Sport Management Review xxx (2017) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Sport Management Review

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/smr

Full Length Article

Building social capital from sport event participation: An exploration of the social impacts of participatory sport events on the community

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 25 April 2017
Received in revised form 14 November 2017
Accepted 14 November 2017
Available online xxx

Keywords:
Social capital
Running events
Social capital outcomes
Participants
Community

ABSTRACT

Participatory sport events have the potential to generate substantial social value in the local community. One important social benefit of such sport events is the development of social capital. However, little is known about the development and outcomes of social capital in the context of participatory sport events, such as running events. Taking a qualitative approach, the authors explored the social capital building among active participants in running events. The findings revealed that bonding capital is developed by all participants in the study while the bridging and linking capital varies by event type and involvement level. Moreover, four positive outcomes of social capital were identified: supportive attitude and behaviors, positive influence on others, prosocial behaviors, and increased everyday socializations. By generating these positive outcomes among the participants of this study, social capital has the potential to contribute to the community development and well-being. This study provides insights as to how social capital that stems from sport event participation can lead to the development of community in the long term. Suggestions are made for future research to test the relationships between social capital, its outcomes, and community development and well-being.

1. Introduction

Scholars widely recognize the social value of mass participation sport events (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2003; Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012). It is believed that such sport events can bring rich social benefits to a community, such as civic pride, social cohesion and community attachment (Inoue & Havard, 2014). One important social impact of sport events is the development of social capital, which can be built and enhanced through the social interactions among various event actors (e.g., participants, spectators, volunteers, organizing staff; Sherry, 2010; Sherry, Karg, & O'May, 2011). As a result of participating in the events, there can be an enhanced sense of belongingness, solidarity, and camaraderie among the local people (Schulenkorf, Thomson, & Schlenker, 2011). Not only do people develop bonding capital with their families and friends, they also form bridging capital across class, religious, and ethnic boundaries (Harris, 1998; Tonts, 2005). In addition, the linking capital between individuals and community institutions (e.g., event organizers, sponsors, local sport associations,

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2017.11.001
1441-3523/

and charitable organizations etc.) are strengthened from their interactions in the events (Sherry, 2010). These different types of social capital are mostly found in studies that focus on either mega sport events (Gibson et al., 2014) or sport-for-development events (Schulenkorf et al., 2011; Sherry, 2010; Welty Peachey, Cohen, Borland, & Lyras, 2013). However, scholars have not fully examined the social capital stemming from participating in community-based mass participant sport events, such as running events.

Social capital reflects the psychic connections between people and can lead to a series of behavioral outcomes, such as civic engagement and social participation, that are beneficial to a community (Misener & Mason, 2006; Putnam, 1995). Community is marked by meaningful social ties and interactions among its members and, thus, is widely used as the context for studying social capital (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Skinner, Zakus, & Cowell, 2008). Prior researchers have noted that social capital was critical in community building because it facilitates collective actions among community members who, therefore, take active part in political and social community activities – for example, voting, signing petitions, running campaigns or becoming memberships of social organizations (Stone, 2001). In the sport field, however, exploration of the positive outcomes of social capital within the community is limited. Although scholars have identified that sport events are able to bond, bridge, and create the relationships among individuals, groups and organizations (Schulenkorf et al., 2011; Sherry, 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2013), they have largely eschewed discussion on the process of achieving long-term outcomes of these social relationships. In other words, there is a missing link between social capital development and community benefits that answer the question: what are the processes through which social capital can benefit the community long term? Answering the question allows for understanding of the role of sport events in the long-term development of the community.

2. Literature review

2.1. Conceptualization of social capital

While several scholars have made attempts to define social capital, we drew from Putnam (1995), as he interpreted social capital in a collective sense and characterized the ways in which community members interacted. According to Putnam (1995), social capital is "the features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that can facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p. 66). It consists of three core elements: trust, network, and reciprocity (Putnam, 1995). Trust and reciprocity serve as the cognitive elements of social capital because of their subjective and intangible nature, while network serves as the structural element of social capital because it reflects the structural forms of the social groups (Grootaert, Narayan, Jones, & Woolcock, 2004). Among the three elements, trust is the foundation of social capital, facilitating communication and mutual understanding. Once the trust was built, social networks can be created. Within these social networks, a process of exchange and reciprocity occurred, further strengthening the trust and networks (Schulenkorf et al., 2011).

Based on the three elements of social capital, scholars suggest that social capital is a multi-dimensional construct that also encompasses three types of networks: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Foxton & Jones, 2011; Stone, 2001; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Bonding social capital reflects the networks within homogenous groups where people shared similar identities and strong familiarity. It represents everyday sociability, which includes social connections with families, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and other acquaintances (Foxton & Jones, 2011; Narayan & Cassidy,2001). Bridging social capital, on the other hand, is fostered between heterogeneous groups, where broader social networks can be built among individuals who are not like one another. As such, the bridging capital is an important indicator of community inclusiveness and tolerance of diversity (Onyx & Bullen, 2000; Skinner et al., 2008). While bonding and bridging capital represent horizontal networks, linking social capital represents the vertical connection within a social hierarchy, referring to the ties with people in positions of authority. Linking social capital involves greater heterogeneity among people with different levels of power and is often found in individual's relationships with institutions. As such, linking capital underlines individual's perceived influence on the authorities and represents a measure of empowerment, personal efficacy, self-value, and community-ownership (Foxton & Jones, 2011; Grootaert et al., 2004; Kay, 2006).

2.2. The positive outcomes of social capital in the running and broader community

As a reflection of the communitarian view, Putnam's social capital framework looked at social capital in the context of the community and emphasized the collective values of trust, mutuality, and community solidarity (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). Community is a broad concept emerging from complicated social relationships. The constructs is commonly characterized in two ways: the actual and symbolic or imagined (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Jarvie, 2003). The actual community is based on geographic space, in which people actually live. It involves a group of individuals who share a common environment and are interconnected through units of social relations such as family, kin, neighborhood, and workplace (Blackshaw & Long, 2005). In this present study, the actual geographic community is termed broader community. The symbolic community extends beyond the geographic boundaries and carries a symbolic meaning. It consists of individuals with shared social identities, common interests, and a sense of belonging (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Skinner et al., 2008). In this study, we term symbolic community as running community. As such, we look at both broader community and running community, and their development as a result of social capital building.

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As stressed by communitarians, social capital plays an important part in community development, as it brings people together to work for their sharing goals and cope with community issues cooperatively (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Jarvie, 2003). The collective action of community members is the result of norms and networks that bond individuals, who otherwise might be reluctant to work cooperatively (Putnam, 1995). The collective action includes formal and informal participation in collective activities (e.g., everyday socializations, leisure and cultural activities, and political actions) and can benefit the private and public domain of the community.

In the private domain, social capital strengthens family ties and increases interactions and caring among family members, while in the public domain, social capital leads to cooperation behaviors at work or in social activities through formal and informal networks (Shinn & Toohey, 2003). Civic engagement and social participation are the outcomes of social capital based on formal networks. Civic engagement includes various political actions, such as voting, contacting with officials, attending council meetings, signing petitions, running campaigns, or other local actions (Stone, 2001). Social participation, on the other hand, refers to the involvement in social organizations, such as memberships in voluntary organizations, sport associations, religious groups, or recreational clubs (Foxton & Jones, 2011). The increased civic trust in the formal institution of governance and the sense of empowerment facilitate civic engagement in public or political affairs (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001; Stone, 2001). As a result of linking social capital with community institutions, community members become more empowered and proactive to participate in, negotiate with, or have a voice in the institutions that affect their lives (Grootaert et al., 2004). The development of social capital also leads to involvement in informal networks, enhancing social contacts and interactions at personal level. For instance, bonding social capital engenders reciprocal behaviors among kin, friends, neighbors, and workmates, and bridging social capital engenders helping and support towards a wider group of people with heterogeneous identities (Grootaert et al., 2004; Stone, 2001).

It is important to note that the outcomes of social capital should not be confounded with social capital itself. There is a common practice of mistaking collective participation (through formal and informal networks) as the concept of social capital itself (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001; Tonts, 2005). In a review of previously published articles, we found that authors routinely considered social participation, civic engagement, and individual involvement in informal networks as dimensions of social capital. However, Putnam (1995) argued that the intangible feature of social capital was composed of norms (i.e., trust and reciprocity) and networks. It is the outcomes of social capital that involve tangible elements such as behaviors, which can be observed by others (Stone, 2001). Therefore, it seems more pertinent to consider the actions taken by community members as the outcomes of social capital.

In addition, community safety has been associated with the concept of social capital. The increased trust and social ties with others make people feel more comfortable, confident, and safe about their surrounding environment, thereby contributing to the perception of community safety (Onyx & Bullen, 2000). Moreover, there is a linkage between social capital and overall community well-being (Skinner et al., 2008). The relational and affective ties in social capital provide individuals with sense of belonging, togetherness, camaraderie, and equity, and they contribute to the overall happiness of the community members (Son, Yarnal, & Kerstetter, 2010). Furthermore, social capital enables individuals to support each other, to work collectively, to respect different values, and to treat everybody with fairness. As a consequence, it improves the efficacy of community services and creates an equal and harmonious living environment, and as a result, contributes to the overall socio-economic well-being of the community (Cuthill, 2003; Skinner et al., 2008; Wiseman & Brasher, 2008).

While these positive outcomes underlined the importance of social capital in the development of a community, caution should be taken when evaluating the benefits of social capital. Putnam (1995) acknowledged that social capital might engender negative impacts as a result of the imbalance between bonding and bridging capital. The over emphasis on bonding capital may lead to social exclusion that casts hostility towards outsiders and inhibits the tolerance of the community (Tonts, 2005; Welty Peachey et al., 2013). In addition, critics of Putnam's framework claimed that social capital might give rise to inequality since the benefits of social capital only exists if other people are excluded. Those who have privileged access to social capital exploit it to gain greater interests (Blackshaw & Long, 2005). Therefore, despite its own importance, social capital alone may not necessarily lead to socio-economic development of the community unless power relations and cultural norms were taken into consideration (Blackshaw & Long, 2005; DeFilippis, 2001). Thus, economic capital (e.g., power) and cultural capital (e.g., compassion and respect) also play a crucial role in broadening the benefits of social capital, especially in promoting the prosperity and well-being of disadvantaged communities through the sharing of bridging capital (Blackshaw & Long, 2005; DeFilippis, 2001).

2.3. Sport events and social capital

Sport and sport events are often used as means to generate social benefits and achieve community development goals. Tonts (2005) examined the linkage between sport and social capital in rural Australia and proposed that sport acted as a vehicle for the generation of social capital. Specifically, he discovered that sporting activities and clubs created ties that bridged between the aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. They also helped residents build strong identification with their communities, reflecting the formation of bonding capital. In terms of the outcomes of social capital, Tonts mentioned that reciprocity and altruistic elements of social capital led to higher levels of participation in sport as well as willingness to volunteer and support the sport. In addition, the presence of social capital as a whole contributed to the well-being of the citizens (Tonts, 2005). Consistent with Tonts (2005),Skinner et al. (2008) addressed the potential of sport programs in bringing social changes in disadvantaged communities in Australia, suggesting the power of sport for social change. The

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authors argued that sport could be a useful tool for organizations and governing bodies to cultivate social capital and foster sustainable development in the community. Similarly, Misener and Mason (2006) found that sport events were important for building social capital and community networks within host cities of sport events, suggesting that communities should capitalize on sport events and deliver the positive social outcomes through inclusive community involvement (e.g., collaboration with various stakeholders) in the events and associated activities.

From the consumers' perspectives, scholars have empirically examined the social capital built within and across different groups that engaged in sport events, especially the sport-for-development (SFD) events. Schulenkorf et al. (2011) investigated the contribution of intercommunity sport events to intergroup relations and social capital building in an ethnically divided society. Five themes that emerged from the positive sociocultural experiences of the participants contributed to the production of social capital and reduction of ethnic barriers between disparate communities. However, the production of social capital and social capital itself are two different concepts, and Schulenkorf et al. seemed to confound the determinants (e.g., socializing, learning and development) of social capital with the elements (e.g., trust, reciprocity, networks) of social capital. Other scholars have addressed the social impacts of SFD events on marginalized groups, focusing on the development of bridging social capital between homeless participants and spectators (Sherry et al., 2011), volunteers, and coaches (Welty Peachey et al., 2013; Welty Peachey, Borland, Lobpries, & Cohen, 2015). Preconditions for bridging social capital were found in these studies. For example, Sherry et al. (2011) found enhanced awareness and empathy toward players experiencing homelessness was developed among spectators as a result of attending the Homeless World Cup. In the latter study, the authors pointed out that this attitudinal change engendered bridging capital between spectators and players. Further, Welty Peachey et al. (2013) found that intense interactions and positive experiences during the events were the prerequisites for fostering the bridging social capital between coaches/volunteers and players. They also found that the building of trust and social relationships led to enhanced motivation to participate in future events or work in the SFD field to give back to the community (Welty Peachey et al., 2013). In addition to bridging social capital, bonding capital among soccer team players (Sherry, 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2013, 2015) and linking capital between players and program/media staff (Sherry, 2010) are also evident in SFD events. These findings suggest the potential for sport participation in creating bonding, bridging, and linking capital.

Scholars have also explored the social capital building among residents of cities hosting major sport events. By adopting a five-dimension scale, Gibson et al. (2014) attempted to quantitatively measure the social capital among host city residents six months before and eight months after the events, but they found no improvement of social capital. The authors acknowledged that problems remained regarding the appropriateness of time span and survey instrument used in the study. They called for better measurement for social capital in future research. Heere et al. (2016) also investigated the impact of 2010 FIFA World Cup on the host nation's social capital. Unlike Gibson et al. (2014), the authors did not compare the mean difference on social capital before and after the event. Instead, they found that the variance in social capital explained by ethnic identity decreased significantly in the post-event stage, indicating the creation of bridging capital that brought the ethnically-divided nation together. In another study, Inoue and Havard (2014) identified social camaraderie as an antecedent of the event's social impacts (e.g., social capital), which further led to positive behavioral outcomes, such as intentions to attend and recommend future events. Moreover, the social impact was not an automatic result of sport event participation (Inoue & Havard, 2014). Strategic leveraging (e.g., creating socializing spaces and auxiliary community activities) was needed for fostering substantial social capital in sport events (Mackellar & Jamieson, 2015).

To sum up, although many researchers have shown the potential of sport events in fostering social capital, few have examined the social capital among active participants in non-SFD events. Moreover, the link between social capital and community development was only tangentially addressed, and there was a lack of elaboration on the underlying mechanism of this connection. As such, we developed the following research questions to advance existing knowledge about social capital and community development in sport event contexts:

Research Question 1: What social capital was developed from active participation in sport events?

Research Question 2: What are the positive outcomes of social capital that benefit the running and broader community in the long run?

3. Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore the development of social capital from active participation in sport events and the outcomes of social capital within the running and broader community; therefore, we employ a qualitative approach, which is considered an appropriate way to gather informative data in the exploratory stage of the study (Maxwell, 2012). Given the subjective and nuanced nature of social capital, we embraced a phenomenological approach trying to understand the social capital emerging from being a runner and participating in sport events (Creswell, 2013). As such, qualitative interviews were conducted to provide rich and in-depth information about sport event participation social capital, as well as, its relationship with running or broader community benefits.

3.1. Participants

Participants were active runners ($n = 10$) with at least three-year running experience and participated in at least one running event in the past 12 months. Running events are one of the most popular types of participatory sport events in the

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US. There are a large number of running events hosted in the communities every year (Running USA, 2016). Generally speaking, running events involve large groups of participants and provide rich social opportunities for the participants (Funk, Toohey, & Bruun, 2007; Theodorakis, Kaplanidou, & Karabaxoglou, 2015). Therefore, interviews with running event participants can provide insights about social capital cultivated from sport event participation.

3.2. Procedures

To recruit the participants in our study, we used snowball sampling which allowed us to identify and gain access to the eligible, experienced runners who can offer richer information on what social capital meant and how it was developed through event participation (Goodman, 1961). Specifically, we started with an active runner who was an acquaintance of one of the researchers in this study. And then we asked him to nominate other runners that were eligible for the study. The same recruiting procedure was applied to the next interviewee and all the interviewees afterwards (Goodman, 1961). Although there might be some existing social ties between the interviewee and the participants he/she recommended, we did not find close connections between other participants, meaning that participants were actually from different social groups. As the US running population was characterized by approximately equal number of male and female participants in a wide age span (Running USA, 2016), we selected the interviewees who were balanced in gender and varied in age (see Table 1). There were some variations in terms of race, occupation, education level, and level of involvement in running in our sample, although most of the interviewees were white, well-educated, and employed full time (see Table 1). This also corresponded to the feature of US running community which was dominated by white people with high socio-economic status (Jennings, 2011; Morse, 2012; Running USA, 2016). We stopped recruiting more respondents after we finished 10 interviews, as we began to receive repetitive responses and there were no new themes coming out from the interviews, indicating that the data saturation was reached.

The interviews were semi-structured with an interview guide that outlined the key questions and related probes and, at the same time, allowed interviewees to freely express their ideas around the topics (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Based on Putnam's conceptualization of social capital (Putnam, 1995) and existing literature on the social impacts of sport events, we developed a series of interview questions regarding sport event impacts, social capital, and community development. Sample questions included: "how would you describe your personal experience with the running events that you participated in within the past 12 months," "what are the overall impacts of the event experience on your life in general," "what do you gain socially from participating in the running events," "what are the impacts of the event experience on your social networks," "what do you think is community development and community well-being," "where do sport events belong in the community development and well-being," and "after all these years participating in running events, have you observed any changes in yourself in terms of participation in community activities?"

The interviews took the form of either face-to-face or Skype interviews depending on the locations of the interviewees. The interviewees came from different cities within the state located in the southeast part of the United States. Each interview was conducted with an interviewee individually and lasted about 30–40 min. Zhou moderated all the interviews, leading the discussions based on the interview guide and making probes according to the interviewees' responses. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In addition, Zhou took notes to provide supplementary information. To ensure the confidentiality of the data, all interviewees were given pseudonyms so there were no direct links of their identities to their responses.

3.3. Analyses

The data analysis is primarily inductive. Our aim was to make sense of the data by consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the responses from our interviewees. Following the guidelines set out by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009), we embraced an inductive reasoning process which involved open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This bottom-up

Table 1
Demographic Description of the Interviewees.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race	Occupation	Education Level	Years of Running	Years of Event	Event participation in the past 12 months
Mike	Male	40	White	Company tech researcher	Master	11	4	A 5K and a 10K
Emma	Female	31	Asian	College student	Master	15	4	Two half marathons, five 5Ks and five 10Ks
David	Male	52	White	College professor	Ph.D.	42	35	A marathon
Celia	Female	42	Asian	College staff	Bachelor	8	5	A half marathon, a 10K, a 7.5K, and a couple of 5Ks
Carol	Female	35	White	College professor	Ph.D.	25	5	A 5K
Edward	Male	45	White	Radio broadcaster	High School	7	3	A 5K, a 15 miles, a marathon and a half marathon.
Sheldon	Male	31	Asian	College student	Master	6	1	Two half marathons and a 15K
Nana	Female	50	White	Crime scene investigator	Bachelor	5	5	A half marathon, a 30 miles, and a 15K
Ross	Male	62	White	Self-employed manufacturing worker	Bachelor	38	34	A 3 miles, a 5miles, two 10Ks, a 15K, and two half marathons
Candy	Female	42	White	Homemaker	Bachelor	5	5	Three 5Ks, a 10 miles, a 15K, and a half marathon

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(from concreteness to abstraction) process allowed us to develop abstract concepts, themes, and categories from the descriptive responses and to draw inferences upon the data. Consequently, we were able to move up "from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 261).

In the open coding stage, the responses in the interviews were carefully examined line by line. Responses that were relevant to the research questions are identified and assigned with codes based on their meanings in the conversational contexts. Memos and annotations were also made on the emergent themes to clarify their meanings (Gratton & Jones, 2010). In addition, we used existing research on social capital, sport event impacts, and community development as a guide to establish the coding scheme which included a set of priori categories borrowed from the literature (Merriam, 2009). Except for that, we did not employ guidelines for generating specific themes in the first round. The process allowed for themes to surface, and it led to the identification of a total of 23 themes and 36 sub-themes in the open coding stage.

In the axial coding stage, we sought for the similarities of the codes and grouped the codes that were closely related into bigger categories, which accounted for a broader range of cases. For example, the theme "running is a recreational activity," "primary reason for participation," and "an opportunity for socialization" all highlighted the social features of running events and provided conditions for the growth of social capital. Thus, these themes were grouped into a higher-order theme "running as a social event," accounting for the antecedents of building social capital. Another example was that we grouped the initial theme "new relationships with strangers," "limited bridging capital," and "limited linking capital" into a bigger category named "different levels of social capital" because these three initial themes all indicated that the formation of social capital was contingent on the event and participant characteristics. At the end of this stage, the initial 23 themes and 36 sub-themes were collapsed into 8 themes and 22 sub-themes hence a clearer pattern began to form.

Finally, in the selective coding stage, we read through the original responses and gather quotes that represent the identified themes. To avoid biases in quote selection, we selected both supporting and contradictory quotations, leaving the readers the opportunity to construct their own interpretation (Creswell, 2013; Gratton & Jones, 2010). In addition, to establish the trustworthiness of our data analysis, peer review was used to validate the coding (Gratton & Jones, 2010;Welty Peachey & Cohen, 2016). Specifically, after Zhou completed the coding, Kaplanidou and two sport management colleagues examined the themes and interpretations of the data independently, providing comments and critiques. When disagreement arose, the group discussed the disparity together until final agreement was reached. The reviewing process helped establish the credibility and dependability of the findings, minimizing the potential biases and inconsistencies in the interpretation of qualitative data (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

4. Results

We present the results in two parts. The first, which included three themes—running as a social event (theme 1), building social capital in the running events (theme 2), and different levels of social capital (theme 3)—reflects the building of social capital itself. The second part, includes five themes: attitudinal and behavioral changes towards running events (theme 4), positive influence on others in terms of running (theme 5), prosocial behaviors (theme 6), increased everyday social interactions (theme 7), and the benefits of social capital for the community (theme 8). These themes reflect the outcomes of social capital to the community.

4.1. Running as a social event

Community running events were ideal for cultivating social capital since they were more recreational and less competitive in nature. Participants highlighted the fun element of running events. Ross, who was a highly-involved runner with 34 years of event experience, remarked:

> The biggest thing about participating in running events is fun; meeting people, being with people, being outdoors and facing the same conditions with everyone else. It's a fun activity to share with other people. It's one of the few things you can do with a huge variety of people that all have different abilities. You don't have to be good at it, you don't have to be a winner. Even you are no longer competitive, you can still get joy out of the competition.

In fact, participants revealed that running events were very social-related and they described running events as "social events," "a form of socialization," and "social outlets" which they used as opportunities to socially interact with different people.

Mike, who was a middle-age runner with four years of event experience and who participated in two running events in the last twelve months, commented, "I find that as long as I go there knowing that this is for fun and I am doing it with people from work, then it becomes . . . instead of being a race, it becomes an experience, which is actually more fun for me." Similarly, Ross reflected that running events were always associated with meeting people, socializing with friends, interacting with other runners, and building new relationships.

Running events also seemed to help participants adapt to the broader community where they lived. Emma was an international student who just came to the United States. By participating in local running events, Emma was able to familiarize herself with the new neighborhood.

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4.2. Building social capital in the running events

Participants recalled that participating in running events made them bond more closely with their families, friends, colleagues, and significant others. For example, Candy and her running friends wore matching costumes in the running events, taking funny group pictures and posting them on social media. Their friendships could have improved as a result of the wonderful time they spent together. Edward felt an enhanced sense of camaraderie and friendship because he and his friend always supported, encouraged, and cheered for each other during the events. Nana became closer with her mother and boyfriend after a running event in which her boyfriend rode a bike to accompany her and cheer her on along the route, and her mother waited her at the finishing line for celebration. Mike reported that he developed more comfortable working relationships with the people that he participated in the events with. Moreover, the motivating atmosphere of the running events with spectators cheering on the sidelines fostered a strong sense of community, which contributed to the generation of bonding social capital.

In addition, event-associated activities were also helpful in building relationships. In the pre-event stage, many participants joined group training to get prepared for the running events, and when they finished the events, there were all kinds of post-event social activities where people talked and interacted with one another. The collective training experience and the socializations after the events were perceived beneficial for developing bonding capital. David who participated in the Boston Marathon every year said:

> There are other people in [city name] that do the marathon. We get together as Boston Marathon Group. Sometimes we had breakfast and ran together. I spend more time with these friends that I probably wouldn't otherwise, because we get together three or four times a couple of months before the marathon. And then after the marathon, we get together once in a while. Last year, we met at a friend's house for a post-marathon party for those who went to Boston. It gives me a chance to meet and hang out with some of the local people that do the Boston Marathon. So definitely I gain friendships.

Participants indicated that running event participation contributed to relationship building because it provided a shared experience between people. Nana shared her insights on this:

> You participated in one of your life events, one of the experiences that you and your friends can share together. You encourage each other and you just experience a happy moment together. I guess your relationship improves just because you share more what you experience together.

Similarly, Carol remarked that "sport events create a common ground that brings people together and around which people find commonality in one another," and this "commonality of experiences" made people become more connected. The relationships developed from running events were also considered as different from other relationships. Ross thought his friendships with the runners were stronger and deeper due to the shared experiences and physical movement related with conversations.

We also discovered increased trust and reciprocity towards co-runners. For example, Mike mentioned that his participation experience with his colleagues increased his comfort level when being around these people, and it naturally led to a higher level of trust and willingness to seek help from these people:

> Because I feel more comfortable with people that I participated and experienced something with, then it's natural to trust people more than those I didn't participate with. Just because I get that comfort level . . . I am more likely to trust people that I got to know in the event experience. If I need help of something, or I need someone to drive me somewhere, I am more likely to ask those people who I participated with than those I haven't.

4.3. Different levels of social capital

Despite the rich bonding capital created from running event participation, the bridging and linking social capital was limited among the participants. The interactions were superficial with other runners who were strangers. They sometimes "gave each other thumbs up or quick high five" during the run or "sat around and talked for a little while" after the event, but few of them developed further relationships. Similar occurrences transpired among participants and event managers, staff, and volunteers. Most participants revealed that they hardly got the chance to talk to the event organizers and their contacts with volunteers were limited to just "requesting for something and saying 'thank you."' In addition to event organizers, the relationships between participants and other community institutions (e.g., public, private, and nonprofit organizations in general) were hardly influenced by participating in running events. Further, we did not find participants (except for one highly involved runner) became more politically proactive as a result of event participation. Nonetheless, we did find that bridging and linking capital varied across different types of events and runners.

Compared to non-local events, local events seemed more capable in developing new social relationships that connected strangers because there was a higher probability that participants ran into each other in other occasions. Four participants mentioned that local events gave them the chance to start friendships with local runners whom they might see around in their neighborhoods; for example, they happened to work in the same institution (mentioned by Sheldon and David) or

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they met each other again in the local sport clubs (mentioned by Candy and David) and grocery stores (mentioned by Nana).

In addition, events that were specifically designed to create bridging networks seemed more likely to develop relationships across different groups. That noted, events that were not designed for a development purpose seemed to influence primarily the running community – a particular group of people with higher socio-economic status – rather than the broader community, as revealed by Carol:

> The people who do running events tend to be white and of higher socio-economic status. I think there's a sense of community among these groups of people. But at the same time, it tends to be only one part of the community . . . It's a very limited community. I think running events that focus on a specific cause may have more community building.

Furthermore, the social capital building across individuals could be very different. Compared to low-involvement runners, highly-involved runners seemed to develop more bridging and linking capital from the running events. One reason might be that highly-involved runners would repeatedly go to the same events, which helped them reconnect with the runners. "You remember them and they remember you and then they become your dude. Then you have breakfast together and go to other activities while you are there," stated Ross, who ran in different running events for 34 years. Another reason might be that highly-involved runners were more active in the running community thus built wider personal networks with people in various positions. For example, David, who has been involved in running for 24 years, built a connection with a local running race director because they both were members of a local track club and they were both "embedded in the running community."

4.4. Attitudinal and behavioral changes towards running events

The social relationships built from the running events could influence attitudes and behaviors. Some participants were not into running at the beginning but they changed their attitude after running and having fun with friends. For example, Edward was initially "afraid of joining the running races" because he thought he was too slow. However, after making friends with some of the runners who were "completely supportive and helpful," he came to think that "running was amazing and completely positive." Sheldon participated in his first running event by chance, and he started to realize that running could be fun and enjoyable, especially when doing it with a lot of people, so he continued to participate in running events ever since.

In addition, participants became more agreeable, understanding, supportive, and proactive about hosting sport events because of the social gains from participating in running events. David revealed:

> I become more willing as a community citizen to welcome sport events. I am a little more understanding of the events and I am a lot more agreeable to events. When I know that a certain amenity, a certain service, or a certain section of town is closed because of the event; I am a lot more understanding. Overall, sport events definitely make me more proactive about putting the events on . . . and more willing to . . . For example, I would vote for sport facilities, and better roads for bikers and runners.

4.5. Positive influence on others in terms of running

Based on participants' perspective, the increased social capital as a result of event participation potentially improved the level of influence on others. By having this influence, experienced runners felt that they were able to motivate the beginners to keep on running. Candy played an influential role in motivating her niece to keep fit through running after their first 5k event together: "She texted me about her run, her eating and everything all day long. She wants me to come to her town and run with her seven months later to see the difference. That's her encouragement." As a highly-involved runner, Ross reported that he set an example for his running friends and positively influenced their participation in running by inspiring them:

> They tell me that I am inspiring them. That also gives me a positive feedback that I am setting a good example for other people . . . Getting others involved to go to an event allows me to have positive impacts on others' life. I also get a lot of feedback that I am presenting a positive role model and also facilitating other people to enjoy more things in life.

4.6. Prosocial behaviors

This theme was generated to reflect different kinds of prosocial behaviors (e.g., helping, supporting, volunteering, and donating) reported by participants who had developed closer social relationships through running event participation. Candy indicated she had closer ties with her children after running in the events together and they were more supportive of one another as a result.

We also found participants helping other runners with running questions, lending running shoes and equipment or taking care of their kids as a return for their favor. In addition, some participants also volunteered in the running events to give back to the running community.

Other participants who did not volunteer in sport events yet, claimed they were willing to do so in the future. David, Emma and Cecilia identified time as the biggest constraint for them to volunteer in the events although they always wanted

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"to be a volunteer and support back to the community." Moreover, participants also reported their inclination to run in charity events, do fundraising, or make donation to a philanthropic cause to show their support back to the running community.

4.7. Increased everyday social interactions

We also observed an increased everyday socialization as a result of the social capital built from sport events. Participants revealed their interaction levels went up as they became more connected to their running friends. Nana reflected:

> You get involved with their personal lives. You are not just running sometimes, you will go out and celebrate somebody's birthday. If somebody gets married, you get invited to the party. Like Sam and JoAnn *(her running friends),* they have really nice little gatherings at their house. Richard *(another running friend)* is always setting up stuff like "let's go and pick blueberries this Saturday" or something. And there are other friends who sometimes ride their bikes, so you can expand to other areas as well.

Like Nana, who found there were other common interests shared between her and her running friends hence started to engage in other leisure activities together, Mike stated that the social relationships he gained from the running events led him to do more cultural things such as art, music, and movies with other runners. Because of these non-sport activities, Edward felt that he was more socially involved in other runners' lives and their relationships tended to last longer: "We had different little barbecues and parties . . . Some of our kids play together in free days. So it's growing from just running itself. It grows into a long friendship."

4.8. The benefits of social capital for the community

The potential contribution of social capital to the development of the running and the broader community was noted by the participants. Within the running community, it seemed that social capital engendered a heightened sense of community, which reinforced the collective identity of the runners. This collective identity was manifested in the participants' description which analogized the community to a team. They expressed that the "team as a whole will be improved" if all members in the team "help and encourage each other" and "try to make each other better." Candy commented that being a part of the running community enabled runners to act beyond individual interests and towards the greater good of the community. She gave the example that runners in other cities stood up and showed support for their fellows who experienced the terrorist attack in Boston Marathon.

For the broader community where the tightening social networks were found in households, neighborhoods, and workplaces, participants highlighted that community development could be achieved when "people in the community contributed to benefit the greater whole" and that the social capital from sport event participation "brought people together for a common good." Carol remarked:

> I think sport helps you find a common ground. I think everybody wants something better in their community than what they have. We all look for better ways to improve. Often times sport can create this common ground in which individuals can lay their differences aside and try to come together and creates some positive outcomes for their community.

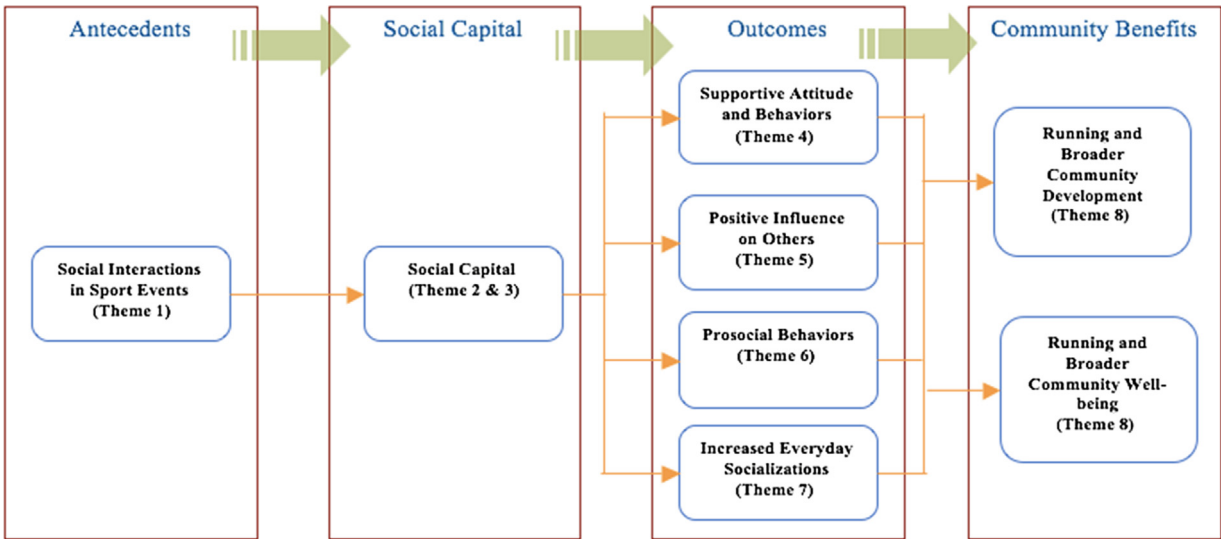

Fig. 1. Relationships between Event Participation, Social Capital, and Community.

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Finally, participants revealed that social capital from running event participation created a sense of belongingness, camaraderie and mutual trust that made people in the running community feel safer, happier, and less lonely, suggesting that social capital was beneficial to the emotional well-being of the running community. With regard to the physical well-being, participants reflected that social capital allowed them to positively influence their family members and acquaintances to take part in sport and physical exercise, thereby improving sport participation and overall health level within the broader community. Cecilia articulated, "With the social relationships you developed, you can involve other people and help out with their health and fitness as well. That in turn helps the community become healthier."

The following figure summarizes the eight themes outlined in the results and provides a visual preview to our discussion (Fig. 1).

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical contributions

We make several contributions to existing body of knowledge. Building on Putnam's (1995) social capital framework, we examined the social capital development in a participatory sport event setting and identified all the elements (i.e., trust, network, and reciprocity) and types (i.e., bonding, bridging, and linking capital) of social capital conceptualized by Putnam (1995), thereby providing evidence for the application of his framework to running event participation. Furthermore, we extended the social capital framework by demonstrating the antecedents and outcomes of social capital from active sport event participation. More importantly, we mapped the process through which social capital is formed and contributes to the long-term benefits of the (running and broader) community. We discuss each contribution in the following space.

First, our findings indicate that social interactions in the sport events are an antecedent of social capita formation. This is supported by Welty Peachey et al. (2013), who found that social capital was developed through the intensive interactions and engagement of the soccer players in SFD events. Moreover, as observed in our findings, the recreational nature of running events provides more opportunities for socializations, indicating that non-competitive sport environments can facilitate the building of social networks (Schulenkorf et al., 2011).

Second, compared to the rich bonding capital, the bridging and linking capital seem limited in running events. While all participants perceive strengthened ties with their normal social groups, only a few of them established relationships with people from different socio-cultural backgrounds or with staff from the event management team. Mackellar and Jamieson (2015) offered similar findings study on an international cycling event, as they showed that the event bonded members within the same community organizations internally but the interactions between different organizations in a broader community or between local people and event organizers were rare, indicating a lack of bridging and linking capital. In particular, our results showed that the development of bridging and linking capital varied across different types of events and participants. From the participants' perspective, sport events that are specifically designed for a development goal can engender more bridging and linking capital than those that are not. Correspondingly, scholars have found that sport-for-development (SFD) events are capable in achieving the development of bridging capital (between community groups) and linking capital (between individual participants and the event management team) because these events deliberately create opportunities for people from different backgrounds to communicate and interact (Sherry, 2010; Welty Peachey et al., 2013). However, for most of the running events that are not targeting a development purpose, the building of social capital seems to be generated within a limited running community that includes predominantly white people with high socio-economic status (e.g., education and occupation) as illustrated in our sample. Perhaps, this is determined by the nature of social capital. As exclusivity is the nature of all kinds of capitals (Blackshaw & Long, 2005), it is unlikely for the privileged group of people to spontaneously share the social capital with everyone in the community unless special efforts or interventions are made (Blackshaw & Long, 2005; DeFilippis, 2001). In addition, it appears that local events are more likely to generate bridging capital than non-local events. Because participants in local events are geographically close to each other, the chances for daily interactions are higher than those who live far away. Furthermore, highly-involved participants seemed more likely to develop bridging and linking capital than lowly-involved participants, because the former were involved in the sport community for a longer period of time and consequently accumulated more contacts and relationships with all kinds of people in the sport community. Other researchers have also suggested that social capital might diminish when there was a lack of further interactions, so the long-term involvement in sport events was desired for building lasting social capital (Harvey, Lévesque, & Donnelly, 2007; Welty Peachey et al., 2015).

Third, and most importantly, we identified various outcomes of social capital from sport event participation, showing a linkage between social capital from sport events and the development of the running and broader community. As a result of social capital, there were positive changes in participants' attitudes and behaviors towards sport events. Our findings resonate with the work of Inoue and Havard (2014), who indicated the perceived social impact of the sport event had a positive effect on attendees' support of the event (e.g., intentions to attend and recommend the event in the future). Based on Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), the social gains from participating in sport events led to favorable attitude towards event participation and subsequently led to future participation in sport events (Inoue & Havard, 2014; Lutz, 1991). Also, because of the perceived social benefits from sport events, participants became more tolerant toward the inconvenience and costs associated with events, demonstrating cooperative and supportive behaviors towards the events

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(Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012). The second outcome of social capital was the increased interpersonal influence. As pointed out by Putnam (1995), social norms and networks persuasively influenced our public and private life. Accordingly, the enhanced social capital among event participants allowed them to positively influence one another, so the highly-involved participants were able to motivate and recruit the newly-started participants to get involved in more sport events. The third outcome of social capital was the prosocial behaviors. As a result of the emerged reciprocity from the social capital created by the events, participants helped and supported each other in the events, as well as, in their daily lives. Participants undertook volunteering, donating, and fundraising activities associated with sport events to give back to the community (Grootaert et al., 2004; Stone, 2001). The last outcome of social capital was the increased everyday socializations among event participants. We found the strengthening social ties could lead to a higher level of socializations not only during sport events but also in everyday life (Skinner et al., 2008). As participants interacted more frequently with each other daily, their relationships were sustained and grew into long-term friendships. Moreover, as the participants became more involved in others' personal lives, their social interactions extended to other areas outside of sport events, which led to an increased participation in a wide range of community activities.

Finally, by elaborating the specific outcomes of social capital from sport event participation, we draw the connection between social capital and benefits for the running and broader community. Our findings suggest that social capital can facilitate sport participation, contributing to the development of sport community. In addition, the social capital accrued from sport events may extend beyond the realm of sport and facilitate participation in non-sport activities in the locality; thus, it has the potential to contribute to the broader community development in diverse aspects (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Furthermore, we observed that social capital from sport event participation appeared to fulfill the social needs of the participants, creating a sense of belongingness and camaraderie among the running community members. The linkage may ultimately lead to the happiness and emotional well-being of the running community (Manderson, 2010; Son et al., 2010). On the other hand, our findings imply that social capital is helpful in promoting sport participation in the local area where residents become more physically active, suggesting that social capital is capable to benefit the overall health and physical well-being of the broader community (Son et al., 2010). Collectively, we propose here that social capital among sport event participants has antecedents and outcomes that may positively impact the running and broader community in terms of its development and resident well-being.

5.2. Practical implications

Sport managers can gain valuable information about the benefits that participatory sport events potentially bring to the local community. As social benefits are not the mere results of hosting sport events, leveraging strategies should be deployed by event managers to generate and sustain the social capital derived from the sport events in a wider community (Chalip, 2006). Auxiliary events and stall activities that focus on providing social opportunities for event participants, families, and friends can facilitate the building of bonding capital (Mackellar & Jamieson, 2015). Entertainment events, such as concerts, family festivals, opening ceremonies, finish line celebrations, pre-event dinners, and post-event parties, can create a celebratory and festive atmosphere that fosters the social camaraderie (Inoue & Havard, 2014). Moreover, the creation of socializing spaces such as a hospitality tent, entertaining hub, and kids zone offer a relaxing environment for social interactions and relationship building (Inoue & Havard, 2014). Moreover, given the lack of bridging capital in our results, event managers may want to design initiatives that aimed at connecting strangers, involving people from diverse backgrounds in the events. Specifically, event organizers can combine the events with charitable programs or cultural activities to promote the inclusiveness of the community and overcome social capital weaknesses noted in the literature. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, related to the event are also helpful in engaging different groups of people in the celebrations of the events. These outlets are also useful in drawing public attention to social issues and creating awareness for the development of intergroup relations (Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). Finally, the lack of linking capital in our results may suggest that communication is essential for establishing linkage between individuals and community organizations. Therefore, event organizers, business sponsors, and various community institutions should be creative in designing initiatives that help raise participants' awareness and understanding of their organizations. Expositions, vendor booths, sport club sessions, and interactive activities organized by different community groups at the events may offer good opportunities for local people to interact with these organizations, learn about their missions and goals, and share their visions and strategic plans for future community projects. To further empower the participants, it is important for community organizations to actively seek participants' input in their programs. This can be achieved by delivering the message that the involvement of every community member is valued and appreciated. Further, community organizations may want to capitalize on participants' willingness to give back the community by providing volunteering opportunities in other social areas outside of sport events. Such opportunities not only boost citizen empowerment, but facilitate the transformation of social capital into other types of capital. As a result of the social capital developed from the sport events, participants in our study demonstrated tendencies to volunteer, donate, and raise fund for charitable events. Therefore, encouraging community members to engage in volunteering initiatives and associated training programs would help them build knowledge and skills, thus may translate social capital into cultural capital. Moreover, community development organizations may use participants' social networks to engage more people in charitable donations and fundraising, which facilitates the transformation from social capital to economic capital that benefits broader groups of people.

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5.3. Limitations and future research

We used snowball sampling to for recruit the participants. However, the potential interaction between the sampling technique and participants' social networks may have an influence on the results. That participants were recruited through existing social networks may limit our understanding of the complexities in social capital, so we encourage future research to consider other sampling methods that allow for the inclusion of more diverse groups of participants as well as a broader range of voices. With regard to the findings, although the ethnicities and socio-economic status of the participants were discussed regarding the generation of bonding capital in the homogeneous running community, we feel that further connections should be made between the social capital and the individuals' socio-demographic backgrounds, given that social capital is deeply embedded in the socio-cultural settings of the studied subjects (Tonts, 2005). In addition, we only examined the social capital building in running events. It is possible that other sport events – for example, team sport events – create different social capital and outcomes than running events. Also, the social capital among active participants and spectators may be different as well. Therefore, future study can (a) compare the social capital building across multiple types of sport events and/or (b) examine the social capital among various actors (e.g., spectators, volunteers, coaches, and organizing staff) in the sport events.

Given the focus of current study on the formation and outcomes of social capital among event participants, we did not look deep into other forms of capital (e.g., economic, cultural, and human capital) that may influence the outcomes of social capital in the running and broader community. Further examination of the economic and cultural capital may offer insights on the scarce bridging and linking capital illustrated in our findings. Perhaps, the creation of bridging and linking capital can hardly be realized if there is a lack of power and respect for the disadvantaged groups (Blackshaw & Long, 2005; DeFilippis, 2001). Without access to other forms of capital, it is hard to make significant social changes.

While our study suggests that social capital could potentially lead to prosocial behaviors, such as supporting others in difficulties and raising funds for underprivileged groups in the community, the value of these prosocial actions may be limited without wider political mobilization (King, 2004). For future studies, it is worthwhile to examine how social capital, when combined with other types of capital, can facilitate broader social movement and political actions in advancing the development of the community (King, 2004).

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