



**SPORT AND COMMUNITY COHESION
IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
Understanding linkages between sport,
social capital and the community**

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SPORT AND COMMUNITY COHESION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: Understanding linkages between sport, social capital and the community

Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of research commissioned by the Department of Sport and Recreation, Western Australia. The overall aim of the research was to gain insight into how sport and recreation can help provide more cohesive communities, particularly within a social context. In order to achieve this aim it was necessary to understand linkages between sport, social capital and communities. The research methodology comprised a review of national and international academic and institutional literature on sport-related aspects of community cohesion and the concept of social capital. The report is divided into three main sections.

Section One

The first section introduces the concept of social capital and provides a detailed discussion on linkages between sport and social capital. This section also offers a discussion on the importance of sport within the context of community cohesion, community regeneration, and rural communities.

Social capital, although a somewhat contested concept, is often defined as the “features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam, 1995:664-665). In broad terms, social capital relates to the resources available within communities as a consequence of networks of mutual support, reciprocity, trust and obligation (ABS, 2000). Social capital has been noted as a force that can help bind society together by transforming individuals into members of a community with shared interests and assumptions about social relations (Newton, 1997). The report provides much evidence of links between sport and social capital. In the early 1990s, Putnam (1993) claimed that the strengthening of communities could be achieved if a virtuous circle of civic trust, norms, networks and reciprocity was facilitated and sustained. He also explained that choral societies, sports clubs and community organizations were important vehicles through which such strength was developed, and that these organizations were good indicators of strong communities (Putnam, 1995). He believes that there are two main mechanisms which allow the creation of social capital through participation in the arts and sport. The first is the bonds and connections made between people who participate in an activity together, for instance members of a sports team or a band. The second is the bonds created between supporters of a local sports team or fans of a band (Putnam, 2005).

Section one also provides a discussion on research recently conducted in the United States by De Graaf and Jordan. Their research involved an analysis of social capital and how it can help build communities via recreational activities. They believe that individuals, communities and organisations have the capacity to develop their own social capital and that such capacity can be found in participation in networks; in the opportunities to develop trust and form new relationships across age, ethnic, religious and economic lines; and by embedding the notion of pooled resources as a benefit to all (De Graaf and Jordan, 2003:24). The report also offers overwhelming evidence of the positive role that sport has in community regeneration. For instance, Delaney and Keaney’s (2005) analysis of statistical studies from British and international surveys revealed specific links between sport participation and social capital. They

identified links from very strong correlations between the level of sports membership, and levels of social trust and well-being in the United Kingdom. They believe that sport can be a useful tool for building up community networks and relationships. Delaney and Keaney (2005) also suggest that the tasks undertaken by sports volunteers actually represent valuable transferable skills that can contribute to community regeneration. Section one of the report also provides a brief discussion on the various types of social capital, the possible negative effects of bonding social capital, and the importance of sport in Australian rural communities.

Sections Two and Three

The second section of the report provides an outline of surveys and reviews pertaining to the social benefits of sport participation. One of the reviews outlined in this section included the one conducted by Collins and Kay (2003). Their research included an analysis of a number of independent reviews carried out between the 1990s and early 2000s in the United States and the United Kingdom. Some of the surveys outlined in this section were conducted in the United Kingdom and rural Western Australia. Some of the social benefits of sport participation, identified in this section, include improved personal self-esteem and self-confidence; improved community identity and cohesion; the promotion of community pride and ownership; and the promotion of ethnic or cultural harmony. Section three of the report offers an outline of various policies, programs and conferences from Australia and Europe. Direct links between sport, social capital and community cohesion are identified in this section. Sections two and three are accompanied by detailed appendices, including various website addresses.

This report reveals direct and indirect linkages between sport, social capital and the community. These links have significant relevance for the development of cohesive communities via sport participation. A review of the literature indicates that sport can help provide social benefits such as community integration, cohesion, cooperation, and community identity and pride. Discussions presented in this report provide evidence of the positive role that sport can play in community regeneration and in helping communities become more cohesive in the 21st century.

SPORT AND COMMUNITY COHESION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: Understanding linkages between sport, social capital and the community

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an analysis of national and international academic and institutional literature on how sport and recreation can help provide more cohesive communities. The analysis particularly focuses on sport and recreation within a social context. There is much evidence to support significant linkages between sport, social capital and community cohesion. Direct and indirect links have been found in various studies, surveys, reviews, conference papers, government policies and community programs.

The report is divided into three main sections. The first section provides an introduction to the concept of social capital followed by a detailed discussion on the relationships between sport and social capital. The importance of sport in the context of community cohesion, community regeneration, and rural communities is also examined. The second section provides a brief outline of surveys and reviews pertaining to the social benefits of sport participation, as well as detailed Appendices. The evidence presented in sections one and two was sourced primarily from academic literature. The third section offers a brief overview of Australian and European government policies, community programs and conferences that are specifically related to sport and social capital, and also to sport and community cohesion. This section also provides detailed Appendices.

2. SPORT, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE COMMUNITY

2.1 Introduction

This section addresses the role of sport and recreation in developing community cohesion within a social context. It has been divided into five main themes: (i) the concept of social capital, (ii) relationships between sport and social capital, (iii) the role of sport within the context of social capital and community regeneration, (iv) the other side of social capital, and (v) sport in rural communities.

2.2 Social Capital: Understanding the Concept

Over recent decades many policy makers from around the world have been looking for new ways to measure social effectiveness in society and this has been, in part, a catalyst for the attention given to the concept of social capital (Cox and Caldwell, 2000). Social capital is a subject of discussion and debate in academic and government arenas in Australia and overseas (ABS, 2000). Even though themes that are aligned with social capital have in fact been debated in the social sciences since the 1700s, today social capital discourse mainly comprises theories that have been presented by sociologists Bourdieu and Coleman, and also by political scientist, Robert Putnam (see, for example, Winter, 2000b). However, despite its popularity, the concept remains contested, particularly in relation to its definition and measurement. Nonetheless, the definition offered by Putnam (which has been adopted widely) will be used in this report. With an emphasis on participation in civil society, Putnam defines social capital as the “features of

social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (Putnam, 1995: 664-665). Thus, in broad terms, social capital relates to the resources available within communities as a consequence of networks of mutual support, reciprocity, trust and obligation. Further, it can be accumulated when people interact with each other within their families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, local associations, and also in other types of formal or informal meeting places (ABS, 2000). It has been argued that social capital can contribute to: social cohesion and harmony; economic and social development (through access to shared resources, including labour and capital); lower crime rates; and more effective democratic procedures (Field, 2003). Social capital has also been said to constitute a force that helps to bind society together by transforming individuals (with little social conscience or sense of mutual obligation) into members of a community with shared interests and assumptions about social relations, as well as a shared sense of the common good (Newton, 1997:576).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) contends that there is a strong push from the general community to use social capital, as a way to describe and understand community well-being (ABS, 2000). Currently, the ABS is participating in national and international discussions about social capital, many of which are aimed at developing some level of harmonisation of social capital data, which will in turn allow for comparison within and between countries. In 2004 the ABS released an ‘Information Paper’ entitled *Measuring Social Capital: An Australian Framework and Indicators* to contribute to the process of harmonising social capital data (ABS, 2004). Other discussions about social capital and its place in Australian public policy can be found in Winter (2000a). Despite the contested nature of social capital though, it has been used for analyses by international statistical agencies such as the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom, Statistics Canada and Statistics New Zealand. Government agencies in Australia that have used social capital in a variety of research projects include the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Productivity Commission (the Australian Government’s principal review and advisory body on micro-economic policy and regulation), the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, to name just a few.

2.3 Social Capital and Sport

Within the context of sport and recreational activity, social capital has gained much currency particularly since the 1990s. Indeed, according to Blackshaw and Long (2005:240), few other ideas so closely related to people's leisure lives, have had such an impact as social capital. In the mid 1990s the Boyer Lectures presented by Eva Cox signified the beginning of social capital discourse in Australia. Cox reflected on her initial interest in the concept of social capital, noting that it was the possibility of measuring social processes through connections as relationships, that initially attracted her attention to the concept. She noted that "it was one of the first punitive measures to recognise the bonds of sociality as a key to the effectiveness of group processes" (Cox, 2000:147). Cox claims that social capital is the ‘social fabric or glue’ that ties members together in a given locality (Cox, 1995). She also argues that by demonstrating the way in which social relationships are also resources that strengthen communities, the prevailing ethos of economic rationalism might grasp the way in which the ‘bottom line’ can not only to be measured in dollars, but also by the association and action of citizens (Cox, 1995). Her argument follows on from what Putnam (1993) had previously debated in the early 1990s, where he

claimed that the strengthening of communities could be achieved if a virtuous circle of civic trust, norms, networks and reciprocity was facilitated and sustained. He also explained that choral societies, sports clubs and community organizations were important vehicles through which such strength was developed and that these organizations were good indicators of strong communities (Putnam, 1995).

Putnam (2005) explains that there are probably two main mechanisms which allow participation in the arts and sport to create social capital. The first is the bonds and connections made between people who participate in an activity together, for instance members of a team or a band. The second is to do with identity. The bonds created between fans of a band or supporters of a local team are unlikely to be as strong as those who meet regularly to participate in an activity together. However it still creates a feeling of belonging and identification with a group which is defined by its support for that particular team. This is particularly strong in sport which tends to be defined by identification with a particular team. Also the success of a local team can generate an enormous sense of civic pride. However compared with the first mechanism, the amount of social capital this provides is probably quite small (Putnam, 2005).

Since the conceptualisation of social capital, Putnam and Goss (2002) have identified several different types, and these include: formal and informal; thick and thin; inward and outward looking; and bonding and bridging. Formal social capital refers to that found in organisations with membership requirements and regular meetings, such as in clubs and associations. Whereas informal social capital refers to that found in non-formal gatherings, such as random games of basketball or where people are gathered at a bar. Thick social capital is closely interwoven and multi-stranded. It represents a type of social capital found when individuals work, play or worship together. Such strong ties are defined in terms of frequency of contact and closeness. On the other hand, thin (or weak) social capital represents thin ties which might exist among individuals who are only acquaintances and who only share a few friendship groups. For inward-looking social capital, this type tends to promote the material, social or political interests of its members, such as in a private golf club. Whereas outward-looking social capital refers to individuals who concern themselves with public goods, such as seeking the common good, for instance those individuals who belong to environmental groups (Putnam and Goss, 2002; DeGraaf and Jordan, 2003). Bonding and bridging social capital is similar to inward and outward looking social capital. Bonding social capital refers to trust and reciprocity within dense or closed networks. It tends to be inward looking and reinforces exclusive identities and homogenous groups, for example bonds within a closely-knit sporting club. Bonding social capital is evident when people who already know each other are brought closer together. By contrast, bridging social capital refers to wider overlapping networks that generate broader identities and reciprocity, for example links between people from other social groups which may differ in religion, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Bridging social capital is evident when people who did not previously know each other, are brought together (Gittell and Vidal, 1998; Briggs, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Black and Hughes, 2001; Woolcock, 2001; Putnam and Goss, 2002; Tonts, 2005; Atherley, 2006). Research carried out on the specific links between sport and social capital in Australian communities is relatively sparse, however some investigations have recently been carried out. See, for example, Tonts (2005) and Atherley (2006).

In the United Kingdom, the acceptance of the social capital thesis (including its connection to sport) has been reflected in two government reviews published in 2001. The first review by Cante (2001) addressed the development of social capital, community networks and community capacity. The second review, the Denham Report, investigated community cohesion and building shared social capital. The report concluded that “sporting and cultural opportunities can play an important part in re-engaging disaffected sections of the community, building shared social capital and grass roots leadership, through improved cross-cultural interaction” (Denham, 2001:28).

In the United States an analysis of social capital within the context of helping build communities via recreational activities, was recently published by Professor DeGraaf from the Department of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Dance and Sport at Calvin College in Michigan, and Professor Jordan from the Leisure Studies Department at Oklahoma State University. The aim of their analysis was to highlight some of the major findings of social capital research, and to apply the findings to parks and recreational programs (De Graaf and Jordan, 2003:22). Part of the analysis focused on the ability to develop or build social capital, in which they describe eleven key indicators of social capital in communities. These indicators include: social trust, inter-racial trust, conventional politics participation, protest politics participation, civic leadership, association involvement, informal socializing, diversity of friendships, giving and volunteering, faith-based engagement and equality of civic engagement (also see Appendix A). DeGraaf and Jordan (2003) believe that individuals, communities and organizations have the capacity to develop their own social capital, even though it can take time and effort. They note that such capacity can be found in participation in networks; in the opportunities to develop trust and form new relationships across age, ethnic, religious and economic lines; and by embedding the notion of pooled resources as a benefit to all (De Graaf and Jordan, 2003:24). Indeed, according to Blackshaw and Long (2005:255), leisure has a key role to play in the process of developing social capital because it has the potential to communicate across cultural boundaries that often divide communities. Similarly, Harris (1998) also suggests that sport can be used to foster new friendships and social connectivity, and that this can often be across class, religious and ethnic boundaries. The social connectivity would often be between players, non-playing participants (for example coaches) and spectators, and the connectivity can ultimately lead to increases in the norms of trust and reciprocity. In other words, sport can provide bridges or help build social capital between different groups and social networks (Tonts, 2005).

The research by De Graaf and Jordan indicates that given the many sources of social capital, it becomes evident that individuals, communities and professionals can help build social capital at various venues. They propose that Parks and Recreation is one such professional field through which social capital may be developed. These researchers indicate, though, that early research about leisure and social capital is still mixed, and further research is needed in examining the role that parks, recreation and leisure services can play in reinventing and encouraging positive aspects of social capital and general well-being in society. However, De Graaf and Jordan (2003) indicate that parks, recreation and leisure services can play an important role in promoting a sense of well-being and happiness, and also in promoting close relationships, social support, purpose and hope. They state that Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services professionals have an opportunity to make choices about making a difference in our communities by promoting the development of social capital. They believe that the process can begin firstly, by examining current practices in light of their eleven key indicators of social capital, and also examining organizations, policies and programs, and secondly, by answering a number of questions which they have created. See Appendix A for a full list of questions by De Graaf and Jordan.

2.4 Social Capital, Sport and Community Regeneration

Similar to the concerns of Putnam (1995), about the perceived decline of social capital in the United States, Jarvie (2003) notes that across the United Kingdom there is also concern that communities have weakened and that civic culture is in decline. Subsequently, the relationship between sport and the community has become central to policies of social inclusion and community regeneration in the United Kingdom (Jarvie, 2003:139). Community regeneration (or civil renewal) is one of a number of government strategies in the United Kingdom intended to take a community-based approach to tackling problems such as deprivation and inequality. The theory is that through the process of capacity building among the local population, combined with the opening up of the systems and structures of governance, the spirit of self-improvement and self-help will be rekindled. Communities themselves will then become a powerful force in rebuilding and regenerating local areas, helping to tackle problems like poverty and poor health. In relation to the capacity building element of civil renewal, social capital has an important role to play (Delaney and Keaney, 2005). Indeed, as a general rule, places with high levels of social capital are safer, better governed and more prosperous compared with those places with low levels of social capital (Putnam, 2000).

In order to understand the role of sport in building social capital and civil renewal, Delaney and Keaney (2005) analysed data from a large number of existing statistical studies from both British and international surveys. Their research compared levels of sports participation in the United Kingdom with that of other European Union countries, and explored links between sports participation and social capital. These researchers suggest that sport has an important role to play in the civil renewal agenda particularly because of its ability to foster social capital. They identify three ways that this can be achieved. Firstly, through the social activity and membership of sports clubs (which is one of the key forms of associational life identified by Putnam as being important for social capital). Secondly, it can be achieved when sports groups create networks which extend beyond the participants themselves, for instance among groups of parents or supporters of a local team, or volunteers who help run an activity. Thirdly, it can be achieved when bonds between different groups of people are created. For instance, between supporters of a national, regional or local sports team. In other words, sport can help build shared identities.

Delaney and Keaney's (2005) research revealed three key findings. The first key finding indicated that participation in sport is linked to social capital. This was found from the very strong correlations between the level of sports membership, and the levels of social trust and well-being in the United Kingdom. According to Delaney and Keaney (2005), those countries with higher levels of membership in sports groups also have higher levels of social trust. They believe that individuals who are involved in sports organisations (both as members and as participants), are slightly more likely to vote, contact a politician, or sign a petition compared to non-members and the average citizen. They also noted that sports members were more likely to express the view that immigration enriched the cultural life of the United Kingdom. It was also found that the impact of sports participation on measures of political trust, on wellbeing, and on the frequency of socialising and meeting with friends remained statistically significant even after controlling for other factors such as gender, education, income, age and ethnicity. However, it was also found that once the socio-demographic factors of education and income were controlled for, the relationship between sports participation and social trust did not persist. The authors suggest that although sport makes people more likely to socialise, and form and maintain social networks, it is not one of the primary drivers of trust. Thus, the authors note that sports programs therefore need to be implemented alongside other measures to stimulate community regeneration.

Nonetheless, in light of their overall findings, Delaney and Keaney (2005) do suggest that sport could be a useful tool for building up community networks and relationships due to the fact that (even after controlling for other factors) there were strong links between participation in sport, and social and political trust, and levels of social engagement.

The second key finding revealed in Delaney and Keaney's (2005) research indicated that levels of social capital (including trust in institutions, social trust, associational membership and political participation) in the United Kingdom did not appear to have declined over time, and that the levels were around the European Union average. The third key finding revealed that levels of sport volunteering in the United Kingdom were significant, even though levels were higher in some other European countries. The research indicated that sport attracts more volunteers than any other activity, except for religious ones, and that sport volunteers undertake a wide range of tasks. Some of these tasks include assisting the organisation and running of events, the raising of funds and handling of finances, sitting on committees, to name just a few. According to Delaney and Keaney (2005), these tasks not only benefit the sports sector but they also provide valuable transferable skills that can contribute, among other things, to civil renewal (or community regeneration).

The research conducted by Deleany and Keaney (2005) indicates a significant role for sport in building social capital and also in civil renewal, and their findings confirm what Jarvie (2003) previously noted. He claimed that sport and sports projects can certainly make a valuable contribution to civil society. Indeed, he believes that the place of sport in communities, provides it with the opportunity to promote a communitarian philosophy. Jarvie's comments make sense, particularly in consideration of the positive links between sport and social capital. That is, according to Etzioni (1993:119), one of the communitarian goals is to create a more inclusive society where despite the high concentrations of labour and much geographical mobility, there are "new communities that sustain a web of social bonds, a Communitarian nexus". He notes that environments can be made more community friendly by the provision of sport and leisure facilities, in-turn satisfying the need for social connectedness (Etzioni, 1993:128). Notwithstanding these views though, Jarvie (2003:152) also argues that it is unrealistic to expect sport to be totally responsible for sustaining a sense of community or citizenship, or for reinforcing notions of social capital. Such comments lead into the idea that social capital has another side, and this will now be addressed.

2.5 Social Capital: The Other Side

Just as economic capital can have positive and negative implications, so too can social capital (Black and Hughes, 2001). In some cases, social capital can be linked to problems such as racism, sectarianism, social exclusion, and corruption (Field, 2003). As Putnam and others have stressed, it can be used to perpetuate privilege and sustain advantage as well as to reinforce negative and exclusionary group identities. The latter is often referred to as a problem caused by an excess of bonding social capital, without sufficient bridging social capital. In other words, social capital can be a powerful way of enhancing the bonds within already polarised groups Delaney and Keaney (2005).

Regarding sport and social capital, of course not all types of sport have the same relationship with social capital. For instance, going for a run alone will not create the same level of social capital as joining a running club. Likewise, the bonds between a spectator and fellow supporters at a football match are not likely to be as strong as those bonds between team mates who play in a club. Further, the social capital created by sport can, in some cases, not be positive. That is, the networks and bonds that it creates can be used to exclude, rather than include. Strong bonds within sporting clubs or organisations can make them homogeneous in their membership but at the same time relatively hostile towards outsiders (Putnam, 2000; Jarvie and Burnett, 2000; Black and Hughes, 2001; Langbein and Bess, 2002; Delaney and Keaney, 2005; Tonts, 2005; Atherley, 2006). Indeed, sport in parts of rural Australia can sometimes be sharply divided according to class, status and ethnicity (Wild, 1974; Whittaker and Banwell, 2002; Dempsey, 1990). Jarvie (2003) argues that it is unrealistic to expect sport to sustain a notion of social capital, civic engagement, or communitarianism without addressing the issue of ownership, obligations and stakeholding in sport. Guest (2005) notes that the essential point in relation to development through sport is to recognize that the ability of sport to bring people together and craft positive developmental experiences is far from automatic. He contends that sport experiences have the potential to develop affection or antagonism, and the choice often depends upon the nature of the competition and the care with which programs are designed.

2.6 Sport in Rural Communities

Part of the Australian Government's Sport Policy '*Building Australian Communities through Sport*' focuses on local sporting clubs in communities, both in metropolitan and rural areas. The fundamental building blocks of Australian sports are the 26,000 local sporting clubs which have played a key role in communities for more than 100 years. Grassroots sporting clubs provide better health outcomes for Australians of all ages. They also help teach values, volunteerism, cooperation, leadership, teamwork, and help in defeating adversity (Loughnane, 2004). Indeed, in most regional and remote communities, it is the local tennis, football or basketball club that provides and sustains community interaction (Australian Government, 2006b).

According to Bourke (2001:122), in rural communities social relations including social ties, power relations and social capital are important to everyday life. She claims that local sporting clubs are a main focus of community life and participation in, or exclusion from such groups affects residents' daily life, social networks, community integration and flow of information. There is no doubt that sport is an integral part of rural life due to its role in the formation of social networks (Jones and Alexander, 1998) and in helping create a sense of belonging (Dempsey, 1990; Smailes, 2002). Smailes (2002:89) claims that the social interaction that occurs through participation in sporting teams, community clubs and special interest groups, particularly rural and/or agricultural organisations, plays an important part in shaping and/or reinforcing a pattern of community identification and community belonging. Indeed, the Victorian Government has even conducted a parliamentary inquiry to assess the role of country football in building community identity, social interaction and pride (Victorian Government, 2002). While there are undoubtedly aspects of country sport that are problematic, sport's positive contributions to rural life should not be underestimated. Its role in fostering social interaction, a sense of place, community cohesion, and a range of physical and mental health benefits, contribute significantly to the well-being of rural citizens (Tonts, 2005).

2.7 Conclusion

Section one of the report has provided a brief introduction to the concept of social capital as well as an understanding of the various types of social capital. Evidence of linkages between sport and social capital were examined, revealing that the associational nature of sports participation, and particularly sporting clubs, is often seen as a forum for the creation of social capital (Jarvie, 2003). Research conducted in the United States by De Graaf and Jordan (2003) revealed the important role of sport and recreation in promoting a sense of well-being and happiness, and also in promoting close relationships, social support, purpose and hope. These researchers believe that individuals, communities and organisations have the capacity to develop their own social capital and that such capacity can be found in participation in networks; in the opportunities to develop trust and form new relationships across age, ethnic, religious and economic lines; and by embedding the notion of pooled resources as a benefit to all (De Graaf and Jordan, 2003:24).

Social capital can however, in some cases, be linked to social exclusion. This is evident where strong bonds within sporting clubs or organisations make them homogeneous in their membership, but at the same time, the bonds can make them relatively hostile towards outsiders (Tonts, 2005). Nonetheless, there is overwhelming evidence of the positive role that sport has in community regeneration. Indeed, in particular Delaney and Keaney's (2005) analysis of existing statistical studies from British and international surveys revealed specific links between sport participation and social capital. They identified links from very strong correlations between the level of sports membership, and levels of social trust and well-being in the United Kingdom. They believe that sport can be a useful tool for building up community networks and relationships due to the fact that (even after controlling for other factors) there are strong links between participation in sport, and social and political trust, and levels of social engagement. Delaney and Keaney (2005) also suggest that the tasks undertaken by sports volunteers actually represent valuable transferable skills that can contribute, among other things, to community regeneration.

3. THE BENEFITS OF SPORT PARTICIPATION: REVIEWS AND SURVEYS

3.1 Introduction

This second section of the report provides a brief outline of recent reviews and surveys which investigate the social benefits of sport participation. Some of the most commonly identified social benefits include improved personal self-esteem and self-confidence; improved community identity and cohesion; the promotion of community pride and ownership; and the promotion of ethnic or cultural harmony. Elkington (1982: 75) suggests that sport itself is important because it provides a sense of belonging to a town and can also provide self-esteem and purpose. For Burnett (1993:9), sport is seen as offering the opportunity to experience and build self-esteem. Notwithstanding the difficulties (and criticisms) associated with measuring 'non-tangible' benefits (or social benefits), there have nevertheless been some attempts, and these are outlined below.

3.2 Driver and Bruns (1999)

Driver and Bruns (1999) compiled a list of benefits attributed to leisure and placed them in categories such as personal, psycho-physiological, social and cultural, economic and environmental. Within their list, certain social benefits included socialisation, cultural identity, community integration, social bonding, cohesion, cooperation, community and national pride, to name just a few (see Appendix B).

3.3 Collins and Kay (2003)

Recently, Collins and Kay (2003) analysed a number of independent reviews on the benefits of sport participation. The independent reviews were conducted (i) in 1992 by the Parks and Recreation Federation of Ontario (USA), (ii) in 1998 by Sullivan for the Hillary Commission, (iii) in 1999 by Sport England, and (iv) in 2001 by Coalter for the Local Government Association (UK). Some of the social benefits revealed in the analysis included strengthened communities, reduced anti-social behaviour, promotion of ethnic/cultural harmony and community pride, and community empowerment (see Appendix C).

3.4 Various Surveys

Other analyses of the social benefits of sport participation have been carried out in surveys conducted by Long and Sanderson (2001), Tonts (2005) and Atherley (2006). Long and Sanderson (2001) surveyed sports departments and managers in urban areas in the United Kingdom. Their survey revealed sport being perceived as improving self-esteem and self-confidence, improving community identity and cohesion (see Appendix D). For Tonts (2005), surveys conducted in seven country towns in the northern wheatbelt region of Western Australia revealed sport being perceived as promoting a sense of community, and as being an important vehicle for community bonding and social interaction (see Appendix E). For Atherley (2006), surveys conducted in two country towns in the central wheatbelt region of Western Australia revealed sport being perceived to improve self-esteem and self-confidence, improve community identity and cohesion, promote community pride and ownership, and also (to some extent) promote ethnic harmony. Atherley (2006) compared the survey results of her research with that of Long and Sanderson's (2001) (see Appendix F).

4. SPORT AND COMMUNITY COHESION: POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND CONFERENCES

4.1 Australia: Sport and Communities

4.1.1 Policy

In Australia, out of around twenty million people, thirteen million persons aged 15 years and over participate in some form of physical activity for recreation or sport (Australian Government, 2006a). In November 2004 the Australian Government unveiled its national sports policy '*Building Australian Communities through Sport*'. The four priority areas of this policy are (i) community participation, including community sport for all, Active After-School Communities, physical activity in our schools, community facilities, water safety and women in sport; (ii) securing Australia's sporting future through high performance success, direct athlete support, a national Paralympic partnership, excellence in sports management and a strong anti-doping regime; (iii) sport infrastructure and support in areas such as major multi-sport competitions and through existing sports agencies; and (iv) development of the sport and leisure industry (Australian Government, 2006b).

4.1.2 Programs and Strategies

In June 2004 the Australian Government launched the *Building a Healthy, Active Australia initiative* with a budget of \$116 million. This initiative recognises a need for a balanced approach towards nutrition and physical activity, to promote healthy habits for life. The package has a focus on children because healthy and active children will live better, learn better and grow up to be more healthy and active adults (Australian Government, 2005). Part of the package includes the 'Active After-school Communities' (AASC) program which commenced in 2005. This program initially involved some 1400 schools but by 2007 it is proposed that over 3000 schools will be involved. This program has two main aims. Firstly, it aims to provide increased opportunities for children to be physically active through inclusive participation in quality, safe and fun sporting activities. Secondly, it aims to increase community cohesion and stimulate local community involvement in sport (Australian Sports Foundation, 2004). Also see Appendix G.

The *Indigenous Sport and Recreation Program (ISRP)* is another program aimed at increasing participation of Indigenous Australians in sport and physical recreation activities. The program has two main aims. The first is to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous Australians, and the second is to provide broader social benefits including social cohesion and diversionary activities, particularly in areas of social concern such as substance abuse and school attendance (Australian Government, 2006c). Also see Appendix G.

The *Targeted Sports Participation Growth Program (TSPGP)* was implemented by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and designed for juniors, women and adults, in metropolitan and regional areas. Funding for this program was \$11.53 million over the life of the project which commenced in 2002. The TSPGP focuses on increasing participation in organised sport, particularly at the club level. The policy also seeks to find new ways of establishing partnerships between sport and business to enhance the sustainability of participation growth. The Programme targets a small number of sports for special support, to grow their business by expanding active membership of clubs and associations (Australian Government, 2005).

The *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004-2008* was implemented by the Department Family and Community Services. This strategy has a budget of \$365.8 million over a four-year period. The program is expected to include opportunities to address health issues, including obesity and related risk factors, in children and families (Australian Government, 2005).

4.2 Europe: Sport and Communities

4.2.1 Council of Europe Policy

The Council of Europe has been focusing on sport at least since 1997, when heads of European states and governments adopted a declaration recognising the role of sport in promoting social integration and subsequently adopted *Recommendation 99/9: The Role of Sport in Furthering Social Cohesion*. The policy, which was adopted in May 2000 in Bratislava, acknowledges that all sport has social consequences and that it can provide favourable conditions for people to meet and make contact. The Council of Europe invited European governments, businesses and NGOs to use sport as a way to combat social exclusion, indicating that sport can improve health, be a source of entertainment, be a meeting ground, be a contact point between cultures, and can also provide employment (Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2000).

4.2.2 United Kingdom Programs and Strategies

Sport England is an organisation that promotes and invests in community sport. It aims to increase the number of people from all backgrounds who are physically active and involved in sport, with a focus on key priority groups who are currently under-represented in sport. Sport England has nine Regional Sports Boards (RSBs), each made up of experts from areas such as business, local government, sport, health and education. The RSBs provide the strategic lead for sport in their regions and distribute investment for grassroots sport. In the year 2000, Sport England launched the Sport Action Zone (SAZ) initiative. The aim of the initiative was to combat low levels of participation in sport and physical activity in communities that experience the effects of poverty and deprivation. The aim was to help local communities to help themselves by getting local people to play a role in identifying what was need in each Zone, and then involving them in the planning and delivery process. Twelve Zones were located throughout England, ranging in size from a couple of wards to whole counties. An evaluation was carried out on the success of the initiative which was published in a press release on 3 October, 2006 (Sport England, 2006a; Sport England, 2006b). Also see Appendix H.

Other programs implemented by Sport England include the '*Community Cohesion Unit*' and the '*Neighbourhood Renewal Unit*'. Sport England advocates that community cohesion is about developing a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities. They also believe that it is about valuing the diversity of different people's backgrounds and circumstances, and about positive relationships and similar life opportunities for all (Sport England, 2006c). Also see Appendix H.

4.3 Conferences

4.3.1 United Kingdom: Sport and Community Cohesion

On the 20th July, 2006 the '*National Sport and Community Cohesion Conference*' which was hosted by Sport England, the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA), and the Institute of Community Cohesion was held in Loughborough, United Kingdom. At the conference a new policy document, 'The Power of Sport', was launched in which sport was promoted as being able to break down divisions and promote stronger community cohesion. The policy document was commissioned by Sport England and developed by the Institute of Community Cohesion. Other conference outcomes included (i) providing examples of 'Good Practice' for schemes that could become mainstreamed, (ii) providing links to Citizenship, Civil Renewal and Social Capital Agendas, and (iii) assistance in creating an 'Action Plan' for organisations and communities. At the time of writing (for the current report), no conference publications were available to the public (Sport England, 2006d). Also see Appendix I.

4.3.2 European Union: Sport and Social Capital

A forthcoming conference to be held on the 4th and 5th of December in 2006 is the '*Sport and Social Capital in the European Union Conference*'. This conference will be hosted by the Institute of Public Administration and Healthcare Management (IPAS) and will be held at Bocconi University, Milan, Italy. The aim of the conference is to create a space for exchange across research specialisations, with an emphasis on qualitative research in the fields of social capital and of sport management (International Platform on Sport and Development, 2006). Also see Appendix I.

5. Conclusion

This report has provided an overview of national and international academic and institutional literature on relationships between sport and social capital, with particular reference to community cohesion. The report reveals direct links between sport and social capital which, in turn, has relevance within the context of developing positive, cohesive social environments within communities via participation in sport. Surveys and reviews discussed in the report provided evidence of sport being linked to individual and community social benefits such as community integration, social bonding, cohesion, cooperation, and community identity and pride. Within the list of various policies, programs and conferences from Australia and Europe, direct links between sport, social capital and community cohesion were evident. Evidence presented in this report signifies the important role of sport and recreation in communities today. As DeGraaf and Jordan (2003) point out, we should not be bound by the past but rather should strive to be visionary in an attempt to understand the driving forces behind sport participation in the 21st century. They believe that the many tools, such as recreation programs, at our disposal today can help build the cohesive, open and tolerant communities that everyone desires.