UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

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Sport and Integration: An exploration of group identity and intergroup relations in Fiji

Jack Sugden

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy 2017

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Jack Thomas Sugden, declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given in the bibliography in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

Signed

Production Note:
Signature removed prior to publication.

Jack Thomas Sugden

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Vinaka vakaleuv!

PREFACE

My interest in conflict and division stemmed from my undergraduate degree in international politics from the University of Manchester (UK), a Masters in ethnic conflict at Queens University (Belfast), coupled with childhood in Northern Ireland during the 'troubles'. I have worked as both a researcher and project leader in Sport for Peace (SFP) and Sport for Development (SFD) projects in Israel/Palestine, West and South Africa and Northern Ireland. It was while researching in Israel/Palestine, and later in South Africa for the University of Johannesburg that I at first became interested in 'bottom up' and/or 'civil society' approaches to peacebuilding and development.

I believe it is the combination of practical and research experience within the two fields of SFP and SFD that have furnished me with the critical skills which have added to the value of these projects on the ground. My experiences in study and in the field have been complementary and have informed the critical lens through which I view the field of sport and social change. This critical appraisal has helped shape this study, providing deep contextual understanding within this field.

At a conference on sport in divided societies in Israel, and later at a similar event in Belfast, I met my now supervisors from The University of Technology Sydney. They shared similar interests and, several conversations later, we formulated the idea for a thesis. I decided to focus on the Fijian context, as it provides an interesting case study of sport and integration. Fiji's unique history of colonialism, migration and division, within a modern political landscape punctuated by four military coups provides a culturally complex site. Following some valuable correspondence with academics based in Fiji - Dr. Mohit Prasad and Dr. Yoko Kanemasu at The University of the South Pacific, I began in earnest. This is what we found.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the topic of sport and integration (SAI) and discusses the role that sport plays in both uniting and dividing groups in lower and middle income settings. In particular, this thesis addresses the effect of sport on ethno-racial division by exploring the effect of sport on intergroup distance. This in-depth study applies rigorous social science to local voices and ways of knowing, to improve understanding of the role of sport in divided societies. In doing so, this thesis proposes a new framework to map the way in which the practice of popular sports can influence intergroup relations.

The research draws from three distinct but interrelated areas of literature: identity formation, intergroup relations and the effect of sport on these fields. The first two areas are discussed in relation to the role of ethno-racial and social identity in group relations, along with strategies to reconcile intergroup difference. Sport then emerges as an emblematic site for solidifying identity, hegemonic power relations and group categorisation, while also facilitating positive social change in the form of the sport for development and peace (SDP) field. It is shown that our current understanding of SDP is restricted in its focus on development and/or peacebuilding goals, and that an extension to this field is required: sport and integration (SAI). In short, SAI also encompasses sport for social change but it is not orientated towards meeting specific development goals or curating peace in the wake of violence.

The Pacific Island nation of Fiji presents an ideal place for SAI research due to the cultural prominence of sport as well as underlying divisions between Indigenous Fijians and Fijians of Indian descent. Utilising a qualitative mode of enquiry that employs social constructivist logic in its design, the empirical research followed an approach described as ‘Short Term Ethnography’. This approach foregrounds local agency and ways of knowing an immersive research journey designed specifically to gain in-depth knowledge. The research took place in a number of locations across Fiji at the community (micro), institutional (meso) and decision making (macro) levels to develop a holistic impression of Fijian sport and society.

The approach I have taken acknowledges that sport is a powerful cultural commodity in Fiji and finds that in some practices, such as rugby sevens fandom and soccer participation, sport serves as a focal point of unity. However, there are other elements of Fijian sport which seem to maintain unequal power relations, perpetuating separatism between Fiji’s two main groups. The framework which was built to research SAI in Fiji therefore, functions to expose the exclusive social, cultural and structural mechanisms within Fijian sport and highlights a locally envisaged agenda for change. Based on the initial insights provided by this thesis, this study points to further application of the SAI framework in other societies troubled with division, in both low and high income settings.

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ACRONYMS

CIIM: Common Ingroup Identity Model
DCM: De-categorised Contact Model
DIM: Dual Identity Model
FFA: The Fijian Football Association
FRU: The Fijian Rugby Union
GCC: The Great Council of Chiefs
HIC: High Income Country
IPM: Ingroup Projection Model
IRB: The International Rugby Board
IRC: Intergroup Relations Continuum
LMIC: Lower and Middle Income Country
MIDM: Mutual Ingroup Differentiation Model
SDP: Sport for Development and Peace
SFD: Sport for Development
SFP: Sport for Peace
STE: Short Term Ethnography