

Chapter 10

Social Impact of Street Soccer Leagues

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within the professional soccer sector, soccer clubs are becoming more aware of their social function in society (Van Eekeren & Dijk, 2011). In 2010, 32 of the 36 professional soccer clubs in the Netherlands have delivered social contributions to society and together invested 6.3 million Euro's in 160 societal projects in which 102,371 persons participated. These social contributions focused on a broad range of subjects, such as 'sportsmanship and respect', 'participation and integration', 'education', 'health' and 'neighborhood development' (Van Eekeren & Dijk, 2011). Around these subjects many projects have been developed, like for instance 'Playing for Success' (focus on education), 'Say No to Racism' (focus on sportsmanship and respect) and 'Nobody Off Side' (focus on participation and integration). By linking the name of the professional soccer club to these projects, many children are stimulated to participate.

For this research, one particular sports project will be examined which covers all five subjects: 'the soccer street league program'. This project has been determined as one of the flagship

projects of many soccer clubs because it reaches a large, broad and diverse audience. It is a street soccer competition which targets for children, both boys and girls, from 12 to 16 years old. Throughout the year, teams compete on small playing fields which are constructed in several neighborhoods throughout the city (e.g. Johan Cruyff Courts) or at the local gym. The uniqueness of this project lies in the special construction of the competition. The game cannot be won by winning the street soccer matches solely. In addition to the matches, children can earn one third of the points by initiating and executing charity events in their own neighborhood. Another one third of the points can be earned by abiding the fair play regulations which have been constructed by the professional soccer teams. When the participants do not live up by these rules, deduction of formerly earned points takes place. The team that earns the most points wins the competition. The aim of the project is to enhance the social capital of participating children.

Although participation in sports programs is often assumed to be related with building social capital, Coalter (2007) addresses the marginal ability of sports in social capital building; many times the effects of sports regarding social capital development are overrated. This raises the question whether participation in street league programs is just another form of recreation. Does participation contributes to the development of social capital, or are the social projects only organized for image building and are investments a waste of (public) money? The purpose of this study is to investigate to what extent 'street league programs' play a role in enhancing the degree of social capital amongst children who participate in this competition event.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Social Capital

Within the academic literature on social capital, three leading authors can be identified. In general, the definitions of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam have in common that ‘social capital refers to social networks based on social and group norms which enable people to trust and cooperate with each other and via which individuals or groups can obtain certain advantages’ (Coalter, 2007, p-50). Bourdieu (1986) was one of the first to introduce the concept emphasizing that social capital is related to the processes underpinning the reproduction of unequal access to resources. Bourdieu states that social capital is predominantly a product of the elite to secure their relative positions. Unlike Bourdieu, Coleman does not share the opinion that social capital is class specific. For Coleman, social capital refers to aspects of social structures and social relationships which facilitate actions. Coleman emphasizes that social capital is an individualistic tool for gaining access to valuable resources which can be used to achieve personal goals (Coleman, 1988).

While Bourdieu and Coleman focus on personal resources, Putnam (1995) addresses the ability of social capital to bind communities together and serves for the public good. Putnam defines social capital as ‘‘features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives... Social capital refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust’ (p. 665). Networks can be subdivided into informal and formal networks. Informal networks are constructed through interpersonal

relationships between class mates, friends, relatives, etc. Formal networks however, are formed through participation in associations and voluntary organizations. These networks provide a platform for the exchange of information through conversation, and are the basis for the creation of trust. In addition, they contribute to becoming more aware of the norms of a particular social structure (Franke, 2005). Norms can best be described as social contracts or unwritten rules (Kaasa, 2009). They are some kind of behavioral guidelines within a social network. 'When a norm exists and is effective, it constitutes a powerful, though sometimes fragile, form of social capital' (Coleman, 1988, p-104). It is important for society that people are aware of the norms of social structures. People must forgo self-interest and act in the interest of the collectivity.

Trust can be defined as confidence in the reliability of others (Daskalakis & Kauffeld-Monz, 2007). Trust is an important feature because it is a good parameter for social cohesion (Coleman, 1990). When social trust is high, it reduces the chances of loneliness, discrimination and premature school leaving (Van den Meulen, 2007). In addition, trust is related to less corruption, more effective bureaucracies, higher economic development and better performing educational systems (Leigh, 2006). Trust can be subdivided into three components: personal trust, generalized trust and institutional trust. The amount of personal trust is related to how well respondents trust their friends, family and acquaintances (Poortinga, 2006). Generalized trust can be determined by how well people trust others with whom they are not familiar (Delaney, Wall & O'hAdoaha, 2007), while institutional trust is related to people's attitude towards formal institutes like the church, the educational system, police, press or the politics (Stone, 2001). Norms and trust are strongly related. Kaasa (2009) explains this by stating that 'civic norms

guiding people's behavior can be viewed as trustworthiness that increases trust in other people' (p. 220).

It can be concluded that social capital is a complex and multidimensional concept. Since the definition of social capital by Putnam fits perfectly with the purpose of the soccer street league programs, we use his definition of social capital; through participation in the soccer street league program it is expected that children create more social capital because they obtain a larger network, respect their social surrounding more than before (trust) and become more civically engaged (norms). In the next section, the influence of sports in the creation of social capital will be discussed.

2.2 Sports and bridging and bonding capital

According to Putnam (1995) leisure-based organizations are the primary places for the generation of social capital. In those places, two form of social capital can be created: bridging and bonding capital. Putnam (2000) argues that bonding capital has a homogeneous character and is focused on strong social ties between similar people, with relations, reciprocity and trust based on ties of familiarity and closeness. Bonding capital can be seen as a kind of social superglue, which enables people to maintain a strong in-group loyalty and strengthens the identity of the social network. Bridging capital however, has a more heterogeneous character. The process of getting to know people who might be different from oneself, thus are part of a different social network (e.g. people belonging to another ethnic group), can be described by the concept of bridging. Bridging social capital seems to contribute to societal integration, while

bonding social capital might be exclusive and can produce strong out-group antagonism.

Sports can contribute to the creation of both forms of capital. In their analysis on urban identity, Hague and Mercer (1998) observed how a local soccer team in Scotland created a sense of identity and strong attachment to the locality, a process that can be linked to bonding capital. This provided benefits for members of the network who lived by the associated norms of this social structure. However, this same process also had negative external effects where members became more hostile towards 'outsiders'. This strong in-group mentality can lead to problems such as segregation, social exclusion and racism (Tonts, 2005). In addition, Bourdieu (1986) emphasized this process of segregation through sports. He argues that sports are a representation of society and social classes. Golf clubs for example, serve as a platform for valuable business networks because the lower social classes are excluded. According to Portes and Landolt (2000), benefits are marginal when similar platforms are being created for people from the lower classes, because the wrong kind of social network is being provided. In this case, members are being linked to similar others who also have a resource poor network.

Unlike Bourdieu, Van Eekeren & Dijk (2011) are more positive about sports' ability to mingle people from different social classes with each other. In their research on professional soccer clubs and community programs, Van Eekeren & Dijk concluded that the use of soccer is not a solution for all social problems in society. However, the professional soccer clubs have a unique

position in society which provides them opportunities to reach a diverse audience, which exists of people from different social classes and of people with different ethnical backgrounds. By using the brand of the soccer club, multiple social classes can be reached and brought together in which a resourceful platform is created, also for the lower social classes. In addition to Van Eekeren & Dijk, Stolle (1998) also found evidence of sports ability in creating bridging capital. In her research on generalized trust in voluntary associations, she demonstrates that sports organizations that have members with different ethnical backgrounds stimulate higher degrees of generalized trust. Stolle analyzed this process in Germany and Sweden and found that the more diverse the composition of a voluntary organization was, the more trusting people it accommodated. Krouwel, Boonstra, Duyvendak and Veldboer (2005), on the other hand, experienced that it is not easy to mingle people with different backgrounds. Dutch people wanting to mingle with Turks and Moroccans were not successful in integrating. These two groups of immigrants rather wanted to play in a soccer team with their 'own' people. The integrating process was easier amongst little children.

In short, participation in sports can contribute to the creation of bonding capital because participation in a sport team can create a sense of identity and strong attachment to the locality (Hague and Mercer, 1998). One must be careful that it does not lead to social exclusion, however (Tonts, 2005). In addition, sports can also contribute to the development of bridging capital. Although some remarks can be made about the possibilities to actually create bridging capital through sports (Krouwel et al., 2005; Bourdieu, 1986), it has been proven that there are opportunities to unite different social classes through sports (Van Eekeren & Dijk, 2011), which can lead to an increased generalized trust (Stolle, 1998). Krouwel et al. argue that children are

more eager to mingle. Therefore, it is arguable that soccer street league programs provide an ideal platform for the creation of both bonding and bridging capital of children.

3. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

Respondents of this research were participants of the soccer street league programs of NAC Breda and N.E.C. Nijmegen (programs are named the NAC Street League and N.E.C. BuurtBattle, respectively). The soccer street league programs of NAC Breda and N.E.C. Nijmegen are evaluated as best cases because both are at the forefront of social programs development and are rewarded for this (More Than Football Foundation, 2010). In total, there are 400 participants of the soccer street league programs within the age group of 12 to 16 years old (250 NAC Street League; 150 N.E.C. BuurtBattle) of which 70% exists of boys and 30% of girls (N.E.C. BuurtBattle, 2010; NAC Street League, 2010). We tried to create a control group of non-participants with the same background characteristics, living in the same city and in the same neighborhoods as the participants. To establish this, multiple secondary schools in both Breda and Nijmegen were approached.

Data were obtained throughout a time period of four months. From March until May 2011, 103 respondents were reached whom participated in the soccer street league programs of NAC Breda and N.E.C. Nijmegen (response rate = 25,75%). These participants were approached during the match days of the competition or after soccer trainings which were organized by the professional

soccer clubs. In March 2011, the questionnaire was conducted among 131 respondents who did not participate in the soccer street league programs. This group served as a control group in this research. These respondents filled in the questionnaire at their secondary schools in Nijmegen and Breda. Every secondary school in both Breda and Nijmegen was approached in order to cooperate with this research. Four secondary schools participated in this research, of which one was located in Breda (Van Cooth College) and three in Nijmegen (Mondial College Nijmegen West, Mondial College Lindenholt and Canisius College). Children filled out the questionnaires during their classes, most of the time under supervision of one of the researchers. At one school, children filled in the questionnaire under supervision of their teacher, who on forehand was briefed carefully by the researcher.

In order to determine to which extent the groups of participants of the soccer street league programs and the control group were identical, an independent-samples T-Test was conducted to compare the group scores on age, gender and educational level (Pallant, 2007). No significant differences were found on gender ($M = 0,29$, $SD = 0,46$ for participants and $M = 0,36$, $SD = 0,48$ for non-participants; $t(229) = -1,100$, $p = 0.272$) and education ($M = 1,54$, $SD = 0,73$ for participants and $M = 1,66$, $SD = 0,71$ for non-participants ; $t(229) = -1,302$, $p = 0.19$). There was a significant difference in age for the participants ($M = 14,15$, $SD = 1,63$) and non-participants ($M = 15,09$, $SD = 1,24$; $t(229) = -4,983$, $p = 0.00$), however.

3.2 Research Instrument

A questionnaire was constructed measuring the independent variable (participation in the soccer street league program) and five dependent variables measuring social capital (networks, norms, trust, bridging and bonding capital). In addition, four control variables were taken into the analyses in order to control for any effects of these background characteristics (age, gender, education, city). The items in the questionnaire are presented in the Appendix.

The respondents' network was measured based on a questionnaire developed by Vyncke (2009). The informal network was measured based on amount of friends and relatives, frequency of meeting friends and relatives, and the importance of these relationships. Second, the formal network was measured based on the amount of memberships in various voluntary organizations, the amount of members in these group, and the amount of group members the respondent has created a bond with.

Indicators for measuring trust were also based on Vyncke's (2009) validated questionnaire on social capital. Personal trust was measured based on the answers to four questions about whether respondents' father, mother, friends and family can be trusted. General trust was measured based on the answers to five questions whether most people can be trusted, are honest, make abuse of people's goodness, and whether one should be cautious in trusting people. Institutional trust is measured by three indicators: trust in the teacher, trust in the police and trust in the government. Norms are measured based on twelve indicators, of which seven items measured actual behavior of the respondent and five items measured the respondent's attitude towards norms (Kaasa,

2009). In her research, Kaasa used a 10-point scale. However, for this research a 5-point scale was used to be consistent within the questionnaire.

In order to determine the amount of bonding capital, the strength of ties with friends and family were measured. It is assumed that the stronger the ties with family and friends, the more bonding capital the respondent has. In addition, also the heterogeneity of the respondent's family and friends is measured based on the presence of people with different ethnical backgrounds and religion. Finally, trust in family and friends is measured, as was the trust in people with a different religion and with a different ethnical background.

In order to determine bridging capital, respondents' weak ties are investigated. This is determined by measuring the amount of formal networks the respondent is participating in. In addition, the heterogeneity of the networks has been determined by analyzing the differences between people's education, gender, religion and ethnicity within the networks. Also trust in people from other social classes is measured. When the respondent has a high amount of trust in people from other classes, has a heterogeneous network, and is part of several formal networks, this person is assumed to have a high amount of bridging capital.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Analyses

Before the individual items of the questionnaire were converted into the dependent variables, scales were evaluated in a reliability analysis, based on the rules of Keith (2005). Some items were removed because these infringed the regulations for the creation of a reliable scale¹. After these adjustments, every scale is evaluated as reliable (see Table 4.1)

Table 4.1: Reliability scores per scale

| | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Informal network | .625 |
| Formal network | .740 |
| Personal trust | .662 |
| Generalized trust | .747 |
| Institutional trust | .805 |
| Norms | .753 |
| Bridging capital | .656 |
| Bonding capital | .671 |

In addition, the data set underwent a preliminary assumption testing. The dataset was tested on sample size, normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices and multicollinearity. No serious violations have been noted.

¹ The items 'You should be cautious with who you trust' and 'People are trying to abuse your goodness' were removed. Also in the scale of 'Norms' the item 'How many times were you grounded over the last 12 months?' was removed. In the scale of 'Bridging capital', the items 'How many family members were born in a country as you were?', 'How many family members have got another kind of believe as you?', 'How many family member have followed another educational level as you have?' and 'To which extent do you trust people who have a different educational level as you have?' were removed. Finally, within the scale of 'Bonding capital', 'the item How many family members are born in the same country as you are?' was removed.

Next, a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to investigate the difference between participation in soccer street league programs in relation to the features of social capital. The multivariate test indicated that there are statistically significant differences amongst the groups of participants and non-participants (Wilks' Lambda = .774; partial eta squared = .23; $p < .0001$). When the result for the dependent variables were considered separately, four variables were responsible for reaching statistical significance, using a Bonferroni adjustment alpha level of .006. These are the variables informal network ($p < .0001$, partial eta squared = .151), personal trust ($p = .003$, partial eta squared = .045), bonding capital ($p < .0001$, partial eta squared = .080), and bridging capital ($p < .0001$, partial eta squared = .098) (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 MANOVA on measures of social capital by participation in street league program

| | Partial eta squared |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Informal network | .15* |
| Formal network | .03 |
| Personal trust | .05* |
| Generalized trust | .00 |
| Institutional trust | .00 |
| Norms | .03 |
| Bridging capital | .08* |
| Bonding capital | .10* |

* $p < .006$ (Bonferonni corrected alpha level)

An inspection of the mean scores indicates that participants of the soccer street league programs reported a larger informal network, have more personal trust, and have more bridging and bonding capital than non-participants, as can be seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Mean social capital scores per group

| | Mean scores participants | Mean scores non-participants | Total |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| Informal network* | 5.21 | 4.62 | 4.87 |
| Formal network | 11.31 | 8.70 | 10.05 |
| Personal trust* | 4.79 | 4.52 | 4.63 |
| Generalized trust | 3.35 | 3.13 | 3.23 |
| Institutional trust | 3.48 | 3.43 | 3.40 |
| Norms | 4.00 | 3.78 | 3.88 |
| Bridging capital* | 26.98 | 21.82 | 24.39 |
| Bonding capital* | 4.80 | 4.36 | 4.55 |

*p<.006 (Bonferonni corrected alpha level)

Based on the output, it can be concluded that participants have significantly higher mean scores on the variables informal network, personal trust, and bonding and bridging capital compared to non-participants of the street league programs. When interpreting the effect size, it can be concluded that the difference in scores between the two groups in relation to the variable ‘informal network’, can be considered as large². The difference with regard to ‘personal trust’

² Cohen formulated the following scale for interpreting an effect size: ≤0,06 = small; > 0,06 ≤ 0,14 = average; >0,14 = large.

can be considered as small, while the difference for the variables ‘bridging capital’ and ‘bonding capital’ can be considered as an average effect (Cohen, 1988). Participants and non-participants did not show differences in mean scores with regard to ‘formal network’, ‘generalized trust’, ‘institutional trust’, and ‘norms’.

We conjectured that through participation in the soccer street league program, children create more social capital because they obtain a larger network, respect their social surrounding more than before (trust) and become more civically engaged (norms). Our results show that participants have a larger informal network, but their formal network (participation in associations and voluntary organizations) is similar compared to non-participants. In addition, participants show similar levels of norms compared to non-participants. Personal trust - trust in friends, family and acquaintances- is larger among participants, but generalized trust (trust in unfamiliar people) and institutional trust (trust in formal institutes like the educational system, police, etc.) seems to be unrelated to participation. Bonding and bridging capital is larger for participants than for non-participants. In all, we find evidence of a higher amount of social capital among participants of the street league programs, which seems to be more related to participants’ personal network than to society.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study identified to which extent participation in the soccer street league programs is correlated to someone’s social capital. It was expected that the participants of the soccer street league programs would score significant higher on all features of social capital, as defined by

Robert Putnam (1995). Four significant positive effects have been found which seem to prove that the participants of the soccer street league programs have more social capital than non-participants. The participants scored significantly higher on the variables: (i) informal networks, (ii) personal trust, (iii) bonding capital, and (iv) bridging capital. This suggests that participation in the street league programs is more related to participants' personal network than to social capital in society (such as norms in society and institutional and generalized trust).

It is unclear to what extent participation in the soccer street league program is a causal variable to children's social capital. Within this study, we are unable to determine causal relations. Did the participants of the soccer street league programs already have more social capital on forehand, and because of that, entered the competition? Or do the children have more social capital because they participated in the soccer street league program? Arguments can be addressed which incline to state that the relation goes from participation to social capital. Within the soccer street league programs, almost half of the participants exist of immigrants (Teamplay@NAC, 2010). In general, immigrants have less social capital than natives (Putnam, 2007) which makes it assumable that the group of participants of the soccer street league programs should have had less social capital before they entered the competition. In order to determine the direct causal relationship, participants and non-participants of the soccer street league program should be monitored for a longer period of time in future research, preferably before and after they enter the competition. Another option is to apply a qualitative research approach so that through in-depth interviews, the role of the soccer street league programs in building social capital can be exposed.

It would be interesting to investigate if participation by ethnic minorities is correlated to the involvement of professional soccer clubs. Normally, these minorities are less likely to be involved in sports (De Vries et al., 2005). Participation records in the street league programs show a high percentage of children from ethnic minorities, however. Secondly, it would be interesting to investigate if participation in the soccer street league program is more effective in hetero-ethnic neighborhoods than in homo-ethnic neighborhoods. The teams of the soccer street league programs represent both homo-ethnic and hetero-ethnic neighborhoods. Homo-ethnic neighborhoods are being characterized by homogenate composition, while hetero-ethnic neighborhoods are being characterized by its divers composition when relating it to the ethnical backgrounds of the inhabitants. Based on studies on social cohesion in homo-ethnic and hetero-ethnic neighborhoods, it has been concluded that people who live in hetero-ethnic neighborhood posses less social capital than children who live in homo-ethnic neighborhoods (Massey ,1996; Alesina & La Ferrare, 2000; Costa & Kahn, 2003; Leigh, 2006; Putnam, 2007). Because they have less social capital than the inhabitants of homo-ethnic neighborhoods, the chance of getting involved in valuable networks is less assumable than is the case for people living in homo-ethnic neighborhoods. Since children in hetero-ethnic neighborhoods have less social capital, and normally have less opportunities to gain access to valuable social structures, it is possible that through participation in the soccer street league programs, new and valuable networks are being provided for them. Our results suggests that the increase in social capital by participants is larger in heterogeneous neighborhoods compared to homogeneous neighborhoods. Unfortunately, our number of observations is too small to take the diversity of the neighborhood into account in our analyses and make valid statements. Future research on a

larger amount of cases should make the relation between neighborhood diversity and social capital of participants in the soccer street league programs clearer.

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