

## Understanding Intercultural Relations on Multiethnic High School Sports Teams

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Our study utilizes the context of multiethnic high school sports teams to understand the sources of intergroup conflict. Teams are one of the few contexts in which multiethnic youth come together under conditions social psychology has found favorable for the reduction of prejudice: these conditions are, "equal status contact between . . . groups in the pursuit of common goals" (Allport, 1954/1958). In theory, the members of a sports team are defined as having equal status and working together for a common goal. Indeed, Allport uses the multiethnic sports team to exemplify his principle: "Here the goal is all-important; the ethnic composition of the team is irrelevant. It is the cooperative striving for the goal that engenders solidarity" (Allport, 1958, p. 264).

However, the theoretical potential of team sports for equal status contact in the service of a common goal may not always be realized in practice. Under certain conditions, a dominance hierarchy of socially constructed ethnic groups (Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1999) can form within the team. This was an unexpected finding of our research.

Nonetheless, even when the conditions of equal status contact in the service of a common goal are obtained on a team, these conditions are, according to our theoretical framework, *necessary* but *not sufficient* for intergroup harmony. Our notion was that even equal status contact and a common goal cannot eradicate the difference between two very basic, yet unspoken value frameworks: individualism and collectivism. We

hypothesized that this difference in values lies at the root of much intergroup conflict among youth in general, and on sports teams in particular.

Individualism and collectivism are cultural models both for generating behavior and for interpreting the behavior of others. Mainstream culture in the United States is generally viewed as individualistic, encouraging independence, self-reliance, individual achievement, and personal self-esteem as important goals of development (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, many groups come to the United States bringing a collectivistic value system from their ancestral culture into our highly individualistic society (Greenfield & Cocking, 1994). Collectivism is a cultural value orientation that emphasizes interdependence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), group needs and goals, and personal modesty (Boutakidis, Davis, Suzuki, Greenfield, & Baidoo, 1997). This situation sets the stage for intergroup conflict, particularly between Euro-Americans or African Americans and members of non-Western immigrant minorities. The conflict that can arise from differences in value systems is subtle and often goes unrecognized as being culturally based.

In sum, divergent value frameworks, as well as attitudes of group dominance or superiority, disrupt the ideal conditions of sports teams: equal status and common goals. In this chapter, we describe how and why intercultural conflict occurs. In line with our theoretical framework and findings, we have two foci: (1) value differences and (2) the presence of hierarchically arranged ethnic subgroups within a team. Both conditions lead to intergroup misunderstanding and conflict.

### *Value Differences*

Players bring differing value lenses into the team sport situation. Different players then see the same behaviors through the different cultural lenses of individualism and collectivism, and interpret the meaning of the behaviors in ways that may contrast with another's interpretation. In particular, we look at differing cultural approaches on the themes of (1) self-enhancement (individualistic) versus self-deprecation (collectivistic) (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997); and (2) the role of a team member as an individual achiever (individualistic) versus as a supporting player (collectivistic). *Conflict occurs when the behavior valued in one perspective is negatively evaluated through the lens of the other perspective.*

These issues of value difference were particularly salient in our analysis of conflict on a girls' high school volleyball team. For a boys' high school basketball team, these issues were also present. However, they did not seem to lead to the escalation of conflict as much as did problems of in-group/out-group definition and the formation of a dominance hierarchy composed of different ethnic groups, our next topic of discussion.

### *A Hierarchy of Ethnic Groups*

For the boys' basketball team, we found it necessary to examine the disruption of equal status team membership by the formation of an ethnically defined social dominance hierarchy (Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, Federico, & Pratto, 1999). In this case, the team fractionated into a racially constructed dominance hierarchy with an ethnically defined in-group in the dominant position (Black-identified players). The divisive issues were an attitude of Black superiority at basketball and coach favoritism toward the Black players. In line with the model of Gaertner, Dovidio, Nièr, Ward, and Banker (1999), we concluded that this process of ethnic fission was a function of these divisive issues; which, in turn, led to negative intergroup attitudes and to a high level of conflict, including some physical aggression. On this team, an ethnically defined dominance hierarchy went side-by-side with value differences as sources of conflict.

### **Subjects and Context**

The research presented here is part of a larger study involving multiethnic high school basketball and volleyball teams, both girls' and boys', in two schools in Los Angeles County. Our study of value perspectives and conflict on these teams includes players, coaches, and parents as subjects. In this chapter, we will present data from two multiethnic teams to illustrate how cultural value conflict can motivate both subtle and blatant conflict in the context of high school sports. Conflict abounded on both teams, but on the second team, conflict also led to physical aggression.

The first team we will discuss is a girls' high school volleyball team from a suburb east of downtown Los Angeles. This varsity team contained Asian-Americans, Euro-Americans, Latinas, and mixed-race players and had many instances of interethnic conflict. The second team was a varsity boys' basketball team comprised of African Americans, Asian-Americans, Euramericans, Latinos, and mixed-race players from the same school as the girls' team. This boys' team was the only one in which player conflict led to physical aggression among team members.

### **Methods**

The work presented in this chapter is based on ethnographic data and player journals. An important feature of our methodology is the multivoical ethnography, an ethnography composed of many voices. We investigated conflict not only from the researchers' points of view, but also from the points of view of our subjects. Our research team was multiethnic in

order to provide varying cultural interpretations of the same observed events at team practices, games, and team gatherings; and the multiethnic high school players kept journals concerning their personal experiences of harmony and conflict with their teammates. Player opinions and ideas in the journal entries showed us the players' thoughts in their own voices. In this way, we analyzed the interpretations of multiple observers and multiple journal writers to understand conflict from multiple perspectives.

At the end of each sports season, we also administered two individualism/collectivism assessments to each player. We assumed that these assessments were stable over the length of a sports season and therefore reflected the values each player brought into the team situation. One assessment was based on Likert-scale items assembled by Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand (1995, pp. 255–266). This assessment allows one to measure individualism and collectivism as two separate and independent dimensions.<sup>1</sup> We also gave participants our own scenario measure of individualism and collectivism. In this measure, participants try to resolve social dilemmas that have both individualistic and collectivistic solutions (see Raeff, Greenfield, and Quiroz [2000] for sample dilemmas and responses). This instrument assesses the extent to which individualism or collectivism is prioritized in choice situations; it therefore yields a single dimension with individualism at one pole and collectivism at the other.

Our analysis is primarily qualitative. Although we derived quantitative scores from our assessments, we use them on the individual rather than the group level. For example, we tried to connect the values that pairs of individual players bring into the team situation with the interaction of the pair. For example, would a player who scored in the assessments as more collectivistic take the collectivistic position in a conflict with a teammate assessed as less collectivistic? We use pseudonyms when presenting individual data from researcher observations, journal entries, and individualism-collectivism assessments.

#### *The Issue of Cultural Essence*

Note first that we are not assuming that a particular value system constitutes a cultural essence (cf., Miller & Prentice, 1999) for all members of a given ethnic group. Instead, we are measuring values on the individual level and relating these values to interactive behavior in specific conflict situations. To avoid stereotyping ethnic groups, we focused on differences in player values and in conflict behavior rather than on ethnic labels. The connection between ethnicity and values or between ethnicity and conflict behavior then became empirical questions. Thus, as a second stage in the

analysis, we looked to see whether particular values and particular conflict behaviors are associated with particular ethnic groups.

Secondly, we are not assuming that a given score on the Individualism-Collectivism Scale will always be associated with the same type of behavior in a conflict situation. Instead, we see value conflicts as interactional constructions; the context provided by the other person in a particular conflict is crucial to the construction process. Thus, we look at the *relationship* between the individualism and collectivism scores of two parties, in order to understand the positions each has taken in a given conflict. In short, it is the *relationship* between the values of the two parties—value differences—that instigate the value conflict process.

We tested our hypothesis—that the most salient issues of conflict in a multiethnic group setting can be traced to differences in individualist and collectivist values—with a microanalysis of players' underlying values and their interactive behavior in several cases of observed team conflicts. We then related this behavior to individual assessments of collectivism and individualism; this was done in order to understand more fully the relationship between player values and interactional behavior.

#### Findings

##### *Girls' Volleyball*

The first case of conflict comes from the girls' volleyball team and shows how value differences can animate subtle interpersonal conflict. The heart of this conflict stems from a contrast between the individualistic emphasis on *self-esteem and the protection of self-esteem in front of others* (self-enhancement) versus the collectivistic emphasis on *promoting personal modesty* (self-deprecation).

First, we will highlight examples showing self-esteem and modesty as contrasting values. We will then demonstrate how each value system provides a lens for negatively evaluating behavior stemming from the other framework.

On this particular team, both of our individualism/collectivism assessments indicated that two players (Molly and Julia) were relatively more collectivistic and relatively less individualistic than another player (Arlene). These differences on our questionnaire measures were reflected in attitudes and behavior on the playing field. A member of our research team noted that when the more individualistic player, Arlene, made a good play, she looked at the coach for approval and praise; for example, she made a "kill" (a very desirable play in volleyball) and looked toward Coach Landford, who cheered. On the other hand, when she made a mistake, she was

quick to explain the reasons and circumstances for the error. For example, Arlene and another player were talking when a ball came to them, and they missed it. Coach Landford said "You can talk later." Arlene replied with a reason for talking: "We're talking about approaches."

In contrast, when Molly, one of the more collectivistic players, made a good play and her teammates hi-fived and cheered, "Yay, Molly!" Molly hid her face in her shirt to hide a smile and pretended to wipe sweat. Also, when Molly made a mistake, she dropped her head down saying, "my fault." Whereas the more individualistic girl sought praise and shied away from blame, the more collectivistic girl sought modesty, shied away from praise, and was quick to assume personal responsibility for the error.

While promoting one's self-esteem is seen as beneficial from an individualistic perspective, this may be seen as undesirable egotism from a collectivistic perspective. On the other hand, while modesty and self-deference are seen as behavioral ideals in collectivistic societies, such behavior may be interpreted as a lack of self-assertion in individualistic societies. It is these negative interpretations of the positive values of the other framework that provides a potential for intergroup conflict and misunderstanding.

These contrasting approaches to accepting/deflecting praise and responsibility for error led to subtle forms of conflict and misunderstanding between the players. Molly, relatively collectivistic and the cocaptain of this volleyball team, wrote in her journal, "It gets me mad when I see Coach being easy on Arlene and sticks up for Arlene by saying 'It's okay, it wasn't your fault.'" (Arlene is the more individualistic player.) "Coach saying things like that just keeps Arlene playing the same way instead of trying to push herself to correct it." Molly is upset that Coach Landford deflects criticism from her more individualistic teammate rather than instigating a change in her teammate's skills.

The fact that Arlene, the individualist, deflects criticism from herself also upsets Julia, another player who scores as a relative collectivist. In her journal, Julia writes of Arlene, "She gets very defensive when you try and tell her something and she is always making excuses. I confronted her before about it and she said, 'There is always an excuse for everything.'" For her part, Arlene, the relative individualist, resents Julia's criticism, writing, "It pisses me off big time." Arlene also expresses love for the head coach ("I love her to death."), who was observed to protect her from criticism. On the other hand, Arlene expresses hatred for the assistant coach, because, she writes in her journal, "he always tells me that I don't even try or I need to try harder." She dismisses this criticism as "complete bull\*—?!"

As prior research has indicated (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998), the individualistic goal of creating and maintaining self-esteem and presenting a strong image of self-esteem to others is linked to an emphasis on praise

as a feedback mechanism. In this framework, admission of error may be considered a threat to one's self-esteem. However, Arlene's consistent defense of her own self-esteem is interpreted by Molly, in her journal, as "her big ego." This is because the collectivistic emphasis is on personal modesty. Associated with the positive value of modesty is the positive value of self-criticism and criticism by others. In this value framework, criticism of error is seen in a more benign light, as a feedback mode for improvement. This kind of conflict, rooted in deep-seated value differences, tends to go on and on without resolution because the players do not recognize the conflicting values.

Analysis of this case supports our hypothesized relationship between value frameworks and interactive behavior. Here we see the same behaviors—praise and criticism, self-defense, and self-blame—evaluated differently by different players. This differential evaluation leads to interpersonal tension and conflict because each party to the conflict takes her own perspective for granted: the journals indicate a complete lack of awareness of alternative value orientations, or even comprehension that values are at issue. We also found that the values expressed in the journals were corroborated by individual value assessments on two different measures, the Singelis et al. questionnaire and our scenario measure.

Additionally, the value frameworks represented by the positions taken in the conflict correspond with the expected ethnic groups: Arlene, the player who scored the most individualistically of the three, is Euramerican. Molly, the more collectivistic cocaptain, is the daughter of Korean immigrants and was raised in Korea and the United States. Julia, the other more collectivistic player, is a Latina immigrant. The head coach (also Euro-American) is liked by the Euro-American player because the coach deflects blame and is disliked by the collectivistic players for the same reason. The assistant coach (who is disliked by the individualistic, Euro-American player because he told her to try harder) is a Mexican immigrant.

### *Boys Basketball*

The second case of team conflict comes from a multiethnic boys' basketball team and shows the conditions for aggressive conflict. A different source of conflict was salient for this team. It had a racial basis. The societal domination of basketball in the United States by African Americans was reflected in a racially-labeled hierarchy of players on this team. Although there was some conflict based on value differences in the dimensions of individualism and collectivism, these were subordinated to and structured by a racial divide.

**Racially constructed dominance hierarchy.** One theme that frequently arose on the boys' team concerned the relationship between African Americans and basketball. There was a feeling that the African American players felt they were the superior players and received preferential treatment by the coach. The perceived unequal status of the players on the team broke down Allport's conditions for the reduction of prejudice on the team and led to conflict and racial tension.

*African American basketball superiority: The end of equal status team membership.* The following journal excerpts show how a status hierarchy among the players on the team contributed to intergroup ill will. The first journal excerpt was written by Jay. He says of Stewart and Kenny, the two African American players on the team,

Sometimes I feel Kenny and Stewart think they are special because they are black. They think being black makes them superior to everyone else and they are so wrong. I heard them make a comment that isn't it a coincidence that the two best players on the team are black. For 1, Kenny isn't even in the top 4 best players on the team and for 2, so what if they are black?

The journal entries on "Blackness" and playing ability were not limited to this comment. In fact, at least one member of every non-African American group commented on this fact. Erron, a Euro-American player, wrote,

Nobody passed me the ball. It was almost as I didn't exist anymore. It was all because of Kenny. He figured since he is "black," and Stewart is "black," that only they should shoot the ball.

In this way, it appears that the players on the team sensed a hierarchy within the team. This hierarchy is in accord with Sidanius and Pratto's social dominance theory (e.g., Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993); the African American players on the team were socially constructed as being of a higher status than the rest of the team members. This led to many instances of tension between team members.

*Cooperative activity: In-group and out-group patterns.* There is another condition recognized by Allport as favorable to good intergroup relations that is violated here: Working together cooperatively (see also Sherif & Sherif, 1953). We see in this example ("No one passed me the ball. It was almost as I didn't exist anymore.") that the fissioning of the team into a dominance hierarchy of racially defined subgroups was also manifest in the absence of cross-ethnic cooperative play.

At the top of the dominance hierarchy, Kenny and Stewart, the two African American players, were close friends and functioned as an "in-group." In an informal interview, Kenny told a researcher that Stewart was his "cousin," and that if anything happened to him, he would have to help out no matter what. This is an interesting statement, since it is probable that Kenny and Stewart are not related by blood. (Kenny had earlier stated that he had no relatives in Los Angeles except his mother and sister.) Kenny had created a symbolic kinship with Stewart that implicitly excludes "unrelated" others. This attitude was confirmed behaviorally: a researcher observed a situation where Kenny was fouled by an opposing player. After the play, the fouler pushed Kenny with his body. Stewart saw this and immediately walked up to the other player and glared at him, his body so close that it touched the body of the fouler.

Yet the dominant in-group was not simply defined along racial lines. According to a mother, Mrs. Rose, Joshua, another player, said he was Black in order to get the ball passed to him (in fact Joshua is Euro-American and Filipino). While the other members of the team were angry, the fact that Joshua seems to be the non-African American teammate that gets along the best with Stewart and Kenny indicates that, under some conditions, symbolic group identification is more important than "racial" group membership.

In line with Allport's conditions for positive intergroup relations, however, the functional in-group needed to be expanded to include the team as a whole. Indeed, a number of player journals noted that they were not functioning as a team. In fact, there was a suggestion in Kenny's journal that he wished he could expand his in-group to include the team as a whole. He wrote, "A team is supposed to be people you can go to. But my team is like being out on the streets." Here we see that Kenny longs for a team where people will help him, but instead, he feels that playing on the team provides no more help than being out on the streets.

Bearing in mind the ethnically defined ingroup symbolically constituted by the African American players, we can understand the connection between behavior, attitudes, and values in the individualism/collectivism conflict, to be presented next.

**Individualism and collectivism: Team member as individual achiever or supporting player?** In this particular case, interpersonal conflict, involving physical aggression between two players, was long-term. The conflict was repeated and escalated over a period of a month. There were two central characters in the conflict, Stewart, whom we have met previously, and Jay, who self-identifies as Costa Rican, French, and Mexican. It became evident from observer comments and journal entries that the conflicts between Jay

and Stewart were ongoing. After a practice during which a member of our research team observed physical aggression on and off the court between Jay and Stewart, the researcher was invited to observe a peacekeeping meeting between the two players and the coach. The researcher made the following observation:

The coach asks Stewart and Jay, who had exchanged apparently angry words . . . into his office after practice. The conflict was between Jay and Stewart over Jay's perception that Stewart was 1) overly aggressive on the court during practice, i.e., throwing elbows, pushing, grabbing were particularly mentioned; and 2) was far too vocally critical of the other players when they made mistakes. Specifically, Jay stated that Stewart was acting like a "punk" and that he was "*not supportive*" of the team. Jay stated that he really did not want to "play with someone who acted like that." Stewart's retort was that he probably would have fought with Jay if Jay had called him a punk off the court; that he "*didn't care*" how anyone felt about his behavior during practice; and that it was how he "*pumped himself up*." Stewart also stated that *the important thing was winning*, and the team needed to get "angrier" if they were to win. (Italics added by the researchers for emphasis.)

A few days later, Jay wrote in his journal, "It is clear that Stewart isn't going to lift his grudge that he has on me. That's fine with me as long as he knows that *he is hurting the team, not me*." (Italics added by the researchers for emphasis.)

This example shows a classic conflict between individualism and collectivism. The individualist values his own achievement, which bolsters self-esteem, and considers personal achievement to be his contribution to the group. Stewart reflects the individual player mentality: An individual player leads the other players in skills. Stewart voiced his needs as an individual achiever and his lack of concern for others' opinions of him. Stewart's comments in the meeting reflect his perspective that he had a responsibility to be the best he could. Stewart was very upset by Jay's criticisms and plainly did not understand Jay's position.

In contrast, the collectivist prefers to subjugate individual achievement in favor of supporting the others in the group in order to further the group's joint achievement. Jay presents the group player mentality: He voices the interests of the group and identifies more with team goals than with personal goals. Jay's main point was that Stewart did not play as a supportive team player. Jay was critical of how Stewart emphasized his own feelings and motivations, an attitude that Jay felt was neglecting the team's goals.

From this analysis of the conflict, we would expect Stewart's assessed value preferences to be more individualistic than Jay's; and this is the case for the Singelis et al. individualism measure. We would also expect Jay to be higher on collectivism, but, in fact, Stewart scores higher. We think this has something to do with the in-group/out-group structure just presented.

The data presented so far indicate that Stewart was probably thinking of his ethnic group (including family) rather than his team as his in-group. For example, on the Singelis et al. Likert-scale measure of collectivism, Stewart indicated the strongest possible agreement (a score of 9 out of a possible 9) with "I hate to disagree with others in my group." This makes sense if "group" refers to African Americans; it flies in the face of reality if "group" refers to the team. The only other "9" Stewart assigned for a collectivism item was "If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means." This item refers explicitly to family and excludes team as a relevant ingroup for this question. Hence, as these items show, by defining ingroup as African Americans, Stewart could logically score high on collectivism and yet act individualistically vis-a-vis the team. Hence, we see that behavioral expressions of individualism and collectivism are relative to particular definitions of in-group and out-group (Iyengar, Lepper, & Ross, 1999).

The relationship of this example to individualism and collectivism is further elucidated by Markus and Lin (1999):

Conceptions of the self in African American contexts reflect mainstream models of the autonomous agentic self, but they also reflect interdependent understandings of group identity and belongingness. . . . This type of interdependence may be a legacy of African notions of personhood and/or a continuing legacy of involuntary immigration, slavery, discrimination, poverty, and minority status, or some combination of all of these. (pp. 324-325)

Under this analysis, it is not surprising that an African American player should be assessed both as more individualistic and more collectivistic than his partner in conflict.

This combination of individualism and collectivism is also seen in the African American approach to conflict (Markus & Lin, 1999). Markus and Lin write:

In African American cultural contexts, the meaning of conflict may be simultaneously individual and relational . . . the participants in a conflict are often expected to formulate personal positions on an issue and present those positions as advocates. . . .

This style of conflict may reflect the cultural value placed on movement, expressive individualism, and affect in many African American contexts (Boykin & Toms, 1985). . . . One goal of conflict in African American contexts is to work toward resolving the problem that initially caused the disagreement by representing personal views in an impassioned confrontation. . . . By forcefully but credibly making a case for their own point of view, people engaged in African American contexts in conflict may persuade others of their position and thereby re-establish interpersonal harmony. (Markus & Lin, pp. 325–326)

This description applies extremely well to Stewart's behavior in the conflict described above: an impassioned confrontation in which he tries to persuade the others of a heartfelt case. The "Black mode," as Kochman (1981) calls it, "is often animated, interpersonal, emotional, and confrontational. In many African American cultural contexts, being animated or energetic is entirely appropriate in a dispute or conflict" (Markus & Lin, 1999, p. 222).

**Leadership norms: Coach favoritism.** Coach favoritism solidified the unofficial status hierarchy among the players, increasing the tension between ethnic groups. Allport's (1954/1958) theory of prejudice presented another element that he considered a secondary factor in reducing prejudice. He stated that the effect of equal status contact between groups in pursuit of common goals "is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere)" (Allport, 1958, p. 267). Considering coach leadership as the most immediate institutional support, we found that perceived coach favoritism implicitly undermined equal status contact among players.

The following examples show that some players and at least one parent claimed that the coaches gave preferential treatment to the African Americans. Players felt that the coaches, who were Euramerican, treated the African American players with a different standard, allowing them to miss more practices and have more playing time in games.

Alvin, an Asian-American team captain, wrote,

Every year since my freshman year I've had to work my butt off for playing time. . . . Maybe every player feels like that, but I think I've really had to work harder than others have had to. Sometimes maybe because I'm too short or not fast enough or whatever, but I felt that a few times it was because I wasn't black. Not to be racial or anything, because I love all the guys, but people have told me that one of my past coaches was biased toward the black guys and the people who told me this are very qualified people.

In this excerpt, Alvin alluded to the fact that even coaches tend to favor African American players over others. Alvin's perceptions that the coaches were biased in favor of the African American players was echoed by other non-African American players as well. This idea was echoed by at least one parent.

In contrast, Kenny's perspective on his relationship with the coach showed that he was deeply grateful for the coach's attention. At the end of the season, the coach tragically died. In a moving eulogy at his funeral, Kenny acknowledged the special off-court help the coach had given to him. The other African American player, Stewart, was reported to be disappointed that there would be no one else to help him find college scholarships.

**Racism.** The intergroup conflict that developed from unequal status among the players also erupted into racial tension. While the previous journal excerpts described the feelings surrounding a status differential, the following excerpts address perceived racism by the African American players. Player Greg noted the following in his journal:

Stewart got pissed off at Penn because Penn said something very stupid. He said "these people . . ." then Stewart said "What do you mean these People, are you talking about Black People." Then Penn said, "No just you and Kenny." Stewart and Kenny are the only two Black people on the team. This was the first time that the race card has been dealt during a practice.

Here we see clear racial tension between the African American players and Penn, whose mother is Euro-American and whose father is Samoan. From the African American perspective, Penn's comment was racist and highly inappropriate. It is interesting, however, to learn more about other players' reactions to this situation. Alvin, an Asian-American, witnesses this incident and writes in his journal,

I guess Stewart took it as a racist comment, since coincidentally, Kenny and Stewart are the only 2 African Americans on the team. I think Stewart was in a bad mood, and that's why he took it so personal. I had noticed earlier during the play run-throughs that Stewart looked a little irritated for some reason and I guess Penn's comment was misinterpreted by him.

While many of the non-African Americans did not perceive Penn's "these people" comment as racist, Kenny and Stewart obviously did. Very clearly, there are two perspectives in conflict, producing intergroup tension.

### Summary

An important point is that values that each person brings into an interaction strongly influence the nature of disagreement or conflict. Importantly, it is value *differences* that shape the nature of disagreements and the positions of each participant in the disagreement.

These teams' experiences of conflict and misunderstanding reflect the misunderstandings that occur in society as a whole. The different perspectives that were heard by means of our multivocal methodology provide us with solid evidence of the players' perceptions of intergroup and interpersonal issues in their own words. This allows us to provide a more in-depth and objective interpretation of what people are really thinking about each other. Our method of multivocal ethnography has been successful in revealing different cultural voices in situations of interpersonal conflict.

First, we identified misunderstandings that occur due to differences between an individualistic and a collectivistic value system. These value conflicts, of which a sample has been presented in this chapter, were at the center of the problems experienced by the girls' volleyball team. Although they were not central to the boys' basketball team, they were also present.

Second, we were able to measure individualism and collectivism in each individual, and, using these scores, were successful in most cases in postdicting the roles and interpretations players had taken in real-world misunderstandings and conflicts. Where scores did not relate to behavior and attitudes on the playing field, it was because the collectivity specified in the instrument or assumed by the respondent was their family or ethnic group rather than their team. In such a case, collectivism assessed on the questionnaire did not match behavior and attitudes vis-a-vis the player's team. An important theoretical and methodological point is that the operational measurement of collectivism must include specification of a particular collectivity with which the respondent identifies (cf. Iyengar, Lepper, and Ross, 1999).

Third, on the boys' basketball team only, we found attitudes of racial superiority supported by perceived Black favoritism on the part of the coach. In line with the theoretical formulation of Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Ward, and Banker (1999), these conditions led to a fissioning of the team into a racially and culturally defined dominance hierarchy, with African Americans at the center of the top group. Also in line with Gaertner and his colleagues' model, the fissioned groups were associated with perceived racism and physical aggression. Note that this dominance hierarchy was specific to the basketball court and does not necessarily reflect the dominance hierarchy of ethnic groups in society as a whole.

In conclusion, as this team actually functioned, it did *not* contain the prerequisites for good intergroup relations delineated by Allport (1954/1958):

All members were *not* perceived as having equal status and working together for a common goal. Moreover, higher and lower status were identified with ethnic group membership. These are just the conditions that social psychology has shown to be *unfavorable* to positive intergroup relations. In line with this theoretical formulation, this team had the worst intergroup relations of all eight teams studied: it was the only one in which physical aggression became an issue and the only one in which racist remarks were noted. Thus, we see that theoretical definitions concerning the nature of a team and how it functions must be supported by internal dynamics. Otherwise, the potential of multiethnic sports teams to create positive intergroup relations will be squandered.

### Notes

We are indebted to our research team: Blanca Quiroz, NanaEfuia Baidoo, Nattu Coleman, German Hercules, Adrienne Isaac, Cacilia Kim, Kiahna Patton, Alissa Taylor, Dawn Vo, and Nicole Weekes. We very much appreciate the participation of the teams and coaches who participated in our research. Finally, we acknowledge the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Russell Sage Foundation. The statements made and views expressed are solely the views of the authors.

1. For our purposes, we did not use the authors' horizontal/vertical dimension.

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