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The Role of Sport in Reflecting and Shaping Group Dynamics: The "Intergroup Relations

Continuum" and its Application to Fijian Rugby and Soccer

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Abstract

A significant body of knowledge exists around the role of intergroup relations in sport for development and peace (SFDP). However, while numerous SFDP researchers have investigated overt conflict, scholars have typically overlooked the varied nature of intergroup relations in comparatively stable SFDP environments. In addressing that issue, the authors explore intergroup relations in the context of Fiji, a country which in recent years has moved from a society characterized by the politics of coup d'état to democratic government and relatively peaceful social relations. That said, Fiji has long been shaped by a fundamental cultural divide between Indigenous Fijians (iTaukei) and Fijians of Indian ancestry (Indo-Fijians): this is reflected in the de facto separatism between these groups in relation to their role in rugby union and Association football (soccer). The authors present a qualitative framework—the Intergroup Relations Continuum (IRC)—by which to map intergroup relations as they apply in Fiji according to identity, ethnicity and sport. While the IRC is applied here in a Fijian context, the model is intended to be generalizable, aiming to provide a practical instrument for researchers, sport managers, policymakers and local stakeholders. The goal is to allow them to visually illustrate group affinities, rivalries, and sensibilities in terms of collective relationships that characterize sport and society.

Keywords: intergroup relations, Fiji, ethnic division, sport management, sport for development and peace, integration

1. Introduction

The study of relations between groups of people (hereafter, intergroup relations) has played a key role in efforts to interpret collective attitudes and behaviors among all manner of communities. Central to this is an in-depth understanding of groups and their engagement with each other. Among this vast scholarship, sport has attracted the interest of researchers concerned with collective identities, tribal affiliations, and intergroup rivalries (Bairner, 2015; Heere, 2016; Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013). Indeed, the globalization of sport as both practice and product has provoked scholars to speak to the power of sport both in and across societies (Boyle, 2009; Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2015; Wolff, 2011), and it has been appropriated for various social, political, and economic purposes (Allison, 1986; Grix, 2013; Houlihan & Zheng, 2015). There is, of course, an inherent duality about sport's potential in human relations. On the one hand, it can "unite people in a way that little else does", as Nelson Mandela famously said (as cited in Coakley 2015). On the other hand, sport can promote enmity and violence (Cable, 1969; Krüger & Murray, 2010)—"war minus the shooting," as George Orwell (1945, p. 11) wrote.

This duality of sport in contributing positively or otherwise to intergroup relations forms the basis of the present discussion. Within that framework the authors have an overarching goal: to introduce the Intergroup Relations Continuum (IRC) as a conceptual model with the aim of visually conveying information about collective identities and intergroup relationships in a given sport and society context. The IRC model draws upon findings from a larger study by the principal author (Sugden); it was developed as a means by which to explore identities and relationships both within and across two sports and two ethnic communities in Fiji. The IRC, while applied to that context, is intended to be transferable and thus generalizable to other SFDP studies with an intergroup relations lens. The IRC also aims to be a practical instrument: by providing a visual map of where sports fit along an

intergroup relations continuum, this may assist sport managers, policy makers and local stakeholders to better understand the ethnocultural dynamics of sport and society in their own environment.

We begin with a discussion of intergroup relations scholarship and the role of sport therein. We then introduce the basis for the IRC as a conceptual model and practical tool to approximate the position of a sport along a spectrum of intergroup relations in a given context. We then move to the field research conducted for this study, the relationship between sport and intergroup relations in Fiji, and how the IRC was eventually used to visually position those findings allowing for intergroup relationships to be better understood and, therefore, managed.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Intergroup relations

Studies on intergroup relations date back to the early 20th Century (Allport, 1924) and grew to become influential in social science and psychology due to the salience of group behavior in human-centered research (Dovidio, Love, Schellhaas, & Hewstone, 2017). According to Hogg (2016), "A group exists psychologically when two or more people define and evaluate themselves in terms of the defining properties of a common self-inclusive category" (p. 533). Beyond that simple dictum, individuals choose group memberships and create new groups by recognizing or adapting shared commonalities, from which they behave in an interdependent manner. Outside observers also place them into group categories, whether as a result of social norms, stereotyping, prejudice, or a combination of such factors (Gaertner, Dovidio, Guerra, Hehman, & Saguy, 2016). In short, understanding group behavior is central to societal studies, as so much of our world is organized and defined in terms of collective identities, attributes and alliances (Paffenholz, 2010).

Some group formations are both prevalent and long lasting: as Worchel and Coutant (2001) have put it, "groups survive long after the original members have turned to dust" (p. 462). It is no surprise, therefore, that much attention has been given to analyzing how and why groups behave in certain ways (Dovidio et al., 2017). The degree to which a person identifies with a group based on nationality, ethnicity, culture and so on, invariably influences how that person acts toward outsiders. The nature of a group's identity is dependent on attitudes formed in relation to the political, social, and economic context in which they exist (Hacking, 1999). Group identity is also dependent on how groups are positioned *in relation* to others, and how individuals within a group feel about their own group identity (Hogg, 2016). Adopting a set of beliefs associated with group identity is therefore part of a wider sense of "belonging" that underpins collective membership and which may encompass both positive or negative attitudes toward other groups (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998, p. 919).

Negative attitudes toward the other may relate to the concept of *intergroup bias*—the tendency for people to favor the group to which one belongs while viewing those in other groups with suspicion or disdain. According to Gaertner and Dovido (2014), intergroup bias has a propensity to manifest itself in racism and other forms of prejudice. In many places around the world, discriminatory group boundaries and intergroup distance are longstanding. This realization has provoked calls for a deeper understanding of what leads to biased "fear of the other" (Hogg, 2016, p. 14) and what actions might be taken to mitigate problematic intergroup attitudes and relationships (Wright, Mazziotta, & Tropp, 2017).

The formation and maintenance of intergroup division and ethno-racial boundaries is particularly salient in studies on sport and racial formation. In his germinal work, *Darwin's Athletes*, Hoberman (1997) critiqued U.S. society for failing to perceive the role of sport in creating and maintaining damaging stereotypes about African Americans' presumed natural

athletic abilities and, by inference, their natural intellectual inabilities. The former has been

lionized as exceptional, while the latter pathologized as inconsequential. In this respect, sport

may contribute to racialized attitudes so entrenched that overarching or underlying

discrimination is unrecognized or obscured (Mummendey & Otten, 2001). Such research,

situated mainly in the United States, has prompted further investigation into how different

sporting cultures form, frame, and shape groups (Phillips & Platt, 2016).

2.2 Intergroup relations and sport for development and peace

In the past, sports-based research and interventions have borrowed from Allport's

(1954) well known "contact hypothesis" as a means by which to investigate intergroup

relations in societies experiencing extreme stress or overt turmoil (Schulenkorf, 2017).

Under an SFDP paradigm, academically-informed practitioners have developed conflict

resolution and peacebuilding programs intended to foster understanding and reciprocity

between groups who, within society generally, may have little or no sense of empathy for

rival groups. In peace-focused SFDP projects and research, sport is used as an intergroup tool

that aims to break down ignorance of the other by putting players in a neutral space, thereby

challenging their existing assumptions about the normality of hierarchy and difference

(Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012; Schulenkorf & Sugden, 2011). In both cases, the intent of

SFDP is to try to mitigate the impact of conflict and to promote understanding of and

empathy towards others.

In one sense, the size and growth of the wider SFDP field can be understood by

looking at the number and breadth of on-the-ground projects now taking place around the

world. Back in 2008, Kidd mentioned that 150 SFDP organisations were registered with the

unofficial SFDP online platform (http://www/sportanddev.org) maintained by the Swiss

Academy for Development (Kidd, 2008). Ten years later, that platform features close to 1000

programs, more than 100 of which are specifically dedicated to peacebuilding. Another

barometer of growth is academic scholarship in the SFDP space, which has grown

substantially over the past decade (Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016). In regards to

conflict resolution, reconciliation and peacebuilding, examples abound, including programs

in sub-Saharan Africa (Heere, Walker, Gibson, Thapa, Geldenhuys & Coetzee et al., 2013),

the Middle East (Sugden & Tomlinson, 2018; Sugden & Spacey, 2016), Southeastern Europe

(Sterchele, 2013), Colombia (Cardenas, 2016), Sri Lanka (Schulenkorf, 2010, 2012), and

Northern Ireland (Hassan & Telford, 2014). These largely micro-level programs have

highlighted that sport *per se* is not going to result in positive development outcomes; rather, it

depends on the management of SFDP projects and their engagement with local communities

to design and implement successful initiatives (Schulenkorf, 2017: Sugden, 2006).

Accepting that, in the context of peacebuilding, sport can have either or both positive

and negative impacts prompts a logical conclusion that it may push intergroup relations

toward conflict (negative) or harmony (positive). This variability can be illustrated visually

by exploring the position of sports along the IRC. As will be shown, this model aims to map

sport, collective identities, and intergroup relationships in a simple and thus accessible way: it

provides a visual snapshot in time (leading to the possibility of comparisons over time) in a

given context. The end goal is to then allow a range of stakeholders an opportunity to reflect

upon the mapping when it comes to *their* design and implementation of sport initiatives,

programs, and policy. As such, the IRC responds to calls from SFDP researchers for a more

co-productive approach to praxis (Edwards, 2015; Spaaij, Schulenkorf, Jeanes, & Oxford,

2018), and from field practitioners and sport administrators for more accessible and practical

data instruments (Siefken, Schofield and Schulenkorf, 2015). In short, the IRC aims to assist

local stakeholders when they contemplate relations between groups in sport and society.

3. The intergroup relations continuum (IRC)

Figure 1 showcases the IRC that has been developed to depict a spectrum of intergroup relations, as well as their underlying features. It is intended to symbolize the diverse nature of intergroup relations in a particular context and time: in this study it features as a snapshot, but the tool can be adjusted (with further research) across intervals of time, this providing a dynamic element to such qualitative evaluation. Hence, while intergroup relations are typically in flux, subject to variables that push sports (and their stakeholders) toward harmony (positive) or conflict (negative), the IRC provides a snapshot of intergroup relations *in* time. A series of IRC maps could certainly provide evidence of stability or change *over* time. The IRC does not profess to represent every possible facet of intergroup relations, but rather is designed as an *indicative instrument* to aid policy makers and administrators to better understand the relationship between sport(s) and intergroup relations in a given geographical and temporal context. Further, the IRC does not presume a goal of harmony in all societies. For instance, some divided societies, such as Lebanon, South Africa, and Israel/Palestine, are arguably balanced by coexistence, but there are substantial intergroup hostilities and therefore wider challenges in terms of peace and equity (Maoz, 2004).

The rationale for the development of the IRC is based on the aforementioned critique, in that it calls for more dialogical, participatory, co-constructed research and practice in SFDP (see also Collison, Giulianotti, Howe & Darnell, 2016; Spaaij & Jeanes, 2013). Such a stance recognizes the capacity of people living in socially vulnerable and/or lower income contexts to engage in opportunities (where they exist) to interpret and seek to improve their circumstances. It is therefore imperative that outsider researchers seek to empathize with and empower participants through deep and respectful listening and dialogue (Collison & Machesseault, 2016). As a concept, the IRC is therefore intended to be a culmination of discussions with locals, with the field researcher being an instrument rather than a creator.

The IRC model was informed by language and concepts consistent with intergroup relations scholarship (see also Hewstone, 2009; Maoz 2004; Pettigrew, 1991; Shain & Sherman, 1998). As will now be explained, seven characteristics were identified as pivotal: *harmony*, *integration*, *co-integration*, *co-existence*, *dis-integration*, *separatism*, and *conflict*.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

To the extreme right is intergroup harmony. To sceptics, harmony is idealistic and/or denotes the absence of dissent, but the goal of consensus-based, tranquil intergroup relations has wide policy support (Dovidio, Eller, & Hewstone, 2011; Gaertner et al., 2016). *Harmony* is defined within the field as the complete absence of prejudicial behavior and (negative) conflict between groups (Pettigrew, 1991). It is viewed as an environment where peaceful intergroup relations reign, acrimony is absent, and where the potency of group difference is muted or unproblematic (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010). Thus, a common superordinate identity has greater importance than separate group identities. Again, we do not suggest that intergroup harmony is a panacea for *all* types of intergroup relations; however, on the IRC, harmony (positive) appears in polar opposition to conflict (negative), and a step beyond integration.

Integration is defined here as "the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political activities while maintaining one's cultural identity" (Spaaij, 2012, p. 2). There is mutual recognition between groups, along with their shared identity as part of a superordinate structure. With integration, both group identity and a superordinate collective coexist in a pluralistic political climate, such as consensus-based multiculturalism (Berry, 2005).

Co-integration is a term borrowed from mathematics, denoting two values connected in some way: they are predictable but remain largely autonomous or separate (Granger, 1986). On the IRC, co-integration is a point between coexistence and integration,

representing a state of intergroup relations where separate group memberships are clear, but there is growing consensus about a shared identity. In such an environment, extended periods of contact between groups has resulted in horizontal linkages and increased intermingling, reducing group boundaries (Dovidio et al., 2011), such as with changing attitudes toward disadvantaged migrant groups in the Netherlands (Paulle & Kalir, 2014).

Co-existence, a term prevalent in discourses on peacebuilding (Abu-Nimer, 2001), is defined as "reflecting the realization on the part of groups that they are mutually dependent to a significant degree" (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, & Zartman, 2008, p. 36). In coexistence, inequalities remain, but the relationship between groups is functional and peaceful, with mutual recognition of separate roles. Notably, some societies may have reached a balance, with coexistence preferable to conflict (negative), where clearly recognized and accepted boundaries form a basis for intergroup understanding, with respectfully agreed spatial and cultural distance (González & Brown, 2006). The power-sharing arrangement underpinning intergroup relations between Protestant and Catholic communities in Northern Ireland since the 1998 Good Friday agreement is a prime example of prolonged coexistence in action (Kerr, 2006).

When coexistence stops functioning in a way that is mutually beneficial and/or when events trigger an increase in fear and mistrust of the other, relations begin to disintegrate. *Dis-integration* has been associated with the breaking apart of mono-ethnic national identities (Shain & Sherman, 1998). In international relations, it is associated with the break-up of supranational economic formations into smaller entities that still retain a weaker degree of inter-relation (Ruta, 2005). Here, it is applied to signify the beginnings of intergroup distance indicated by a lack, but not complete absence, of contact and communication.

Separatism then follows when distance between groups has increased to a stage where there is minimal contact and dialogue, and where levels of mistrust, fear, and outgroup

derogation are increasing. For instance, when looking at intergroup relations related to ethnicity, separatism may be informed by ethnocentrism, ethno-racial stereotypes, and ultimately fear of the other (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Esteban & Ray, 2011). Group separatism can be dangerous when it "crystallizes the differences, magnifies tensions and intensifies hostilities" between groups (Schlesinger, 1991, p. 4). Intergroup separatism was present before many of the world's most horrific conflicts, such as the 1994 genocide of Tutsi by Hutu in Rwanda. The ethno-federal separation of the USSR and former Yugoslavia into group sovereignties was also a precursor for violence in Eastern Europe (Paffenholz, 2016).

Conflict signifies the complete breakdown of intergroup relations that, in extreme cases, may result in war (Esteban & Ray, 2011). The outcomes of war or war-like situations have often been catastrophic—catalyzing violence, famine, and mass displacement that can echo through generations (Miller, 2014). While there are peaceful examples of (political) conflict, which can be viewed necessary to secure sustainable and positive change (Simmel, 2010), aggressive conflict often provokes dire consequences. History provides evidence to support such claims and, because of this, a significant body of knowledge has addressed the many challenges associated with overt conflict that is intended to profoundly and negatively impact another group (Galtung, 1975; Paffenholz, 2016).

A potential key to avoiding intergroup conflict (negative) lies in understanding what social processes influence group relations adversely, and therefore how to investigate ways to constrain or reverse them (Stephan & Renfro, 2002). However, there is an imbalance in the scholarship. For example, a review of conflict literature indicates that social psychologists have a clearer picture of the processes and pre-conditions that initiate division and conflict than they do of methods to reduce or avoid them (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). Even less scholarship has been directed to situations where oppositional groups coexist yet remain opposed to open conflict. Such dynamics have been apparent, at certain points in

time, in places as diverse as India (Weiner, 2015), modern-day Northern Ireland (Hughes, 2014), Kazakhstan (Asker, 2014), Malaysia (Roper, 2011) and Fiji (Fraenkel, 2015a).

As outlined, the IRC is intended to assist researchers and practitioners in identifying attributes of intergroup conflict (negative) through to harmony (positive) and positioning them visually along a spectrum. As will be explained, a benefit of this approach is that findings can be communicated to local stakeholders in an accessible, digestible format. With these attributes in mind, we now turn to the application of IRC in a specific context—Fiji, which features a spectrum of challenges in respect of sport and intergroup relations.

4. Context: Fiji

Fiji is a society with two main population groups – indigenous Fijian islanders (iTaukei[1]) and Fijians of Indian descent (hereafter Indo-Fijians). Since independence from British rule, Fiji has struggled with protracted divides between these two ethno-racial groups, reflected in a tumultuous recent history marked by political instability and economic uncertainty (Lal, 2012a). Today, Fiji is under the control of a government and armed forces dominated by indigenous Fijians, who initially seized political power by undemocratic means, but gained legitimacy in September 2014 by winning the first open elections in 14 years (Fraenkel, 2015b). Executive power in the island nation is highly centralized, with a political culture subject to nepotism, corruption, and indigenous exclusivity (Naidu, 2016; Ratuva, 2014). The Indo-Fijian community, while not disenfranchised during the last election, has comparatively little political power in government or public institutions (Lal, 2012b). That said, intergroup division between the two main population groups is stable rather than volatile, with no civil war or militant clashes. Indeed, Fiji's return to democracy has resulted in its (gradual) acceptance back into the international community, bolstering

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[1] ITaukei is another term for Indigenous Fijian(s), both terms are used interchangeably in Fiji, and within extracts in this research. Where possible, "indigenous Fijians" is used to determine this groups distinctiveness.

geopolitical ties, foreign investment, and economic development (Kelly, 2015; Lawson,

2016).

How has sport reflected and shaped intergroup relations in Fiji? Under British

colonial rule, sport was instilled as a valuable cultural commodity: rugby[2] has been central to

the story of indigenous Fiji (Presterudstuen, 2010) while soccer[3] provided a hub for Indo-

Fijian identity. Rugby's connection to the indigenous way of life is reflected in the

demographics of participation in the sport, which, like government and the military, is

overwhelmingly indigenous and male (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013). Indeed, Fijian rugby has

become emblematic of muscular, hyper-masculine, indigenous identity and power, not just at

home but internationally (Presterudstuen, 2010; Presterudstuen & Schieder, 2016).

Indigenous dominance in rugby reflects the prevailing sociocultural discourse within

and emanating from Fiji. Indo-Fijians, despite making up around 37% of the total population

(Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2017), are notable in their absence from rugby, whether at

grassroots or elite levels. As Vakaoti (2016) has put it, "the absence of young Indo-Fijians is

unfortunate because the nature of their participation [or the reverse] is relatively unknown"

(p. 36). Nonetheless, Indo-Fijians are not absent from sport: they have a presence in the

country's second most popular game, soccer (James, 2015). Compared to rugby there is much

less discourse on or research about Fijian soccer, again a reflection of rugby's dominance.

Although soccer enjoys a relatively mixed ethnic participation base, Prasad (2013) has argued

that "football in Fiji takes on a racially charged outlook that it is an Indo-Fijian sport" (p. 25).

This perception is shaped, in part, by soccer's Indo-Fijian history, but also by the way in

which the sport is played in Fiji—with significant emphasis on Indian music, food, language,

and culture at games. Although indigenous players are as prominent as Indo-Fijian players at

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[2] "Rugby" will be used as an umbrella term for rugby union, rugby league, and rugby sevens unless otherwise stated.
[3] The term "soccer" is used to refer to Association football. "Football" may appear in the interview excerpts, but for the purposes of clarity the terms soccer is extrapolated.

the club or national level (sometimes even more so), soccer is organized, staged, and administered by Indo-Fijians, with negligible indigenous involvement in the running of the game (James, 2015; Prasad, 2013).

5. Research approach

This study is underpinned by an interpretive mode of qualitative inquiry, a basis of which is that lived experiences are socially constructed through language, consciousness and shared meanings (Crotty, 1998; Glesne, 1999; Neuman, 2003). Interpretive research acknowledges that data is gleaned and analysed through a process of induction, which means that the researcher constructs and reconstructs meaning in relation to a research aim, taking cognisance of the participants' sense of self and others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As Myers (1997) has deftly put it, interpretive studies aim to understand the context of a phenomenon through the meanings that people assign to it. Sugden needed to understand the roles of rugby, soccer, and group identities in Fiji. An interpretative methodology was core to that objective, this involving a combination of qualitative techniques: dialogue (conversations and interviews) and witness (observing local customs and behaviours, as well as participating, as appropriate, in cultural practices) (Wolcott, 2005). The venture would be, to borrow from Hammersley (2016, p.2), an exploration in "making sense" about surroundings. While Sugden had read widely about Fiji's history, politics, sport and cultural milieu, and discussed these complexities with academic colleagues who either lived in the Pacific region or had undertaken field work there, he had yet to immerse himself physically in the country. Hence, Sugden needed to prepare for field work in Fiji and to engage with local experts about who to consult with and how. Consistent with Hammersley's guidance about field work (2016, p. 2): the study aimed to deal with people in "everyday contexts"; data would be gathered from "a range of sources" (observation and conversation); the data would be in "raw form" (which is consistent with unstructured and exploratory research); the focus should be on a "single

setting or group of people" (Fiji and its two main communities); and "locally provided actions and meanings" (as embodied in leisure activities and group identities).

5.1 Immersion and engagement: In and out of the field

Sugden was inspired by Wolcott's notion of field work "reconnaissance" (1999, pp. 208-211), a preliminary journey that allows for affinity and exposure to an environment in advance of a longer period of immersion. He therefore undertook two journeys to Fiji. First, a ten-day reconnaissance trip to foster relationships with individuals and communities that Sugden – as part of his extensive cultural preparation – had been in touch with previously via email, phone or social media conversations. This reconnaissance journey also presented Sugden with tactile, observational, and dialogical exposure: without that prior experience, the subsequent nine-week field trip would have been exceedingly difficult and, indeed, problematic in terms of local engagement. Relationship building through dialogue intensified through face-to-face engagement with representatives of key Fijian sporting bodies and academics at the University of the South Pacific, each of whom offered Sugden guidance and advice. This was vital preparation for the more immersive nine-week field trip that would follow six months later.

During the field trip, Sugden lived with indigenous and Indo-Fijians in villages and shared social and leisure time with men involved in rugby and soccer. From a sport perspective, he was able to draw from his experience as a soccer and a rugby player in Northern Ireland, England, and Australia, and thus to engage—from an athletic sense—as an authentic sport participant and observer in Fiji. Of course, a core goal of interpretive field work is for the researcher to develop relationships with locals who can show and tell non-locals what they sense is valuable (Hunt, 1989). In these respects, Sugden moved between non-participant and participant–observer: he trained with a local rugby team and a local

soccer team for the duration, thereby observing social networks around gyms, university campuses, and crowds at matches.

Sugden's discussions with locals were diverse in nature, ranging from Western-style meetings with Indo-Fijian sports administrators in their offices, where Sugden chatted with bureaucrats while they checked their smart phones, through to impromptu dialogue with people in rural villages, where Talanoa was the norm among indigenous Fijians. The variability of culture and style of dialogue was palpable: Sugden was invited to share curry and rice with several Indo-Fijian soccer players, whose interest – perhaps not surprisingly – was with his knowledge (in being someone from the UK) of the English Premier League. Sport, Sugden understood, can be something of a connective language.

Conversations with indigenous athletes and administrators required Sugden to have a sense of the Talanoa way, which involves "personal encounter(s) where people 'story' their issues, their realities and aspirations" (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 21). It is characterized by oral traditions and very open, emotional dialogue. According to Halapua (2008), the Talanoa method is widely recognized as "engaging in dialogue with, or telling stories to each other, absent [of] concealment of the inner feelings and experiences that resonate in our hearts and minds" (p. 1). Sugden, who had been introduced to Talanoa by a Pasifika colleague at his university, sat in on fifteen such discussions. He found that they accorded with Vaioleti's (2016) prognosis that Talanoa "will almost always produce a rich mosaic of information" (p. 22), a summation that chimes with previous sport management research among Pasifika communities (Stewart-Withers, Sewabu, & Richardson, 2017).

Fijians, whether indigenous or Indo-Fijian, provided Sugden with stories and information about rugby, soccer, sport administration, and government policy. The result of this co-creative approach was a rich bank of data spanning conversations at the community level right up to decision-makers in Fijian sport.

5.2 Interactive analysis

In pursuing a quest to explore sport, identity and intergroup relations in Fiji, Sugden

drew from a portfolio of questions in circumstances where a Western-style interview suited

the participant. Questions were shaped according to the sport in question, with responses

about intergroup relations typically left open rather than pressed upon. So, a relatively simple

question was why either rugby or soccer were important to Fijian men, and which groups

they appealed to. This was invariably all that was needed for respondents to provide Sugden

with a long and detailed rendition of their views, about which they were inevitably

passionate.

Sugden conducted forty-seven interviews while in Fiji: he used this term in umbrella

fashion to describe various forms of face-to-face dialogue. For participants who were

interviewed in a Western fashion, such as journalists and sport bureaucrats, the discussion

was recorded, and the audio transcribed into text by Sugden. For those who chatted with

Sugden informally, field notes were taken. In cases where participants had digital means of

staying in contact with Sugden, such as by email or social media, he was able to cross-check

notes to verify the meanings attributed to them.

These experiences were systematically notated in a 15,000-word reflective research

diary, where Sugden curated what the anthropologist Geertz (1994) has termed "thick

description." This diary was an important site for the recording of observations, allowing for

regular comparison of themes and experiences in relation to the research questions. Locals

were regularly involved in the emergence and interpretation of findings, initially via

discussion in Fiji and then (upon return to Australia) by phone, email or private social media

conversations. In this approach, as in other constructivist methods, analysis of experiences

and observations begin early and were ongoing. Data and resultant theory are therefore

emergent, for they involve "inductive understanding as events unfold and knowledge

accrues" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 155). In short, Sugden was conscious of the importance of reflexivity and self-refection: his positionality as an outsider required self-conscious introspection (see also Ellis, 2004).

Sugden's interactions provided the basis for findings in his wide-ranging study on sport and intergroup relations between iTaukei and Indo-Fijian men (Reference to be included in the event of publication). But this process also became the catalyst for an idea – the establishment of a means by which to visually illustrate the research implications, and for locals to engage with them. The findings were extensive: what follows now is a synopsis of data and stories from the field that have been selected to explain how, where, and why the two sports sit on the IRC in Fiji.

6. Findings

6.1 Rugby: Separatism

Rugby is central to the popular historical, national, and cultural imagining of indigenous Fijians, and especially iTaukei men (Presterudstuen, 2010). Sugden uncovered considerable evidence that the sport is actively preserved and protected as indigenous space. One reason for this was the salience of ethno-racial stereotypes. As Desh (an iTaukei rugby player) emphasized: "If you see an Indo-Fijian person holding a rugby ball it will be like 'oh, wasting your time . . . what will he do?!'" These popular and entrenched beliefs have manifested in prejudice. For instance, Ashan, an Indo-Fijian respondent, told how his son tried to get into the rugby team in school: "they told him to go and play soccer because he is Indian!"

Despite such barriers, there is a small proportion of Indo-Fijians who compete on the rugby pitch. However, they are typically met with mixed responses, with indigenous players typically making it hard for them. Sugden spent approximately 70 hours training and

socializing with the Suva team,[4] one of the few top rugby clubs with Indo-Fijians in the squad (total of three). An indigenous team member, Peni, stated that he was proud of their involvement, believing that Suva was one of the "friendlier teams," but acknowledged that Indo-Fijian males often faced participation difficulties:

> When they play (other teams) they get it! All the other boys are like, "yeah,
>
> let's kill them!" Haha . . . it's just . . . Fiji you know they say "it's not your
>
> sport;" believe it or not some people here believe that rugby is an iTaukei
>
> sport, it's not an Indian sport . . . it's pretty sad really . . . not many people
>
> have tapped into it. (Peni)

Although the Suva team was, by and large, welcoming toward Indo-Fijian players, they considered themselves the exception, not the rule. As Leki, an iTaukei journalist, put it:

> I have been to rugby games where Indo-Fijians have played and I feel sorry
>
> for them because they play normal rugby but the verbal abuse coming from
>
> the side, especially from iTaukei people, it hurts their moral[e] because they
>
> want to participate and want to contribute to the Indo-Fijian rugby community.
>
> But there is no support from both sides – especially the indigenous Fijians.

This interpretation was confirmed by Ashan, a veteran Indo-Fijian player who had experienced racial prejudice in rugby "a lot of times". While we walked around a vacant rugby field, he described to me the problem of racial abuse toward other Indo-Fijians players, speaking of two who received constant bigoted heckling from the sidelines. Even iTaukei teammates sometimes lacked trust in their ability, often not passing to them when there was an opportunity.

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[4] Pseudonym of a rugby team based in Fiji's capital, Suva.

The belief that "Indians" don't belong in rugby—"that sport's for *them* (soccer); *this* sport's for us" (Markus)—is actively reinforced from a young age. This has hindered Indo-Fijian involvement in the game. As the Indo-Fijian sports journalist, Rajan, explained:

For the national Sevens team if you see Indians going for trials people would be like "really!?" In a place like Fiji we are behind when it comes to integrating and stuff, so we are still caught in the olden days. Indians are hesitant because they feel that is not their field, for whatever reason, and Fijians [indigenous] are like "no, that's our sport!"

There were also signs that indigenous stakeholders in rugby wished to maintain the sport's indigeneity, using Indo-Fijian stereotypes about lack of physical size and sporting acumen as excuses to bar interested players. This tactic also links to fears that rugby might one day be eroded as a site of iTaukei dominance, perhaps by the potential for Indo-Fijian cultural appropriation. One indigenous rugby player said, "we need to safeguard our interests . . . they [Indo-Fijians] are telling us you need to change your cultural ways, you need to change so that we can develop, and we are saying why?" (Temo).

Thus, rugby remains almost sacrosanct—a space controlled, owned, and protected by indigenous Fijians. This is also evident in the centralization of power and lack of inclusivity in the Fijian Rugby Union (FRU). When speaking with Sugden, a senior FRU official was dismissive about Indo-Fijian development in rugby: "They don't like contact . . . they are a soft kind of people" (Samu), confirming widely held stereotypes yet again. Another participant, a well-known human rights advocate, was outspoken about such attitudes: "The Fiji Rugby Union is racist . . . it's racist, it promotes racism. They talk about the fact that it's inclusive but that's all bulls**t" (Vivian). The result is a national sport that is ethnocentric and overwhelmingly exclusive.

6.2 Rugby: Toward integration

Notwithstanding ethnocultural discrimination in Fijian rugby, the international

success of the men's rugby team in Sevens competition has prompted pride in the national

team from both iTaukei and Indo-Fijian communities (Pickup, 2017). As one Indo-Fijian law

student explained, "If I think about it in terms of rugby I think that it does unite the nation:

it's common ground, everyone is pretty into it, and I think everyone is proud of that particular

field" (Rashni). National pride or "pride for the nation as a whole", as an indigenous fan (Joe)

put it, was a factor that kept coming up when discussing rugby. This seemed one way by

which both groups could feel a sense of attachment to a collective Fijian identity. As, Masi, a

top indigenous Fijian rugby official explained, "Rugby is part of our history, you know; it is

important in Fiji, it brings people together so to speak, it has stayed strong all throughout our

turbulent years and challenges."

The sport has been a constant thread in Fijian history despite political upheaval.

Rugby, and to some extent, art and poetry (Koya, 2012), have been the most important social

meeting points for Fijians. In terms of sport, this is due to the pride associated with such a

small nation competing well internationally. Yet there is also an optimistic view that sport

can be virtuous for the whole of Fiji: "You know about the segregation in Fiji between races

and all, but then when it comes to rugby, everyone is united [and] everyone has a common

interest in rugby. Despite the different backgrounds, different races" (Temo).

I had the privilege of being invited into kava circles involving both indigenous and

Indo-Fijian rugby players. There, people often spoke gleefully about rugby in an almost

evangelical way due to its perceived unifying properties for the nation. However, while there

are aspects of rugby in Fiji that promote national unity, such as fandom, this is more of a

shared enthusiasm about the team's performance than it being a widely shared activity by

way of participation. For example, I observed few instances of both groups sitting together watching games.

Meanwhile, in soccer, Indo-Fijians have found a sporting enclave. As we will see, this too has had an impact on intergroup relations.

6.3 Soccer: Separatism

Soccer in Fiji is historically "Indian" in character, despite relatively mixed participation, particularly at grassroots levels (James, 2015; Prasad, 2013). The face of the Fijian Football Association (FFA), previously the Fijian Indian Football Association, has given permanence to the belief that soccer is an "Indian" sport. The vast majority of staff and officials, either within or affiliated to the FFA, from the cleaners at their headquarters, to coaches and referees, are Indo-Fijian. Speaking about the organizational staff, one prominent Indo-Fijian sports journalist (Rajan) complained that "you don't see many iTaukei in soccer [organization] because Fiji football don't embrace them." A key impediment for them is the unofficial expectation—for all soccer administrators—to financially support the FFA; without that monetary contribution they are basically unable to enter into Fiji's soccer hierarchy. The FFA has faced numerous allegations of intra-organizational nepotism and corruption, all of which is played out among the Indo-Fijian elite that runs soccer.

Indo-Fijian businesses are a crucial source of income for the FFA. As Amod put it, "A lot of money comes into Fiji football from them [Indo-Fijian businessmen]." Another coach explained that Indo-Fijians are so prevalent in the organization "because of the money factor, to be part of Fiji soccer you need to invest, from the smallest to the full scale" (Desh). Indo-Fijian monetary commitment comes partly due to the status afforded to those who are part of the soccer hierarchy; unlike rugby, there is negligible government financial support for the game. Indeed, soccer is rarely acknowledged in government policy or budget documents (Government of Fiji, 2016; Naupoto, 2012a, 2012b). For the iTaukei-controlled state, rugby

is the national game. Meanwhile, in the soccer grandstands, and among coaching staff, indigenous Fijians are in a substantial minority, a fact that the sports journalist Rajan attributed squarely to FFA governance issues: "Many people are scared to be critical of Fiji football, but I have been and I always will be because they are not doing their job, so that's why you don't see Fijian (indigenous) people on the stands."

These themes were regularly referenced when the FFA came up in conversation (Joe/Jimmy/Samir). Soccer's governing body has drawn criticisms about organizational corruption, allegations of match fixing, the national team's poor performance, and poor fan attendance at local games (James, 2015; Kumar, 2013). All that said, in terms of soccer participation, there is cause for optimism regarding intergroup relations.

6.4 Soccer: Towards integration

Soccer is one of the few areas where Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians share a commonality in sport and society. Across Fiji, there are examples of soccer acting as a site for shared participation, and there are genuine examples of inter-ethnic friendships formed through the game (Lal/Samir/Mani). In some rural areas with a high Indo-Fijian population, such as Ba and Labasa, this was even more common. Ethnically-mixed Talanoa circles focused on or around the game were more frequent here than in other areas of Fiji, with the ritual of drinking kava enshrined in their male bonding sessions. Inter-ethnic camaraderie was also reflected by many indigenous Fijian players communicating with teammates in Hindi language on the field. As, Lal, a top-flight coach, explained: "iTaukei boys playing in our team they are well versed in both tongues . . . iTaukei language and Indian language so the mixing among them is I think perfect so it has a good effect on the team."

English is the national language of Fiji and the lingua franca of business, education, and governance (Maharaj, 2013). The aforementioned point, is that via the inter-ethnic activity of soccer, indigenous players learn to converse in an Indian language within a climate

of coexistence. This is significant, as the learning and sharing of Indo-Fijian culture by the iTaukei on such a scale is rare in a society where sociocultural discourse is predominantly indigenous. Soccer is, none the less, an unusual space in Fiji: it is a sport that has long been run by Indo-Fijians; thus, iTaukei players' accommodation of the Hindi language speaks to their culturally subordinate place in the game. In short, this language interchange is one way, with an expectation that indigenous players will adopt Hindi to better interact with Indo-Fijian coaches and teammates. This shows the degree of Indo-Fijian cultural dominance in soccer, despite iTaukei domination in terms of player numbers and their quality at elite levels (see also fijifootball.com.fj, 2017).

Thus, it is important not to overstate the integrative nature of soccer: sport provides an unusual bonding environment, but its hierarchical nuances may not reflect society generally. As Joe, an indigenous Fijian soccer player reminds us, when playing "you are all one, but as soon as you walk out and you take off the uniform and go into groups and go and sit down then that negativity comes back again." This statement demonstrates the duality of sport to positively/negatively affect intergroup relations. That dynamic is now addressed in respect of where Fijian rugby and soccer appear on the IRC.

7. Discussion and implications: Sport and the IRC

This research found that soccer and rugby both reflect and influence intergroup relations in Fiji in many ways; ethnic divisions are played out, and largely sustained, in Fiji's two major sports. However, as the research progressed it became clear that soccer and, to a much more limited extent rugby, could also act as meeting points for both communities. This brings us back to the IRC model which we can now embellish.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

The IRC was developed to visually depict the nature of intergroup relations and to aid in their mapping across a spectrum of possibilities. A soccer ball is featured along with a larger rugby ball. Both provide a visual approximation of the roles that soccer and rugby play in intergroup relations in Fiji, as the study results determined. First, soccer in Fiji exemplifies both coexistence and elements of integration. Soccer is a shared space despite its "Indian" assignation and control, and it assists in bringing about some degree of mutual recognition, cultural exchange, and cross-community linkages. It therefore sits between co-existence and co-integration: there is clear evidence of a shared identity built on mutual recognition (Dovidio et al., 2011). However, this mutual recognition is based on the acknowledgement of difference between the two groups, which is perpetuated by the static and mono-ethnic soccer administration in Fiji.

Rugby, on the other hand, is relatively closed and ethnocentric, a potent site for the reproduction and maintenance of intergroup distance. In some areas, rugby ferments disintegration and separation of indigenous and Indo-Fijian groups. Many aspects of rugby's embroidery, consisting of indigenous masculinity, cultural dominance, and elements of ethno-nationalism, are reflected in its organization, actively preserving the sport as an indigenous-exclusive space. The larger size of the rugby ball in this depiction is intended to symbolize the game's power and meaning in Fiji. Rugby, in short, projects indigenous Fijian hegemony (Kanemasu & Molnar, 2013; Presterudstuen, 2010). On the IRC, rugby therefore sits between disintegration and separatism owing to ethno-racial stereotypes underpinning participation, thus its othering of Indo-Fijians as not merely different, but physically lesser human beings (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2012; Esteban & Ray, 2011).

Rugby and soccer are, therefore, important influences on Fijian intergroup relations. The IRC proved helpful in allowing the intergroup positionality of rugby and soccer to be represented visually to local stakeholders. That knowledge provided a crucial starting point

for discussion about policy strategies for both the body politic and its constituent parts: the superordinate society, policy makers, sport administrators and the two groups under focus— indigenous and Indo-Fijian. The IRC, as a visual instrument, assisted with local comprehension of research findings (which, of course, had been curated from those very stakeholders). This is not a new philosophy: in recent years, SFDP scholars have called for creative, culturally relevant ways of communicating findings to local stakeholders. Here the emphasis is on authentic engagement, as there is little point having findings that locals do not comprehend (Carroll, Dew, & Howden-Chapman, 2011; Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2014). For example, in their work with health staff and remote community leaders in Vanuatu, Siefken et al. (2014) provided a combination of simple poster messages (visual communication) and word clouds (linguistic communication), learning that locals appreciated these succinct, aesthetically pleasing means of representing research findings, this helping to facilitate further dialogue.

As Sugden gathered data reflexively, this involved follow up conversations, e-mails, and phone calls with locals. Eventually, he was able to apply the findings to the IRC framework, and to point out to correspondents the positions of rugby and soccer on this spectrum. That process allowed for robust exchanges: the IRC proved to be a conversation starter and thus, a dynamic process of interaction, debate, thereby allowing for further evaluation.

The IRC, by helping to catalyze opinion, enabled the germination of suggestions for change. Two examples are presented here. First, many local respondents asserted that for equality of opportunity to be achieved in rugby and soccer, policy reforms needed to begin with the youth (e.g., Sunjul – Indo-Fijian, Ana/Milo/Moji*i* – indigenous). They argued that primary school physical education ought to be made ethno-culturally inclusive: currently, the common practice is to automatically separate indigenous Fijian boys into rugby and Indo-

Fijian boys into soccer, as though their ethnic backgrounds make these choices natural.

When the IRC was shown to stakeholders who retained contact with Sugden, their position

on the need for *inclusive* physical education was made manifest. In that respect, there was

consensus among many indigenous and Indo-Fijian stakeholders that reform would offer

greater flexibility to all young boys in schools.

Sugden concluded that this was not simply about providing indigenous and Indo-

Fijian children with opportunities to choose rugby *or* soccer (or both); it is also about

disrupting the mindset that Indigenous Fijians are naturally gifted at sport and Indo-Fijians at

academia, with deficits for both groups in the reverse. A scenario may be imagined where

both indigenous and Indo-Fijian students are equally encouraged into sports, challenging the

socially constructed limitations placed around the physical and mental capabilities of each.

Sugden learned that a second area of concern to many Fijians is the government's

sport outreach policy (Beckman, Rossi, Hanrahan, Rynne, & Dorovolomo, 2017). It is

supposed to engage all communities but is typically targeted toward the iTaukei. A senior

sports administrator, of indigenous heritage, was candid in his criticism:

> There is . . . no work put in to get the Indians involved; they only go to rural areas
>
> where the vast majority of the population is iTaukei. We have been in the program
>
> for a year now I have seen what it's like and there is no way—there is no form
>
> of integration that is happening at the moment; it's just what it is, you know, and
>
> that's what it is in Fiji (Lomu).

Such testimony was supported repeatedly by locals from diverse groups: Indo-Fijian,

academics (Samir/Nasim) along with top administrators from rugby (Moji – indigenous),

soccer (Amir – Indo-Fijian), the Olympic committee (Riane – Chinese-Fijian), and the Pacific

Games Council (Vikram – Indo-Fijian). These respondents spoke with varying degrees of

criticism about the way in which outreach is managed, their consensus being that the

government tended to focus its resources on rural iTaukei villages. When the IRC was

discussed with stakeholders at the end of the study, their position on the inequity of

government policy hardened. This reaffirmed a critical consensus between the indigenous

and Indo-Fijian respondents about the discriminatory nature of the outreach program.

In summary, there is potential for the IRC to be used as an indicative mapping tool for

sport managers and policymakers. A practical benefit of this approach is that local

stakeholders, in the wake of iterative research findings, can be embedded into the map

reading process. From an intergroup relations perspective, it is beneficial that people with

different, even competing collective identities, are given the opportunity to visualize their

group's position along the IRC. Use of the model is intended to be a catalyst for dialogue,

both within and between groups. Whether stability or change is sought, stakeholder

understanding and engagement is critical to transformational sport management initiatives

involving both practitioners and academics (Frisby, 2005).

8. Conclusions

In this paper, we have introduced the IRC model to the study of intergroup relations.

An investigation into Fijian rugby and soccer led to the creation of the IRC, this allowing

sports (or, indeed, other group activities) to be positioned on an indicative spectrum, from

conflict (negative) through to harmony (positive). Within the intergroup relations and SFDP

literature, a focus on societies afflicted by conflict (negative) has meant that there remains a

gap regarding our knowledge of intergroup relations in societies where divisions are not

manifest in the form of open conflict, violence, and militarism. Although SFDP has rightly

furnished us with the knowledge that sport—if managed carefully and strategically—can be

effective in helping to remediate damaged relationships (Sterchele, 2015; Sugden, 2011), the

present study broadens that scope to explore intergroup relations exhibiting latent divisions

and more subtle relationships. Moreover, in bridging the often-prevalent researcher–

practitioner gap, the IRC serves as an important visual aid, providing an accessible snapshot in time about the influence of sport on intergroup relations in a given context. The authors have applied the model to Fiji, a society with ethno-cultural divisions that are manifest in two major sports.

From a practical perspective, the IRC assists in mapping the status of intergroup relations in an accessible way that allows for snapshot comparisons in context to inform the design and implementation of sport initiatives, programs, and policy. This is particularly relevant as an illustrative tool in community settings where local stakeholders, sport managers, and policymakers attempt to make sense of group affinities, rivalries, and sensibilities in sport and society. Building on its usefulness here, the IRC might be operationalized in further research on the effect of sport on intergroup relations in various settings. Evidently, intergroup relations are crucial patterns of inclusion and exclusion in both sport and society.

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