Social capacity and social cohesion

The definition and measurement of sport's contribution to aspects of social capacity, social cohesion and social capital present researchers with considerable methodological difficulties. The entries in this section seek to address such issues at various levels: large scale sports development programmes; the community impact of amateur and professional sports clubs; the role of sport and volunteering in developing pro-social behaviours and organisational cohesion; sport's role in developing peer relationships and the meaning of sport for minority ethnic groups with differing attitudes to social and cultural integration.

Delaney and Keaney use a variety of data sources to illustrate substantial *correlations* between measures of social capital and measures of sports participation in the UK and the EU. There are very strong correlations between national levels of sports membership and levels of social trust and well being, although the correlation with trust in institutions is much weaker. In the UK individuals involved in sports organisations are slightly more likely to vote, contact a politician and sign a petition than both non-members and the average citizen. Membership of, and participation in, sports groups also display strong correlations with higher levels of social trust and trust in institutions and with life satisfaction. However there is no relationship between participation in sport and trust in other people once other factors are controlled. This suggests that the correlations between participation in sport and social trust may reflect the type of people who participate in sport, rather than a function of participation itself. In this regard they point to the fact that the wealthy and educated are much more likely than the poor to participate in sport.

Burnett addresses some of these issues in attempting to measure the social impact of a junior sports development programme in South Africa. She proposes a multi-dimensional impact assessment approach, drawing on a range of academic disciplines and operating at macro, meso and micro levels. Using a Sports Development Impact Tool, with small samples, she illustrates that the inclusive, non-competitive programme reduced social distance between teachers and pupils; enabled female teachers to break-down male-dominated barriers; enabled children to broaden their knowledge of each other.

More broadly, Driscoll and Wood explore the role of sport and recreation clubs in periods of social and economic change and their contribution to development of social capital in a rural Australian community. On the basis of a household survey and group discussions they conclude that sports clubs have the potential to perform wide-ranging socio-cultural functions, including leadership, participation, skill development, providing a community hub, health promotion, social networks, and community identity. In a related study, Tonts

reports on an Australian study of the importance of sport and sports volunteering in a rural area suffering social and economic decline. Its contribution to social networking, community identity, sense of place, health and the development of both bonding and bridging capital are explored. Consequently the author presents a mixed picture. For those involved, sport provides a forum for social interaction and such networks form the basis for the creation and expression of social capital. However, this has its limits, with intra-club divisions and those not involved in sport and many Aboriginals experience a sense of social exclusion

In a Japanese study Okayasu et al illustrate that comprehensive community sports clubs (which include non-sporting activities and a broad age range) have a higher potential for the development of bonding and bridging social capital than traditional community sports clubs (which are more single sports focussed, have a narrower social base and are less inclusive).

Using survey data and the contingent valuation method, Johnson et al tentatively conclude that a major USA ice hockey team provides a unifying element to civic life (although they question the balance between costs and benefits).

Misener and Mason explore the potential role of large scale sports events in policies of social regeneration, increased social engagement and improved social infrastructure. Using Coleman's conceptualisation of social capital they explore the potential contribution of differing aspects of the process of bidding for, acquiring, hosting and legacy of sporting events. They illustrate their argument with examples from the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester and offer four propositions as to how such processes can be developed to maximise their impact on social regeneration. Kellet et al report on a qualitative study of different strategies to leverage social benefits from adopting a country competing in the 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games. The authors conclude that a multifaceted approach in which the visiting team is involved directly in a wide variety of sporting and non-sporting events served to create new networks, develop new skills and strengthened organisational coordination and learning.

In a broad ranging review literature on the contribution of hosting events and national team successes the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute notes that: the impact of sports events on cohesion and pride are short-lived; that sport is likely to be one of a number of factors that influence national identity; pride and some sports are more likely to be effective than others; that these vary between nations and sports teams and events can provide a community with psychic income and community pride which contributes to the quality of life. However, the review concludes that much of the evidence is qualitative and there is a need for more robust empirical research.

On the basis of an analysis of school records, Langbein and Bess illustrate that larger schools with interscholastic sports programmes experience reduced disturbances and increased levels of cooperation and pro-social behaviour. The hypothesis is that such programmes reinforce group and sub-

group cohesion. The issue of pro-social behaviour is also central to Eley and Kirk's analysis of a volunteer programme for young sports leaders. Their data is used to illustrate the contribution that sports volunteering can make to the development of pro- social and altruistic orientations. Dobosz and Beaty found that among a small sample of high school students the athletes recorded significantly greater leadership ability than non-athletes and females had greater leadership scores than males.

Smith reviews literature relating to issues about peer relationships in physical activity settings and the contribution of peers to self-perception, moral attitudes and behaviours. Concentrating on friendships and group acceptance, Smith suggests that the physical domain is an ideal context for developing a deeper understanding of peer relationships.

At the level of group integration, the Scott Porter research examines the meaning of sport for minority ethnic groups with differing attitudes to social and cultural integration. They suggest that providers need to adopt a theory of change approach to the provision of sporting opportunities to diverse ethnic minority populations (this approach is also recommended by many of the contributors in the Participation section). At each stage it is necessary for providers to identify, and be sensitive to, the perceived and real barriers to participation, although it is suggested that there are few community-specific barriers.

Much of the work in this section remains at the developmental stage and indicates the need for a range of inter-related, conceptually and methodologically robust, research at various levels:

- Sport's potential contribution to social cohesion and the development of various types of precisely defined social capital in differing socio-economic and cultural contexts.

- The contribution of professional sports teams to civic life.

- The role of sports in developing social capital within schools and the impact on behaviour and educational performance.

- The potential role of various types of sports event to develop social networks and forms of social capital.

- The value of sport in promoting quality peer relationships.

- The role of peers in facilitating, or delaying, sports transitions and their centrality in athletic and global self-identities.

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Added to the Value of Sport Monitor in September 2011:

New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (2007) *National identity: An annotated bibliography*, New Zealand, AUT University

Okayasu, I., Kawahara, Y. and Nogawa, H. (2010) The relationship between community sport clubs and social capital in Japan: A comparative study between the comprehensive community sport clubs and traditional community sports clubs, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 45(2), 163-186

Delaney, L and Keaney, E (2005) *Sport and Social Capital in the United Kingdom: Statistical Evidence from National and International Survey Data.* Institute for Public Policy Research. London. Commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
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