

The Role of Identity and Self-Sacrificial Leaders on Social Capital in Youth Sport Organizations

Dorothy Collins, University of South Carolina

Bob Heere (Advisor), University of South Carolina

Friday, November 3, 2017

8:00-8:50 AM, Washington Ballroom

50-minute poster presentation

(including questions)

Popular culture often assumes that participation in youth sport has a host of positive benefits, including the ability to generate social capital, spur future occupational success and encourage greater levels of civic engagement (Coalter, 2007). There is; however, little empirical evidence to support this ideal (Coakley, 2011). In fact, little is known about the specific conditions within a sport organization that likely to facilitate youth sport organizations to become more adept at generating, maintaining, and distributing social capital to their members. Using the community of practice framework as a lens, the author will investigate the possibility that the creation of communities that generate social capital for its members can be explained by two different theories of identity formation, namely identity theory (Stryker, 1968) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), as well as the influence of leaders that are perceived to display self-sacrificial the ability of a youth sport organization to create social capital based on the strength of the role-based identities found in the members of the organization, controlling for the presence of a strong sense of shared social identity based on membership in the group between those individuals. Second, the author will examine the possibility in groups that have high levels of social capital as opposed to groups that do not have high levels of social capital, there will also be strong perceptions of self-sacrificial behaviors of the organization's leaders, again controlling for level of group identification.

Literature Review

It is understood that communities of practice have the potential to create high levels of social capital; however, there is a gap in the literature with regards to these communities and under what conditions they may offer members access to social capital. Social capital, simply defined as “access to knowledge and opportunities through networks to enhance social and or economic mobility” (Foster & Maas, 2014, p.1), is a primary benefit of membership in more traditional community and civic organizations (Putnam, 1995). Youth sport organizations, as community based organizations have the potential to offer individuals an opportunity to create communities of their own choosing, and thereby gain access to social capital through participation in those communities. However, the literature does not define the conditions that must occur to allow the formation of social capital. Identity theory posits that at the heart of an individual's sense of identity is the specific role he or she occupies, and the way in which the performance of that role translates to expectations connected to that role (Burke & Tully, 1977). Thus, a starting point for an individual to join a group is their role identity (i.e. player, coach), not an identity with the community. Individuals often initially join groups based on expectations stemming from a particular role they inhabit, (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), or on pre-existing social bonds that do not necessarily relate to the focus of the group (Katz & Heere, 2013), yet this does not preclude the subsequent formation of a separate social identity that is directly tied to membership in the organization itself (Tajfel, 1978), and shared by members of that organization to create an “in-group” (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Furthermore, the literature suggests that when members with individual role identities that are similar come together in the presence of shared group identity, there is the potential for social capital to emerge (Palmer & Thompson, 2007).

The leaders of an organization have been determined to be influential in determining both the sense of individual self and also the sense of identification with the organization felt by members of the organization (Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). Traditional ideas about transformational leadership styles have implied that those leaders that exhibit self-sacrificial behaviors may effective because they are able to better meet the changing needs of an organization's members (Burns, 1978). The concept of self-sacrifice extends beyond a desire to lead in a way that puts their subordinates ahead of themselves (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luvé & Neuberg, 1997). Self-sacrificial leadership; specifies that the motivation for these behaviors on the part of the leader is to inspire reciprocity between leaders and followers (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999). It has been empirically

2017 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XV)

demonstrated that effective self-sacrificial leaders display high levels of identification with the organization (Van Knippenberg & Van Knippenberg, 2005). These characteristics of self-sacrificial leaders suggest that self-sacrificial leaders maybe a key to the creation of communities, and the ensuing social capital that is a positive outcome of strong communities, because these characteristics are also frequently cited as critical to community development or social capital. This link; however, has not been empirically proven.

Methods

This quantitative study will employ a cross-sectional descriptive design, in an attempt to better understand the differences between youth sport organizations that are successfully able to generate social capital and those that are not. Social capital will be measured using a scale found in Chiu, Hsu and Wang's (2006) study of knowledge sharing that are used to determine the extent to which community-level social capital is present within the organization. This study will also utilize the TEAM*ID scale (Heere & James, 2007) to measure an individual's level of group identification. Five elements of this scale: private evaluation, public evaluation, cognitive awareness and interconnectedness of self, and sense of interdependence will be evaluated as antecedents of social identity. The sixth dimension, behavioral involvement, will be viewed as both an element of organizational involvement and as a part of social capital. To measure perceptions of self-sacrificial leadership, questions adapted by De Cremer, Mayer, Van Dijke, Schouten and Bardes (2009) from the Multifactor leaderships questionnaire for research (Bass & Avolio, 1995), will be used. In addition, five questions taken from the Model of Self-Sacrificial Leadership (Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999) will be used to evaluate the extent to which the organization's members are likely to respond to the requests of self-sacrificial leaders. Finally, role-based identity will be measured using domain involvement questions from Fisher and Wakefield's (1998) study of the formation of group identity. In order to evaluate the differences in these organizations, two ANCOVA analyses will be conducted. The first will examine if there are significant differences in social capital between groups in which members show high levels of role identity as opposed to those that have lower levels of role identity, when controlling for group identification. The second ANCOVA analysis will consider if there are significant differences in social capital between groups in which members have strong perceptions of self-sacrificial behavior of leaders, and groups in which individuals do not have strong perceptions of self-sacrificial leadership, when controlling for group identification.

The study instrument will be distributed to athletes, parents, coaches and administrators participating in selected youth sport organizations, and which offer programs that cater to athletes at a variety of levels of skill and commitment to the sport. Data collection will be completed in April 2017, with data analysis immediately following. It is expected that results of the study will be known by July 2017.

References

- Burke, P. J., & Tully, J. C. (1977). The measurement of role identity. *Social forces*, 55(4), 881-897.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. NY.
- Chiu, C. M., Hsu, M. H., & Wang, E. T. (2006). Understanding knowledge sharing in virtual communities: An integration of social capital and social cognitive theories. *Decision support systems*, 42(3), 1872-1888.
- Choi, Y., & Mai-Dalton, R. R. (1999). The model of followers' responses to self-sacrificial leadership: An empirical test. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 10(3), 397-421.
- Cialdini, R. B., Brown, S. L., Lewis, B. P., Luce, C., & Neuberg, S. L. (1997). Reinterpreting the empathy-altruism relationship: When one into one equals oneness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 73(3), 481.
- Coakley, J. (2011). Youth sports what counts as "positive development?". *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 35(3), 306-324.
- Coalter, F. (2007). *A wider social role for sport: who's keeping the score?*. Routledge.

2017 Sport Marketing Association Conference (SMA XV)

- Fisher, R.J. and Wakefield, K. (1998), "Factors leading to group identification: a field study of winners and losers", *Journal of Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 15, January, pp. 23-40.
- Foster, K. A., & Maas, C. D. (2014). An Exploratory Factor Analysis of the Resource Generator-United States: A Social Capital Measure. *British Journal of Social Work*, 1-19.
- Heere, B., & James, J. D. (2007). Sports teams and their communities: Examining the influence of external group identities on team identity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 21, 319-337.
- Hogg, M. & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*. London: Routledge.
- Katz, M., & Heere, B. (2013). Leaders and followers: An exploration of the notion of scale-free networks within a new brand community. *Journal of Sport Management*, 27(4), 271-287.
- Palmer, C., & Thompson, K. (2007). The paradoxes of football spectatorship: On-field and online expressions of social capital among the "Grog Squad." *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 24(2), 187-205.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy*, 6, 65-78.
- Schouten, J. W., & McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of consumer research*, 22(1), 43-61.
- Stryker, S. (1968). Identity salience and role performance: The relevance of symbolic interaction theory for family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 558-564.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). Social categorization, social identity and social comparison. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 61-76). London: Academic Press.
- van Knippenberg, B., & van Knippenberg, D. (2005). "Leader self-sacrifice and leadership effectiveness: The moderating role
- Van Knippenberg, D., Van Knippenberg, B., De Cremer, D., & Hogg, M. A. (2004). Leadership, self, and identity: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(6), 825-856.