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“IT IS A STRANGE THING FOR US TO SEE WATER BEING SOLD”:
LOCAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE FIJIAN
BOTTLED WATER INDUSTRY

By

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B.A., The University of Montana, Dillon, MT, 2005

Thesis

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for the degree of

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“It is a strange thing for us to see water being sold”: Local Perceptions of the Fijian Bottled Water Industry

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Despite the availability of affordable, clean water from taps in our homes, increasing numbers of people are willing to pay for the convenience of portable water, and to consume bottled water imported from an exotic location, such as Fiji. Consequently, FIJI Water, an American-owned multinational corporation, now constitutes approximately 29 percent of Fiji’s domestic exports. An important question that no one has asked to date is how do stakeholders in Fiji make sense of the rapidly growing bottled water industry? Examining how water is changing from a natural entitlement to a commodity throughout the world, and exploring how this is affecting stakeholders in Fiji in particular, will help in understanding what sort of impacts commodification of a natural resource on a worldwide scale has on a community level. Using data collected through interviews and observations in Fiji, this qualitative research project examines discourses that residents of Fijian communities in close proximity to the bottled water plant and representatives of the FIJI Water Company use to make sense of the global bottled water market and how these perceptions relate to larger questions about globalization, consumerism, inequality, and justice. But what happens if the demand for bottled water dries up? This thesis examines the dependency that Fiji is developing with the bottled water industry and analyzes the situation using an environmental justice framework. I argue that although the bottled water industry may be beneficial in the short-term for some Fijian stakeholders because of the jobs it provides and the donations the company makes to local communities, the environmental, economic, social, and cultural impacts of the industry may be detrimental to Fiji in the future.

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Chapter One – Introduction

As the population of the planet continues to grow, water becomes an increasingly valuable resource. This is not only because there are more people on the planet, but also because most people are consuming more water, both directly and indirectly. Water is needed for life, yet people disagree on how it should be utilized. There are a wide variety of discourses regarding whether water should be a natural entitlement or universal right, or, by contrast, a commodity available first to those with the power to purchase it. Although there are some pockets of resistance, the trend that began in the 1980s is for water sources used for drinking, sanitation, technology, and agriculture to be privatized or commodified at alarming rates (Castro 2008; Shiva 2002). Barlow and Clarke (2002)

note:

At the dawn of the 21st century, something as fundamental as water is no longer recognized as a universal right by the dominant economic and political elites; being designated as a need, water has been subject to the supply and demand forces of the global marketplace, where the distribution of resources is determined on the basis of ability to pay (80-81).

Will water, which is critical for human survival, increasingly become a commodity rather than a universal right or natural entitlement?

In our progressively globalized world, control over water has potential to become a highly contested issue because of the huge gap between those who consume large amounts of water and those who don't. As Barlow and Clarke (2002) point out,

Many of us who have lived our lives in the industrialized countries of the north may find it difficult to imagine running out of water, we have lived with steady supplies most of our lives and have used it lavishly (25).

The degree to which many in the global north take water for granted is illustrated clearly in the rise of the bottled water industry. Despite the availability of affordable, clean water from taps in our homes, increasing numbers of people are willing to pay for the convenience of portable water and for the idea of consuming high-priced bottled water imported from exotic locations, such as Italy, Iceland, or Fiji. Consequently, Fiji, specifically the FIJI Water Company, has become a large bottled water exporter to countries thousands of miles away, such as the United States and countries in Europe (Connell 2006). But what is the effect of this industry on Fiji itself? FIJI Water currently provides hundreds of jobs in Fiji and produces 29% of the entire country of Fiji's domestic exports (FIJI Water 2009). At the same time, reports indicate that not all residents of Fiji have secure access to clean water (Weber 2007), suggesting inequalities to access to water within Fiji.

Inequality in the bottled water industry refers to the disparities between those reaping the benefits from the consumption of the bottled water or the profits from selling it, in comparison to those who do not benefit by consuming or selling the water and who shoulder the burdens of the industry. The burdens include environmental destruction, resource depletion, and the inability of less powerful countries, companies or individuals to profit from resources. Critics often see the industry as unsustainable and as causing more problems than it actually solves. The product and the profit are seen as leaving the source while the environmental damage remains where the water is extracted. In FIJI Water's case, some Fijians benefit in the short-term from the bottled water industry through jobs and donations made by the company, but they may be left to deal with long-

term environmental or economic problems if the multinational corporation (MNC) discontinues production or does not address possible lingering environmental issues. At the same time, most profits from the sale of FIJI Water are leaving Fiji along with the bottled water and going to an American-owned company and foreign consumers.

Why is bottled water consumption continuing to grow in places that have adequate drinking water systems already in place and how is the extraction of water impacting the places and people from which it is taken? The next section examines the explosive growth of the bottled water industry.

Growth of the Bottled Water Industry

The global bottled water industry has grown and profited tremendously in recent years and shows few signs of decline. From the late 1990s, the world bottled water market has grown at an annual rate of over ten percent (Connell 2006) and is estimated to be worth U.S. \$60 billion dollars a year (Royte 2008). According to a 2009 report from the International Bottled Water Association (IBWA),

Despite an uncharacteristically staid performance in 2008,¹ bottled water remains a beverage industry phenomenon. It stands as the second-largest beverage type in the U.S. market and for many years also ranked as the most vigorously growing category. Only carbonated soft drinks (CSA) have greater volume, but they have been declining, in no small part because of the ascent of bottled water and its ever enlarging share of Americans' beverage intake (Rodwan 2009:12).

Despite the slight drop in the growth of the bottled water industry in 2008, it is still a powerful and growing industry and water is being transported all over the world to places

¹ The IBWA report attributes the staid performance in 2008 to the weak economy, high energy and commodity costs, and changes in consumer preferences because of colder weather trends and concerns about the environment (Rodwan 2009:13).

where potable water is already readily available. Although some places certainly need outside water sources, much of the industry supplies on what I consider a want-only, not need-only markets. Want-only markets are considered places that already have available drinking water yet desire other sources of water because of perceived benefits, while need-only markets are places where drinking water is required because a lack of potable water in the area.

In the U.S. alone, per capita consumption of bottled water has risen from 5.7 gallons a year in 1987 to 27.6 gallons per year in 2006 (Royte 2008). Although bottled water is consumed all over the world, the annual consumption rate of bottled water in the U.S. and Europe is much higher than the global average of six gallons per capita a year (Wilk 2006). The rapid growth in the worldwide bottled water industry is the result of a combination of factors including skepticism about tap water quality, actual lack of potable water sources, convenience, busy and lavish lifestyles, the desire to drink something that is healthy, natural, and pure, and extensive marketing and advertising campaigns by bottled water companies (Opel 1999). Additionally, the bottled water industry has benefitted from favorable business conditions in the form of policies that promote growth, commodification, and privatization of water and services. These favorable business conditions that the policies of individual governments, such as Fiji, and large multinational institutions, such as the World Bank, provide to the bottled water industry are examined in Chapter Two.

There has been growth in not only the number of bottled water companies throughout the world, but also in the number of companies expanding their production

lines to include bottled water because it is such a lucrative business. The chairman of Perrier noted how simple it is to bottle water and sell it for large profits: “it struck me.....that all you had to do is take the water out of the ground and sell it for more than the price of wine, milk, or for that matter oil” (Barlow and Clarke 2002:142). The creation of Coca-Cola’s Dasani water line and Pepsi’s Aquafina are obvious examples of existing companies jumping on the bottled water bandwagon. Both companies wanted a share of the growing industry and already owned bottling facilities all around the world, and thus were easily able to move into the industry. Roll International, FIJI Water’s parent company, is also an example of a company that has invested in the profitable bottled water industry.

Despite the economic benefits of the bottled water industry, the entire industry is criticized for its environmental impacts, as we see in the next section.

Criticisms of the Bottled Water Industry

Consumers in the global north are becoming increasingly aware of environmental impacts embedded in the products they consume and are demanding that companies address related environmental issues (Korten 2001). Criticism and demands come from a wide variety of sources including the consumers, environmental activists, concerned citizens, and governments. Most bottled water companies, including FIJI Water, are aware of these criticisms and work not only to defend their products, but to project an image of environmental responsibility. Demands from critics of bottled water include reducing the massive amount of plastic used in water bottle production, limiting the

amount of energy used in the transportation of the water, promoting recycling of the plastic water bottles, and reducing the overall consumption of bottled water in general.

The environmental impacts from bottling water are apparent at both the sites of its production and consumption. The site of production is where the packaging material is produced, and also the location where the water is extracted and put into plastic bottles. At the sites of production, renewable and nonrenewable resources such as electricity, fuel, plastic, and cardboard are used to extract, make, package, and transport components of the final product.

Extensive resources are also consumed in the process of transporting the finished product from where it is produced to where it is consumed. A bottle of FIJI Water going to the United States must be transported by truck 70 kilometers from the factory to a port, then 5710 miles by ship² across the Pacific Ocean, and finally from the ship by truck or rail to its final destination. Once the bottle arrives at its final destination, likely at a convenience store or restaurant, it is usually refrigerated until it is consumed. Refrigeration also uses additional energy to keep the water at a preferred drinking temperature.

On the consumption side, one of the most significant environmental concerns about bottled water is the disposal of the plastic water bottles in which the water is packaged. In 2007, Americans collectively consumed fifty billion single-serve bottles of water alone (Royte 2008). In 2005, only about 23 percent of the five billion pounds of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) water bottles sold in the United States were recycled

² 5710 refers to the mileage from Lautoka, Fiji to Los Angeles, California by ship.

(Gitlitz and Franklin 2007). Almost 96 percent of all bottled water consumed in the U.S. is packaged in PET bottles which have a lower recycling rate than all other bottled drinks, in part due to outdated deposit laws³ (Gitlitz and Franklin 2007).

Individual consumers also bear responsibility for failing to recycle plastic bottles, and, according to industry critics, for overlooking the negative consequences of their drinking bottled water. People often fail to realize that in order to be able to consume bottled water there is an increase in the

resources used to distribute a readily available, local product, and the packaging, labeling, advertising, transporting, and cooling of bottled waters create extensive hidden environmental costs in what may appear to be a benign pure and natural drink (Opel 1999:69).

The companies producing the plastic water bottles and the fuel required to transport the bottled water sometimes cause the pollution of the same tap water sources that people are skeptical of drinking (Opel 1999). In order to get “pure and natural” bottled water from distant places, environmental damage is caused to the local sources of that water. For example, Poland Spring’s water, which is extracted in Maine, is often criticized by local residents that the company is drying up private wells by over pumping (Royte 2008).

Conclusion

If water throughout the world becomes increasingly commodified, how will individuals make sense of the situation? Will those who are benefitting from the commodification of water make sense of the situation differently than those who must

³ Some bottled water companies claim that if a deposit were to be required at the time of purchase, sales would be hurt, yet in some states many other bottled drinks do require deposits and thus have higher rates of return and recycling.

pay for something that was once a natural entitlement? According to Berg (2007), for sociologists “sensemaking” refers to how

people, groups, and organizations make sense of stimuli with which they are confronted, how they frame what they see and hear, how they perceive and interpret this information, and how they interpret their own actions and go about solving problems and interacting with others (285).

No one has yet asked how stakeholders make sense of the bottled water industry that is becoming such a huge portion of Fiji’s economy and possibly damaging Fiji’s natural environment. Stakeholders are all those in positions to benefit from or be harmed by the bottled water industry in Fiji. The Fijian government, indigenous Fijians, the FIJI Water Company, FIJI Water employees, and consumers of FIJI Water are all considered stakeholders, and all are impacted by the growth of the industry. What does the ability to extract and export Fiji’s water mean to the extractors – the representatives of the FIJI Water Company? What does it mean to the Fijians whose lives are affected by the presence of this plant? This project examines discourses that residents of local Fijian communities in close proximity to the bottled water plant and representatives of the FIJI Water Company use to make sense of the global bottled water market. By collecting data through interviews and observations in Fiji, my goal was to produce the richest possible data encompassing a “wide and diverse range of information [.....] collected in a persistent and systematic manner” (Lofland et al. 2006:15). Examining how water is changing from a natural entitlement to a commodity, and exploring how this shift is affecting stakeholders in Fiji in particular, will help in understanding what sort of impacts commodification of a natural resource on a worldwide scale has on community and individual levels.

Chapter Two - Case Background

The FIJI Water Company began selling water in the United States in 1997 and has seen rapid growth in sales in the U.S. as well as in Europe and the South Pacific (Connell 2006). Until the recent past, FIJI Water was consumed by only the elite and celebrities, but now it is the number two imported brand in the U.S. behind France's Evian (Royte 2008). With plans to expand to lucrative new markets such as Japan and the Middle East, FIJI Water shows few signs of slowing its growth. Production has grown by approximately 60 percent every year from 2000 to 2008, and the company has increased from its initial production line to three production lines running on a 24-hour schedule (Connell 2006). The company has been able to capitalize on water from a unique source at a time when global demand for bottled water is high. The company's marketers have been able to capture exactly what some consumers are looking for in their FIJI bottled water – ideals of pristine quality and distance from industrialization and pollutants. In order to fully understand FIJI Water's relationship with the local communities and its success in the global bottled water market, the company's history and development must be discussed.

Development of the FIJI Water Company

Canadian hotelier David Gilmour founded the FIJI Water Company in 1996 (Connell 2006). Gilmour owns the exclusive Wakaya Resort in Fiji, which is frequented by celebrities and the ultra-rich. Stories claim that Wakaya's guests had drinking water flown in from thousands of miles away while vacationing there, partially out of fear of the local drinking water supply on the remote tropic island and partially out of their

desire to consume luxury goods (Kaplan 2007). Gilmour came to the realization that “I’ve imported water from 10,000 miles away, probably from a highly polluted area, and I bet within 100 miles there is the most unique source in history” (Connell 2006:343). As an entrepreneur, Gilmour set out to find a nearby water source containing an abundance of high-quality water in which to invest, and he found one. The subsequent development of Gilmour’s water company, known as Natural Waters of Viti Levu in Fiji was assisted by both his past business and government connections from his resort development in Fiji and the favorable business conditions provided in Fiji.

Initial and continued investments occur in a developing country when decision-makers, such as Gilmour, are confident in a number of favorable conditions that can facilitate the growth of their business and expand their profit-margins. Favorable business conditions can include access to cheap and temporary labor, corporate-friendly laws and policies such as tax breaks, tax-holidays and subsidies, and unregulated access to abundant natural resources⁴ (Madeley 1999). In 1996, Gilmour found many of these MNC friendly conditions in Fiji which assisted his developing FIJI Water.

⁴ Relatively cheap labor provides MNCs with the manpower needed to produce their products, and the less money MNCs have to pay in wages and benefits to workers, the greater the profit for the company. Having access to a cheap and flexible labor force allows MNCs to keep wages low because workers live under the constant threat of being replaced by other workers willing to work for the same or lower wages. It is also ideal for MNCs to be able to extract natural resources without limitation, allowing more profit to be made off of the country’s valuable resources (Madeley 1999). Environmental regulations often cost MNCs additional money, for example, by requiring that they invest in new technology that is more efficient or less polluting, meaning environmental regulations are considered undesirable by MNCs. Additionally, MNCs typically want to invest as little as possible in costly infrastructure development. Related infrastructure includes roads, bridges, airports and seaports, all heavily used by MNCs in the transportation of the goods they export. MNCs often rely upon governments to provide this needed infrastructure, indirectly forcing taxpaying citizens of the country to help foot the bill for the development of the MNC.

The source of water Gilmour located was a pristine aquifer in Fiji's Yaqara Valley, located on the northern part of the largest Fijian island of Viti Levu.⁵ The particular land Gilmour chose was crown or national land owned by the Fijian government. This land could be leased by an outside company, unlike the remaining 83 percent of land in Fiji that collectively belongs to ethnic Fijians and cannot be leased by a non-Fijian company (Kaplan 2007). According to FIJI Water representatives, Gilmour was able to negotiate a 99-year lease on the land in 1996. The cost of the lease was not disclosed. Later that year, Gilmour constructed a state of the art water bottling facility that has continued to grow since beginning production. The leasing of this land did not go uncontested by local villagers, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Seeing potential to capitalize on the growing bottled water industry and company, a wealthy California couple who owns the private company⁶ Roll International⁷, purchased FIJI Water from Gilmour in 2004 for a reported U.S. \$50 million (Kaplan 2007). Why would a large American-owned MNC like Roll International invest in a bottled water company in Fiji? According to Madeley (1999),

⁵ Please refer to Appendix A for a map of Fiji and the island of Viti Levu.

⁶ Since FIJI Water Company is part of a privately held MNC, it means that unlike some publicly owned MNCs, it is owned not by shareholders but by private investors and owners and thus is responsible for making profits on their behalf (Madeley 1999:3). This is problematic for a country such as Fiji because private MNCs are much more difficult to regulate and hold responsible than public MNCs. Public MNCs are required to disclose any relevant information to shareholders while private MNCs are not.

⁷ Roll International is a company with diverse investments including POM Wonderful (producing pomegranate juice and fresh pomegranates), Teleflora (the largest flower wire service in the world), Paramount Farms (the largest grower and producer of pistachios and almonds in the world), and Paramount Citrus (leader in California lemon and orange production) (Roll International 2008).

one reason that MNCs are willing to take risks and invest in new overseas markets is because of the ongoing pressure they face to increase their profits, which compels them,

to increasingly turn to the developing world, a world which holds many attractions for them, wages and operating costs are usually much lower than in developed countries, organized labor unions may not exist, environmental controls are often lax, there is a scope for transfer pricing and governments may offer a 'tax-free holiday'(2).

Thus, because FIJI Water and Roll International were both already on the road to success, Roll International saw potential to continue to increase its overall profits by purchasing FIJI Water. FIJI Water was also likely seen as a prime investment by Roll International because of the favorable conditions described above that operating in a "developing" country like Fiji provides. The developing world holds many attractions for MNCs because in these countries, they are often exempt from many laws and regulations of the country because of their multinational status (Madeley 1992). MNCs are often not accountable to any one country and it is difficult for any government to monitor them. Because the economies of countries such as Fiji are struggling, governments of LICs believe it in their interest to promote policies to attract business regardless of the negative impacts it may have on the society, culture, or environment.

Roll International was in an extremely favorable position to purchase FIJI Water because of the overseas markets in which it already had connections. It also maintains an expansive marketing division which is crucial for growth in the competitive bottled water industry. Marketing is particularly important in the bottled water industry and is a huge expense for bottled water companies. Consumers need to be convinced that the water they are purchasing is different or unique in comparison to the hundreds of other bottled

waters, especially if it has a high price tag like FIJI Water. FIJI Water puts massive amounts of money into marketing, employing at least 50 people outside of Fiji specifically to market its product⁸ (Connell 2006). FIJI Water depends upon marketing because without it, consumers would be unable to distinguish FIJI Water from other bottled waters. FIJI Water's recent marketing emphasis has been focused on FIJI Green – the company's environmentally focused initiative – which is likely a response to demands from consumers for more environmentally friendly products.⁹ Reacting to, or being proactive towards these types of consumer demands helps keep FIJI Water competitive in a cutthroat bottled water market.

FIJI Water marketers have created a unique identity that the company believes distinguishes it from other bottled waters (Connell 2006). First of all, FIJI Water bottles have a unique square shape which makes it stand out among the typically circular shaped plastic water bottles. The fact that FIJI Water isn't from a mountainous or cold place like other popular bottled waters, but rather a tropical island in the middle of the ocean far from the industrialized continents, is another way that FIJI Water differentiates itself

⁸ Product placement strategies, such as having celebrities carry FIJI Water in public places, sponsoring sports teams and events, and placing the product in popular television shows or movies, are also important marketing tools for FIJI Water (Connell 2006). Sometimes FIJI Water deliberately places the product in the public eye by paying someone to endorse or consume it, yet sometimes FIJI Water is lucky enough to have this done inadvertently by popular public personalities. Then Senator Barack Obama was seen on television across America on election night drinking FIJI Water in his hotel room as he awaited the results of the 2008 presidential election. Although it is unlikely that President Obama was paid to consume FIJI Water in the public eye, he did inadvertently promote FIJI Water through consuming it during a highly televised evening.

⁹ Refer to Chapter Nine for more information on FIJI Green.

from other popular bottled waters. FIJI Water highlights this distinction on the company website:

Far from pollution. Far from acid rain. Far from industrial waste. There's no question about it: Fiji is far away. But when it comes to drinking water, "remote" happens to be very, very good. Look at it this way. FIJI Water is drawn from an artesian aquifer, located at the very edge of a primitive rainforest, hundreds of miles away from the nearest continent. That very distance is part of what makes us so much more pure and so much healthier than other bottled waters (FIJI Water 2008).

Without the intensive type of marketing discussed above, consumers would have few ways of distinguishing among the hundreds of brands of bottled waters that have flooded the market, and FIJI Water would not have experienced such an extreme growth in worldwide sales. But why was Fiji ripe for MNC investment in the first place? Fiji's history, particularly its colonial history, can help shed light as to why a foreign MNC has been so successful in gaining access to and profiting from Fiji's abundant natural resources.

The Colonial History of Fiji and Links to FIJI Water

Fiji was a colony of Great Britain for almost a hundred years, from 1874 to 1970. Many residual effects of colonialism are still present in Fiji's government, society, culture, environment, and economy (CIA 2008). According to Kloby (2006),

One of the major reasons for development problems that exist in much of the world today, is the destruction of indigenous social relationships and productive economic practices, as well as the evolution of various patterns of relationships that were established during the era of colonialism (99).

Fijian colonial history has had a major impact on land rights issues and on relationships between native Fijians and Indo-Fijians, the indentured laborers brought over from India

by the British during the colonial period, both of particular importance to this analysis of the bottled water industry (Kaplan 2007).

According to some Fijians and researchers, the water used by FIJI Water in particular comes from an “aquifer below the lands of the Vatukoloko people who live in the Ra province in the north of Fiji’s largest island” (Kaplan 2007:3). This particular land from which FIJI Water is extracted has a contested history springing from its colonization and subsequent redistribution. During colonization British officials replaced the traditional system of communal ownership used by indigenous Fijians with a private land ownership system. When it gained independence in 1970 the Fijian government partially redistributed these private lands to native Fijians for communal ownership (Kaplan 2007). Both native and Indo-Fijians believe that some of the land was unfairly redistributed. The land on which the FIJI Water plant is located once belonged to the Vatukoloko people, yet after redistribution it belongs to the Fijian government. The contested history of the land is glossed by the company, as evidenced by the version of that history it highlights on its website:

Four hundred and fifty years ago, there was a rain shower on the island of Viti Levu in Fiji. The rain fell onto the highlands and pristine tropical forests. Slowly it began its long purifying process through the earth to the natural aquifer that would become its home. Drop by drop it would pass the nature’s elaborate filtration system into the aquifer deep below the volcanic highlands. Here it would remain on this island, in the middle of nowhere, protected from the pollutants of civilization (FIJI Water 2008).

This re-writing of history makes no reference to the original ownership of the land by indigenous Fijians, who certainly don’t consider themselves “nowhere,” or to the contestation of land ownership that continues today. It makes it appear that no one has

ever used water in the region, when in fact native Fijians have a long history of doing so. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, some of those interviewed mentioned the unique qualities of the water that they and their ancestors have always believed existed.

In 2000, the conflicting views regarding land ownership between the government, villagers, and FIJI Water culminated in “over 80 villagers armed with spear guns, knives and sticks” seizing the FIJI Water factory (Sharma 2000:1). Rather than calling for a halt of the exportation of water, they demanded employment at the plant in labor and management, a royalty of one cent per bottle sold, and a joint meeting with the government to discuss their claims to the land (Kaplan 2005). The protesters were arrested during the ordeal, but the charges against them were eventually dropped. Ultimately, the villagers’ demands were not met, but the attempted seizure of the plant did result in a greater number of higher-paying jobs for community members and increased local and national awareness about issues surrounding the bottled water industry in Fiji.

Along with land issues, conflict between the indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian populations is another legacy of the country’s colonial history. British colonialists brought indentured laborers from India to Fiji throughout the colonial period primarily to work on the sugar cane plantations (CIA 2008). Although many Indo-Fijians have families who have lived in Fiji for multiple generations, some indigenous Fijians still do not view them as full citizens. According to most Fijians that I met and first-hand observations, it is common for indigenous Fijians to live in villages, while Indo-Fijians live in what are called “settlements,” implying their non-permanent status in the country.

In rural Fiji it is common for villages and settlements to be separate physically, politically, and socially, while in urban areas ethnicities are more integrated (FIJI Bureau of Statistics 2007). According to a FIJI Water representative, the lingering resentment between the two parties has led to disagreements regarding who is more qualified to be in higher ranking and paying positions within the company.

Though formal colonialism is long over, along with the lingering impacts of official colonization by the British, critics argue that Fiji now suffers under a form of neocolonialism, or “resource colonialism,” by an MNC (Geddicks 1993), which will be described below.

Neocolonialism and FIJI Water

Kloby (2006) defines neocolonialism as “a situation of formal independence coupled with continued economic exploitation by an external power” (100). MNCs such as FIJI Water are in positions of power to continue informal colonization, or neocolonialism, in a less industrialized country (LIC) such as Fiji through economic exploitation of the natural resources belonging to the country. According to neocolonialist theory, because Fiji lacks control and power over its own resources, it is not a truly autonomous nation. Because of their colonial histories, countries such as Fiji

largely started off into independence with little in the way of governmental institutions, societal resources, and economic resources—a handicap that profoundly retarded their development as nations and placed them at a disadvantage as competitors in the marketplace (Yang 2002:95).

Colonial history, numerous military coups, a weak government, and an unstable economy all contributed to an atmosphere where it is easy for an MNC to capitalize on the abundant natural resources and cheap labor that Fiji provides.

Neocolonialism in Fiji is evidenced in part by the relatively few monetary benefits the country receives from bottled water in comparison to the profits FIJI Water makes, the minimal taxes and regulations the government is able to place on FIJI Water, and the imagery and ideologies surrounding FIJI Water. The monetary benefits the country of Fiji and its citizens receive are small in comparison to the profits FIJI Water makes because Fijians do not receive revenue from taxes on the actual extraction of the resource. Although the government receives an undisclosed amount from leasing the land the plant is located on to FIJI Water, the only direct remuneration the Fijian government and citizens receive is from jobs at the company and revenue from related industries such as transportation, hospitality, and cardboard production.

Looking at the imagery offered by marketers and embraced by consumers of FIJI Water helps illustrate how consumption and exploitation of resources could be considered a form of neocolonialism. The image of FIJI Water is one of “exotic luxury” that “evokes nature, health, purity and a remote, indigenous origin ‘far from continents’” (Kaplan 2007:4). The popularity of FIJI Water is also due, in part, to the fact that quasi-imperial power, particularly American power, controls the global economy, as demonstrated by the desire and ability of Americans to conspicuously consume water as an exotic commodity (Kaplan 2007). In other words, the idea that more industrialized countries (MICs) or MNCs have a right to impose their wills and desires on lands and people remains. If control over developing countries can’t be achieved directly, it can be achieved indirectly through consumption of products that convey these meanings. The idea that MICs still have the right to impose their wills on foreign lands and people is

manifest in the consumption and use of resources that were traditionally used and managed by indigenous Fijians. Unless Fiji is able to gain more control over its natural resources, it may still suffer a form of colonialism. In order to understand the particular dynamics of resource colonialism and the bottled water industry in Fiji, the next section details the site where I conducted this research.

The Research Site

The research project was primarily conducted in Rakiraki Village¹⁰, which is composed of two smaller villages, Navutulevu and Navuavua, that are connected and essentially indistinguishable (Fiji Times 2008). Most Fijians, maps, and even government agencies do not differentiate between the two villages, so throughout this paper I will similarly only refer to Rakiraki Village.

The village of Rakiraki is located on the northern part of the island of Viti Levu in Fiji.¹¹ Over 300 islands compose the Republic of Fiji with Viti Levu being the largest, most populated, and most developed of the islands (Weber 2007). Rakiraki is approximately 20 kilometers west of the FIJI Water plant along the King's Road. The King's Road is the primary road around the northern perimeter of the island of Viti Levu and because both Rakiraki and the FIJI Water plant are situated along the road they are relatively accessible in comparison with other Fijian villages. Many Fijian villages are much more remote and only accessible by dirt roads, making it very difficult to get to

¹⁰ Please see Appendix A for a map of the region.

¹¹ The northern part of the island is considered a dryer part of Fiji. Yet each year there is a substantial rainy season from November to April which often results in massive flooding and contamination of the drinking water sources (Stanley 2007).

them during Fiji's wet season. Cheap, although not always timely, public transportation in the form of taxi or bus, can be used to get to both Rakiraki and the FIJI Water plant along the King's Road. A small dirt road leads a few kilometers inland to the plant from the main road.¹² To get to the plant from Suva, the capital of Fiji, takes more than four hours by bus along the King's Road, which is still partially unpaved making the journey time-consuming and difficult. From Nadi, Fiji's transportation hub including the primary international airport, the journey takes almost three hours by bus. The main urban center for the region, Vaileka, is located approximately 20 kilometers from the FIJI Water plant and is less than two kilometers from Rakiraki. This is where the majority of provincial residents, many of them FIJI Water employees, go to shop for groceries and goods such as clothing, electronics, or furniture. On the whole, the FIJI Water plant and the surrounding villages are relatively isolated, despite being located along one of the main roads in Fiji.

The population of Rakiraki Village is approximately 1200¹³ (Fiji Times 2008). Although the Fijian government conducts a census every ten years¹⁴, it does not consistently break down the population to the village level. The most accurate data that I found on the region was at the provincial level. This makes it difficult to obtain an exact

¹² From the plant, the bottled water must be trucked to Lautoka, approximately 70 kilometers southwest, where it can be shipped across the Pacific Ocean to its final destinations. Lautoka is the closest major port in Fiji. The road to Lautoka is completely paved making it more accessible and closer than shipping out of Suva. There has been discussion about opening a port suitable for shipping the bottled water nearby at Ellington Wharf in order to shorten the distance the water must be trucked.

¹³ Combined populations of Navuavua and Navutulevu.

¹⁴ The most recent census was conducted in 2007 (Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics 2009)

population count for the smaller villages throughout Fiji, including Rakiraki. Because Rakiraki is a village and not a settlement it can be assumed that the majority of people living in Rakiraki are indigenous Fijians, not Indo-Fijians, and indeed from my first hand observations, Rakiraki residents were predominantly Fijian.

I also conducted a number of interviews in villages closer to the FIJI Water plant – Drauniivi, Rabulu, and Vatukaceveva. I obtained current demographic information on two of the other villages in which I conducted interviews – Drauniivi and Vatukaceveva – from the Province of Ra’s Ministry of Fijian Affairs. Drauniivi has a population of 679 and is less than five kilometers west of the FIJI Water plant, while Vatukaceveva has a population of 434 and is approximately 35 kilometers from FIJI Water by road, but only ten kilometers as the crow flies. The Ministry of Fijian Affairs did not have information on Rabulu but according to a local resident who I interviewed, the village has an unofficial population of approximately 300 and is less than five kilometers east of plant.

Although exact numbers are unknown, because populations of the villages are small in comparison to the relatively high number of jobs in the bottled water industry, it is probable that a high percentage of the families in the villages nearby the plant have at least one member who works for FIJI Water or in a related occupation. According to the same respondent from Rabulu, of the approximately 300 residents in the village, 32 are employed at FIJI Water, equaling approximately ten percent of its population. A high percentage of people in Rabulu and Drauniivi have direct relationships with FIJI Water

and thus may be more likely than residents of Rakiraki of Vatukacevaceva to perceive direct impacts from the company.

All of the villages in which I conducted interviews are part of the Province of Ra. In 2007, the province had a population of 30,216, with 20,797 of the residents being Fijian, 9,251 Indo-Fijian, 41 Rotuman¹⁵, and 127 others (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007). The ethnic composition of the province is important to note because of the existing tension and conflict between the Indo-Fijians and the Fijians regarding politics and land rights and usage in recent decades. The province only saw an increase of 121 residents between 1996 and 2006 (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 2007). Many young Fijians living in villages move to larger urban areas such as Suva, Lautoka, and Nadi to find higher paying employment that is lacking in rural areas like the province of Ra. Many of the larger cities in Fiji, especially Suva, have seen substantial population growth over the past ten years while rural areas in Fiji have not (FIJI Bureau of Statistics 2007). As will be analyzed in Chapter Five, FIJI Water's presence in the region may be keeping some of its younger residents from moving to urban areas to find work.

Primary industries in the Province of Ra include mining, sugar production, rice cultivation, exportation of mineral water, and tourism (CIA 2008). Throughout Fiji, many Indo-Fijians have traditionally worked on the sugar plantations and have leased the land from Fijians. Recently, Fiji as a whole has been shifting away from sugar as the backbone of the economy, to industries such as tourism, garment manufacturing, fishing,

¹⁵ Rotumans are a small indigenous Fijian ethnic group who descend or have moved from the island of Rotuma, a part of the Republic of Fiji (CIA 2008).

and of course bottled water (Kaplan 2007). The shift from sugar production to new industries illuminate why looking at the growing industry of water exportation is important for the region and the country, as bottled water now accounts for over 29 percent of Fiji's domestic exports (FIJI Water 2009).¹⁶

Although the tourism and bottled water industries of the region are flourishing, daily life for some Fijians can be difficult. A main concern for rural villages in Fiji is maintaining a reliable source of water for drinking and domestic use. In villages water is often supplied by local government reservoirs, but because of seasonal droughts, system breakdowns, and weak infrastructure, water does not reach all residents on a reliable basis. While many remote villages in Fiji lack quality water delivery systems, the water infrastructure in larger cities such as Suva and Nadi are also under strain because of their rapidly growing populations (Weber 2007). Daily village life is often interrupted and children are sometimes unable to attend school when water supplies for consumption and sanitation become unavailable or contaminated.

Bottled water is being trucked out of Fijian communities while at the same time the water coming out of the faucets in homes, schools, and communal pumps is of questionable quality. What are the perceptions of Fijians living close to the plant or working at the plant of the bottled water industry, or FIJI Water in particular? What sort of impacts do they perceive the industry to be having on their economy, society, culture, and environment? How do FIJI Water representatives make sense of the situation? After discussion of related literature and methodology used for this thesis the following

¹⁶ Please see chapter six for more information about other Fijian bottled water companies.

chapters analyze the perceptions stakeholders have of FIJI Water and apply these perceptions to the frameworks of dependency and justice.

Chapter Three - Literature Review

There is a growing body of literature about the bottled water industry and the commodification of water in general (Castro 2008). The growth of literature and interest in water issues is likely a response to a heightened awareness that scholars and others have of the effects the commodification of vital resources such as water are having on our daily lives. The literature that I reviewed and found important to understanding contrasting perspectives of water are covered in the four following theoretical perspectives: (1) cultural capital and the marketing of bottled water, (2) neoliberal and privatization discourses, (3) water as a natural entitlement, (4) and indigenous views of resources.

Cultural Capital and the Marketing of Bottled Water

As discussed in the previous chapters, the consumption of expensive, high-end bottled water from companies such as Perrier and Evian from the French Alps, Pellegrino from Italy, and FIJI Water has been steadily increasing in recent years. Popular high-end bottled waters are examples

of how water has shifted from geographical anonymity to closer association with place. As the success of FIJI Water demonstrates, geography increasingly matters as a perceived arbiter of taste, distinctiveness and quality (Connell 2006:343).

The growth of the bottled water industry and of high-end bottled waters can be analyzed by looking at the status that consumption of the product infers using Bourdieu's framework of cultural capital. Cultural capital is the forms of knowledge, skills, education, or advantages that a person has which gives one a higher status in society (Bourdieu 1984). According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can be conferred by consuming

high status, nonessential goods –in this case, bottled water from remote places such as Fiji. Simply by consuming some brands of bottled water people are making statements about their lifestyle, taste, and status. They show that they do not need to drink tap water and can afford to pay the high price for bottled water. Even if consumers can't always afford expensive bottled waters, if they choose to drink the high end or boutique waters they can become connoisseurs of water and vicariously live a high status lifestyle for a few moments. They can convey to others just by holding the bottled water that they know what good water is and that they can afford it. Celebrity endorsements, such as Jennifer Aniston's endorsement of Smartwater, can also help fuel desire by conveying that the product is an essential part of celebrity lifestyle and taste to potential consumers. People are now paying premium prices for something that was free (or relatively cheap), because of the cultural capital that consumption of the bottled water implies.

Marketing and advertising by bottled water companies help propagate the idea that their products confer status and culture on consumers. Some bottled water companies create their own special niche because of where they are from and the meanings that these places convey to consumers. Opel (1999) points out that “advertisements convey not only descriptions of the product, but values and meanings about how the product fits into the social context, and labels become a way of adding symbolic value to products” (70). Advertising for bottled water suggests natural purity through symbols such as mountains, ice, and springs. If one looks at a label of bottled water one will almost certainly see some reference to nature. This connection with nature and pure, pristine water may be effective because of the human desire to connect with

nature in an increasingly urbanized and industrialized world. One cheap and convenient way that people can consume nature in this busy society is through drinking it, or so they believe.

This connection to purity and nature is exactly what FIJI Water attempts to cultivate, and what Connell (2006) sees as place or location being used as a means of marketing perceived taste, distinctiveness and quality. FIJI Water markets the exotic by using the claim that its water is from a faraway and pristine place, far from familiar water sources that are industrialized and possibly polluted. The company website proudly states that “FIJI Water is a result of rain that fell before the Industrial Revolution and filtered slowly through silica-rich volcanic rock over hundreds of years” (FIJI Water 2008).

Cultivating a sense of purity is only part of the industry’s strategy. Bottled water companies have a “two-pronged strategy: to establish the purity of their sources while raising the fears of contaminated public drinking waters” (Opel 1999:68). As many consumers from high income countries have become more health conscious, they have begun looking for sources of water that they view to be more pure than tap water, and the bottled water industry has capitalized on this trend. The industry has also pushed the idea that there are special health benefits in their water, and that in order to be healthy you must make sure to consume at least eight glasses a day. Companies have even adjusted their advertising for this trend as was the case when Evian changed its slogan from “L’original” to “Your natural source of youth” (Kaplan 2007:4). Since water from most sources is so similar, companies must use these tactics so people will choose their bottled

water over others and be afraid of water sources that are free to them. FIJI Water claims to produce water that is “untouched by man” and is bottled at the source to prevent contamination. In this way, bottled water companies attempt to link the ideal of purity with the ideal of health in the mind of the consumer. Drinking bottled water thus allows consumers to convey to others that they are both conscious of their health and a person of high status.

The idea that bottled water is healthier than tap water is a common misconception that has increased bottled water sales. In some places tap water is polluted, but bottled water has not been proven to have health benefits over tap water or to be any more “pure” as is often claimed by the industry (Wilk 2006). In fact, bottled water is often tested less rigorously than tap water and has been found to actually taste less favorably in blind taste tests than some tap waters (Opel 1999). Multiple surveys conclude that most bottled water is generally no safer or purer than the water that most people get from their taps (Opel 1999). Often bottled water *is* just tap water run through a filter and has no other benefits besides psychological ones on an individual level, or the cultural or social capital that it brings from consumption on a social level (Wilk 2006). Various people have contrasting ways of making sense of the system in which the bottled water industry exists. Some people see bottled water as beneficial because of the status consumption of it confers and the health benefits drinking it provides, while some, in particular corporate player, see it as a way to commodify a needed resource.

Neoliberal Discourses on Water

The rapid growth of the bottled water industry is a perfect example of the commodification of a resource that was previously not for sale. Why has there been this recent shift from water as a natural entitlement to a commodity that many people are willing to buy? According to Wilk (2006), it clearly isn't the "taste (of water) that is the central motivation behind the continuing inexorable increase in the bottled water trade" (306). In a capitalist economy, companies must continually increase profits. This means that companies must constantly create new products or services from which to profit. One way companies can do this is to turn items or services that were previously not for sale into products that are for sale to commodify them. Companies must persuade potential consumers to purchase products that were traditionally free through marketing and advertising. As we have seen, marketers use sophisticated techniques to convey meanings that make their product desirable and something for which consumers are willing to pay a premium price. Playing on fears of tap water and our desire to be healthy, they entice consumers to purchase something we can get cheaply in our homes.

Who benefits from the commodification or privatization of water? In a market-driven society there are stakeholders who benefit from the commodification of water and some who are burdened. By privatizing water supplies in developing countries, corporate players may argue that they are strengthening the economies and providing affordable water or jobs to local communities. Such neoliberal discourses are often used to justify the commodification or privatization of resources or services (Castro 2008). Neoliberal discourses have been actively promoted since the 1980s by international financial

institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the World Bank, powerful and influential countries, such as the U.S., donor agencies, think tanks, and academics, among other actors, as a tool to “solve the problems affecting water and sanitation services in less developed countries” (Castro 2008:64). International companies also lobby various governments to enact neoliberal policies that they see as favorable to their businesses.

According to dominant neoliberal discourse, commodifying water sources is the most efficient way to manage water supplies, because consumers will only conserve water if they are forced to pay for it (Castro 2008). In addition, according to neoliberal discourse, water can be better regulated by private companies competing in the marketplace because they are in the best position to distribute resources like water, as opposed to state or other public bodies (Castro 2008). Advocates of neoliberal discourses argue that allowing free trade among all countries will also help to build a stronger global economy that will ultimately benefit everyone because the optimal prices for goods will occur in a free market. Further, helping less developed countries capitalize on their natural resources is beneficial to all stakeholders since the countries do not always have the ability or the financing to do so themselves (Castro 2008).

Critiques of Neoliberal Discourses on Water

Neoliberal views of water as a commodity are not without their critics. This section outlines two lines of criticism against the view of water as a commodity: asking questions of justice, and the alternative view of water as a natural entitlement. Advocates of environmental justice apply the concepts of procedural and distributive justice to

criticize the commodification and privatization of water sources. According to Kuehn (2000), procedural justice refers to

fairness in the manner in which decisions are made, and includes active and informed participation and decision making for all stakeholders, as well as full access and disclosure of information (10688).

According to this logic, when water sources are commodified, questions must be asked regarding whether or not all stakeholders get equal and informed participation on the decision making process.

Additionally, it is important to find out whether the benefits and detriments are equally distributed. According to Kuehn, distributive justice is defined as “the right to equal treatment, that is, to the same distributions of goods and opportunities as anyone else has or is given” (2000:10683). These concepts of procedural justice and distributive justice are applied in depth to the bottled water industry in Fiji in Chapter Nine.

Another line of criticism of neoliberal views of water rejects the assumption that resources like water can or should be commodified. Critics of commodification of natural resources argue that it is also possible to understand water consumption in ways that imply resistance to trends towards privatization or market-driven discourses (Shiva 2002; Barlow and Clarke 2002). Many people believe that water in any form is something that is a natural entitlement or universal human right because it is needed for survival. Any form of private control over water supplies is difficult for advocates of such a position to accept because they fear that if water becomes overpriced, then the people that need it the most will not be able to afford it. They cite evidence that privatization or commodification of water sources is not beneficial to the greatest number

of people (Castro 2008). Castro (2008) argues that the findings of his research refute the claim that privatization has helped developing countries. He also believes he provides evidence that neoliberal policies have actually worsened the systems of inequality in developing countries while more developed countries and their MNCs have prospered. Following the logic of those who view water as a universal right, this could mean that a small number of corporations, or countries, could come to have a monopoly over a resource that is needed for human life. Critics of neoliberal discourses regarding privatization also argue that such discourses do not take into account that the people who can afford to pay a lot for water also may not care if they spend more to use it in decadent or unnecessary ways (Castro 2008), as perhaps in the case of the consumption of bottled water in places where tap water is safe and plentiful.

Advocates of neoliberal discourses argue that commodifying water supplies will ultimately lead to increased water conservations. However, critics of these discourses argue that this is illogical. Critics point out that profit making enterprises want consumers to use more water, not less, in order to maximize profit for their shareholders. This means that companies may encourage consumers to use water in ways that are not beneficial to a large number of people but to the smaller number of people who are willing to pay for it.

There has been widespread condemnation of damming rivers and polluting of the world's water systems, but there has been far less resistance to exporting water and to privatization of local water services (Shiva 2002). There have been some successes in fighting off corporate takeovers of local water sources, such as a local coalition's case

against Nestle in Wisconsin in 2002 (Snitow, Kaufman, and Fox 2007), in which local residents there were able to prove that the damage to the environment would be greater than the revenues that the community would gain from the industry. In these types of conflicts, the large companies pour significant resources into getting access to the water sources because they know how lucrative the bottled water business is, and they usually have a lot of influence over political entities that make the laws that regulate the industry. But in the Wisconsin case, we see an example of residents' views of their water supply taking precedence over the profit motives of a large corporation. How are indigenous discourses surrounding water issues different from neoliberal discourses, and have they been changing with the growth of the bottled water industry?

Indigenous Views of Water Resources

Has the lure of money led some indigenous people to change the values and meanings they place on resources such as water? Commodifying water includes increasing its economic value, transferring it to higher-value uses, international trade in water, and expanding existing water markets. These values conflict with a view of water as a communal good which includes a priority on water's emotional and symbolic value, an emphasis on fairness, participation and local control, opportunity (economic), caring for the resource, and collective decision making (Brown and Ingram 1987).

How do MNCs or MICs views of resources differ from those of native users of the resources? According to Barlow and Clarke (2002)

Those living closer to the sources of nature in today's world knew that to destroy water was to destroy life itself; only modern 'advanced' cultures, driven by acquisition and convinced of their supremacy over nature, have failed to revere water (4).

Indigenous people may view water as something that belongs to the people and has sacred and religious roots, not as something to be taken away from the land and sold for a profit. Until an outside entity proved that there was a profit to be made off of the resource they may have only thought of water in terms of something needed for daily life and to share amongst their people.

The neoliberal way of thinking about resources is something that is an anathema to many indigenous beliefs throughout the world. The culture of the global north has a history of colonialism which plays out in how resources are viewed and thus consumed. Resources, land, and even people become something to extract and consume as we have seen throughout history when dominant entities invade less powerful ones. Indigenous cultures tend to have a contrasting view, and traditional cultures are often built around the sacredness of resources (Shiva 2002)

Some literature claims that outside values and meanings regarding water have been imposed upon indigenous people in order to make a profit. It is also possible that discourses of some indigenous people have recently changed because rather than emphasizing the negative social, cultural and environmental impacts the industry may be having, some have begun to demand their share in the profits, thus validating the market-driven discourses in the eyes of local residents (Kaplan 2005).

Conclusion

Academics, environmentalists, policy analysts and corporate actors in the global north are all familiar to some extent with the discourses outlined above, but this paper analyzes the discourses that some Fijians use to make sense of the situation. Are the

discourses that Fijians use similar to those used in academics or do they have their own way of understanding the bottled water industry? Have Fijians become dependent on this commodity and how do they view their place in this system? The discourses Fijians use regarding water may depend on whether or not they feel that they are benefitting from the bottled water industry. If they feel the FIJI Water Company has been a positive impact on them as individuals or on their communities it is likely that they may now see water as a commodity and something from which they themselves want to profit. However, if other stakeholders have not seen improvements in their standard of living while others around them have, they might reject the commodification of water. Alternatively, they might see water as something from which they too should profit. The subsequent chapters examine Fijians' own views of water in more detail.

Chapter Four – Methodology

My research primarily uses qualitative semi-standardized interviews and is supplemented by participant observation and analysis of relevant documentary sources such as the FIJI Water website and press coverage of the company. Although my primary source of data was interviews with residents from local villages and FIJI Water employees, observing and interacting with villagers on a day-to-day basis was also essential. Forming personal and professional relationships with stakeholders helped paint a fuller picture of the perceived impacts from the bottled water industry and strengthened my analysis of the interviews. Questions I asked¹⁷ revolved around how the various stakeholders made sense of the bottled water industry as a part of their communities and specifically whether they saw water as a commodity or a natural entitlement.

The qualitative methodology I used for this project is different from other methods of research because many of the tasks such as selecting the topics and deciding what questions to ask happened in the course of the research itself (Lofland et al. 2006). Many of my questions were open-ended so that respondents could tell me what they thought was important, not what I, the researcher, thought was important. I was interested in what they perceived to be the impacts of having the industry in their backyards and whether or not residents of local villages perceived the relationship between FIJI Water and their communities to be fair. Finally, I conducted interviews with FIJI Water employees to examine their perceptions of the company's relationship with the local communities.

¹⁷ Please see Appendix C for a copy of the questions and probes used for the interviews.

The objective of this study was to explore how various stakeholders make sense of the bottled water industry in Fiji, and specifically what social, cultural, environmental, or economic impacts they attribute to having the FIJI Water Company near or in their communities. In order to access the sensemaking processes of stakeholders, I used observation and in-depth interviews in five Fijian villages. I relied primarily on participant observation and in-depth interviewing because my goal was to obtain the richest possible data through gaining an intimate familiarity with the setting and “through engaging in some number of behaviors relevant to the setting and in face-to-face interaction with its participants” (Lofland et al. 2006:16). In other words, by actually meeting face-to-face with stakeholders I was able to gain a better understanding of the situation than if the study was done using an alternative methodology. This exploratory, qualitative method allowed me to examine how stakeholders themselves perceived the bottled water industry and how these perceptions related to larger questions about globalization, consumerism, inequality, and justice.

Site and Respondent Selection

I initially chose to conduct my research in the village of Rakiraki because of my contacts in the area and the village’s close proximity to FIJI Water’s bottling plant. I found no evidence of any previous studies on the impacts of the bottled water industry on the region, so it seemed an important case to add to the body of research on the effects of multinational industries on developing countries. Additionally, I wanted to investigate growing worldwide concerns about the commodification of water specifically in Fiji.

My research in a small, rural village like Rakiraki allowed me to gain a stronger grasp on the day-to-day lives of the residents during the short duration of my study. Although residents of Rakiraki have a more indirect relationship with FIJI Water in comparison to other villages closer to the plant, all of the villages in the area have been impacted in some way from the presence of the factory in the region. I did not encounter any residents of Rakiraki who were employees of FIJI Water, but all interviewees had friends or family who worked at the plant and acknowledged the impact of the industry on the region. The relationship between the village and the company seems to be increasing in scope as the company continues to grow in size and increase its profits. The company has plans to expand its community outreach through the FIJI Water Foundation,¹⁸ and it is likely that in the near future villages such as Rakiraki will be affected to a greater degree by donations and jobs provided by FIJI Water.

Although Rakiraki provided a suitable initial research site because of my contacts there, other villages in closer proximity to the plant experience more direct impacts from the company and its donations and investments. When planning my research, I had no contacts in the villages neighboring the plant, so I was unsure if it was feasible to meet and interview any of their residents during the short time period of my study. It is both officially and culturally inappropriate to arrive in Fijian villages without personal contacts. Since I had no contacts in the villages closer to the plant, I could not be certain that I would be welcome to perform my study. However, I made sure to make

¹⁸ See page 177 for more information on the FIJI Water Foundation.

appropriate official contacts, including contacting the Province’s representative for the Ministry of Fijian Affairs.

According to a representative of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs, visitors who do not have local contacts are expected to check in at the province-level ministry before visiting a village, but visitors are seldom aware of this requirement and seldom do so. The Ministry of Fijian Affairs Office considers itself one of the “gatekeepers” of the province, and I made sure to comply with all formal rules during my time in the villages. In tandem with my compliance with formal rules, I attempted to comply with informal cultural imperatives as well. I always had acquaintances introduce me to potential interviewees throughout the villages so that I would not be infringing upon any cultural or official norms and rules mentioned by villagers, literature, and government officials.

While in Fiji I was able to conduct 21 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. By interviewing a wide range of people I was able to collect a broad range of perspectives that local residents have about FIJI Water. The interviewees’ ages ranged from 20 to 69, and included 13 males and eight females. My sample was a mixture of 18 native Fijians, two Indo-Fijians, and one Caucasian. Employment of the interviewees included three FIJI Water employees, a resort worker, teachers, school administrators, government employees, retirees, a farmer, housewives, and businessmen. The villages that I conducted interviews in besides Rakiraki were Drauniivi, Rabulu, Vatukacevaceva, and Suva. The following table summarizes the number of interviews conducted in each location according to residency of the interviewees.

Table 1: Respondents' Residence

Location	Number of Interviews	Percentage
Rakiraki/Settlement Outside of Rakiraki	11	52%
Drauniivi	6	28%
Rabulu	2	10%
Vatukacevaceva	1	5%
Suva	1	5%
Total	21	100%

As shown in Table 1, most interviews were conducted in Rakiraki partially because the majority of my time was spent there, but also because access to the other villages was limited. I conducted almost half of the interviews during day trips to variety of villages outside of Rakiraki. I conducted over one-fourth of my interviews in Drauniivi, a village that I had the opportunity to visit three times, while I conducted only two in Rabulu, a village I had the opportunity to visit only once. I placed both Indo-Fijians that I interviewed in the Rakiraki category because they lived in settlements just outside of the village. One interviewee resided in Suva but I conducted the interview at the FIJI Water plant. Although the village of Vatukacevaceva is not one of the villages closest to the plant, I conducted a spontaneous interview there with a man who is working with fellow villagers to start a village-owned and operated bottled water company.¹⁹ As will be discussed in more depth in the sampling section, I did not use random sampling for my interviews, but I was able to achieve a wide variety of variability in the residency of the

¹⁹ During my visit in August of 2008, Vatukacevaceva villagers were still in the beginning stages of starting a bottled water company. They appeared to lack the financial backing and expertise to open it expediently. Importantly, if the villagers of Vatukacevaceva were to start their own bottled water company, the water would be coming from the same source as FIJI Water, the Nakauvandra Range, but from the east side rather than the west side of the range. They plan to draw the water from a spring rather than an aquifer like FIJI Water. I discuss this village's plans to start a bottled water company in more depth in the social and cultural impact chapter.

interviewees creating a broader picture of the perceived impacts on the province. Despite the variability in my interviewees I can only generalize my findings to the population I studied.

It seemed reasonable to assume that respondents' perceptions of the impact of FIJI Water might vary according to their relationships to the company itself. Therefore, I tried to ensure variety in respondents' relationship to the company. In order to set up interviews before leaving for Fiji, I contacted FIJI Water's Los Angeles headquarters by phone, email, and letter. I received no response to my requests for a tour of the plant or to interview employees, including residents of the villages, during my stay in Fiji. Upon arrival in Fiji I discovered that I could gain access to informants from the villages closer to the plant, including FIJI Water employees, and I chose to interview them in addition to my interviewees from Rakiraki Village. The breakdown of the 21 respondents according to their relationship to the company is as follows:

Table 2: Respondents' Relationship to FIJI Water

Relationship to FIJI Water	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Fijian FIJI Water Employee	2	10%
Foreign FIJI Water Employee	1	5%
Nuclear Family Member Employed by FIJI Water	4	19%
Respondent and Nuclear Family Member Not Employed by FIJI Water	14	66%
Total	21	100%

By interviewing residents from villages closer to the plant and FIJI Water employees, I was able to gain richer data because of the more direct experience the interviewees have interacting with the company. I was able to gain access to these villages by having key informants introduce me to gatekeepers of the villages and to FIJI Water representatives.

Respondents from these villages and the company were excellent additions to my data because of their proximity to the plant, their varied perspectives of the situation, and because many of them work or had family members that work for FIJI Water.

Among other criteria, language was an important factor that influenced my decision to conduct research in Fiji. English is the official language in Fiji, while Fijian and Hindi are taught in schools as part of the curriculum and are typically the languages spoken informally and in homes (FIJI Bureau of Statistics 2008). I do not speak Fijian or Hindi, so it was important to choose a site where at least a number of respondents could speak English. If English had not been such a widely spoken language in Fiji, my research would have been significantly more time consuming and costly. It would have required that I hire a translator, since I would not have been able to independently communicate casually or formally with villagers. The language barrier could have also made my project less insightful and interesting because true meaning and significance can be lost in language translation. Even though most villagers could speak English, Fijian was the primary language used on a day-to-day basis in the villages that I visited. When villagers spoke amongst themselves it would be in Fijian, but when speaking to me it would be in English. The English skill level among villagers I met varied, with the older and younger generations tending to have fewer English skills in comparison to middle-aged villagers who were typically more fluent. This gap in skill may be because the younger villagers were still in the process of learning English at school, since Fijian was the primary language spoken in the home. Middle-aged villagers may have better

English skills because of the need for the skill in employment, particularly for jobs in the tourism industry.

Getting In and Gaining Access

According to Lofland (2006) and many other qualitative sociologists, “many aspects of social life can only be seen, felt, and analytically articulated” through observing or participating in the lives of those being studied (3). I traveled to Fiji for a month to conduct field research to acquire a grasp on the social lives of the stakeholders being affected by the bottled water industry. The best way for me to gain access to the villages nearby the plant and conduct my research was to stay with a host family for the duration of the trip. I was introduced to a host family through another University of Montana student who had visited Rakiraki during the winter of 2008 and was working on raising money for a local water project. I expressed my interest in doing research on bottled water in Fiji to her and she was able to arrange my stay with a host family. Before arriving in the village, I was relatively unaware of what to expect of the living arrangements and how the personalities and culture of the host family would match my research interests. Ultimately, staying with a host family was a great choice, and doing so provided access to a key informant, interviewees, and invitations to village gatherings such as funerals, fundraisers, and meals. Without this connection it would have been much more difficult to meet villagers and gain such first-hand access to their daily lives and comply with the government regulations described above. It is likely that I would have had to stay in a local hotel, resulting in missed opportunities to experience social and cultural functions in the village that were vital for the context of my research.

The process of getting in was also eased because my mother accompanied me for the duration of the trip. Her presence proved to be a valuable tool for socializing with potential interviewees on many occasions. Her status as a university professor and her age enabled her to gain a higher degree of initial respect from villagers than I could have initially cultivated on my own as a student and relatively young person. Additionally, her interests in Polynesian culture provided a gateway for many conversations and enabled us to befriend many potential interviewees. Her presence also lessened the personal difficulties such as loneliness or frustration that field researchers can experience in a foreign culture. Although it was sometimes necessary to do my field research without her, having her around to socialize with the host family and other villagers was important in gaining the respect I needed to complete my research. Most days during our stay in the village my mother and the host mother would do errands and chores around the house and village while the host father and I would conduct research and make contacts.

The host family we stayed with was very generous in sharing their home, food, culture, and company with my mother and me for almost three weeks. At every chance possible, we made clear our appreciation for their generosity and worked hard to adapt to their culture to the best of our ability. Although their home was very simple and lacked many amenities to which we were accustomed such as hot water, indoor toilets, and a refrigerator, the stay was comfortable and the family shared what little they had in material wealth. They provided us with our own room for the entire stay, and the host mother cooked authentic Fijian food for us almost every meal. We reciprocated this generosity by purchasing most of the groceries during our stay and also left the family

money and gifts upon our departure. Helping around the house with chores and errands was also an important way that my mother and I showed our appreciation during our stay. Although neither of us had ever stayed for such a long time in a home with so few amenities that we normally use, staying with a Fijian family was a great way to experience how some Fijians go about their daily lives. Overall, staying in the village positively contributed to my understanding of Fijian lifestyles and social and cultural norms. Having daily access to villagers' private lives also provided frequent opportunities to listen to or take part in casual conversations about water and issues related to my research.

The host family we stayed with consists of a father, mother, son, and grandson, but extended family members also visit them frequently. Although no members of the family worked at FIJI Water, they knew many people who did and had frequent contact with company employees. The father of the host family ended up being my key informant. Despite being retired, he had many local connections that were vital to my research. Because of his past work for the Fijian government and his membership in many civic organizations, he knew people who were knowledgeable about FIJI Water and the social, economic, and environmental situations of local villages. I made my research intentions clear to him, specifically, the types of people I wanted to interview, and he was very useful in helping contact and set up interviews. Although I controlled the types of people I interviewed, my key informant provided opportunities to interview other types of people that I did not originally plan on interviewing. In particular, his

connections with local business owners and government officials were helpful in diversifying my interviewees.

One negative aspect of staying with a host family is that I may have alienated myself from certain stakeholders. At points during our stay, the mother and father of the household seemed rather protective of my mother and me, but their protection could have created barriers in being able to talk to people with whom the family does not associate. Although I did not perceive any alienation, if there were people that did not get along with my host family, my lack of contact with them could have impaired my research project without my knowledge. Ultimately however, staying with a host family in the village had more pros than cons, especially because of my foreign status and the short duration of the study.

Renting a cellular phone during my time in Fiji also proved to be an essential tool for “getting in” and facilitating my research. Access to a land-line phone or the internet was not always available or convenient, thus having a cellular phone provided me with a tool to stay in contact with informants, interviewees, and contacts. My key informant also had a cellular phone so it was useful to be able to contact him and his family at any time, and vice versa. I encouraged my key informant to use my phone whenever possible for research related calls so that he would not have to spend money using his personal phones. Plans to meet for interviews often changed, in particular with FIJI Water representatives, so having a cellular phone allowed me to be flexible and available, both important when conducting research in a place like Fiji for a limited amount of time.

Having a phone also made me appear more professional to my respondents, and I did not have to rely upon using the host family's phone or finding public phones. I primarily used the phone to stay in contact with FIJI Water employees because they all had cellular phones and they did not live in Rakiraki. The cellular phone did not aid in contacting all of my interviewees, because many villagers did not have phones at all. This meant that I often stopped by their homes, sometimes on multiple occasions, in order to find suitable times for interviews rather than call.

Getting Along in the Villages

After my initial arrival in Rakiraki Village it took a number of days to become acquainted and comfortable with the host family and the local culture and customs. Although I prepared myself for adaptation to the local culture by reading relevant books and articles, written literature can seldom acquaint one with a foreign culture with the same acuity as actually experiencing it first-hand. Our arrival coincided with a local funeral, putting the research project on hold for a number of days. A funeral in a Fijian village is often a multiple day affair, and most village members are expected to attend and contribute to the occasion in some form depending upon their relationship to the deceased. Despite our reservations, the host family insisted that it was appropriate for us to take part in the funeral, and we complied.

“Getting along” and gaining respect in this case was achieved by attending the funeral in the appropriate attire, being present at the subsequent ceremonies and feasts, and by donating money to the family of the deceased, a common way of contributing to a funeral in Fiji. We arrived in the village on a Friday, the funeral was on a Saturday, and a

church service was on Sunday. Sundays in a Fijian village are typically reserved for attending church or relaxing at home, making conducting interviews culturally inappropriate. Because of this string of events, I was unable to begin my research until the following Monday. The extra time allowed me to become familiar with the local area and people before beginning formal research, and to demonstrate my commitment to honoring the local culture during my visit.

An important way I made potential interviewees comfortable around me was by adapting to their culture to the best of my ability, as was done in the funeral case. Although I was unable to always replicate Fijian customs or norms, showing consideration or attempting to conform to them often sufficed. For example, an extremely important part of Fijian culture revolves around the social consumption of *kava*, or *yaqona*. *Kava* is a mild narcotic that is often consumed in Pacific societies for cultural, social, religious or medicinal purposes. Initial contact with Fijian interviewees often involved a *sevusevu*, or a formal presentation of *kava* roots. By presenting the *kava* and subsequently “sharing a bowl” with interviewees I was able to make the respondents more comfortable to be in my presence.

Kava drinking sessions can be time-consuming, lasting hours, and the taste of *kava* is often unappealing to those not accustomed to its taste. But, in order to gain access to or break the ice with some informants, it was necessary that I consume some *kava*. Although I consumed *kava* before and during some of the interviews, it had little to no physical or mental effect on me and I was able to complete my interviews satisfactorily. It should be noted that during interviews I consumed *kava* only with the

Fijian male interviewees. Although I presented a *sevusevu* to numerous Fijian women, we did not consume *kava* before or during the interviews. The Fijian men may have felt that, because I am a woman, the meeting needed to be more formal, thus they felt the need to perform the ceremony with me. It could have also been because Fijian women typically do not ceremoniously consume *kava* as much as Fijian men do. Purchasing *kava* roots at the local markets for a few Fijian dollars and presenting it to potential interviewees proved to be a cheap and effective way to demonstrate my respect for informants' culture throughout the research process.

Getting along in a Fijian village also requires wearing the proper clothing, especially when you are a woman. In villages it is appropriate for women to wear a *sulu*, or wrap skirt to cover one's legs at all times, particularly when meeting someone for the first time or attending a formal gathering. Soon after our arrival in Fiji, we purchased *sulus* and made sure to wear them on all appropriate occasions. Additionally, it is inappropriate to wear tank tops, so wearing sleeved, high-cut shirts was also necessary while in villages. By following these cultural norms I was able to show potential interviewees that I respected their culture and customs, ultimately helping me get closer to interviewing them. Many villagers expressed their appreciation for our compliance with their culture and customs which helped assure us that we were taking the correct steps to "get along" in the villages.

Sampling

My sample included respondents of diverse ages, ethnicities, backgrounds, sexes, and occupations. Sampling of interviewees was done using the snowball technique and

by speaking with people casually about water to see if they would be good candidates for interviews. Snowball sampling refers to the process of

first identifying several people with relevant characteristics and interviewing them. [.....] These subjects are then asked for the names (referrals) of other people who possess the same attributes they do (Berg 2007:44).

A good candidate was knowledgeable about local water sources and issues and was aware of FIJI Water but did not need direct experience with the company. People who had direct experience with the company included those people who work or worked at the plant, residents who know people that work at the plant, or residents who have been involved with issues surrounding the company or industry. Interviewing the residents with no direct experience was also important to the study because their experiences with the company tended to be different from those with direct experience with it.

Although using the snowball sampling method was adequate for this small, short-term study, it did have some drawbacks. I did not systematically locate respondents and but rather met them by chance or through acquaintances. Although I found plenty of respondents that met my criteria, my sample was not representative of all Fijian stakeholders and many respondents had relatively similar viewpoints. It is also likely that my sample did not contain certain perspectives, such as those more critical of the bottled water industry.

I met my key informant – the father of the household with whom we stayed – by chance. He subsequently introduced me to many people throughout the region who I formally interviewed, observed, or with whom I informally discussed my project. The

most important contact my key informant provided to me was a high-ranking employee of FIJI Water who subsequently introduced me to more interviewees.

When I first arrived and told my key informant about my research project, he reached into his wallet, pulled out a FIJI Water employee's business card, and immediately called to set up a meeting. My key informant had the particular business card because of his involvement in a village civic organization that interacts with FIJI Water. Without this connection I believe it would have been much more difficult to establish a direct connection with the company, especially since before leaving for Fiji I had gotten no reply to my requests for visiting the plant and interviewing employees. The initial phone conversation that I had with the American FIJI Water employee introduced to me by my key informant was met with slight skepticism until I clarified that my research was for a school research project, not an exposé of the company as the representative said had previously resulted from giving foreign journalists access to the plant and company representatives.

After that initial conversation, the FIJI Water representative, who is currently the FIJI Water Foundation Coordinator, said she needed to get approval from her supervisors to give me a tour of the plant and interview company employees. After getting approval from her superiors, we set up a date for the tour of the plant, and she arranged a meeting for me with FIJI Water's Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator. The tour of the plant and subsequent interview with the FIJI Water Foundation Coordinator was very informative, especially regarding the marketing and outreach done by FIJI Water. Although I was not allowed to take photographs inside the plant, I was able to take

pictures outside and to record the interviews. After the interview, she requested that I send her a copy of my final thesis so that she could review any quotations from her interview that appeared in the thesis and make sure she was comfortable with me using them for publications.²⁰ Importantly, throughout the research process, she was also able to clarify questions that arose about FIJI Water.

FIJI Water's Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator was extremely helpful and informative throughout my stay and met with me numerous times to show me around Drauniivi and Rabulu. Being a native of the village of Drauniivi, this Fijian woman was extremely knowledgeable about the local villages and people. She was extremely important to my research because of her status as a woman and an indigenous Fijian, and because both she and her husband have been employees of FIJI Water for over ten years. According to a FIJI Water employee, approximately twenty percent of the employees of FIJI Water are women, and they often work in lower level positions in product quality control. This woman's high position at FIJI Water indicates that she is an exception to the norm for Fijian women and likely a person of high status in the community and the company.

Initially the Community Affairs Coordinator was also skeptical about my research motives. However, she opened up once I proved to her that I was respectful of the culture by purchasing *kava* to present to the interviewees and village chiefs, by dressing appropriately, and by demonstrating my lack of bias about FIJI Water. Once I

²⁰ After the final version of my thesis is complete I will email her an electronic copy to review. Before publishing any of her quotes I will get her approval. If she requests that I remove any of her quotes, I will make the appropriate adjustments to the thesis before publication.

established her trust, she allowed me to interview residents of my choice during these visits and would usually leave my presence during the interviews. Numerous times, plans that we had to meet were changed or cancelled because of village events or work obligations. The day we had planned to visit Togowere unfortunately coincided with a village funeral, rendering even visitation to the village inappropriate. These two FIJI Water employees were much more helpful than I initially thought FIJI Water representatives would be and have been an integral part of my research project by facilitating understanding of how FIJI Water employees perceive their relationship with the local communities.

In-Depth Interviews

The personal characteristics of my interviewees were diverse, and the interviews themselves differed in length, content, and location. Because my questions were open-ended, the interviews varied in length from seven minutes to an hour and a half, depending on time constraints and the talkativeness and knowledge of the interviewee. I continued to interview residents until I reached a satisfactory level of data saturation from the interviews. This means that I continued to interview residents until the number of issues that they shared with me about their water situation did not continue to grow substantially.

I used the semi-standardized interviewing style because these types of interviews are set up so that “questions are asked in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewer’s area allowed freedom to digress” or are actually encouraged to probe beyond answers to the prepared standardized questions (Berg 2007:95). As noted by

Berg (2007), language and ordering of questions in these types of interviews can be adjusted according to interviewee, so that the interviewer can reflect “awareness that individuals understand the world in varying ways” (95). Further, in a semi-standardized interview, the interviewer and interviewees are allowed to ask questions or make clarifications during the interview which in this situation was essential because of the social, cultural, and language differences between the interviewees and me.

This flexibility during interviews allowed freedom to spontaneously adjust the format of the interviews depending upon the respondent and their varying characteristics. For example, a few times during interviews I would not know until mid-interview that the respondent had a family member who worked for FIJI Water. Once they shared this information, I tended to ask more questions regarding their perceptions of their family member working for the company. This style of interviewing fit my research project because it allowed comparison among interviewees but at the same time I could probe interviewees if they had more to say about a particular subject.

Before initiating each interview, respondents had to orally consent to an IRB²¹ mandated purpose of research form, and agree to be audio-recorded during the interview. Every person that I asked to interview orally consented to the IRB form and allowed the entire interview to be audio recorded. Because it was impractical to bring my laptop to Fiji for the research trip, I brought two digital audio recorders to ensure that if something happened to one of them I would have a backup. I also needed a way to back up my data while in Fiji so during each interview I would use both recorders and take short-hand

²¹ Please see Appendix B for the Oral Purpose of Research Form required by the IRB.

notes. After returning from Fiji, I transcribed each of the interviews. It was helpful to transcribe each interview myself because it allowed initial analysis of the data. It is unlikely that someone else would have been able to understand the dialogue because of the context of the study, accent and jargon of the interviewees, and the frequent background noise.

I ran into a few minor problems during the interviews, including finding a quiet and undisturbed place to conduct them. Because of the communal nature of villages, people did not always understand that a quiet and private place to conduct interviews was preferable. Often the interviews were conducted outside because there was no other available space and people seemed to prefer to socialize outside on lawns or porches. Neighbors or friends of interviewees would often stop by mid-interview causing a lot of background noise to be picked up by the audio recorders. However, I was usually introduced to the people stopping by, and they often became interviewees or informants themselves. Timing also became an issue with a few interviewees. Sometimes there were mix-ups as to when an interview was planned, and sometimes time appeared to be overlooked by interviewees. In many island cultures or less “modern” societies, staying on a precise time schedule is often not valued to the same degree that it is in societies such the U.S. Many villagers tended to be on what some residents and expatriates refer to as “Fiji Time” regardless of their plans, which made setting exact schedules difficult and frustrating at times.

Despite these small mix-ups, the interviewing process went very smoothly and I was able to complete more interviews with a wider variety of stakeholders than I had

originally planned. The snowball sampling technique worked for this particular project as evidenced by the fact that I never ran out potential interviewees and respondents were always helpful in introducing me to new interviewees. However, I would have liked to have greater access to the villages closer to the plant so that I could interview more FIJI Water employees. Interviewing villagers that participated in the attempted takeover of the plant could have also provided a different perspective of the situation. Staying in Fiji for a longer duration would have allowed me to interview even more stakeholders and further understand the local communities and the perceptions their residents have of the company.

Participant Observation

I observed residents in the region performing daily activities to supplement my interview data during the three week duration of my study. It felt that after a just few days in the village most residents were aware of and comfortable with our presence and were very friendly and helpful with my research project. Because most villagers were aware of my status as a researcher, it should be noted that my “very presence in the study setting may [have] taint[ed] anything that happen[ed] among other participants in that setting” (Berg 2007:177). Despite being an overt researcher, by conforming as best I could to village norms, I was able to observe villagers during their daily lives and interactions.

Partially because we were staying with a host family, my mother and I were invited to many social and cultural functions including church services, choir practices, fundraisers, meals, funerals, and sporting events. In order to gather the richest possible

data and fully experience Fijian culture and society, I took almost every opportunity presented to socialize with the host family, their friends and neighbors, and other villagers. By living in and observing daily life in the village, I was able to put some of the interviews I conducted into a broader context and better understand interviewees' perceptions of the bottled water industry. This informal socializing also provided me with information about potential interviewees and allowed me to determine who would be a good fit to interview.

To keep track of my daily observations I wrote detailed field notes each night, took field notes when appropriate during the day, and took pictures of the surroundings and people. Photographs were an important way to capture the daily reality of living in the village. Before taking pictures of individuals or small groups I would ask permission, which was always given. Villagers, especially children, were often excited about the prospect of getting their pictures taken, and I was able to immediately show them the pictures with my digital camera. The pictures I took have also been useful for presentations of my research, and I have sent copies to the host family and acquaintances as gifts for their generosity and friendliness during our stay.

To utilize my participant observation data, I first transcribed my field notes and subsequently wrote memos to keep track of my initial thoughts about my field notes. I then used the field notes and memos to identify some open and focused codes to use for analysis of the interviews. This step in the analysis process was useful because I was able to use the ideas that I had at the time of my observations and interviews rather than generate them just from the interviews themselves.

Secondary Data

I collected a variety of sources of secondary data for this study throughout the research process. Overall, the secondary data that I reviewed helped facilitate a fuller understanding of the region's economic, political, social, and cultural conditions. I used secondary data from Fijian government sources, such as the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, to determine the demographic and economic makeup of the region. Detailed demographic information of the smaller villages was unavailable through the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics but was obtained from the Province of Ra's Fijian Affairs Office, and was used to determine the exact populations of some of smaller villages. Before, during and after my research trip, I used national Fijian newspapers, such as the Fiji Times and Fiji Daily Post²² to understand how the bottled water industry was portrayed by the local media. I also made an exhaustive review of FIJI Water's website to examine its community outreach programs and to understand how it portrays itself to those interested.

Data Analysis

After initial data collection and transcription of my interviews, I imported each interview into the qualitative software program NVivo. I used NVivo to store, organize, code, and search for data throughout the research process. I initially analyzed the content of my interviews by writing memos during the transcription process to brainstorm potential themes. I then conducted open coding²³ using NVivo. During the open coding

²² The national private newspapers Fiji Times and the Fiji Daily Post are both printed in English and are widely available throughout Fiji.

²³ Open coding is when "you begin to condense and organize your data into categories that make sense in terms of your relevant interests, commitments, literatures, and/or perspectives" (Lofland et al. 2006:201).

process I continually referred back to my memos and literature review to help challenge or confirm my findings. I identified three major themes expressed throughout the twenty-one interviews. These themes were derived from the responses interviewees gave to questions about how they make sense of the immense growth of the bottled water industry in the region. I placed the interviewees' responses into categories of economic, social and cultural, and environmental impacts. Within each of these major themes there were secondary categories that reoccurred throughout the interviews that were also analyzed.

None of the three major impact themes are exclusive. Thus, many responses fit into multiple impact categories and will only be discussed in-depth once in the analysis. For example, a new recycling program could be perceived as both an environmental and cultural impact, and a monetary donation from FIJI Water could impact the region both socially and economically. Some of the themes were further analyzed to determine whether or not residents felt they were generally positive or negative for the region as a whole. There were no impacts mentioned by respondents that did not fit into these three thematic categories. Importantly, some respondents also had contradicting assessments of various impacts, implying that they felt there were certain trade-offs between the benefits and the drawbacks of having the company in their communities.

The ultimate goal of dividing the responses into the descriptive themes was to enable the application of theoretical frameworks of dependency and justice. Dependency and justice frameworks are important to use in this analysis because these theoretical contexts help better understand perceptions stakeholders have of the bottled water

industry. Using a dependency framework to look at FIJI Water's impact allows analysis of the sustainability of the industry and looks at discourses regarding whether some stakeholders are perceived to have more power than other stakeholders. A justice framework allows analysis of stakeholders' perceptions of how decisions are made and whether decision making processes are fair to all stakeholders. These broader concepts will be applied to the perceptions of stakeholders later in the analysis specifically in Chapter Nine.

Researcher Credibility

Some of the personal characteristics of my mother and me such as our education levels and class may have impacted how respondents or acquaintances perceived us and thus reacted to us. I am from a middle-class, highly-educated American family and have a bachelor's degree in social and political science. I am working on completing my master's degree in sociology and also plan to obtain a PhD in sociology. Our relatively high levels of education may have created social or cultural barriers between the Fijian people that we associated with because most of them had no college-level education. We attempted to minimize this barrier by speaking with simple vocabulary and not assuming that people had the same knowledge base as us.

Along with education level, class may have also been a barrier to my research. Although we tried to minimize the amount of expensive or flashy items that we traveled with, it was often obvious that we came from a more affluent background and could afford many luxury items that they could not. We tried to minimize these class

differences by sharing all that we could with acquaintances and not always openly showing some of the items we brought such as a video recorder and camera.

During my stay in the village I presented myself as a “socially acceptable incompetent” (Lofland et al. 2006:69). Thus although I did background research before arriving in Fiji, I wanted to present my knowledge about the industry to potential interviewees as “relatively incompetent (although otherwise cordial and easy to get along with), [so that] the investigator easily assumes the role of one who is being taught” (Lofland et al. 2006:69). As a young American student, I could not presume to know all of the issues surrounding FIJI Water. By presenting myself as a “learner” I was able to convey a desire and capability to learn about the issues. Despite being well versed on many of the issues I often pretended I needed them explained to me in order to get the perceptions of the interviewees about the respective subjects.

Despite my status as an outsider, I believe that the background research I did before leaving for Fiji, the consideration I gave to local culture and norms, and my personal attitudes and attentiveness enabled me to “get in” and conduct a quality research project. I was often much younger than many interviewees, yet I was able to gain respect by really listening to what they had to say and by adhering to local formal and informal norms and rules. Although my personal stance on bottled water is fairly critical, I kept my personal judgment private throughout the research process. By remaining neutral I was able to get a wider variety of stakeholders to speak to me and consent to being interviewed.

Conclusion

No research design is perfect, and throughout my research process I had to adjust my methods to work with the local culture to garner the best results possible. Although overall my research in Fiji went very smoothly and better than expected, there are a number of ways that it could have been improved. For example, some of my questions had to be reworded because respondents didn't understand what I was referring to such as when I used the word environment. To Fijians it meant the all of their surroundings including social and cultural networks, not just the natural environment. Once I realized this, I was more specific in the wording of my questions regarding environmental impacts. I also added questions in my interviews once I realized that particular issues were important to certain individuals or to the study as a whole. For instance, during my stay, the government initiated a tax on bottled water, so I thought it was important to ask interviewees what they thought about this timely issue. Despite these minor issues, I was able to successfully complete the planned number of interviews in the set amount of time while enjoying learning about and experiencing a new culture.

Chapter Five – Perceived Economic Impacts

FIJI Water is currently Fiji's leading exporter – exceeding exports of sugar, fish, and garments for the first time in 2008 – indicating that the company's operations are vital to the economic development of Fiji as a whole. As of December 2008, FIJI Water exports were 29% of domestic exports from Fiji, totaling over \$125 million in export sales (FIJI Water 2009). Because of this immense growth it is not surprising that interviewees' responses regarding perceived impacts of FIJI Water on their communities typically focused on economic impacts. All of the twenty-one stakeholders that I interviewed in Fiji mentioned that FIJI Water was impacting the region in positive economic ways, while only six mentioned negative economic impacts. Stakeholders varied in their overall perception of the company, but each acknowledged that the company had positively changed the economic situation of the region. This quote from a former government employee is representative of respondents' overall perceptions of the company's economic impacts on the region:

As a former minister, and a leader of my nation, I think that Natural Waters [FIJI Water] has brought a lot of employment to our country. Especially into a rural area like Rakiraki, where there are hundreds of people, and thousands of mouths that they are feeding, being done by opening up this Natural Waters. And also, apart from that, the company itself donates a lot of, gives a lot of assistance to the rural areas, gives water in areas, like now you see the Naseyani the electricity is going there, the deposit of ten percent is being done by the Natural Waters. So this is, this is.....very, very important.

His quote brings up the wide variety of ways in which stakeholders perceive FIJI Water has economically benefitted the region which will be discussed in-depth throughout the analysis.

Positive Economic Impacts

The strongest supporters of the economic growth brought about by the company were respondents working for FIJI Water and respondents who lived in one of the five villages close to the plant. This is likely because they are stakeholders who receive direct economic benefits in the form of wages, donations, or services from the company.

Business owners also tended to support the economic advantages it brought to their businesses. For example, this quote from an Indo-Fijian businessman from Rakiraki brings up a wide variety of economic issues:

FIJI Water has helped us very much. Like as I have said, there are a lot of projects in the rural...in the villages being done. Not only to the place where the Vatukoloko, the people whose lands, are the land owning unit of these, of where the Natural Waters is, [has] helped. Not just them, they have spent so much into giving scholarships, into the medical field, now they are trying to put up a mortuary in Nanapua, so you know, these are all the things that the Natural Water, you know like a company that is, any company is going to make a profit, anyone, otherwise they are going to close the company, but apart from the profit, now they share the cake amongst the community and the people of the country. Not only in this country, they might be doing the same thing, you know, in America. They might be doing something where they have an account, somewhere they will do it, because they are so, and you know, one thing in the minds of Americans is they never think about themselves. They think about the whole world, and that is their additive in there, and I feel very proud to see American companies coming to my place here. I am not trying to say because you are an American lady, but that is a fact of life. You know, and too, the politeness too that they have. Not on the scale of a grassroots level, but also in a professional way, they are too good.

People who viewed the economic impacts of FIJI Water in positive terms typically mention three main issues: (1) a growth in higher paying jobs in the five villages close to the plant, (2) donations and investment made by FIJI Water, (3) and economic growth as

a result of business brought in by the company to local hotels, shops, and restaurants, and related contract work.

Growth in Higher-Paying Jobs

Many interviewees perceived jobs at FIJI Water to be highly desired, high quality jobs. According to FIJI Water, “with low attrition in its workforce over the last ten years and hundreds of applications for employment on a weekly basis, FIJI Water is the employer of choice in Fiji” (FIJI Green 2007). An overview of FIJI Water’s growth was provided by an expatriate FIJI Water employee:

When they [FIJI Water] first opened the plant, there was one line of production, and there were probably about, you know, forty workers, almost all of them from just the local area, from the local five villages around us, Drauniivi, Togowere, Rabulu, Naseyani, and Nananu. Today we have over five hundred workers, we have three lines of production. We went from basically bottling everything by hand, and manufacturing and packaging everything by hand, to..... basically state-of-the-art global.....globally it is one of the best water systems. We also went from having like one expatriate or two expatriates at once, to now, we bring in a lot of people from overseas at any given time to sort of help raise the quality of our local staff and teach them how to better work the machines andthey will be here for a year or two years, and.....at the same time there has been a huge demand of FIJI Water so the growth has been exponential over the last ten years.

This quote indicates the high growth in the number of jobs in such a rural area and the potential for continued growth. The region traditionally depended upon the exportation of sugar for its main source of revenue, but a drop in sugar prices in recent years, accompanied by the loss of sugar production related jobs in the area, has created even more demand for jobs at the factory (Reddy 2008). With drops in tourism after both the 2000 and 2006 coups in Fiji and the global economic recession, many in the tourism

industry are also unemployed or in unstable occupations (Narayan and Prasad 2003).

According to Narayan and Prasad (2003),

Amid an unstable political, and the associated depressed economic, climate, the growth of the tourism has backtracked in the years of the coups. [...] Recent empirical studies show that in the years of the coups visitor arrivals fell by between 30-40% from Fiji's main tourism source markets (8).

The high demand for new jobs from those previously employed in the sugar or tourism industry, along with the perception that FIJI Water provides relatively high wages and stable jobs, supports the belief that jobs at FIJI Water are highly desired by those living in the region, as well as by those living outside of the region.

Many respondents noted that having FIJI Water in the region has provided new, higher-paying, badly-needed jobs for residents of the five villages close to the plant.

Without these jobs, more residents would have to move to urban areas in order to make a living. For example, a middle-aged Fijian FIJI Water employee put it this way:

No job, if this factory.....if there is no FIJI Water, no work there for me. I will have to go around the urban areas to find job, to look for job, because all this, get money, get paid, good pay from FIJI Water. Me and my husband, build a house, and my family's side, build a new house, and my husband's side of the family, I mean the money that was given from FIJI Water, we work so hard, we struggle to get the money, so now we happy, if no FIJI Water, no work, no money.

This quote highlights the wide scope of economic impacts that start at the individual or family level and work their way up to the community, regional, or national level.

Another villager talked about how jobs at FIJI Water also allow villagers to pursue more "modern" types of labor:

It has changed the community a lot. Better chief's house, change our community hall into something that looks like a community hall in a village, and help a lot of family, providing employment to our parents to our brothers to our sisters. Without FIJI Water I think we might go back to the sea fishing, catching fish, that is what we used to do before, catching crabs to, in order to survive. [.....] Most of them [FIJI Water employees] would go to other towns to get good jobs those are lucky ones, the unfortunate one they have to do cutting sugar cane, going to Indian farmers looking for job, go down to the sea catching fish, get the fish, sell in the bundle, get the crabs, sell in a bundle.

These changes to the types of work that Fijians living in the villages are expected to adapt to will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Six.

With over five hundred workers and continual growth in sales, FIJI Water appears to be in a good position to provide even more jobs in the near future.²⁴ Although most employees are from one of the five villages surrounding the plant, more jobs have recently been offered to people in nearby communities, such as Rakiraki and Tavua. According to a FIJI Water representative, before a new law was passed by the Fijian government in 2007 which prohibits hiring of employees based on a particular characteristic such as race or clan, FIJI Water did give informal preference to the Vatukoloko people on whose land the plant is located. This change in the law gives other Fijians a better chance at getting a highly-desired job at FIJI Water.

Not only has there been an explosion in the number of jobs that FIJI Water offers, but the company also claims to be paying higher wages than the average job in Fiji. A

²⁴ At the beginning of this research project during the spring of 2008, FIJI Water was still growing in terms of profit and size. But, correspondence with a FIJI Water representative in April of 2009 indicated that the worldwide economic recession has been taking a toll on FIJI Water's bottom line because of a reduction in demand, causing FIJI Water to lay off employees in its international sales force and at the Fiji Plant.

foreign FIJI Water employee touted the wage that workers at FIJI Water get paid in the following passage:

Obviously we provide a working, living wage. It's actually the highest wage of anybody in the country; they get paid for what they are doing here. The average, like line worker here, makes five times as much as a line worker at Island Chill [another bottled water company in Fiji] or anybody else.

The above claim depicts the company as one of the country's highest paying employers, which is also highlighted on FIJI Water's website:

In fact, we are one of Fiji's highest-paying employers and a major contributor to the country's economy, including more than 15% of Fiji's exports (FIJI Water 2009).

The private status of FIJI Water complicates obtaining the exact wages of FIJI Water employees, making wage comparisons with other Fijian bottled water companies impossible. However, an analysis of data from the Fijian Bureau of Statistics from 2008 reveals that the daily mean wages for jobs in the manufacturing industry are slightly below average and are among the lowest of all recorded industries in Fiji (FIJI Bureau of Statistics 2008). In 2004, daily wages in the manufacturing industry were 18.86 FJD (Fijian Dollars), approximately \$10.47 in U.S. Dollars.²⁵ The average daily wage in Fiji was 21.64 FJD (\$12.01 U.S.), while the highest daily wage earners were in the mining industry, earning a daily average wage of 30.28 FJD (\$16.81 U.S.). This comparison between industries indicates that although FIJI Water may well be paying relatively high wages for the bottled water industry, the company may not be paying "the highest wage of anybody in the country." More importantly, this comparison indicates that some

²⁵ Currency converted on 3/31/09 (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

interviewees *perceived* FIJI Water to be paying its employees high wages for Fiji, when in actuality the wages of FIJI Water employees may be just high wages for the bottled water industry or for the region.

Despite the possibility that FIJI Water doesn't pay relatively high wages compared to Fiji as a whole, by investing in company employees in other ways, such as through education and preventative health care, FIJI Water ensures that local residents will continue to want to work for the company. For example according to an upper-level employee of FIJI Water:

We know that what we are making is really, it's a great product and we want to make sure that people, people here, feel the benefits...of FIJI Water, the product. We bring in training, we have localized health, we have a nurse on site here who is constantly sort of monitoring people [FIJI Water employees], helping folks who are diabetic or who have high blood pressure and you know.....we want to invest basically in the people who are here.

A kindergarten teacher from Rabulu also commented on the impact of jobs from FIJI Water and the importance of FIJI Water's donations to educational programs:

Good because people are working, for financial support for the family, they [FIJI Water] provide more employment opportunities in this area so that is good. It's the best, the best of bottled water companies. You can support your family, good family living, and they can support their own families and buy houses. Before the standard of living was lower...they help to educate, so this is good for the community.

By showing a desire to invest in their employees through providing health care, education, or relatively high wages, FIJI Water can recruit well-qualified employees throughout Fiji and retain its trained employees. Positive investments FIJI Water makes in their employees can improve the overall perception of the company in the region,

within Fiji, and throughout the entire world – helping the business continue its rapid growth.

Donations and Investment by FIJI Water

Along with growth in higher-paying jobs, FIJI Water has provided variety of donations and investments to communities in the Province of Ra and throughout Fiji. Many respondents mentioned these among the company’s positive impacts. The company supports these projects through a variety of different charitable outreach programs including the Natural Waters of Viti Ltd. Trust²⁶, The FIJI Water Foundation²⁷, Roll Charitable Giving and Employee Grant Program²⁸, and Employee Volunteer Service Days²⁹. Although the most tangible donations to date have been to schools near the plant, the company has also been donating money and supplies to sports programs, health care programs, water infrastructure projects, community development projects, and emergency relief.

When asked how they thought FIJI Water was affecting their community and region, FIJI Water representatives and non-FIJI Water representatives mentioned donations and investments made by FIJI Water frequently. When asked about her

²⁶ The Natural Waters of Viti Ltd. Trust (NWVL) is funded from a percentage of company revenue and gives directly back to the local communities surrounding the plant. Since establishment in 2000, the NWVL has among other things helped build schools, support water projects, and construct community halls (FIJI Water 2009).

²⁷ See page 177 for more information on the FIJI Water Foundation.

²⁸ The Roll Charitable Giving and Employee Grant Program was set up to encourage employees to become more involved in their communities by giving 100 members of the staff each year \$250-\$1000FJD to donate to their charity of choice in Fiji (FIJI Water 2009).

²⁹ Employee Volunteer Service Days are set up by FIJI Water to provide volunteer service events for employees, their families, and community members (FIJI Water 2009).

recently acquired position, FIJI Water's Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator replied:

For me, it is good for me...I will go around, especially [to] the school[s], the community, going around to the villages, [see] what they request, what you can be done to help them. Like for the church, like for the kindergarten school, the preschool. [...] Then I will go back to the factory, and I have to tell them and I'll have to tell them what the village, what these people request, what these people need. FIJI Water is doing great help to the villages. Not only [for] us here [in Drauniivi], because we don't have enough time....if you've got plenty time, you could go around to the villages, the five villages, I can take you two around, and you can ask the people the same questions to people, what FIJI Water done to the community.

For this woman, her job at FIJI Water gives her opportunity to give back to her community both personally and professionally. She was enthusiastic to share with me what her position at FIJI Water entails and what FIJI Water does for the communities surrounding the plant. Both this woman and her husband have worked at FIJI Water for over ten years and have strong ties to the company likely making their perception of the company positively biased.

Fijian respondents were most likely to note donations made to the local schools and miscellaneous community development projects, somewhat likely to mention sport programs and water projects, and least likely to mention health care projects and emergency relief. The following table reports the number of interviewees out of the twenty-one interviews conducted that mentioned donations from FIJI Water by donation category:

Table 3: Donations From FIJI Water Mentioned by Respondents

Donation Category	Total # of Responses	Percentage
School Projects	19	29%
Miscellaneous Community Development Projects	17	26%
Sport Programs	13	20%
Water Projects	12	19%
Health Care Projects	4	6%
Emergency Relief	0	0%
Total	65	100%

As shown in Table 3, respondents were most likely to mention school and community donations, but as will be demonstrated in this analysis, respondents went into far more detail about the school and sports donations than the community, water, and health donations.

Respondents from the five villages closest to the plant mentioned a greater diversity of donations and investments by the FIJI Water Company – likely due to their physical proximity to the projects resulting in a more in-depth knowledge of those projects. Respondents who were not from any of the five villages closest to the plant mentioned most of the school, sport, and community programs FIJI Water supported, but did not usually mention the water, health, or emergency relief projects. The perceptions that respondents have could be attributed to the fact that school, sports, and community programs were more visible or significant to people from outside the five villages, or because most of the donations tend to go to those programs. A FIJI Water representative provided a breakdown of donations from the company from March of 2008 through April 2009:

Table 4: Donations from FIJI Water by Project, Monetary Amount, and Percentage

Project	Monetary Amount (Fiji \$)	Monetary Amount (U.S. \$)³⁰	Percentage
Water	\$427,800 FJD	\$194,650	28%
Education	\$380,200 FJD	\$172,992	25%
Emergency Relief	\$249,270 FJD	\$113,418	17%
Health	\$227,240 FJD	\$103,394	15%
Community Infrastructure	\$180,000 FJD	\$81,900	12%
Sports	\$50,000 FJD	\$22,750	3%
Total	\$1,514,510 FJD	\$689,106	100%

Source: FIJI Water, 2009.

Interestingly, during the past year most money went to water projects, yet respondents were more likely to mention school or community projects, and despite a good portion of money going to emergency relief, no respondents mentioned emergency relief donations made by FIJI Water. This could be attributed to the timing of my study, since no major natural disasters had recently occurred, because respondents simply perceived community and school projects to be more important than emergency relief or health related donations, or because community members simply didn't know about all of FIJI Water's projects.

Donations to School Programs

One-third of my interviews were with teachers, administrators, or parents of children attending one of the schools in the five villages closest to the plant. On its website, FIJI Water claims to see education as being "critical to the long-term social development of Fiji" implying the importance to the company of donating money to local

³⁰ Converted on 5/2/09, \$1 FJD=\$0.457 U.S. (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

education programs (FIJI Water 2009). One FIJI Water employee mentioned the extensive donations that the company had made to local schools:

We've built kindergartens in all of the villages, including in the Indian school, Rabulu Indian School, that's towards Tavua. We've helped to build the Vatukoloko Secondary School and have invested more than a hundred thousand [Fijian] dollars³¹ in the building of that, as well as investing in the three local schools, we have Rabulu Indian School, Naseyani Primary School, and Drauniivi Public School which have more than 500.....more than 800 students when you put them all together.

FIJI Water has provided funding and supplies for a substantial number of children in both Fijian and Indian schools in the region at all levels. Because each of the five villages, as well as a few of the settlements in the vicinity of the plant, have received support for schools in their region, nearly all of the interviewees from those villages had knowledge about the donations made and perceived the donations to the schools in a positive light. Perceptions that residents of the villages close to the plant have of FIJI Water were likely positively influenced by the donations from FIJI Water because of the integral role that schools play in the communities.

FIJI Water has built kindergarten buildings in all of the five villages closest the plant, including Drauniivi, Togowere, Nananu, Naseyani, and Rabulu. Each of the kindergartens is staffed by trained educators paid by the Fijian government. Previously most of the villages lacked official kindergarten facilities. Parents sent their children to homes of their relatives or neighbors as a substitute for formal education. The range in age of children at these informal "kindergartens" varied, while the age of children at the official kindergartens was typically four or five.

³¹ Approximately equivalent to U.S. \$48,142 on July 9, 2009 (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

I visited two of these new kindergartens constructed and outfitted by FIJI Water. They appeared to offer a safe and productive learning environment for children and allow parents to leave their children if they work outside of the home, as an increasing number of Fijians are doing. Providing funding for the local kindergartens is of particular interest to FIJI Water since it enables parents that work at the factory to leave the home and attend work. In my visit to the kindergartens in Rabulu and Drauniivi, I was able to see physical evidence of FIJI Water's presence in many of their teaching materials and facilities. A kindergarten teacher from Drauniivi told me about some of the donations to her school:

This kindergarten, this school was being built by FIJI Water. They [FIJI Water] provide all the tables the chairs. The tables, the children's tables, and chairs, the stools, and their playing material, the outdoor playing material, like the seesaw, the slide, and the swing, that was being sponsored by FIJI Water.

Not only did respondents mention the donations that FIJI Water had made to build the kindergartens and purchase essential items such as tables and chairs, but other seemingly unimportant items were also deemed useful by the two kindergarten teachers:

I used to ask for cartons, those kind of cartons, the ones hanging here (points to cartons hanging on the walls in school room). For posters. Cartons and around here that one, that one (pointing around room). And we go back to bookshops to stationary shops to buy stuff like this but now we just use that one, that is from FIJI Water. And they have got that kind of plastic too, it is just cellophane, cellophane, big plastic, so we just asked for that and we come and cover our posters with that one, to keep it clean.

Rattles made from FIJI Water bottles and sand and posters made from FIJI Water cardboard boxes and cellophane are some of the unusual, yet seemingly useful, items donated by FIJI Water that permeate the school grounds. Both kindergarten teachers

interviewed from the villages of Rabulu and Drauniivi believe that without FIJI Water, their jobs would be much more difficult since they would not have the needed supplies or the proper facilities to effectively run the village kindergartens.

A visit to a kindergarten in Rakiraki Village, not one of the villages closest to the plant, was a stark contrast to the kindergartens of Rabulu and Drauniivi. The Rakiraki kindergarten lacked many basic supplies and classroom materials needed to provide a proper learning environment. This difference in quality between the kindergartens near the plant and the Rakiraki kindergarten could reflect the degree of support received from FIJI Water.

Many primary and secondary schools in the region have also received supplies or funding from FIJI Water. During my visit in August 2008, the most recent and largest school project to date was the Vatukoloko Secondary School, located in the village of Drauniivi.³² The village of Drauniivi previously lacked a secondary school and was in desperate need of one. According to the principal of the Vatukoloko Secondary School, before this school was built in 2007, children from the five villages closest to the plant had to travel to Rakiraki or Tavua, larger villages in the region, in order to attend secondary school.

The first high school, Vatukoloko. Before they used to go to school in Rakiraki. Now most of them come to our schools. But slowly, when things improve, they are expecting more students at Vatukoloko, a big gathering of the people. [Before] either they quit school because of financial difficulties traveling or they go to other schools, other high schools.

³² Drauniivi is the most central of the five villages near the FIJI Water plant. I was unable to confirm if it was intentionally chosen as the place to build the new secondary school because of its central location.

Unfortunately, as expressed by the principal, many students were unable to afford the cost of travel each day to the other villages, so they often quit attending school after eighth grade. The principal also mentioned that ten of the forty students are not from Drauniivi and travel from Naseyani, Nananu, Togowere, and Rabulu to get to the new school, meaning that some students still must travel, just not as far.³³ Still, not all children who wish to attend secondary school in the region receive the opportunity. Students must pass an exam to be allowed into the school due to the limited number of teachers, supplies, and facilities. The principal said that the school desires to expand in order to be able to educate more children in the region past the primary level with the help of FIJI Water; “We are planning from Fiji Water to extend. We are hoping that by 2011 we will be offering more education, more classes.” Interestingly, he did not mention the help of the government when expressing his hope to expand the school, only FIJI Water, indicating how important the company’s donations have been to the development of the school and the strong role that local stakeholders assign to FIJI Water in developing their communities.

When I visited, the Vatukoloko Secondary School had forty students, ten teachers, a principal, and a secretary. The construction of this new school implies that not only have more students been allowed to attend secondary school, but more jobs, specifically teaching positions, have been created in the region. This school was by far the best facility and most well-equipped school that I visited during my trip to Fiji. Out of

³³ Please see the map of Viti Levu in Appendix A for the locations of the villages in comparison to the Drauniivi Secondary School.

approximately twenty other schools that I saw, both up close and by a distance, the Vatukoloko Secondary School was by far the most impressive. Some of the above-average physical evidence I noticed was the size and quality of the library, the cleanliness of the school grounds, and the quality of the school and sport uniforms. According to a FIJI Water representative, through the Natural Waters of Viti Ltd. Trust, FIJI Water helped provide more than a hundred thousand Fijian dollars³⁴ to build the school and continues to support the school by donating supplies and sponsoring many sports programs. Although FIJI Water has played an important role in the development of the school, according to the high school principal, the government still pays the salaries of the teachers and administrators at the school and the Ministry of Education partially funded the initial construction of the school. This joint responsibility indicates that the village did not fully rely upon FIJI Water to construct the new school and still relies upon government support for school projects.

A few schools in the region that are not in one of the five villages closest to the plant have also been impacted by donations from FIJI Water, both directly and indirectly. As of August 2008, most schools outside of the five villages had not received any substantial donations from FIJI Water. The only concrete example of schools outside of the area that have received financial assistance from FIJI Water is Nakauvadra High School in Rakiraki. The school received \$20,000 FJD³⁵ from FIJI Water to use for

³⁴ Approximately \$45,500 U.S. dollars on May 3, 2009 (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

³⁵ Approximately \$11,000 U.S. dollars on March 17, 2009 (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

fencing around the school in order to protect vocational tools that were being stolen from the school grounds.

An indirect positive benefit for the larger villages in the region, like Rakiraki, is that fewer students from the five villages closest to the plant are traveling to their villages to attend school. This is a positive change according to an employee of the Province of Ra's Ministry of Fijian Affairs:

When FIJI Water came in they have taken over that responsibility for the government in that area [education], which is good, because then the budget indication for the area...whatever is to be set aside for them [local schools] could be better used in other villages....other areas in the province can use that.

This means that more governmental or non-profit funding for schools can be spent on schools not receiving direct support from FIJI Water.

Donations to Sports Programs

FIJI Water has also provided donations to local schools to fund sports programs. Netball³⁶ and rugby are both extremely popular sports throughout Fiji, so support for these activities from FIJI Water brings much positive publicity throughout Fiji for the company. According to a FIJI Water representative:

Just a few months ago we [FIJI Water] had the FIJI Water Sevens Tournament [rugby] which helped to raise over 20,000³⁷ dollars for the school, for Drauniivi Public School. And they...we brought [Waisale] Serevi the big sevens rugby guru, he came, we had him, and a two day netball tournament, as well as girls playing netball.

³⁶ Netball is a sport derived from basketball for women in which two teams of seven compete to score by placing a ball through a high hoop.

³⁷ Approximately U.S. \$9,971 on 7/27/09 (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

Students and teachers at the Drauniivi Primary and Secondary schools were very excited about the recent sponsorship of netball and rugby tournaments as well as the new uniforms provided by FIJI Water. Although the uniforms donated by FIJI Water have the company's logos covering them, it is unlikely that the schools would have such nice uniforms without donations from the company. The company often donates bottled water for sports trips and tournaments, as well as to provide relief for temporary problems with schools' water supplies.³⁸ By supporting the local sports programs, stakeholders seemed to feel that FIJI Water helps provide children in the region a healthy after-school alternative and is also indirectly fostering community camaraderie.

Increasingly, a wider variety of individuals or groups in the area, such as sports teams or women's clubs, are looking to FIJI Water for financial support and long-term planning. Not only has FIJI Water supported school sports programs, but they have also been donating to community sports clubs and providing them with fundraising opportunities. A resident of Drauniivi, who is an active member of a community sports program for adults, explained the wide variety of donations the program had received from FIJI Water:

FIJI Water is sponsoring us, and FIJI Water is sponsoring the new uniforms, and the balls, and the official, and our long-term planning is to build a multi-purpose court at the school. That is part of the FIJI Water Project to this region, not only to the girls who play netball, but for the school, and for the community. That is long-term planning, because like when it is bad weather, we'll have to stop [playing netball], the school's committee and us [the village netball club] think that you can't play, you going to spoil the ground and all that. So that is our long-term planning.

³⁸ Problems with schools' water supplies could be the result of damage to the water supply systems, a shortage in water during the dry season, or a disruption to the supply during flood seasons.

Everything is okay from FIJI Water, about the multi-purpose court. It will be the biggest one [in Fiji].....

In this case, community sports teams are looking to FIJI Water to provide funding for a new indoor sports facility. Along with soliciting funding from FIJI Water to build this facility, local clubs also have taken the opportunity to collect plastic bottles for recycling – which FIJI Water will pay them to collect. This opportunity is perceived as a positive impact by a resident of Drauniivi:

One thing good with FIJI Water too, they give that as a contract to a group, like rugby group, netball group, or the church group, they pick that one and fill in a big bag [plastic bottles], and they give us certain money. In the village, we ladies, we picked empty bottles, with that big sack, and give it back to FIJI Water, and they give us 500³⁹ dollars to buy utensils for our community hall. That's good.

Clearly FIJI Water has helped increase the variety of ways that a number of local groups or individuals can get financial support, other than from the government or existing nonprofit organizations.

Donations to Water Projects

In addition to funding for school and sports programs, FIJI Water states on its website that it “believes that Fiji is home to the best water on the planet, and the people of Fiji should be able to enjoy it as much as the rest of the world” (FIJI Water 2009).

There are many problems with water delivery systems in Fiji, especially in rural areas such as the Province of Ra. To begin addressing this crucial issue, the company is working to improve access to clean and safe drinking water in villages that surround its

³⁹ Approximately U.S. \$249 as of 7/27/09 (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

source in the Yaqara Valley.⁴⁰ To date, FIJI Water's donations towards water local projects have helped both schools and individual villages in the region. One-half of interviewees mentioned specific water projects that received support from FIJI Water. According to the FIJI Water website and a FIJI Water representative, the company has completed water projects in Drauniivi and Togowere. FIJI Water also plans to, or is, working on similar projects in Rabulu, Naseyani, and Nananu, and in the future hopes to expand water projects outside of the closest five villages where similar water infrastructure issues also need to be addressed (FIJI Water 2009).

Each of the five villages near the plant has distinct water accessibility issues, and each has received financial and/or technical assistance from FIJI Water to improve their water delivery systems. Financial assistance has helped villages dig boreholes, buy water pumps, maintain reservoirs, or pay electricity bills for water delivery. Technical assistance is provided by water technicians from FIJI Water. For example, sometimes FIJI Water will send company water technicians to test or examine a village's water supply and make recommendations for improvements.

While I could not obtain reliable information from the government or other organizations on particular water issues that plague each of the five villages close to the plant, I did get a chance to speak to residents of Rabulu and Drauniivi about perceptions they have of the water situation in their respective villages. Residents of Drauniivi had a more positive perception, likely a result of the assistance received from the company in order to improve their water delivery system. One Drauniivi resident noted:

⁴⁰ Please see Appendix A for a map of Viti Levu referencing the Yaqara Valley.

About the water, the problems we normally face, because of the dry season, we are lucky that this company [FIJI Water] has asked assisted us in building, making boreholes.....to help us bring water from up there to help us top off the tank, so that it can cater the whole village..... they pay, and the bills for the power, the electricity bills, FIJI Water, they pay the electricity bill....for everyone in the village. We just got one pump, one big pump, just beside the tank, and when we need to top off the tank, we just pump the water from that borehole, the one from FIJI Water, from the borehole to that tank. When the tank isn't full they pump it again..... and that borehole is run by electricity, and that bill, FIJI Water pay the bill, FIJI Water make the borehole, this means that we are lucky for this company, yeah?

This resident of Drauniivi had a positive perception of the assistance from FIJI Water and felt lucky that the company had not only provided the village with money to build a borehole and buy a pump, but had also continued to pay the electricity bill for the water delivery.

Villagers from Rabulu are experiencing very different water issues than villagers from Drauniivi and seem to be anxious to get assistance from FIJI Water to fix these problems. According to a resident of Rabulu, the source that the village was using until three years ago⁴¹ became inaccessible because the pipes that delivered the water and the water tank were no longer operational. The village's only option is to get water from a main line from Tavua.⁴² Getting the water from Tavua has led to an increase in residents' water bills and has made water less accessible to many residents of the village, since the new pipe system does not reach every house directly. The woman I interviewed had to get all of her water from her parent's house, which was nearby, but nonetheless

⁴¹ Interview was conducted in August of 2008, indicating that the source may not been used since approximately 2005.

⁴² Tavua is a larger village approximately 15 kilometers to the west of Rabulu.

inconvenient. The village is hoping that FIJI Water will fix their water delivery system so that they can have access to affordable and reliable water, and, if the company keeps its promises, it is likely that they will be receiving assistance from FIJI Water in the near future. In addition to the plans to help with water projects in the five villages, the company also plans to “provide the infrastructure, expertise, and skills necessary to deliver safe, clean, and sustainable water to over 100 additional communities, schools, health centers, and nursing stations throughout Fiji within two years” (FIJI Water 2009).

Donations to Miscellaneous Community Projects

Donations that FIJI Water has made to miscellaneous community projects were also mentioned frequently by interviewees, though not as often as the school projects. Community projects were mentioned frequently but respondents did not share as much detail as they did for the school, sport, or water programs being funded by FIJI Water. Commonly mentioned community projects were physical structures such as churches or community halls that FIJI Water had donated money to build, maintain, and repair. A good overview of donations made by FIJI Water that have impacted a community as a whole was expressed by a *kava* seller from the village of Drauniivi:

They [FIJI Water] have done so many things in this village, first of all, our community hall, paramount chief's house, and the water tank up there, and the borehole, and the kindergarten school, secondary school, and the netball and rugby teams, sports teams for the kids and adults, and the renovation of the primary school, kindergarten school, and secondary school. And in this village we have various churches, in this church here FIJI Water renovate this church, paint for us, rollers, everything. Just everything that the members of the congregation want.

It is important for FIJI Water to donate to projects and causes, such as ones mentioned in this quote like churches and community halls, that almost all residents of the respective

villages can enjoy and utilize. By donating to causes that improve day-to-day living in an entire community, the company can maximize the number of residents that it positively impacts. A wider variety of residents, not just the school children or sport enthusiasts, are able to reap the benefits of having the company in their community, improving the perception that villagers have of the company.

As evidenced through my interviews with village residents, FIJI Water appears to be donating to causes that are important to the formation of a sense of community in the villages closest to the plant. In all of the Fijian villages that I visited, churches and community halls were important public spaces for socializing and community decision-making and appeared to be places where villagers could form a sense of community. A sense of community, or *vanua*, is very important to many villagers as expressed in this statement from a Rakiraki resident:

When I say I like my land, that means I like my *vanua*, the *vanua* is a Fijian word to be used like a respect, my people, when I say my *vanua* that means I love my people, and I love my place, my whole of my surroundings.

These words reflect a point mentioned in every single interview: values related to community and sharing are very important to Fijians living in rural villages. Every Fijian interviewee expressed that one positive aspect of living in a village is that they live in a place where they are connected to everyone and they are able to share both good and bad things with one another. If FIJI Water is able to continue to donate to projects that are central to this sense of community that villagers feel, they are likely to be more positively received by a wider variety of residents.

Donations to Health Projects

Of all of the donations mentioned by interviewees and analyzed above, health related donations were mentioned the least during the interviews. Only four respondents, two of them FIJI Water employees, mentioned donations that were health related. For instance, one FIJI Water employee explained that the company planned to “improve access to health care” with the creation of the FIJI Water Foundation, as well as through donations to Project Heaven, a nonprofit organization that circulates Fiji providing free eye and ear checkups for school children. According to a FIJI Water representative Project Heaven is:

....a group that goes around doing eye and ear checks for school children all around the country, so hopefully identifying kids with severe problems or any problems that might be preventing them from doing as well as they might in school, because they don't realize, oh I don't see the board, or you know. Some people just kind of take that kind of stuff for granted, you know? Actually, until Project Heaven came around no one was doing that, so if you don't already have enough drop outs obviously you are going to lose the kids who don't hear or see what is going on.

Another respondent noted that FIJI Water sometimes donates bottled water to visiting health groups and programs doing nonprofit work in Fiji. Even though health related issues or donations were mentioned infrequently, my observations suggested that more health related support is needed either from FIJI Water, the Fijian government, or international aid agencies. For example, when foreign doctors came to do free eye exams and provide villagers with badly needed eye care and glasses, over two hundred people formed a line outside of the Vaileka hospital hoping to get assistance. Although both of the above cases are examples of important donations made by FIJI Water to health related programs, respondents may have been unaware of donation or could have perceived

donations to schools, sports, water, and community programs to be either larger or more important to their respective communities.

Indirect Business Growth

According to some respondents, FIJI Water's presence in the region has brought positive economic growth for a number of local businesses in a variety of ways. Indirect business growth can be seen through people in the province who are contracted by FIJI Water to do related work such as laundry or catering for the company, bringing in more revenue that can be spent locally. Additionally, employees of FIJI Water have more money to spend at local businesses due to the relative increase they have seen in their incomes. As noted by a woman from Rakiraki village, lower-level FIJI Water employees are now able to go "shopping in Vaileka, shopping in Tavua, even the people that used to wait for the bus to go do shopping in Tavua, but now they can go by cars." An increase in revenue has also been recognized by local businesses that supply FIJI Water with goods or services needed to run, manage, or administer the plant. When I asked a local resort worker if the local hotels and resorts got business from FIJI Water and its employees he replied:

Lots of people are like working there too and okay, the hotels...there is lots of people from the management staff they used to come to the hotels. They used to buy a lot of stuff from the villages.

In casual conversation, this resort worker also mentioned that management from FIJI Water or visiting foreign employees also frequent local scuba diving shops, bringing in additional business for local dive masters. Finally, some respondents said that because

FIJI Water is so popular and widespread throughout the world, it inadvertently advertises for the country of Fiji and contributes to tourism growth.

Contract Work for FIJI Water

Local contracting with FIJI Water has been important for the growth of the economy in the region. Contracting jobs allow people who do not work directly for FIJI Water to gain employment, earn more money, or even start their own business. For example, according to a FIJI Water employee:

The fact that this building is here [FIJI Water plant] has also helped other small businesses in the area to grow, like the ladies who do the laundry, for all the guys who have their uniforms, women who sell food out here.....that is just grassroots kind of work, but then also the folks who do our security and our grounds maintenance, that is a separate company called the Vatuloko Investment Company, VIC, and....that company you know is like a community run company, a community based company, and is able to be here because we need to outsource some of this work that was available, we needed somebody to do some security, we needed people to drive our workers to and from work. We needed people to take care of the grounds so....that's a really great. It's a small business growth opportunity that wouldn't be here if it weren't for FIJI Water.

As noted, there are a wide variety of ways that local people can earn money from FIJI Water besides being directly employed by the company. Although I did not interview anyone that worked as a contractor for the company, contract work is an important way for people that may not be qualified or experienced enough to work at FIJI Water to get involved with the growing bottled water industry. Contracting with FIJI Water also allows business owners to create and manage their own businesses, rather than to be employed by an overseas corporation in which they would have little power or control.

*Increased Revenue for Local Businesses*⁴³

Area businesses also benefit indirectly because the relative increase in wages that FIJI Water employees receive has allowed them to spend more money at local businesses in the region, altering their standard of living and lifestyle. Because it is difficult and time-consuming to travel out of the province, much of the money earned is likely spent at businesses within the province, boosting the local economy. New wages earned can be spent at local businesses that provide essential goods such as food and clothing, and nonessential consumer goods, such as DVDs, televisions, and restaurant meals. As expressed by a local government official:

When FIJI Water came in it really made a difference, especially in their [FIJI Water employees] income earning capacity of the villages. They get to build better houses for their children, for the families, better houses. They are able to feed their children well, send them to school. FIJI Water has made a big impact on the villages in the area.

A number of interviewees felt that there are often a wide variety of stakeholders that are in positions to benefit from FIJI Water, even if they are not directly employed for the company.

Other stakeholders that benefit economically from FIJI Water's presence in the region include local businesses such as hotels and restaurants. Some hotels benefit immensely from accommodating visiting foreign workers for months at a time, as well as from visiting business people for shorter durations. A villager from Rakiraki noted that:

⁴³ It must be noted that for FIJI Water's presence might not be positive for all local businesses. For example, it could switch local "tastes" from subsistence work to waged employment which could cause local business owners to lose valuable employees. Also, depending upon the wage level paid by FIJI Water, it may put pressure on small businesses to increase their wages in order to remain competitive.

They [foreign FIJI Water employees] live there [by the FIJI Water plant] and some of them live in the area near us [in Rakiraki], and they spend time at the hotel. Most of them [hotels and resorts] are located in this area, they live around this area, there is nowhere else to go so they go to the Rakiraki Hotel.

When I asked the manager of the Rakiraki Hotel if it got a lot of business from FIJI Water he replied, “Yeah, all the time. Good for everybody, yeah? Good for country, good for their business, no?” Economic growth has also been seen by a variety of other businesses, such as the ones that supply the cardboard boxes FIJI Water uses, the workers at the ports who load approximately 10,000 shipping containers annually, the gas and maintenance on the trucks to transport the water, and the paper products used in the offices. The remote location of the plant forces the company to purchase some of its supplies and services locally, contributing to the overall economic growth in the province of Ra.

Advertisement for Fiji by FIJI Water

Some respondents also perceive FIJI Water, and the FIJI Water bottle itself – particularly recognizable because of its distinctive square shape -- to be a form of advertisement for Fiji. They believe that when consumers positively relate to the quality of the water from Fiji, it generates interest in the source, thereby increasing tourism. According to FIJI Water, the company spent approximately \$30 million Fijian dollars in 2007 on marketing and advertising while the Fiji Visitors Bureau spent just \$8 million. When asked what he thought about FIJI Water being sold all over the world, a local hotel manager replied, “you know, very good advertise for the Fiji, for every part of the world they go ‘ahhh it’s from Fiji’.” Although not backed by any evidence, this comment

typifies a discourse from interviewees implying a positive correlation between quality of FIJI Water and a growth of tourism in Fiji. More tourism can result in increased revenue for a small, growing country that increasingly relies on outside sources of revenue for economic growth. The following excerpt from an interview is an example of how some respondents think that FIJI Water has advertising potential for the struggling Fijian tourism industry:

Interviewer: Why do you think that the water from Fiji is being taken and sold in other parts?

EW: One is revenue, two, tourists..... like the work of the visitor's bureau, no? Telling the world, or the people of other countries to come and visit Fiji.

Interviewer: A little bit of advertisement?

EW: Advertisement, right. We have enough water, but we can't sell all in Fiji, so we have to look for markets outside of Fiji.

Any positive advertisement Fiji can get, whether it is from the actual water bottle itself or its placement in movies or television shows, was viewed by many respondents as a way to let consumers know that "there might be something good over here in this small country." However, not all economic impacts were perceived as positive by interviewees. In the next section of the analysis I will be exploring the perceptions of interviewees on the negative economic impacts of FIJI Water.

Negative Economic Impacts

Many respondents perceived a wide variety of positive economic impacts from FIJI Water, yet many of them also mentioned negative economic impacts. More skeptical views of the economic growth in the region were from respondents with higher educational levels and people that worked for, or previously worked for, the Fijian government. Their skepticism about the economic growth of the company was likely

fueled by their ability to look at the situation from a regional or national perspective, which might reveal inequalities in the dispersion of economic benefits from the industry. This segment of an interview with a local resort worker typifies the types of responses I received when asking interviewees about what sort of positive or negative impacts they perceived FIJI Water to be having on their communities:

AS: Well positive I will say, employment at the local businesses. Yeah, there has been loads of people employed around this region. FIJI Water I think there are about three hundred, four hundred people. [FIJI Water] generate[s] income, and provide[s] infrastructure development around the area. Roads, schools, and...especially the region close to the bottling plant. They built a high school, foot paths, for the community and I would say there are negative impacts as well.

Interviewer: What do you think are some of the negative [impacts]?

AS: Well, first of all I think FIJI Water is running on a tax-free basis, from that I heard.

Interviewer: Yeah, for the first ten years.

AS: [...] Most of the profits from the exporting of the water.....

Interviewer: Doesn't stay here?

AS: Yeah, doesn't stay here. Sometimes pollution.

Interviewer: Pollution from what?

AS: From.....it is like to me a reversal, I think some of the waste, it goes [into] the river, [hurts] marine life.

This young man's positive impression about the jobs, donations, and investments made by FIJI Water, and criticism of the taxation of the company by the government and of the company's generation of pollution, is a typical overall perception of the company of interviewees. Although many respondents also mentioned both good and bad impacts from FIJI Water, his perception that profits from the exportation of water are leaving Fiji and that the company is polluting water systems were atypical in comparison to other interviewees and will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Respondents did not mention negative economic impacts as often as positive economic impacts, but they also help illuminate how Fijians perceive FIJI Water to be impacting their lives economically. Only six respondents mentioned negative economic impacts, while all twenty-one respondents mentioned positive economic impacts in their interviews. Perceived negative economic impacts from FIJI Water focused on: (1) the lack of taxation of FIJI Water, (2) perceptions of the FIJI Water Company or FIJI Water employees not giving enough back to local communities or to the appropriate causes, (3) mismanagement of new wages by FIJI Water employees, (4) and pressure felt by FIJI Water employees to contribute money they earn to their communities or families.

All interviewees did not experience economic benefits from FIJI Water, and some such as this university student from Rakiraki Village think that only the people working for FIJI Water and the government substantially benefit:

Actually, the people who do work there, [...] it is not too many people who are working there, and like the whole Fiji is like not benefitting from it. I mean, families from the rural areas where people work at that village at their homes are benefitting. I mean it is like from this village [Rakiraki] there is not even a person that is working at that factory, even though it earns a lot of money every year. But I don't know, the government people they just get the tax and that is it; it is only the people who work there that benefit.

Not all respondents perceived only the Fijian government and FIJI Water employees to be benefitting economically from FIJI Water. Many often thought that local businesses and the communities closest to the plant were also benefitting, but not equally. Many respondents expressed a belief that other stakeholders should benefit more from the industry, yet often had varying ideas about how the perceived disparities could be

reduced. One way many respondents thought that the dispersion of benefits could be equalized was through taxation of the company by the government.

Taxation of FIJI Water

There are two key issues related to FIJI Water's tax status. The first is related to perceptions about the ten year tax-holiday that FIJI Water is receiving from the Fijian government.⁴⁴ The second pertains to perceptions about the tax the Fijian government attempted to place on each bottle of water produced in Fiji during the summer of 2008. Both taxation issues were predominantly viewed by interviewees in a negative fashion – likely because of their perceived ineffectiveness. Most respondents thought that the company should be taxed, but thought that how the government had attempted to tax all bottled water companies was the wrong way to address the issue. A local business manager clearly expressed the general conviction of the other interviewees:

Interviewer: Do you think that they should tax the water, the government?

SP: Well that is between government and the company.....

Interviewer: Well I mean it could make the roads maybe better, they could use the money for that kind of stuff.....

SP: Yeah. They'll do something, yeah? Because there is a problem from the first day one. Tax-free zone.⁴⁵ They start with a tax-free zone. But now the government want to push the tax, try with a little, no? Not put lots on the people [bottled water companies] and then they [bottled water companies] away, and leave the business, then they [government] don't get anything!

Interviewer: Yeah, that is true. They [FIJI Water] tried shutting it down for one day, but they [FIJI Water] reopened it?

SP: Yeah, one day. We so worried because we [Rakiraki Hotel] have lots of business from them, lots of business, especially Rakiraki, yeah?

⁴⁴ The ten year tax holiday should be ending sometime during 2009 according to a FIJI Water representative.

⁴⁵ Refers to the ten year tax-holiday given to FIJI Water by the Fijian government.

This excerpt shows the internally contradictory perceptions many interviewees had regarding the taxation of FIJI Water – stakeholders want FIJI Water to be taxed, but they are afraid it will drive the company away if the taxes are too high.

I did not specifically ask the interviewees about the ten year tax-holiday that FIJI Water received from the Fijian government, but interviewees mentioned it. Most understood why FIJI Water received the ten year tax-holiday from the government but still thought that the company needed to be taxed. It is not uncommon in Fiji for start-up companies to receive such a tax-holiday in order to allow the company to build up their business. A perspective of the tax from a FIJI Water employee explains the government's motive behind giving the tax-holiday to the company:

We [FIJI Water] actually, and this is like public knowledge, but we haven't been taxed for the first ten years of our being here because; even this is a pretty common thing, I guess, for small businesses when they are starting up. They aren't taxed so they can broaden their base and they can invest more, and that is exactly what we have done. We will be such a much larger tax revenue source for the government after next year when our tax is then opened... because we have been tax free for the last ten years. Sometimes different people get it into their heads that we are cheating somebody but actually, it is a pretty normal practice. And I think there has just been a lot of eagerness on the part of the government, maybe, to have that be over sooner.

As mentioned by the FIJI Water representative, many stakeholders are skeptical of the tax-free status and think that a new company, particularly one as successful as FIJI Water, should not have such a long tax-free operating window. This skepticism regarding the tax-free holiday echoes sentiments expressed by many other stakeholders, such as “there is a problem from the first day one. Tax-free zone.” The tax-free status

takes away from the revenue that the country could have been receiving over the past ten years for the extraction of its natural resources.

As with the tax-holiday, I did not ask every interviewee about the recent bottle tax imposed by the Fijian government,⁴⁶ yet the majority of interviewees nonetheless brought it up, most likely because of the timeliness of the issue. I arrived in Fiji during August of 2008, just after the government had attempted to permanently impose a tax of twenty Fijian cents⁴⁷ on each bottle of water produced in Fiji. After three weeks of implementing the tax during June and July, the government was pressured to rescind the tax. The tax caused numerous smaller bottled water companies to close, and importantly, the largest bottled water company, FIJI Water, was on the verge of shutting itself down as well. For the smaller companies the tax was just too high, cutting into the small profits they were making, and forcing them to close. For FIJI Water, the tax certainly cut into the profits it was making, just not as drastically as for the smaller Fijian-owned companies.

FIJI Water was able to remain open for three weeks during the taxation period by filling up all of its storage containers on the island, but not actually putting anything on a ship, effectively avoiding the tax until running out of storage space. Once the company ran out of storage space, it threatened to shut down the plant, and did so for less than a day. A permanent closure would have put hundreds of Fijians out of work, likely causing

⁴⁶ I did not ask each interviewee about the tax imposed by the government because before my arrival to Fiji I was not aware of this issue. Upon my arrival in Fiji, I realized that it was an important and timely issue to analyze because it illustrates a power struggle between stakeholders.

⁴⁷ Approximately U.S. \$.13 as of 3/21/09 (Reserve Bank of Fiji).

widespread negative economic impacts throughout Fiji. Thus, the government was forced to rescind the tax. This tax and the decision making process between the company, government, and other stakeholders will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

More than half of the interviewees mentioned the imposed tax and gave their perspectives on the situation. As a Rakiraki villager put it, “I think, the tax to me it was, it was okay, but the only thing we, the amount of tax they put in is too high.” All of the 12 respondents thought that a tax of 20 cents on each bottle of water produced in Fiji was too steep, particularly for smaller bottled water companies. Although most did not give an alternative solution, many mentioned that they thought a smaller tax would be appropriate and that more communication between the government and the company was also necessary. A local resort worker noted:

The government, they are trying to take 20 cents from every liter. [...] Which is, I think the government is a bit greedy or something. Oh, no I can say, the government, they are not greedy, but 20 cents per liter, it is just, the company should give it to the government because of the resources, because this is Fiji’s mineral and they need to pay something for the government.

Issues such as the bottle tax often seemed to pose an internal dilemma for Fijians, in which they wanted the government to tax FIJI Water but at the same time they wanted the company to remain open and bring in business. This dilemma seemed to have been resolved by most respondents through a belief that a compromise involving a smaller bottle tax and more communication between the government and FIJI Water was the best solution. Taxation was not the only way that respondents thought benefits from FIJI water could be equalized. Many also thought FIJI Water could donate more and to different causes.

Negative Perceptions of Community Donations from FIJI Water

FIJI Water was perceived by some interviewees as not donating enough money to the local communities. Although FIJI Water representatives that I interviewed discussed some instances in which the company is planning on improving or adjusting their donation strategies,⁴⁸ the examples I refer to in this section are from non-FIJI Water Employees. For example, one Rakiraki resident commented, “FIJI Water is making so much money, and I don’t think they are giving enough back to the communities or the owners of this resource.” Even when respondents had positive things to say about donations FIJI Water had made, many also had ideas about how FIJI Water could be donating more to the local communities that weren’t yet recipients or to different causes within the villages already receiving donations. For example, a representative of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs thought more emphasis should be placed on community development:

There is a lot of money coming to the village you know, the Fijian communities in the area, but it is just that where they are channeling the money, the funds, how they have been used, it is the communities need to get the development committees, you know, to be more responsible in the....again to find the priority areas for village growth and programs.

Respondents from Rakiraki Village were likely to express their desire for FIJI Water to increase donations to their village, while respondents living in one of the five villages closer to the plant typically expressed a desire for a wider variety of programs to be sponsored by FIJI Water within their own communities. Suggestions from interviewees

⁴⁸ I am referring to the FIJI Water Foundation, a new branch of FIJI Water formed in 2008 with a goal of spreading donations throughout Fiji. Please refer to page 177 for more information on the FIJI Water Foundation.

about how FIJI Water should change its donation strategies can be put into three primary categories: donating more to causes outside of the five villages that surround the plant; giving donations directly to local government agencies; and donating more money to causes that they already support.

Donations Outside of the Five Villages

All nine respondents from Rakiraki Village, and one from Vatukacevaceva⁴⁹, articulated a desire for FIJI Water to donate more to their respective communities and to the region as a whole. A Rakiraki resident commented, “it is very hard from this village, from here [in] Rakiraki, we hardly even seen anything that is done by FIJI Water.” Suggestions included increasing donations to schools, hospitals, environmental programs, and as put by a Vatukacevaceva village elder, “the bridges, the roads, the education, the health!!!” When I asked a less animated interviewee if she thought FIJI Water could be donating more, her comment about the need for FIJI Water to help schools more was typical of Rakiraki residents:

FN: Yeah, I think they could be more helpful.

Interviewer: Where do you think would be good places?

FN: To the schools, especially to the schools. And...in hospitals.

Although not many respondents mentioned hospitals, along with schools in the region, hospitals appeared to be in need of funding. Most responses about exactly where money should be donated were very vague. The responses simply seemed to convey that there

⁴⁹ I only did one interview in Vatukacevaceva, a village about 15 miles southwest of Rakiraki, where residents are working on starting their own bottled water company.

was a want and a perceived need for FIJI Water to expand the scope of its donations outside of the five villages closest to the plant.

Donations Directly to Local Government

One way a few respondents, all of them current or former government employees, thought FIJI Water could improve its donations was by donating directly to the local government agencies. This indicates that their responses could have been somewhat biased, yet they might also have a better idea about the needs and capabilities of the local government agencies. An employee from the Ministry of Fijian Affairs Office thought that FIJI Water should donate directly to the Ra Provincial Council as done by other big companies in Fiji:

Unlike the other provinces where they have these big companies, you know, located in the area making so much money, they make a contribution to the village councils, whereas FIJI Water doesn't.

According to the same woman, the local government is more aware of where money is needed and could better distribute donated funds. For example, she thought that FIJI Water should donate money to the government to distribute for local scholarships:

Maybe they could do something, like contribute to the...a part of our scholarship for the province. We don't have a scholarship for the province. Maybe FIJI Water could contribute in that way. Probably allocate a certain amount from...amounts [money] allocated to their community projects to the provincial councils, the Ra provincial council.

Donating directly to the local governments could give people who are not directly employed by FIJI Water more input into how the donations are distributed, but it could also open up new areas for corruption by government employees aiming to get a share of

the benefits. Government officials may not necessarily be any better at money management or less corrupt than other local officials.

In tandem with donating directly to the local government, the same government employee also thought that FIJI Water should work directly with the local government to make decisions about the donations that it does make. She considered the government to be the “gatekeeper” of the community, saying that FIJI Water could not truly gain access to the community without a blessing or assistance from the local government.

I think it is very important that their project officer works with the provincial office because we are the gatekeepers. It doesn't make sense that a person in the community who is responsible for the project for the community is an individual, it is not linked directly to us, because we need to be working with them.

The “individual” to whom she refers to is the Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator at FIJI Water. She believes that the Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator position is ineffective since it is only an individual making decisions about donations, importantly an individual that works for FIJI Water, and not a group of concerned villagers coming to a consensus on where money is needed the most. This is an important point that she makes about decision making, communication, and power that will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter Nine.

Increased Donations for Existing Programs

Many interviewees from the villages close to the plant were pleased and even proud of donations that FIJI Water had already made to the village schools, water supplies, and sports teams. Along with their praise for FIJI Water's donations, many shared a desire to receive even more from FIJI Water. Such a desire was especially

prominent in interviews with school principals from the Drauniivi Primary and Secondary Schools. For example, despite support already received from FIJI Water for the school, the principal of the Drauniivi Primary School is looking to FIJI Water for funding of the school's future upgrades:

As long as I have been here [Drauniivi], only library books, [and] water [have been donated by FIJI Water]. [Also], we have a tour, like rugby and netball, here in Rakiraki. They give us cartons of water.....for the children. And I have already given them one plan for the school, a development plan for three years to update the teacher's quarters. The houses here are just the original since the school started. And we want to change it to..... all the teacher's quarters are in the back (points to back of school). And last night, yesterday we just hand delivered one letter to the cultural, what do you call,[FIJI Water's] community awareness, cultural community awareness [coordinator].

Both principals I interviewed had already asked FIJI Water for more money to continue to improve their schools indicating how an MNC is filling in where government and parental inputs are absent. Both proudly showed me all of the physical objects FIJI Water had already donated, and the principal from the secondary school even took a boy and girl student out of class and had them both dress in the brand new sport uniforms FIJI Water had donated in order to display them for me. Regardless of what the schools had already received, the principals appeared to think FIJI Water was the key to even more improvements.

The above examples of how stakeholders perceive that FIJI Water could better distribute its donations exemplify the need for FIJI Water to expand the scope of its donations to reach a wider variety of villages within the region. If the company does not expand its scope, as staff has said they are planning on doing, its current predominantly positive reputation in the region could be damaged, possibly hurting future business. Not

only did some respondents perceive that the FIJI Water Company itself should be giving back more, but some also thought that employees of the company should be giving back more to their respective communities.

Negative Perceptions of Giving Back by FIJI Water Employees

A few respondents did not think that Fijian employees of FIJI Water were giving enough back to their communities, and that they were being selfish with their earnings.

For example, a kindergarten teacher from the village of Rabulu said that:

Those who are working at the factory, like they are just having wages for their own house, for their own family, they not sharing, especially this kind of kindergarten and churches they need support, financial support.

Although infrequent, this type of statement is very strong because of the importance placed on sharing and forming a sense of community in a Fijian village. A village elder commented on the concept of sharing that is so important for village life:

Yeah, [we] share everything. Waste is nothing. To me, it's best for me to give, not to worry about what to receive, no never. I [am] always like that. If I give it, it is with all my heart.

This same woman told me that when she went to visit a friend in one of the villages near the plant that she reminded that friend to “don't be too greedy, we all should share and share.” These statements demonstrate a perception of a growing divide between those working at the factory who make possibly relatively higher wages and those who do not. This type of divide has potential to create conflict among community members, as the “have-nots” perceive the “haves” to be enjoying a better standard of living.

Because of the communal nature of villages, residents earning more money by working at FIJI Water are sometimes pressured to contribute more money than other

villagers to local causes, relatives, or neighbors. As articulated by an American FIJI Water employee that has lived in Fiji over four years, speaks fluent Fijian, and is familiar with Fijian culture:

[What] people I know, who are here or live in village, find challenging is that when there are obligations like funerals and weddings or even like fundraisers, because you work, everybody is like leaning on you, so you have to put in more because you are working. So sometimes people choose actually not to live in the village. It has happened at least to...one or two people who have chosen to go live in Tavua because they feel that the financial strain is less there.

Respondents frequently mentioned the communal nature of villages. Unfortunately, this communal ideal can be a problem for people that earn much more than the average villager. It appears that as the size of the village or town increases that there is less personal pressure to donate. I personally felt this pressure to donate when visiting the villages, but did not feel it in the larger towns or cities. There are a lot of social situations requiring donations in Fijian villages, and if you are perceived to have more money than the average villager, then it is not unusual for pressure to be put on you to donate to a variety of causes.

For some FIJI Water employees, working at FIJI Water may be the first work experience they have where they earn a regular wage. This lack of formal work experience means that they may lack skills in dealing with the larger sums of money that they may be earning at the company. Community groups, such as sports teams or church choirs, may also have little or no experience managing large sums of money they receive from the company. Some respondents felt that FIJI Water employees and community

groups did not know how to manage the newly earned or donated money responsibly.

According to a woman from the Ministry of Fijian Affairs:

Our communities in the area, they just are not managing their finances well...properly. That could be another, another area where you know, our representatives of our ministry need to be more proactive, using especially financial management for our Fijian communities, something that we [Fijian villagers] are not really good at.

Not only did she indicate that some stakeholders, such as FIJI Water employees and community groups, don't know how to manage their finances properly, but she also thought that the government should be the entity that steps in and helps manage their finances properly. She also observes that stakeholders are not even realizing the potential that FIJI Water has for their communities. Her comments reflect a perception that stakeholders are maybe just thinking only of short-term uses for the new found money, rather than managing it for the long-term.

The Vatukoloko Investment Company (VIC) was set up by FIJI Water with villagers from the five villages close to the plant to manage donations from FIJI Water and jobs related to the bottled water industry in security, transportation, food, and laundry. Rather than being directly employed by FIJI Water, employees of the VIC do contract work for FIJI Water and are thus given some autonomy in managing this business. When I visited Fiji in August 2008, a few respondents were concerned with the management of funds in the VIC:

AR: They have, they have this company, the Vatukoloko Investment Company, it was set up, this company set up when FIJI Water started, then I guess there was a lot of mismanagement in the committee that ran the Vatukoloko Investment Company.....

Interviewer: That was who they worked with?

AR: Yes, it was a company set up to sort of like look after the community funds that FIJI Water allocated to the communities for development purposes. And I guess these people mismanaged the funds allocated, and there were no reports coming to the people in the area and a lot of differences.

Discourse regarding how donations should be managed was often similar to the above passage because many stakeholders perceived miscommunication, corruption, and money mismanagement among FIJI Water, the communities, and community members. As of May 2009, a FIJI Water representative informed me that the VIC had gone bankrupt and had to have the positions incorporated into FIJI Water. Unfortunately this means that although they still have jobs, because they are no longer contracting from FIJI Water, some stakeholders have lost an important opportunity to gain experience and profit from running their own business.

Conclusion

The fact that economic impacts were mentioned by each respondent illustrates how important economic issues surrounding the bottled water industry are for the Fijians who I interviewed. Each respondent mentioned positive economic impacts such as a growth in higher paying jobs, donations and investments made by the company, or indirect business growth as a result of FIJI Water's presence. Fewer respondents mentioned negative economic impacts such as the lack of taxes being placed on FIJI Water, donations from FIJI Water, or lack of giving back by FIJI Water employees. Although economic impacts may be the first impacts to be perceived by stakeholders, because of the immediate changes they often bring about, other social, cultural, or environmental impacts may be longer lasting, more difficult to detect, and harder to

overcome if demand for bottled water decreases. Academics, entities being invested in, and investors also typically analyze the economic impacts from MNCs like FIJI Water before looking at less tangible impacts such as those felt in social, cultural, or environmental arenas. Yet these impacts are also important to analyze in order to get a full picture of how the growth of the bottled water industry is impacting stakeholders.

Chapter Six – Perceived Social and Cultural Impacts of FIJI Water on Local Communities

FIJI Water's success has altered the way some Fijians think about water and reinforced some perceptions that they already have about the utilization and quality of local water sources. This social and cultural analysis provides a better understanding of the perceptions stakeholders have regarding how Fijians are benefitting from, or being hurt by, the presence of FIJI Water. Several relevant themes emerged: a shift in perceptions of water from a natural entitlement to a commodity, increasing stratification and jealousy among stakeholders, and work ethic differences between FIJI Water and its employees.

Water as a Commodity, Not a Natural Entitlement

The economic success of FIJI Water made many of the interviewees more aware of the high quality and potential utility of Fijian water sources. In fact, some stakeholders switched from thinking of water as a natural entitlement to something from which profit could be made, a commodity. According to Kaplan (2005),

Profit, formerly described by many ethnic Fijians as a sinister foreign god, has become domesticated, clean, and moral to many ethnic Fijians, or in the self-description of many ethnic Fijians, in a way it was not formerly. In other words [...] ethnic Fijians have made their right to the *hau*⁵⁰ of their land an explicit issue, and they want a big return on any profit made on their land (31-32).

Interviews with some villagers supported Kaplan's findings about these changes. As a resort worker living in Rakiraki Village expressed,

⁵⁰ According to Tamati Ranaipiri, the *hau* of an object refers to a "spirit" that longs to return to the giver, or according to Mauss, "the bonds created by things is in fact a bond between persons or pertains to a person" (Kaplan 2005:30).

.....Yeah, before, before they [FIJI Water]..... built the factory, we never think of that source [Nakauvadra Range] as valuable. We know the source was there, but we didn't know it would be something like this.

A retired government employee from Rakiraki Village whose friends in the village of Vatukaceveva have been trying to start a bottled water company for years noted:

Yeah, because they [FIJI Water] take water, as I said, it is a strange thing for us to see water being sold. Something that has been there from the start. To them [villagers in Vatukaceveva] it is a great shock to realize that water can fetch a lot of money.

Both of these responses convey the idea that people were surprised that money could be made from water – “something that has been there from the start.” Once some of the Fijians I interviewed came to the realization that a profit could be made from water, their perceptions of water shifted from a natural entitlement to a commodity. A shift in how some Fijians perceive water as a commodity rather than a natural entitlement is evidenced in the following themes: growth in number of Fijian-owned bottled water companies, growth in consumption of bottled water in Fiji, and marketing the high quality of Fijian water.

Growth in Fijian-Owned Bottled Water Companies

When a particular business or industry, in this case bottled water, is exceptionally successful, others often want to replicate its success. A perfect example of how FIJI Water's success has changed the perceptions some Fijians have toward water as a commodity can be seen in the increasing number of Fijians who want to, or have, started their own bottled water companies. Many respondents discussed the increasing number of bottled water companies that have been started in Fiji. For example, a Fijian-owned company is attempting to bottle water, even from the same source as FIJI Water:

When you move further in from Naseyani to Nananu village, there is a good source too, Nananu village.⁵¹ They have water to set up a plant there too, a bottling plant called Magic Mountain. Yes, yes, good water source there. In fact it is right near to where Nananu village gets their water from, and that is very clean water. Because that is almost the same area, that is the same source too, from where FIJI Water is getting their water.

For some, the idea to start their own bottled water company may be appealing, but not always realistic. A retired male respondent from Rakiraki made the observation that,

.....once they realize water means a lot they want to start them [bottled water companies], but I told them we can start the thing, but to run it, that we may need a lot of....we need expertise, or people to be attached with us so that we can do it well.

As this man points out, it takes more than just an idea or access to water to start a successful bottled water company. In order to run a profitable bottled water company there is a need for large sums of money to bottle and market the product. It is often impossible for smaller Fijian-owned companies to become compete with the larger bottled water companies because they do not have enough financial support.

There are currently seven bottled water companies in operation in Fiji, not including three that have recently gone out of business. A co-owner of Island Chill provided me with the following overview of the country's bottled water industry by email:

⁵¹ Naseyani and Nananu are further inland from the FIJI Water plant but are still within the Nakauvadra Range, the source of FIJI Water. See Appendix A for a map of the region. If this company is able to open, it will be using the same source as FIJI Water, potentially creating conflict over the resource.

Table 5: Bottled Water Companies in Fiji

Name of Company	Ownership	Market	Status
FIJI Water	American	Well known international brand, largest exporter	Open
ISLAND CHILL	Fijian	2nd largest exporter of bottled water from Fiji	Open
VITI BLU	American	Never could establish export market	About to close down
AQUA Pacific	Fijian	Small operator for local market only, could never establish export market	Open
Diamond Aqua	Fijian	Could never establish export market	Now out of business
Aquifer	Fijian	Could never establish export market	Now out of business
BULA	Fijian	Purified tap water-could never establish export market	Open
VTY	Fijian	Could never establish an export market	Now out of business
Mr. Pure	Australian	Purified rain water, very small backyard operator	Open
Aqua Safe	Australian	Small local operator, don't think they even export	Open

Additionally he commented that,

.....there has been an increase over last three years in the number of operators. Many projects failed due to no or low capital to sustain losses. From the above list I suspect the number [of bottled water companies] will decrease in few years time.

This man, who has first-hand experience working in the Fijian bottled water industry, predicts that more bottled water companies in Fiji will close in the next few years, possibly because of the worldwide economic downturn or perhaps because some companies are unable to establish competitive export markets. Export markets are extremely important because the domestic Fijian market is very small. Table 5 shows

that each of the companies now out of business were Fijian-owned and could not establish viable export markets.

According a university student from the village of Rakiraki, the reason why many Fijian-owned bottled water companies have not been successful is because of Fijian government interference.

It's like whenever a company comes up with an idea of producing a water factory in a particular area, so for example near a village or something like in Vatukaceveva, so whenever the company tries to establish the water factory or whatever you call it...to bottle water, and the government is sort of like you know so greedy, and they'll go like, okay, that is not your land, it is ours [the government].

If smaller Fijian-owned bottled water companies do not get the same favorable treatment from the government as more powerful companies in the form of tax-holidays or land leases, then it will be difficult for them to replicate FIJI Water's success. For example, when asked if Island Chill receives the same tax-holiday as FIJI Water, a representative responded,

.....we do not have the tax holidays. We pay ALL taxes. FIJI Water did enjoy a bunch of tax free holidays. [.....] Start-up companies [do] not necessarily enjoy tax free holidays. It depends from government policies of the day.

Despite unequal treatment from the government, Island Chill has achieved relative success in the bottled water industry. It has become the second largest bottled water producer in Fiji behind FIJI Water since beginning production in 2005.⁵² Island Chill is predominantly sold in the South Pacific, but the company has plans to expand its U.S. and foreign markets. Like FIJI Water, Island Chill is packaged in a square shaped bottle

⁵² This information was given to me over email by a co-owner of Island Chill.

and has hibiscus flowers on the label indicating that the company may be trying to “piggyback” on FIJI Water’s marketing success. Island Chill differs from American-owned FIJI Water because it is owned by M R Dayal & Sons, an Indo-Fijian-owned multifaceted business specializing in international real estate, mining, and timber industries (ISLAND CHILL 2009). Island Chill proves that it is possible for a Fijian-owned bottled water company to be successful – yet unlike other Fijian-owned bottled water companies, Island Chill has a successful parent company, M R Dayal & Sons, that invests in its growth.

Growth in Consumption of Bottled Water in Fiji

The recent growth in consumption of bottled water by Fijians is another indicator of the commoditization of water in Fiji. In Fiji, as throughout the world, bottled water is a relatively new consumer product. Although bottled water has been around for a number of decades, the growth in consumption throughout the world has been especially pronounced in recent years. Some interviewees noted that consumption of bottled water in Fiji has increased recently as well:

What I noticed most people now always carry around bottled water; I don’t see that years ago. They also now realize what water means to the body. It’s the people, see, now you seen people move around with the bottled water, but you don’t see that three or five years ago.

Despite speaking to numerous representatives from the Fijian bottled water industry, I was unable to locate any detailed statistics on bottled water consumption in Fiji, but what matters for this project is the point that Fijians perceived an increase in bottled water consumption. A noticeable increase in consumption of bottled water in Fiji could be attributed to a number of causes similar to those that have increased its consumption

elsewhere: an increase in the amount of bottled water on the market, more concern about the quality of tap water supplies, and the perception that bottled water is a healthier alternative to tap water. In addition, according to a FIJI Water employee:

All of the employees who work here get a water ration, per week, and one of the things I hoped to start while I was here, is if you bring back your one carton, then you can get two cartons the following week. So if you bring back your empty bottles basically, if you help us recycle, and it is just this process, so that is cool.

By giving over 500 FIJI Water employees weekly rations of water, FIJI Water is not only providing its employees with water, it is promoting the consumption of FIJI Water within Fiji. When Fijians see other consumers walking around with bottles of FIJI Water, the company gets more name recognition, and people are more compelled to consume bottled water themselves, specifically FIJI Water.

Marketing the High Quality of Fijian Water

Respondents sometimes combined traditional understandings of water with contemporary, commercial, and scientific discourses propagated by FIJI Water. FIJI Water and some of its employees are well aware of the importance of funneling large amounts of money into marketing as evidenced by a statement from an interview with an American FIJI Water employee:

All of that marketing, you have to pay a lot of money for it; they pay to put a big billboard up and to put it on T.V.....have different ads, that is the most expensive part actually, more than producing anything.....is to market. We just have to get the water out of the ground and make people want to buy it.

FIJI Water's success in marketing and selling billions of bottles of water around the world verified what some Fijians already believed about the quality of water in Fiji, that "it is the best water [...] top in the world."

Just when this company [FIJI Water] is exporting water out to various countries from there, then we know that people from the rest of the countries want this water. That is how we know that it is the best water. Even though there is plenty water in supermarkets, yeah? There is plenty water out there, even in Fiji there is one, Island Chill, there is another Aqua [other Fijian bottled water brands], about three or four water companies in Fiji, but FIJI Water Company is the best. Top in Fiji, top in America, top in the world.

This statement from a *kava* seller in Drauniivi illustrates how consumption of FIJI Water throughout the world confirms for some Fijians the exceptional quality of Fijian water.

In this man's eyes, why else would people from all around the world pay to consume water from the remote islands of Fiji? For some interviewees, the high quality of FIJI Water is further verified by its success in distant foreign markets and on television:

FIJI water is the best, best water. We all can prove it, yeah. We are sending it, exporting it, right to Sudan, and the Arabs they are drinking FIJI Water there, in Iraq, there is FIJI Water there. In some movies, American movies from Hollywood, we can see FIJI Water in it.

As exclaimed by a FIJI Water employee,

I don't know if you all watch Grey's Anatomy or any of these shows on T.V....you sometimes see FIJI Water! I think I see it in movies every once in a while, so FIJI Water is very popular, especially overseas.

This statement makes it appear as if seeing a bottle of FIJI Water on T.V. is a result of the water's popularity, when in fact it is often a deliberate attempt by the company to make it appear that the product is popular and desired by high status consumers. By selling FIJI Water in far off places and strategically placing it in prominent movies and television

shows that are seen even in Fiji, FIJI Water is contributing to the perception some Fijians have that FIJI Water is the “top in Fiji, top in America, and top in the world.”

Every interviewee was aware that FIJI Water is sold all over the world, but their perceptions of why they think it is so popular throughout the world varied. One Rakiraki village elder explained that FIJI Water was sold all over the world because “it’s clean and that one is the first class water in the.....they said some of the other [bottled waters] they don’t know whether it is clean or not, the best, one of the best in the world.” This woman has the perception that FIJI Water is better than other waters because of its cleanliness. She has no scientific evidence that it is any cleaner than other waters, but nonetheless believes that it is.

Three respondents differentiated FIJI Water from other types of bottled water because of its alleged magical or mystical qualities. As a kindergarten teacher from Drauniivi put it,

It is the best water. To me it is the magic water. That is what I believe. Because whoever is sick, take that water, that sickness gone. If ever you’ve got a headache, and I experience that too, whenever I have a stomachache or headache, when I drink FIJI Water, thing gone, it’s magic. When using that you have to pray, give thanks to the Lord, that water he gave that water, its magic.

Her language is very powerful because of the healing powers she attributes to FIJI Water. Another Drauniivi resident also attributed healing powers to the water, “we all think of it as medicine; when we get sick we drink FIJI Water.” Although Fijians in the region may have always perceived the water to be “the magic water” or a healing elixir from above, they may not have thought to bottle it and sell it without witnessing FIJI Water’s success or the company’s marketing and advertising campaigns.

FIJI Water's marketing also appears to contribute to respondents' perceptions about the high mineral content of FIJI Water. Respondents mentioned the high mineral content of FIJI Water as a quality that makes it especially desirable for consumption. The natural volcanic filtering process FIJI Water goes through contributes to the water's higher than normal levels of silica, purportedly giving the water its distinct taste and providing health benefits. Although it seems that high silica content is an obscure quality of water for a number of respondents to mention, many did, such as this interviewee:

[FIJI Water is] also popular, too, because look at the chemical contents of water, and they [FIJI Water] said, I don't know how true it is, this is the only bottled water that has silica. Yeah, and secondly it has to do with silica to the aging of people, but I don't know how true that is.

A relatively educated Fijian man's response indicated that he was aware of the effect that advertising was having on perceptions of FIJI Water:

There is two things, one they, the bottled water company, they are very good in doing their sales, marketing sales, yeah? And two, they go around advertising this is the only water around the world that has silica.

FIJI Water advertises the silica content of its water and its purported health benefits in this way:

Silica is an essential trace mineral that influences bone formation and connective tissue development, and is thought to improve the thickness of skin, hair and nails. Silica may also help prevent osteoarthritis through its effects on cartilage composition. Research shows that silica can also help protect against Alzheimer's disease. The suggested daily intake for silica is 20-50 milligrams for adults. The good news: FIJI Water is rich in silica with 85 milligrams per liter. Drinking FIJI Water is an easy way to add silica to your balanced diet (FIJI Water 2009).

Here FIJI Water offers scientific discourse that supports the assertion that it is higher than normal quality water. Although some Fijians may have always thought that the water

had special qualities that made it healthier than other waters, scientific evidence is now available to back up their claims, making them even more likely to believe in the health benefits of the water. It could be argued that the silica in water has no real health benefits, but because some people perceive that it does, it changes their overall perception of the water's quality.

Some respondents also mentioned the history behind the region's water when discussing the water's quality, connecting the success of the water company to the historically-known quality of the water. When I asked a local Indo-Fijian businessman why he thought FIJI Water was sold all over the world, he gave me the following response:

There are two reasons. If I go on a traditional reason I am going to put two points in here, two views. One view is, in the whole of Fiji, the province of Ra is being respected, in a traditional way, in such a thing that they are the most paramount people of our country. [...] Rakiraki, Ra, dominates, the whole, the whole place of Fiji just because in the tradition the ancestors' God of the Fijians, are flowing from the Nakauvadra Ranges⁵³, that is, that is the place. So where the natural water is, that water is coming, it is flowing from the Nakauvadra Ranges, that is the water.....it has been blessed by the almighty, and it has been blessed by the people of Fiji. So any borehole that has been dug, the water that is coming from the hills of Nakauvadra, that's the place where it goes.

His first reason for the company's success stems from the water's source, which according to him, is a traditionally special place within Fiji, the Nakauvadra Range, which has "been blessed by the almighty." He implies that it is well known throughout

⁵³ Nakauvadra Range is the mountain range from which the aquifer that FIJI Water draws its water from is located.

Fiji that the Nakauvadra Range is where the ancestors' God blessed the water, making it the best water in Fiji. The second reason he gives for the company's success is,

.....the environment is so natural here, undisturbed, no pollution, free of everything, that itself qualifies to be the best water. That itself qualifies to be the best water, not in our country, but maybe in the whole world.

His second reason connects the high quality of Fiji's natural environment to the high quality of the water, creating one of the "top waters in the world," and further supports its popularity. He also provides a mythological discourse about the value of the water:

And also the traditions between the Indians and the Fijians, if you go and study the history of India, in one of the Lord Krishna time, the Lord Krishna always gets involved with the snake god. The snake god. Ra, that's why our Fijians and Indians we cannot live apart, we are going to be together. The most strongest snake, where the Lord Krishna, when he was a young boy, took the male snake out from a big pond, and the female snake asked the male snake requested....you know if you are going to take my husband away please throw him in such a place where you don't find that bad. So he took the snake and when he threw, it turned to Nakauvadra Ranges, where the snake god is there, that's the ties. And with the Fijian, their snake god, Degei, which is called Degei is there. So that Degei lives with the snake god that comes from India, so that's a snake, where they didn't know the story of Ra, Krishna and the Indians in India didn't know about it. But they knew that it was being thrown, the snake, to the Nakauvadra Ranges. So it is a snake, it's also a snake (using hand gestures to articulate). And that's the snake, where the mother, the power, sometimes it carries traditional power with you. [...] So that's where the relation comes over, and that is why we always respect the Nakauvadra Ranges, and when they tasted Natural Waters, see Americans, you know it was.....it was being bought by Gilmore⁵⁴, who started the Natural Waters here, and that's where, if you.....drink the water, the natural water, the, the, from....Naseyani, the natural waters, it's a different, it's a beautiful water, see. So that's that what has been linked.

⁵⁴ David Gilmore, a Canadian, was the original founder of FIJI Water. Refer to the Chapter Two for more information on Gilmore and the creation of FIJI Water.

The narrative this man provides links Indian and Fijian history and mythology to the exceptional quality of the water from the Nakauvadra Range. He thinks that the fact that both Indian and Fijian cultures have myths that exemplify the quality of the Nakauvadra Range's water solidifies the high quality of FIJI Water.

In sum, respondents perceived FIJI Water to be the "best water in the world" because of personal experience, history, myth, mineral content, and because of its worldwide desirability. Respondents' positive perceptions about the quality of FIJI Water could also be an indicator of the success of FIJI Water's marketing campaign within Fiji. The MNC draws upon the mineral content of the water and Fijian religious or folk beliefs to market the water as pure and magical which is impacting how Fijians themselves view the water. As the perceptions of some Fijians toward water have shifted, so too have attitudes towards who should benefit from the industry.

Changes in the *Vanua*, Increasing Stratification and Jealousy

Stratification between those who benefit from the bottled water industry and those who don't can alter the social and cultural organization of villages. A sense of community centered around sharing is central to Fijian village life. All of the villagers I interviewed said they enjoyed village life, with most giving answers similar to this man from Rakiraki Village:

One thing I like about living in this village, what is our community living. Because all of us we normally share what is going on, what has to be done. With other families we have to look after. It's a part of our social set up. Our set up is made up from a unit a family to extended family to a further extended family and to the *vanua*, this is how we are. You can hardly sit down if you see a problem to a family you have to see and ask what can we assist? How can we help? This is something I like being, living here.

The concept *vanua* is important for understanding how Fijian societies and communities function:

Vanua means "the land area one is identified with", but also "the people, their traditions and customs, beliefs and values, and the various other institutions established for the sake of achieving harmony, solidarity and prosperity within a particular social context. [...] It provides a sense of identity and belonging. [...] The *vanua* [...] is an extension of the concept of the self" (Sienkiewicz 1983:1).

The Fijian concept of *vanua* refers to more than just the physical land with which a person identifies. It also refers to their social and cultural beliefs and practices.

According to the principle of *vanua*, daily life in a village is more than individuals working to meet their own needs, it is individuals working together to meet the needs of the entire village. By working together on a daily basis to meet common goals, a sense of community, identity, and belonging is constantly being negotiated and formed among villagers.

The dominant philosophy behind how daily life should transpire in Fiji is much different than the predominantly hurried, goal-oriented, way of living in more industrialized countries such as the United States. A local Indo-Fijian business owner expresses the predominant Fijian philosophy in a unique fashion:

You know, like you know, what Shakespeare said "what is a life full of care, who does not have the time to stand and stare?" So when you come over here you get what it is like, you are an American lady.

This man was trying to convey the way in which Fijians make sure to take time to enjoy daily life, a value often lost in more "modern" or "industrialized" societies. Do Fijians feel that they are able to preserve this cultural ideal of enjoying daily life even with all of

the changes occurring in their social and cultural lives? Does a corporate or global culture, represented by FIJI Water, clash with ideals or the reality of village life?

Many respondents perceived benefits from FIJI Water to be unequally distributed and indirectly influencing *vanua*. This theme was expressed by respondents on two different levels, between individuals and between villages. If stakeholders perceive that the gap between those who are gaining benefits from the industry and those who are not is growing too large, tension between stakeholders may occur. A growing gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” could result in jealousy or competition between the two stakeholder groups and a disruption in the sense of community that is so important in Fijian culture.

Individually, some respondents appeared to be envious or jealous of people who work for FIJI Water or who are receiving benefits from FIJI Water that they are not receiving. FIJI Water appeared to be disrupting the *vanua* for some of the residents by not giving all stakeholders equal access to benefits. Although this type of discourse was more obvious from villagers not from one of the villages close to the plant, in a few instances, villagers living within the villages close to the plant also appeared to be jealous of benefits others were receiving. I asked a school teacher from Rabulu village if she perceived any jealousy between the people who have the jobs at the company and those who don't and she replied:

SV: Yes, from those who are working at the factory, like they are just having wages for their own house, for their own family, they not sharing, especially this kind of kindergarten and churches they need support, financial support. [.....] Yes, yes there are.

Interviewer: Because it is hard to get a job there, right?

SV: Yes, it is hard to get a job, those who have a job, and those who don't have a job, they be different, right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

SV: People who get a job there, they can support themselves, and it is hard for people that do not have a job that pays well.

From a global north perspective, jealousy seems like a natural response. However, not many respondents admitted during interviews, as this woman did, that they feel jealousy toward people who have jobs at FIJI Water or who live in the villages that receive more donations from FIJI Water, or that the *vanua* of their village was being disrupted. If I had been able to interview more people in the villages close to the plant, I may have found more people with these types of feelings.

However, if the gap continues to widen between those receiving benefits and those not, it is likely that there will be an increasing number of people expressing these types of feelings towards the individuals and villages that are benefitting to a greater degree from the company.

A number of villagers commented that the presence of FIJI Water had altered their social lives. This man from Rakiraki Village disliked the changes occurring in his village and attributed the changing way of life to an influx of native Fijians from towns who are trying to get jobs at FIJI Water:

We find it difficult to control....our Fijian way of life, because [of] the changes that take place, it brings about changes in the village too. People coming from town to villages....there is a link....when they come, they come in from town into the villages and that seems to be changing our way of life.

His perception that the negative social impacts in villages are a result of the influx of people living in villages to work at FIJI Water was typical of interviewees. Comments

were often made that changes in village life were not a result of the people themselves changing, but a result of outside forces causing their lives to change. Another man from Drauniivi had similar sentiments about people simply visiting his village:

MN: What I dislike about living in this village is only outsiders, when they come in our *vanua*, outsiders, outsiders.....

Interviewer: Outsiders?

MN: Yeah, people from other villages....that do not respect the rules of our village.

Interviewer: Like if they come to visit?

MN: Yeah, when they come to visit.

Interviewer: And they act disrespectful?

MN: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you have a lot of problems with that?

MN: Yeah, mostly plenty they come to our village just because they want to drink liquor, because our village is the only village around this *tekina*⁵⁵ that is near to the FIJI Water and plenty is working there, plenty workers, the FIJI Water, yeah, come to our village.

What both these men convey in their interviews are perceptions that changes to ways of living in villages are occurring as a result of the presence of outsiders, specifically the new FIJI Water employees, and that these changes ultimately result in a loss of control over village life. The “outsiders” they mention are not following village social and cultural etiquette, resulting in tension between villagers and newcomers. Breaking informal social or cultural rules, such as drinking alcohol in the village or not sharing what you have with others results in difficulty maintaining social structure and a sense of community within the villages. Ultimately, outside economic, social, and cultural impacts can result in changes to daily village life.

⁵⁵ A *tekina* is a group of Fijian villages administered by a *buli*, or a Fijian administrative officer that is below a *roko tui*, or senior officer.

Changes can also be seen in some of the villages in the ways that traditional social and cultural functions are being performed, which also impacts the overall *vanua*.

Traditionally, village functions such as funerals and weddings would be paid for by family and friends. Social functions such as funerals appear to be impacted by donations from FIJI Water, as discussed in the following passage:

In the village when somebody dies, they ask for water or anything they need for it. They [FIJI Water] are a great help to our village. Stuff for the various individual family, when someone passed away you know, their family, FIJI Water they provide us with food, ingredients, or whatever is needed. Whenever there is a function, in this *vanua*, in this village yeah, FIJI Water can provide them with whatever they want, a FIJI fund⁵⁶.

Although donations from FIJI Water are probably well intended and do help villagers in times of need, care must be taken not to alter traditional ways of living that are central to village life. If too much dependency is formed, villages may find it difficult to return to traditional customs if FIJI Water were to stop donating to such functions. I did not find any evidence that the donations from FIJI Water are hurting village social ties, just evidence that the donations are changing how the functions are performed because of the additional monetary assistance from the company.

Of course, even without the presence of FIJI Water, village life would constantly be changing because from both outside and internal factors. Village social and cultural life in general may be changing with the presence of FIJI Water, but for employees of FIJI Water, personal and social lives are changing to an even greater degree.

⁵⁶ This man from Drauniivi is referring to the Natural Waters of Viti Ltd. Trust (NWVL) which is funded from a percentage of company revenue and gives directly back to the local communities surrounding the plant.

Work Ethic Differences

As discussed above, Fijians have traditionally valued a philosophy of daily life that differs from a global north or more “modern” philosophy of daily life. Work expectations for FIJI Water employees contradict some social and cultural norms of Fijian village life. Managers of FIJI Water expect employees to adapt to foreign work ideals that are not always complementary to traditional ways of making a living, such as working on a 24-hour schedule with eight-hour rotating shifts, year-round, and for hourly wages. Because the factory is located in a remote part of Fiji, for many employees it is the first time they have worked in hourly wage jobs, and thus they may not be accustomed to the continuous commitment required by such jobs. Many of the lower-level FIJI Water employees from the villages who work in the factory perform structured, low-skilled and repetitive work, much different than the work of previous generations in Fiji. According to a woman from the Ministry of Fijian Affairs:

Before FIJI Water came in, most of them [villagers in the five villages closest to the FIJI Water plant] were unemployed. They relied mainly on.....well obviously cash crop, small scale cash crop. And most of them would just go to the sea and get whatever they could get and sell them or whatever they had left in their family gardens, they sell those. But when FIJI Water came in, it really made a difference, especially in their income earning capacity of the villages. They get to build better houses for their children, for the families, better houses. They are able to feed their children well, send them to school. FIJI Water has made a big impact on the villages in the area.

Before the arrival of FIJI Water many employees weren't unemployed, but were subsistence farmers or fishermen/women and not wage laborers. More traditional types of employment in Fiji change seasonally, are locally or family owned and operated, and don't function on precise continuous time schedules like jobs at FIJI Water.

Approximately one out of every three Fijians in the labor force is still working in more traditional types of labor in the agriculture, forestry, or fishing industries (FIJI Bureau of Statistics). The remaining two-thirds of workers are predominantly employed in manufacturing, wholesale and retail trades, restaurants and hotels, transportation, storage, and communication, and community, social, and personal services (FIJI Bureau of Statistics 2008).

Although most Fijians are now employed in the service and manufacturing industries, many traditional work values still remain, particularly in rural areas like the province of Ra, creating tension between traditional values and real life circumstances. FIJI Water employees and non-FIJI Water employees both commented on contradictions between village social and cultural expectations and work expectations for FIJI Water employees. An upper-level American FIJI Water employee discussed some of the challenges the company faces in dealing with conflicting work ethics:

It is a challenge and this is something from your sociology perspective that is always a challenge for us.....trying to work with Fiji people to get our HR [Human Resource] systems so that they work with Fiji culture.

This FIJI Water employee is referring to the difficulty of maintaining a work environment that is productive from a business perspective in terms of profit and efficiency but at the same time takes into consideration Fijian cultural differences. Because it is an American company, this employee notes that careful attention must be paid to how they work with contradictory aspects of Fijian culture. According to this FIJI Water representative, the company does take into consideration some cultural factors, such as holidays and religious practices, when planning work schedules or events, but as

discussed below, there are aspects of social life that some FIJI Water employees must give up if they want to be successful in their jobs at FIJI Water.

Along with adapting to a foreign work ethic, Fijian workers at the company are also required to adjust their roles in the communities in which they live because of their jobs at FIJI Water. Taking part in community gatherings in Fiji is a frequent and expected part of village life, yet many factory workers have had to miss out on this important aspect of village life because of the water bottling plant has initiated three eight-hour long shifts to keep up with demand. As this FIJI Water employee pointed out:

You know here, if there is a death, if there is a wedding, we just whatever, you go and while you are grieving you stay there for a week or two, so when our employees do that it is a big deal. We, you know, we can't run the lines if everybody decides to take off for a funeral, especially if it is somebody here in the village, so that's a challenge because, and we have dealt with employees who like employees who have passed away. Generally people here are younger so it hasn't been a big thing, but I think at least one guy died in the last year. He used to work here, and we have to say only so many people could go, and you know representatives from these shifts, but if it is your off shift obviously you can go.

This interviewee noted that it is no longer acceptable for workers from the nearby villages to miss work because of community events such funerals or fundraisers.

According to the same FIJI Water employee, employees would most likely be able to attend funerals for immediate family members, but not for someone who isn't immediate family. Despite the importance of attending these community affairs for village social solidarity, if villagers want to keep their jobs at the factory they must be willing to sacrifice some community involvement. Rather than adjusting the factory to a more Fijian style of work, factory managers, who are typically foreign, have imposed a corporate model based on efficiency that is unfamiliar to many Fijians from small

villages. Although I did not get to discuss issues such as not being able to attend a village funeral with FIJI Water employees, it would be interesting in a future study to talk to Fijians about how they address these types of issues.

Conclusion

The important impacts of FIJI Water's presence in the region are not merely economic, but social and cultural as well. FIJI Water and the associated labor immigration of plant workers are cultural and social forces in nearby communities, as expressed through the commodification of water, impacts on *vanua* or community solidarity, and changing work ethics. Stakeholders must consider these types of social, cultural, and as will be discussed in the next chapter, environmental impacts, not just economic ones when evaluating FIJI Water and other MNC-dominated industries. Not addressing these social and cultural issues could be detrimental to FIJI Water if it wants to produce bottled water in Fiji for the long run because they are so fundamental to the daily lives and *vanua* of Fijians.

Chapter Seven – Perceived Environmental Impacts

Despite the integral role the natural environment plays in the daily lives of many Fijian villagers only nine of the 21 interviewees mentioned any environmental impacts from FIJI Water. Interviewees focused more on the perceived economic, social, and cultural impacts of FIJI Water than on environmental impacts. Interviewees may have not perceived many environmental impacts from FIJI Water because they do not exist, or because they lack the knowledge or experience to be able to detect changes to their natural environment.

Reliable and detailed information was not available to prove that any sort of environmental damage is being done to Fiji's environment by FIJI Water, but at the same time no credible information has been presented that it has *not* been causing any environmental damage. I did not find any documented cases in Fiji supporting concerns that extracting water is causing any major environmental changes such as a drop in the water table. Furthermore, because the industry is still relatively new, environmental damage may emerge later. Nonetheless, some stakeholders already criticize the environmental damage done by the bottled water industry, including FIJI Water.

Positive Environmental Impacts

About a third of the interviewees discussed positive environmental impacts from FIJI Water. Positive environmental themes include a shift in awareness of Fijians and the FIJI Water Company towards the environment, a decrease in agricultural chemicals used in the region, and an increase in recycling programs throughout Fiji. The most frequently

perceived positive environmental impact was a shift in attitudes of stakeholders toward the environment.

Once water is seen as something that is profitable, it becomes beneficial for the stakeholders involved to protect the source of the water – the natural environment, and thus the source of the profit. The FIJI Water Company, the Fijian government, Fijian citizens, and consumers of FIJI Water are some of the stakeholders that have a shared interest in keeping Fiji’s water sources pristine, so that quality water can continue to be extracted, sold, and consumed. As discussed by an American FIJI Water representative, FIJI Water has recently taken a number of steps to protect the environment and the company’s water source:

Partly because it is an important part of our watershed and partly because it’s an important part for FIJI Water, for our green initiative, that is going on now, since the middle of last year, and.....to be making our product, as.....well green, you know, sustainable. We are actually now a carbon negative company.....or carbon negative product because we have invested in things like the Sovi Basin and to protect it along with Conservation International. So we have put through our owners, and FIJI Water Foundation, we’ve.....and in coordination with Conservation International and these local villages, we have put in the money that will help to preserve that area in perpetuity, and that like serves as a carbon offset but, it also helps our local people.

FIJI Water believes that taking these steps will help make its product more “green” and “sustainable” and will ultimately “help local people” and the environment.

FIJI Water is not the only stakeholder that has an interest in taking care of the Fijian natural environment. Fijians living in the villages surrounding the plant also appear to have a new found interest in protecting the environment in which they live. Many Fijians are becoming increasingly dependent upon the well-being of the

environment because of their employment in the bottled water industry and the income it provides. Without a quality water source to extract water from, FIJI Water would be unable to produce its product, and Fijians working at the factory and in related jobs would have to find new sources of income. As discussed in the previous chapters, even Fijians who are not directly employed by FIJI Water have seen positive changes in their daily lives through donations and investments made by FIJI Water and are becoming increasingly dependent upon the company for the benefits it provides. Regardless of whether the impacts of FIJI Water are positive or negative, this increased dependency of villagers on FIJI Water for employment and community donations appears to have led some Fijians to take a greater interest in protecting the environment in which they reside.

For example, according to a kindergarten teacher from Drauniivi, FIJI Water has altered the ways some Fijians view the environment:

.....Bring in money [FIJI Water], not only money, but change the environment too. Before [the arrival of FIJI Water] we don't care about rubbish, now when FIJI Water was here, give us the big bag [to pick up plastic bottles for recycling], we have to everyday in our life we wake up we have to, see that our community is clean, like to pick up bits and pieces of rubbish, that is like what we used to doing now.

The village, the main problem is the water, but now FIJI Water dig boreholes, so water is, we don't have to worry about the water now. And another thing is the rubbish, I mean the empty bottles, the cans, FIJI Water brought in the big resin bag, the big plastic bags, and put it around the villages, all the villages, and the big plastic bags in the school on the main road to clear everything.

Her claim, like those of many others, is that keeping the environment free of litter wasn't a big concern for villagers until FIJI Water taught them the importance of environmental cleanliness and stewardship. By providing the tools and incentives needed to clean up

their communities, FIJI Water is shaping how some Fijians perceive the cleanliness of the environment in which they live. Thus, FIJI Water is helping encourage villagers to clean up their communities.

According to a few interviewees, residents of the villages nearby the plant did not “worry about their water supply” until the arrival of FIJI Water. This representative from the Ministry of Fijian Affairs discusses how the view towards local water supplies has changed:

But, FIJI Water...before, they never used to worry about their water supply especially from Drauniivi, Drauniivi is a big village. Drauniivi is one of the biggest villages in Rakiraki, in Ra. But they still have a problem with their water, with the village supply water source. Before they never worried about, I guess it is the when FIJI Water came into the area, then they started to realize the importance of, you know, getting not a reliable, but a clean water system. Because I remember we used to go out there, we were, you know, we used to think twice about drinking from the villages in the area.

This woman made an interesting point regarding FIJI Water’s positive influence on how people view the cleanliness of local water sources. The changes in villagers’ views towards local water sources appear to be positively impacting the quality of water in the villages near the plant because FIJI Water has been pressured by villagers to improve the water supplies in some of the villages. It is possible that before FIJI Water began giving them assistance for water projects, villagers felt that their water sources were adequate and that the government was not in a position to help fix or maintain them. With the arrival of FIJI Water or NGOs, villagers may have begun to feel that they can demand better water sources, which has in turn positively changed the quality of water available in a number of villages.

FIJI Water is located nearby the Yaqara Pastoral Company (YPC), and a former board member of this prominent cattle company mentioned that FIJI Water's presence has changed how the YPC does business. When I asked if he had noticed any negative environmental impacts from FIJI Water, he commented that:

IN: The only negative thing that I noticed with FIJI Water, first they want to enlarge their...buffer zone, which they don't allow any chemicals, anything to be used within the region. That has affected some of the agricultural areas.

Interviewer: They had to move some of the cattle right?

IN: Yeah, but when we look at the economics of that, by doing that, they are driving more return in on their water, which bring[s] more revenue into the country in such a way, in the form of tax or whatever.

His comments bring up positive environmental impacts as well as mixed economic impacts from FIJI Water. On one hand, the cattle company reduced the amount of chemicals used in the region that might leach into water supplies, but at the same time it was forced to adjust where and how their cattle are fed, which add additional costs to the local business. To this respondent, the trade-off between losing money in the cattle business and gaining money in the bottled water industry is ultimately economically beneficial for Fiji, as the bottled water industry has more potential to bring revenue into the country as a whole in comparison to the cattle business.

One-third of those interviewed mentioned the plastic bottle recycling programs sponsored by FIJI Water as a positive environmental impact. For example, when one Rakiraki resident noted, "I have noticed no disturbance on the surface of the land.....now they [FIJI Water] are looking to recollect the bottles back, recycling it."

This indicates that not only have some respondents not noticed any environmental impacts but they perceive an *improvement* in the environment because of FIJI Water's

recycling programs. When I asked another villager from Drauniivi if he perceived any environmental impacts, he commented that:

MN: No. But the plastic, two months ago, FIJI Water brought bags to all of the villages, for every household to collect bottles, FIJI Water bottles, all plastic bottles. We have to collect the empty one[s], we take it to the FIJI Water, they buy it again from us, recycle it. That is one good thing that FIJI Water does for our village.

Interviewer: Did they just start doing that? Picking up the plastic?

MN: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, that is a good idea, otherwise it is hard to dispose of the bottles.

MN: Yeah, before they just dispose of the bottles everywhere....but through their recycle, we have to collect the bottles, we have to bring it to them, they give us the case, we take the plastic, recycle it, go through the bottles again.

It isn't surprising that many interviewees perceived FIJI Water's recycling programs as a positive impact because it appears to be a win-win situation for villagers nearby the plant. They can earn money or free bottled water for picking up empty plastic bottles and at the same time clean up their communities.

A FIJI Water employee discussed how the recycling programs works in conjunction with company efforts to reduce the amount of plastic that goes into its bottles:

We are at the same time trying to cut down on the amount of plastic that goes into our product. We have ongoing testing, actually there was a group that just left yesterday that had been doing trials, for you know, looking to reduce the amount of plastic by even 10 percent that goes into a bottle, and try to inject some amount of recycled plastic into that, also we're really upping our recycling [.....] we have coming these big recycling containers for the local villages here, with initiatives that we started at the schools and in the villages with women's groups and things, they bring in bottles and tin cans and then we start like funds basically for their groups. It is not only for individuals to make money but we are hoping to use it as a way to invest and do drives and different sort of

fundraising techniques. Church groups, or school groups, or sports groups or anything else like that.

Although FIJI Water's recycling program may be having positive environmental effects on the local communities, many respondents mentioned the fact that FIJI Water often entices villagers to pick up litter with monetary rewards. This indicates that villagers may not be taking care of the environment because they want to, but because of the monetary incentives. This type of enticement could be seen as a tool to enforce foreign ideals of environmental cleanliness on villages. Although it may not be intentional or having any negative repercussions, by providing incentives FIJI Water promotes standards of environmental cleanliness standards that were not present in the villages before its arrival.⁵⁷ Would villagers continue to clean up the plastic bottles if they were not being compensated by FIJI Water? Regardless of the answer to this question, for the time being, many stakeholders seem to have positive perception of FIJI Water's recycling initiative and the way it has cleaned up their communities. But, other respondents focused more on negative environmental impacts.

Negative Environmental Impacts

Only about one-fourth of interviewees brought up negative environmental impacts, including (1) Fijians lack of knowledge about environmental issues, (2) a desire for FIJI Water to focus more on environmental concerns, (3) and a perceived increase in environmental pollution.

⁵⁷ It is also possible that recycling programs were not necessary before the arrival of the company. This is because the company's own plastic bottles are probably a large percentage of the plastic waste in the region.

All of the interviewees that mentioned negative environmental impacts had high levels of education in comparison to the interviewees that did not perceive any environmental impacts. Furthermore, all respondents who mentioned negative impacts lived outside of the five villages close to the plant. The similar educational and residential status of these interviewees indicates that their point of view may be impacted by these statuses since their responses differed from the interviewees, who had lower levels of education and lived nearby the plant. For example, when I asked a relatively highly educated interviewee from Rakiraki if he thought people living in the villages nearby the plant perceived any environmental impacts he commented that:

IN: They hardly can see that because of the lack of knowledge of the environment.

JU: They don't know yet?

IN: [They] don't know yet.

His comment indicates that some people living in the villages close to the plant don't detect any environmental impacts because of their lack of knowledge about the environment. Unless people have the knowledge and tools to detect environmental impacts, is it unlikely that they will notice them unless they are more tangible such as the drying up of village wells. In conjunction with this lack of expertise, some villagers employ mythological or non-scientific explanations for environmental changes:

Interviewer: Is there a worry though if they [FIJI Water] take it [water] out too fast that there could be maybe environmental problems, or it could dry up, if they take out too much water?

MN: That depends on the one that is above, yeah? If he wants to close the factory, the water.

Interviewer: Is anybody worried about that?

MN: No, we are not worried.

This interviewee seems to place all concerns about local water supplies into the hands of the “the one above,” indicating that he believes scientific data is irrelevant. Although FIJI Water is taking some steps to protect the Fijian environment, if Fijian stakeholders are not concerned about the water supply or the environment, less pressure will be put on FIJI Water to truly address potential environmental issues.

A few interviewees mentioned their wishes for FIJI Water to address more environmental concerns through programs, education, and donations. A local government employee commented on how she thought FIJI Water could improve their programs:

Even though that they placed big litter bins around there, I think FIJI Water could do a lot more on environmental issues. They could do more. They could play a big, a major role in the, especially for this area I guess it’s really the responsibility of the people in the area. You know the programs that they have in the villages, I think they are not focusing on environmental problems. Because actually I think that they need to come up with a lot of various programs on environment, environmental issues.

Although she saw FIJI Water’s focus on recycling programs as positive, she thought that FIJI Water needed “to come up with a lot of various programs” to address more environmental issues. She noted that FIJI Water has various programs, for schools and sports, but believed that FIJI Water needed to “redivert its attention” to environmental issues in part because the villagers themselves are not aware of the importance of “keeping the environment clean.” She went on to discuss the lack of awareness of environmental issues in the villages:

Environmental impacts.....that is one area that I would like FIJI Water to really work on because most of the villages within the community they are not really aware of the importance of keeping the environment clean, very important. I guess that is one area that maybe they should redivert their

attention there, especially now that...we are more in tune to environmental issues and [...]I have noticed that most of their villages, especially for the ones located along the coast, there are two villages located along the coast area, Togowere and Drauniivi. If you go past the area you will notice there is a lot of litter in the area. You know, they have come up with a...I think they placed large litter bins around the villages. It is just that these people, if you go past the area you can see that...they really are not aware of the importance of the impact it has on the environment, keeping the environment clean, you still see a lot of abuse on the mangroves, yes....very important..... for the whole water system, the marine life very important and I see that there has been a lot of rubbish.

Some respondents perceived the transportation, production, and plastic from the bottled water industry to be “damaging the environment.” According to a student from the University of the South Pacific in Suva, who also happened to be a resident of the village of Rakiraki:

To look from the money making people and what people get, I can say that it offer benefit[s], but in other terms, like with all the trucks and the land and all the stuff, to build that such big plant for the FIJI Water, I can say that they are sort of like damaging that environment, you know. The other villages which lives there, even though there is no sound, but you hardly even hear any sound coming from the factory it is just silent, but you know its lots of fear from vehicles, pollution and all those stuff.....destructions of the environment.

Though FIJI Water is improving the Fijian economy, the vehicles used to transport the bottled water may be damaging the environment.

Although few respondents claimed to be bothered by the increasing truck traffic from FIJI Water, one did note that it was taking a toll on the condition of the roads:

AR: Earlier what I noticed, you know the road condition when you go to the Naseyani plant, the water plant, I guess it is from the weight of the trucks keep going every day.

Interviewer: Yeah, twenty-four hours.

AR: Ah...twenty-four hours! They say the, the surface of the road is coming off.

Interviewer: From so much use?

AR: Yeah, sometimes you just wonder what kind of company... how did they make these kind of roads too. True, the construction companies that work in this area to make that road, it is just a small part there. And they just come into the factory and the top surface of the road is just coming off.

Since FIJI Water does not currently pay taxes to the government, it is the Fijian people, not FIJI Water, who will be paying to fix the conditions of the roads from the excess use.

The primary port that FIJI Water ships from is Lautoka, located approximately 70 kilometers southwest of the plant. In 2007, 10,000 containers were loaded in Lautoka with FIJI Water to be shipped across the Pacific Ocean, generating over seven million in revenue to Fiji ports (FIJI Water 2009).

When asked what sort of environmental problems he perceived, a University of the South Pacific student commented that:

Well...water bottles, even though it brings a lot of money to the country like in terms of profits or earnings and all but for instance there are some problems to the environment, you know plastics. And they have been coming up with....FIJI Green ideas about you know, but I don't think so. It is FIJI Green that they are doing something for the environment because of plastics, and plastics it is very hard to be decomposed by bacteria. It's impossible. So...and they didn't even set up a recycling, you know stuff like recycling method, or to tell people about "okay all FIJI Water bottles need to be put in this critical place so that we can do some recycling" and FIJI Water bottles is everywhere! You can see it! Yeah, not only FIJI Water bottles but also Coke.

As he notes, although FIJI Water is taking steps to address some environmental concerns through FIJI Green, the fact remains that it is still using plastic which he correctly states as being "very hard to be decomposed by bacteria."

When explaining to students that the FIJI Water factory runs on a twenty-four hour schedule, a FIJI Water employee commented that:

If you came across this place [FIJI Water Factory] at night you would be really surprised because it almost looks like a city, the lights are so bright it almost looks like a stadium. If I am driving around at night and I drive past the FIJI Water like I am driving past New York City, I can see the glow of it from the horizon.

This employee explains the phenomenon as if it is something that is positive, rather than something that might bother local residents or be using large amounts of electricity.

Although no residents I interviewed mentioned the bright lights to some villagers, it could be considered a negative environmental impact.

Conclusion

To some Fijians like this University of South Pacific student, the Fijian natural environment is integral to the Fijian way of life and steps need to be taken to protect it:

It's just that I love [the] Fiji[n] environment; it is all started way back when I was in primary school, when I get to realize how beautiful Fiji is, and all those beautiful sceneries, yeah? So then, yeah, I try to figure out an idea of come up with an aim to do something about environment and help people protect the Fiji environment. Seems the rising of certain problems, issues about global warming all those, small islands will definitely be effected.

The image of Fiji is extremely important in the marketing of FIJI bottled water. Without the image of Fiji being a pristine place that is "untouched by man," it is unlikely that they would continue to have the success in sales that they do. According to one Fijian man,

...the environment is so natural here, undisturbed, no pollution, free of everything, that itself qualifies to be the best water. That itself qualifies to be the best water, not in our country, but maybe in the whole world.

Thus it is in the best interest for all stakeholders involved, regardless if they are in it for the profits, to keep Fiji's natural environment clean and pristine. Additionally, other

industries that are important for Fiji, such as tourism and sugar, also rely upon the natural environment.

Chapter Eight - Fiji's Growing Dependence on the Bottled Water Industry

The preceding chapters explored the perceptions that a variety of stakeholders have of FIJI Water and the bottled water industry in Fiji. The following chapters analyze these data in light of existing theoretical frameworks with the goal of answering this question: On balance, is FIJI Water's presence positive or negative for Fijians?

Despite the fact that Fiji is now an independent nation after nearly a hundred years of colonization under Great Britain, I argue in this chapter that it currently suffers a form of neocolonialism by an MNC, the FIJI Water Company. Using dependency theory and critiquing modernization theory, I will examine how the FIJI Water Company is not economically "developing" Fiji as it so often claims, but how the growing bottled water industry is actually making Fiji increasingly dependent upon other more industrialized countries (MICs), their powerful MNCs, and their consumers. The people and government of Fiji provide many conditions favorable to FIJI Water. It is relatively easy for an MNC like FIJI Water to capitalize on the abundant natural resources and cheap labor in a less industrialized country (LICs) like Fiji. Importantly, none of the rapid development of the bottled water industry in Fiji would be possible without the continued growth in consumption of FIJI Water by consumers from MICs throughout the world, much of which is fueled by intense marketing campaigns by the MNC.

Dependency and modernization theories of development are useful in analyzing the situation in Fiji because the theories help isolate factors contributing to how a MNC, such as FIJI Water, can become such a huge part of the economy of such a small island

nation and subsequently create dependence upon it. Madeley (1999), a critic of the growing power of corporations, argues that MNCs:

Acting with little or no government control, no effective responsibility to developing countries and peoples, and leaving few, if any, long-term benefits, . . . [MNCs] can be highly detrimental to a poorer country's political, economic and social health. But the worst aspect is that resource-poor peoples and communities suffer the most (15).

This statement suggests why some stakeholders, particularly the poorest people in LICs like Fiji, must be cautious of the growing dependence in Fiji on MNCs. Despite short-term benefits for some stakeholders, too much dependency can lead to future environmental, social, and cultural damage and economic disaster for the country in the long run.

The bottled water industry shows few signs of slowing down, and in fact, mineral water exports from Fiji rose almost 15 percent from 2007 to 2008 (Reddy 2008). As FIJI Water continues to grow within Fiji and spreads throughout the global market, it becomes more dependent on consumers who are willing to drink its luxury bottled water. A 1.5-liter bottle of FIJI Water is sold in the United States for an average of U.S.\$2.29 (U.S.\$5.77 a gallon), a steeper price than most consumers are even willing to pay for gas (Mohl 2005). Some consumers in the United States are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental, social, cultural, and economic impacts of goods that they consume and may not continue to support the commodification of a natural resource needed for survival. If the bottled industry were to decline, how would this effect Fiji's economy and residents? Is the Fijian economy becoming too dependent upon the bottled water

industry? What sort of implications does this dependency on a single product have for the future of individuals working for the company and for the country as a whole?

Modernization Theory and the FIJI Water Company

Proponents of the modernization theory of development postulate that when a MIC or MNC invest in a LIC, the economic or cultural benefits of “modernizing” will benefit everyone in the country. Proponents of the modernization theory contend that the economic growth brought about by a company such as FIJI Water is an example of positive development for the country, despite the fact that the company is not owned by the country or one of its citizens (Kendall 2004). Evidence of this discourse is highlighted on FIJI Water’s website by the proclamation that “we have always been, and will continue to be, a driving force of economic development and social welfare in the Fijian islands” (FIJI Water 2008). The promise of economic growth that will “trickle-down” to everyone is primary tactic used to convince citizens and decision-makers of LICs to allow MNCs to locate in their country. Although this theory has been thoroughly criticized, especially by dependency theorists, when FIJI Water was founded, many of the underlying principles of modernization theory were nonetheless applied to the development of the bottled water industry in Fiji.

Proponents of the modernization theory of development also suggest that Fiji or other LICs need outside assistance to be able to utilize their resources appropriately. But critics of modernization theory argue that outside assistance may not be what LICs need and may further LICs’ dependency on foreign countries, development loans and MNCs. Proponents of modernization theory further argue that how LICs are using their resources

is not efficient or profitable and that MNCs are the perfect vehicle to help them develop. Modernization theory does not take into account thousands of years of relatively sustainable living that occurred in many parts of the less industrialized world and assumes that economic development is ideal for the country and its citizens. Local knowledge is often ignored or discredited. Adopting a modernization approach to economic development can wreak havoc on traditional ways of living and ultimately hurt some places and people more than it benefits them in the long run, causing further dependency.

FIJI Water is not the only entity in Fiji touting the modernizing benefits of the bottled water industry. Government officials and elites of the country receiving foreign investment are often in positions to benefit from investment and thus often promote modernization ideology within their country along with the MNCs. With their powerful public positions, government officials and elites of the country, are able to promote modernization ideology in Fiji through the media or political outlets. For instance, after villagers attempted taking over the factory in 2000, a national newspaper *The Daily Post* proclaimed that “the new water bottling plant will employ close to 100 people and its spin-off to the immediate local population will be enormous” (Kaplan2005:39). Thus the local Fijian media is also sometimes perpetuating “trickle-down” and modernization ideologies. Additionally, most Fijians I interviewed during the summer of 2008 considered FIJI Water to be a positive part of their community, listing many benefits and few detriments. For example, a resident of a village near the plant explained that FIJI Water is,

...good because people are working, for financial support for the family, they provide more employment opportunities in this area so that is good. It's the best, the best of bottled water companies, you can support your family, good family living, and they can support their own families and buy houses, before the standard of living was lower, so many kinds you know, they help to educate, so this is good for the community.

This widespread support on many levels generally praising the benefits of the bottled water industry makes the exploitation of the country and its resources run smoothly for MNCs like FIJI Water.

Is “modernizing” or “developing” Fiji using foreign ideologies and standards, and exporting a primary product like water the best route to reducing poverty and economically developing Fiji? Modernization theorists conclude that “industrialization and economic development are essential steps that nations must go through in order to reduce poverty and increase life chances for their citizens” (Kendall 2004:230). This approach implies that each country must go through this same model of “economic development” so that its citizens can lead happy and healthy lives regardless of any cultural or social differences between those countries. Proponents of modernization theory contend that the adoption of neoliberal economic policies could help reduce poverty and facilitate economic growth in Fiji and that such policies are a necessary step that Fiji must take to improve its citizens’ standard of living.

According to modernization theorists, the bottled water export industry in Fiji could help the entire Fijian economy grow substantially if facilitated by neoliberal economic policies. Neoliberal economic policies include the “removal of tariff barriers, non-tariff barriers, price controls, subsidies, and other restraints on the free play of economic forces” (Madeley 1999:4-5). Supporters of neoliberal economic policies also

typically oppose regulations imposed by governments or other international institutions that might negatively impact their business such as environmental regulations, labor rights, or subsidies to local producers (Madeley 1999). Removing all of these sorts of barriers and creating a laissez-faire business environment is attractive to MNCs because it gives them more control over their business and facilitates their growth, thus helping them “modernize” or exploit their host countries. According to supporters of neoliberal economics, regulations make it harder for businesses to compete in the global market because they raise costs the companies must incur to produce products. It is in FIJI Water’s best interest if few environmental regulations or labor laws exist since they would impede its expansion by forcing it to invest in things such as costly new environmentally-friendly technology or higher wages and more benefits for employees.⁵⁸ Many of these neoliberal economic policies were embraced by the government of Fiji during the founding of the FIJI Water Company and continue to be used today.

Typically foreign investors are reluctant to invest in a country if the government is unstable, but if attractive tax breaks are offered then companies are more apt to pursue investment. One example of a neoliberal economic policy that has helped facilitate the growth of FIJI Water is the ten-year “tax-free holiday” the government is giving the MNC. This policy is helping to promote the rapid development of the company by

⁵⁸ FIJI Water has invested in new environmentally-friendly technology, such as wind-generated electricity and diesel-efficient trucks, without being forced to by regulations. This is likely because of its efforts to be perceived as a “green” company amidst all of the criticisms bottled water companies have been receiving regarding the industry’s environmental impacts. Also, according to my interviews with FIJI Water employees and the FIJI Water website, FIJI Water does pay relatively high wages compared to other companies in the bottled water industry in Fiji, but compared to wages where the products are consumed, these wages are low.

allowing it to make larger short-term profits than it would if there were no tax-free holiday. According to a FIJI Water employee the purpose of the tax-free holiday is:

So they [FIJI Water] can broaden their base, and they can invest more, and that is exactly what we have done. We will be such a much larger tax revenue source for the government after next year when our tax is then opened...because we have been tax free for the last ten years. Sometime different people get it into their heads that we are cheating somebody but actually, it is a pretty normal practice. And I think there has just been a lot of eagerness on the part of the government maybe to have that be over sooner.

A tax-free holiday is meant to give start-up companies a chance to grow during their infancy by freeing them from the burdens of taxation, but the policy prevents countries from gaining needed taxes from the depletion of their natural resources (Madeley 1999). The hope of governments like Fiji's is that the money the company saves as a result of the tax-free holiday will be reinvested back into the country, helping fuel economic growth in the future, but there is often no guarantee that this reinvestment will occur.

A tax-free holiday or low taxes on production are not uncommon practices in Fiji or throughout the world, but such practices force low-income countries around the world to lower their standards in order to attract business (Madeley 1999). It may be in the best interests of the government or the elite of the country to give tax breaks to large corporations, but it may not be in the best interest of the country as a whole, since revenue from the taxes could go into badly needed national development projects or social welfare, education and health programs (Korten 2001). As discussed in Chapter Five, many interviewees thought that FIJI Water needs to be taxed in some way, but they are afraid that if taxes are too high, they will drive the company that they are becoming so dependent upon out of the country.

Modernization theory assumes that economic growth and industrialization is the best step for countries that are trying to develop. The theory of comparative advantage fits with modernization theory and suggests that if a country specializes in a product, then it is possible that its development could occur at a faster pace (Madeley 1999). This theory assumes that despite the fact that a company like FIJI Water is run by an American-owned MNC rather than Fijians, it is good for the overall development of the country. In order to survive in this increasingly globalized world, the theory contends that Fiji must find a product to specialize in that is abundant or that it can produce more efficiently than other countries (Kendall 2004).

MNCs are particularly able to assist in specialization because of their international scope. In this case, such an approach might claim that it is beneficial for Fiji, with assistance of an MNC like FIJI Water, to specialize in the bottled water industry because of the abundance of high quality water it has that many other places in the world lack. It also makes sense for Fiji to switch its specialization to bottled water, because the price of sugar, once the country's primary export, has drastically dropped in price in the world market. This drop in sugar prices means the country needs a new source of income to replace earnings from sugar exports (Reddy 2008).

Specialization in one product means that countries become more dependent upon each other because they do not produce all that their citizens need or want to consume. The theory of comparative advantage supposes that as Fiji becomes increasingly dependent upon the bottled water industry, all stakeholders benefit, and that MNCs can assist in that specialization (Madeley 1999). The theory of comparative advantage can be

critiqued in that the policies it proposes oftentimes make countries overly dependent upon one or a small number of resources, particularly small LICs such as Fiji. According to Evans (2008), “dependent countries are classically those whose histories of involvement with the international market have led them to specialize in the export of a few primary products” (415). Fiji has come to specialize in a small number of items for export partially because of its small size and its remoteness, and partially because of the role of colonial powers. During the colonial era, Great Britain influenced Fiji to specialize in exporting sugar (CIA 2008). Thus many factors including small size, remoteness, colonial history and specialization of a small number of products make Fiji very vulnerable and dependent upon the global market and its many fluctuations.

Many countries have tried or been forced into this specialization route and have not succeeded for various reasons (Madeley 1999). Failure is partially due to the facts that demand for consumer items in the world market changes frequently and that not all industries such as bottled water are sustainable in the long run. When countries specialize in particular goods, it forces them to discontinue or limit production of other consumer goods, creating dependency upon foreign countries for resources that are often needed for survival. This specialization thus creates countries that are no longer self-sufficient or sustainable, so if another country raises the prices of goods or discontinues production, it can have consequences all across the world. Since Fiji is increasingly linked to the global economy because of its specialization in a few areas like bottled water and tourism, the country’s economic security and ability to provide for its people

grows ever more dependent upon the ups and downs of the global economy and the whims of foreign consumers.

Dependency Theory and the FIJI Water Company

Contrary to modernization theory, dependency theory argues that each country is unique in how it can and wants to develop. Proponents of dependency theory believe that not all countries want to take part in the world economy by implementing neoliberal development policies proposed by modernization theorists. In fact implementing these types of policies may be detrimental to lesser developed country, particularly if they are imposed upon them. A dependency approach is applicable to the bottled water industry in Fiji because it postulates that a country can have the illusion of development when in actuality the country is becoming increasingly dependent on foreign countries, foreign consumers, or MNCs. A middle-aged Fijian FIJI Water employee illustrates the growing dependency forming between FIJI Water and this woman, her family, and her village of Drauniivi:

No job, if this factory.....if there is no FIJI Water, no work there for me. I will have to go around the urban areas to find job, to look for job, because all this, get money, get paid, good pay from FIJI Water. Me and my husband, build a house, and my family's side, build a new house, and my husband's side of the family, I mean the money that was given from FIJI Water, we work so hard, we struggle to get the money, so now we happy, if no FIJI Water, no work, no money.

This quote highlights the wide scope of economic dependency that starts at the individual or family level and works its way up to a community, region, and national level in Fiji.

Although this FIJI Water employee notes positive aspects of working for FIJI Water, the

growing dependency she is expressing is representative of many of my interviewees, particularly those Fijians working for the company.

Although FIJI Water provides many jobs in villages in close proximity to the plant, it does not necessarily mean that the country as a whole benefits from the industry. Rather, only some individual job holders, from only one region of the country benefit. Additionally, contrary to modernization theorists' claims, there is only a specific region of Viti Levu, one of Fiji's Northern islands, that is currently directly reaping benefits other than jobs provided by the industry. The FIJI Water Company provides many benefits other than employment, such as funding for school projects or water infrastructure to the villages in close proximity to its plant that are not provided to other regions in Fiji. Rather than rely on national or local governments to provide funding for these projects, the communities surrounding the factory are becoming dependent upon FIJI Water for its frequent donations or organizing to fund them themselves. According to an employee of the Province of Ra's Ministry of Fijian Affairs:

When FIJI Water came in they have taken over that responsibility for the government in that area [education], which is good, because then the budget indication for the area, you know, whatever is to be set aside for them could be better used in other villages, you know, other areas in the province can use that.

This quote reflects the growing dependence local schools are forming on FIJI Water. Similar discourse occurred throughout the seven interviews I conducted with teachers and administrators from villages near the plant. This dependence also reflects a government that is not fulfilling its duties to rural villages but is instead relinquishing them to an

MNC. Areas schools would certainly suffer if the company decreased its donations or left the region.

Over 500 Fijians have jobs at the FIJI Water factory providing the money they need to survive. Hundreds more are employed in related industries such as cardboard manufacturing, infrastructure development, and transportation.⁵⁹ Although jobs at the factory pay relatively well for Fiji⁶⁰, the facts that the plant operates in a developing country and that the product itself does not need to be processed before selling it means that much of the budget of the company is spent on overseas employees and marketing, not on Fijians' salaries, or, as discussed later, on national taxes. In fact, a FIJI Water employee confirmed this, explaining that it doesn't cost very much to produce FIJI Water itself, but that it costs the company a tremendous amount to market it. This may lead one to question how much the Fijian people really are benefitting from the extraction of their natural resources, since the majority of the money FIJI Water spends appears to be on marketing, not on providing local jobs.

As the world becomes increasingly globalized, it becomes more difficult for countries to retain their autonomy, weakening the control that they have over their own natural resources and human labor. Through FIJI Water and small number of other bottled water companies, Fiji has lost control over an important and valuable natural resource – its water. Exploitation of Fiji's labor and resources by a MNC can limit both economic growth and human development (Kendall 2004). Economic growth is limited

⁵⁹ This information was gathered from an interview with a FIJI Water representative.

⁶⁰ According to an interviewed FIJI Water Company employee from the United States, wages for native Fijians working at the FIJI Water bottling plant are above the national average wage.

because the majority of the profits from the bottled water industry are exported along with the products to MICs and private investors in FIJI Water.

Despite many interviewees' feelings that positive economic growth is resulting from FIJI Water, it is apparent that some stakeholders are still not receiving their fair share of the benefits from the industry, and in the long run they could be the ones facing the long-term environmental, social, and cultural damage. Unless Fijians get the opportunity and financing needed to run their own companies and businesses, the vast majority of Fijians employed by MNCs will only be working in low-skilled, low-paying jobs, learning few skills that could help empower them to become more independent entrepreneurs in the future. Employees of FIJI Water are also expected to adapt to foreign work ethic ideals that are not always complementary to traditional ways of making a living discussion of which appears in Chapter Six.

Dependency can also be illustrated by the Fijian government's inability to exert even a minimal level of control over the FIJI Water Company. The Fijian government has been reluctant to enforce taxes or regulations on the company because of its dependence upon the company's revenue and because of the number of jobs the company and related industries provide to the Fijian people. The lack of control the government has over FIJI Water was demonstrated by the government's recent attempt in the summer of 2008 to place a tax of twenty Fijian cents⁶¹ on each liter of bottled water produced in Fiji, a move which, as we have seen, FIJI Water was easily able to counter by threatening to stop production and leave many employees out of work. This example demonstrates

⁶¹ Equivalent to approximately 13 U.S. cents on 6/5/09.

the inability of the Fijian government to hold the company accountable for the resources that it is extracting. In the future will the government of Fiji be able to tax the company in a way that compensates the Fijian people in part for the extraction of Fijian natural resources, or will the FIJI Water Company continue to be able operate in a country that grants many favorable conditions without asking for much in return?

Unlike some other types of MNCS which can threaten to move production from one LIC to another when costs become too high, FIJI Water is tied to Fiji because the product itself is tied to the location (Madeley 1999). This may mean that Fijians do have some power to ask for more from FIJI Water. Much of the reasoning behind consuming FIJI Water is because it is from Fiji, a place that has been linked to remote and pristine ideals. In some ways this makes the FIJI Water Company somewhat dependent upon Fiji's government and population to continue to grant the company favorable business conditions. This also illustrates the bargaining power that Fiji really has in its negotiations with the company, for without the water specifically from Fiji, the company would be unable to operate.

Because Fijians have failed to develop their own multinational bottled water company that is as successful as FIJI Water, they have become dependent upon the knowledge and connections of the FIJI Water Company. As discovered by local villagers when they tried to take over the plant in 2000, they lacked the knowledge to effectively run a multinational bottled water company (Kaplan 2007). Ironically though, if Fijians don't have the chance to move into marketing or management or the ability to attract investment capital they will continue to be dependent upon outside actors to control their

natural resources and will be unable to develop a successful bottled water company that is owned and run by Fijians. In order to break this cycle of dependence, Fijians must ask themselves if they want to control their own natural resources. They also need to learn effective marketing and management skills that are used in the global market. Local stakeholders may ultimately decide that they do not want to sell this precious natural resource for profit because potential environmental risks, such as depletion or damage to the aquifer, outweigh the benefits.

Finally, another extremely important aspect of the bottled water industry that highlights the potential danger of Fiji's dependence on foreign consumers is the fact that modern consumption patterns frequently change. Just as quickly as the bottled water industry has grown, it could also dry up, leaving Fiji with a huge gap in its economy. According to Evans (2008), "the development of the dependent country requires the continued acceptance of its products in the center" (415). This means that FIJI Water depends upon consumers throughout the world to demand its water and be willing to pay a high price for it. Evidence of this backlash against bottled water is already being seen in liberal communities across the U.S. like Missoula, Montana where a student led anti-bottled water campaign posted signs by water fountains proclaiming "FREE WATER." These signs were meant to indicate that there is no need to spend money on bottled water when you can get it for free from public places like water fountains or from the taps in your homes. The massive bottled water consumption phenomenon is relatively new, and if consumers eventually reject bottled water, many people in Fiji will have to find new jobs and sources of income.

Conclusion

Despite providing many jobs and charitable donations to local villages surrounding the factory, the bottom line is that most of the profit from FIJI Water does not stay in Fiji. Moreover, the benefits of this multinational industry do not “trickle-down” to most citizens of Fiji to the degree that modernization theorists predict. Since it is an American company with responsibility to provide profits to the owners and investors, most of the profits leave Fiji along with the water. Additionally there is no commitment on the part of FIJI Water to stay there indefinitely, and no commitment to fix possible lingering or future environmental damage if and when the company does leave. Even if the Fijian government or people want the MNC to leave, the dependence the Fijian economy on the bottled water industry must be addressed lest the departure cause lasting economic damage. The bottled water industry has potential to benefit Fiji as a whole, but, as argued, the industry exploits Fiji for its resources and labor, sending the profits to an American MNC, and the products to MICs for consumption. The end result will depend greatly upon whether Fijians are able or want to take control of the industry and thereby attain more of the benefits that it produces.

Chapter Nine - Environmental Justice and the FIJI Water Company

Environmental justice concepts, such as procedural and distributive justice, can be applied to the bottled water industry, and specifically to FIJI Water. Analyzing how FIJI Water and local residents perceive and react to potential or real environmental impacts of the industry can highlight what kind of environmental injustices are perceived to be affecting various stakeholders. How various stakeholders see themselves participating, or not participating, in decision making processes with the company is also important for this environmental justice analysis. Analysis and critique of FIJI Water's FIJI Green program can also provide insights into environmental justice issues surrounding the situation.

FIJI Green Program

FIJI Water's aspirations to address environmental criticisms are best demonstrated by the company's creation of FIJI Green in 2007. The company's initiative addresses criticisms that it has faced regarding the environmental impacts from production and transportation of the product in addition to the waste generated from the plastic water bottles and cardboard cases in which the water comes. FIJI Water's environmental initiatives include reducing its carbon footprint, reducing the amount of plastic and cardboard used in its product, and supporting recycling programs, all of which are components of the FIJI Green program. Although FIJI Water may have additional environmental goals, these three initiatives stood out in my data from interviews and observations in Fiji, on the FIJI Water website, and in FIJI Water marketing and advertising materials.

FIJI Water has a website dedicated to its environmental policies called “FIJI Green,” which makes the claim that “every drop is green” (FIJI Water Company 2008). Visiting the FIJI Green website provides a variety of information about the steps that the company claims to be taking to address environmental issues. According to the company’s website:

FIJI Green is our path to sustainability. Our mission is to deliver to you the finest tasting, mineral-rich natural artesian water with a commitment to do something great for the environment. We have partnered with Conservation International to become the first “carbon negative” product in our industry and to save the largest rainforest in Fiji, and we are also reducing the amount of packaging in our products and leading the charge to expand recycling programs and incentives. FIJI Green means we give back to the environment with every bottle (FIJI Water Company 2009).

As shown by its own description of FIJI Green, the company promotes the efforts it makes to protect the environment. The labels on bottles of FIJI Water include statements and illustrations that showcase these environmental initiatives and attempt to inform consumers about what the company is doing to address environmental concerns.

FIJI Water works hard to promote its “greenness” in more places than on the bottle, and the effort appears to be paying off for the company. FIJI Water uses advertisements in magazines and newspapers, television commercials, and the FIJI Green website to promote its environmentally friendly actions. We might assume that the expenses associated with these initiatives would be a drain on company profits.

However, according to the current owner of FIJI Water, Lynda Resnick,

it turns out that FIJI Green’s impact on our bottom line will be millions of dollars. Fortunately, the initiative will be *adding* millions to the bottom line, not *subtracting* them. As it turns out, we should have gone green long ago (Resnick 2009:167).

FIJI Green appears to be profitable for FIJI Water in part because of the company's choice to produce bottled water in ways that use less material and energy for both assembly and transportation. For example, by reducing the amount of plastic used in its bottles the company is saving money on materials while simultaneously reducing the amount of carbon emissions associated with the product. Similarly, the company is replacing old energy infrastructure in Fiji with wind turbines, thereby reducing the amount of money FIJI Water must spend to power the plant. FIJI Water's position at the forefront of the green movement for bottled water companies is apparently putting it in a good position to remain profitable despite competition in the bottled water industry.

FIJI Water claims that it is a pioneer in the bottled water industry because of the steps it is taking to reduce its carbon footprint, in fact, it set a goal to become the first "carbon negative" bottled water producer. According to the company,

As of 2008, FIJI Water offers a carbon negative product. The production and sale of each bottle of FIJI Water actually results in a reduction of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere by 120% of the bottle's carbon footprint. To achieve this, FIJI Water first accounts for the carbon footprint throughout the entire lifecycle of our products. We look not only at the emission sources the company owns, like our bottling plant, but also at everything it takes to get the product into our consumers' hands. A few examples of the emission sources we included in the carbon footprint include manufacturing of our raw materials, the ships, trains and trucks that carry the product to market, and the refrigeration of the product in stores, restaurants, hotels, and other venues (FIJI Water 2009).

In order to reduce its carbon emissions even further, FIJI Water has set three specific targets: (1) reduce CO₂ emissions across the entire life cycle of its products by 25 percent by 2010, (2) obtain 50 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2010, and (3) invest in reforestation and renewable energy projects to offset the remaining emissions by

120 percent (FIJI Green 2008). The website briefly describes its reforestation and renewable energy projects:

We [FIJI Water] have already started to create and manage our own reforestation program in Fiji, certified by Conservation International. Reforestation projects provide multiple benefits: carbon sequestration, biodiversity protection, erosion control, watershed protection, and more. Other projects will follow, particularly in the area of renewable energy. Renewable energy credits finance the creation of renewable energy facilities that help reduce the overall emissions from local electrical grids.

FIJI Water's effort to become carbon negative highlights how it tries to distinguish itself from other bottled water companies environmentally and make the product both more marketable and thus more profitable.

In addition to reducing its carbon footprint, FIJI Water claims to be environmentally conscious by reducing the amount of materials used to produce and transport its product. By shipping or sending the water via ship rather than by air, the company claims that it conserves energy and thus reduces its environmental impacts. The company also discusses its overt choice to use unique square bottles rather than the typical round bottles. It claims that the square bottled take up less space and thus fewer trips are need to transport the water.⁶² FIJI Water also packages all of its water in 100 percent recyclable PET bottles. FIJI Water has no plans to change this practice, but, as noted above, the company is planning on reducing the amount of plastic in each bottle by 25 percent by 2010. To achieve this goal, FIJI Water is experimenting with lighter weight bottles to help reduce the overall amount of plastic. At the same time, FIJI Water is

⁶² Although it is true that less space is wasted, the same amount of water, or more, is still being transported across the ocean.

working to incorporate more recycled materials into the plastic bottles and cardboard boxes. The cardboard cartons currently contain about 55% recycled material, but the company is working with its cardboard supplier to increase this percentage. All of FIJI Water's packaging is fully recyclable, thus the company encourages recycling amongst its consumers and employees (FIJI Water 2009). Investing in "greening" its product appears to be a win-win situation for FIJI Water because it saves the company money on materials and it makes environmentally-conscious people more likely to purchase the product.

As discussed in Chapter Seven, FIJI Water supports recycling programs in Fiji by providing villagers with incentives and materials to clean up plastic waste in their communities. Most villagers I interviewed perceived the recycling programs sponsored by FIJI Water to be positive because of their success in cleaning up the communities and the extra income and bottled water that they provide to villagers. As discussed below, FIJI Water also supports recycling programs for consumers in the U.S. and other markets.

A combined system of curbside recycling and container deposits give consumers more opportunity and incentive to recycle. That is why FIJI Water sees an active role for itself in advocating for legislation that will boost overall recycling rates via expanded curbside recycling programs and container deposit laws that include bottled water and other non-carbonated beverages (FIJI Green 2009).

By supporting recycling programs both abroad and within Fiji, FIJI Water is actively promoting a positive environmental image for itself. Despite all the positive steps that FIJI Water is taking to be more environmentally conscious, the overall environmental impacts from the company can still be criticized. It must also be noted that all of the above claims regarding FIJI Green are made by FIJI Water representatives or marketers

whose foremost interest is to positively promote the image of the company. This means that the claims must be viewed with skepticism.

A Critique of FIJI Water's Green Initiatives

Critics of FIJI Water argue that although FIJI Water is reducing its carbon emissions by taking steps to invest in renewable energy, using less packaging material, and by reforesting parts of Fiji to offset more of their carbon emissions, the company's solutions do not address the root issue. The fact remains that bottled water is a product that, in most cases, is not a necessity. Thus, its production and transportation releases unnecessary carbon into the atmosphere. Energy is still expended to transport and produce the bottled water, and no amount of carbon offsets or reduction can erase this fact. The only way FIJI Water could truly be carbon negative would be to quit producing all together. FIJI Water's plans also don't address the fact that it has been extracting water in Fiji for more than a decade and that it has most likely been impacting the local environment that entire time. There seems to be no plan to address these previous environmental impacts that may be detriments to Fiji in the future, especially if the market for bottled water dries up.

Further, although FIJI Water proclaims to be working on being "greener" and reducing its environmental impacts, the absurdity of taking a natural resource from one corner of the earth that has drinking water shortages to other parts of the earth that have their own water supplies cannot be overlooked. According to Weber (2007), a professor from the University of the South Pacific in Suva, drought and water scarcity are not unknown in Fiji, where there is

increasing demand for water from a fast growing population, the expanding tourism sector, and sometimes also industries. Many countries in the Pacific Island region are threatened by a continued over-exploitation and pollution of limited surface and groundwater resources (269).

This statement highlights the high value of potable water in Fiji, particularly during times of drought and in areas with contamination, and how demand for water within Fiji is growing. Water is an essential resource for this island nation, which has a limited and unstable water supply. Questions need to be asked regarding why water from Fiji is being shipped to places that have abundant and clean drinking water supplies and what entities are benefitting or being harmed.

Becoming “green” or portraying their products as “green” are beneficial marketing strategies for some companies, including FIJI Water. Many of the largest international bottled water companies are taking steps to address environmental concerns, as seen with the heavy advertisement surrounding Poland Spring’s recent initiative to reduce the amount of plastic used in its bottles. In the heightened environmental awareness of our time, the companies that do not make any changes that address environmental issues may be left behind in an extremely competitive market.

Undoubtedly, these initiatives should help protect the environment and thus local people, but is FIJI Water’s concern for the environment due to its own interests or to an altruistic desire to keep Fiji pristine for the Fijian people? This is an important issue to explore when dealing with natural resources and profit motives. “Greenwashing” is a term used to describe companies that make their products appear to be environmentally virtuous as a marketing strategy when they are truly not. As long as no greenwashing is occurring, environmentally friendly practices and general awareness of environmental problems

have the potential to be good for some companies because the companies are able to continue selling their products, and good for consumers because they can feel better about their consumption habits, though they may both sidestep deeper environmental questions. All stakeholders have the potential to benefit from the increased environmental awareness providing companies are not making empty or misleading promises and are producing real changes that address environmental concerns. Even if the root problem is not being addressed, some environmental impacts are at least being reduced. In order to fully understand if or how environmental impacts are being reduced, the decision making process, or the procedural justice, of the situation must be examined.

Procedural Justice and the FIJI Water Company

FIJI Water claims it is working to address some environmental concerns, yet the company rarely addresses issues related to the rights of the government and people of Fiji to regulate their own natural resources. The procedural justice in this situation could be questioned because not all stakeholders, including the government and local residents, are able to take a fair or informed part in the decision making process that regulates the activities of an MNC. Of course not all stakeholders need or can to be part of the decision making process, but stakeholders should have a right to be informed about situations in which they are strongly impacted. In this case, because FIJI Water is a privately held company, people cannot buy stocks in it, and members of the public cannot view its annual reports because of its multinational status (Kaplan 2007). This excludes many stakeholders from knowing exactly what is going on within the company, thus preventing them from having access to information and participating in decision making.

The only Fijian stakeholders that can officially negotiate with FIJI Water are government representatives. What is important then in this case, is who participates and is represented, or not represented, in government regulatory decisions.

One benefit of having power over other stakeholders is being able to dictate which stakeholders are allowed to participate in decision making. By keeping dissenting or contradictory voices out of the process, FIJI Water is better able to achieve its will and have greater access to influence government officials who can in turn help secure favorable business conditions for the company. The power FIJI Water has is supplemented by substantial financial backing and the multinational status of its parent company Roll International. Without the financial backing, it would be much more difficult for the company to yield as much power as it does, and without its multinational status, the company would have much more difficulty gaining access to the world market in bottled water.

Effective procedural justice requires that the decision making *process* is fair to all, not just the outcome. In FIJI Water's case we can see that both the decision making process and the outcome are unfair to some stakeholders. As noted above, because FIJI Water is a private entity, most stakeholders don't even have the right to participate in the decision making process with the company. Only selected representatives, who are part of the Fijian regional, provincial, or national government get an opportunity to engage in formal decision making with the company. As will be discussed with the taxation issue, it is typically the highest level of Fijian government, not the local or provincial level, who participates with FIJI Water to make policies and laws that govern the industry.

A corporate model of decision making may also contradict the traditional Fijian way of decision making, especially when dealing with important natural resources. A number of villagers talked about the importance of active, informed, yet time-consuming participation in decision making as being an important component of village life:

.....there is a system that we have, that if you have a problem down in the village, then you have to go to village meeting and then take it up to the...all the stakeholders who sort of have something to do with the, making the final decision...it takes such a long time. Yeah, it is just that it takes such a long time to get done. We are so community-based with any sort of decision making, we are so community-based and it is going to take a very very long time to get us out of this community-based system.....it is not going to be you know, a couple of peoples' ideas, because it has to take the whole community to agree.

FIJI Water's decision making process may be incompatible with the type of decision making process that Fijian villagers prefer because it is viewed as too time-consuming and requires input from too many stakeholders. Additionally, such a participatory review may not be part of the current Fijian government protocol. How procedurally just is the decision making process with FIJI Water when the stakeholders, whose resources are being extracted and land is possibly being damaged, get the least amount of opportunity to participate in the decision making process?

There are also procedural justice concerns regarding the terms and conditions of licensing and operation for the company. How much say did the Fijian government or the local communities have in the negotiations during the start up of this company? The favorable conditions the company has in Fiji suggest that the Fijian government and the local communities did not have much input in the negotiation of the terms and conditions for the company's licensing and operation. FIJI Water has been able to secure favorable

operating conditions from the Fijian government, most notably the ten-year tax-free holiday, and a 99 year lease on the land that the company operates. If the government had been more stable and powerful at the time of FIJI Water's inception, it might have been in a better position to negotiate business terms and agreements that benefited Fiji's economy and protected its environment. Thus, an uneven distribution of power between stakeholders is one contributor to procedural injustice in this case. Because of the relative power and economic dependency that the MNC has over the weaker Fijian government, the company is able to exert much control over how the government regulates the industry (Madeley 1999). The power FIJI Water has over Fijian stakeholders is very important because it indicates that it is not the Fijian government that is dictating how the industry is regulated, but the corporation itself. What is good for the MNC may not be in the best interest for Fiji or at least not for local villagers and the environment, especially in the long run.

The ten-year tax-free holiday granted by the Fijian government to FIJI Water brings up questions of procedural justice. According to a FIJI Water spokesperson interviewed during the summer of 2008, this tax-free holiday is expected to end sometime during 2009.⁶³ A tax-free holiday is meant to give start-up companies a chance to grow during their infancy by freeing them from the burdens of taxation, but the policy prevents countries from gaining needed taxes from the depletion of their natural resources (Madeley 1999). Typically investors are reluctant to invest in a country if the

⁶³ As of my last correspondence with a FIJI Water representative in May of 2009 the tax-holiday was still in place.

government is unstable, but if attractive tax breaks are offered, then companies are more apt to pursue investment. They may take advantage of the weak government or corrupt leaders in order to gain favorable concessions mentioned above such as tax breaks, weak environmental regulations, or lax labor laws. If the government is stable and strong, it may be more able to make its own demands of the company choosing to invest in the country.

Though incentives like tax-free holidays for important businesses are not uncommon practices in Fiji or throughout the world, offering such incentives to MNCs also forces countries to lower their standards, including labor and environmental, in order to attract business (Madeley 1999). This means that procedural and distributive justice is compromised, since not all stakeholders equally share in the benefits from or the decision making process of the industry. It may be in the best interest of the government or the elite of the country to give tax breaks to large corporations, but it is not in the best interest of the country as a whole, because revenue from the taxes could be spent on many things, such as badly needed national development or health projects (Korten 2001). In this case, previous government regimes made choices that now impact the daily lives and environments of the communities surrounding the plant without the consent of community members. Thus, although it is not unusual, even in Fiji, for startup companies to receive tax-free holidays from countries that are looking to attract investment, a ten-year tax-free holiday for a MNC in a country in dire need of revenue seems illogical and almost contradictory to having the MNC invest in the country, particularly if the industry's sustainability is questionable.

Additionally, the company was able to obtain a 99 year lease for the land on which the plant is located. Procedural justice can be questioned in this case because of the fact that the plant happens to be located on national land that can be leased from the government, unlike the remaining 83 percent of land in Fiji that belongs to ethnic Fijians which cannot be leased by an outside company (Kaplan 2007). As discussed in Chapter Two the particular land where FIJI Water extracts its water has a contested history springing from colonization and subsequent land redistribution. As seen in recent cases throughout the world, such as the attempted privatization of water infrastructure in Bolivia, indigenous people are in danger of losing rights to their own natural resources once MNCs gain exclusive rights to profit from them (Barlow and Clarke 2002). This lease calls into question whether land ownership was manipulated to provide an adequate production location for an MNC. Were voices of indigenous Fijians silenced during the drafting of the lease? Although I was unable to detect that they were, more investigation into whether or not indigenous rights were violated could indicate a higher level of procedural injustice.

There is also little communication or transparency of actions between the government and bottled water companies as evidenced in the method the government chose to use to impose the twenty-cent tax on each bottle of water produced in Fiji in July, 2008.⁶⁴ The tax was approved by Fiji's national cabinet, or the parliamentary branch of government, and implemented by the Fiji Islands Revenue and Custom Authority (Fiji Sun 2008). When the government tried to enforce the tax, FIJI Water

⁶⁴ Detailed discussion of the tax occurs in chapter five on page 93 and in the chapter eight on page 157.

simply continued bottling water but did not export it in order to avoid paying the tax. After two weeks FIJI Water could not store any more bottled water, and rather than pay the tax, the company shut down the factory, putting hundreds of local people out of work (Fiji Sun 2008). The factory closure was an important incident because over four hundred Fijians rely upon the income that they get from working for the company and many more workers in related industries also indirectly depend upon FIJI Water (Fiji Sun 2008). According to Paul Davies, FIJI Water's managing director,

All of these forced decisions have significant short and long-term consequences for our business, and disastrous consequences for our 420 local employees, our suppliers and vendors, and the Fijian economy as a whole (Fiji Sun 2008).

After a few days, the government rescinded the tax because the bottled water industry is such a huge part of the national economy and it could not afford to lose the jobs and revenue related to the industry. This situation illustrates that the government has little recourse to control the company or perhaps insufficient political will to do so.

For those who are not directly a part of FIJI Water or the Fijian government, it is difficult to investigate exactly how negotiations about the tax transpired between the two stakeholders because it is not a public company. Although bottled water companies were aware that the government wanted to impose a tax, according to local sources I interviewed, the companies did not realize the tax would be implemented at such a high rate, so soon, or with little if any negotiation. The lack of bottled water companies input in the decision making process with the government regarding the tax is an example of procedural injustice for bottled water companies. Because of past dealings with the bottled water industry the government may have been reluctant to even attempt to

negotiate with any companies. Once the tax was in place, both sides were unwilling to cooperate or communicate, as evidenced by another statement given by Paul Davies, that “the authorities [Fijian government] refused to take action or even engage in any meaningful dialogue to repeal the tax” (Fiji Sun 2008:1). With open and informed dialogue, the tax might have benefitted some stakeholders, such as the Fijian government, rather than hurt smaller bottled water companies and the relationship between the Fijian government and the larger bottled water companies.

The tax is an example of the kind of event that should be analyzed in light of questions about procedural justice because it represents an attempt by a government to make its own regulatory decisions over powerful MNCs such as FIJI Water. The backlash against the company is a direct expression of frustration over the government’s inability to find ways to benefit from the presence of a company that profits from its use of the country’s natural resources. The Fijian government was unable or unwilling to participate or negotiate with the company about the tax partially because FIJI Water is a private entity that does not have to let public entities participate, and the government may have resorted to applying this tax as a way to show they wanted to make its own regulatory decisions. Taxation could have been seen by the government as a viable solution to redistributing the benefits from the industry more equally to stakeholders. The tax may also have been seen as a last resort by the government in a situation which it had little control.

Another rationale behind this tax could have been to create revenue for a cash-strapped government looking for new sources of money. Since the bottled water

industry, and FIJI Water in particular, is thriving, government officials may have believed that some sort of tax needed to be placed on bottled water to generate revenue. Additionally, because FIJI Water has a ten-year tax exemption, officials may have seen a need to implement some sort of a tax on the company.

A procedural justice framework also begs analysis of how knowledge is generated and shared. It is important to know who provides information and where they get it. According to FIJI Water representatives, the aquifer that the company draws water from is tested by company employees or scientists being temporarily employed by the company. FIJI Water representatives claim that the extraction of water from its underground aquifer is sustainable, and thus there is no cause for concern that the water will run out. The representatives claim that the water tables are constantly being monitored and that they are careful not to extract too much water at any time, giving the aquifer plenty of time to replenish. According to an American FIJI Water representative I interviewed,

The water supply is not in danger! We [FIJI Water] are constantly monitoring the level of our aquifer, to make sure this is sustainable because with a lot of extractive industries like forestry or coal-mining...eventually you are going to run out. Our aquifer fortunately, is not like a closed lake, it's not like something that will eventually be gone and dry up. It's more of a river that is constantly running from the rainfall up here (points up to the mountain range) and it empties out into the ocean, a few miles off. So, as long as we make sure we are not at any one time dropping the level of that to, like we measure it against some variable boards that are not in our watershed so that we know we are not taking too much basically, at any one time, we can always, there will always be more, because we are hoping that this place is around for a long time. We think, we hope that there are a lot of positive things being brought about by FIJI Water and can continue to be brought about by what we are doing.

The FIJI Water website claims that it takes hundreds of years for the water to filter through the volcanic rock, and the aquifer is constantly being replenished through rainfall (FIJI Green 2008). Regardless of the claims by FIJI Water, if too much water is taken out of the aquifer too quickly, it could damage or dry out the aquifer. Given the fact that scientists monitoring the aquifer are employed by the company, which depends upon the information they provide to remain in business, questions can be asked regarding the credibility of their research. Unless the information regarding the impacts from the extraction of the water on the aquifer is being provided to all stakeholders by multiple independent sources, the credibility and reliability of the information could be challenged. Fijian stakeholders need fair and balanced information to be able to make appropriate and educated decisions regarding their natural resources, and in particular the aquifer that supplies FIJI Water. So how are the benefits and the detriments of extracting and bottling water in Fiji being distributed?

Distributive Justice and the Case of FIJI Water Company

A distributive justice framework is useful in the case of FIJI Water in analyzing who benefits from and who bears the detriments of the bottled water industry. Kuehn also notes that distributional justice is best reached by lowering risks for everyone, not simply shifting or equalizing existing overall risks (2000). How are the goods, opportunities, and risks surrounding the bottled water industry in Fiji actually distributed? More importantly for this analysis, how are they perceived to be distributed?

As noted earlier, some stakeholders do not perceive the benefits of the industry to be shared equally within communities nearby the bottled water facility or equally throughout Fiji. According to a woman from Rakiraki,

They [FIJI Water] are focusing on the communities around the area because, you know, the land belongs to them. In the bigger picture, we don't really see FIJI Water in the bigger picture of the Ra Province. You know, maybe they could do something, like contribute to the...there is, a part of our scholarship for the province. We don't have a scholarship for the province. Maybe FIJI Water could contribute in that way. Probably allocate a certain amount from, project from...amounts allocated to their community projects to the provincial councils, the Ra provincial council.

Benefits from the industry, in particular the relatively high paying jobs at FIJI Water, typically go to residents living in the five villages that are in close proximity to the plant; Drauniivi, Rabulu, Naseyani, Togowere, and Nananu. Many of the people living in these villages are Vatukoloko people, who claim that the land was theirs before colonization by the British in the late 19th Century (Kaplan 2007). According to company representatives, because of this history and informal agreements, Vatukoloko people used to be first in line to be hired when desired jobs open up at the factory. In order to secure usage of the land, this informal agreement was negotiated between FIJI Water and the Vatukoloko people. Although a recent change in national law prevents FIJI Water from preferentially hiring Vatukoloko people based on the fact that they are Vatukoloko alone, almost all of the employees at FIJI Water are part of the Vatukoloko people.

Since they are relatively high paying, jobs at FIJI Water are in high demand. Additionally, a loss of jobs in the sugar and tourism industries in the area has created even more demand for jobs at the factory (Reddy 2008). According to FIJI Water, the company is the most desired employer in the region (FIJI Green 2007). Thus, there is far

more demand for jobs at the factory than FIJI Water can supply. It makes sense that the people living closest to the facility would get the jobs at the factory, but there are far more residents in the area that are impacted by the industry that do not get direct benefits, such as employment, from having the company in their province. Although most people in the province receive some indirect benefits, they are not equally distributed to all stakeholders. More discussion of how the economic benefits are distributed throughout Fiji occurs in Chapter Five.

Additional benefits for local residents include a trust that has been created with funding from the company's gross revenues. The Natural Waters of Viti Ltd. Trust gives back to the local communities through works to improve various local education, health, sanitation, and environmental initiatives (FIJI Water 2009). The exact percentage of the revenue from the company that is put into the trust is private information, and thus unknown. Input on how to spend the funds allocated for the trust is given to residents in the nearby villages, thus allowing them to distribute the funds how they see fit, rather than the company.

One way FIJI Water is attempting to more equally distribute the positive impacts of the company is through the creation of the FIJI Water Foundation. It was created in August of 2007 to address a wider variety of national level interests, specifically education, health care, and water access (FIJI Green 2008). The FIJI Water Foundation is funded entirely by company owners, employees, and partners from around the world and its expansion will distribute the impacts of the company, both good and bad, throughout more of Fiji.

As discussed above, residents of the five villages that are near the plant receive a number of benefits from being near the plant, but they are also vulnerable to a number of possible harmful effects. Within Fiji some of the environmental impacts of the industry can be seen, though other less tangible impacts are also acknowledged by local residents and employees of the FIJI Water Company. Local residents have noted an increase in the amount of plastic bottle litter, both the distinctive square-shaped FIJI Water bottle and others, that does not find their way to a recycling center or garbage. Residents have also noted an increase in the number of trucks carrying supplies and products going to and from the factory. Although many local residents note the increase in the number of trucks and traffic on the few roads in the area surrounding the factory, few link it to an increase in air or other types of pollution. This may be because the increase in traffic has a negligible impact on the local environment, and it may also be because the local people do not know what potential environmental impacts an increase in traffic could have and thus do not notice them. With the factory running on a twenty-four hour schedule and a constant stream of trucks taking water and supplies to and from the area, it would be hard to argue that no impact is being made on the local environment.

As discussed in Chapter Six, further detriments to the local community could include a loss of traditional ways of living as well as an influx of non-locals moving into the area that may create conflicting interests. According to Weber, “the parallel existence of traditional and modern institutions creates fields of uncertainty that make water-related issues even more complex than they are already” (2007:270). Residents may be forced to choose between short-term economic gains and possible long-term environmental

destruction and loss of traditional ways of living. They also run the risk of becoming too dependent upon a vulnerable industry that may not provide long-term development for the region as planned. Despite the many benefits the company offers in the local villages, the fact remains that local people do not have control over their own natural resources, and thus do not have the same ability as an MNC to benefit.

Solutions

There are a wide variety of possible solutions that could help make the situation in Fiji more equitable to a larger number of stakeholders. Possible solutions to the situation in Fiji could include discourse among stakeholders related to procedural and distributive justice, since the situation in Fiji has been shown to be lacking in those dimensions.

Some suggested solutions could be considered highly idealistic and impossible to implement, while the more pragmatic suggestions could be fairly easy to implement if the right steps were made. The quickest and most effective way for the Fijian government to remedy the distributive injustice of the situation would be to implement some type of tax on the bottled water industry.

Procedurally, allowing more local input in the decision making processes might help equalize the distribution of the benefits from the industry. Ensuring that the government representatives who participate in decision making with the company represent minority or silenced stakeholders could also help improve procedural justice. To make improvements in the decision making processes more communication between the local communities or governmental agencies and FIJI Water also needs to occur. A female government employee from Rakiraki shared that,

I think it is very important that their [FIJI Water's] project officer works with the provincial office because we [Ministry of Fijian Affairs] are the gatekeepers. It doesn't make sense that a person in the community who is responsible for the project for the community is an individual [FIJI Water's Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator], it is not linked directly to us, because we need to be working with them.

As this woman voiced, there is concern that FIJI Water representatives are not the most appropriate people to be making decisions about community projects. If local stakeholders can't communicate their needs and concerns to the company, little can be done to improve the communities in ways that the residents desire. This woman also notes that it should not be an *individual* making decisions, but a *community* decision making process, in which the appropriate gatekeepers get adequate input. Benefits from the industry could potentially be shared more equally once improvements are made in decision making processes.

In order to achieve procedural justice in this situation, a variety of stakeholders must be able to give input into how the natural resource should be managed from an environmental standpoint. After all, who knows the land better than the people that have been living on it for generations? Locals are intimately in tune with changes that are occurring to the local environment, even if they are unsure of the causes. Rather than allowing FIJI Water to have all the say regarding the management of Fiji's water, the government and the surrounding communities should also be able to decide how to use the water and what sort of environmental standards should be set for the industry to follow. The Fijian government and people need to be able to decide if the risks involved are acceptable and whether appropriate compensation or assurances have been given.

Yet, for some, any amount of financial compensation will not be adequate for damage to the land on which they live.

More communication and transparency among the bottled water companies, the government, and the communities is needed in order to prevent situations where the entire industry is interrupted as it was over the twenty-cent tax during the summer of 2008. If all stakeholders would have been more willing to communicate, compromise, and inform other stakeholders about what was occurring, a taxation system might have been developed that benefited more stakeholders. A fair taxation system also could have prevented economic loss and even closure for smaller, local bottled water companies. Transparency and communication are once again related to the idea that all stakeholders need to be informatively involved in the decision making process to reach an agreement that is fair and beneficial to the largest number of people.

One way the FIJI Water Company is working to address the issue of procedural justice is by the creation of the position of Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator. FIJI water created this position in 2007 as liaison between the company and the local communities. The coordinator is supposed to work closely with the nearby communities to help meet their needs, requests, and concerns. Until recently this position was held by an American woman who was fluent in the Fijian language and comfortable with Fijian culture and society. Now the position is held by a local woman who is from the community of Drauniivi, which is nearby the facility. The characteristics of the holders of this position illustrate that it is important to FIJI Water to have someone in the position who understands the local communities. He or she must be able to communicate

effectively between the company and the communities to mediate conflicts, so the position is best held by a local community member. Because the coordinator is a FIJI Water employee the loyalty of the position still lies with the company and not the community (Korten 2001). Although the coordinator might be working for the interest of the community, he/she is getting paid by FIJI Water, which has the final say in matters. It would be beneficial for the local communities and the government to appoint their own representatives to work with the companies to promote their interests. One way the community could get more involved in the decision making process could be by forming a volunteer board. Rather than have an individual FIJI Water employee or everyone in the communities making decisions about donations, a volunteer board could represent the key interests of the communities.

Distributionally, FIJI Water needs to ensure that it is addressing the true needs of nearby communities when giving assistance, not just imposing what it thinks the local communities need or desire. For example, a local government employee complained that FIJI Water was not effectively working with the local communities.

AR: That is something, there is one thing that I noticed that, you know....FIJI Water, whoever their project person is responsible for the community, they don't work with us. They are supposed to be working with us.

Interviewer: You see that is, I am surprised that they wouldn't.

AR: They do things on their own. And [name removed], you know, I am not offended personally, she doesn't have the background into trying to identify, you know, people who are supposed to, you know, what kind of projects that need to be done in the villages, that need to be implemented. They need to work with us. If their programs are to be more effective to the people, all the people in the area, especially to the communities in the area, they need to work with us.

Interviewer: So that is a problem?

AR: Yes. One big problem with FIJI Water, they don't have a person working there to work with the provincial council.

Interviewer: That is interesting.

AR: And there is another thing too, even the provincial council, unlike the other provinces where they have these big companies, you know, located in the area making so much money, they make a contribution to the village councils, where as FIJI Water doesn't.

Interviewer: Oh, for you guys to give out as you choose....

AR: Yes, you know the council as a whole.

As this woman notes, some stakeholders believe that FIJI Water should give back to local communities with fewer strings attached. Political motivations behind donations would ideally be eliminated, and benefits would be based upon true needs of communities.

Drastic economic changes can produce cultural or social shifts so FIJI Water needs to ensure that they are not fundamentally changing the villages socially or culturally for the sake of economic benefits. In order to prevent local conflict over mentioned benefits, more effort also needs to be put into sharing the benefits among a greater number of Fijians. Additionally, FIJI Water donates money voluntarily and it is questionable whether it will continue to do so in the future either because of choice or because of economic constraints.

Environmentally, an ideal solution would include Fijians gaining more control over the natural resources and environment of their country, discontinuation of the bottled water industry all together, or implementation of strict environmental protections. Alternatively, although highly unlikely and idealistic, ownership FIJI Water would be in the hands of Fijians, not an MNC based in the United States. Another possible solution to alleviate some of the inequality in profits made in the bottled water industry would be for a Fijian-owned bottled water company to aggressively compete with FIJI Water, and

create their own niche in the world market. As evidenced by the failed takeover of the plant in 2000, part of the reason that Fijians have failed to create their own successful company is that they lack the knowledge and experience needed to run an MNC (Kaplan 2007). They also lack the funding essential to develop and market such a company. Thus some sort of management or business training program, and investment money would need to be accessible in order for Fijians to start their own successful multinational bottled water company.

Finally, one way that the Fijian government and local communities have the potential to be empowered by the situation that they find themselves in lies in the fact that FIJI Water is tied to a specific location. Unlike some other industries that are able to shift their operations from country to country, the people of Fiji have a relative amount of control and stability over the company because the product is tied to the location (Madeley 1999). For example, if a shoe factory in Thailand finds that it is cheaper to move the factory to the Philippines to utilize cheaper labor or fewer environmental regulations, then it can do so relatively easily. But because water from Fiji is itself the product, the production cannot be shifted to another country. Production or extraction could be shifted within the country, but because of the fact that the product is tied to a specific location, the product of FIJI Water must always come from Fiji. This fact has potential to empower citizens of Fiji to demand more profits from the company and more input in the decision making process of the company.

Conclusion

Using the frameworks of procedural and distributive justice to explore the situation in Fiji allows a better understanding of how stakeholders perceive the bottled water industry to be impacting Fiji environmentally, socially, culturally, and politically. By using these frameworks, knowledge about how more powerful entities, such as MNCs like FIJI Water, impact weaker entities, such as small, lesser developed countries like Fiji can be generated. The frameworks can also provide insight into changes that could be made that would help include more stakeholders in the decision making process. Ideally then more stakeholders would be able benefit from the industry and help prevent negative impacts from occurring.

The Fijian government has the potential to change how FIJI Water operates by taxing or enacting and enforcing environment and labor laws and regulations that protect local workers and the natural environment yet little is being done because of the short-term economic benefits that the industry is providing. Employees of FIJI Water and Fijians living in close proximity to the factory also have the potential to make demands upon FIJI Water by demanding their right to representation or by forming a union. Fijian stakeholders could demand that FIJI Water use more environmentally friendly practices or provide more jobs, higher wages, and other financial support for the communities they live in that are affected by the extraction of the resource. Although requests are constantly being made to FIJI Water, Fijian stakeholders have much more power than they utilize over FIJI Water because of their close proximity to the plant. As the company increasingly becomes a part of the daily lives of villagers close to the plant, it is

extremely important that the communication between the stakeholders and the MNC be open, frequent, and balanced. The appropriate representatives must also be able to take part in the decision making process. Local communities must also be aware of their growing economic dependency upon the industry and ensure that important, longstanding cultural and social practices are not lost because of economic and environmental changes influenced by the industry.

Some of these questions arising from an environmental justice framework have been partially addressed by the FIJI Water Company. FIJI Water is trying to make changes, as evidenced by a number of the company's initiatives such as FIJI Green, creating local recycling programs, switching some of their trucking fleet into more fuel-efficient and environmentally-friendly vehicles, and giving back to local communities. Regardless of whether the company is making these changes to save money, to be portrayed to consumers as more green, or because there is a true concern in addressing environmental impacts of the industry, these issues are to a degree being addressed by the company. Yet, despite the advancements, more water is being shipped out of Fiji each year, and the FIJI Water Company continues to reap the benefits from the industry while the country continues to be exploited. As a whole, Fiji has been unsuccessful in attempts to reap substantial benefits from the industry and seems relatively unaware of the potential long-term impacts that the industry may have. As long as the power remains in the hands of a MNC, it is likely that nothing substantial will change unless Fijians more forcefully take the situation into their own hands.

Chapter Ten – Conclusion: The Future of FIJI Bottled Water

This research project examined discourses that residents of Fijian communities close to the FIJI bottled water plant and representatives of the FIJI Water Company use to make sense of the global bottled water industry. By collecting data through interviews, observations, and secondary data, I was able to analyze how stakeholders make sense of water shifting from a natural entitlement to a commodity. A growing number of people, including many of the stakeholders that I interviewed in Fiji, perceive water as a commodity rather than a natural entitlement. The commodification of water brings up a number of important questions. Who benefits from the commodification of bottled water and who doesn't? Who gets to consume high quality water from exotic locations such as Fiji and at what price? And finally, who doesn't get the chance to consume their fair share of potable water because it isn't available to them or because they cannot afford it?

Throughout history water has been seen by most people in this world as a common resource for everyone to use and maintain. People now find themselves in a situation where not only is water being consumed unevenly but it is also not available to some or they cannot afford to purchase it. Large powerful MNCs like FIJI Water are increasingly in control of drinking water in both our homes and public places. In the future will this natural resource that is essential for human survival only be in the hands of the elite and powerful? Commodification of some resources or products can be positive for society as a whole, but questions must be asked about whether or not something that is so essential for life should be commodified. Will everything, including the air we breathe and the water we drink be up for sale? If water sources continue to be

commodified at the current rate then it is possible that in the future water will only be available to people who can afford it.

My research helped to understand the perceived economic, social and cultural, and environmental impacts that the bottled water industry can have on a community level. Economically, FIJI Water is changing how Fijians live their daily lives because of the relatively high paying jobs it provides and the donations and investments it is making in the local communities. The majority of my respondents perceived FIJI Water to be having more positive economic impacts than negative on their communities. Socially and culturally the bottled water industry is changing how Fijians look at the quality of their water sources, influencing them to start their own bottled water companies, and creating increased stratification between those who are benefitting from the industry and those who are not. Environmentally, most stakeholders perceived FIJI Water to be positively impacting their communities through recycling programs and generation of environmental awareness. This study had few direct benefits to the research subjects but it may have influenced them to become more aware of water issues and help them generate a better understanding of the impacts of the bottled water industry on their communities.

The Fijian government and Fijian citizens may eventually be forced to choose between the short-term economic gains brought from the bottled water industry and the long-term environmental destruction and changes to their traditional ways of working and living. They also run the risk of becoming too dependent upon an unsustainable industry that may not provide long-term development for the region as planned. Despite the many

benefits the company offers in the local villages, the fact remains that local people do not have control over their own natural resources, and thus do not have the same ability as the MNC to benefit.

Future Implications and Research

The worldwide economic recession is taking its toll on FIJI Water's bottom line implying that the company will need to expediently change how it does business in order to remain profitable in an increasingly competitive bottled water industry. As recently as August of 2008, FIJI Water was still increasing the amount of water it bottled, hiring more Fijian and foreign employees, and expanding its overseas markets with no apparent signs of slowing down. According to a FIJI Water representative I corresponded with in May of 2009, the economic recession has already begun to take a toll on the company. She attributed a downturn in sales to consumers becoming less willing or able to purchase "premium goods such as bottled water when they are tightening their belts." According to the same representative, in late 2008, jobs were cut in FIJI Water's international sales force, and "recently some jobs have been cut at the plant in 2009." The company has also been forced to slow down production at the factory because of a reduction in demand for FIJI bottled water indicating that those who still work at FIJI Water may not have the same hours or income that they did during my visit in 2008. Although exact numbers are unavailable, these statements illustrate the vulnerability of the bottled water industry and the impacts that this vulnerability can have on the local communities that have become dependent upon FIJI Water.

These negative changes will likely have an impact on how Fijians perceive the FIJI Water Company and the bottled water industry, and could provide an interesting case study comparison of perceptions before and after the economic recession. Do Fijian stakeholders still feel that they are benefitting to the same degree that they were before? Are they feeling any long-term detriments that they did not notice when the bottled water industry was still growing and they were receiving many benefits? Now that I am more comfortable with Fijian culture and society, more knowledgeable about the FIJI Water Company and the bottled water industry, and a more experienced researcher I believe that I could investigate many more aspects of the impacts and perceptions of the global bottled water industry on individuals, societies, and countries.

Will there continue to be a market for FIJI bottled water that can provide the same benefits to Fijian stakeholders? Despite the slight setbacks discussed above for FIJI Water, in the face of the economic recession, the bottled water industry as a whole still remains relatively strong. But regardless of the positive outlook for the bottled water industry in general, the relatively high cost of FIJI Water, the economic recession, and constant shifts in consumer preference, may cause FIJI Water to see sales drop even further. For Fijian stakeholders who have become dependent upon the benefits that the industry provides, this drop in sales will result in drastic changes to their daily lives and perhaps change the perceptions that they currently have about the bottled water industry.

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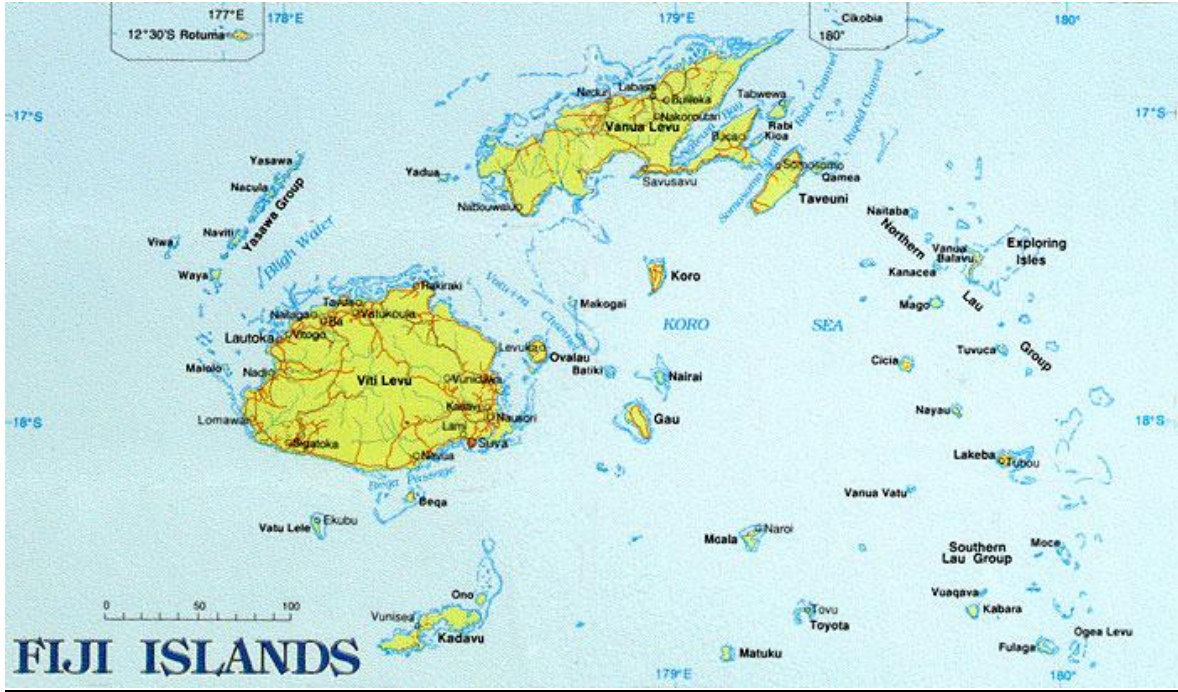
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Appendix A: Map of Fiji, Map of Viti Levu



Appendix B: IRB Oral Purpose of Research Consent Form

Purpose of Research Form for Subjects from Rural Communities:

(Presented Orally to Subject Before Commencement of Interview)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this interview is to help me understand the how you look at water and use water. I am particularly interested in if you view water as something that is to be owned and used by everyone or something that should be for sale.

METHOD: This interview will consist of a series of questions and is likely to last about one hour. With your permission, I will use a tape recorder so that I can record all of your answers accurately.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: There should not be any risks or discomforts involved in this interview. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence. You may also decline to answer any questions without consequence.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name and identity will remain confidential. I will be using names different than your own when writing up your responses and sharing your answers with others.

The results of this research will be shared with you and with others from your community when it is complete. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Purpose of Research Form for Employees of the FIJI Water Company:

(Presented Orally to Subject Before Commencement of Interview)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this interview is to help me understand how your company looks at water in Fiji and the impacts that the bottled water industry has in Fiji. I am particularly interested in the ways that you promote water from FIJI and why you think it is so highly desired throughout the world. I am also interested in your relationship with the local communities and economy and your environmental initiatives.

METHOD: This interview will consist of a series of questions and is likely to last approximately one hour. With your permission, I will use an audio-recorder so that I can record all of your answers accurately.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: There should not be any risks or discomforts involved in this interview. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence. You may also decline to answer any questions without consequence.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name, identity, and position in the company will remain confidential unless permission is granted to use such identifiers. If permission to use identifiers is not granted, I will be using pseudonyms when writing up your responses and sharing your answers with others.

The results of this research will be shared with you when it is complete. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Questions for Subjects From Rural Communities:*

1. How long have you lived here?
2. Tell me about how you get your family's everyday drinking water. Where is that?
 - Is your bathing or washing water source different?
 - How long have you used this source? Have you recently changed your source? If so, when and why?
 - Is this water safe to drink? Do you test or treat it in any way?
3. In what ways do you use water in your everyday life?
4. What sort of things impact the availability of drinking water for you?
 - natural causes (drought, cyclones), price, seasonal availability, contamination, quantity
5. Are there any shared water sources in your community? If so, how are decisions made in your community regarding access to water?
6. Is there any conflict over water sources in your community? If so, how are they resolved?
7. Have you seen any changes in regards to your everyday drinking water supplies in the past ten years? If so what kind of changes?
 - quality, quantity, availability, price?
8. Do you attribute any of the changes that you have seen to the FIJI Water Company? Explain why.
9. Why do you think that water from Fiji is sold in other parts of the world?
10. Do you think the FIJI Water Company has affected your community? If so, how?
 - economically, environmentally, socially, culturally?
11. Do you think people should pay for drinking water? If so, how much? If not, why not?

Questions for Subjects From the FIJI Water Company:*

1. How long have you worked at the FIJI Water Company?
2. What do you do at the FIJI Water Company?
3. What did you do before working at the FIJI Water Company?
4. What sort of impacts do you think the FIJI Water Company is having on FIJI?
 - economic, cultural, social, environmental
5. Describe the company's relationship to surrounding communities.
6. Why do you think water from Fiji is so highly desired?
7. Your company prides itself on its environmental consciousness and positive impact on the community. How do you think the FIJI Water Company compares with other bottled water companies in terms of having a positive impact on Fiji? Why?

*Note: these questions will be used as probes and as a guide to help direct the initial portion of the interviews. I will be asking other probing questions based on the content of the individual subjects responses.