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Exploring Mixedness in Fiji: Navigating Mixed-Race Identities for Individuals of Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian Descent

Rolando Cocom

Abstract: This article explores the shifts and negotiations of racial, ethnic, and national identity for persons of mixed Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian descent. The study provides a detailed historical overview of the racialization of politics and identity in Fiji and the subsequent politicization of mixed race. Drawing on narratives of identity and belonging gathered from multiple individual and group interviews with ten participants in Fiji, the article juxtaposes this historical framework with the lived reality of mixedness in contemporary Fiji. Framed within the field of critical mixed race studies, this research identifies and interrogates how identity constructions are challenged, accommodated, and reinforced through the participants' lived experiences of mixedness and how this relates to Indigenous identity. The article seeks to provide a new layer of analysis at a time when identity politics remain critical in Fijian society. Drawing on models of mixed identity developed in the West, it explores how mixed identities in Fiji converge with and diverge from experiences elsewhere. By moving away from studies of colonizer/colonized mixedness, this research enriches mixed-race scholarship with a unique study of mixing, migration, and Indigeneity in an understudied region of the world.

Keywords: Identity, mixed race, Indigenous Fijian, Indo-Fijian, Indian, Fijian, Fiji

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Introduction

With colonial underpinnings, the term "mixed race" has historically referred to persons born of White European and "Other" (often Black) ancestry. Rooted in the Eurocentric ideology that humans can be classified into distinct racial groups in which the White European race is superior, such racist ideology was central to the processes of colonization, enslavement, and imperialism that shaped our modern world, including the many nations of the Pacific. Across the Pacific, the configurations of race and identity formations share commonalities that are distinct from the large body of research on mixed race in the Global North. In the case of Fiji, where this study is based, contemporary mixed identities have been constructed around different contextual racial, ethnic, and national classifications, shaped by a history of colonialism and the positioning of the Indigenous Fijian ethnic group.

Drawing on critical mixed race studies (CMRS), this article aims to work toward reassessing the scholarship on mixed race in the region and to map a trajectory for future research and even potential activism.[1] CMRS draws on the fields of critical race theory and ethnic studies to study the

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historical evolution of racialization and contemporary movements and debates around being mixed. Questioning racial essentialism and racial hierarchy, this study incorporates the tools of CMRS, examining how the lived experiences of mixed-race persons may reinforce and/or challenge dominant discourses around Indigeneity and belonging and racial social structures.

Fiji provides a unique social context to explore mixedness. In Fiji, against a colonial background, the Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian populations have been racialized against each other. For historical, political, and cultural reasons (discussed in detail below), interrelationships and offspring between these two groups have remained low in numbers and are generally invisible in public discourse. While mixedness in European/Indigenous relationships appears more acceptable, this postcolonial intermixing of minority migrant/Indigenous majority remains largely unstudied. The situation is different in other contexts, such as the United States where the number of mixed-race persons continues to grow and where various groups are advocating for the acknowledgment of their dual heritages and mixed-race identities.[2] Thus, given its North American roots, are the tools of the CMRS framework applicable in the Fijian context?

Drawing on interviews conducted with ten research participants in Fiji, this article explores the theoretical and methodological value of the CMRS approach. It looks at how the contemporary experience of being mixed race in Fiji compares with experiences and theorizations elsewhere. The intersectional racial and ethnic history of the country is outlined in order to examine why and how persons of Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian descent may be considered mixed race. In reassessing the historical relations between the two groups, this article analyzes why the racial, ethnic, and national classifications of "Fijian" and "Indian" are tied to these racialized histories and why being mixed race demonstrates the unstable racial essentialism that has shaped Fiji's recent past. In carefully drawing out the variety of classifications, opinions, and perspectives of mixed-race Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijians, I hope that our understanding of the social construction of race and belonging in the region becomes more nuanced.

The Racialization of Indigenous Fijian Identities

In studying mixed race, CMRS encourages us to view race as a process: drawing on histories of racialization and social stratification and exploring how Indigenous and migrant groups came to be positioned as opposing racial collectives. To understand this process, this section reviews the main elements of identity in precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial Fiji. The Republic of Fiji is an archipelago in the South Pacific of about 330 islands of which 110 are inhabited. Collectively, Fiji covers an area of 570,000 square kilometers. It is divided into two geographic regions: the western region, dominated by the large islands Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, and the eastern region, dominated

and The University of the South Pacific. Many thanks to my wife for her inspiration and patience. Any and all errors are mine.

[1] Daniel et al., "Emerging Paradigms," 6–65.

[2] Ifekwunigwe, "Introduction," 6.

by the Lau Group of smaller islands. Historically, these two regions had distinct cultural characteristics, kinship, and Indigenous identity formations.

While the current understanding of the sociopolitical structures of early Indigenous populations remains limited, oral traditions and early reports suggest the permanence of three ideal social units—the *yavusa* (tribe), the *mataqali* (clans), and the *tokatoka* (extended family groups)—which in modified forms remain today.[3] The yavusa was composed of descendants who claim association by ancestry to a founding father. It was further divided into several mataqali: the *turaga mataqali*, ruling chiefs; *sautraga mataqali*, those responsible for the election and support of chiefs; *matanivanua mataqali*, diplomats; *bete mataqali*, priests and healers; and *bati mataqali*, warriors.[4] Each mataqali was further divided into respective tokatoka, the smallest social units. Power and identity status in these groupings were largely based on one's sex, location, and descent. Social stratification, however, was not uniform across Fiji. For example, communities in the eastern region had more hierarchical social structures by the time of European arrival. Conversely, communities in western Fiji developed more egalitarian sociopolitical structures.[5] Patriarchal rather than matrilineal modes of identification were also more strictly followed in the East than in the West.

By the nineteenth century, several *vanua* (land/people grouping) had come into existence.[6] On one level, the vanua is an association or confederation established between the chiefs of various social units (yavusa, mataqali, or tokatoka). On another level, the vanua is an encompassing concept to refer to the interconnected relationship of land, environment, and people, illustrating a complex understanding of belonging and identity.[7] Additionally, individuals were widely given a social status through the construction of a *taukei-vulagi* relationship.[8] An individual is *taukei* (the landowner or native) of the specific vanua into which they are born. Rights and belonging are accorded to taukei only in their vanua unless another relationship is established, such as that of a *vasu* (kinship position). Historically, a vasu is the special kinship position given to the son, sometimes daughter, of the sister of a prominent chief who marries outside her vanua.[9] If no kinship relationship is established, the individual is recognized as *vulagi*, meaning foreigner or guest. Taukei, vulagi, and vanua were important features of one's social position and identification in precolonial Fiji and continue to influence identification today.[10]

Early European explorers and settlers arrived in Fiji in as early as the seventeenth century.[11] Regular European contact, however, did not occur until the early 1800s.[12] In the early phase, this contact included a small number of European traders and explorers from Australia and New Zealand

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[3] Howard, *Fiji*, 17; Nabobo-Baba, *Knowing and Learning*, 77–86.

[4] Howard, *Fiji*, 17; Tagi, "Fijian Identity," 51–57.

[5] Howard, *Fiji*, 17–18.

[6] Ibid., 18–20.

[7] Nabobo-Baba, *Knowing and Learning*, 77–86.

[8] Rakuita, "Taukei-Vulagi Philosophy," 95–96.

[9] Derrick, *History of Fiji*, 56.

[10] Rakuita, "Taukei-Vulagi Philosophy," 95–97.

[11] Clark and Anderson, "Early Prehistory of Fiji," 2–3.

[12] Howard, *Fiji*, 18–21.

who engaged in the extraction of sandalwood and bêche-de-mer in Vanua Levu. One of the most strategic alliances occurred between the colonizers and the Bauan chief Ratu Cakobau. Cakobau had converted to Christianity in 1854, which helped to consolidate his power as the "King of Fiji" and marked his campaign to convert the "heathens" of the western region.[13] With the aid of Europeans, Cakobau led successive military campaigns to subdue a number of Indigenous Fijian communities.[14] An alliance between Cakobau and several eastern chiefs led to the formal colonization of Fiji with the Deed of Cession on October 10, 1874, which marked the official creation of the new polity "Fiji."[15] The deed declared that the dominion and sovereignty of Fiji belonged to the British Crown.[16] It constituted Indigenous Fijians as the people of the land (taukei) and the "British chiefs" as legitimate settlers, administrators, and protectors.

British colonialism had devastating demographic and structural effects on the Indigenous population of the islands, which continue to have an enduring impact on the present. During the colonial period, three "races" were central to the social order: Europeans, Indigenous Fijians, and Indo-Fijians who migrated to the island as indentured laborers.[17] This social order was dominant despite the presence of other Pacific Islanders, Chinese minorities, and the existence of intermarriages and intercultural exchanges.[18] For the colonial state, administration of the people classified as "Fijian" and "Indians" was of greatest political and economic importance. The colonial formation marked the emergence of the Indigenous people as a collectivity known as the *Taukei kei Viti* or *Kai Viti*, loosely translated as "the owners of Fiji land" and "persons from Fiji," respectively.[19] The various sociocultural communities were viewed and treated as one "racial" collective by the colonial state.[20] During this period, "Fijian" became the most widespread signifier to refer to the "natives." The classification of "Fijian" was a symbolic enunciation that facilitated the creation of an Indigenous Fijian collectivity.

Establishing the power of the colonial state did not occur without resistance. Significant occasions of resistance to Cakobau's political expansion and other colonial efforts of proselytization emerged. Some of the more overt resistance took place between the communities of western and eastern regions in the years 1876–86 and 1894–1917. Multiple resistance strategies were also less overt but more common, such as tax evasion, village absenteeism, and religious syncretism. These practices of resistance demonstrate that challenges to colonialism developed and that Indigenous Fijians were not a homogenous collective of "natives" who instantaneously accepted Christianity and European colonization, which remains a popular identity narrative.[21]

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[13] Kaplan, "Christianity, People of the Land," 127–30.
[14] Howard, *Fiji*, 20–24.
[15] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 126.
[16] Timothy, *Fijian Colonial Experience*, 1–11.
[17] Kelly, "Threats to Difference," 71.
[18] Ibid., 64–80; Riles, "Part-Europeans and Fijians," 105–29.
[19] Rakuita, *Living by Bread Alone*, 95–96.
[20] Kelly, "Threats to Difference," 71.
[21] Nicole, "Disturbing History," 32–174, 224–76, 372–86.

Race, Colonialism, and the Indo-Fijian Population

Despite resistance, various ideologies, coercive forces, and alliances made between Europeans and Indigenous Fijian chiefs sustained the colonial formation, as evident in the discourses and practices implemented by Fiji's first colonial governor, Sir Arthur Gordon (1875–90). Gordon, like subsequent administrators after him, was influenced by an ethnology theory referred to as the "Pacific Romance."[22] The underlying logic of this theory was influenced by Social Darwinism in the assumption that each "race" undergoes a series of evolutionary stages and that any outside intervention would disrupt their progression.

Gordon took a patronizing and paternalistic position during his administration, demonstrating that Great Britain had agreed to be the protectors of the Indigenous Fijians by way of the Deed of Cession.[23] He introduced "indirect rule" as a method to safeguard the "Fijian race." The newly developed Native Administration ensured that 83 percent of land remained inalienable to Indigenous Fijian ownership and consolidated the power of chiefs.[24] This meant that at the social and political levels, a chiefly colonial structure regulated Indigenous Fijians.[25] Access to state resources and power was based on a cooperative relationship between chiefs and colonialists. "Race" became the dominant ideological discourse through which chiefs and Europeans enacted policies that in turn shaped the mode of social classification among the population.

The practice of "indirect rule" and policies influenced by the "Pacific Romance" meant that Indigenous Fijians were not extensively incorporated into the capitalist colonial economy. Gordon relied on his experience in Trinidad and Mauritius to coordinate the introduction of indentured laborers from India at a time when the practice of enslaving other Pacific Islanders to work in Fiji became increasingly unproductive and prohibited. In 1880, he secured one thousand acres of land for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) of Australia to operate in Fiji.[26] Subsequently, an estimated sixty thousand indentured laborers, or "Girmitiyas" as they called themselves, migrated to Fiji between 1879 and 1916. They were largely confined to sugar plantations; the descendants of these laborers are the majority of the ethnic collective referred to as "Indians" and "Indo-Fijians" today.[27]

Unlike Gordon's perspective of Indigenous Fijians, the colonizers viewed Indo-Fijians as a "race" suitable to work on the sugar plantations. Indo-Fijians were perceived as hardworking and fit for plantation labor.[28] Colonizers' records show that the settlers viewed Indo-Fijians as subhuman and as "a working population and nothing more."[29] Indentured Indo-Fijians were contracted to work six

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[22] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 147–51.
[23] Kelly, "Fear of Culture," 381–89; Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 158–75.
[24] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 85.
[25] Ratuva, *Participation for Peace*, 14 .
[26] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 160–62.
[27] Trnka, *State of Suffering*, 32, 94, 7.
[28] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 153–59.
[29] Quoted in Kelly, "Fear of Culture," 384.

days a week for five years with an additional period if penal sanctions were assigned. They were viewed and treated as a racial collective in the colonial economy.[30]

Indo-Fijians, however, were not a homogenous "race" or cultural group. They had migrated to Fiji from various geographic locations in India and had varied linguistic, cultural, and religious beliefs and practices.[31] Pronounced distinctions existed between North and South Indians, between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Additionally, the arrival of non-indentured Indians, particularly those from Gujarat and Punjab, after the end of indenture in 1920, contributed to this diversity.

Nonetheless, colonialism did produce a shared experience among indentured Indo-Fijians. Due to the equal treatment they received on board ships and on plantations, Indo-Fijians developed collective responses to new conditions. Past cultural practices and social relations shifted, as caste distinctions, religious differences, and cultural practices became less significant during the everyday period of indenture.[32] A common language known as Fiji Bhaat, spoken widely among Indo-Fijians today, also developed.

These shared experiences did not lead to the absolute absence of religious and cultural diversity. The completion of indenture contracts, arrival of non-indentured Indo-Fijians, and religious revitalizations toward the end of indenture contributed to the formation of different Indo-Fijian collectivities. Group affiliations and distinctions among the different "sects" of Islam, Hinduism, South Indians, and North Indians provided multiple identity positionalities among the population classified as Indo-Fijians. At the same time, the collective "racial" classification and shared experiences in the colonial state marked the formation of an "Indian" collective.[33]

As in other colonial societies, categorizations and social boundaries of "race" were important in the colonial social structure.[34] Specific economic, cultural, political, military, and geographic spaces were assigned to Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians during the colonial period.[35] For example, Indigenous Fijians were prohibited migration from their villages and Indo-Fijians were not to be accommodated in Indigenous Fijian villages.[36] Regulations circumscribing Indigenous Fijian movement were not lifted until 1968.[37] Colonial authorities through alliance with Indigenous Fijian chiefs regularly devised regulations to keep the two "races" apart. During Indo-Fijian labor resistance, Indigenous Fijian chiefs and Christian missionaries strongly discouraged the common Indigenous Fijian populace from participating.[38] These social boundaries contributed to the perception of irrevocable "differences" between these two "races."

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[30] Lal, *Chalo Jahaji*, 72, 79–80.

[31] Ibid., 99–116.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Lal, "Girmit, History, Memory," 12–13.

[34] Fanon, W*retched of the Earth*, 40.

[35] Kelly, "Threats to Difference," 64–84.

[36] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 161, 168.

[37] The Fijian Administration was abolished in 1968 and later revived in 1984. Tagi, "Fijian Identity," 91, 126.

[38] Sutherland, *Beyond the Politics of Race*, 39–59.

Colonial policy, prejudice, and cultural differences sustained the social boundaries between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians.[39] To the Indigenous Fijians, the Indo-Fijians were the vulagi, foreigners. To the Indo-Fijians, the Indigenous Fijians were the *jungli*, jungle people. Prejudice due to observable cultural differences, lack of knowledge, and racialized colonial politics were significant contributing factors in the development of racialized relations politics between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians.[40]

Colonial Intermixing

Colonization and racism established the parameters of social interaction and the framework of the colonial state to the respective "races"; however, as pervasive as racism was, it did not have a totalizing effect. The colonial racial ideology did not automatically govern the actions of all people.[41] For example, Jiale Taragi, an Indo-Fijian freed from his period of indenture, married an Indigenous Fijian woman in the early 1900s. After living for twenty years in an Indigenous Fijian village, he applied to the Indigenous Fijian district official "to be 'treated as a native.'"[42] His request was supported by Roko Tui Ra, an Indigenous Fijian chief and highest government official of the province. The colonial secretary, however, did not share the chief's view: "The Colonial Secretary Eyre Hutson was dubious.... [He was] concerned about 'creating or recognizing an undesirable precedent and opening the door to East Indians securing by marriage with Fijians the use of native land without paying rent. Would his children have the right to be registered as a member of mataqali?'... Fiji's Executive Council had it announced that 'it was considered and advised that it was not competent for the Governor in Council to sanction the formal recognition of an Indian as a Fijian.'"[43]

This case of an early intermarriage illustrates three crucial points. First, despite regulations that kept Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians apart, there were cases of sexual and/or marital unions. Second, despite the racial ideology at the time, the provincial chief challenged the state's ideology and was willing to concede land to an Indo-Fijian but ultimately capitulated to the state's power. As in other cases where Indo-Fijians were found in Indigenous Fijian villages, Indo-Fijians were not allowed to remain in the village, despite acceptance by Indigenous Fijian communities.[44] Third, the colonial government did not approve the request, fearing it would set a negative precedent. Approval would have opened up the possibility of Indo-Fijians gaining access to land and capital, which could have been disastrous for CSR and the state. Suppressing intermixing and making opportunities for a secure livelihood for those who transgressed social boundaries difficult was in the state's interest.

Intermarriages between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians remained largely unreported and statistically insignificant during the colonial period.[45] The census commissioner in 1955 suggested that

[39] Lal, "Girmit, History, Memory," 24–25.
[40] Kelly, "Threats to Difference," 64–84.
[41] Naidu, "Plural Society Thesis," 237–38.
[42] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 168–69.
[43] Kelly and Kaplan, *Represented Communities*, 168.
[44] Lal, "Girmit, History, Memory," 24–25.
[45] McArthur, "Fijians and Indians," 202–13; Riles, "Part-Europeans and Fijians," 107.

it was difficult to estimate the mixed-race Indo-Fijian–Indigenous Fijian population because Indigenous Fijians would not admit Indo-Fijian parentage.[46] Thus, the state did not consistently record the rates of intermarriages and the population of "mixed-race" Indo-Fijian–Fijians. Intermixing, however, did occur during the colonial period, with recorded intermarriages between Pacific Islanders, Europeans, the Chinese, and Indigenous Fijians. Intermarriages between Pacific Islanders were increasingly common under colonialism, and as in many other colonized nations, male colonizers had sexual interactions with Indigenous Fijians (willing or not). By the early 1900s, the state created categories such as "half-caste" and "part-European" to recognize the presence of the offspring of Europeans and Indigenous Fijians.[47] The Chinese presence in Fiji grew from the 1870s to the early 1900s when they came as merchants and indentured laborers to work on the banana plantations.[48] While the number of intermarriages was generally low, these various interethnic unions highlight the presence of intercultural exchanges beyond the "mixed-race" Indo-Fijian–Fijian focus of this article.

Independence and Postcolonial Identity Building

After ninety-six years of British rule, Fiji became independent in 1970. Indo-Fijian demand for elected representation on a common roll, nonracial, basis began in the 1920s and continued throughout most of the twentieth century.[49] Nevertheless, negotiations over the structural distribution of power in the new state were primarily in the hands of Indigenous Fijian chiefs and colonial authorities, which facilitated the transition of administrative power to prominent Indigenous Fijian chiefs and personalities.[50] Thus, despite the claim by Ratu Mara, the first prime minister of Fiji, that Fiji was a "united multiracial society," there were no substantial structural and ideological shifts from the colonial period.[51]

Proposals to establish "Fijian" as a national-civic classification were rejected in the drafting of the constitution. When Indo-Fijian politicians first proposed this classification in the 1960s, Indigenous Fijian politicians and intellectuals claimed that it would result in Indigenous Fijians losing their "identity."[52] Similarly, some politicians viewed the proposed common roll electoral system as detrimental to Indigenous Fijians and Europeans. Therefore, Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians were classified and treated as distinct racial collectives in the postcolonial period.

In 1970, the constitution declared that all Pacific Islanders, for institutional and political purposes but not for tenure, were to be classified as "Fijians."[53] This change provided additional votes for Indigenous Fijians in the electoral system but also illustrated that Indo-Fijians were ultimately constituted as the "Other" in relation to Pacific Islanders. "Race" remained the common institutional

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[46] Cato, "Fijians and Fiji-Indians," 19.
[47] Simpson, *Part-European Community*, 3–5.
[48] Greif, "Political Attitudes," 971–80.
[49] Lal, "Girmit, History, Memory," 120.
[50] Ramesh, "Hegemony, Anti-hegemony and Counter-hegemony," 213–33.
[51] Quoted in ibid., 238. Ratu Mara was Fiji's prime minister from 1970 to 1992 (excluding several months in 1987).
[52] Durutalo, "Paramountcy of Fijian Interest," 31, 54.
[53] Tuimaleali'ifano, *Samoans in Fiji*, 144–46.

and sociopolitical classification schema in independent Fiji.[54] The constitution outlined racial belonging along patrilineal lines and declared that "a person shall be regarded as a Fijian if, and shall not be so regarded unless, his father or any of his earlier male progenitors in the male line is or was the child of parents both of whom are or were indigenous inhabitants of Fiji or any island in Melanesia, Micronesia or Polynesia." In reference to the Indo-Fijian collective, it further declared that "a person shall be regarded as an Indian if, and shall not be so regarded unless, his father or any of his earlier male progenitors in the male line is or was the child of parents both of whom are or were indigenous inhabitants of the sub-continent of India."[55] Other minorities, such as Europeans, part-Europeans, and the Chinese, among others, were classified as "General Electors" for political purposes.[56] "Race" remained the overall criterion for the distribution of resources.[57] This was the case in a variety of spheres, including education, employment, land tenure, cultural institutions, labor unions, and the military.[58] No institutions or policies existed to promote the "multiracial" nation described by politicians after independence.[59]

Intermarriages between Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians remained low in the postcolonial period. For example, in 1971, of the 2,500 Indo-Fijian men who got married, only 8 married Indigenous Fijian women; and of the 1,467 Indigenous Fijian men who got married, only 2 married Indo-Fijian women. Out-group marriage rates were higher among Europeans, with 13 European-Indian marriages and 26 European-Fijian marriages in 1971. A study by Alexander Mamak, based on fifteen interviews with Indo-Fijian–Fijian married couples in Suva during the 1970s, noted that intermarriages were usually discouraged by families but were accepted once they took place: no significant social stigma was attached to intermarriages, and married partners accommodated to each other's cultural practices related to religion, diet, and language in the home. Mamak suggested that, based on his interviews and observations, intermarriages were likely to increase in the future.[60]

Since Mamak conducted his study, social boundaries have been redrawn in the political and public sphere. Fiji has experienced coups d'état in the years 1987, 2000, and 2006 in which discourses of race, ethnicity, and national identity have been represented as key causes, justification, and mobilizing ideologies.[61] In these coups, Indo-Fijians were (and are) framed as vulagi, the foreigner and exploiter of Indigenous Fijian land and customs.[62] In turn, Indigenous Fijian chiefs and politicians are framed as taukei, owners and vanguards of Indigenous Fijian tradition and land. Claims are made about the "primordial" distinctions in language, religion, culture, and race between Indo-Fijians and

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[54] Rakuita, "Taukei-Vulagi Philosophy," 93–108.
[55] "Fiji Independence Order 1970 and Constitution of Fiji," section 134, Government of Fiji, 1970, https://constitutionnet.org/vl/item/fiji-independence-order-1970-and-constitution-fiji.
[56] Tuimaleali'ifano, *Samoans in Fiji*, 8.
[57] Howard, *Fiji*, 53–121.
[58] Durutalo, "Paramountcy of Fijian Interest," 1–70.
[59] Naidu, "Tribes or Nations?," 132–38.
[60] Mamak, *Colour, Culture, and Conflict*, 128–31.
[61] Norton, "Reconciling Ethnicity and Nation," 83–122.
[62] Rakuita, "Taukei-Vulagi Philosophy," 93–108.

Indigenous Fijians.[63] In postcolonial Fiji, "racial" classifications and boundaries of colonialism have developed into powerful ideological forces in electoral politics and these coups.[64]

From independence until 1987, the Alliance Party, predominantly Indigenous Fijian, wielded the state's political power. When the party, however, was defeated in 1987 by a coalition party formed by Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian politicians, ethno-nationalist factions in society did not concede defeat. A group of "Fijian nationalists called the '*Taukei* Movement' began systematic terrorism designed to destabilize the new government."[65] In May 1987, a coup d'état was executed by Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka who remained in power until 1999. Support for the coup was summoned through the precise nexus of discourses that enunciated an Indigenous Fijian collectivity during colonialism. Discourses featured arguments to "protect" the taukei, *lotu* (Christian religious beliefs), and vanua, which were supposedly endangered because of the Indo-Fijian population.[66] The coup's mobilizing theme was the protection of "paramountcy of Fijian interest."[67] The 1987 coup shifted structural ethnic divisions to occasions of interethnic violence.[68] This discourse about the "paramountcy of Fijian interest" was similarly reflected in the subsequent coup of 2000.

By 1997, Rabuka had facilitated the creation of a new constitution, which was to ensure ethnic power sharing among newly elected parties. In the 1999 general election, the Peoples' Coalition, comprising the Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian minority parties, had won the election and Mahendra Chaudhry became Fiji's first Indo-Fijian prime minister.[69] Several months later, in May 2000, George Speight along with six armed men took the coalition government hostage. Speight claimed that Indigenous Fijian interests were at stake and that he and the armed men were protecting the Indigenous Fijian "race." The racial ideology was once again instrumental in the mobilization of a sizable number of Indigenous Fijians who looted, vandalized, and inflicted violence on Indo-Fijians in urban and rural areas.[70]

Amid the 2000 coup, a power struggle among Speight, his supporters, and the Great Council of Chiefs provided a rationale for Rear Admiral (retired) Josaia Voreqe "Frank" Bainimarama to intervene in the name of social order. Bainimarama announced that he had abrogated the constitution and proceeded to appoint an interim government led by Lasenia Qarase as prime minister. In 2006, another coup occurred, which, unlike the previous coups, was marked by a moral vision or moral rhetoric (depending on one's view) to bring an end to racism in Fiji. This coup led to the removal of Qarase as prime minister, who had recently been elected in 2006. Bainimarama expressed that Qarase was leading Fiji into another ethnic-political crisis. The Qarase government had increased the scope of policies that disenfranchised the non-Fijian population, mostly Indo-Fijians.[71] In December 2006,

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[63] Emde, "Feared Rumours," 387–402.

[64] Ratuva, *Participation for Peace*, 13–34.

[65] Robertson, *Multiculturalism and Reconciliation*, 9.

[66] Barr, *Church and Fijian Ethnocentrism*, 5–22; Lal, *Time Bomb*, 9–21.

[67] Barr, *Church and Fijian Ethnocentrism*, 11.

[68] Trnka, *State of Suffering*, 87–183.

[69] Kumar, "Good Bye to Paradise," 334.

[70] Lal, "Madness in May," 175–93.

[71] Naidu et al., *Fiji*, 7–13.

Bainimarama disposed of the Qarase government and declared himself prime minister. He announced that elections were to be held after mechanisms for elections were revised. After more than seven years in power, Bainimarama ultimately scheduled the election for September 2014 during which his Fiji First Party emerged victorious.

Prior to the election, the Bainimarama government had institutionalized "Fijian" as the label to refer to all citizens to foster national identity.[72] The previous constitutions of 1990 and 1997 (which were drafted after the 1987 coup) did not employ "Fijian" as a national identity label. Instead, the 1990 Constitution referred to the "citizens of Fiji" and the 1997 Constitution to the "People of the Fiji Islands."[73] In 2010, a decree was made to replace "Fijian" with the term "*iTaukei*" to refer to Indigenous Fijians in all official communications and categorized all citizens as "Fijians."[74] This change, according to Bainimarama, reflected his progressive vision to end discrimination and racism.[75]

The dictum of "We are all Fijians" became a central ideological device in the Bainimarama government and electoral campaign strategies. It was a prominent feature of the newly created 2013 Constitution, which declared that "We are all Fijians united by common and equal citizenry."[76] For some segments of the population, this shift was a positive step toward national unity, while for others, especially Indigenous Fijian ethno-nationalists and supporters, it was interpreted as a threat to "Fijian identity."[77] Some saw it is a symbolic change with no material benefits.[78] There is no guarantee that the policies the Bainimarama government enacted will lead to a stable democratic Fiji.[79] The "We are all Fijians" campaign platform may be viewed as an ideology that the Bainimarama regime incorporated to maintain and gain popular support.[80]

Racial ideologies and identity constructs thus have remained at the center of Fiji's political discourse since independence.[81] The classification of Indo-Fijians and Indigenous Fijians as racial collectives from the colonial era has persisted into postcolonial Fiji. These classifications were emphasized and dichotomized in the public sphere in each coup. The discursive construct of race, ethnicity, and national identity was used in efforts to gain and remove political authority, both in the name of ethno-nationalist rights and in the name of multicultural equality—in spite of the religious,

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[72] Ibid., 15.

[73] "Constitution of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of Fiji," section 22, Government of Fiji, 1990, https://constitutionnet.org/vl/item/constitution-sovereign-democratic-republic-fiji-1990; "Fiji Islands Constitution Amendment Act 1997," preamble, Government of Fiji, 1997, http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=184423.

[74] "Fijian Affairs (Amendment) Decree," section 2, Government of Fiji, 2010, https://countrysafeguardsystems.net/sites/default/files/Fiji%20Fijian%20Affairs%20Amdmt%20Decree%20iTaukei%202010.pdf.

[75] Naidu et al., *Fiji*, 15.

[76] "Constitution of the Republic of Fiji," preamble, Government of Fiji, 2013, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Fiji_2013.pdf?lang=en.

[77] See findings and perspectives in Naidu et al., *Fiji*, 29–30.

[78] See opinions in "Fijians, I-Taukei, Indians and Indo-Fijians."

[79] Lal, "Strange Career," 14.

[80] See Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance," 5–27, for a discussion on ideology and hegemony; see Ramesh, "Hegemony, Anti-hegemony and Counter-hegemony," 42–88, for its theoretical application to the Fiji context.

[81] Naidu et al., *Fiji*, 31–33.

economic, geographic, and linguistic diversity of the society.[82] This complex background of colonial and postcolonial racial formation highlights the pervasiveness of colonial categorization and the intricate threads around identity, nationalism, and race in contemporary Fiji: the backdrop for the narratives of mixedness of the participants in this study.

Research Methods

Against this historical background, the empirical findings of this article are based on multiple individual and group interviews conducted between April and June 2014 with ten research participants born to an Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian couple.[83] The ten participants were recruited through the snowball method, which was initiated after a recruitment flyer was sent to all students at The University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji.

Name	Sex	Age	Religion	Education	Birthplace	Father	Mother
Nathan	M	20	Sikh	BA degree*	Taveuni	Indo-Fijian	Indigenous Fijian
Akim	M	21	Christian	BA degree*	Labassa	Indigenous Fijian	Indo-Fijian
Amy	F	24	Christian	BA degree*	Labassa	Indo-Fijian**	Indigenous Fijian**
Jacob	M	27	Christian	BA degree	Taveuni	Indigenous Fijian	Indo-Fijian
Jolie	F	27	Christian	BA degree	Suva	Indo-Fijian**	Indigenous Fijian
Kirk	M	31	Muslim	BA degree*	Labassa	Indo-Fijian	Indigenous Fijian
Lyn	F	32	Muslim	BA degree	Ba	Indo-Fijian	Indigenous Fijian
Rose	F	36	Christian	tertiary certificate	Suva	Indo-Fijian	Indigenous Fijian **
Ruby	F	37	Muslim	BA degree	Labassa	Indo-Fijian	Indigenous Fijian
Jane	F	37	Christian	BA degree	Suva	Indo-Fijian**	Indigenous Fijian **

Table 1: Demographic features of the participants (arranged by age, all names are pseudonyms). *Degree in progress. **Father or mother also claims a mixed heritage (e.g., Indo-Fijian–Rotuman grandfather).

In the first round of interviews, each participant was individually interviewed. During this phase, biographical information and narratives on the theme of identity, Indigeneity and belonging, and Fijian politics were gathered. The participants later attended a group interview with three fellow participants, which allowed for them to work together, to think about mixedness and Fijian identity in ways not previously considered, and to elaborate on narratives and opinions. These individual and

[82] Chand, "Ethnic Conflict," 1–7.

[83] For detailed information on research methods and findings, consult Cocom, "Mixed Race Thesis," 51–111.

group interviews, combined with follow-up questions over the phone and email, produced a rich trove of information, as individuals were able to describe their identities in their own words, exploring what mixedness meant to them personally.

For the analysis, this research used a thematic and narrative method of analysis.[84] I developed this project as part of my tertiary studies. I am from Belize where British colonialism also left its enduring legacies of racism and social stratification. My Indigenous Maya, African, and European mixedness helped me to navigate the shifting narratives of identity construction and Indigeneity that I encountered in Fiji. Similarly, the fact that one of my biological grandparents was from the neighboring state of Guatemala, which has a territorial claim on Belize, made me conscious of how historical context and discourses affect contemporary constructions of ethnic and national identity. This background has shaped my opinion that mixed-race persons and researchers in general could play a more active role in deconstructing the power relations imbued in identity constructions.[85] I pay keen attention to the experiences and narratives of each participant and examine their relationship to the wider social context, positioning their biographies of mixedness within the long history of racialization in Fiji. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the research, the participants were all given an oral presentation and written version of the analysis for feedback.

Mixedness, Identity, and Belonging in Contemporary Fiji

Mixedness can be expressed and understood in many different ways. Much theory about mixedness has been developed in the North American context. For example, various scholars have identified several identity options frequently employed by "mixed-race" persons.[86] Kerry Ann Rockquemore and David L. Brunsma, in particular, argue that "mixed-race" persons may identify with one side of their ancestry, a *traditional identity*; a category that emphasizes their "mixedness," a *border identity*; a category depending on its convenience, a *protean identity*; or no "racial" category, a *transcendent identity*.[87] This study found that these identity options, despite being developed elsewhere, are useful in exploring mixed identities in Fiji.

As seen in table 2, breaking down identity options into the abovementioned categories and subclassifying the concept of "transcendent identities" into national and humanist perspectives highlights both the similarities and the differences. Certainly, depending on the situation, these options may challenge or reinforce existing racial relations, but although the social contexts and histories may be different, there are similar themes around colonialism, forced migration, ethnic conflict, and the invisibility of mixedness.

[84] Chase, "Narrative Inquiry," 651–79.

[85] Daniel et al., "Emerging Paradigms," 6–65.

[86] Renn, "Understanding Identities," 383–403; Root, "Experiences and Processes," 237–47; Daniel et al., "Emerging Paradigms," 6–65.

[87] Rockquemore and Brunsma, "Socially Embedded Identities," 335–56.

Traditional Identity	Identifies based on the dominant monoracial discursive practice (patrilineal identification): "I am Indian since my dad is Indian"; "I am Fijian since my dad is Fijian"
Border Identity	Identifies in a way that emphasizes one's multiple heritage: "I am both"; "I am part-Indian-Fijian"; "I am half-caste"
Protean Identity	Identifies with a category depending on the benefits of the context: "I am Fijian when I am with my Fijian friends"
National Identity	Employs "Fijian" as national-civic category: "We are called Fijian. We were Indo-Fijian before"
Humanist Identity	Refuses to identify with an ethnic category: "I am human"

Table 2: Identity options among the research participants[88]

Traditional Identity

In the United States, a traditional mode of identity means conforming to the dominant monoracial rules of hypodescent: identifying as Black as a result of any Black ancestry. In Fiji, historically, the dominant patrilineal mode of identification informed this form of identity. As delimited and strictly enforced under colonial rule, this practice specified that a person was a member of a respective "race" on the basis of their immediate paternal ancestry.[89] In Fiji today, this form of identification is most common. All of the participants in my study at some point in their lives have reinforced and even possibly "preferred" this singular mode of classification. For example, Nathan said, "I just prefer they calling me Indian," and Rose remarked, "I would always class myself as Indian because my dad was Indian."[90]

As in other research contexts, my participants stated that their parents did not demand or compel them to identify in one particular manner.[91] Nathan, for example, said, "None of my family ever tried to ask me which side I should choose.... It's just my opinion, my choice." Akim noted, "That is just like me, it is just what we think about us." Despite such claims of identity as an individual rational choice, the colonial patrilineal practice of identification was evident. Akim elaborated that he preferred to be called "Fijian" and to be associated with his dad's Indigenous Fijian family. Similarly,

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[88] Adapted from Rockquemore and Brunsma, "Socially Embedded Identities," 335–56; Renn, *Mixed Race Students*, 88–89. The texts in quotations are from the research participants.
[89] Naidu, "State, Class and Politics," 398–99.
[90] Nathan, individual interview by author; Rose, individual interview by author. All interviews were conducted in 2014.
[91] Ali, *Mixed-Race, Post-Race*, 173–80.

Nathan expressed a preference to "follow what my dad follows." They both claimed that this preference was not to deny their multiple heritage but to indicate a closer association with one of their heritages.[92]

For Jolie, her mode of traditional identity was transitional. During her primary and secondary schooling, she preferred to identify as "Fijian." As she became older and attended tertiary education, however, she identified more as Indo-Fijian. "I notice that I acknowledge more my Indo-Fijian side today, more than I did before.... I am more open to the fact that I am Indian or Indo-Fijian and that I just have a mum that is iTaukei."[93] Her narrative reads as an example of the negotiation of traditional identity. During her childhood and adolescence, she preferred not to be identified as Indo-Fijian. Today, she seeks to be identified as "Indian or Indo-Fijian," as it is "just" her mother who is Indigenous Fijian—a reinforcement of the patrilineal form of identification.

Similarly, when Kirk was asked about his identification at school and in formal spaces, he remarked that "on the birth certificate it says it's Indian"; therefore, he "just follows that." He accommodates himself to the traditional identity stipulated on his birth certificate. "It's just for formality. I just do it; but not in my heart," he stated.[94]

Thus, the most obvious common identity option among participants is the traditional identity. This prevalence reflects Fiji's colonial administrative past and the intertwining and overlap between notions of patrilineal descent for both Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian culture. The formal mechanisms of the state continue to prioritize identity by patrilineal descent, and as a result, social groups easily accept this as the legitimate mode of identification.

Border Identity

A border identity refers to a mode of identification through which mixed-race persons acknowledge their multiple heritages through the articulation of a mixed-race or multiracial identity.[95] Among my participants, two forms of border identity emerged: celebratory and the in-between or dislocated. The celebratory border identity was highlighted through an array of such labels as "part," "fruit salad," "mixed," "half-caste," and "multiethnic." Participants acknowledged positive feelings toward their multiple heritage. The use of "part" was based on the more widely known categorization of "part-Europeans," a significant minority in Fiji.[96] "Part" has become a popular way to signify being ethnically mixed in Fiji, unlike in the Anglo-American context where mixed race is in greater use.[97] The other terms, such as "fruit salad," "half-caste," and "multiethnic," were less common but together were taken as positive terms or metaphors to highlight mixed status.

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[92] Nathan, group interview by author; Akim, group interview by author.
[93] Jolie, individual interview by author.
[94] Kirk, individual interview by author.
[95] See Rockquemore and Brunsma, "Socially Embedded Identities," 335–56.
[96] Riles, "Part-Europeans and Fijians," 105–6.
[97] Ifekwunigwe, "Introduction," 1–20.

"Half-caste," historically used to refer to the part-Europeans in Fiji, has been considered a derogatory term.[98] Amy, however, explained that she did not consider "half-caste" a discriminatory term, a similar finding to a previous study in Fiji which indicated that some part-Europeans were reappropriating "half-caste" as a positive label of identification.[99] Akim expressed his reservations about the term: "When I grew up … being called a 'half-caste' … that became normal, now when I think about it, how dare they call me half-caste [chuckles]…. The thing is, when I say half-caste, I think it is okay, but when someone else says half-caste, I am like 'what gives you the right to say half-caste?'"[100]

Rose also introduced the term *vasu* in reference to being mixed. The history and ethnography of vasu is complex, as described previously, referring to intricate kinship relationships. The participants used the term to describe the children of an Indigenous Fijian mother who married outside of her vanua. The interviewees only sparingly mentioned vasu, usually at my request to better understand the concept, possibly for two reasons. First, perhaps vasu is not applied to persons of this particular intermarriage, with mixed Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian heritage. Second, perhaps the participants' limited social relations with their Indigenous Fijian side of the family in their vanua mean that the term is not frequently used. In one of the interviews, I asked Rachel if there was a common term of identification for people like her, to which she replied, "No, there isn't a word. But the indigenous community, if you were linked to them, they would call you their vasu, which was a term that had respect to it. Vasu—'you are one of us,' 'You are affiliated to us.' So, I was *Vasu i Lau (Vasu* of *Lau)*. So, I was part of *Lau* because of my maternal line."[101]

Vasu highlights the complex and nuanced understandings of belonging for the Indigenous communities in Fiji: based on blood, kinship, and culture, being linked to the family as "one of us." Additionally, while many of the participants did not specifically mention vasu, many of them recollected that they had been given special treatment in their interactions with their Indigenous Fijian kin. Thus, the absence of vasu as an explicit term of identification or kinship relationship does not indicate the absence of acceptance from the Indigenous Fijian side of the family.

The in-between or dislocated border identity was marked by uncertainty. Participants occasionally, especially while growing up, felt uncertain about their social position because of their mixed race. Lyn, for example, stated, "I think growing up I never felt like I belonged anywhere, even though they made you feel welcome they also made sure that you knew that you were different."[102] Rose expressed similar sentiments. "We never really belonged anywhere, sort of just dangling [chuckles] in the middle. You can't really say, 'I am part of your group' and 'I am part of your group,' you know."[103] Akim also exhibited uncertainty about his identity. "I always consider myself a Fijian,

[98] Riles, "Part-Europeans and Fijians," 105–29.
[99] Amy, individual interview by author; Osborne, "Kailoma," 58.
[100] Akim, individual interview by author.
[101] Rachel, individual interview by author.
[102] Lyn, group interview by author.
[103] Rose, individual interview.

no matter how anyone asks me. 'Who are you?' 'I'm a Fijian.' 'You don't look like Fijian.' 'I am part Indian.'"[104]

Not everyone openly acknowledged their mixed heritage. For example, Jacob noted that a friend with a similar Indo-Fijian/Indigenous Fijian background did not acknowledge their "mixedness." "I know one of my friends who do have iTaukei parents and parents of Indian descent, [but] they would never talk about it. They would never even identify as having both. I look at them and say I wonder if they are all like that or it's just me that is proud of carrying both the flags and both identities."[105]

Rose expressed discontent about being pressured to identify within the traditional identity. "The way I look at it is that I am who I am, like it or don't like it.... On both side[s] I think there is always pressure to be either one.... Being biracial, especially Indo-Fijian, in some places you still get that look like she is neither here, nor there. Then of course you meet people who are broad-minded they say 'OK. Half of you is still Fijian, native, [or] whatever, so you are still a part of us.'"[106]

For some participants, this form of identification occurred until around the period of their tertiary education. I asked Lyn if she recalled how she identified while studying at the tertiary level. Her response was: "When people ask me, I would tell them I'm half Indian and Fijian. That's what I used to call myself. I'm right in the middle. Because I spoke both languages, they would just accept me. So, it became cool to be of mixed race."[107]

The border identity can be viewed as both a subversive and an adaptive mode of identification in the Fiji context. While it does challenge the dominant practice of patrilineal identity, as others have noted, its potential subversive effect is not a necessary consequence.[108] Negotiating an identity "on the borders" in this context highlights how familial links and feelings of belonging are heavily influenced by an individual's historical context in which there is a degree of subjective expression and identity construction.

Protean Identity

A protean identity, an identity label that is situationally advantageous, is inherently shifting.[109] An individual makes calculated decisions about the benefits and opportunities of a particular identity label in a specific setting. Lyn and Nathan performed this identity option. "I would always say that I was Indian," Lyn said. "But, when I went to the village, I didn't want to be Indian because it was so not cool to be Indian. I would speak in my thickest Fijian accent ever ... but of course my looks were a dead giveaway."[110] Nathan expressed a similar perspective of shifting identities. "I always prefer calling

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[104] Akim, individual interview.
[105] Jacob, individual interview by author.
[106] Rose, individual interview.
[107] Lyn, individual interview by author.
[108] See Rocha, "Betwixt, Between, and Beyond," 38–39, 119.
[109] See Rockquemore and Brunsma, "Socially Embedded Identities," 338.
[110] Lyn, individual interview.

myself Indo-Fijian but with my mom's group then I would call myself as Fijian. It just depends on which side I am on."[111]

Time and location were also prominent factors in determining the participants' identity selection. Lyn shared that when it comes to describing herself among non-Fijian citizens, she prefers stating that she is "Fijian":

> If somebody asks me outside [of Fiji] what my nationality was I would say Fijian but if they ask me [what] my ethnicity was then I would explain. Depending on whether I had the time to, because usually I look at their face and ask is it worth explaining. If I don't want to explain then I just say "I am Indo-Fijian."... So, you have to quickly assess in your mind, how much time you want to spend explaining yourself or just say "OK I am Fijian" and keep moving.... It really depends on whether you want to spend time or not.[112]

From the array of scenarios presented, the protean identity depended on the interactional setting and the use of an identity label that was convenient and advantageous. Selecting one's identity reflected the fluid nature of identity and agency of the participants to capitalize on the social norms of identity. It also reinforces the agency of mixed-race persons to adapt their identities based on context, beyond the dominant mode of identity.

Transcendent Identity: National

The government's attempt to classify all its citizens as Fijians did not translate into an immediate repositioning of the participants' identifications. Most participants found themselves using and negotiating "Fijian" and "Indian" as labels for racial and ethnic identification. The use of "Fijian" outside of the national Fiji context, however, was viewed as beneficial. Rose, for example, maintained that "at the end of the day when you are overseas, they don't care whether you are Indian, Fijian, or what. If they say you are from Fiji then you are a Fijian, simple as that, that is how they refer to you. So, the race thing doesn't really matter that much when you are among a different group of people."[113] Lyn expounded on this perspective:

> Fijian actually refers to citizenship and nationality so I am happy to be called Fijian that way, but in terms of my own ethnicity I call myself Indo-Fijian and iTaukei.... If somebody asks me outside what my nationality was, I would say Fijian but if they ask me my ethnicity, I would then explain.... A lot of people confuse it. So, when they ask me: "What are you?" I ask "What [do] you mean? Do you want my ethnic background or do you want to understand what

[111] Nathan, group interview.
[112] Lyn, group interview.
[113] Rose, individual interview.

> nationality I am?"... So based on my mood and the time I have, I decide what I want them to know about me.[114]

In these excerpts, the participants disclosed that in international contexts "Fijian" is a helpful national signifier, highlighting civic rather than ethnic identities. International experiences made them support the recent institutionalization of the term.

One participant, Jane, supported a move to purely use civic identities, illustrating an idealized version of citizenship elsewhere. "I think that eventually it is the way that Fiji has to go, just like any other nation. You don't call Australians Indian or Portuguese, everyone who has a blue Australian passport is called an Australian. Why do you want to come to Fiji and hold a blue passport and say, I'm an Indian, I'm an Other. We are Fijian, we hold this passport; so I agree with the change in this light."[115] Similarly, Jacob, who feels compelled to identify as Indian in some settings because of his patrilineal heritage, expressed that this recent change by the government gives him confidence to call himself "Fijian." "Lately leading up to the elections, there is this TV commercial that comes on.... There [is] an Indian guy, Muslim guy, a Chinese guy, everyone coming from different [backgrounds] and they all say 'I am Fijian, I am Fijian.' That is when I realize, if they are all Fijians then what am I? That is when I realize being Fijian is not about where you are from, it's about identifying with a country."[116] "Fijian" is interpreted as a classification with the potential to foster unity. This was the common rationale to support its recent institutionalization and was echoed by some participants, including Lyn. "I think it's a positive thing, in terms of legalizing the term. It's almost like forcing everybody to say that everybody is Fijian.... But it will take some time before everybody fully understands."[117]

Some have opposed this change to call all citizens Fijians. The opposing views were centered on two main arguments. First, the premise was that the name change was enforced by a military regime and not through dialogue or a democratic process. For instance, Jane remarked, "I do not agree with just stamping it in the damn constitution and expect that is just going to make it happen.... I know that we need to go there and I would love for the people to come to it, instead of having signed something that says 'Now you're a Fijian....' I think if he [Bainimarama] tries to keep enforcing things [it's] just going to fail."[118]

Second, some have argued that the institutionalization of Fijian as a national classification should not prevent people from using "Fijian" and "Indian" as racial and ethnic identity constructs. Due to a lack of clarity about the political correctness of these terms, participants expressed a degree of opposition to the change. Akim said that "it is good that we are nationally recognized as Fijians but then we should also acknowledge who we are [ethnically]."[119] Jacob did not like the classification. "I

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[114] Lyn, individual interview.
[115] Jane, individual interview by author.
[116] Jacob, individual interview.
[117] Lyn, individual interview.
[118] Jane, individual interview.
[119] Akim, group interview.

really don't like it, I prefer being a[n] Indian or a Fijian. I prefer [if] someone ask(s) me, 'so who's Indian or who's Fijian,' to me that's more okay."[120]

Participants also expressed indifference to ethnic labels, interestingly especially among those whose fathers were Indigenous Fijian. Rose showed this indifference when she stated, "The other day someone asked me, you Indian? I say yes. You Fijian, I say yes. There is no particular tag. There is no tag."[121] Akim shared that this change in classification did not affect how he perceived himself. "It didn't really bother me because I had already considered myself as a Fijian.... I have always considered myself a Fijian. This change doesn't really affect me."[122]

The participants viewed the institutionalization of "Fijian" both positively and negatively.[123] Those supporting the term suggested it was a common mode of identification in the world today and that it may foster unity. Those against the change highlighted that it was a policy imposed on the population and that it limited the use of "Indian" and "Fijian" as ethnic identity categories, identifications that still had significant everyday salience.

Transcendent Identity: Humanist

A humanist identity refers to the refusal to identify with any racial, ethnic, or national category.[124] This identity can be viewed as a subversive strategy, because it questions the validity of existing classification practices. This identity option was evident among several of the participants, such as Rose who said, "Eventually, race should not really matter I don't think it says a lot about who you are.... Race should not be what defines you.... I think what really matters is people's upbringing."[125] This identity option was also reflected in Kirk's and Jacob's interviews. "I always see myself as a human being," Kirk stated. "That's why most of the time when racial things are going on I don't really care.... We are just human beings."[126] Jacob noted that he remembered someone asking him, "'Where are you from?' That's when I said 'I'm human' [chuckle]."[127]

Although the participants did not widely employ this identity option, it does indicate discontent around the existing classification system. Choosing this identity option may be understood as dissatisfaction with the divisive racial-ethno-nationalist discourse that has pervaded public understandings of social relations in Fiji. The participants' decision to be viewed as humans first challenges the perception that race occupies a significant feature in their lives and perhaps highlights a

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[120] Jacob, group interview by author.
[121] Rose, individual interview.
[122] Akim, group interview.
[123] For a similar finding in the Norway context, see Sandset, *Color That Matters.*
[124] See Rockquemore and Brunsma, "Socially Embedded Identities," 335–56. See also Daniel, "Black and White Identity," 137; Daniel, "Betwixt and Between," 342. Daniel refers to this, respectively, as a transcendent or metaracial (beyond race) identity.
[125] Rose, individual interview.
[126] Kirk, individual interview.
[127] Jacob, individual interview.

deliberate personal positioning against racial and ethnic classification.[128] Despite this approach, however, in day-to-day life, participants described being ultimately compelled to engage and negotiate their cultural identity on racial and ethnic terms. In other words, while we are all human, the cultural weight of ethnic and racial identification cannot be avoided entirely, regardless of context.

Conclusion

Fiji's unique geographical location and colonial history provide a fascinating context in which to explore mixed-race identifications, moving away from looking at colonizer/colonized mixing to drawing out the dynamics between the Indigenous majority and the migrant minority groups. Set against a contentious and conflictual history, participants in this study described distinct and shifting ways to negotiate their mixed identities. The Indigenous Fijian concept of vasu illustrates how belonging and kinship can be understood in more complex ways, and the mixed Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian individuals in this research all highlighted the different ways they sought to belong.

Unlike in the United States where mixed-race persons are more frequently able to celebrate their mixed-race status, the colonial ideological practices of race remain highly influential in how mixed-race persons of Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian descent in Fiji articulate their identities.[129] This is unsurprising given Fiji's politicized history and social formation. The history and contemporary invisibility also contribute to identity articulation, given the low number of mixed-race persons of Indo-Fijian and Indigenous Fijian descent and their lack of recognition in the past.

Interestingly, the typology of mixed-race identifications I used proved adaptable to Fiji, highlighting both overlaps and disconnects with other contexts.[130] The four identity categories, expanded to five in this work, encompassed much richness in identification and provided a scaffolding through which to explore contextual mixedness. Expanding on the analytic and theoretical framework pursued by CMRS, this article shows how valuable such work is in this new Pacific context. This study has shown that mixed-race persons in Fiji, like mixed-race persons around the world, are confronted by an array of discursive identity constructs that they reinforce, subvert, and accommodate based on the social context and available discursive identity constructions.

The state's ideological maneuvering to refer to all citizens as "Fijians" has been praised by some as an attempt to advance Fiji as a multiethnic and equal society. The Bainimarama government has also dismantled affirmative action policies that favored Indigenous Fijians and abolished the Great Council of Chiefs. These changes have created grievances on the part of Indigenous Fijians and others. Vijay Naidu, however, reminds us that until Fiji's military is reformed, future military intervention on ethno-nationalist grounds remains a concern.[131] Indeed, the 2013 Constitution has been criticized for granting military immunity to those involved in the 2006 coup.

[128] See Ratuva, "Politics of Ethno-National Identity," 171–98.

[129] See Small and King-O'Riain, "Global Mixed Race," vii–xxii.

[130] See Rockquemore and Brunsma, "Socially Embedded Identities," 335–56.

[131] Naidu, "Moving Towards a More Multiethnic Fiji Military Forces," 117–35.

Therefore, as shown through the participants' narratives, the state's attempts to reconfigure how identity is constructed in Fiji remains limited in power and brings to the fore the intersections of racial, ethnic, and national identity. The participants expressed varying degrees of approval, disapproval, and indifference when they discussed and used "Fijian" as a national-civic construct versus a racial or ethnic construct. The primary reason for disapproval was because of the perceived undemocratic enactment of state policies. Such analysis could help to inform a larger discussion that CMRS still wrestles with. While being mixed race and "biracial" are increasingly celebrated in some contexts and while there is a desire for such terms to become official classifications, the dominant racial definitions of national constructions must be subjected to long-term critique. This study shows that rapid shifts in classifications do not provide immediate shifts in the discursive formations of identities.

Interethnic relations in Fiji are not without hope. Steven Ratuva notes that despite cases of extreme ethno-nationalism in the past, interethnic relations are not always dichotomous and tense.[132] Ron Crocombe has long made the argument that the South Pacific is a space of movement, cultural exchange, and ethnic mixture.[133] Undeniably, the very presence of a mixed-race Indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian population is testament to Crocombe's point. The divide and rule strategies of colonialism have played a determining role in how individuals and groups have politicized and mobilized around ethnic, racial, and national identity. Yet the decolonization of Fijian identities alongside the reconstruction of Fiji's history and progressive peace-building initiatives may work to shift toward more inclusive ways to belong as Fijian.

The sometimes-contradictory identity constructions presented here then support the importance of CMRS in demonstrating the contingent and ideological nature of identity formation processes.[134] The field has never been more equipped and prepared for additional studies to take place across the globe. Increasing numbers of historical, ethnographic, and interdisciplinary research will continue to contribute to the global perspectives of mixed race, bolstering this critical turn in analysis. I hope that additional studies from the Global South will help to advance new insights on how mixedness identity is embodied, enacted, and theorized around the world.

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[132] Ratuva, *Contested Terrain*, 105–54.

[133] Crocombe, *New South Pacific*, 1–23.

[134] See Daniel et al., "Emerging Paradigms," 6–65.

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