

# SOCIAL CAPITAL, ENDURING INVOLVEMENT AND CHARITY MOTIVE AMONG RUNNERS: COMPARING EVENT AND NON-EVENT PARTICIPANTS

Heather Gibson, Richard Buning, Morgan Weinberg  
Department of Tourism, Recreation & Sport Management, University of Florida  
[hgibson@hhp.ufl.edu](mailto:hgibson@hhp.ufl.edu)

Work Shop: Impacts and strategic outcomes from non-mega sport events for local communities

## Aim of the Study

While the long-term utility of mega-sport events is debated (Smith, 2009), others argue that non-mega sport events are more beneficial for host communities (e.g., Gibson et al 2012; Higham, 1999). However, few studies have focused on the social benefits, including support for the supposition that social capital might accrue from hosting sports events (Chalip, 2006; Misener & Mason, 2006; Schulenkorf, 2009; 2010). This exploratory study compared levels of social capital among participants of a community's hallmark running event, the Five Points of Life Race Weekend with runners who live in the same community, but chose not to participate in the event. Involvement in running and propensity to participate in charity events were also examined.

## Literature Review

Social capital, as a measure of community cohesiveness has received much attention as social scientists debate the loss of community (Putnam, 1995). There is no one definition of social capital, however, elements such as trust, reciprocity, and social networks are generally associated with it (Putnam, 2001). Community events, such as participatory sports events, may encourage a sense of *communitas*, bringing diverse groups of people together (Chalip, 2006). Likewise, at the micro level of sport social worlds, Enduring Involvement (EI) (McIntyre, 1989) assesses the degree to which particular leisure activities such as running are central to individuals' lives. Recent conceptualizations of EI include the importance of social ties in maintaining activity participation (Kyle & Chick, 2002). EI shows the degree to which an individual's identity and social world is related to an activity rather than overall connectedness to community per se, i.e. social capital. Another relevant dimension of community participation and connectedness may also be found in examining motives and attachment for participation in charity-related sport events (Filo et al., 2008; 2009).

## Methods

Both groups completed similar versions of an on-line questionnaire. For event participants (5POL), data collection began two days after the race weekend. Data for non-event participants (N5POL) was ongoing through spring 2013. Both groups responded to measures of running-related EI (SD=1, SA=7) (Chang, 2008); Social Capital (NA=1, Yes=5) (Onyx & Bullen, 2000); Charity-related motives (SD=1, SA=5) (Bennett et al 2007); event and running participation patterns, and demographics. 5POL participants, N=220 complete responses; 40% male, 60% female, aged 27-78 years (M=55.02); running experience <1 to 50 years (M=10.15); 45.5% participated in the 2012 5POL. N5POL, N=107, 40.9% male, 59.1% female; aged 26-75 years (M=56.86); running experience <1 to 36 years (M=8.84); 40.4% previous 5POL participation. Data analysis used frequencies, ANOVA and MANOVA.

## Results and Discussion

Both groups were moderately high on all five dimensions of running-related EI (M=4.49-M=5.98) with N5POL reporting significantly higher levels of Self Identity (F=3.35,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .012$ ). The small effect size denotes little practical significance. No significant differences existed between the groups on the seven social capital dimensions. Both groups were similarly low on Community Participation (5POL M=2.64; N5POL M=2.57) and moderately high on Social Connections (5POL M=3.35, N5POL M=3.23), and Trust and Safety (5POL M=3.69, N5POL M=3.60). They were similarly high on Work Connections (5POL M=4.25, N5POL M=4.15; Value of Life (5POL M=3.98, N5POL M=3.88); Tolerance of Diversity (5POL M=4.03, N5POL M=3.96), and Social Proactivity (5POL M=3.76; N5POL M=3.71). ANOVA revealed 5POL (M=3.76) were significantly more likely than N5POL (M=2.62) to participate in charity-related events. (F=91.89,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .239$ ). Further, regular charity-related events participants were significantly higher on all social capital dimensions except Trust and Safety ( $p = .083$ ), and were significantly higher on EI's Social dimension (F=4.96,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .010$ ).

Among two demographically homogenous groups, with similar running-related EI levels, the proclivity to participate in non-mega running events does not appear to be underpinned by differences in community connectedness i.e. social capital, but instead by a higher interest in participating in charity-related events (Filo et al., 2008). While the design of the study cannot establish support for the supposition that hosting sports events encourages development of social capital (Chalip, 2006; Misener & Mason, 2006), our data show that community sport participants do not differ from non-participants in this respect. This corresponds to Gibson et al.'s (2012b) study where no change in social capital levels was evident among residents pre/post the 2010 FIFA World Cup. One question arising is social capital the best measure of event-related social benefit? Another promising line of enquiry is the role of charity in the social benefit mix. Runners with more EI-related social ties and those higher on social capital participated more regularly in charity-related events. Linking non-mega event social benefits to charity sports research-line may offer some insights.

## References

- Chalip, L. (2006). Towards social leverage of sport events. *Journal of Sport & Tourism, 11* (2), 109-127.
- Filo, K., Funk, D., & O'Brien, D. (2009). The meaning behind attachment: Exploring camaraderie, cause and competency at a charity sport event. *Journal of Sport Management, 23*, 361-387.
- Gibson, H., Kaplanidou, K., & Kang, S.J., (2012a). Small-Scale Event Sport Tourism: A Case Study in Sustainable Tourism. *Sport Management Review, 15*, 160-170.
- Misener, L., & Mason, D. (2006). Creating community networks: Can sporting events offer meaningful sources of social capital? *Managing Leisure, 11*, 39-56.
- Putnam, R. (2001). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.