INTRODUCTION

It is argued in this paper that the ethno-local distinctions evident in youth cultural practice in Fiji occupy most of the symbolic space of the popular, encoding an intractable struggle between two ethnic groups who traditionally hold power in some areas, but not others. Distinctive styles and traditions contrast strongly in the popular music/dance preferences of Fijian youth, to the extent that ethnicity can be identified as the major signifier of difference. The irreducible political-economic dimension of music and dance in Fijian youth culture is that of polarisation and implicit exclusion of the other. In a divided cultural environment such as urban Fiji, globally-distributed western pop music and dance styles come to constitute the safe middle ground in local youth media and music/dance venues.

The theoretical premise that informs the discussion below is that “even the most discursive cultural practices have a constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension” (Fraser, 1997: 15). The specific preferences of young people for particular musicians, TV shows, films, fashion and leisure practices tend to reflect their socio-
cultural location (see Bourdieu, 1984; Bennett, Emmison and Frow, 1999). Bourdieu also
reminds us that one of the functions of cultural consumption is to legitimise not only
economic but social "differences" (1984: 7). More recently, Thornton (1995) has referred
to "subcultural capital" in describing the process of distinction – taste preferences – as
they are hierarchically arranged in mass culture. It is certainly true that the local in Fiji is
highly contested space, and one way urban youth from the two ethnic groups make
distinctive "realisations of society and space is through the act of musical consumption"
(Bennett, 2000: 64).

Indigenous Fijian youth and Indian Fijian youth in urban Fiji grow up in a polarised
social and cultural milieu of racialised “us” and “them” so strongly separated that one
local commentator has compared it to “apartheid” (Solomone, 2003 :23). The set of
principles through which young urban Fijians understand the world and organise their
socio-cultural practices, the cultural constitution of self - the defining of identity - largely
occurs through the iteration of ethnic difference (see Morley and Robins, 1995: 45) from
the local other. As sometimes happens in societies dominated by a binary opposition of
cultural styles and practices (where the mixing of these does not occur), resources for the
“middle ground” of cultural rapprochement, a stated political priority, often come from
neither local domain, but from outside. In the case of Fiji, the cultural materials of the
middle ground of urban youth leisure practice appear to be globally-distributed western
teen culture products and styles such as pop music, which does not offend (in theory)
either party in the local cultural divide. It is concluded that the extraordinarily strong
domain separation of Indian and Indigenous Fijian youth popular culture, and the
apparent necessity for maintaining local boundaries, leads to the situation where white, western music and dance styles (with an exotic touch of contemporary Latino) come to represent neutral (inter-ethnic) cultural space.

FIJI

Fiji has a population of less than one million and is one of the more prosperous nations in the Pacific region. For example, life expectancy is seventy years. Yet an estimated twenty-five percent of Fiji’s population lives in poverty (UNDP, 1997: 2). Fiji ranked eighty-one out of one hundred and seventy-seven countries listed in a recent Human Development Report (UNDP, 2004). A series of military coups – evidence of the ethnic conflict in Fiji - has seen a decline in overall human development indicators since the mid-1980s. Economic hardship has been further exacerbated by a decline in the country’s traditional dependence on agriculture, although manufacturing and tourism have expanded. Ongoing land tenure and use issues have displaced many Indian Fijian families, often after multi-generation livelihood on the same land (Carling and Peacock-Taylor, 2001: 9). Formal sector employment has shown little increase (Bacchus, 2000: 40). Unemployment levels in Fiji for 2002 ranged from seven to twelve percent (conservative estimates) to thirty to thirty-five percent (Mausio, 2003: 445). The lack of formal sector jobs contributes both to Indian Fijian emigration (see de Vries, 2002: 314), which has a negative effect on economic growth (see for example, Voigt-Graf, 2003), and to crime and corruption (Connell, 2003).
Fiji is an interesting example of a post-colonial nation in which there are two ethnic groups of almost equal size, where each group strongly believes they are oppressed by the other group. According to Crocombe, equally balanced populations like this “are the most difficult to manage, owing to the constant competition for power” (2001: 450). In the 1996 census, almost fifty-one percent of Fiji’s population were Indigenous people of Melanesian descent or from other Pacific Islands. Almost forty-four percent were Indian Fijian - descendants of indentured plantation labourers imported from South Asia by Fiji’s British rulers in a previous century. Fiji became independent in 1970. English is the official language, although Fijian (Bauan) and Hindi are spoken at home. As a direct outcome of separatist colonial policies under British rule (Barr, 2003: 77), the military and civil sector is now dominated by Indigenous Fijians, and the urban/commercial sector by Indian Fijians. There is continued tension between the two ethnic groups, intensified by high unemployment and rapid urbanisation. Although urban poor from both ethnic groups inhabit the pitiful shanty towns around Suva, even here there is strong domain separation in cultural, social and religious life, which can extend to civil unrest at times between groups of young men.

YOUTH AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE

Young people – just over twenty percent of the population (UNICEF Pacific, 1998: 59) - feel the tight competition for jobs very keenly. For example, in 2002 there was “an average of only 2,000 new jobs for the usual annual figure of 17,000 school leavers” (Mausio, 2003: 445). In the past four decades, large numbers of young people have moved away from rural villages and outer islands looking for work in the towns. Indian
Fijian youth seek emigration to New Zealand or Australia, often without success. Unemployed Indigenous Fijian youth, especially those without much education, turn to work in town as itinerant labourers, sex workers, domestic servants, shoe-shine boys, bottle-collectors or barrow-pushers at the markets. Males are also likely to commit petty crimes. Around seventy percent of those currently in prison in Fiji are young first offenders (ECREA, 2002) and many offences involve alcohol. Locally-made beer and spirits are freely available - easily obtained by minors. There is a culture of drinking to get drunk which many young urban male and female Indigenous Fijians embrace enthusiastically. Alcohol abuse is complicated by the ready availability of locally-grown marijuana and the extensive recreational use of yaqona (kava - grog). Indian Fijian youth do not usually get involved in alcohol or drug abuse. On the other hand they show a much higher suicide rate (ECREA, 2002).

Young urban people in Fiji are "saturated" with global popular culture. Television and radio ownership is almost universal in Suva and Nadi. Although domestic internet access is currently limited by cost, it is certainly increasing. Mobile phone ownership fuels the SMS craze among young middle-class urbanites. Messages and images of global youth trends (from the West, the Pacific and from India) pour forth from radio, television, print media, the internet, cinemas, retail outlets and billboards. As Fiji is an English-speaking country, there is no language barrier. The constant flow of consumer images and messages inevitably impacts upon young people. As Liechty (1995: 167) put it “identity formation occurs within communities, but in the late twentieth century (sic) the factors that shape identities increasingly transcend the boundaries of locale”.

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However, this global "flow" (Castells, 1997) does not replace local identity frames. Young middle-class urban Fijians remain members of their defining ethnic cultures and much of their status and sense of self derives from this local cultural normativity. A significant aspect of this local cultural identity, for Indigenous Fijian and Indian Fijian youth respectively, lies in a marked difference, really a domain separation from the local “other”. Indigenous Fijian and Indian Fijian youth attend different schools, speak different languages at home, partake in different cultural activities and forms of worship. They even play for separate teams and in separate competitions of the same sport. They are destined for different jobs and careers with a dual set of unions to represent even the same occupations of nurses and teachers. Moreover, they tend to watch different films, listen to different music, prefer different dance styles, and wear different kinds of clothes for nightclubbing – “the politics of youth culture is a politics of the metaphor: it deals in the currency of signs” (Hebdige, 1988: 35). Youth culture “signs” in Fiji are organised according to the logics of racial distinction. In other words, if we take local popular music and dance practices as a “sociospatial pathway” (Finnegan, 1989: 5) for youth in Suva, then strict domain separation on this “pathway” sustains “a field of differentiated positions defined by unequal distributions of economic and symbolic power” (Stahl, 2003: 140; see Bourdieu, 1993). It is argued that in this context of cultural polarisation, the globalised cultural products of western youth trends in music and dance come to symbolise politically and culturally neutral territory for young Fijians, offering a ready open market for global pop music and dance styles.
METHODOLOGY

Data which supports the discussion in this paper was collected in Fiji during January and February 2004 during pilot research for a planned larger project. Data sets are from two different sources. The first comes from a pilot survey completed by thirty-four senior secondary school students. The survey (see Williams and May, 2001: 89), consisting of a number of questions on popular culture, technology and lifestyle, was distributed to a Grade Twelve science class at Hari Rama Secondary School – a rare mixed race school - by an Indian Fijian teacher. Since it was a science class there were only eight girls present. The second set of data comes from fieldnotes assembled during the same period of pilot research. These include detailed descriptions of local television and radio broadcasts, as well as the streetlife of urban youth (see Appadurai, 1997). The fieldnotes also include participant observation reports from clubs and bars in Suva, supported by local informant accounts.

POPULAR MUSIC PREFERENCES

Final year students at Hari Rama Secondary School were asked to write down their music preferences.

Table 1.1. Indigenous Fijian Youth - Three favourite musical groups or singers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favourite Music Artists</th>
<th>Males n = 15</th>
<th>Females n = 7</th>
<th>Total N = 23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Life</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourite Music Artists</td>
<td>Males n = 10</td>
<td>Females n = 1</td>
<td>Total n = 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backstreet Boys</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westlife</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSync</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eminem</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abjeet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udit Narayan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remix</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical Indian Music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As they were aged seventeen and under, the main sources of popular music knowledge for these young Fijians were radio, television, cinema and peers, rather than the music and dance venues discussed later in the paper. Beyond some obvious ethnic distinctions one can see that British boy band *Westlife* was the most popular musical group for the class as a whole. In fact, many of them named singers and groups easily recognized as British and American “global commodities” (Bennett, 2000: 27) - preferences that do not correspond with ethno-local loyalties. However, they also named performers we can easily identify as belonging to the separate cultural domains of Indigenous Fijians and Indian Fijians. A number of these are also global or regional cultural commodities, but they derive from non-western sources. These popular music products at their point of origin target young people belonging to specific racial groups – for example, Black American youth or Asian youth in Britain - but their local meanings in Fiji cannot be understood in isolation.

We are reminded that for mass-produced cultural products, their “precise meanings become bound up with the local scenarios within which they are appropriated and the local circumstances they are asked to negotiate” (Bennett, 2000: 27). The negotiation of
meaning for popular music genres like gangsta rap and bhangra takes place in a highly charged atmosphere of racial tension in Fiji. There are implicit racialised binaries at work in these distinctions that both reflect and “structure the kinds of sociality” (Stahl, 2003: 140) possible in Fijian youth culture. The constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension of these musical taste distinctions, and the cultural consumption patterns they encode, serve to trace out and reinforce the culture of separateness between the two ethnic groups in Fiji.

Using this relatively small amount of data, we can begin to identify three distinct cultural domains of popular music for young people in Fiji. The first domain consists of genres preferred by Indigenous Fijian youth – pacific rock, reggae, rap, hip-hop - for example, *Voqa Ni Delai Doki Doki, Caucau Ni Delainakulakula, Lucky Dube, Big Brovaz, Outkast, P.Diddy*. At the other end of the symbolic continuum of (sub)cultural distinctions lie the genres preferred by Indian Fijian youth – bhangra, fusion (Bennett, 2000:103) and Bollywood pop – for example, *Abjeet, Udit Narayan, Sonu Nigam, Luck Ali*. Around the centre of this symbolic continuum of distinctions lies the genre most popular with both sets of youth – western pop – for example, *Westlife, Backstreet Boys, Daniel Bedingfield, Shania Twain, Celine Dion*. However, *Eminem* (rap), *Bob Marley* (reggae) and *Black-eyed Peas* (hip-hop) are also named by both, suggesting some degree of crossover, since these are genres usually favoured by Indigenous youth. It will be argued though, that this is partly an effect of one particular television program on Fijian youth under seventeen. To understand one way in which their musical tastes are formed

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1 *Bob Marley* has probably become "mainstream" to some extent in Fiji, as in Indonesia (see Baulch, 2003).
and cultivated, one has to take into account the fact that Fiji has only one free-to-air broadcasting channel.

**POWERJAMMER - VISUAL INPUT TO MUSICAL TASTES**

Some wealthier households in Suva have cable television, but Fiji1 was the sole free-to-air television channel in February 2004. Fiji1 offers a Saturday afternoon music program for young people called PowerJammer which has a huge following among teens. It is not just the musical tracks themselves. The visually appealing video clips that accompany them encode messages about sexuality, fashion and dance styles. PowerJammer is made in Suva, with a clean-cut Indigenous Fijian teenage boy and a casually-clad Indian Fijian teenage girl as comperes. The entire show is video-clips, with a viewers' competition at the end. On one Saturday in February 2004, PowerJammer began with a sentimental power ballad and videoclip from Westlife. This was followed by a song and sophisticated visuals from Black-eyed Peas. Subsequently, there was a ballad and a rather amateurish video clip from a female Maori singer who modelled herself on Alanis Morisette, and a clean-cut Maori boy band harmonising on R & B. American TLC and Scottish Wet Wet Wet featured next, followed by the American-based singer Eagle Eye Cherry. The American Missy Elliot and British Sean Paul were next, followed by Boyz to Men and Daniel Bedingfield – also both American. There were no Indian songs or popular music at all, nor any local Fijian bands or singers such as Black Rose, Caucau Ni Delainakulakula or Voqa Ni Delai Doki Doki. It was explained by one
of the young Indigenous Fijians watching PowerJammer with me that the show was "inclusive of races".

It may well be that PowerJammer avoids giving offence to either ethnic cohort of their youthful viewing audience by including recorded material from overseas which does not strongly belong to either of the locally-polarised genres. On a show like Video Hits in Australia aimed at a similar youth demographic you will hear and see many more Black rap and hip-hop artists, and even occasionally a popular Indian artist like Bally Sagoo, but not in Fiji it seems. The line-up of mainstream hits implicitly recognises the divided local scene by avoiding it, while showcasing selected New Zealand performers as a regional inclusion. Nevertheless, in the current commercial music climate it is impossible to avoid top-selling artists who make use of traditions like rap, hip-hop, reggae and even bhangra (for example Sean Paul). Globally significant artists like Black-eyed Peas and Eminem are simply too big to be left out of PowerJammer programming. So PowerJammer mostly broadcasts a menu of standard "white" western pop and rock which influences the musical tastes of Fijian youth in the direction of western-style genres and packaged "global commodities" such as Britney Spears, but certain performers and bands whose musical style touches on the locally polarised and racialised genres have to be included. We return to the official explanation for PowerJammer programming - racial inclusiveness. Acts like Sean Paul, Eminem and Black-eyed Peas are the exception rather than the rule. To some extent, the limitations of a single youth popular music video hits show, on the sole free-to-air television station, means that the
complete domain separation seen elsewhere in the culture is not easily achieved. Radio provides a useful contrast, as it does not suffer the same broadcasting constraints.

**RADIO – A TRIPARTITE YOUTH MARKET**

In a country where there is only one free-to-air television station, radio is a very influential broadcasting medium as far as young people are concerned. On the FM band there are three popular Suva radio stations aimed directly at youth. The exclusively Indigenous Fijian station broadcasts mainly in Fijian and plays music by Fijian, Pacific and New Zealand bands and singers, usually Pacific-style rock, rhythm and blues, and reggae tributes. Late at night this station also features Black American ghetto hip-hop and gangsta rap, as well as British ska and hip hop. Much of this music extols the black American ghetto code of "dangerous and violent masculinity" (Miller, 2004: 178), affirming "blackness" per se, and advancing a "critique of racism" (West-Durán, 2004: 31), with which many Indigenous Fijian males clearly identify. In Fiji though, the explosive anti-white discourse of rap is taken up in a local context where the white colonialists left long ago, where the contemporary "oppressors" are not white, not a majority, and where the political ruling class, the police and the military are all Indigenous Fijians. Nonetheless, the discourse obviously resonates. Perhaps "race" (as such) is the wrong way to look at this phenomenon. The explanation may lie in the large shanty-town settlements on the outskirts of Suva where economic hardship pits young unemployed men from the two ethnic groups against each other, and where both imagine the other to be more privileged in the tiny job market.
For its part, the exclusively Indian Fijian radio station broadcasts in Hindi and plays Bollywood pop (usually from contemporary film soundtracks), a little Indian classical music, and a lot of British bhangra and fusion tracks. The third station popular with youth in Suva broadcasts in English and has an international pop and rock playlist in which *Westlife* figure largely, as well as *Shania Twain, Celine Dion, Alicia Keys, Lincoln Park, Britney Spears, Backstreet Boys, Black-eyed Peas, Daniel Bedingfield* and *Blink 182*. All three radio stations play a lot of requests from listeners, so the young audiences themselves partly produce the domain separation "effect". The listener orientations of the three radio stations delineate the polarised cultural landscape of youth music distinctions in Fiji. At the imaginary centre of this bisected field lies the apparently neutral position of western pop music. Fieldwork observations suggest that the English-broadcast radio station appeals most to well-educated middle-class young Fijians, from both ethnic backgrounds, seeking a sophisticated, cosmopolitan image. It is here that we can start to sense that class as well as ethnicity plays a role in the appropriation by Fijian youth of the discourses and genres of globally distributed popular music.

**OTHER LOCAL MUSICAL INFLUENCES AND SOURCES**

There was no indication that any local Fiji Indian popular bands or singers were giving live performances in February 2004. DJ-ing seems to be the primary outlet for Indian Fijian music artists outside mainstream Indian classical music events. Contemporary Bollywood films, however, constitute a major influence on the musical
tastes of young Indian Fijians. The latest films reach Fiji very quickly. On one Friday in February, 2004, at the Village Six Cinema in Suva there were five recent release Bollywood films showing, (as well as ten Hollywood films and the latest Harry Potter). Cinema-going is a major leisure pastime for urban Fijian youth. This provides further evidence of domain separation, as it is obvious that while Indian Fijians might view both kinds of films, Indigenous Fijians would not. Unfortunately it seems very few feature films are ever made in Fiji by Indigenous film-makers in the local language. Indian films in the Village Six Cinema complex form a significant input to youth culture in Suva. An Indian Fijian informant told me that every time a new Indian film came to town, the soundtrack would sell out the next day in the Indian music shops (separate like everything else). Pirate DVDs from the same outlets are also instantly available. Some western films also have the effect of cultivating local youth music tastes though. An Indigenous informant assured me that one reason for local enthusiasm for Eminem as a white "rapper" in Fiji was the popularity of his film Eight Mile.

Live music does constitute a major influence on the musical tastes of Indigenous Fijian youth. There are frequent opportunities to hear and see the local music form – Pacific rock - in a number of venues. Suva is a routine destination for New Zealand rock bands and other bands from the Pacific region. The South African reggae singer Lucky Dube has also given live performances in Suva and gathered a fan base accordingly. In summary then, it appears the domain separation of popular music in Fiji draws on different sources. Indian Fijian youth are influenced in their culturally-specific musical tastes by Indian films from Mumbai, while Indigenous Fijian youth are influenced in their
culturally-specific musical tastes by local live rock bands and musicians from both Fiji and the wider Pacific (including New Zealand and Australia) which frequently exhort Indigenous rights and autonomy (Mitchell, 1996). However, this is not the only influence on Indigenous Fijian youth. The many local fans of "authentic" hip-hop and rap (not the commercialised kind) seek out alternative music shows on cable and other recorded sources as these genres enjoy only limited public exposure – the late night FM radio program being one exception. As for western pop music, both youth cohorts are exposed to a great deal of it on free-to-air television, on radio and in many public places like shopping malls, as well as through viewing western films. As we saw in the survey above, youth from both ethnic groups name bands and singers familiar to young people everywhere. It appears that in any "inclusive" youth space in Fiji, including certain dance venues, western pop music tends to represent culturally neutral space in the politics of local race relations.

LIVE MUSIC AND DANCE VENUES

Live music and dance venues in Suva show similar cultural domain separation features to FM youth radio stations. Suva has an active nightlife consisting of dance clubs, bars, karaoke bars and live music venues. Like many other global cities, in Suva ‘visiting pubs, bars and clubs (…) a core element of young people’s lifestyles’ (Chatterton and Hollands, 2001: 3), happens often. As elsewhere, many low-income youth are seeking night-life entertainment to redress their dissatisfaction with either low-paid jobs or jobs which offer little in the way of personal satisfaction (Chatterton and
Moreover, the urban reaction against modernity is characterised by the "recreation of places of relative smallness and informality" (Giddens, 1990: 142), that bars and dance venues provide.

At first glance, venues can be functionally divided into live music venues and dance clubs/bars. Live music venues mainly provide entertainment for Indigenous Fijian youth and feature live bands and singers as described above. Most acts are local, with many reggae tribute bands and singers. However, almost every week there is a visiting rock, or rhythm and blues band from Samoa, Tonga, or New Zealand. Regular live music venues in Suva are male dominated places, usually in the less fashionable parts of town. Informants confirmed that excessive consumption of beer, yaqona and marijuana is normal, followed by fights both inside and outside the venues (see Veramu, 1992: 87).

By contrast, dance venues are located in the city centre and tend to attract a more affluent, middle-class clientele, although fights also occur in the streets outside these venues. There is a strong police presence in the major entertainment area of the city from Wednesday to Saturday night. Every venue has a bouncer/doorman, often more than one.

The following table lists some popular music/dance venues popular with the eighteen to thirty-five year old crowd.

Table 1.3. Three Selected Suva music/dance venues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Venue</th>
<th>Clientele</th>
<th>Music/Dance style</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O’Reilley's Bar –</td>
<td>Majority of Indigenous Fijians, male and female, but some Indian</td>
<td>Commercial Latino, western rock ballads, ABBA, light hip-hop, ska,</td>
<td>Street level. Not an Irish Bar. Not a large space. Packed tight. Modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active from 8.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>until 2.00 $3.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cover charge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and drinks expensive. Set up for drinking, talking, dancing, watching big screen (in that order).

| **Fijians, a few westerners (expats).** | **some country music, Britney, J.Lo. some boy bands. Disco style dancing, dirty dancing, always in pairs.** | **upmarket décor. Pool table in back. Rugby on big screen. Pole-dancing possibilities. Dimly lit central bar, special lighting above pool table and small dance floor.** |

**Bojangles** – active from 8.30 until 2.00. No cover charge. Cheap drinks. Set up for drinking and dancing.

| **Exclusively Indigenous Fijian crowd. No westerners.** | **Pacific rock, hip-hop, gangsta rap, reggae. Hip-hop style dancing, always in mixed sex pairs.** | **Third floor, up a narrow and treacherous flight of stairs. No décor. 3 small rooms. No pool table. Tightly packed. Poorly ventilated. High fire risk.** |

**Purple Haze** – active from 8.30 until 2.00 $5.00 covercharge and drinks expensive. Set up primarily for dancing.

| **Indian Fijians, male and female, very few Indigenous Fijians, usually in a mixed couple, a few westerners.** | **Hindi pop, Bally Sagoo, UK Bhangra and Fusion. Bollywood dance moves and some dirty dancing, always in pairs.** | **First floor. Large venue. Big crowd. 1960s psychedelic theme. Much more brightly lit than the other venues, with impressive special effects lighting above large central dance floor.** |

The centrally-located karaoke bar also attracts an almost exclusively Indigenous Fijian crowd. Two other venues – Liquids and Traps - are similar to O'Reilley's in opening hours and percentage of ethnically mixed patronage. Another venue - Birdland - becomes active only after 11.00 and closes at dawn. Using pass-out stamps, young people move between these venues, and the streets around them are very lively.

However, this is not a completely free flow of movement – it follows the contours of the cultural domain music/dance separation. We are reminded that dance clubs tend to create safe places for the specific in-crowd that patronises them (Tomlinson, 1998: 203).
Accordingly, Bojangles patrons - Indigenous Fijian youth - might visit the live music venues on another night. They might also go to Traps and O’Reilley’s in the course of a night’s partying, if they had the money, but not Purple Haze. Similarly, Purple Haze patrons - Indian Fijian youth - might also visit the mixed venues, but not Bojangles or the karaoke bar, or the live music venues. In that sense the dance venues and the social practices of young people in and around them, constitute much the same kind of polarised popular cultural landscape described above in relation to broadcast media and music.

DANCE STYLES

While acknowledging that in many parts of the world ‘dance music is spatially characterized by regional diversity’ (Straw, 1991: 370), dance music preferences in Fiji are characterized by the local cultural binary. The middle ground is predictably occupied by western-style disco, with contemporary Latino providing an exotic edge. The different dance styles practised at the two most culturally polarised dance venues – Purple Haze and Bojangles - articulate very clearly their youthful patrons’ allegiance to parent cultural sources outside Fiji.

At Purple Haze, the crowd of young people probably come from middle-class homes, as a night out here is not cheap. The Bollywood pop is fast and bouncy, with the usual sitars, harmoniums and wind instruments that give the music its particular wailing quality. On the large central dance floor pairs of dancers combine moves and steps from the contemporary Bollywood dance repertoire – mimicking the characteristic
choreography of all large dance spectaculargs in the movies. A series of rapid eye movements, smiles and facial animations, curving arms, scissoring or cupped hands, stamping feet, hip rotations and rocking shoulders. On favoured songs it is common for almost the whole dance floor to move in formation, obviously guided largely by the choreography in the original film. The effect is rendered even more dramatic by lighting effects, including strobe. Many young women wear vivid silk dresses, sequins, gold jewellery and beads, while young men favour white shirts open to the waist with black trousers.

In complete contrast to the musical and visual extravaganza of Purple Haze, at the dimly-lit downmarket Bojangles the music is usually rather stark hip-hop or uncompromising gangsta rap. Fuelled by cheaply-priced alcohol, young Indigenous Fijian men are dominant on the dance floor, some dressed in black American ghetto style, a few even in hooded sweatshirts, despite the debilitating heat of the poorly-ventilated venue. They dance according to the conventions of their favourite video clips – a series of jerky, staccato, puppet-like movements and steps, with expressionless faces. The girls in their jeans (or short skirts) and high heels, dance like the women in those same video clips - a kind of sinuous undulation of the body while standing in more or less the same place. The couples dance together, despite the differences in what their bodies were actually doing. At times their interaction is sexually suggestive, and even aggressive at times on the part of the young men – a fist waved under the partner’s face, turning his back on her dismissively. The dance floor is crowded and chaotic.
In the relatively expensive middle ground of racial inclusiveness, at the upmarket O’Reilley’s, *Ricky Martin* and *J.Lo* tracks are favourites and neither of the two dance styles described above is to be found. Instead contemporary Latino (dirty dancing) is favoured by dance floor couples, or just ordinary disco-dancing to be found in any nightspot on the planet. Here there are some racially mixed couples and groups of friends. At times ethnic difference is not just "included" (elided), but celebrated. During the period of observation in February 2004, a song came on which created great mirth and animation in the Saturday night crowd at O’Reilley’s. According to informants it was a Pacific "rap" song from New Zealand, which incorporated the famous Maori *Haka*. At the appropriate point in the track a number of Indigenous Fijian men took over the dance floor and performed the *Haka* warrior dance, with the requisite words, grunts and yells, to great applause from the crowd. Later the same night, a slow romantic track came on and those on the dance floor gradually yielded to let a mutually besotted mixed race couple in their twenties take centre stage. He was wearing a Hawaiian shirt and *sulu* (men’s wrap around skirt) and she was wearing a sari. O’Reilley’s patrons just watched in relative silence, then crowded back onto the dance floor for the track *It’s Raining Men* by *Geri Halliwell*.

Of course there are many more than three dance/music venues in Suva. Nevertheless, the descriptions above of some obvious contrasts in dance/music styles serve to illustrate the way distinctive music/dance practices of Fijian youth both reflect and constitute the irreducible political-economic dimension of their separate cultural domains in the local context. At all three venues - as Baulch states in relation to "death
metal" fans in Bali – they orient "towards a global elsewhere" (2003, 196). Purple Haze patrons draw directly upon the parent cultural resource of India and there seems little local hybridity or sense of the local in their music, dance or film-going. It would seem that, imaginatively, their "journey" in the dance is towards the Bollywood cultural "core". Similarly, Bojangles patrons draw directly on the music and dance resources of the Black American ghetto, or African/Jamaican diaspora in their "quest for authenticity in an elsewhere" (Baulch, 2003: 203). Their imaginative journey is towards the "bad-ass", black anti-hero (or heroine) of the rap and hip-hop tradition, fighting racism. There seems little hybridity or sense of the local Pacific in either of these polarised genres of popular music/dance as practised in Fiji. At O'Reilley’s the imaginative journey is perhaps towards to West, symbolising affluence and upward mobility.

For Fijian youth, perhaps to attach oneself to one extreme end or the other of the ethnically polarised nightlife on offer - Bojangles or Purple Haze - is to transpose oneself imaginatively outside the immediate local (complicated and intractable), to a fantasy place (exotic yet simple) to which you feel you belong. Yet this is not politically neutral dance/music pleasure. The ethnic exclusivity of these dance venues in the politically-charged tension of contemporary Fiji means the streets outside them bristle with implicit tensions. They are therefore more than just entertainment "style" options which operate "independently of socio-economic background" (Reimer, 1995: 135). The situation in Fiji is qualitatively different to countries like Britain, where the convention of separate music/dance venues for hip-hop/rap, and for bhangra/bollywood respectively encodes different ethnic (immigrant population) youth culture preferences in the context of an
anglo-dominated culture, where both groups are involved in the wider struggle against white racism, despite their local territorial disputes. In Fiji youth culture, the convention of separate music/dance venues for hip-hop/rap, and for bhangra/bollywood respectively, encodes a direct power struggle over control of the state between the two ethnic groups which comprise the whole population.

It was suggested above that the Fijian English-broadcast radio station appeals most to well-educated middle-class young Fijians, of both kinds, seeking a sophisticated, cosmopolitan image. The same can be said about the patronage of mixed music/dance venues such as O’Reilley’s or Traps in Suva. These were the only venues at which mixed race couples or groups were to be found, even though there were not many such groupings. In the context of the explanations offered in this paper, we can understand why disc jockeys at these venues play western pop and Latino tracks, and why the dance floor moves are either Latino (which does not attach exclusively to either ethnic group in Fiji) or generic disco/nightclub. As the young informant implied when we were watching Power Jammer, genre choices in the popular culture middle ground of Fijian social life try to be "inclusive of races".

CONCLUSION

In Fiji, every aspect of cultural life is charged with political meanings. The typical youth cultural practices of engaging with contemporary popular music, listening to radio, buying compact discs, watching video clips on free-to-air and cable television, finding
sound-tracks to films, going to music/dance venues with friends, dancing, wearing the right clothes and shoes for your group, and so on, are implicitly organised around the tripartite cultural domain structure explained above. The two separate domains of Indigenous Fijian youth culture, and of Indian Fijian youth culture, occupy most of the symbolic space of the popular, despite the racially inclusive message of *PowerJammer*, the middle-class radio station, or the congenial mixed atmosphere of O’Reilley’s. Because Fijian politics is a seemingly intractable struggle between two ethnic groups who traditionally hold power in some areas, but not others, because of the inter-ethnic violence which flares sporadically, there is really not that much neutral youth culture space, either symbolic or actual. The political-economic and the cultural in Fiji reinforce each other dialectically. The irreducible dimension of Fijian youth culture is that of polarisation and implicit exclusion of the racial other, with a relatively small proportion of middle-class youth committed to fostering ethnic harmony through the creation and patronage of "inclusive" youth cultural spaces.

The music and dance preferences of Fijian youth, and the entertainment and socialising practices that accompany them, can therefore be read as interventions in the social world that refer to, and are given form by, narratives drawn from historically, politically, culturally contingent pools of cultural resources (Stahl, 2003: 142). The popular music/dance practices described in this paper refer implicitly back to the colonialist narratives of Fiji, yet also refer elsewhere - outside Fiji to global narratives attached to particular music and dance forms in global youth culture. The extraordinarily strong domain separation of Indian and Indigenous Fijian youth, and the apparent
necessity for maintaining local boundaries, leads to the situation where white, western pop music and dance styles have come to represent neutral (inter-ethnic) cultural space in Fiji. From the point of view of global economic interests, this distinctive cultural landscape provides an upwardly mobile middle-class youth market for global western-style popular culture and media products. This certainly works against possibilities for any productive local synthesis or blending of the ethnically divided popular music and dance genres.

REFERENCES


