Islands (Taufe'ulungaki, 2003). *Ratu Semi* further suggested that such thinking styles are manifested in a number of ways and provided examples such as *na vosa* (speech) which is used as a means of developing and maintaining social cohesion characterised by absolute silences and eyes looking down. All these are signs of respect. *Ratu Semi* went further to explain that the key learning strategies for Indigenous Fijians have been observation and imitation, rather than the oral and written instruction approaches used in schools. He noted this was where differences lie but that Indigenous Fijian children have no choice but to blend into the Western style of learning and knowing (NS: 20/07/12). Similarly, *Emori*, also in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained:

> *Learning and knowing for the Indigenous Fijians is through careful observation and then children imitate what they see. Imitation is done and through a series of practice through trial and error under the critical and watchful eyes of the elders.*
> (NV1: 19/07/12).

However, in early childhood and primary schools settings, learning and knowing took a different direction, they were linear and logical in approach, coupled with learning that is decontextualised and generalisable. Harrison (2013 noted that the Aborigines of Australia experience a similar disjunction. Fleer (2010) and others (e.g. Bowes, Grace & Hayes, 2013; Cologan, 2014) espoused a more inclusive early childhood education pedagogy in trying to understand the diversities of children and promoting their active citizenship in their social environment, including their education setting. In relation to this, *Kalivati*, in one of the focus groups, explained that the Indigenous Fijian knowledge system is organised in

such a way that young children refrain from questioning their elders including teachers in educational settings. Indigenous Fijian children remain silent even though they were continuously asked by teachers to ask questions and further contribute during class discussions (CED3: 23/07/12). For example, there is low intensity of interaction between children and their parents especially to the fathers; this is respect; and the notion of taboos in relationships between male and female cousins. However, in the school system, our ways of knowing are diluted and seen as irrelevant. (RST2: 22/07/12)

In addition the traditional knowledge system of the Indigenous Fijian were validated by collaboration and consensus (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). This gives rise to certain learning strategies, as mentioned earlier in this Chapter, including learning focused on observation, participation and imitation (Chilisa, 2012a; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Ritchie 2009 Thaman, 2000). Furthermore, Indigenous Fijian children are expected to demonstrate sharing and cooperative behaviours that continue to be governed by the need to maintain social harmony. However, schools have tended to disregard these forms of interaction, as two teacher participants in one of the focus groups commented:

> *Even in some early childhood settings and early years primary schools today, they disregard children helping one another, especially when a child does not have a pen or a book to write on. These children are sent home to get their school stationeries, and in some instances, they are told not to return unless they have all the school stationeries needed. Also in early childhood settings, children are required to come with their learning requirements, stationeries such as crayons, drawing papers and so on.*
> (CED4: 23/07/12)

> *Children are required to be work on their own and solve their own math problems for example. They have to work individually on their classrooms tasks and they are not allowed to collaborate with their peers.*
> (CED10: 23/07/12)

Such individualism is prioritised in educational settings such as early childhood and primary schools; and this can leave Indigenous Fijian children powerless as they are used to working together. In particular, *Ratu Semi* earlier emphasised, in

one of the *veitalanoa-yaga,* that Western schools promote structured individualised learning while traditional Indigenous Fijian learning was based on collaboration and teamwork (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). To support this, he provided a scenario of a three-year experience as a principal in one of Fiji's prominent schools in the 1980s.

> *A parent came to complain that his son does not like to attend school because he finds it hard to be in class, as they as students are not allowed to collaborate with peers. They are told to work on their own without speaking to their friends or anyone. If they are caught, they will be punished.*
> (NS: 20/07/12)

While some older, quite structured Western concepts of schooling are still prevalent in most Fijian schools; today, most early childhood and primary school settings now focus on collaboration and teamwork, which was proved to be the best way for children to learn, as documented in Australia's *Early Years Learning Framework Belonging, Being and Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009) and the *Te Whāriki* (1996) New Zealand's early childhood curriculum. This was also proven in research such as that undertaken by Woolley and Hay (2013), Harrison and Murray, (2013), Guo, Justice, Sawyer & Tompkins (2011) and the Victorian Early Years Learning Development Framework (VEYLDF; Victoria Department of Education, 2012), including the UNICEF, (2012) document.

However, generally, schools seem to continue to be transmitters of ideas that are alien to more traditionally oriented Indigenous Fijian children. In speaking about cooperation and teamwork, *Ilaisa* stated:

> *Sosolevaki (cooperation and team work) can hardly be seen in the villages nowadays. People focus on themselves and they work alone, individually on tasks that require teamwork.*
> (NV4: 19/07/12)

Tuwai, an elder participant in another of the *veitalanoa-yaga* sessions, said that most Indigenous Fijians have lost direction and their ways of thinking have changed over time to be more Western. Another example is seen in the positioning of money as more important than relationships. In his example, he

emotionally shared the experience of taking his son to attend high school in the urban centre, as there was not a high school in their village:

> *I asked my brother if my son could stay with his family so he could attend high school and he said; I quote How about if he lives in the hostel, or if he lives with us, you will have to send money for the food and other expenses. I felt so small and this tells me that my brother's thinking style has a focus on money and not on relationship. My blood relationship is less important to him. I was so touched [in tears].*
> (MV2: 12/07/12)

Peni, in one of the focus groups, commented that the idea of togetherness as an extended family has faded. He further noted that this could what schools address, the idea of being independent and self-centred, which is contrary to the cultural ways of Indigenous Fijians concepts of a web of relationship and he further reiterated 'you marry an Indigenous Fijian, you marry the whole family' (RST3: 22/07/12).

Even traditional reconciliation has been lost through the Western legal system. Indigenous Fijians teach children to be forgiving and there are Indigenous Fijian protocols available to safeguard against other peoples' ruthless ways. However, these have been brushed aside, as the Western legal system has taken precedence over Indigenous Fijian traditional ways. This was considered by one of the participants as an explanation why Indigenous Fijians are still the majority inmates in prisons (NV4: 19/07/12).

Further, generally, school discourses present some Indigenous Fijian children with the challenges of learning in a different culture. However, as Indigenous Fijians continue to adopt with changes, there is a need to consider three historical layers of education. The first is the traditional Indigenous Fijian home-based education, before colonialism, which was contextually-based (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). Secondly, there is the Western education during the many years of colonial rule that was designed to promote indigenous inferiority by teaching some traditional Indigenous knowledge in a manner designed to position it as inferior (Chilisa, 2012a; Childs & Williams, 2013; Thaman, 2003). Thirdly, there

is contemporary Western education, which began in the early 1950s and 1960s and was basically designed to make students fully Westernised.

Indigenous Fijians may need to rethink how the education they received has impacted on their Indigenous identity, and what kind of education they want for their children now and into the future. All these views and influences lead to two questions:

- What kind of Indigenous Fijian children would Fiji prefer to have in the next century?
- How can we create a Fijian education system from early childhood that will maintain key Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges amidst the enormous globalising surge from the West?

The section that follows reflects on these questions and what they imply for young children and early childhood education policies and practices. This focus is not meant to exclude children's families or the Indigenous Fijian villages nor the early primary school years.

Implications for young children and early childhood education policies and practices

The data from this research study portrayed a scenario of how Indigenous Fijian epistemologies have changed and are continuously changing as a result of contact and interactions with the Western world across Fiji and beyond. In conversations in the *veitalanoa-yaga* sessions, the focus groups and the individual interviews, some of the participants discussed the implications of these changes in terms of current early childhood education practices moving into the future. For example, *Litiana*, an elder female in the early years teacher focus group, said:

> *When I see the many changes that have challenged our culture and especially the way we learn and know things, I wish to bring attention to all of us teachers in this room that we need to do something. The work is not small, but it is huge task, as we need to first of all try to change the mind-set of our parents and the whole Indigenous Fijians on the importance of our culture. This is because some parents have totally disregarded our cultural knowledge.*

(CED1: 23/07/12)

This reflection particularly demonstrates how action is needed to revitalise key child development Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. *Litiana* particularly wanted teachers to have a role in bringing back what has been really lost, so that children can have better understandings of their cultural knowledges in early childhood educational settings, alongside contemporary Western ideas and approaches.

Another early year's teacher in the same focus group, *Rosita*, explained that the onus rests on the teachers and she referred to the need to bring Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges back into the curriculum. One way was not to teach in English only as teaching ought to be also through the vernacular language, which could be possibly made mandatory as part of professional standards in teaching and learning. All Indigenous Fijian children need to know and understand the Indigenous Fijian language in addition to traditional songs, rhymes, riddles and stories because they are part of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. These cultural ideas are meaningful and contextually-relevant to Indigenous Fijian children (CED3: 23/07/12); and these are fully supported by the literature (Arthur et al, 2015; Fleer, 2006; 2010; Sims, 2011a).

It was cited in all the *veitalanoa-yaga* that there is a need for the whole village communities to collaborate in the dissemination of cultural knowledges to children. Sentiments such as these were heard from the participants, for example, *me da cakacakavata va-koro ena kena sagai me vueti na nodra kila na lalai na veika baleti keda* (We need to work together as a village to resurrect our cultural knowledge to our children; MV: 12/07/12); NV: 17/07/12; NS: 20/07/12). The same sentiment was shared by the focus group participants, who mentioned that the preservation of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges needed to start in the homes and in the villages. They felt that an evening a week could be organised for the Indigenous Fijian elders to teach children Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges in village halls. In urban areas, a similar activity could be organised by Indigenous Fijian family groups, as this would be a great opportunity to meet up, rekindle relationships and be involved in important discussions on how to revitalise cultural knowledges (RST2, 3&4: 22/07/12).

Ilikimi, an elder in the *veitalanoa-yaga*, believed that the Fijian Ministry of Education should look into the curriculum for both early childhood education settings and the early years of primary schooling and place more emphasis on the importance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. Children from other cultural groups could be given options whether or not they would like to learn Indigenous Fijian culture or more about their own cultural backgrounds. This should be accepted and familiar to teachers who are the implementers of the curriculum (NV3: 19/07/12). In the same *veitalanoa-yaga*, *Emori* explained that the teacher training colleges in Fiji should place more emphasis on the importance of having one's culture and the acknowledgement of others' cultures within the teacher education programs.

> *I believe before teachers can implement a curriculum, it is the Education Ministry that dictates what is to be taught. Therefore a clear pathway to the teaching of culture must be made possible by the education system to the teacher training colleges and universities before all else could happen. Teachers are the implementers of the curriculum and it is important that they have the knowledge of teaching of Indigenous Fijian culture and there is also no harm if they learn other cultures.*
> (NV1: 19/07/12)

Teachers' knowledge of mainstream cultural and cross-cultural studies is important for learning and teaching. Children will learn and understand better when educators' are well versed in the subjects they are teaching. Coupled with that is the notion of being positive and a willing to teach culture. *Rosita*, one of the teachers in the early years focus group, stated:

> *Things happen when there is a will. We need to regularly sit together as teachers and share our Indigenous Fijian ethics and values so we can pass [them] on to our children and the process can keep going, passing on the knowledge further to the next generation.*
>
> *(CED5: 23/07/12).*

Some teachers in the same focus group realised how important culture is, for example, *Sotia*, a female elder teacher could not contain her appreciation of this research study topic and said:

> *I'm happy for this research Lavinia. It has brought back our minds on track to see the importance of our own selves as Indigenous Fijians and how our knowledge is important to us and for our children. We can definitely make a difference. Instead of reciting Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, we recite our own like Dua tiko noqu pusi; things like that. We need to teach what belongs to us, so there is a balance in both the Western and the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge. Our Indigenous Fijian knowledge has been there ever since but we have tended to prioritise the Western concepts all the time. It is about time that we rethink and reconceptualise our own ways of learning and incorporate it into our teaching and learning program.*
> (CED2: 23/07/12)

Some teachers were emotional during the process of sharing the importance of culture:

> *I am touched with what we are doing tonight and as a teacher, I would see that we do more hands-on cultural activities for example making earth oven, weaving baskets and small mats, carving traditional artifacts that are simple for the children. These can be done through the assistance of the elders in our community. Our elders are important to us and they have wisdoms and knowledges, which we need to get from them while they are still around.*
> *(CED4: 23/07/12)*

> *My eyes are open tonight. Thank you Lavinia for your topic of study. It has opened my eyes as an Indigenous Fijian woman, a teacher for our young ones and a mother of five who have gone too long and lost into the Western world. I am tonight encouraged to make a turn and reconstruct my teaching and even my ways of thinking to include our own Indigenous Fijian traditional ways of learning and knowing. I have to make a balance of both worlds in my teaching approaches.*
> *(CED6: 23/07/12)*

> *Our journey has been long. As we look back, we have lost more of our cultural knowledge along the way. Maybe we need to pause and dialogue more to see where we have gone wrong and find a suitable way to set us back on track to the road of our ancestors. We can do it [but] only if the will is there. Our culture is our identity and this is very important to tell our children.*
> *(CED9: 23/07/12)*

These teachers acknowledged the need to revitalise Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. These knowledges can be framed in terms of social justice (Cologon, 2014; Davis & Elliott, 2014; Map, 2014; Sims, 2011a; Sims, 2008a) where Indigenous Fijian children are positioned as having a right to their own cultural knowledges, a right that has not yet been honoured.

However, exposure to Indigenous Fijian knowledge needs to be balanced with the dominating Western knowledge currently prioritised in early childhood settings and early primary schools. A participant in one of the focus groups mentioned *a tosotoso yai ena toso ga, me keta fikatakina vinaka ga a weta itosotoso* (Change is inevitable and we must learn how to work out the best out of it; II1: 28/07/12). Likewise, *Marika* proposed a blended approach *me rau taurivaki ruarua tiko na na veika e noda kei na veika e nodra baleta ni oqo ena vukei ira na luveda ena tosotoso ni vuravura levu eda tiko kina* (That places emphasis on the importance of a balance of traditional cultural knowledge and contemporary Western knowledges, because this will help our children in the global world; RST1: 22/07/12). Peni, Ciri and Salome shared similar sentiments, during the same focus group interview (RST3, 4 & 5: 22/07/12).

Biau, a male curriculum officer in the Ministry of Education, explained that the notion of rethinking curriculum came to his mind as he thought about my research focus (refer to Research Aims and Questions in Chapter One). He pointed to the need for a curriculum that strikes a balance between the two worlds (ECO3: 24/07/12). *Losena* noted that *vuli tara* (practical learning) is suitable and relevant because that is how early childhood education and early primary schooling is viewed in the Indigenous Fijian context (MV4: 12/07/12). Similar thoughts were expressed by *Tevita*, a male in the one of the focus groups, who said:

> *I believe that it is about time we do some serious rethinking of our culture, our ways of knowing, learning and doing things. I know the forces of modernity have affected us in all ways but one thing we must remember, we cannot be left behind in this world. I think what we need to do now is to see that our education system strikes a balance of both curriculum of the two worlds, a one that has Indigenous Fijian and the Western. I hope I am*

> *making sense here. We need to revisit what we are teaching and take into consideration the ideas of both worlds so that our children are competitive in both the Indigenous Fijian and the palagi (Whiteman's) ways.*
> *(CED7: 23/07/12)*

Ratu Semi, in one the *veitalanoa-yaga,* asserted the need for Indigenous Fijians to 'claim space' in the education system. This space would encompass the knowledges, culture and ways of knowing, including Indigenous Fijian worldviews and values. He further explained that there is a need for culture to be taught as early as possible, that is, from the early childhood years at home and in early childhood settings before formal schooling. The teachers working with children in these years ought to have a sound knowledge of Indigenous Fijian culture (NS: 20/07/12). Instead of teaching formally, cultural ways and practices could be incorporated into the daily routines of each early childhood education setting. Teachers ought to be exemplary in displaying culture in these educational settings. Children learn better when they see teachers displaying exemplary practices. This is vital as Indigenous Fijians wrestle with the changes that continually come into the country. *Basulu* reflected that Indigenous Fijians have come a long way:

> *We have learned to thrive in the colonial environment, as it still exists today. I believe that this can be made easier with carefully developed technologies supported by an attuned education system that is inclusive and contextually appropriate to us as Indigenous Fijians.*
> *(NV5: 17/07/12)*

A positive approach is illustrated in this excerpt, which links well with Fleer's (2010) concepts of culturally-relevant contexts; this is what is needed to ensure the revitalisation of the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. *Ilikimi*, a participant in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga,* said:

> *We all are different and differ in ways we choose to do things. For the Indigenous Fijians, I see that some parents choose schools that both have a strong Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge and Western knowledge. This is to enable children to be competent in both worlds. Though our lives have been influenced by the many changes that have come to our country, we still need to hold on tight to our culture. My time is different from this time but if we, as elders in the community, teach*

> *our children our cultural ways, they will know, understand and keep it.*
>
> *(NV3: 17/07/12)*

Teachers' knowledge and pedagogical understandings was seen as vital as *Mereisi*, a female key informant, commented:

> *Teachers need to have a thorough knowledge of our own culture before they can teach it to the little children. Me ra kila tale ga na vanua era susugi yani kina na gone, se nodra vuravura ba gone (Teachers need to understand the social context of children).*
> *(II6: 18/07/12)*

Whilst the sociocultural context was seen as important (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010), it was suggested that teaching and learning about Indigenous Fijian culture ought to begin right from the foundation level at preschool and/or kindergarten with three to five year olds and continue through to the early years of primary school. *Makelesi*, a female and a key informant in this research, suggested:

> *I see that the importance of culture should be emphasised right from [the] foundation level with our little ones. And one thing I need to emphasise here, that our teachers must know what and how to teach culture to our kids. If some of them lack the knowledge of our culture, they should make space for elders in the community to come and teach our cultural concepts such as traditional dances, traditional games and songs plus the rhymes and the riddles, even telling stories. We have a rich culture and having the elders around will make a difference and I know teachers with both knowledges can make a difference.*
> *(II2: 22/07/12)*

Similarly, *Bua*, in the one of the focus groups, explained the importance of including the elders of the community:

If teachers are not well versed with Indigenous Fijian culture, they can call the knowledgeable elders in the community to help out in disseminating knowledge to the young children. These elders can be allowed into the classrooms to assist teachers in the teaching of culture (MV5: 12/07/12).

Participants in this research looked to the Ministry of Education for support in including Indigenous Fijian culture in both early childhood settings and early primary school policies and curriculum practices. Teachers ought also to be knowledgeable enough to teach Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges to the children. Even the teacher participants in this study identified the need for teachers to be knowledgeable and they supported the need to teach Indigenous Fijian culture from the beginning at the early foundational educational stages. Participants in one of the focus groups also agreed with these ideas and suggested the need for teachers to fully understand children's sociocultural backgrounds in the teaching and learning process (RST: 22/07/12). The inclusion of village elders (Ritchie, 2014) in programs may serve as wise practice in Fiji's early childhood and early years policy, pedagogy and learning. Importantly, creating networks and partnerships with relevant stakeholders (Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2010) could further enhance the preservation of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges for both and with young Indigenous Fijian children

Chapter synthesis

Through a series of narratives, metaphors and life anecdotes, the research participants indicated how they had seen the world changed, impacting on the contemporary child development practices of Indigenous Fijians, even in remote rural settings. These changes have impacted heavily, not just on parenting, but very significantly across the education system. The research participants pointed to Western educational settings, beginning in early childhood education and early primary school, as major transmitters of Western ideas. And more importantly, they pointed to how contradictory concepts of the early childhood settings and early primary schools have distorted and demeaned Indigenous Fijian children's own ways of learning, knowing and doing. Research participants also noted how the social media has impacted heavily on the way children viewed themselves and the world. The chapter also documented the importance of teachers being well informed about cultural knowledges and also able to express these cultural knowledges in their classroom practices. The importance of engaging elders in the community as a resource was acknowledged, as elders have cultural wisdoms and knowledges to impart to Indigenous Fijian children so they know and better

understand their culture and how it position them in their society and to the wider world.

Chapter 7

Creating an Early Childhood Education Pathway for Sustaining Indigenous Fijian Cultural Knowledges.

> *By harmonising Indigenous knowledge with Eurocentric knowledge, they are attempting to heal their inherent dignity and apply fundamental human rights in their communities. (Battiste, 2000a, p. xvi)*

Introduction

In the last two chapters (Chapter Five and Chapter Six), the experiences and ideas of the research participants were presented through their own words. They described their own childhood experiences in homes, villages and in educational settings and they described how Indigenous Fijian children today are experiencing very different childhoods. Early Childhood Education and Primary Education were seen as major contributors and transmitters of Western knowledges to Indigenous Fijian people and the research participants perceived young children to be the most affected by these knowledges. This chapter draws on the research findings to explore, discuss and interrogate various factors that affect Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges and practices in contemporary Indigenous Fijian society.

There are some key elements of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and epistemologies that participants agreed needed to be preserved and maintained, although there were some areas of disagreement. In this chapter, I explore how to rationally, effectively and meaningfully combine both Indigenous Fijian knowledges and Western knowledges. The ultimate purpose is to ensure the revitalisation of important Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges and family epistemologies within early childhood settings. With that in mind, the quote from Battiste (2000a) at the head of this chapter is appropriate for our thinking, as it is a reminder and directive to early childhood professionals and stakeholders that cultural contexts (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2006; 2010;

Rogoff, 2003) are too important to be dismissed and ought to be included in planning relevant and authentic learning experiences for and with young children.

The role of early education in supporting post-colonisation

The dissonance between Western and Indigenous thinking is particularly problematic in Fiji's Western-based education system, where aspects of Indigenous Fijian children's home lives, epistemological knowledges and culture are not congruent with that of educational settings such as early childhood and early primary school years (6-8 year olds). As such, most Indigenous Fijian children are faced with what they perceive as a choice between Western ways, which potentially lead to more success, and Indigenous ways, which potentially lead to being disadvantaged. The positioning of this choice adversely affects their identity, their understandings and commitment to their Indigenous Fijian culture, including its knowledge systems. Freire's (2000) notions of oppressors and the oppressed, confirms that Western education can be a tool for oppression and adopts the position that oppression can only be addressed through the actions of those who are oppressed (refer to Chapter Two). This means that people liberate themselves in fellowship with one another, necessitating better dialogues to allow people to be understood in their own cultural contexts.

The findings from this study strongly suggested that Western educational knowledges have taken priority over Indigenous Fijian traditional knowledges, particularly in relation to child development cultural knowledges and practices. This is seen through parenting practices, including the choice of educational settings parents prefer their children to attend. As carriers of Western knowledges, these educational settings are seen as having the pre-requisite knowledges that children need to be successful and have a better future (NS: 20/07/12). Such parental choices reflect change through the influence of colonisation and the prioritising of an education that is deeply rooted in the concepts of the same.

The research participants (refer to Chapters Five and Six) reflected on schools as places where knowledge was taught, rather than a location where children pursue knowledge (RST1: 22/07/12). Pursued knowledge is attained from real-life experiences, which constitute the prevalent everyday learning style in Indigenous Fijian villages. Such settings are seen as authentic and practical in nature. This is in contrast to Western educational settings in which Indigenous Fijian children are positioned as outsiders, visitors or 'others' (Bowes & Fegan, 2012; Childs & Williams, 2013), adding environmental differences to knowledge differences. Without effective transition programs (Petriwskyj, 2014), many village children encounter an environmental challenge, along with the many other challenges that occur during the teaching-learning processes (Nabobo-Baba, 2003; Teaero, 2003).

The *Australian Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009) and other writers (Ozman & Erdi, 2013; Sims, 2011a, Sims, 2011b) emphasise the importance of acknowledging differences (Sims, 2011b). Given the significance of knowledge differences/diversities, the study findings suggest that it would be better for early childhood settings to develop environments that create a learning context conducive to Indigenous Fijian children's ways of learning, knowing and doing (RST1: 22/07/12). For this reason and because of the differences in the thinking and learning styles of children, the onus rests on early childhood educators *me ra kila na vanua era susugi yani kina na lalai* (to understand the social context of children), as suggested by a teacher participant (EED3: 11/07/12, Chapter Five). This idea again necessitated the importance of theorising around sociocultural learning as a reminder for teachers to understand children's social milieu beyond educational settings. This understanding is best demonstrated practically in the teaching-learning process (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014; Fleer, 2010; Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978) and through effective transition programs (Petriwskyj, 2014).

A useful example provided in the study was *vuli tara* or practical learning (refer to Chapter Five), as suggested in a *veitalanoa-yaga*, as the best approach for Indigenous Fijian children; because, they would actually see, do and participate in the learning process (MV6: 12/07/12). This emphasis on observation prompts

children to grasp knowledge and be able to work on tasks under the watchful eyes of the elders. *Mereseini*, a research participant in one of the focus group, specifically noted that her expertise in the knowledge of weaving came as she observed and experienced hands-on practice while doing tasks together with her mother, aunties and female elders (MV6: 12/07/12). This is linked to Rogoff's (2003) concept of guided participation, beginning from the Zone of Actual Development (ZAD) (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014) and working towards Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). In such social learning contexts, a child's learning is supported through meaningful participation in authentic and reciprocal experiences (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014).

Further adverse effects of Western influences are evident in school dropout rates in Fiji, where some children leave school as early as primary school (Learning Together, 2000; Nabobo-Baba, 2006). There appear to be no withdrawals at the early childhood level of education but this may be because there have not been any record. Such dropout rates result from the failure of the education system to recognise students' learning styles and cultural backgrounds; with children of all ages perceived as unsuccessful and incompetent in the Western education system (Thaman, 2000). This indicates the need to bring socioculturally appropriate practices to educational programs beginning from early childhood. These students who have dropped out find their way back into the traditional education system of learning life skills that will help them survive in their own natural world (NS: 20/07/12; refer to Chapter Five). However, they often have feelings of inadequacy arising from their perceived failure in the Western education system, which impacts on their ability to shape a socially-valued life. Again, the need is to develop a system of theorising and practice that is culturally- relevant for supporting differences and diversities among children, so that they are not seen as failures but rather seen as competent through an understanding and relevant education system (Sims, 2011a).

The analysis of the research data also suggests that traditional Indigenous Fijian education has not always been considered as separate but was once seen as an integral part of everyday experiences, with members of local village communities also being teachers. These many teachers included clan elders, grandparents,

parents, aunties and uncles and even peers (II5: 26/07/12). Fleer (2010) positions such people as more experienced adults operating in children's cultural contexts and perhaps this is an area that needs some thought in today's classrooms. A broadening of the concept of teacher, to include those with different types of expertise could see the involvement of more educators of the community in assisting young children and older students in the teaching-learning process. Such an approach challenges the usual standard Western approach of one teacher to a ratio of about 20 to 30 children in standard Fijian early childhood settings and early primary schools. It also challenges the idea of who is an educator by asking:

- Is an educator only someone formally trained with a qualification in education?
- Can an educator in the education system also be someone with other types of life expertise, such as elders?
- Is it possible to include adults with different expertise in the classroom along with the educators as teachers' aides?

This study argues that the inclusion of other adults (in particular the elders) in educational settings (Ritchie, 2014) as their presence can help recognise and support Indigenous Fijian ways of learning.

Further, the data from this research reflects the aspects of oppression that Freire (2000) identifies in education systems, in particular injustice, exploitation and dehumanising behaviours towards the minority, who are seen to be powerless in the Western world (Childs & Williams, 2013). To explore this concept further, the following discussion focuses on issues that some of the participants saw as oppressive. These key issues are: voices and silences; language; interpersonal concepts; and other areas of changing life-styles such as food choices, addressing others, and clothing choices. Whilst these issues have been initially presented in the previous chapters, the aim of this chapter is to extend my analysis and further critique the discussions in order to link the perceptions of the participant to various educational theories.

Voices and silences

Both voices and silences are Indigenous Fijian ways of communicating, which means that both speaking and remaining silent in a dialogue communicate messages to people. Specific examples provided in the data included how teachers encourage children to be vocal and contribute during classroom discussions. For example, *Rosana* pointed out that some Indigenous Fijian children tend to remain silent during these discussions, even in instances when they are asked directly to answer questions by the teacher (CED4: 23/07/12, Chapter Five). Such a situation puts a child in a position that is considered inappropriate in the Indigenous Fijian worldview. In addition, verbalising knowledge is seen as a kind of 'showing off', where a child's response to a teacher's request places the child in a position of either pleasing the teacher (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) or talking back to a teacher which signals a lack of respect on the part of the child. Lewis (2010) identifies that children's silences, as a related notion to children's voices, are an important issue and suggests that silences in encounters with children need to be considered within the context of the power relationship between the teacher and children (Duenkel et al, 2014). This concept and practice warrants more consideration on the part of teachers and silences need to be heard, as they are 'not neutral or empty' (Lewis, 2010, p.18). While in some instances some children may respond, there will be others who will definitely not. Lewis (2010) further explains that silence has meaning and must be however interpreted from the cultural perspective of each child. In such situations the child should not be seen as a problem for not knowing the answer or labelled as dumb. Thus, a child's sociocultural context must be taken into consideration, relating to what Sims (2011a) meant when she emphasises the whole context of children.

Similarly, in support of this idea, *Mereisi*, a key research informant, emphasised the importance of noting the *vuravura ni gone* (child's ecological niche or context) in understanding children (CED5: 23/07/12, refer to Chapter Five). The Indigenous Fijian child's ecological niche, is an example of the unique intersection of all the layers in Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory, is positioned in a sociocultural context where the values of Indigenous

Fijians do not allow such verbalising interaction. For the child, to learn is to keep quiet, listen and do (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). This is still a challenge for most Indigenous Fijian children in today's early childhood settings and early primary school classrooms and even in homes where respect does not allow children to question their parents and elders.

Language

The role of education in supporting colonisation is also seen in the use of a language other than the child's home or first language. *Savenaca*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, explained how today's Indigenous Fijians (including children) prefer to speak English rather than speaking their mother tongue (MV8: 12/07/12). There are at least two reasons for this: one educational spaces such as early childhood settings and primary schools have English as the language of instruction in teaching-learning processes; and, secondly, English is a core and mandatory subject in the school curriculum. *Rusila*, a key informant in the individual interviews, noted that children in her school days (1950s and 1960s) were forced to speak English within the school premises during school hours and failure to comply resulted in punishment, and this is still a practice in some educational settings today (II8: 20/07/12). Given that English is mandatory and is a priority subject in the school curriculum, most parents have taken the further initiatives in making English their home language. As a result, most early childhood and other educational programs emphasise the use of English, even in rural and remote locales. *Mereisi*, another key informant, pointed out that the Indigenous Fijian mother tongue, which is part of most children's personal, social and cultural identity, takes second place or in some families now has no place at all (II6: 25/07/12). This unfortunately can have disastrous consequences for children and their families. It violates a child's right to a culturally-appropriate education and also undermines communications between children and their parents (Cummins, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Perhaps this is why most Indigenous Fijian children are labelled as failures in the education system. Their lack of English language skills limits their ability to express themselves clearly; and, further failing to hear fluent language also contributes to children's difficulties in language acquisition (Cummins, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

Further, *Ratu Semi* noted that not much attention is paid to the vernacular language and its role in classroom interactions between teachers and children, or between children themselves (NSV: 20/07/12). Such inattention and negligence towards the local language belittles people's identity and so I assert in this study that this practice is a kind of a purposeful indoctrination against people's cultural values and knowledges. *Veitalanoa-yaga* participants also pointed out that the Indigenous Fijians vernacular language will be lost if nothing is done to ensure its continuity (NV3 and NV5: 19/07/12). As earlier mentioned, Taufe'ulungaki (2003) notes that Pacific young children's (Indigenous Fijians included), bring the values and the belief systems and cultures of their homes to school. These include beliefs about knowledges, their own language including speech rules of their culture, their own learning system and their own styles of thinking. Further, Taufe'ulungaki (2003, p. 10) states that 'the traditional culture of non-Western students has profound effects on their learning performances in Western style classrooms'. Therefore, the school's ways of teaching and learning are not always congruent with traditional Indigenous systems of learning, knowing and doing (refer to Chapter Six).

Some researchers argued that people's mother tongue is an indispensable instrument for the development of the intellectual, physical and moral aspects of education (Baker, 2000, Cummins, 2000; 2001; Skuttbabb-Kangas, 2000). Habits, conducts, values, virtues, customs and beliefs are all shaped through the mother tongue. Needless to say, weakness in the mother tongue also results in a form of paralysis of thought and power of expression (Cummins, 2000; 2001). While this can be true to an extent, some Indigenous Fijians now have English as their first language, which can be said to be a borrowed mother tongue, since their family authentic linkage mother tongue is kept isolated because of its low profile in today's society. This idea may need further research to substantiate such a position.

In the *veitalanoa-yaga* sessions participants agreed that there was a need for Indigenous Fijian children to be able to speak their own mother tongue at home, before they participated in early childhood education programs or began primary school (NV1: 19/07/12; NS: 20/07/12; MV9: 12/07/12, Chapter Five). *Emori*

pointed out that educational sites such as early childhood settings and primary schools need to create space and an emphasis on children especially early years (ages 5-8 year olds) conversing in their mother tongue and in the national Indigenous Fijian language which is *Bauan* (NV1: 19/07/12). Not only should an emphasis be placed on the mother tongue and/or provincial dialects, there are other areas of Indigenous Fijian culture that also ought to be prioritised, including cultural knowledges such as the Idioms and Customs (refer to Chapter Five). This Indigenous value is relevant to Article 31 Number 1 of the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People* (UNDRIP; UNESCO, 2008, p.11).

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Cummins (2001) points out that any credible educator will agree that the educational settings of early childhood and primary schools should build on children's fund's of knowledge (Hedges et al, 2011). This includes the experiences and knowledges that children bring to the classroom; and that learning and teaching should further promote children's culture in terms of particular abilities and talents. Working and organising teaching and learning around children's identity can be a challenge as Cummins (2000, p. 2) asserted:

> *The challenge for educators and policy makers is to shape the evolution of national identity in such a way that the rights of all citizens (including school children) are respected, and the cultural linguistic and economic resources of the nation are maximised.*

As documented in Chapter Two, my late mother insisted, during my early days, that I speak our dialect at home and speak English only at school. This was

mainly because the dialect was the language of our home and the village community. Along similar lines, *Anaseini*, in one of the focus groups, mentioned how she was advised by her grandmother to speak in the vernacular language with her children and then let them learn and speak English only in schools (CED10: 23/07/12, Chapter Six). This wisdom of the elders cannot be overlooked (Ritchie, 2012), particularly as earlier literature (Kavaliauskiene, 2009; Krashen, 2004;) argued that children for whom English is not their first language do learn English more effectively, if they are initially fluent in their mother tongue and continue to maintain and develop this proficiency. This is because culture is embedded in language and cultural strength needs to include fluency in the mother tongue language.

One example of strengthening language was the establishment of the New Zealand *Te Kōhanga Reo* for revitalising Māori language, so that children could better understand their culture through speaking their own language (Cooper, Arago-Kemp, Wylie & Hodgen, 2004). Similarly, the Pacific Island communities in New Zealand continue to promote their own languages in educational settings, so their children are not disadvantaged, but advantaged by being bilingual (May & Hill, 2005). Another example of this educational practice is the Pacific language *nests* such as the *faa* Samoa for Samoan children, which is similar to *Kōhanga Reo*. This educational program is in addition to the *Language Enhancing the Achievement of Pasifika* (LEAP) program where the New Zealand Curriculum Framework supports the use of Pasifika languages in early childhood settings and in schools[1]. Similar emphasis is evident in the Singaporean early childhood framework, *Nurturing Early Learners* (NEL; Singaporean Ministry of Education, 2013) where early childhood educators place emphasis on Singaporean children's mother tongue in the learning environment. In summary, mother tongue is seen as part of language, which is a key element of culture.

[1] Available at http://leap.tki.org.nz/Pasifika-languages-in-schools.

Beyond language, supporting the maintenance of a form of colonisation is also seen in how people relate to one another. Intrapersonal communication is preferred in early childhood education settings and primary schools rather than emphasis on interpersonal, which is part of Indigenous Fijian culture.

Interpersonal concepts

Early education preferences in children's learning lean towards the Western concept of the intrapersonal as opposed to the interpersonal, which is a cultural concept of Indigenous Fijians. The interpersonal is when people operate together on a group level, where *sosolevaki* (teamwork) and cooperation are encouraged. Indigenous Fijians operate on a relational model where people share and work together to maintain good relationships. This is seen in the traditional teaching-learning process where learning is concrete and context-specific with people working together on tasks and activities (Bakalevu, 2003; Nabobo-Baba, 2006; Ravuvu, 1983). *Dawai* (refer to Chapter Five) explained how when she was young, the children would follow her mother and other mothers to gather pandanus leaves for the purpose of weaving mats. They would first observe their mothers doing the cutting, sorting and bundling until they were called on to assist (II3: 24/07/12). This active learning (assisted by the elders) provided the children with the knowledge, of how to perform this task and how to do this together with others (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014). This concept of working together interpersonally in turn developed their relational bonds, thus furthering their traditional literacy (Fellowes & Oakley, 2012; Raban & Scull, 2013) and numeracy skills (Papic et al, 2013).

Interpersonal relationships is seen in the spirit of sharing, as well as in the emotional and social intelligences when *veiwekani* (related people; refer to Table 1.1, pp.xix-xxii) pay a *veisiko* (visitation; refer to Table 1.1, pp.xix-xxii) to a sick relative, a relative who has just returned from overseas or a relative whom they have not seen for some time. *Litia*, noted that it is part of Indigenous Fijian culture to *veisiko* and is a dignified way of telling the person who is being visited that s/he has relationship ties and is a significant part of the extended family (MV3: 12/07/12, refer to Chapter Five). Such occasions tell of the importance of *veikauwaitaki* (caring), as sharing with others is a sign of caring. Noddings

(2008) notes that the ethics of care is a moral standard, and in the Indigenous Fijian context, it is an essence of a person who is *vakaturaga* (chiefly in ways; refer to Table 1.1, pp.xix-xxii) (Ravuvu, 1995).

Today the concept of the interpersonal is slowly diminishing within Indigenous Fijian villages. Many Indigenous Fijians today are more self-centered and focus more on their nuclear families, without having much association with relatives or the extended family (II2: 22/07/12, refer to Chapter Five). In some of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, the participants agreed that today's generation of Indigenous Fijians have been influenced by the ways of the outside world, for example, through things such as television, movies and other media, which are considered as *palagi* (Whiteman) ways instead of socialising in person with others around the community (MV9: 12/07/12, Chapter Five). As a result *sa ra sega ni via kila na veiwekani, era sa kauwaitaka ga na veika baleti ira ga vakamatavuvale, kei na bula ni tu galala* (people no longer bother about the interpersonal but, more the intrapersonal and being independent; CED4: 23/07/12).

The ideas of interpersonal are all about positive and respectful relationships (Kennedy & Surman, 2006) and this is an ideal context for young children's learning. For example, Nagel (2013, p. 62) states that 'it forms the foundation of all aspects of healthy neurological development'. Children need to socialise and create relationships, which would see them develop networks with other children, with teachers and other adults in early childhood settings. Such relating results in a 'healthier learning environment that could maximise children's academic, social, emotional, health and well being outcomes' (Sims, 2013, p. 30).

Changing lifestyles

Education that continues to support past colonisation is reflected in the many changing lifestyle choices, such as in food preferences, how they address others and clothing choices.

Food choices

Children's food choices and preferences have changed, as the participants in the three *veitalanoa-yaga* sites explained. *Vakacegu* and *Takayawa* pointed out that

even children growing up in villages nowadays often choose less healthy processed food such as noodles, fried foods and chips as part of their diet instead of local foods of freshly cooked fish with *tapioca* (cassava) and fresh organic vegetables. Some girls even prefer to eat very little to keep their bodies in a shape as valued in the Western world (RST4: 22/07/12, Chapter Five). This could be the effect of social media and television (Warburton & Highfield, 2013) and also what they witness when tourists visit Fiji's shores. They also see their peers in school eating much less healthy foods, as noted by the *Rokosau* family in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga*, and by *Tuwai* in one of the focus group interviews (FRR: 16/07/12; MV2: 12/07/12, refer to Chapter Five). These of course, are what stores and shops provide and how food items are displayed on shelves in attractive ways also influence children choices.

Loraini, in one of the focus groups, also mentioned children learn inappropriate food choices from school, as school canteens often sell foods such as fried chicken and chips that have high fat levels, which may promote a health risks for some children. Today's Indigenous Fijian children like these kinds of food better than the local organic foods such as fresh fish with vegetables and coconut juice (MV11: 12/07/12). *Loraini* further explained how in some schools, food is prepared and sold to children and she particularly mentioned *sa vakaukauwataki mai koronivuli me ra lai volia ga na gone na kakana sa saqa mai koronivuli, ia a kakana vakayai e sega soti ni bulabula* (educational settings such as early childhood and primary schools encourage children to buy food sold from school, and these foods are not healthy; MV11: 12/07/12, Chapter Five). This is post-colonisation through food whereby Indigenous Fijian children choose 'tasty foods' that have been sold in the schools instead of healthier foods prepared from home (Tarunna & Donelly, 2013). This has resulted in more than seventy percent of Indigenous Fijian children being obese as reported in Fiji by Mavoa and McCabe (2008). Research suggests that eating healthy food stimulates healthy brain growth, enabling children to think better and stimulating better learning outcomes (McCrea, 2014). Further, McCrea (2015b) argues that food education ought to be conducted with children and families so they are more aware of what foods are, where they come from and the consequences of the food choices they

make. Thus prioritising young children's health and well-being are important because it contributes to good health outcomes now and in the future. This position about foods, by McCrea (2014) was supported by *Ratu Semi* in relation to unhealthy food choices (refer to Chapter Five).

Addressing others

Participants suggested that post-colonisation has continued to affect the way Indigenous Fijian children address their elders, and how they generally conduct themselves within the community. Many of today's interactive behaviours, are not at all congruent with traditional Indigenous Fijian ways of *veivakarokorokotaki* (NV3; NV4: 19/07/12, Chapter Five). Children do not engage in the respectful calling for which Indigenous Fijians are known. For example, the prefix *Adi* or *Ratu,* used with a person who is chiefly in status or with an elder in family lineage, is often not used by children today. In some parts of Fiji, the prefix *Bulou* and *Ro,* synonymous with *Adi* and *Ratu* are also not commonly used by children (NV1: 19/07/12; NSV: 20/07/12, refer to Chapter Five). Such practices arise from the culture of Western educational places such as in early childhood and primary schools where children are restricted in the use of such prefixes with other children who are born of higher status. Perhaps the purpose of this prohibition is an attempt to enact social justice and equity principles where children are seen as all equal, but the direct consequence is the deletion of the cultural knowledge of respect that children ought to know and perform. Valenzuela (2005; 1999) and Menken and Kleyn (2010, p. 299) term such examples as this as 'subtractive schooling'. Thus, early childhood settings and primary schools' ethos of equality and equity is practised regardless of whether a child is chiefly or not. This means that all children are seen on a same level social plane, where no one is more equal than the other. On this same level plane, children are expected to compete, although it is well understood that each child is an individual (Sims, 2011b). This is another Western concept within the Western education system that functions to oppress Indigenous Fijian culture.

Addressing people appropriately, according to their Indigenous Fijian status, is about demonstrating respect, and this is an important cultural value. Therefore, educational settings ought to enhance respect in the children's culture, in the way

of appropriately addressing children who are born of chiefly status. When respect is ignored, children feel they leave a central part of themselves behind, they do not feel they belong, as part of them is being demeaned, deleted and taken away (Kennedy & Surman, 2006). Today, Fiji is yet to develop culturally-appropriate policies beyond the mainstream to inform better educational practices, beginning from early childhood and extending to the upper educational levels. Having said that, the model proposed in the following two chapters (Chapters Eight and Nine) addresses ways and how the enactment of such concepts of respect and equity. Therefore, addressing Others' as part of respect ought to be a two-way link between the teacher and the child, where teachers ought to respect children and vice versa (Bat & Fasoli, 2013). When this happens, children may feel empowered and yet sensitive to others, they will feel they belong and their 'being' is encouraged. This is an essential component of good quality practice as asserted in a range of national curriculum documents such as in DEEWR, (2009) and *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Clothing choices

Effects of post-colonisation are much evident in the contemporary dressing styles of children and adults throughout Fiji. This is another component of life that was considered by the participants in the four focus groups and the interviews, where they identified dramatic changes (EED: 11/07/12, CED: 23/07/12, RST: 22/07/12, ECO: 24/07/12, refer to Chapter Five). As earlier mentioned, Western-style fashion has taken over the dressing styles of most Indigenous Fijians, especially with girls tending to choose what to wear in relation to what they see and read in women's fashion magazines (CED6: 23/07/12). Examples of such clothing include mini-dresses, mini-skirts, shorts and other Western styles. The research participants called these styles un-cultural dressing (EED3: 11/07/12), Chapter Five). Girls have resorted to Western hairstyles rather than their own *buiniga* (Indigenous Fijian hair style). This change also occurs with males who take up fancy hairstyles rather than maintaining the traditional Indigenous Fijian hairstyle. In a similar manner, choice of clothing for males has changed, as most young males prefer to wear long pants instead of a *sulu* (wrap around skirt), as

earlier mentioned by *Biau* and *Kalivati* (ECO3: 24/07/12; RST2: 22/07/12, refer to Chapter Five).

Perhaps while these changes represent individual choice in a democratic environment, they also raise the question of how culture can be given due recognition in a globalised world as stated in the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP; UNESCO, 2008). While Indigenous people have the right, under the Declaration, to exercise their Indigenous cultural knowledges, in a democracy the onus rests on individuals, but also on government positions and decisions. For Indigenous Fijians, what are pertinent are the choices they make, whether Indigenous Fijian traditional cultural knowledges has a space in their hearts or not. This brings to mind the poem by Kalsef (in Teasedale & Teasedale, 1995, p. 23) entitled *The Decision*, which reads:

Who will you choose?
Me, the revolutionary
Or him the conservative
Education is a friend of mine
Custom is a friend of his
My tools are pencils, books and rulers
His tools are leaves, stone and magic
Modern world is mine
Old world is his
Oh my people
Who will you choose?
Me the revolutionary
Or him the preserver
The decision is yours.

Perhaps lifestyle decisions and choices must come with both personal and collective responsibility. While a decision rests with each individual, it is evident that the choices Indigenous Fijians make are crucial to the survival and sustainability of Indigenous Fijian culture. The culture will survive, if greater awareness within families means that the *lalai* (little children) are taught and learn from exemplary elders. However, this is complex because the individualism

that comes with democracy seems to strongly influence the choices and decisions made by individuals and families.

The foregoing analysis and discussion implies ongoing post-colonisation that continues to operate through an often-unstated oppression, arising from multiple sources such as in educational settings like early childhood, primary schools and other social forces; which thus, sutley intrude and undermine society's social structure. Sarantakos (1998, p. 36) argued from a critical theory perspective that such reality is created, not by nature, but by 'the powerful people who manipulate, condition and brainwash others to perceive things and to interpret them the way they want them to'. This everyday reality has a profound effect on how Indigenous Fijians currently view their cultural knowledge. *Era sa sega ni vakavulici na gone ena noda itovo vakaviti, ka sa vuqa na veika vovou era taura mai tuba wili kina na veika eso e vakatavulici tiko mai koronivuli* (Children are not taught the cultural knowledge, therefore, they have embraced outside concepts). Also in early childhood settings and primary schools as echoed by *Ratu Semi* in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* (NS: 20/07/12, refer to Chapter Five). An appropriate government response would be, as identified by *Naca* (MV1: 12/07/12, refer to Chapter Five), for parents and whole village communities to be supported in passing on authentic Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. He further suggested the need for much more collaboration between homes and schools in order to support the preservation of such Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. Collaborative partnerships between families, communities and educators are vital in order to revive various Indigenous knowledges and discourses (Authur et al, 2015; Bowes, Hayes & Grace, 2013; NSW Department of Community Services, 2002; Ritchie, 2012; Stonehouse & Gonzalez-Mena, 2004). Curriculum documents for Australia (DEEWR, 2009) and the New Zealand's *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) and Nurturing Early Learners (NEL; 2013) are key examples of government documents that prioritise collaborative partnerships and culturally strong programs for their first peoples. These offer a foundational example for other colonised countries to consider when working towards revitalising the cultural knowledges of their own 'first people'. Having said that, and given the huge impact that colonisation has had

and continues to have on the lives of Indigenous Fijians, the challenge from this research is to create a meaningful framework or model that is workable and realistic for families, educators, organisations, politicians and governments to embrace and implement in order to work towards a more culturally-strong Fiji for Indigenous Fijians beginning during early childhood years.

Challenging post-colonisation ideas with educational changes

Indigenous Fijians have sustained their unique worldviews and associated knowledge systems for millennia, even while undergoing major social changes as a result of transformative forces beyond their control (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). For this reason, Barnhardt and Kawagley (2005, p. 5) note that the depth of Indigenous knowledges that is rooted in the long inhabitation of a particular place still offers lessons that can benefit everyone, 'from educator to scientist, as we search for a more satisfying and sustainable way to live on this planet'. If today's post-colonial situation is to be challenged in terms of the development of young children, early education needs to provide opportunities to work towards an amicable solution for minimising and bridging the cultural gap between Indigenous Fijian knowledges and Western knowledges.

As the research progressed, the initial sociocultural bias of this study was challenged and eventually changed. This was prompted by the literature (e.g. Hammersmith 2007; Nabobo-Baba, 2012 Sims, 2011a; Thaman, 2000), and by the following questions that I continually asked myself as the data progressed:

- Should Western knowledges be rejected?
- Should Indigenous Fijians concentrate solely on Indigenous Fijian knowledges?
- Is there a way of keeping both Indigenous Fijian and Western knowledges alive together?

Attention moved from a sole focus on Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges to ideas about blending both knowledges. A bigger perspective and a more open-minded approach were needed in viewing the research findings and the context of

this study. A more optimistic and constructive approach, rather than a pessimistic and destructive one, prompted the idea of embracing diversity (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2012) in acceptable, relevant, meaningful and ethical ways in a manner similar to that discussed by Pearson, Mohamad & Zainal, (2014). In this constructive approach it may be possible for important Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges to be maintained by children in this globalised world (Nabobo-Baba, 2006).

While the obstacles to change are many and the challenge is enormous (Fullan, 2011; Ebbeck & Waniganayake, 2010), the survival of Indigenous Fijian culture is at stake. Cultural diversity is essential and vital to the survival of all humankind. Thus, for Indigenous Fijians, the essential nature of this sociocultural work is succinctly captured in the observations of current and previous Indigenous education studies and documents (e.g. Learning Together: Fiji's Education Commission Report, 2000; Nabobo-Baba, 2005 and 2006; Qovu, 2013; Ravuvu, 1987). Indigenous Fijian children currently face an unbalanced mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) where values, beliefs and practices are different across their key microsystems of home and school, and where the cultural differences at the macrosystem level between Western and Indigenous Fijian societies position the Indigenous culture as inferior to the hegemonic Western culture (Grieshaber, 2009). The tension between these different systems is a key attribute contributing to young children's failure to succeed in the Western-based education system. Supporting this is a study by Fleer (2010) and others (Arthur et al, 2015; Edwards, 2009; Sims, 2011a), which note that children's success in early childhood settings is attributable to the congruence between the practices of home and early childhood settings. These authors also identify that differences in values, skills and learning styles, described as cultural dissonance, can inhibit children's education now and future life success.

While some of the Indigenous Fijian research participants tended to view formal early childhood and school settings as a hindrance to maintaining their traditional ways, others had begun to look at these settings in a different light. As earlier stated for example *Seruwaia*, a teacher in one of the focus groups, suggested that a mixture of Indigenous Fijian knowledges and Western knowledges could be the

way forward: *a tosotoso yai ena toso ga, me keta fikatakina vinaka ga a weta itosotoso* (change is inevitable and we must learn how to work out the best out of it; II1: 28/07/12). Along similar lines, a blended approach was proposed by *Marika*: *me rau taurivaki ruarua tiko na veika e noda kei na veika e nodra baleta ni oqo ena vukei ira na luveda ena tosotoso ni vuravura levu eda tiko kina* (that emphasis be placed on the importance of a balance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and Western knowledges because this will help our children in the global world; RST1: 22/07/12, refer to Chapter Six). Such remarks imply thinking that is based on equity of knowledges, in other words, maintaining a balance between both the Indigenous Fijian and Western worlds' knowledges. These concepts are supported by Nabobo-Baba (2006) who suggests the need for Indigenous Fijian children to be competent in both worlds.

In a similar account, *Ilikimi,* a clan elder and also a retired civil servant, in one of the *veitalanoa yaga,* noted that some Indigenous Fijians were seeking ways to enhance control of their own education in order to accomplish their own goals. This is exemplified by those, who choose to send their children to early childhood education settings and primary schools that have a strong Indigenous Fijian cultural emphasis; while at the same time simultaneously embracing Western knowledges as a second force that can help them maintain themselves with as much self-reliance and self-sufficiency as possible across the two worlds (NV3: 17/07/12, refer to Chapter Six). *Basulu*, in a *veitalanoa-yaga,* explained that some Indigenous Fijians have learned to thrive in the post-colonial environment as it exists today, and this can be made easier with a carefully developed technology supported by an attuned educational system that is inclusive and contextually stimulating (NV5: 17/07/12, Chapter Six). These ideas highlight the need to create a new pathway by developing an appropriate early childhood education model. A model that is developed with philosophies and guiding principles for informing policies and practices that would work best for the revival, survival and sustenance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges for and with children, alongside the Western dominated society, in such times of rapid global changes.

Table 7.1 below compares Western style early childhood practices and expectations with the cultural practices and family expectations of Indigenous Fijian culture. These cultural differences ought to be understood by teachers from a non-Indigenous background who teach Indigenous Fijian children. The table has been adapted from Taufe'ulungaki, (2003, p. 21) to suit the Indigenous Fijian early childhood education contexts. This table could provide a broader generic resource for educators working with children in the Indigenous Fijian early childhood context. Acknowledging contexts and diversity could be the most honorable thing educators do during the teaching-learning processes. Further, understanding children from their own sociocultural perspective (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010) could be one of the most important quality components of early childhood education (Sims, 2011b).

Table 7-1: Educational-Cultural Practices and Family Expectations of Indigenous Fijians versus Western-Style Early Childhood Educational Pedagogical Practices and Expectations

Traditional Indigenous Fijian Cultural Practices and Family Expectations	**Western Early Childhood Education Practices and Expectations**
Cooperation, consensus, respect, generosity, loyalty, sharing, humility, reconciliation, maintaining good relationship, fulfillment of mutual obligation	*Individual rights and freedom* *Independence* *Equality and access* *Privacy*
Beliefs about knowledge	**Beliefs about knowledge**
Validated through consensus, collaboration and scepticism. *Schools regarded as knowledge sources rather than as sources of intellectual experience, so passive knowledge is valued over active knowledge construction* *Knowledge objectified with an emphasis on product* *Humility and respect are culturally valued, restricting overt demonstration of knowledge or expertise in front of elders*	*Open system with change being a key value* *Hierarchically arranged and serially learned* *Validated through tests*
Thinking approaches	**Thinking approaches**
Right brain *Divergent* *Interpersonal* *Concrete and context-specific*	*Left brain* *Linear logical* *Individualistic* *Problem-solving* *Abstract, analytical*
Classroom Managemen	**Classroom Management**

Participatory and level of participation determined by needs and desires of individuals. *Group work preferred: cooperation, sharing and interdependent learning groups are core behaviours.* *Shared responsibilities.* *Interpersonal: cooperation and sharing; participation and production. Non-verbal feedback.* *Little verbal direction. Real life and context specific* *Observation, demonstration, listening, participation, imitation and asking solicit information.*	*Teacher directed and controlled* *Individualistic and competitive, with individual achievement emphasized* *Individualistic* *Verbal direction, written, abstract* *Competition*

Consideration of the research data, the literature and comparisons between traditional Indigenous and Western early childhood practices, expectations and knowledges, prompted another question to be addressed by the study–What does all this mean for the Early Childhood Education scene in Fiji? This led to recognition of the dire need for a better, relevant, effective and more authentic educational pathway that could support the revival of Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges and practices in children.

Creating an educational pathway for young children

Given the ongoing forces of globalisation and universalism, Indigenous Fijians cannot simply be different. Instead, they need to contribute to the creation of a more flexible, appropriate and workable discourse that promotes a harmonisation of the Indigenous Fijian child development knowledges and early childhood education within the Western education knowledge system. Pacific academics (Nabobo-Baba, 2005 and 2006; Sanga, 2002; 2006; 2011; Thaman, 2000 and 2003) advocate for the integration of Indigenous educational ideas into the Western education system, as a possible way forward. This has also been an important study goal here from the beginning.

Much of this advocacy is highlighted in *Educational Ideas from Oceania* (Thaman, 2003*)* where students and teachers voice concerns about how Western concepts dominate the school curriculum and generally whole education systems in the Pacific. These teachers and students call for a minimising of the gap between the two knowledge systems. The works of Sims (2011b) and Guilfoyle, Sims, Saggers & Hutchins (2010) are useful in this regard, as they shed light on what constitutes best practice and high-quality early childhood education for Australia's Indigenous children and their ideas could inform thinking about early childhood education for Indigenous Fijian children in Fiji and also those in other worlds who would like their children to connect to their cultural identity.

The call of the participants in this research study for the integration of Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges into the education systems (refer to Chapter Six) aligns with the Hammersmith (2007) concept of an 'ethical space'. This idea provides a way forward for combining Indigenous Fijian and Western knowledges systems. The current study presents the 'hybrid' early childhood education model for creating an ethical bicultural space. The term 'hybrid' is defined here, as a weaving together of Western and Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges within a single pedagogical model that is appropriate and suitable for both worlds. This model will presumably require ongoing review, as nothing in the world remains static (Hammersmith, 2007; Rogoff, 2003). It is anticipated that the model will help ensure the protection of Indigenous Fijian cultural spaces and prevent the failure of the global classroom to recognise cultural diversity. The model will incorporate strategic approaches that would enable children to make a successful border crossing (Fluckiger, 2010) between the two knowledges in terms of their skills and understandings.

This model, illustrated as the parts of a traditional Fijian house, emerged from the research findings as a basis for designing meaningful and culturally relevant learning environments for young Indigenous Fijian children, as illustrated in Figure 7.1 (p. 232).

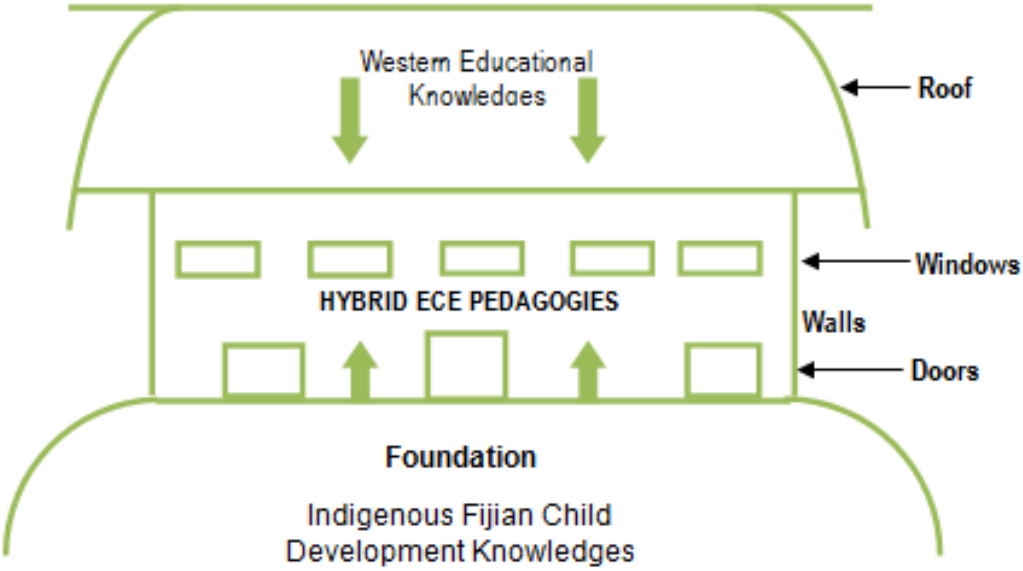

Figure 7-1: The Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model

The **roof** represents the overarching recognition of Western knowledges and the global educational influences that need to be embraced by people. The **foundation** of the model is embraced in the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges, which uphold and support its revival and survival. In traditional Indigenous Fijian villages, all *vale-vakaviti* have foundations are created from selected stones and reinforced with soil to strengthen the *vale* (house). These reinforced foundations represent that cultural knowledge which is such a vital quality component of the model's teaching and learning.

The **walls** of the model represent supports and partnerships; these are the parents, communities and stakeholders who have interests in the learning developments of young children. Partnerships are vital in the educational processes of young children, as it is about strengthening relationships; and relationships are about building positive outcomes for young children's learning and development (DEEWR, 2009; *Te Whāriki*, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). The **windows** of this *Fiji Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* look out to the children's rights in the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) and Indigenous rights in the UNDRIP (UNESCO, 2008). The **doors** represent inclusiveness and

social justice principles. The overall inside space of the *vale vakaviti* holds the **hybrid early childhood education pedagogies** that recognises relevant and meaningful and responsive pedagogies in the teaching and learning processes. It also represents the content knowledges of both the Indigenous Fijians and the Western including teachers and community elders who would be the facilitators of this hybrid early childhood education pedagogies. These teachers and selected knowledgeable elders, would be appointed by the Fijian Ministry of Education and would embrace and recognise the importance of cultural knowledges in young children and thus be ready to pass on these knowledges to the children (refer to Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine).

The analysis of the findings from this study highlighted that Indigenous Fijian culture has generally been overlooked or undervalued by inappropriate social and educational interventions and inexperienced but well-intentioned practitioners. This reflects what has occurred in the everyday life and education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia (Shepard & Walker, 2008) and the Māoris of Aōtearoa, New Zealand (Bishop & Glynn, 2003; Harrison 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; 1999). In Fiji, there are many instances where educational and other practices were imposed within a 'broadly paternalistic framework, assuming the superiority of mainstream views' (Priest et al, 2008, p. 123). Given this context, Chilisa (2012b) suggests the need to build a balance of power that addresses cultural social injustices in the learning environment, in order to promote the social inclusion of all children (that is, social inclusion as also described by Sims, 2011a). An earlier study by Makuwira (2007. pp. 383-384) lists the components of community organizing as:

- *Participation – this is seen as an end in itself through knowledge building and being responsible custodians.*
- *Inclusiveness – this means drawing diverse communities into decision-making processes, especially those at the periphery of decision making.*
- *Scope of mission and vision – these are clear and precise aims and goals that embrace broader issues affecting the community rather than being narrowly focused.*
- *Critical perspective – this mean advocating positive policy and institutional change conducive to active participation, ownership,*

> *accountability and transparency in organisations and institutions that marginalise people.*

These components are reflected in the model and supports learning spaces where young children's meaningful engagement and reciprocity can occur and where everyday social and cultural empowerment can be embedded. This idea was supported in the focus groups and the *veitalanoa-yaga,* (see Chapter Five) where participants emphasised the importance of reciprocity and further the importance of hearing the voices and the wisdom of Indigenous Fijian elders as this is part of Indigenous Fijian culture. In particular, *Ratu Semi*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga,* stated that future generations of Indigenous Fijians ought to treasure cultural advice from elders and seek the cultural knowledges they have, in order to better understanding the traditions of Indigenous Fijian culture. He further stated that the wisdoms of the elders are too important to be ignored and that it also needs to be considered within Western early childhood education settings (NS: 20/07/12). As earlier stated, Ritchie (2012) similarly discusses the importance of the wisdom of Māori elders in the education of Māori children. The *Māori Kōhanga Reo* model (Ritchie, 2010) informed this study and reflects a similar desire to preserving and re-invigorating Indigenous cultural knowledge beginning in early childhood educational settings.

These important Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges, which Indigenous Fijian children ought to learn (refer to Chapter Five) include:

- Knowledge of *Vakaturaga* (Chiefly demeanour)
- Knowledge of *Yalomatua* (Wisdom)
- Knowledge of *Lotu* (Spirituality and Worship)
- Knowledge of *Veika-Vakaviti* (Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs).

These Indigenous Fijian knowledges are the essential components of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model proposed in this study which is represented in Figure 7.1 (p. 232) in a form of a traditional Fijian *vale vakaviti*. They form the philosophical principles that underpinned this model (refer to Chapter Eight). Young children would be able to learn from exemplary

teachers and elders who would be the facilitators of such hybrid early childhood pedagogical knowledges in the sociocultural context across Fiji's early childhood education settings.

Knowledge of *Vakaturaga* (Chiefly demeanour), which includes *veiwekani* (relationships), *talairawarawa* (obedience), *vakarokoroko* (respect) and *dauloloma* (kindness) would be portrayed in ways such as:

- Teachers and elders in these settings would be exemplary of these *vakaturaga* knowledges for example using respective words and phrases (such as **ni**, **kemuni** - third person) to other adults who come into the setting.
- Teachers and elders would tell and read relevant stories that affirm these *vakaturaga* concepts. The involvement of other community elders could be a valuable resource too.
- Relevant pictures and photographs would be on displayed so children can see and learn from.

Knowledge of *Yalomatua* (Wisdom/Maturity) would be part of everyday learning as children look upon teachers and elders to provide them with such concepts. Concepts of *yalomatua* can be displayed in role-plays and dramatisation from children themselves with the help and assistance of teachers and elders in the setting. Relevant stories can be told and read to children to affirm *yalomatua* concepts.

Knowledge of *Lotu* (Spirituality and Worship) is an important part of being Indigenous Fijian. This concept could be strengthened in children through daily morning worships in the early childhood education setting. Christian Pastors and Reverends could be invited to conduct *lotu* sessions with children.

Knowledge of *Veika-Vakaviti* (Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs) encompass varieties of Indigenous Fijian cultural concepts that could be part of the hybrid early childhood pedagogies taught through inviting other knowledgeable elders in the communities in addition to the appointed elder/s. Through strong culture collaboration between the early childhood setting and the

community (DEEWR, 2009; Harrison, 2013), children could be invited to be part of the village functions so they could see first hand experience of *veika vakaviti* concepts displayed during cultural functions.

In order for all this cultural learning to take place, *the Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* proposes a transformation of teaching and learning early childhood education pedagogies that work towards a more culturally-inclusive program; and thus changing and transforming the practices of early childhood teachers. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 67) proposes that 'every child needs at least one person who is crazy about them', but in this *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model*, it proposes that everyone in society ought to be 'crazy' about all children.

Chapter synthesis

This chapter has described how colonisation and ongoing post-colonisation influenced the traditional cultural knowledges of Indigenous Fijians, with the educational settings of early childhood and primary schools identified as major sources of transmissions of Western influence, affecting how Indigenous Fijian children choose their ways of being. This is particularly evident in how they have shifted towards Western ways of doing things and abandoned most of their own cultural knowledges. In light of this, the development of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* can be seen as timely, as it could act as a pathway towards revitalising a more responsive early childhood pedagogy for young Indigenous Fijian children. In the next Chapter, the details of the model, including pedagogical processes to its successful delivery are outlined.

Chapter 8

A Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model for Fiji

> *Hybridity works in a form of resistance in the post-colonial arena. (Childs & Williams, 2013, p. 146)*

> *We think of children in the context of their families, communities, culture and society and take all these into account in our planning. (Sims, 2011a, p.61)*

Introduction

In Chapter Seven, I discussed how Western knowledges have influenced Indigenous Fijian child development practices, as evident in the excerpts and narratives of the research participants. It also presented a meaningful pathway in the revitalisation of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges, which is intended to work as a form of resistance reflecting Childs and Williams, (2013) quote above; and to create a space for Indigenous Fijian children to claim their cultural knowledges and epistemologies. In this chapter, I discuss the inside space of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* (refer to Figure 7.1, p. 232). Here, the model's philosophical ideas and the pedagogical components are discussed alongside the rights of children as suggested by Sims (20011a) in the above quote; and also in Davis's (2014; 2015) newly expanded rights framework.

The bicultural nature of the model is emphasised and the reframing of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model into an *Inter-Ecological Caring Systems Framework* (refer to Figure 8.2, p. 246) informs a way of working seen as ideal in this cultural revival and survival process. Here, all the levels of the systems would ease accessibility in ways of showing support to Indigenous Fijian children's learning and development in terms of cultural revival and survival.

Further the model's content and context are discussed emphasising the various ideal approaches that support the model. I discussed the importance of families and further interrogation of the importance of cultural empowerment through

'spaces' such as in teaching and learning, and also through leadership and partnership. The enactment of the model and what it might mean now and in the future are also discussed.

A Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* hybrid Child Development Model for Fiji

Vuli Ni Lalai means education for young Indigenous Fijian children. The development of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* (refer to Figure 7.1, p. 232) is a timely initiative and its hybrid nature aims to embrace both Indigenous Fijian and Western knowledges of child development and children's learning. The hybrid nature of the model acknowledges that Indigenous Fijians have experienced the worst impositions of imperialism, such as schooling, missionisation, modernisation and globalisation (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). This means that Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and epistemologies have evolved and changed and been reinvented and reshaped in the process of surviving colonial and now post-colonial times (Childs & Williams, 2013).

The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model captures the concepts outlined in Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific Peoples by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP; Sanga, 2011; 2006), a highly transformative initiative, begun in 2001 by a group of Pacific academics (refer to Chapter One). This initiative focused on a variety of ways to integrate Pacific knowledges into Western style approaches to teaching, research, publication, symposia, conferences and workshops and, in addition, offers mentoring by a group of educators to the younger Pacific people (Nabobo-Baba, 2012). The initiative was born out of the need to ensure Indigenous Pacific peoples are empowered through increased ownership of their educational processes, especially through re-examining curriculum to ensure the successful indigenising of education in Pacific institutions (Sanga, 2011).

The bicultural Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is designed to be culturally strong and is founded on *vakaviti vakaturaga* (chiefly demeanors) values that are integrated into teaching and learning. In considering Fiji's diversity, Chapter One outlined the need for a bicultural emphasis, as

opposed to multiculturalism, as multiculturalism is seen as a destroyer of the cultural values of Indigenous people, which poses the question of whose culture multiculturalism represents (Adler, 2014). While children need to have a diversified knowledge of culture, they first of all need to be proficient in their own culture. Thus, the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model has a bicultural emphasis because of the need to revitalise the child development cultural knowledges of Indigenous Fijians and for those non Indigenous Fijians who wish to have their children exposed to this learning context. This is also where the importance of the embracement of the Bronfenbrenner theory, though in this study it is renamed as the inter-eco-caring model where each of the systems (macrosystem, mesosystem, exosystem, microsystem, chonosystem) are exemplified (this is discussed further on in the chapter).

In addition, the model recognises human differences and the individuality of children in the teaching-learning process, a characteristic recognised as important by a range of scholars, including Arthur et al. (2015), Fleer et al. (2006), MacNaughton and Williams (2009), Rogoff (2003) and Sims (2011a; Sims, 2011b). The inclusion of women and men such as knowledgeable elders, philosophers and sages (Ritchie, 2014) is a key component of the model, which acts as a guide for Indigenous Fijians who are seeking to redevelop or reimagine the dominant, mainstream, Western-style institutional model with complementary Indigenous educational input. It provides a vehicle for those who are passionate about Indigenous Fijian culture in wanting to revitalise the cultural roots and advance the epistemological knowledges as Fiji's first people. The section that follows explains the underpinning beliefs and values of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model.

Philosophical ideas of the model

The aims of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* are for Indigenous Fijian young children to feel a sense of connection to their Indigenous Fijian world, a compassion for their own being and to take pride in their identity. The overall goal and vision of the model are outlined in Table 8.1 (p. 240).

Table 8-1: Goal and Vision of the Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model

Goal	*To revitalise and restore Indigenous Fijian children's cultural knowledges in an authentic Indigenous Fijian cultural setting.*
Vision	*Through the Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model, a coordinated, accessible, effective and pedagogically sound educational program of teaching and learning that supports Indigenous Fijian children to reach their optimum potential in knowing their cultural knowledges now and the future.*

With this goal and vision in mind, the following section explains the guiding principles of the model, with biculturalism as one of its overarching principles.

Guiding Principles of the Fijian Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model.

The guiding principles of the model are tabulated in Table 8.2 and this is explicated through the purpose and the rationale that situates the model in a meaningful pathway for the revival and sustenance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges to the now and future younger generations of the Indigenous Fijians.

Table 8-2: Guiding Principles of the Fijian Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model.

Purpose	The Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model aims to develop future generations of children who are knowledgeable in Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge. Therefore, a hybrid responsive education is directed towards developing culturally- knowledgeable bicultural children who are well-grounded in the language, cultural heritage and traditions of their communities.
Rationale	As discussed in Chapter One, this study is underpinned by the assumption that a bicultural-approach is crucial in promoting and building an authentic Indigenous Fijian culture and identity. An important component of this process is maintaining the Indigenous Fijian language. Research indicates that learning more than one language is beneficial to the child. This improves children's cognitive skills and their ability to think critically (Kuhl, 2011; Tabor, 2008). Therefore bilingualism is a cornerstone of the Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model, which prioritises both the Indigenous Fijian language and the English language. The intention is to offer young Indigenous Fijian children the edge in an increasingly globalised and competitive world. Given the importance of biculturalism as a main principle, the model is also rooted in the following Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges as its guiding principles:
Guiding Principles	1. Working from vakaviti-vakaturaga ideals will underpin curriculum. These ideals encompass obedience, respect, relationships and kindness, coupled with integrity, teamwork and collaboration. 2. Build on knowledges of yalomatua, lotu/spirituality and worship; and,

	Indigenous Fijian idioms and customs will be incorporated into curriculum. 3. Acknowledging local differences in culture and languages (dialects) will be used and acknowledge in curriculum and flexibility will be incorporated into curriculum planning to support these. 4. Seeking local Indigenous Fijian elders will be utilised as resources as they can best provide the local knowledge, culture and language support needed for children to know and understand. 5. Ensuring early childhood Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development services are accessible by all Indigenous Fijian children and also the vasu (children of Indigenous Fijian mothers) including other children whose parents are interested, irrespective of where they live. 6. Collaborating with qualified Indigenous Fijian early childhood educators will be employed and all educators will work in partnership with local elders and community member experts in culture and language, with all roles being equally valued. 7. Incorporating local materials and the local environment will be utilised, rather than buying commercially-based resources, which often reinforce Western world ideals. 8. Encouraging participation in village or community events and activities will be part of the curriculum to enhance and develop children's understandings of culture and traditions. 9. Adhering to appropriate Indigenous Fijian ethics that will guide the organisational behaviour of the Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model settings. 10. Embracing, supporting and acknowledging the principles of social justice and equity through the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) and the UNDRIPS (UNICEF, 2008) as a way forward in teaching children from diverse backgrounds. 11. Encourage participations from all levels as in the reframed Inter-Ecological caring system's framework. 12. Collaborate and work in partnership with various levels of government and non-governmental organisation in support of the model.

The general early childhood education guiding principles within the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* aim to underpin best practices that support social justice and equity concepts (Map, 2014; Sims, 2011a), emphasising both content and context best practices that embrace a culturally-strong focus on Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges for and with young children in early childhood settings. Working from the guiding principles of the model, this section discusses the pedagogical components, which include the various approaches of social justice and equity concepts such as: sociocultural, bicultural and rights-based (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2012; Sims, 2011a).

Pedagogical components of the model

A sociocultural approach

The *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* is informed by contemporary theories and philosophies of early childhood education and care, specifically sociocultural theory and its enactment in the teaching and learning development in early childhood education settings and further to the early years of primary schools (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2006). As earlier mentioned in the preceding chapters (Chapters Three, Four, Five, Six and Seven), this theory emphasises the importance of contexts (Bowes et, al, 2013) in thinking about practices that maximises strong cultural and inclusive contexts (Cologan, 2014; Fleer, 2006; Rogoff, 2003) for learning and development. In this case, these practices are applied to the different approaches towards Indigenous Fijian children's learning and development. Participants in one of the focus groups collectively agreed that teachers ought to understand children's home backgrounds in the teaching-learning process (RST: 22/07/12; refer to Chapter Five). Further to this, Edwards (2009) notes that contexts include cognitive tools such as language, whereby the mother tongue is the children's first and only medium of communication. The *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* emphasises the importance of using the mother tongue of young Indigenous Fijian children, which differs meaningfully in various locales across Fiji. For example, if the early childhood setting is in a remote rural area in *Namosi* Province, it is expected that the model will employ the lingua franca of that community. The use of mother tongue is also supported by UNESCO (2008) and in countries such as Singapore (Nurturing Early Learners (NEL), Singaporean Ministry of Education, 2013) and Zimbabwe (Ndamba, 2008), amongst others. In the model, the mother tongue is to be the language of interacting and relating during the teaching and learning processes, while English is recognised and used as a second language.

Two significant aspects of sociocultural theory, as incorporated into the model are supporting children's learning through interacting with others, which enables children to 'demonstrate how to get things done and how to behave in social situations' (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014, p. 80). Another approach to wise practice

is to build in the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) and the process of scaffolding (Bruner, 1996), which show how elders and educators can prompt children to problem-solve and achieve independence as they move on to higher levels of understandings through learning experiences from activities provided (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014). Thus, the model proposes children's learning development through the social and cultural experiences (Fleer, 2006), and not through a universal process. Thus, the idea of one-size fits all (Ndhlovu, 2013) is not conducive to the implementation of this model; and the necessity for responsiveness is important in order to address children's individuality and learning (Fleer, 2006). As earlier mentioned, given the current pace of change, Indigenous Fijian children need to function in a world that is also increasingly Western and globalised; and therefore embracing a bicultural approach is vital in this model.

A bicultural approach

In the past Indigenous Fijian culture has been part of early childhood and primary school curriculum, however, the content not been qualified in the extent and depth required. Further, the subject 'Indigenous Fijian Idioms and Customs' today has been side-lined from the current school curriculum and more emphasis provided with conversational languages (NS: 20/07/12). While it is important that children know other languages, it is more important for children to know and understand their own cultural mores. *Ratu Semi*, in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* (refer to Chapter Five), further mentioned the need for the formal Indigenous Fijian language to be taught and strengthened from early childhood education settings, furthered into the early primary school years and also in the upper educational levels so all children today and in the future can come to know and understand the mores of Indigenous Fijian formal functions and ceremonies as they are important part of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges (NV: 20/07/12).

The bicultural emphasis of the model embraces four types of learning, as stipulated in the Delors Report (2013, p. 319) – 'learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together'; and as young children have the 'right' to their identity, which is upheld in the model. This idea of 'rights' in relation to the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) and their right as Indigenous Fijian

children as expressed in the UNDRIP (UNICEF, 2008) is now the basis of the section that follows.

A rights-based approach

Background

Young Indigenous Fijian children have a right to their identity, which is upheld in the model. The rights framework such as Sims (2011a) is integral to this bicultural curriculum model because it focuses on organisations and educators creating equal educational opportunities through positive attitudes towards difference (Banks 2014; Sims, 2011b); and thus weakening discrimination and prejudice within early childhood settings (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2012; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006). Instead of a top-down approach, the Model engages a more responsive approach that upholds the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989), so that children may feel they are valued participants in their own learning and development. The UNCRC Article 13 states that children have the right to express their views and to be given information and Article 12, which is the linchpin of the UNCRC (Freeman, 1996) as it recognises children's personalities and autonomy. It further states that the views of children should be taken into account in decisions affecting them (according to age and maturity). Thus, children are seen as people and not just objects of concern, and must be listened to. Article 13 is equally important in setting out children's rights to experience optimal learning and teaching in various contexts. These Articles accept that children are full human beings with rights and dignity, and respect should be accorded to their identity (Pufall & Unsworth, 2004; Sims, 2011a).

Participation rights

The model also emphasise the participation rights of children as very important within an Indigenous Fijian societal context. Children's participation is encouraged and ought to be seen and supported to the ideas of belonging (DEEWR, 2009) and social inclusion (Sims, 2011a, Sims, 2011b). Importantly, the participation of children brings empowerment to their 'beings', which could bring about 'change' in the way they become in the future (DEEWR, 2009). Thus, in the context of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child*

Development Model, while 'change' refers to the revival and sustenance of the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges, it is anticipated that the participation of children in traditional village functions would serve as a way of acknowledging their rights to their own identity; and this way help them become competent and wise citizens (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014) in the global context. Sims (2011a,) presents a Hierarchy of Rights based on Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs as shown in Figure 8.1 below is found to be useful in the model's philosophical stance.

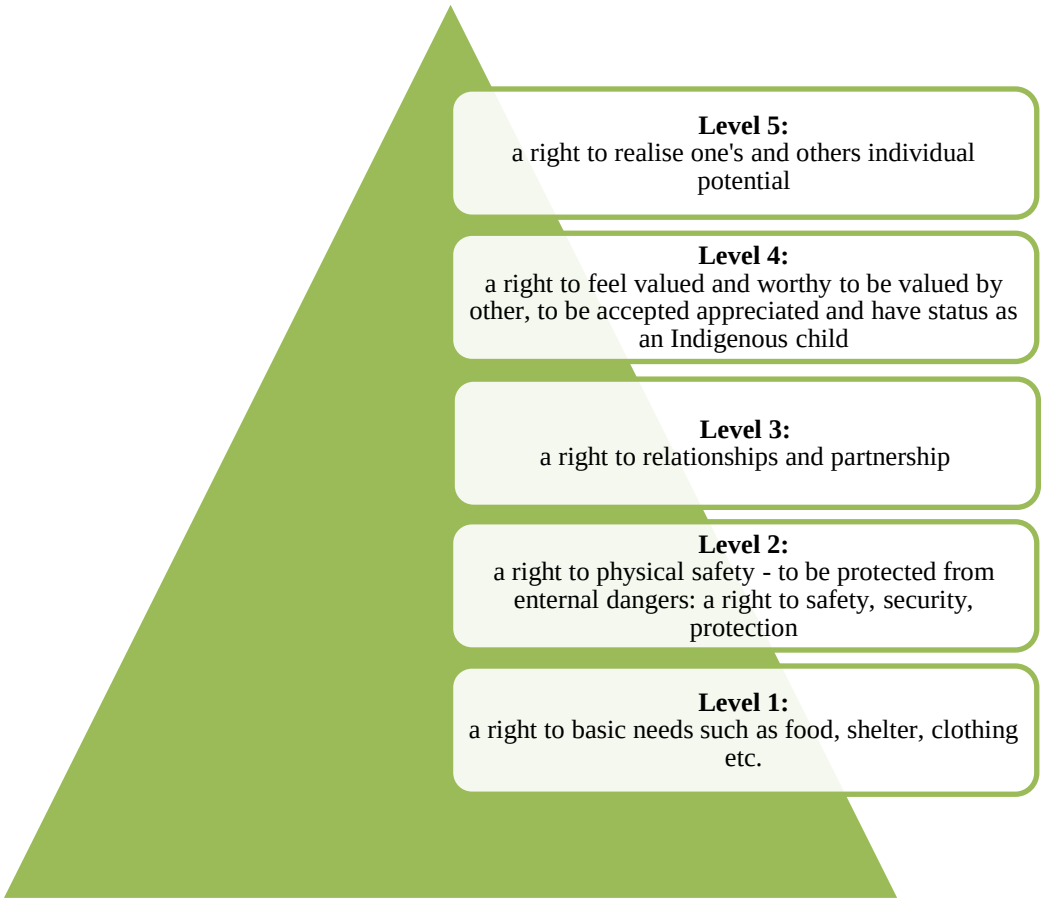

Figure 8-1: Adapted from Sims's Hierarchy of Rights (Sims, 2011, p. 24) based on Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs

Sims (2011a) noted that early childhood education is holistic when the child, the family, community health and well-being are inseparable. Each of the level denotes the 'right' that must be accorded to individuals and further strengthened by the systems levels of a country regardless of circumstances. In considering Indigenous Fijian early childhood education through the model, this means policy makers, decision-makers and service deliverers need to clearly understand their

roles and assumptions based on various theories, models and documents of 'rights', as presented in the newly developed Early Childhood Australia (ECA) *Supporting young children's rights: Statement of Intent (2015-2018)* (2015), UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989), Sim's (2011a) hierarchy of rights and UNDRIP, (UNICEF, 2008) and Davis's (2015) five dimensions of rights for early childhood education which is discussed next.

The Expanded Rights Framework

Davis's (2015; 2014) recently expanded dimension of rights model proposes a five-way lens that could better meet the challenges of sustainable living for today and into the future, as set out in Figure 8.2 below. This expanded framework is seen as relevant and significant to the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* in ways of their rights similar to Sims's (2011a) and each dimension is now discussed.

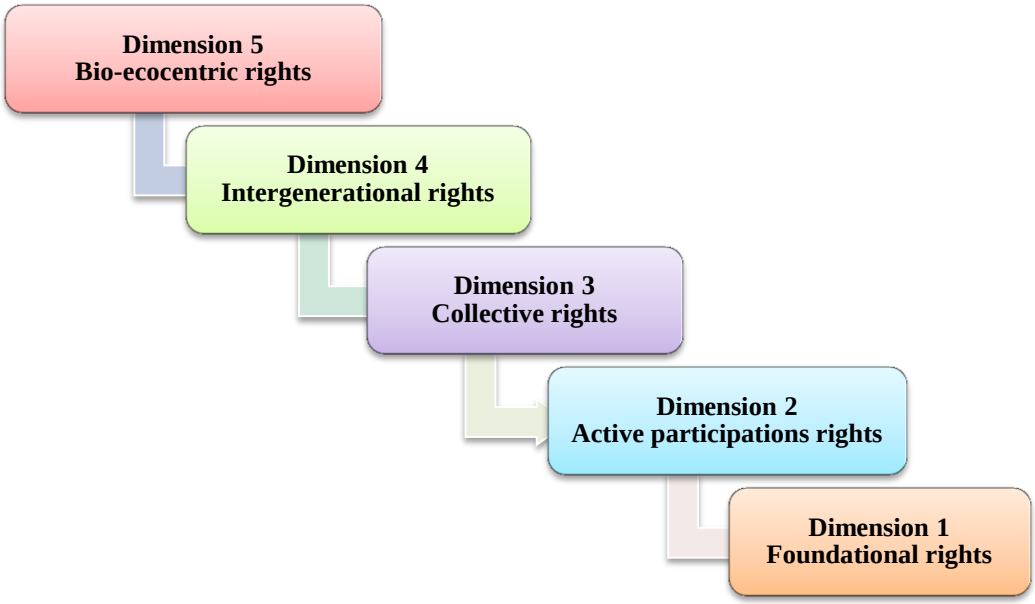

Figure 8-2: Five Dimensions of rights for early childhood education (adapted from Davis, 2014, p. 23 & Davis, 2015, p. 26)

Dimension 1: Foundational rights as promulgated by the UNCRC

The UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) provided a framework for liberation from the oppressive bondage faced by children, in terms of their survival and development rights, protection rights and participation rights. The Fijian *Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, developed as part of this study,

embraces these foundational rights through Indigenous Fijian children accessing education that acknowledges their Indigeneity rights. Davis, (2014, p. 25) notes the need for early childhood educators to 'rethink different meanings of the UNCRC and engage reflexively'. Thus, early childhood educators in the model would align to this perspective in terms of social inclusion (Sims, 2011a) and social justice practices beyond humans (Map, 2014).

Dimension 2: Agentic participation rights

Children can be agents of change, if adults view them as 'capable' beings, and support them in ways that make them wise citizens of a nation (Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014). This dimension in this Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model embraces children as potential agents of change, where educators see them as visible and able to fully participate and contribute to nation building (Davis, 2015).

Dimension 3: Collective rights

The collective rights for living together on the planet and Indigenous rights and knowledges are too important to ignore (UNDRIP; UNICEF, 2008). Indigenous Fijians live 'collectively and this is evident in villages where groups share a strong feeling of connectedness and deep feelings of relatedness' (Lowan-Trudeau, 2013, p. 23). This means no one exists alone (refer to Chapter 1), and as noted by Shava (2013) Indigenous groups have a strong sense of belonging to each other in a shared space for all. Thus, in this dimension, the collective rights of the group serve a bigger purpose and provide a perspective on the cultural learning development of Indigenous Fijian children; and which also serves as one of the guiding principles (refer to Table 8.2, p. 240, Guiding Principles) of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model.

Dimension 4: Intergenerational rights

Intergenerational rights are important in the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* because it is concerned with the sustainability of Indigenous Fijians cultural knowledge in today's generation and also in future generations. This dimension could be seen in terms of a 'chain of obligation'

(Davis, 2014, p. 10), whereby generations have the right and responsibility to keep sharing and extending their cultural knowledges with their children, through a continuing cyclic process somewhat synonymous with 'no child left behind' (US Department of Education, 2007). Though this practice has occurred in the past for Indigenous Fijians, they need to be reminded of this process, as things have tended to shift over time.

Dimension 5: Bio-ecocentric rights

The bio-ecocentric rights concept has been a part of the Indigenous Fijian cultural world for past generations and this has kept Indigenous Fijians connected with nature The notion that 'all living beings are equally valuable' (Davis, 2015, p. 30) is an important component of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model. This dimension of right has been accorded in the past practices of Indigenous Fijians who see people and the *vanua* as interdependent and thus confirm the concept of the 'Rights of Nature' (Davis, 2014, p. 31). Humans live in a community that includes nature, which again Davis (2014, p. 31) describes as 'human-environment relationships' for example, human-beings use shades of trees to keep them cool during warm weathers, trees provide oxygen for humans; such relationships have been a continuous part of the Indigenous Fijians' world over time which needs to be further revived and enhanced.

The expanded rights framework has also informed the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* to encourage Indigenous Fijian early childhood educators to change the way they do things with children. The aim is to contribute to Indigenous Fijian society's transformation towards revitalisation and to the sustenance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges.

Further, the ecological model, the macrosystem (for example, broad societal values and policies) and the microsystems (for example, early childhood education environments; Brofenbrenner, 1979, 1986) need to operate in tandem. In particular, people operating at the macrosystem level, for example top government officials at the Fijian Ministry of Education need to be more proactive, flexible and open to change, in order to re-shape early childhood

education policies and practices that will promote strong, holistic, effective, authentic and responsive culturally-appropriate early childhood education programs. Informed by Sims's (2011) *Hierarchy of Rights*, an *Inter-Ecological Caring Systems Framework* emerged out of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* plays an essential role in terms of the support needed for the model's effective and meaningful implementation. This is discussed in the section that follows.

An inter-ecological caring systems framework

This framework as part of the inner space of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* views every system in Fiji as having a hand in supporting children's learning and development. Based on Sims's (2011a) *Hierarchy of Rights framework*, this study reframes the *Ecological System's Model* (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; 1979) to an *Inter-Ecological Caring Framework* (refer to Figure 8.3. p. 250), where all the systems are not demarcated within layers or levels, but are interdependent in providing support for the children. The arrows holding each level symbolises support from all the systems levels in order to better facilitate children's learning. The framework encourages everyone to think about what is best for all children.

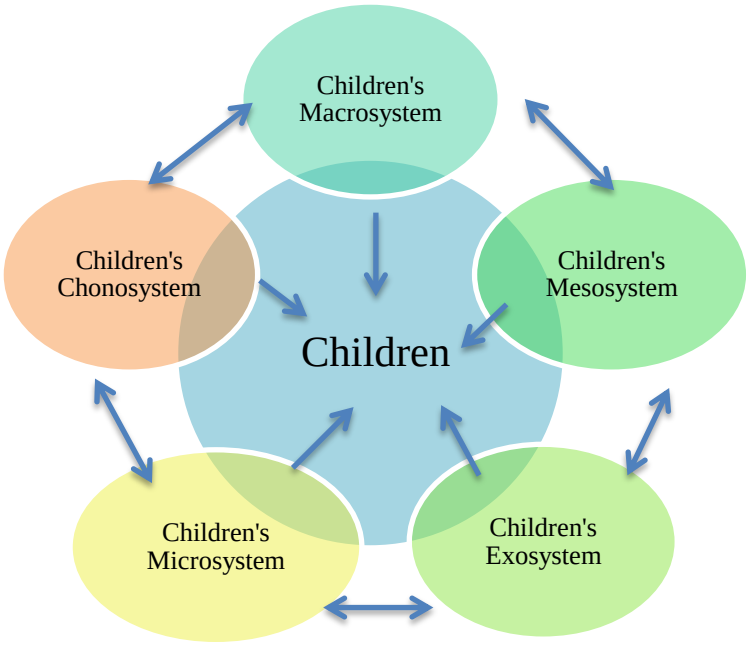

Figure 8-3: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model (1979) reframed into an Inter-Ecological Caring Systems Framework.

The idea of an ecological caring philosophy has been used by early childhood experts such as McCrea (2012) in other areas such as the concepts of 'greener pedagogy' working towards early childhood education sustainability of the environment. Other recent work (Davis & Elliott, 2014; Elliott, 2012; Chua, 2014; Inque, 2014; Miller, 2014; Phillips, 2014) in support of environmental sustainability aligns with working towards the sustainability of cultural knowledges as particularly noted by Ritchie (2014). I now further elaborate on the *Inter-Ecological Caring Systems Model* (refer to Figure 8.3, p. 250) to illustrate the transformative process that ought to take place within these various systems in order to facilitate better learning and development outcomes for children.

1. The Macrosystem

In the reframed *Inter-Ecological Caring Systems Model*, the macrosystem has a crucial role in assisting families to participate in affordable and culturally-appropriate early childhood education. This requires that those working at the macrosystem level ought-not to be seen as superior but be seen at a level responsive in providing what the microsystem and the other systems require through a more meaningful and professional relationship. The macrosystem play

a crucial role in trying to ease any mismatches between the various system levels that may prompt some difficulties of what is required to effectively deliver the curriculum of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model. Through proper consultation and responsive-meaningful dialogue that is symbolised by the relational arrows (refer to Figure 8.3, p. 250), it is anticipated that the way of working of the macro would now ease barriers; and a new perspective in the future would see meaningful support that would enhance the learning and development of young children in the model.

2. The Mesosystem

In this reframed framework, the ethics of care (Foster, 2009; Bergman, 2004) are of utmost importance and the mesosystem is seen as supportive to the needs of the microsystem, so that no one operates in isolation. This is the way of Indigenous Fijians, as suggested by *Ratu Semi* in one of the *veitalanoa-yaga* (refer to Chapters Five and Six). The positive involvement of families and relatives with children is crucial towards their learning and development. This is about working together in partnership and people playing a more responsive and engaging role towards children (Harrison & Murray, 2013), so that they can become responsible citizens of Fiji now and the future. Davis's (2015) agentic participation rights and intergenerational rights links clearly here (refer to Figure 8.2, p. 246).

3. The Exosystem

The exosystem in this reframed framework represents how educational settings would be more supportive of the children's needs, for example, parents workplaces ought to provide parents with spaces for family times, apart from paternal and maternal leave provided from the macro. Other agencies linked to the exosystem, for example, the Department of Social Welfare, Department of Women and Children, various Churches Counseling services and Save the Children Fund ought to provide more meaningful support for children's welfare and well-being. While Fiji does not have many of these support agencies, it is worth noting that in the sociocultural contexts of Indigenous Fijians is such that everyone is related, either through blood or through marriage; and it is in this context that people support each other, which is part of Indigenous Fijian cultural

knowledges (refer to Chapters Five and Six). These sociocultural networks are important sources of support in assisting children now in their right to develop further into young responsible people (UNCRC; UNICEF, 1989).

4. The Microsystem

This system level is crucial as this is where the child is centred and nurtured. A well-established microsystem results in positive outcomes in children; however, it is well understood how children are influenced by peer pressure. In this model, the microsystem does not operate separately, but supported by the other four systems, specifically targeting both the weaknesses and the strengths in the child's family. While this can be an enormous task, Bronfebrenner (1986; 1979) reminded us that this could be made easier, if appropriate policies are in place from the macrosystem level. Thus, this model promotes the importance of partnerships and working together as symbolised by the arrows joining each system. It is also about being inclusive in how we do things (Cologan, 2014), and further promoting social inclusion (Sims, 2011a) and operating on social justice principles (Map, 2014), all for the sake of children who are at the centre of the *Inter-Ecological Caring System Model* (also refer to Table 8.2, p. 240).

5. The Chronosystem

The chronosystem emphasises the importance of transitions in children's lives and the similarly the re-framed framework looks to the macro to provide services that would allow positive transitions in children's lives when they face un-favourable socio-environments such as parents divorce for example at the micro level. In this *Inter-Ecological Caring System Model*, the chonosystem level is seen as a way in which children could have access to family counselling services and other relevant services that will see their 'being' accommodated through services that would allow them to feel 'belong' and thus become resilient. This system works hand in hand with the other four systems to help engage children in meaningful ways so they could have a more positive outlook in how they see life; and this could act as a positive way to counter their micro issues. Such ways would also further enhance their self- esteem.

The following section discusses equity and social justice, another pedagogical component that underpins the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model proposed here.

Equity and social justice approach

The *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* has been informed partly by *Australia's EYLF, Belonging, Being And Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009). Diversity in this framework means understanding that each person is different and common membership of a particular ethnic group does not mean that people are the same (Durand, 2008; Vandenbroeck, 2007). Bringing equity and social justice together provides a powerful base for children's inclusion in terms of all the rights noted above (Sims, 2011a; Wong, 2013). Children in the environment of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model would be embraced equally, regardless of economic and social background. Sims (2011a; Sims, 2011b) provides powerful ways and tools in planning and implementing plans beginning in the homes and links to *Australia's EYLF, Belonging, Being and Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009); by which early childhood professionals can ensure the inclusion of all children, taking into consideration social justice principles as a humanitarian idea (Wong, 2013). Such inclusive principles are embraced and enacted in the model here:

- Respecting children as individuals, who are provided with equal opportunities in all early childhood experiences and also upholding the Indigenous Fijian cultural ways of doing things (UNICEF, 1989).
- Developing effective and innovative strategies for the teaching and learning process (DEEWR, 2009) that upholds both Indigenous Fijian and Western cultural knowledges and practices.
- Creating safe and secure indoor and outdoor learning environments that are engaging, nurturing and culturally safe (Beamish & Saggers, 2013).
- Supporting the development of policies and procedures that uphold the rights and well-being of all young children (Sims, 2011a; Sims, 2011b).

- Supporting both Fijian and Western cultural social justice and equity principles (Sims, 2011a; Sims, 2011b).
- Upholding the *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics* (2006) that promotes education, care and the wellness of young children. The code will also guide teachers and other adults in working professionally with children and all others associated with early childhood settings (ECA, 2006). Thus, the model, have been informed by the Australian Code of Ethics (2006), considering that Fiji is yet to develop its own.

Having outlined the philosophical ideas, guiding principles and the broad pedagogical components of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model*, the content and the context of the Model is now outlined.

The Model's content and context

In the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model*, content and context are woven together as 'content and context integration'. In this way the two components complement each other and acknowledge the cultural inclusiveness of the early childhood environment. The context is bicultural (as defined by Ritchie, 2009), sociocultural (as defined by Fleer et al, 2006) and is informed by rights frameworks (Davis, 2015; 2014; UNICEF, 2009) including social justice and equity principles (as defined by Sims, 2011a; Map, 2014).

Therefore, teaching approaches and content knowledge involve the following Indigenous Fijian educational strategies:

- Using the natural environment such as big tree shades, beaches and forests as learning niches.
- Using culturally specific patterns of interaction, including, for example, greeting children in the morning before the teaching session begins, using language such as *ni yadra vinaka* (good morning) and saying *ni sa moce* (goodbye) at the end of a day's session.
- Developing the philosophy of the setting around the beliefs, values and attitudes of the local Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges.

- Using Indigenous Fijian languages, specifically the mother tongue of the local community as the language of instruction.
- Using natural environmental resources to supplement teaching aids, for example, using pebbles as counters and leaves for sequencing and sorting.
- Including Indigenous Fijian elders as resource people in teaching the local village cultural knowledge including language, customs and arts and crafts work.
- Acknowledging key cultural celebrations and events, for example, celebrating important days such as Christmas and Easter because the majority of Indigenous Fijians are Christians and also *Ratu Sukuna* Day, which is a commemoration day of one of the most distinguished Indigenous Fijian chief and mentor.
- Incorporating story-telling (Phillips, 2014) where children can share their stories and this would also involve families and related family members, in order to create a sense of community and cultural awareness as children share and listen to history (Ritchie, 2012).
- Participating in traditional village cultural functions for example in funerals and wedding ceremonies and in special village yearly church events like Children's Sunday.

Having stated the above educational strategies, children's learning approaches are also important and the model proposes to employ an inquiry play-based learning approaches, that encompass children's engagements, motivations, and participations in the early childhood education setting and also in real situations (Moyles, 2015). To support these areas of early developments, adults in the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model can foster children's creativity, curiosity, confidence, independence, initiative, and persistence as they carry out their intentions, solve problems, and engage in a variety of learning experiences and approaches (Moyles, 2015) that further include engaging environment that is culturally aligned to the Indigenous Fijian ways of learning, knowing and doing such as:

- Engaging children in 'inquiry play-based' activities that further arouse their curiosities and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in both the Indigenous Fijian and Western knowledges;
- Engaging children in listening to, read or told local and traditional stories in both the Indiegnous Fijian language and English language;
- Reciting both the traditional Indigenous Fijian and English riddles, rhymes, songs, and also
- Participating and collaborating in formal and informal traditional cultural activities that take place in the villages for example participating in traditional *meke* (dances) and observing the protocols of village functions.

In further elaborating the focus of the model, I now discuss some key aspects that are interwoven to make the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model educationally and culturally-sound and strong in this global world. These include:

- *matavuvale, veiwekani kei na vanua* (families, kinship relationship and communities),
- cultural empowerment through learning and teaching from knowledgeable Indigenous Fijian elders,
- cultural empowerment through leadership and mentoring, and
- cultural empowerment through partnership with others in the communites.

The four areas above are now discussed.

Matavuvale, Veiwekani kei na Vanua (Families, Kinship Relationship and Communities)

For Indigenous Fijians, *matavuvale, veiwekani* and *vanua* (as above) is all about relationships. It is about the 'many', the 'us' because Indigenous Fijian life is a life of pluralism and not individualism. When a child attends an early childhood setting, s/he is taking the entire *matavuvale* and *vanua* (whole community). Ritchie & Rau (2006) claims that when children go to school, the whole family goes too. This is true, as children cannot exist alone, but exists in a web of

relationships, which are the immediate families, extended families and the communities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 & 1986; Fleer et al., 2006). Therefore, families and communities are an important component of the *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model*. It is well understood that no education system can operate without families and communities, of which children are a part and this is well recognised in (DEEWR, 2009). The Swedish *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care* (Taguma et al, 2013) and New Zealand's *Te Whāriki* Early Childhood Curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996) also support this.

Partnerships with parents and their participation and contribution (refer to Figure 7.1, p 229) are valued and recognised. 'Children thrive when families and educators work together in partnership' (Woolley & Hay, 2013) to support learning as stated in DEEWR (2009, p. 9). Such a partnership has been a continuous part of Indigenous Fijian culture and could be further strengthened and underpinned by the concept of cultural empowerment through learning and teaching.

Cultural empowerment through teaching and learning

The *Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* is driven by cultural empowerment through the principles, practices and outcomes of the teaching-learning processes. This is whereby teachers, parents, families, communities and early childhood administrators work together to develop early childhood settings that uphold the integrity of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and epistemologies. Similar knowledges are also reflected in the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC; 2012) document and in the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (1996).

When cultural empowerment occurs in the early childhood setting, children, teachers, parents, families and Indigenous Fijian community stakeholders are likely to feel they belong, thus fostering effective relationships, as identified in DEEWR (2009), *Te Whāriki* (1996) and in the *Nurturing Early Learners* (NEL; Singapore Ministry of Education, 2013). This feeling of belonging and being part

of a team that supports children's learning and development (SNAICC, 2012 & 2013) facilitates good outcomes for children. This is demonstrated in a wealth of literature (e.g. Fleer, 2010, 2006; Sims et al, 2012; SNAICC, 2004a; SNAICC, 2011) in relation to early childhood services for Australia's Aboriginal people and the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model offers similar focus here.

One example of cultural empowerment in the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid* Child Development Model is the use of mother tongue language in the teaching-learning process. Exemplary modeling could occur through ritual morning greetings and farewells at the end of the day, and children also accord the same to their peers. This was also a recommended strategy in the *Kōhanga Reo* (Ritchie & Rau, 2004) to encourage the use of Māori language with Māori children. In addition, cultural empowerment underpins leadership, which is addressed next.

Cultural empowerment through leadership

The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model advocates for leadership that is characterised by dignity and respect, leadership that is vibrant, engaging and empowers staff (including community members) to enact the model's philosophical and pedagogical ideas. Fullan (2012) suggests that a strong cultural leader, with supportive staff, can make a difference and this is what I envision here in the model. Franco et al, (2011) similarly advocate for a culturally proficient leadership where educational leaders and educators transform their cultural blindness in ways that are congruent to the local as well as institutional cultural knowledges. Jogulu (2010, p. 706) calls this 'culturally-linked leadership styles' and states that leaders can make a difference in an organisation, if responsibilities are clearly defined and staff work as a team to achieve targets. Fullan (2012) further suggests that in early childhood and school settings, leaders ought to know and understand their pivotal role in improving educational settings, as this will lead to improved student performance. The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model thus positions leadership in early childhood settings as important. A component of effective professional leadership (Dalli & Thorton, 2013) is involving respectable village

adults such as the village chiefs and clan leaders to be part of the Advisory group initiated by the model. Parents and community volunteers would collaborate, teamwork and work in partnership for the sake of developing children's learning development. This is discussed in the next section.

Cultural empowerment through partnership

In the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, I prioritise developing an empowering early childhood culture that builds on Indigenous Fijian culture through partnerships with parents and communities; working together for the sole purpose of creating learning that is culturally-strong and culturally-appropriate (elements discussed by Fleer, 2006; Sims, 2011b). Thus, the Inter-Ecological Caring perspective is central to the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model where all adults at all system's levels support children's learning and development strategies, which would include:

- Planning culturally child-centred responsive programs that incorporate aspects of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) and the UNDRIP (UNESCO, 2008);
- Acknowledging the importance of caring and close reciprocal relationships and partnership in support for the teaching and learning for the developing children as in DEEWR (2009) and *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand's Ministry of Education, 1996) Early Childhood Curriculum;
- Encouraging socially-mediated group learning for children and children's parents (DEEWR, 2009);
- Encouraging family and community involvement in programs and reciprocity between home, community and the early childhood setting (Harrison & Murray, 2013; DEEWR, 2009);
- Encouraging the development of projects in ways that would encourage the participation of parents and stakeholders in the early childhood settings. Such projects could include global ideas on 'sustainability' of the environments (Ji & Stuhmcke, 2014) in terms

of the cultural knowledges, which has been a part of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges;

- Encouraging the development of social networks between children and families and relevant organisations (DEEWR, 2009; Wooley & Hay, 2013); and,
- Respecting individual differences as they relate to ability, gender, economic status, ethnicity and religion (Beamish & Saggers, 2013; Cologan, 2014; Sims, 2011b).

The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model incorporates the notion of community–based early learning centres across Fiji in remote rural, rural, semi-rural and urban areas. The model has an ultimate aim for the Fijian Ministry of Education to appoint an Indigenous Fijian trained early childhood teacher to lead the setting and be responsible for promoting the revitalisation of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges with Indigenous Fijian children. It is also expected that the Ministry of Education will develop policies to capture the inclusion of elders (as traditional figures) and also parents and families as part of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* settings. Fasoli et al (2004) and Ritchie (2014) argue that the inclusion of elders is important in early childhood and early years settings. Specifically, the role of the elders is to assist the teachers in the authentic assimilation and instillation of appropriate Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge, the knowledge that the research participants wanted preserved, maintained and treasured with Indigenous Fijian children (refer to Chapter Five).

Enacting the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model

The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is best practically enacted through local affordable sources, for example, community-based spaces such as village or church halls, which most Indigenous Fijian villages have. Alternatively, the Indigenous Fijian a *vale vakaviti* could be constructed, as materials are cheap and readily available in the local environment. Also, the model supports further utilisation of the natural environment such as

big trees shade that offer natural spaces for teaching and learning, rather than the typical indoor classrooms. This kind of natural outdoor learning environment could be powerful and beneficial, as children sense the wonders of the natural world (Elliott, 2015; 2014; 2013; 2012; Louv, 2013), through outdoor and 'naturalistic play' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 14-16).

Children's learning can occur anywhere and at any time as a participant in one of the focus groups said that learning traditionally occurs in the whole open space, or the *vanua* (whole environment) (refer to Chapter Five). Such learning would include exploring nature through activities such as climbing hills and mountains, exploring the seashore; and these activities provided opportunities for the children to begin to know things and establish one's being in the community and the natural environment. The same participant further mentioned that he was the alumini of such training and was assisted by elders in this lifelong learning, a requirement in the village-life curriculum (RST1: 22/07/12). Given this experience, education cannot always rely on Western-type classroom settings as the only way to engage in teaching and learning. Thus, this study proposes that learning can take place anywhere and at any time; and that traditional communities setting, as places where learning occur should be valued. Thus, the Model redirects the Indigenous Fijians back to their roots and at the same time embraces Western cultural knowledges so that Indigenous Fijian children are able to interact and live competently in both worlds. The implications of this model for the early childhood field in Fiji are now discussed.

What might the model mean for the early childhood field in Fiji?

In considering what has been discussed in this study, there are certain areas in people and in the organisations (systems) that would require 'change' to facilitate the Model. Such changes would include first and foremost, changing the mindsets of people in terms of their thinking. Changes would also be occurring at various levels as earlier stated in the chapter (refer to Figure 8.2) as a result of the Model's implementation. These changes are now outlined and discussed.

Transformative thinking

Transformative thinking is needed at all levels of society to facilitate change around the rights of Indigenous Fijian children to knowledge of their culture. When the mind is transformed, the people transform (Fullan, 2011). In the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, transformation is proposed at all levels; an approach where people at the macrosystem level (policy makers, decision-makers, funders) demonstrate leadership that enables inherent responsiveness of the people (the microsystem; see Figure 8.2, p. 246). It is anticipated that some people will resist change and this is typical in any organisation or system where new ideas are proposed. Jabri (2012, p. 221) notes that resistance should be understood as a natural reaction, and that people may not be resisting change itself, but rather 'the perceived and undesirable outcomes of change'. However, an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Whitney et al, 2010) approach in leadership explains that the 'heart' rather than the 'head' is important in bringing about change (Lewis, Passmore & Cantore, 2011, p. 105). It is using the right words and phrases that will open hearts to empower people to work towards transformative change. Atle (2012) also suggests that in changing mindsets, people ought to learn to de-learn and become more open-minded and welcoming of alternatives. This applies also to children's mindsets about what they need to know of their rights as Indigenous Fijian children; and, to reflect on what is rightfully theirs to know. Glassman (2011) identifies the importance of finding the right tone, finding the right time and the creativity of presentation to make an impact. The right words and phrases can be employed in a conversational approach (Jabri, 2012), similar to the *veitalanoa yaga,* which is familiar conversational territory for Indigenous Fijians, as illustrated in this study.

Fullan (2011) mentions that in managing change, people need to feel empowered, trusted and supported in what they are endeavoring to do. In an earlier study, Palmer et al, (2008) explained that while change may bring all sorts of emotions to the fore such as tensions, feelings of loss and frustration, leaders of change ought to be supportive in words and deeds through using multiple perspectives, for example, quality leadership that creates a climate of supportiveness, where people can see things in reality rather than in words.

To approach change, advocacy for the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model* could be developed through awareness programs such as workshops and seminars accessed freely by all Indigenous Fijians, and all those who are interested. The participation of the media would also be crucial in this exercise because most people now use social media to connect with each other. In the village communities, a delegation to promote the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Model, through the *veitalanoa-yaga,* is the most appropriate cultural medium to disseminate information.

People and roles

It is well understood that all Indigenous people have rights and Indigenous Fijians are no exception. As identified in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNICEF, 2008), these rights must be reinforced in the minds of the people, as they have been victims of cultural oppression. Various theories (Childs & Williams, 2013; Freire, 2000; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002) have proposed that oppression is internalised by the oppressed so that their positioning as inferior becomes their worldview. Thus, enlightenment must begin at the grass-roots level and must reach all people in all settings so that Indigenous Fijian people can realise that their traditional cultural knowledges are just as important as any other knowledge. A sense of working together with encouragement, reaffirmation and guidance so that people learn to value their culture are important. Thus, this paves the way for transforming roles in various contexts such in families, local Indigenous Fijian communities, early childhood settings including teachers and children, role of the Ministry of Education and the Fiji government.

The role of families

The immediate social environment of the child, the microsystem (Brofenbrenner, 1979) is the home (refer to Figure 8.2, p. 246), and it determines what a child perceives as appropriate and inappropriate cultural practices (Fleer, 2006; Sims, 2011b). The child's immediate family and extended families play a vital role in determining what is best for the child to know (micro). It is in this familial context that Indigenous Fijian knowledges ought to be prioritised and cultural

tools such as language (Fluckiger, 2010) and behaviours taught. Participants in the teacher's focus group for the Central Education Division agreed with the notion that the child's home environment must first of all embrace Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges because this is the child's key microsystem and where the child is deeply rooted (CED: 23/07/12). However, it ought to be remembered that cultural knowledges cannot be imposed, as parents have the prerogative of embracing their own cultural knowledge or not. It was also noted in two of the focus groups that some parents were not in favour of their children learning their own culture (refer to Chapter Five) (II10: 24/07/12). In another focus group, another participant mentioned *sa sega ni dua na betena na veika baleti keda baleta ni da sa toso tiko yani kina vuravura levu, ka na sega ni gadrevi kina na veika e baleti keda* (ECO4&5: 24/07/12) (It is useless and valueless to learn our own culture because we are moving into the global world where our own culture is invisible). *Sa oti na gauna va-koloni, qo sa gauna ni bula galala* (We have gone past the colonial days and today is all about democracy) (ECO1: 24/07/12).

It is presumed that people must see some value in what is being proposed before they can make decisions about change. An earlier study by Sims, Saggers & Frances (2012) suggested that raising consciousness and awareness of such values would be one approach. For example, a recent study in Hawaii has suggested the importance of knowing one's culture and epistemologies as this promotes positive outcomes for children (Grace & Serna, 2013). These outcomes, in turn, can positively affect achievement, as evident in Native Hawaiian children, when the Native Hawaiian culture was integrated into the kindergarten and early years curriculum (Kana'iaupuni, et al, 2010; Takayama & Ledward, 2009). This awareness is also documented in Australia in the SNAICC reports (2005a; 2004), which consider culture as a component of high quality early childhood education. This was further affirmed in a SNAICC media release (2nd August, 2014) about the need for culturally- appropriate practices in early childhood settings. In Sims's (2011b, p. 1) summary of *Closing the gap* about 'what works', she noted that early childhood 'services are more effective for Indigenous children and families when they are aware of and address cultural competence/cultural safety in their service delivery'. Raising awareness for families can occur through family education programs that ought to be 'delivered

using a strength-based approach that recognises the expertise parents and families bring to the learning, and build on that expertise' (Sims 2011a, p. 5).

Similar approaches could be implemented with Indigenous Fijian families, to promote informed decision-making about the importance of Indigenous Fijian culture as part of the home context. Where families make the decision to honour culture, children can continue to live by these values and maintain strong cultural identities as they wrestle with the waves of change from the outside world. Beyond families, Indigenous Fijian communities also play a pivotal role in transformation.

The role of local indigenous Fijian communities

In both the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model (refer to Chapter Seven, Figure 7.1) and the *Inter- Ecological caring model* (Figure 8.3) the role of Indigenous Fijian communities is vital to the preservation of Indigenous Fijian knowledges. Guilfoyle et al. (2010, p. 69) noted that 'supporting Indigenous children's sense of identity through programs that keep them connected to family and community is an example of best of practice'. Earlier studies are also supportive here (Fasoli et al., 2004; Priest et al, 2008; Woolley & Hay, 2013). It was noted by the research participants that, in order to sustain cultural knowledge, all Indigenous Fijian villages must be involved. This calls for collaboration, teamwork and partnership, which has traditionally been part of the Indigenous Fijian social world. As earlier mentioned in the chapter, Indigenous Fijians operate in groups and not as individuals, and for this reason when children go to school, the whole *veiwekani,* meaning the family, the extended family, the clan and the whole village community go as well (Ritchie, 2012). The village is a community of caretakers where everyone has a role in bringing up children (Lancy, 2014). Children here are the property of the village community and the notion of 'it takes a village to raise a child' (Clinton, 1996) is very true in the context of Indigenous Fijians (refer to Chapter Two). Ritchie and Ritchie (1979, p.48) explain that 'a child is not born to [Tahitian] parents; it is born from parents to the *Whanau* [descent group]'. This can be rephrased in the context of this study to read, a child is not born to Indigenous Fijian parents; it is born from parents to the *matavuvale or mataveiwekani (families or relations).*

The whole community is important in the implementation of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model. Ceremonial functions and events, when communities are involved are suitable spaces where teaching and learning can occur. It is within these various community cultural functions that early childhood programs can be embedded, so that Indigenous Fijian children are able to see and construct knowledge. Data in Chapter Five indicated that all the participants in the *veitalanoa-yaga* concurred with the idea of whole *vanua* (village community) being involved in the dissemination of cultural knowledges with children (MV: 12/07/12); NV: 17/07/12; NS: 20/07/12). For participants not in village settings, such as those in the focus groups for example, (EED, RST, CED, ECO), also agreed that the village community must be involved in the vital preservation of cultural knowledges. Some participants in one of the urban focus group noted *e dodonu ga me na tekivutaki nai tosotoso oqo mai na noda veikorokoro vakaviti ni bera ni qai dewa yani ki na veikoro vakavavalagi* (preservation of culture must first of all start from our very own village communities then continue on to the urban settings) (RST2, 3 & 4: 22/07/12). Again as earlier mentioned in the chapter, this is in relation to Sims (2011b), Harrison & Murray (2013) and Bowes & Warburton, (2013) note that successful programs recognise the importance of family and community, where their involvement offers positive developmental outcomes for children. Therefore educational models ought ‘to honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. In addition it ought to value children’s different capabilities and abilities and respect differences in families’ home life (Sims, 2011a).

The ECO focus group collectively agreed that Indigenous Fijian families living in the urban areas could also create their own little groups of families in order to strengthen children’s Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. They recommended that each of these small groups could consult knowledgeable elders and sages and that they could then share the knowledges within their group (ECO4&5: 24/07/12). The literature (Fluckiger et al 2012; Makuwira, 2007; Ritchie, 2014; 2012) supports the idea that collective involvement in meaningful issues (such as this one) helps in the development of inclusiveness (Cologan, 2014) and creates good relationships, resulting in positive outcomes (DEEWR, 2009). Positive

outcomes will involve teachers too in early childhood education settings; and this is discussed in the section here.

The role of early childhood settings

Early childhood settings promoting the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model could potentially demonstrate the successful implementation of content and context appropriate practices of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. Teacher participants in the study focus groups supported the idea that early childhood settings ought to include Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge in curriculum documents (refer to Chapter Five; EED: 11/07/12; RST: 22/07/12; CED: 23/07/12 & ECO: 24/07/12). To see this work implemented effectively, early childhood educators in would need to align their centre policies and practices with the Fijian Ministry of Education and, this would inform work with children. The early childhood setting would also be informed by the UNCRC principles (UNICEF, 1989) and also the UNDRIP (UNICEF, 2008). Relevant documents that support these include: *Te Whāriki* (1996) and *Australia's Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming* (DEEWR, 2009); and also the SNAICC curriculum policy documents for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people (SNAICC, 2004a &b; 2005a,b&c & 2011).

The early childhood settings ought to also utilise local Indigenous Fijian writers and storytellers, who can write and tell stories for children. The early childhood settings programs need to use books that contain culturally familiar print and pictures and display artifacts with accompanying explanations. Moreover, modern technology makes it possible for local dialects and pictures to be used to create locally appropriate children's books and resources to enhance the value of culture and local identity. Children in these settings can use such resources to support their own learning in their dialects and language. Ritchie et al (2010) in their study of Maori children and Grace and Serna (2013) in their study of Native Hawaiian children note this valuable approach. A growing body of research (e.g. Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010; Takayama & Ledward, 2009) has found links between the use of culturally based strategies in the education of Native Hawaiians and positive student outcomes that include motivation to learn, engagement,

empowerment, a growing self-concept and socio-emotional wellbeing (Twigg & Pendergast, 2013). These outcomes, in turn, positively affect achievements and literacy levels. Thus, implementing curriculum based on Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges is the focus of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model.

It must be noted that early childhood settings are often described as the children's second home, a place where children are made welcome and where they feel they belong in the learning environment (DEEWR, 2009; *Te Whāriki*, New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996). It is in these settings that relationships flourish between children and teachers, children and other adults and between children. Australia's *Early Years Learning Framework* principle: 'secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 12) reflect these, as do SNAICC policies (2012). Moving more broadly from the macrosystem, mesosystem, exosystem and the microsystem (Figure 8.2), this is part of evidence-and effective based practiced (Busch & Theobald, 2013) that informs the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model. Thus, this would also require change in the roles of early childhood teachers in the early childhood settings, which is discussed next.

The role of early childhood teachers and elders

Appointed early childhood teachers and selected elders of young children in the early childhood educational settings play a pivotal role in laying educational foundations for learning and development (Elliott, 2012; Fleer, 2010; Gay, 2002; Grace and Brandt, 2006; Sims, 2011b; Sims, 2010). As earlier mentioned in the chapter, they must be prepared to develop learning environments that are inclusive and respectful for all (Cologan, 2014; Fleer, 2006). Further, teachers' and the elders' pedagogical knowledge of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges are crucial in the teaching and learning processes with young children. To implement the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, the appointed teachers from the Fijian Ministry of Education ought to work together with the selected local Indigenous Fijian elders who are the holders of these knowledges, so that together they can deliver both pedagogically and

culturally-relevant authentic learning experiences that are needed to nurture children's minds in these early childhood years (Nagel, 2013).

In addition, teachers and elders must always be reflective and display exemplary Indigenous Fijian cultural values and beliefs, beginning with incorporating implicit and explicit Indigenous Fijian cultural messages into their daily routines. As earlier mentioned in the chapter, for example greeting in the dialect *yadra vinaka* (good morning). Further, teachers and elders must also be fully informed of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) and the UNDRIP (UNICEF, 2008) and embrace these concepts in their teaching and learning approaches with young children.

The role of children

Children play a crucial role, as they are the clienteles of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model. In this model, children's could be utilised to act as messengers from the educational settings to the homes and vise versa. In addition to newsletters children could share to their parents and their extended families about their experiences at the early childhood setting. They can also act as agents of relationships between the educational setting and the home or the community by encouraging their parents to activities such as: fundraising for projects such as library books, reading activities and other relevant functions that the early childhood setting is engaged with. In addition, children could display and dramatise cultural practices during early childhood settings open days. Children could participate in greeting parents and visitors. They could also perform in traditional ceremonies, like performing in traditional dances and also freely allowed interacting and conversing with their peers using their own dialects. Such participation from children would be an empowerment to their beings. This is also where further partnerships with the local community elders are crucial in supporting children and teachers and especially for teachers and children who are also trying to learn the dialect of that particular setting so they are able to speak it also.

The role of the Fijian Ministry of Education

In the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, the Fijian Ministry of Education, which is at the macrosystem level (refer to Figure 8.2) has a crucial role in enabling and overseeing policies to promote effective construction of a curriculum that is embedded within the Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. Policies must also enable the inclusion of knowledgeable community elders, sages and parents to assist teachers in the effective and meaningful teaching of Indigenous Fijian knowledges with young children. These community elders and parents ought to be selected by the *bose vanua* (village meetings) and then recommended to the Fijian Ministry of Education as teacher assistants for the appointed early childhood teachers. This process of recommendation from the village for teacher assistants would also be stated in government policies and include a remuneration package to acknowledge the assistance to the work undertaken.

Further, a plan of action or an education strategy could be developed by the Fijian Ministry of Education to support the effective construction and dissemination of an Indigenous Fijian curriculum with teachers aligned with the pedagogies of the model proposed here. The Australian Government Department of Education has developed education strategies to assist Aboriginal people to improve their learning outcomes and these strategies are aligned with the cultural knowledges of the people (DEEWR, 2009; SNAICC, 2014; 2013; 2012; 2011). The Fijian Ministry of Education could adopt a similar strategy, so that the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is both effective and workable. For many years, the Fijian Ministry of Education has placed priority on upper education levels such as primary, secondary and post-secondary education. This has resulted in early childhood education being marginalised with a limited budget. There needs to be recognition in Fiji of the importance of early childhood education in preparing children for their future, given the abundance of research emphasising the importance of early childhood education (Council of Australian Government (COAG); 2009); Fleer, 2006; OECD 2006; 2012 reports; Rory, 2010; Sims, 2011b and 2013; UNESCO, 2010; Woodhead, 2006). Given its importance, early childhood must have a secure place on political, academic and community agendas (Sims, 2013).

The role of the Fijian Government

The government's role in supporting the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is vital to the revival and survival of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges. The Fijian Government must review equity and social justice considerations to insert the rights of Indigenous Fijian children (example as shown in Figure 8.1, p. 245 & Figure 8.3, p. 250 - rights frameworks) to know and understand their culture in the country's constitution. This can then be reflected in policies, some of which will need to address how this plays out in high quality early childhood education and care (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Gonzalez-Mena, 2008; Sims, 2011a).

Further, and as earlier mentioned in the chapter, the Fijian Government needs to address the range of international documents that embrace social justice and equity issues; documents such as the UNDRIP, (UNICEF, 2008) and the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989). In addition, the UNESCO World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2014), the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2010) and The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD; 2012) reports are documents that can guide policies that will bring meaningful outcomes and brighter futures for all Indigenous Fijian children. The *Inter-Ecological Caring Systems Model* (see Figure 8.2, p. 246) proposed as part of the inner part of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model positions the Government as a close partner that directly links with the other systems, with children as the central focus.

Chapter synthesis

In this chapter, the inside of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model (refer to Figure 7.1, p. 232) has been explored and proposed as a way to reverse the trend of Indigenous Fijian children loosing their grip on cultural knowledges and epistemologies due to the pace of change Fiji is experiencing. The model has been proposed to embrace what people think ought to be preserved and treasured by Indigenous Fijian children, as well as the whole Indigenous Fijian communities. I have earlier argued that these knowledges ought to be preserved, sustained and passed on to future generations. Sims's

(2011a) rights framework and Davis's (2014) expanded rights framework are employed as part of the model to provide a way of thinking that places 'rights' at the level of an individual's being and sees them as more encompassing than needs (refer to Figure 8.1, p. 245 & Figure 8.3. p. 250). The Ecological system's model (McCrea, 2012) has also been reframed as an *Inter-Ecological Caring Systems Model* (refer to Figure 8.2, p. 246) to reflect these needs. These combined frameworks and models offer a foundation for the model becoming more responsive in the promotion of collaborative solutions for addressing the importance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges to the Indigenous Fijian children. As I wrap this chapter, the look and the action taken to implement this model is detailed in the next chapter with accompanying implications that ought to be noted.

Chapter 9

The Contemporary Indigenous Fijian of Possibilities and Potentials: A Sample Action Plan with Implications

One only understands the system when one tries to change it. (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 55)

Introduction

Where to from here? The question I asked myself as I arrive at this final chapter. Here, I provide a full synthesis and also further explicate the main findings of the study in terms of the implications of key issues. The implications begin with a nationwide discussion about Indigenous Fijian child development knowledges and practices. This leads to a number of other essential implications such as the need for curriculum change, professional learning and training for teachers and how to organise the involvement of local elders and experts in local Indigenous Fijian communities into early childhood settings. Policy is also considered in this chapter, alongside cultural issues such as decolonising knowledge and practices and the decolonised research methodology used in this research study to ensure that the voice of the Indigenous Fijian people were heard. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the limitations and strengths of the research study, possibilities for future research and the chapter's synthesis.

Summary of the Thesis

This thesis has been concerned with Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges and epistemologies. Its main purpose has been to examine and document important cultural knowledges and epistemologies and the implications of these for early childhood educational policies and practices in Fiji.

In **Chapter One, I** set the scene for the study by locating the research and the researcher. The research topic was introduced, including the aims, research assumptions and the questions signaling the direction taken in the study. Terms

used widely in the thesis were also defined for clarity including Indigenous Fijian language terms and phrases. Then the chapter discussed the significance of the research, given how Indigenous Fijians have changed over time in response to colonisation, post-colonisation and the hegemony of Western society (Childs & Williams, 2013).

In **Chapter Two,** I described the theoretical frameworks that underpin this study, including theories around colonisation and oppression, especially the work Freire (2000) and others such as Tuhiwai-Smith (2012; 1999). I drew on the literature explaining how colonisation impacted on the education system and child development outcomes at international levels and how this applies to the Indigenous Fijian context. The chapter also documented the impacts of colonisation on my personal life and linked back to the research questions.

I offered a review of child development theories, beginning with Western theories that espouse the universality of child development knowledges in **chapter three**. The impacts of such deficit discourses were discussed, as was the growing recognition of the importance of culture as reflected in sociocultural theories (e.g. Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010). I then discussed multiculturalism as an enactment of sociocultural strategies, in response to Western ideas that have permeated the education system. A critique of multiculturalism was also provided alongside other specific cultural models that can act as a way to counter to such Western hegemonic ideas. The *vale-vakaviti* model was discussed as the lens that brings coherence to the data in this thesis.

In **Chapter Four**, I discussed the research methodology and the methods employed in this study. Two approaches were used: The Indigenous Fijian methodology of *Vakaviti-Vakaturaga* (IFVV) as a framework with the *veitalanoa-yaga* (a branch of talanoa; equivalent to focus group in Western methods) as the accompanying method. This method was used for the three different locales of villages and the three Indigenous Fijian families. Western methodology was used in the individual interviews with key people and in the focus groups with early childhood teachers, retired schoolteachers and the government education curriculum officers. The chapter also provided the rationale for the selection of certain villages and participants, as participants in

the study. The data collection strategies, specific procedures, ethical issues and the ways of analysis of the data were also discussed at length. The following four research questions shaped the following chapters: five, six and seven:

1. *What are Indigenous Fijian notions of child development?*
2. *How are these Fijian notions of child development used in teaching?*
3. *How can policy and practice reflect the importance of Indigenous Fijian knowledges concerning children's development?*
4. *What future possibilities or appropriate and meaningful alternatives might inform such policies and practices?*

Chapter Five presented the stories and narratives from the research participants, which revealed what people recalled about their own childhoods and which were positioned close to traditional child-rearing practices. They also revealed what they wanted maintained for their own children and pass on to the next generation for cultural continuity and sustainability. **In Chapter Six,** I reported on the participants' stories and narratives of what Western schooling was like for them during their own school days and what it is like for Indigenous Fijian children today. The chapter also explained how the early childhood education and school's influence impacted on Indigenous Fijian children and on parenting, where early childhood education settings and schools were seen as a significant transmitter of Western values and ideologies.

In **Chapter Seven**, the role of education in supporting colonisation and how this could be challenged was discussed. I also noted in the chapter areas of Indigenous Fijian knowledges that participants believed needed to be preserved and maintained. Areas where participants disagreed, such as silence, corporal and verbal punishment and children's rights were also discussed. All of these contributed towards the development of a model aimed at providing a way forward for the revitalisation of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges.

In **Chapter Eight**, I presented the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, a model for transforming education practice to embrace the cultural knowledges and epistemologies of Indigenous Fijians. The model is informed by Sims's (2011a) rights framework (Figure 8.1) and Davis's (2014)

expanded rights framework (Figure 8.3); including the reframed *Inter-Ecological Caring System Model* (Figure 8.2). The bicultural emphasis is similar in nature to *Te Whāriki* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1996), the New Zealand National Early Childhood Curriculum which prioritises the importance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges in the teaching-learning process. Western knowledges were also incorporated into the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model in order to provide opportunities for Indigenous Fijian children to become equally competent in Western world knowledges and contributors to the increasingly global community.

Weaving together – an action plan sampler

In weaving together the threads of this thesis, it is important to be conscious of the hegemonic discourses of Western influence and post-colonial theories. Childs and Williams, (2013, p. 14) argue that:

> *For many groups or individuals, post colonialism is much more to do with the painful experience of confronting the desire to recover the 'lost' pre-colonial identities, the impossibility of actually doing so, and the task of constructing some new identity on the basis of that impossibility.*

Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* suggests that such oppressive influence can be challenged through meaningful dialogic processes. In this study, the dialogue focuses on blending the inherited Indigenous Fijian knowledges with the changes that have come through numerous cultural contacts. This I termed 'hybridity' and, Indigenous Fijians (including myself) are already hybridised people with a hybridised post-colonial culture (Childs & Williams, 2013).

As earlier mentioned (refer to Chapter Seven & Chapter Eight), the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is a hybrid strategy that has been developed out of this study. Childs and Williams (2013, p. 146) note that 'hybridity works as a form of resistance in the post-colonial arena'. The model is an attempt to develop a new bicultural pathway to the revival of Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges. It takes into consideration that Western knowledges are too important for young Indigenous Fijian children to ignore; and thus they need to be active participants and

contributors also in the Western world. Given the inevitability of change in its many forms, this presumably will require ongoing balancing because nothing ever stays static. In the sections that follow, I provide my reflections on the implications of this study.

Implications from the study

There are many issues arising out of this study that will require support from every system level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) within Fijian society. There are also issues that warrant further study, analysis and discussion. Firstly, the implications of this study for the implementation of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid* Child Development Model are elaborated. The study proposes a nationwide project with some of the recommendations focusing exclusively on the implementation of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model in the early childhood education settings because it is in these settings, children begin their formal education journey. In the longer-term, the changes targeted could be enacted throughout the different levels of the Fijian education system more broadly, but the focus in this thesis is on early childhood.

The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model

The implementation of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model as a nationwide project requires support from all stakeholders and sectors in the Fijian government systems (refer to Figure 8.2, p. 246). The goal of increasing nationwide cultural awareness is targeted to begin in early childhood educational settings and could also occur in homes. The sustainability of local Indigenous cultural knowledges (Ritchie, 2014) is as vital as sustaining the natural environment (Davis & Elliott, 2014). Thus, I bring back here the metaphoric lens of the study, the *vale vakaviti* (traditional Fijian house from Chapter Three, Figure 3.1, p. 57) and re-copied below to further illustrate the importance of this nationwide project for the sustenance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges and epistemologies to the Indigenous Fijian children.

Figure 3-1: The Vale Vakaviti http://www.travelingeast.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/87486874.jpg. Retrieved 2nd December 2014

Each part of the *vale vakaviti* has a special role to play in the aspects of teaching-learning development of children; and this is further explicated in Figure 7.1 (p. 232) of Chapter Seven. Thus, the project in its initial phase would need to begin, first of all, with a nationwide discussion as proposed below.

A nationwide discussion

A working committee consisting of the Ministry of Education's Early Childhood Unit, the Fijian Early Childhood Association executives and the researcher would need to be established to oversee the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni* Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model project. The working committee, which is like a community of practice (CoP; Nerad, 2012; Wenger et al, 2002), would collaboratively discuss the initiative with teachers, families, and elders. The Senior Officer in charge of Early Childhood Education in the Ministry of Education would be appointed to lead the project's logistics and discussions. An appointed member of this committee would be tasked to write a discussion paper, including an action plan. This would be similar in style to the *NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Environmental Trust portfolio of activities* (Elliott et al 2014). The development of this discussion paper would involve all relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Women and Children, the Ministry of the *iTaukei* Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Heritage, the Ministry of

Health, representatives from parents and families and relevant non-government organisations (NGOs) that are directly or indirectly associated with children, for example UNICEF and UNESCO.

The discussion paper would need to be circulated to all stakeholders mentioned above for comments and feedback. The received comments and feedbacks would then be reviewed and further discussed before it is factored further for approval and support from the broader education sector and government. Once the discussion paper is approved, a delegation from the working committee would then need to seek an audience with the Office of the Prime Minister for further discussion and support to implement a nationwide consultation process. This is vital because the project ought not to be seen as an opposition to the policies of the current Fijian Government but rather it needs to demonstrate alignment with the current 2012 Constitution of Fiji (Republic of the Fiji Islands Constitution, 2012), and international documents such as the UNDRIP (UNICEF, 2008) and the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989). This project would need to be executed through the phases of an action plan development cycle designed to facilitate focused reflection and change in the curriculum and pedagogy of teacher education to be inclusive of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledge.

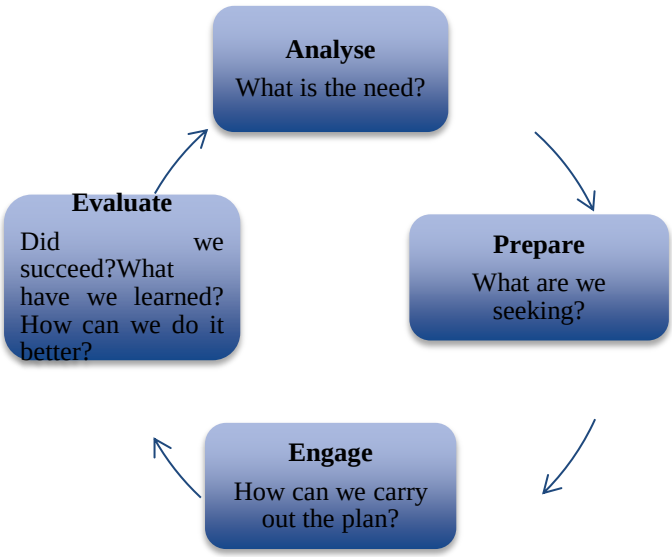

Figure 9-1: An action Plan Development Cycle of the Fijian Indigenous Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid Child Development Model

After approval is obtained from the Office of the Prime Minister, then a nationwide consultation and discussion would need to take place. Such

discussions offer potential opportunities to convince people so they become more inclusive in their ways of thinking. Discussions such as this offer 'learning that transforms problematic frames of reference and sets of fixed assumptions (Elliott et al, 2014, p. 14). This approach is also evident in the Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015), which is particularly pertinent because Indigenous Fijians need opportunities to reflect in how they see themselves; they need to be empowered and engage in decisions regarding their own cultural identity. This nationwide consultation could also present opportunities to create networks and partnerships with families and the communities, as discussed by Able et al (2014).

In implementing the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, in would be necessary to involve the local media as a source of information and to promote the new approach in early childhood education. For example, an appointed three-member panel from the working group could discuss the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model on media outlets such as Radio Fiji and Fiji Television in order to create national awareness. The media discussion 'talk back show' could create opportunities for panel members to respond to queries and comments from the public. News agencies such the *Fiji Times*, the *Fiji Sun* and the *Nai Lalakai* (a newspaper solely for Indigenous Fijians) could also be involved in the promoting the initiative, so that everyone would be well informed.

The next implementation stage would be in village communities for on-site discussions (Ritblatt et al, 2013). A similar process to that followed in the research methodology (refer to Chapter Four) could be employed. Each Provincial Council Office from the fourteen provinces could be consulted to identify individual villages and the best strategies for consultation. Once established, the working group could then begin the consultation process for the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model project. This would be in the form of *veitalanoa-yaga*, a familiar conversational tool for the Indigenous Fijians, which is also the research tool I employed here (refer to Chapter Four).

Following approval from each of the Provincial Offices, the village chiefs would then be consulted for proposed dates and the working group would be on site for the discussions. The discussions would be led by the appointed head of the delegated working group and clan elders and other knowledgeable elders, both males and females, in each village or community. It is to be noted that the discussions would be ethically recorded to further inform the direction of the project. The people in the communities hopefully would take ownership of the project since it would involve the community with robust mobilisation in trying to create change (Campbell, 2014).

Pedagogical change

The first step would see to the ideas of pedagogical change in terms of a curriculum framework; and this would require further consultations and discussions. The working group would then develop a curriculum framework discussion paper. Again a member of the Ministry of Education's working group representative would be appointed to put together this curriculum framework discussion paper and sought Ministry of Education for approval before the paper is taken externally for public consultations. The second step in the process would be to circulate the curriculum framework discussion paper to the Indigenous Fijian public and relevant stakeholders. This would again involve the media and the project team. Then another Ministry of Education consultation would take place in all selected sites across the four education divisions (Central, Western, Northern and Eastern/Maritime). Once the consultations are completed, an appointed member of the Ministry of Education working group would write the final curriculum framework. This curriculum framework would propose recommendations for the possible and meaningful way forward to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges, beginning in the early childhood settings and with perhaps staged introduction through to higher educational levels.

This new curriculum would be piloted in chosen early childhood sites and potentially in some early years primary schools. The evaluation of the pilot could be either undertaken within the Ministry of Education or tendered out to education evaluation consultancies experts. Evaluation would need to include

reflections made by early childhood teachers and early primary school teachers, parents, families and even children who would be directly involved in the pilot process and consultations with curriculum education officers within Ministry of Education. Results of the evaluation would need to be considered within the Ministry of Education to inform ongoing improvements and adjustments. The final draft of the curriculum framework could then be further developed, which would include issues relating to the philosophies, principles, resources, settings and teaching-learning pedagogies. The following important points would need to be considered in the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model:

- The promotion of mother-tongue and provincial dialects (Ndamba, 2008; NEL, 2013).
- Use of culturally-relevant learning materials like use such as pebbles, shells, small stones and seeds for counters (Fleer, 2006).
- Recognition of outdoor learning environment as culturally relevant for example using tree shades during good weather conditions, apart from using the standard indoor facilities such as church halls and village community halls.
- Creating hands-on traditional artifacts from local environmental materials (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) like *bilo ni su* (coconut drinking bowls), *bilo ni yaqona* (kava bowls) weaving small mats.
- Promotion of traditional Fijian countings like *10 na vuaka sa dua na rara* (10 pigs is equivalent to one village green) (Bakalevu, 2003).
- Promotion of Indigenous Fijian lullaby songs, dances, rhymes and riddles.
- The inclusion of elders as traditional support staff in the setting, assisting Ministry of Education appointed teachers (Ritchie, 2014).

Education for creating new teachers and professional learning events for existing teachers

Teacher training is important and understanding people's contexts and cultural knowledge is important in any educational setting including teacher preparation

programs (Ritblatt et al, 2013). This study calls for the inclusion of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges in early childhood teacher training preparations so that teachers would study and apply the required prerequisite knowledges needed to effectively deliver meaningful and culturally-authentic knowledges to children. In the Pacific (Fiji included), Thaman (2012) calls for a more holistic approach towards teacher education curriculum and the inclusion of culture. Therefore, systematic changes are needed for pre-service and in-service teacher education to meet the needs of today's children and families. Thus, the implementation of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model project calls for the following:

- Inclusive and meaningful teacher preparation policies and procedures that enable the teaching of culture and diversity;
- Pedagogical components including a strong cultural emphasis to equip teachers before they venture into the teaching field; and
- Tertiary teacher educators who are knowledgeable, skilful and competent in teaching cultural curriculum, so they can foster appropriate, meaningful and authentic knowledges of pedagogies with both the teacher training professional learning programs.

In this project, early childhood teacher training would address both in-service and pre-service teacher training. Compulsory units focusing on pedagogies for teaching cultural knowledges about Indigenous Fijian in early childhood pre-service courses would be developed and accredited towards the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai Hybrid* Child Development Model and other relevant International literature and frameworks.

For those already qualified early childhood teachers, professional learning opportunities would be made available. Study options would be made available during the school holidays in order not to interrupt the school year for children. For example two weeks of professional learning in term one and term two school holidays and four weeks in term three school holidays because this is the longest school holiday period. A venue would be organised by the working group representative of the Ministry of Education to cater for the training of fifty selected teachers per year. This training would be free for all teachers and their

allowances including their travel would be covered for in the budget that would have been proposed by the project. As mentioned earlier, this training would span a number years until all existing teachers are trained and certificated. The Ministry of Education's Curriculum Advisory Services (CAS), under the leadership of its Director, would provide 'space' with the teachers for follow up purposes and if further support would be needed from the teachers all throughout this training. Course-work assessment tasks would be 'developmental' to ensure that all training requirements would be successfully met to ensure the teachers acquire the necessary knowledges and skills to deliver the aim and the objectives model.

The content for this professional learning would be developed by the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Unit together with local consultants, in partnership with teacher educators from the local teacher training colleges such as Corpus Christi and Fulton University College, and the three local University Schools of Education–Fiji National University, The University of the South Pacific and The University of Fiji. Representative Indigenous Fijian staff from the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs would also be included because this is the Ministry that solely deals with issues for the Indigenous Fijian people. Teacher trainers would also be chosen from the three local university Schools of Education and the two teachers' colleges. Three Indigenous Fijian knowledgeable elders would be selected by the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, because they would be directly involved with village community activities in terms of their work processes.

There would need to be a memorandum of understanding (MoU) drawn up by the Ministry of Education to formalise the professional learning program. This MoU would include a budget to pay for resources and the salaries of the three Indigenous Fijian elders selected from Fiji's three confederacies who would also be employed as trainers. Selected teacher educators would also be paid, but on the understanding that this would be part of their consultancy works factored into the MoU, which would be paid directly to their organization and their organization would pay them likewise.

The training of these teachers would involve a pedagogical shift towards the inclusion of cultural pedagogies relevant to Indigenous Fijians. Importantly these would include 'space' and 'place' (Davis, 2015). Indigenous Fijians' learning has always been in the open space; the *vanua* and thus the trainees would be exposed to utilisation of the natural environment as an essential component of the proposed model (in ways similar to those identified by Elliott et al, 2014). A vital component of this training would be on-site sessions in an early childhood rural village setting, where teacher participants could experience interaction with the real world (in a manner similar to that discussed by Christ & Wang, 2013); as earlier stated in this chapter, for example, the use of tree shades as a place and space for learning. This shift is not new but may be a step back in time, reflecting the past and yet this could be still be part of today's childhood learning and development. In addition, a holistic approach towards Indigenous Fijian perspectives pertaining to cultural knowledges would be illustrated throughout the professional learning program so teachers could:

- Increase their sensitivity to cultural knowledges and practices, including family compositions, religious practices and languages;
- Become more aware of their own implicit and explicit biases that influence their teaching practices and be more ethical in teaching practice; and
- Avoid generalising the traditions, beliefs and values of an individual to a group or conversely from a group to an individual,

In relation to the above, these would specifically see the inclusion of the following as examples of Indigenous Fijian traditional cultural practices:

- Counting, for example, *tini na vuaka sa dua na rara* (10 pigs equals one village green)
- Songs, for example, *Daru lako tu ki soso* (Lets go to the garden)
- Riddles, for example, *ni tauci au na uca au sega ni suasua* (When the rain falls on me, I am not wet)
- Rhymes, for example like *dua tiko noqu vusi* (I have a cat.)
- Cultural etiquette for example, *ni sa bula vinaka* (How do you do!)

- Formal and informal ceremonial functions, for example, in a *soqo ni mate se vakamau* (a funeral or marriage function);
- Knowledge of environment, for example, knowledge of *vula vakaviti* (traditional months)
- Village day-to-day activities, for example *sasamaki vakoro* (village cleaning), *sosolevaki* (cooperative/team work)
- Cultural roles of children, for example, *muri ira na matua kina vanua ni qaravi tavi* (following elders to activity sites),
- Cultural ethics, for example, *sevusevu* (declaring presence or making a request)
- Involvement of local elders and cultural experts in Local Early Childhood Education

As earlier mentioned in the previous chapter, (Chapter Seven) and also in this chapter, the inclusion of knowledgeable elders, Indigenous Fijian sages and philosophers and parents in early childhood settings, as a way of assisting early childhood teachers, is crucial in the revitalisation and implementation of cultural knowledges (Ritchie, 2012). Smith's (2004) six intervention principles and elements of the *Kāupapa Māori Education Framework* are useful in framing the intervention strategies for the implementation of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model. These six principles include self-determination, cultural aspiration, cultural preferred pedagogy, socio-economic mediation, extended families and collective philosophy. Self-determination in decision-making with regards to what children learn in early childhood settings ensures that the community owns and feels a sense of belonging and ownership of the setting (DEEWR, 2009; Ritchie, 2012). Such involvement in decision-making can embrace Indigenous Fijian knowledges and ways of knowing so that people feel they are affirming their own cultures and knowleges and not contradicting themselves with Western ideologies (Bat & Fasoli, 2013).

This study affirmed the need for Indigenous Fijian children to know much more about their identity in terms of cultural knowledges and has suggested that this can be taught in family contexts and extended into early childhood settings. Guided by a memorandum of understanding (MoU), early childhood teachers in

each setting could be involved in the screening and selection process for two elders, preferably one female and one male to join each teaching team. Such screening and selecting could be done during a *bose va-koro* (village meeting) where everyone would be present, indicative of *vanua* transparency. Upon selection, the confirmed names of these elders would be forwarded to the Ministry of Education for notification as contracted staff. The Ministry of Education, as proposed in the MoU budget, would remunerate these elders accordingly. Fleer (2003, 2012) suggests that this could be part of professional learning as in a community of practice (CoP). This is where people share a concern or passion for something they do, building and sustaining flexibility, open dialogue, excitement and cycles of activities with vibrancy (Fleer, 2012; 2003; DEEWR, 2009).

In this shared involvement of early childhood teachers and elders, co-constructed learning would occur that would reflect social constructionism (Vygotsky, 1978). Intergenerational scaffolding (Bruner, 1996) could lead young children from their current zones of actual development (ZAP) to new levels of understanding about concepts (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014). Such a process is viewed as active and participatory learning, where hands-on experience is integral to the learning process (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2014).

Implications from this research study

This study implies that strong advocacy for early childhood education, in terms of the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model, is essential for the regrowth and the revaluing of Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges. This can be framed in terms of community mobilisation with the aim of working with the communities to develop new ways of seeing things, based around a more empowered life gained through reclaiming cultural identity (Campbell, 2014). Able et al, (2014) suggest that this is another way of fostering parental and community partnerships that are integral to early childhood services.

Implications for the role of early childhood education in advocacy

Early childhood teachers, in various educational settings, could be invited to be responsible for Indigenous Fijian cultural advocacy programs in their local communities. The importance of networking is critical in achieving this (Christ & Wang, 2013) and, therefore, early childhood teachers would need to liaise and work closely with village chiefs, head clan elders and the entire village community for successful advocacy. This would be a policy-driven advocacy program, which would be part of the early childhood teacher's community outreach work. This outreach work would be conducted regularly and would most likely take the form of a traditional *bose-va-koro* (village meeting) through *veitalanoa-yaga* sessions (in the way of seminars, workshops and conferences). The focus would be on the importance of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges for children and parents, elders and all community members would be present to hear and discuss perspectives and ideas with the early childhood teachers and the appointed contracted elders. This would create a two-way dialogue aimed at supporting a shared understanding between community members and teachers about what are important local knowledges (Ritchie, 2014). The focus of such advocacy would be about how individual families and all the entire villager communities could play a role in the revival and strengthening of Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges particularly within early childhood settings.

Implications for pedagogy

Children bring their 'cultural baggage' to the early childhood settings, in the same ways that teachers do. The cultural baggage of children includes all the things they have learned and experienced in the context of the village community, the *vanua* (environment) and their homes. Taufe'ulungaki (2003) notes that Pacific (Fiji included) children bring to EC educational settings the belief and value systems of their home culture, including the speech rules of their culture, their own learning systems and their own styles of thinking. Similarly, Nabobo-Baba (2006), argues that the traditional culture of non-Western students has profound effects on their learning in Western early childhood educational settings particularly of how communication takes place with teachers and also in

the way children respond to classroom management and interactions and in the ways they approach learning tasks. This is linked to the Critical Race Theory (CRT) and further to Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) where children's contexts are being oppressed in educational settings (such as in early childhood education settings) as expressed by Ledesma & Calderon (2015). This means that for wise pedagogical approach towards teaching and learning in early childhood education settings, the values, beliefs and contexts of children (Fleer, 2006; 2010) need to be the basis of the whole pedagogical position.

Important Indigenous knowledges reside within Indigenous Fijians but are not available on an equitable basis. Teachers themselves have inequitable access to these knowledges, depending on their own background and experiences. Support for teachers to effectively plan their programs to incorporate such Indigenous knowledges would then need children's learning to be individualised and contextualised. Thus, improvisation with familiar local resources is essential (Graue et al, 2014).

Further, Indigenous Fijians emphasise and exist in their relatedness to a clan group or, if in towns, they build groups, usually kinship-based or *vanua*-based. What this implies for early childhood education or education is that, although education often emphasises individual achievement and competition, individuals still need to belong to or strongly identify with a particular group or groups to feel comfortable and accepted. In addition to belonging to a group, the group itself needs to have established and secure links to an educational setting such as an early childhood centre so that children might feel comfortable in the environment. Thus, the principle of secure, respectful and reciprocal relationship is vital here (DEEWR, 2009) where children would be nurtured to feel 'ownership' of the educational setting. This would be seen in forms of familiar environment in both indoor and outdoor; for example familiar faces such as parents taking part in storytelling and familiar cultural artefacts displayed in the entrance foyer. This notion of ownership could also be promoted in interactions through conversations using dialects familiar to children.

Another implication that is that Indigenous Fijian children are taught by parents and elders not to judge or evaluate things not considered theirs. In most cases

they will be reluctant to examine or critically evaluate subjects or issues that they do not own or feel do not belong to them. What this means is that, children need to be nurtured and be facilitated to feel that the early childhood setting is theirs, then they will not feel it is their right to digest, critique and question what is there. If early childhood settings are treated as extensions of *vanua* life, the possibility is that such would facilitate young children to feel belong to the setting and would be encouraged to participate as communication agents from the educational setting to the home and the communities (Council of Australian Government; COAG, 2011). Further children would be responsive to support teachers in the learning processes knowing they are respected in their identity (DEEWR, 2009). There is a notion amongst Indigenous Fijians that the best learning happens when there is *yalo dina* or *yalomu mai loma* (he inside spirit/the heart) is involved. This suggests that the young learner needs to develop a love for the early childhood educational setting; including the play activities in which they engage in with their teachers. This learning is not superficial; and it suggests that the teacher is also a person that has qualities that include *loloma* (love), *veikauwaitaki* (care) and *vakarokoroko* (respect) for young children.

Children may not see the need to question the teacher or any other source of knowledge. This means, as Ninnes (1994) found among Solomon students, that copying notes and imitating the teacher is seen as the correct way to learn rather than having to figure out truths themselves. Questions, public speaking and public critique is the right of only a handful of clan members in a particular community or *vanua* (and only adults) and, by implication, this may result in low numbers of children critiquing their own work and the work of others.

Indigenous Fijian customary values and behaviours that are widely respected, such as *cola galugalu na itavi* (to quietly shoulder one's responsibilities), may have implications for how tasks are expected to be carried out in educational settings at large. To register complaints, or to be seen to be talking loudly about what one is doing or achieving, is seen as *dokadoka* (boastful behaviour) and is unacceptable. This of course has implications for classroom behaviour and quality. Similarly, Indigenous Fijians expect people to speak with respect, where intonation and choice of words are just as important as the message. When one

lacks respect and speaks harshly and condescendingly, people close their ears or are insulted, therefore speech is extremely important. It makes and breaks relationships in the community *or vanua* and young children are reminded of the importance of these at all times. This point is crucial, as it is a central pillar of Indigenous Fijian epistemology. Speech, like attire, is expected to be appropriate at all times and this has implications for teaching and learning (refer to the section on professional learning above).

Further implications of pedagogy in this study is the realisation and affirmation that there are many kinds of knowledge and many ways of knowing the world (Battiste, 2000b; Ninnes, 1994; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; 1999) rather than the 'white supremacy that has dominated all educational settings creating a corrupt school system' (Parker, 2015, p. 201). However, there is ongoing struggle to redefine knowledge according to the contexts of different cultures (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010; Rogoff, 2003) and their own ways of learning and doing things (Chilisa, 2012a; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Theories such as Vygotsky (1978) and others (Edwards, 2009; Fleer, 2010; Rogoff, 2003) posit the importance of sociocultural contexts as a way forward in defining best learning practices for young children. Thus, in this study, it posits that knowledge is connected to experiential learning, as children learn effectively through doing and making things in related contexts (refer to Chapter Five and Six). And in terms of cultural empiricism, for example, this study further posits that such knowledge is seen as influenced by the mind, the heart and the soul. Childs and Williams (2013) note the same in pointing out that such is a cultural construct, where empiricism provides the foundation for epistemology and, hence, epistemology is culturally-defined.

Implications for early childhood development theory

The key points explicated for early childhood development theory include *voice* (silence), *hybridity* and *othering*; their implications of these are discussed below.

Voice (and Silence)

The implications for post-colonial framings of voice in Indigenous research, such as this study, are just as important as silences. The findings here demonstrate that

the voices of Indigenous Fijians, whether children or adults, will be in the verbal but will also be evident in silences. This notion was established in Chapter Two, which foregrounded my journey as a post-colonial woman and scholar. Clearly in the *veitalanoa-yaga*, and in the focus groups, there was always silence after the chief, clan elder or a respected elder has spoken. The concept of voice is represented strongly in the research methodology and also in the preceding chapters. Indigenous Fijians have spoken from their Indigenous standpoints, from their positions of comfort, familiarity and power during the data collection (St Pierre, 2014).

This thesis was about the voice of Indigenous Fijian people, whose knowledge and epistemology of Indigenous Fijian child development has been collated and recorded in this research study The participants in this study spoke with authority about their worldviews, knowledge and epistemology in relation to Indigenous Fijian child development. Spivak (2010 p. 11) ask 'Can the subaltern speak?' In the case of this study, the participants have spoken and continue to speak and perhaps the more appropriate question to ask is whether, as they speak out, does the (dominant) other has the ability and capacity to hear their voices and decipher their silences?

The dominant other, in seeking to hear Indigenous Fijian voices, needs to hear these voices in authentic cultural contexts, given that both voice and silence have importance. Battiste (2000b, p. xvi) noted the importance of hearing the silenced voices of once colonised peoples so 'we may hear new perspectives on knowledge'. Similarly, Lewis (2010) sees silences also as voices that need to be heard. To this end Nabobo-Baba (2006, p. 95), proposed taxonomy of silence for the people of *Vugale*i in Fiji, which I presume rings true for Indigenous Fijians. The proposed taxonomy of silence depicts eloquence and respect for the *vanua*. These silences imply that early childhood education researchers from both inside and outside Fiji ought to consider these culturally relevant voices in terms of their research and theorising amongst the Indigenous Fijian people.

Table 9-1: Taxonomy of Silence. Adapted from Nabobo-Baba (2006, p. 95)

Taxonomy of Silence	
1	*Silence and the Vanua*
2	*Ceremonial Silence*
3	*Silence and the Church*
4	*Silence and the Elements*
5	*Silence and Social Class*
6	*Silence and Clan Rights to Public Speaking*
7	*Silence of Women*
8	*Age and Silence*
9	*iTaukei and Vulagi dichotomy and Related Silence*
10	*Silence and the Supernatural*
11	*Silence as Resistance, Disagreement and Opposition*
12	*Silence and Relationship of Avoidance*
13	*Silence when in Awe of Custom*
14	*Silence in Death*
15	*Silence of Exclusion*
16	*Silence of the Land*
17	*Silence in Harvest*
18	*Holy Silence*

The above silences align voice to respect and the importance of relatedness amongst people (Martin, 2008) and the *vanua* (Nabobo-Baba, 2006). This positioning adds to the understanding of Indigenous methodologies and associated epistemologies. In this study, this was enacted through recognising Indigenous Fijian ways of knowing as part of the repository of global Indigenous knowledges.

Hybridity

The notion of *hybridity* positions the funds of knowledge (Graue, Whyte & Delaney, 2014) of post-colonial cultures (Childs & Williams, 2013) and of the Indigenous Fijians as strengths rather than weaknesses. The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is based on the concept of empowerment (Childs & Williams, 2013). Cultures that were once colonised showed that they have not totally lost their entire identity, and by adopting new things are able to redefine new knowledges and ways of knowing. This is through a ‘dialogic process of recovery and re-inscription’ as suggested by Childs and Williams (2013, p. 184). This study recognises that such post-colonial realities of

hybridity can be effective sites for resistance to things harmful to the Indigenous Fijian, as well as a tool for counter-discursive practices and development (Childs & Williams, 2013), as illustrated in the Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model. This model adds to theory and especially to understandings of post-colonialism and its discourses in the Indigenous Fijian context. As earlier mentioned in this chapter and the last chapter (Chapter Eight), the model is way of recovering Indigenous Fijian indigeneity and privileging it alongside Western ideologies.

Othering

The privileging and maintaining of the superiority of Western knowledges in institutions of learning and representations of the *Other* as different from the Western norm, is sustained by 'othering' discourses (Childs & Williams, 2013; Martin, 2008; Tuwhai Smith, 2012). These discourses are reflected in the way people are viewed and mirrored as 'what is good in us is lacking in them' (Baumann & Gingrich, 2004, p. x) or, as Baumann (2004) further argues, the process of 'othering' is linked to the process of 'selfing'. Thus, the implications of the findings here point to the urgent need for all educational settings, and in particular early childhood settings, to reflect local Indigenous Fijian knowledges and to deconstruct the existing and pervasive binary discourses. The aim of this deconstruction is for Western knowledges to no longer be privileged nor enjoy 'positional superiority', as Said (1995, p. 90) states. However, a more optimistic approach is being developed out of this study, that is, a more equitable and fair inclusion to preclude further 'othering'. The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is positioned as a way to reflect this impetus, so that, not only young Indigenous Fijians, but children, whose parents would like their children to learn and understand Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges too.

Implications for further research

In this study, the theorising of Indigenous Fijian *vakaviti-vakaturaga* research or research conducted with Indigenous Fijian people call for a holistic approach that grounds the questions and responses within a cultural frame that Indigenous

Fijians provide. This includes the people's worldviews, as well as their spiritually-centred wisdoms. Research about Indigenous people's knowledge, calls for new ways of defining and framing research and theory, as in *Kāupapa Māori Theory* (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; 2012) and in Martin's (2008) work with Australian Aboriginal people. These approaches have informed this research and it is suggested that, in Indigenous Fijian research, the cultural protocols of *vakaviti-vakaturaga* become the frame within which knowledge and epistemologies are explored. This was elucidated in Chapter Three.

Indigenous Fijians need to develop a clear understanding of the many aspects of Indigenous knowledges and explore how these can be valued as they are shaped into a new hybrid Indigenous identity. Different future research projects could focus on a variety of areas such as Indigenous early childhood and the community; Indigenous early childhood and leadership; cultural sustainability and change in early childhood; environmental sustainability in early childhood; and the influence of Christianity on Indigenous people. Research investigating these areas could employ social science methodologies or 'multi-disciplinary approaches' (as discussed by Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999, p. 142).

The need to document Indigenous Fijian clan, tribe and national histories is also an imperative for Indigenous researchers. These include the oral histories of elders, whose life experiences as children reflect a different world to the one in which Fijians currently live. Such projects could address existing anomalies in the historical records documented by colonial administrators and writers. Oppressors wrote the history and it is only in more recent times that Tuhiwai-Smith (1999, p. 144) has suggested 'it may be that histories have to be re-written around other priorities'. Such other priorities, I suggest may need to be identified by the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs or by individual clans or *vanua* for example as in the case of this study where child development practices have seemed to be an issue of 'cultural melt-down'. This pointed to the need to enhance funding for research and its dissemination especially in this area, considering children are the future people of a nation. In Fiji much silencing of Indigenous Fijian voices occurs at all macrosystem levels and such silencing needed to be challenged (Nabobo-Baba, 2006) as in the way proposed in the *Inter-Ecological Caring*

Systems Model (Figure 8.2, p. 246). Projects and publications derived from Indigenous research are imperative and those undertaking this work need encouragement from Indigenous Fijian groups, governments, academia and the Indigenous Fijian leadership. The aim would be for Indigenous Fijians to record their own voices, their own perspectives of their histories, their knowledges and epistemologies, as well as responses to contemporary events as in the case of this study.

Another imperative is the need to continue to encourage appropriate and relevant research methodologies for the context. For example, in this research, the *veitalanoa-yaga* (specific branch of talanoa) was used as a tool for documenting Indigenous Fijians and their voices, especially those of elders. Using stories, chants, songs and traditional dances can also be a powerful way to record a people's knowledges, ways of life and their cultures. Observing and recording children as they interact with the environment in different locales from urban to remote rural could be useful and further explored, especially in the face of dynamic change that has influenced the Indigenous Fijians today. Stories and story-tellers become important avenues to connect Indigenous Fijian pasts to the future through the process of *veitalanoa-yaga*, a process Indigenous Fijians relish and one in which they are regularly engaged. Tuhiwai-Smith, (1999, p. 145) noted that 'such approaches fit well with the oral traditions which are still a reality in day-to-day Indigenous Fijian lives'.

Broad research limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, the sample that was selected, was only one village from each of three confederacies (*Kubuna, Burebasaga, Tovata*), with clan elders and knowledgeable Indigenous Fijians as participants. It was not possible to engage a greater number of villages for practical reasons, including difficulties in physical and geographical access and the fact that recruitment was limited within the existing relationships that my clan and I held. Research among ones people meant customary obligations; I was not able to do this very well because such processes required further cultural support from my clan. The busy work schedules of some participants and a limited budget also contributed to limitations in the sample. This is in addition to the realities of

timeframes that come with PhD study that hindered the collection of more data. In addition, I utilised my extant relationships in accessing participants, which may have narrowed the data sources, but did support accessibility of participants and more in-depth work with them. Language translation took time as well, as I was trying to find and locate appropriate English language equivalents to the words and phrases that best suit the participants' narratives.

Possibilities for future research

Research does not operate in a vacuum, and this study is only part of what it is hoped will be a growing research agenda in Fiji. I anticipate that Indigenous Fijian researchers should be encouraged to use participatory action research strategies to work with community members on issues of relevance (Elliott, 2012). This approach is recognised as one that affirms and empowers participants' voices to be heard. It empowers people because, when they are involved, the research is acknowledging that the participants can define their own problems and critically examine and analyse them, as well as come to conclusions and recommendations about certain aspects of their cultural lives. Such an approach could be used to extend the reach of this study, and involve communities and local groups in discussion and reflection about the ways in which they would like to construct their hybrid identities in selecting the best of both Indigenous and Western cultures as a way forward. Another suggestion is to develop research, which explores the ways in which Indigenous epistemology changes over time. One could also focus on Indigenous Fijians who live in urban areas to see the extent to which their epistemologies have been influenced by their urban and more Westernised environment. This would have implications for Indigenous Fijians living in other parts of the world as well.

Chapter synthesis

In synthesising, what is clear is that the Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges and epistemologies need appropriate and more spaces in educational settings, in particular, the space needs to be strongly visible in early childhood education level. This is reflected in the approach taken in the development of *Te Kōhanga Reo* in New Zealand and its attempt to revitalise

Māori language and culture (Ritchie, 2012) and further led in the development of *Te Whāriki,* New Zealand's National Early Childhood Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). What follows from this is the need for a consistent and integrated effort by all at the micro to macro levels of the ecosystem to ensure that Indigenous Fijian child development cultural knowledges are employed to inform education, as well as support Indigenous Fijian communities in general. The Fijian Indigenous *Vuli Ni Lalai* Hybrid Child Development Model is a timely effort to resurrect what has been nearly lost as a result of Western influences. This would mean that early childhood education policies and all aspects of its curricula and pedagogy need to be rewritten to fully incorporate Indigenous Fijian cultural knowledges, thus addressing the crisis of whiteness as argued by (Baszile, 2015). It is hoped that together Indigenous Fijians can continue to be part of this important work.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

List of Acronyms

The following acronyms are used in the study.

ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
CAS	Curriculum Advisory Services
CED	Central Education Division
CCBP	Content and Context Best Practices
CoP	Community of Practice
CM	Community Mobilisation
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Work Relations
DoE	Department of Education
EED	Eastern Education Division
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
EC	Early Childhood
ECO	Education Curriculum Officers
EFA	**E**ducation for All
EY	Early Years
FRR	Family in remote rural
FSRU	Family in semi rural/urban
FTA	Fijian Teachers Association
FVRF	Fijian Vanua Research Framework
FU	Family in urban
GCM	Generative Curriculum Model
IFVVF	Indigenous Fijian *Vakaviti Vakaturaga* Framework
II	Individual Interviews
IRF	Indigenist Research Framework
KMF	Kaupapa Maori Framework
KRF	Kakala Research Framework
KT	Kindergarten Teacher

MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MV	Mualevu village
NEL	Nurturing Early Learners
NV	Namosi village
NS	Nasautoka village
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NQS	National Quality Standards
RCT	Relational Cultural Theory
RE	Relative Elder
RJ	Research Journal
RST	Retired School Teachers
RQ1	Research Question 1
RQ2	Research Question 2
RQ3	Research Question 3
RQ4	Research Question 4
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
UNE	University of New England
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child
UNDRIPS	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People
VEYLDF	Victorian Early Years Learning Development Framework
ZAP	Zone of Actual Development
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

Appendix 2

School of Education
University of New England
Phone: School Office (02) 6773 4221
ARMIDALE NSW 2351 Fax: (02) 6773 5078
AUSTRALIA Email: education@une.edu.au

Research on Indigenous Fijian Notions Of Child Development

Understanding children's way of learning, knowing and doing and implications for policy and practice the early years of school.

To

……
……

My name is Lavinia Tiko and I am studying towards a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education with specific emphasis in Early Childhood Education at the University of New England, Armidale, New South Wales, Australia.

I kindly invite your input into my research of the Indigenous Fijian Notions of Child Development: understanding children's ways of knowing, learning and doing and implications for policy and practice in the early years of school'. This letter provides information about the research and how you can participate.

Research Outline and Aims:

This study aims to investigate and document Indigenous Fijian notions of child development; the children's ways of knowing, learning, and doing and its implications to policy and practice in the early years of schools. It will then propose some future possibilities on how best can policy and practice reflect the Indigenous Fijian notions of child development. Results from the study will be useful for critical reassessment of the role of the early childhood policies in preschools and in the early primary school years. The study will also help highlight issues that will enhance relationships between the Indigenous Fijian notions of child development and education in general.

Your Involvement:

As a respected member of the community, I am kindly requesting you to take part in this research and give your ideas on the Indigenous Fijian notions of child development in terms of learning, knowing and doing. It is important that I hear what you have to say as you know your community and the people in your community. Taking part in the research involves an informal interview (*veitalanoa*), which I think will take about 1- 3 hours or half a day. This could take place in the village community hall or if there is a better and bigger place that could be arranged and this is entirely your preference. With your permission, we would like to audio-record or video record the interview, as we have found that it is difficult to listen and write down all that you tell us at the same time. Only the researcher will be able to listen to them. The audio-recordings will be transcribed and we will remove any information on the transcriptions that might enable you to be identified. These transcriptions and recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer and destroyed after 5 years. We will send you a copy of the transcribed interview so you can check the information is accurate.

Confidentiality

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. No one is put under any pressure to participate, and you may end the interview at any time. Your name will not be written down or identified with any information you provide. You need only provide us with information that you choose to share with us. You may choose not to answer some questions.

However, we would be very grateful if you would share your thoughts on this issue. It is only by your support that I can gather an understanding of the Indigenous Fijian notions of child development in terms of learning, knowing and doing and the implications to classroom teaching and learning. And whether there are there benefits, problems, and suggestions for improvements.

I wish to stress that your identity will remain **totally confidential**. Your name will not be written down or identified with any information you provide. The discussion will be recorded to assist me analyse the information gathered. However, these recordings will be destroyed once the study is completed. The information that we gather will be kept on a password protected computer at the University of New England and will not be shared with others outside the research team or used for any other purpose other than this research. All information collected from this evaluation will be destroyed after a period of five years.

Please note that it is unlikely that this research will raise any personal or upsetting issues but if it does, you may wish to contact your local contact officer, at the Ministry of Education on telephone (679) 3304477 for support.

The final report will be completed in March 2015. A summary of the findings of the study will be sent to all those who participated in the study. I will send you the full report if you would like that. If you have any questions or require any further information following this meeting, please call Lavinia Tiko on (679) 9358307 or email ltiko@une.edu.au or Professor Margaret Sims on (02) 6773 3823, email msims7@une.edu.au or Assciate Profesor Nadine McCrea on (02) 6773 2039, email nmccrea@une.edu.au or Dr Sue Elliott on sellio24@une.edu.au

(02) 6773 5087

How do I let the researcher know I am happy to be involved?

If you are happy to be involved, please fill in the attached consent form and send it to me, or by phoning or emailing us. The detailed instructions are on the attached consent form.

What happens then?

Once I hear from you I will get in touch and arrange a time that works for you all to meet for the interview. I will bring copies of the information letters and consent forms so that I can collect your formal consent before we begin the interview.

I'm still not sure – what do I do?

I understand that being part of a research project can be rather intimidating. If you are unsure about this please call the researcher, Lavinia on (679) 9705801, email ltiko2@une.edu.au or Professor Margaret Sims on (02) 6773 3823, or Associate Profesor Nadine McCrea on (02) 6773 2039, email nmccrea@une.edu.au or Dr Sue Elliott on sellio24@une.edu.au (02) 6773 5087 and talk to them about your concerns. I fully understand that I am asking for some of your time, and that your time is precious. I really want to hear what you have to say and I will be as flexible as we possibly can to make you feel comfortable and secure.

Complaints

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No HE11-220): Valid to 01/05/2013). Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer: Telephone: (02) 6773 3449; Facsimile (02) 6773 3543; Email:Ethics@une.edu.au; or at the following address: Research Services, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351.

Thank you for your support in this important study

Yours sincerely

……

Lavinia Tausere-Tiko (Mrs)

Researcher

School of Education
University of New England Phone: School Office (02) 6773 4221
ARMIDALE NSW 2351 Fax: (02) 6773 5078
AUSTRALIA Email: education@une.edu.au

INFORMATION SHEET IN INDIGENOUS FIJIAN LANGUAGE

AI VAKAMACALA LEKALEKA NI VAKADIDIKE OQO

O au'saka

Na yacaqu o Lavinia Sauleca Tausere-Tiko. Au cavu-tu saka mai ena tokatoka Nabureto, mataqali Senimoli, yavusa Senimoli na vanua vakaturaga saka ko Mualevu, ena yanuyanu turaga o Vanuabalavu, yasana vakaturaga saka ko Lau.

Ena yalo e veidokai kei na veirokovi vakaitaukei, au sa sureti kemuni saka tiko yani kina ki vei kemuni na wekaqu ki na noqu vakadidike ka kena i ulutaga tiko: ***Na Veituberi Vakaviti Vei Ira Na Lalai:*** **na nodra vakatavulici, na nodra kila ka, kei na nodra vuli tara na lalai, ka cava na kena ibalebale kina vola idusidusi ni nodra tuberi kei na nodra vakatavulici na lalai e loma ni valenivuli.**

Nai vola oqo e vakamatatataki tiko yani kina nai naki ni vakadidike kei na nomuni na rawa ni vakaitavi ena kena veitalanoataki nai ulutaga.

Na inaki ni vakadidike

Na i naki ni vakadidike oqo me ni laurai se dikevi kina na nodra tuberi mai o ira na noda lalai itaukei, era kila vakacava na nodra kila ka, na nodra vuli tara vei ira era na veiwekani era veivolekati kaya, ka cava na kena revurevu ki na volaidusidusi ni nodra tuberi kei na nodra vakatavulici e loma ni valenivuli.

Na vakadidike oqo ena rawa ni soli vakasama ki vei ira na dau ni lalawa vakavuli ni tabana ni vuli ena noda matanitu, ka sa solia tale ga eso nai walewale matau ni veivakavulici me rawa ni tosoi cake kina na nodra rawa ka na luveda e na loma ni valenivuli se kei na nodra vuli raraba.

Na nomuni itavi

Ena kena dokai na nomuni tutu ena vanaua kei na vuku saka ni kena sagai na vakadidike oqo, au sa kerei kemuni tiko kina vakabibi ke rawa ni ko ni soli vakasama ena veitalanoa ni vakadidike oqo. E dokai na nomuni na vakaitavi baleta ni ko ni na solia tiko na vakasama momona eso kina veitaro eso ena biu yani me baleta tiko ga nai ulutaga ni vakadidike.

Eda na veitalanoa tiko ena vanua sa na vakarautaki tiko ena noda gauna ga vakaitaukei. Eda na soqo tiko me yacova na veimama ni siga ke balavu sara.

Ena nomuni veivakadonui, au na katokatoni tiko ena veitalanoa kece e veitalanoataki me baleta nai ulutaga, me na rawa ni na rawarawa kina ki vei au na noqu na mai vola ka mai vakadeuca na veika ko ni talanoataka.

Na veika kece sara o ni talanoataka e na maroroi tu ni oti e lima na yabaki. Sa na qai rawa ni vakarusai ni oti na gauna o ya. Ena vakau yani vei kemuni e dua nai lavelave ni veitalanoa oqo kevaka ko ni gadreva mo ni raica kina na kena dodonu ni veitalanoa e a vakayacori.

Rokovi ni dodonu

E dua na ka bibi ena veitalanoa vakaoqo na rokovi ni dodonu ni tamata (au vakatatabu saka yani). Ena nomuni veivakadonui, ena sega ni na toqai na yacamuni ena veitalanoa oqo, ka na vakayagataki ga na yaca-buli kei na matanivola eso me vakaisosomitaka na veiyaca eso era a vakaitavi ena vakadidike.

Na nomuni vakaitavi e ka ni dodonu ni tamata tabu yani vakayadua ka ko ni sega ni vakasaurarataki mo ni mai vakaitavi. Ia au via vakaraitaka niu gadreva vakalevu na nomuni soli vakasama kina i ulutaga ka koto.

Au via vakaraitaka tale ga ni sega ni na vakavurea e dua na leqa na vakadidike oqo, io kevaka e na tiko e so na loma tarotaro, ni na qai rawa ni veitaratara kei na turaga veiliutaki tiko ena tabana ni vakadidike ena noda tabana ni vuli ena talevoni 3304477 – ena rawa ni na veivuke ena nomuni loma leqa se ena veilomatarotaro ka koto e lomamuni.

Na volai ni tukutuku oqo ena qai vakaoti ena veimama ni yabaki 2014. Kevaka ko ni gadreva e dua nai lavelave ni vakadidike oqo, au na rawa ni vakauta yani vei kemuni . Ke tiko eso tale na vakatataro ena rawa mo ni na veitaratara vakadodonu ga mai vei au ena talevoni: 9705801, se ena mona livaliva : ltiko2@une.edu.au.

Ena kila vakacava o daunivakadidike niu sa vakadonuya meu vakaitavi?

Kevaka ko ni sa vakadonuya mo ni na vakaitavi, sa kerei mo ni na qai vakalewena toka ga mai na tikidua ni veivakadonui ka kabi koto kei nai vola oqo.

A cava e tarava?

Ni ko ni sa na solia ga na veivakadonui, sa na qai laurai na gauna kei na vanua eda na sota kina, kumuni nai vola ni veivakadonui ni bera ni da tosoya yani na veitalanoataki ni ulutaga.

Kevaka e sega tiko ga ni matata na veika e cauraki tiko yani ki vei kemuni, ena vinaka mo ni veitaratara kei dau ni vakadidike, Lavinia Tiko ena naba ni talevoni: 9705801 me na rawa ni vakamatatataki vinaka na nomuni lomatarotaro.

Au kila niu na taura tiko e dua na wase ni nomuni gauna levu, kau sa kerea na nomuni veivosoti baleta niu na gadreva vakalevu meu na rogoci kemuni kei nai talanoa eso me na vukea na kena volai nai tukutuku oqo me baleta tiko ga na kena vukei vakavuli o ira na nodai sausauvou kei Viti ena siga ni mataka. Eda na

veitalanoa sara tiko ga vakaveiwekani kau sa kerea tiko ga kina na nomuni veitokoni.

Vakatataro:

Na vakadidike oqo sa vakadonui oti ena tabana ni vakadidike ena University e New England ena i ka 1/05/2012 ka kena naba ni veivakadonui na HE11-220.

Kevaka e tiko tale eso na vakatataro me baleta na vakadidike oqo, ena rawa mo ni na veitaratara tale ga kei iratou na tabana oqo ni University ena: Tabana ni Vakadidike: Talevoni: (02) 6773 3449: se (02) 6773 3542 se ena mona livaliva: ethics@une.edu.au se ena kena vakavavalagi: Research Services, University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351.

Au taura na tiki ni gauna oqo meu vakavinavinakataki kemuni kece sara na i Liuliu ni Yavusa, Turaga ni Mataqali, Turaga kei na Marama ni vanua ko ni solia tabu saka yani na nomuni gauna ena kena sagai na gacagaca bibi ni kena veitalanoataki na i ulutaga ni vakadidike oqo.

Mo ni kalougata tiko.

Ko au saka

……

Lavinia Tausere Tiko

Appendix 3

Ethics Office
Research Development & Integrity
Research Division
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 02 6773 3449
Fax 02 6773 3543
jo-ann.sozou@une.edu.au
www.une.edu.au/research-services

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Prof M Sims, Mrs R Littledyke & Ms L Tiko
School of Education

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: iTaukei (Indigenous Fijian) notions of child development: understanding children's ways and knowing, learning and doing and implications to policy and practice in the early years of school.

APPROVAL No.: HE11-220

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 01/05/2012

APPROVAL VALID TO: 01/05/2013

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full.

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/researchdevelopmentintegrity/ethics/human-ethics/hrecforms.php

The *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.

[redacted]

Jo-Ann Sozou
Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

19/12/2011

A11/111

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH & SPORTS AND CULTURE,
NATIONAL HERITAGE & ARTS

EDUCATION FOR CHANGE, PEACE AND PROGRESS

Marela House, 19 Thurston Street, Suva, Fiji Islands Ph: (679) 3314477 Fax: (679) 3305511

Private Mail Bag, Government Buildings, Suva

28.12.11

Mrs Lavenia Tausere Tiko,
School of Education,
Faculty of Professions,
University of New England,
Armidable,
NSW 2350,
Australia.

Dear Madam,

Re: Approval of Research Studies

I am pleased to inform you regarding the above on the topic **'I taukei notions of child development:understanding children's ways of learning,knowing and doing and implications fro policy and practice in the early years of school.'**

This approval is for **3 years (January,2012-Jan 2015)**.

Please have advance consultation with Head Teacher if the Kindergarten is in the compound of a Primary School or the Management and the Teacher of the Pre-School if it is not,avoiding any disruptions to normal classes.

As a condition for all research approvals, a copy of the research final report should be submitted to this office as soon as it is ready.

Moreover,it is important to know that the Ministry reserves the sole right to publish the final report or an edited summary of it.

All the best and good luck to your research work.

[redacted]

Isoa Naulumatua [Mr.]
for **Permanent Secretary for Education,National and Heritage, Culture and Arts, Youth and Sports**

All COMMUNICATIONS ARE TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

EDUCATION FOR CHANGE, PEACE AND PROGRESS

Level 2, Senikau House, Gordon Street, Ph: (679) 3314477 Fax: (679) 3303511
Private Mail Bag, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji Islands

Our Reference: Your Reference: Date: 09/01//12

Mrs Lavinia Tausere Tiko
School of Education
University of New England
ARMIDALE NSW 2351
AUSTRALIA

Dear Madam

Thank you for your letter of 1/12/2011 in which you sought permission from the Lau Provincial Council to undertake data collection for your PhD Thesis on Early Childhood Education in Mualevu Village. I am pleased to grant you this permission. However, you will also need to seek the Sau ni Vanua's permission before going to the village.

By a copy of this letter I am also informing the Roko Tui Lau about your research.

I wish you success in your study.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

Filipe Bole
Minister for Education, National Heritage, Culture & Arts, Youth & Sports
Minister for Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment
Chairman Lau Provincial Council.

Copies:

1. Turaga Roko Tui Lau
   Lau Provincial Office
   Suva

2. Sau ni Vanua ko Mualevu
   Turaga na Tui Mavana
   Mualevu
   Vanuabalavu
   Lau

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION

Appendix 4

School of Education
University of New England Phone: School Office (02) 6773 4221
ARMIDALE NSW 2351 Fax: (02) 6773 5078
AUSTRALIA Email: education@une.edu.au

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(TARO NI VAKADIDIKE)

1) What are Indigenous Fijian notions of child development?

(A cava eso nai vakavuvuli vakaviti ni nona tuberi cake e dua na noda lalai?)

2) How are these used in teaching?

(E vakayagataki tiko vakacava ena veivakatavulici?)

3) How can policy and practice reflect the importance of Indigenous Fijian knowledge concerning children's development?

(Ena rawa beka vakacava kina ivola dusidusi kei na noda itovo ni veiqaravi me vakaraitaka na bibi ni kena vakatavulici vakadodonu na veitovo vakaitaukei baleta na nodra susugi na noda lalai?)

4) Which future possibilities or appropriate and meaningful alternatives might inform such policies and practices?

(Na cava eso nai tuvatuva se rai matata ka na ganita na kena vaqaqacotaki na ivola dusidusi ni kena ciqomi na veivakavuvuli vakaviti oqo kina nodra susugi na lalai?)