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## Sports participation and the household: Consumption of Relational Goods

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-77 - (563)

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Date submitted: 2015-03-18

Date accepted: 2015-03-25

Type: Scientific

Keywords: Sports Participation, Household, Panel Data

Category: 11: Sport Participation

Synopsis:

This paper explores how members of the household influence each others sports participation through their participation behaviour.

Abstract:

ABSTRACT: Sports participation and the household: Consumption of Relational Goods

INTRODUCTION

There is now a widely established sports economic and management literature examining the determinants of sports participation (Downward et al, 2009). Typical findings of the research indicate that ageing, being female relative to being male, having a higher education and income tend to contribute to the decision to participate in sport as well as to encourage greater frequency and intensity of participation. It is also common to identify household effects on participation such as being married or the presence of children in the household reducing participation (Eberth and Smith, 2010) although, there are differences noted according to the type of activity, gender and the frequency of sports participation (Humphreys and Ruseski, 2010). Despite this none of the literature has examined the impact of the sports participation of members of the household on one another. Current UK policy encouraging greater sports participation likewise has an emphasis on the young (<http://www.sportengland.org/media/130949/DCMS-Creating-a-sporting-habit-for-life-1-.pdf>), or is more generally focussed on the individual (DCMS/Strategy Unity 2002) or the impacts of major events on their participation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/london-2012-meta-evaluation>). However, economic theory emphasises the importance of the household in decision making in general, and in sport, and has also indicated how important consumption and social capital are to participation (Downward et al. 2009) reflecting the social interactions in sport and their relational character (Downward et al. forthcoming 2015). This paper analyses the impact of other household members' on the sports participation of individuals and draws conclusions for policy.

## DATA AND METHOD

The data used in this study is the British Household Panel Survey. Data on sports participation was collected every two years in this survey up until 2009-10 when the survey was merged with the Understanding Society Survey, when measurement conventions changed. Consequently 6 waves of data are used to generate consistent measures of the sports participation of individuals and their other household members. Static and dynamic panel data estimation was then conducted controlling for individuals previous sports participation, as well as that of other members of the household, and a set of confounding socio-economic factors that are known to influence participation.

## RESULTS

Initial results suggest that the impact of other household members' participation on specific individuals is very large relative to the other typically investigated variables. This is the case for both males and females and independently of their marital status, activity in the previous period and controlling for the participation of a male or female that remained in a single household.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis suggest that the current academic and policy focus on the promotion of sports participation for the individual is biased in ignoring the influence of household consumption patterns on behaviour as part of the process by which sports takes place in a relational context. Clearly further academic research and policy reflection is required to understand better and to act upon these insights and to better tailor sports participation promotion.

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