‘TAKING THE NEXT STEP’: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN’S FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Edoardo G.F. Rosso B.A. (Hons)

Geography, Population and Environmental Management
School of the Environment
Faculty of Science and Engineering
Flinders University

Presented in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2011
Summary .................................................................................................................. 6
Declaration .................................................................................................................. 7
Acknowledgement ...................................................................................................... 8
Chapter 1 .................................................................................................................... 9

Introduction: social capital and the development of women’s football players in
South Australia .......................................................................................................... 9

  1.1 Study background ............................................................................................... 15
    1.1.1 Governance of South Australian women’s football .................................. 16
    1.1.1.1 Main implications of recent restructuring ......... ..................................... 20
    1.1.2 ‘Taking the next step’ .................................................................................... 23
  1.2 Conceptual framework and approach ............................................................... 28
    1.2.1 Conceptualisation of social capital ............................................................. 31
    1.3 Concluding remarks ......................................................................................... 33

Chapter 2 .................................................................................................................... 36

Methodology .............................................................................................................. 36

  2.1 The project design ............................................................................................ 36
  2.1.2 Defining the field ......................................................................................... 37
  2.1.3 Quantitative and qualitative research methods ............................................ 39
  2.2 Gathering and analysing data ........................................................................... 41
    2.2.1 SAWSA database ....................................................................................... 43
    2.2.2 Interviews .................................................................................................. 44
    2.2.3 Questionnaire survey .................................................................................. 50
  2.3 Summary ............................................................................................................ 53

Chapter 3 .................................................................................................................... 54

Literature review: a theoretical framework for social capital and development
in sport ....................................................................................................................... 54

  3.1 Social capital .................................................................................................... 55
    3.1.1 Main conceptualisations ............................................................................ 55
      3.1.1.1 Bourdieu ............................................................................................... 56
      3.1.1.2 Coleman ............................................................................................... 58
      3.1.1.3 Putnam ............................................................................................... 59
    3.1.2 Approaches to social capital ....................................................................... 60
    3.1.3 ‘Bonding’ and ‘bridging’ social capital ...................................................... 62
    3.1.4 Negative social capital ............................................................................. 64
    3.1.5 Social networks ......................................................................................... 65
    3.1.6 Measuring social capital ......................................................................... 67
    3.1.7 Applications of social capital .................................................................... 68
      3.1.7.1 Community ......................................................................................... 69
      3.1.7.2 Public health ....................................................................................... 70
      3.1.7.3 Education and learning ...................................................................... 71
      3.1.7.4 Economic development .................................................................... 71
      3.1.7.5 Career success .................................................................................... 72
  3.2 Sport studies .................................................................................................... 73
    3.2.1 Sport geography ......................................................................................... 75
    3.2.2 Sport and identity ....................................................................................... 77
    3.2.3 Talent development and identification in sport ......................................... 79
  3.3 Social capital and sport .................................................................................. 80
  3.4 Summary ............................................................................................................ 83
# Chapter 4. The South Australian women’s football community and system

## 4.1 The South Australian women’s football community

1. **The imagined women’s football community**
2. **The virtual women’s football community**
3. **Factors of inclusion and exclusion**
   - **Ethnic, cultural and sexual factors**
   - **Socio-economic factors**

## 4.2 The South Australian women’s football system

1. **The school system**
2. **The club system**
3. **The state system**

## 4.3 Concluding remarks

---

# Chapter 5. Beyond recreation: from informal and school football to women’s football clubs

## 5.1 Personal networks

1. **Influence of family members**
2. **Influence of acquaintances**

## 5.2 Communal networks

1. **Club networks**
   - **Intra-club networks**
   - **Extra-club networks**
2. **Institutional networks**
3. **Local community networks**: the example of Mount Gambier
4. **Local schools**

## 5.3 Concluding remarks

---

# Chapter 6. From club to state women’s football

## 6.1 Club networks

1. **Extra-club networks**
   - **Networks among players**
   - **Networks among coaches**
2. **Intra-club networks**
3. **Bonds within club squads**

## 6.2 State networks

1. **Bonds within state squads**
2. **Networks between football institutions**

## 6.3 Family and community networks

1. **Influence of family members**
2. **Influence of acquaintances**

## 6.4 Concluding remarks

---

# Chapter 7. From state to national women’s football

## 7.1 Bonds within squads

1. **Bonds within state squads**
2. **Bonds within national squads**

## 7.2 Cross-system networks

## 7.3 Concluding remarks

---

# Chapter 8. Conclusions

## 8.1 Summary of findings

1. **Positive effects of social capital**

---
8.1.2 Negative consequences of social capital ..............................................196
8.2 Theoretical and practical implications .....................................................200
  8.2.1 Main theoretical implications...............................................................200
  8.2.2 Main practical considerations...............................................................202
8.3 Concluding remarks .................................................................................204

APPENDIX .............................................................................................................. 208
  A.1 Semi-structured interviews.......................................................................208
      A.1.1 Content of documents used to recruit interview respondents...........208
          A.1.1.1 Opening e-mail to potential interview participants .....................208
          A.1.1.2 Letter of introduction from supervisor to potential interview
                  participants ...................................................................................................209
          A.1.1.3 Information sheet for potential interview participants ....................210
          A.1.1.4 Consent form for participation in interview process .......................211
      A.1.2 Base questionnaire used for semi-structured interviews .................212
  A.2 Questionnaire survey................................................................................216
      A.2.1 Content of documents used to recruit survey respondents ..........216
          A.2.1.1 Letter of introduction from supervisor to potential survey respondents
                  ......................................................................................................................216
          A.2.1.2 Letter of endorsement from SAWSA ........................................218
          A.2.1.3 Information sheet for potential survey respondents .....................219
          A.2.1.4 Parental consent form for potential survey respondents.............220
      A.2.2 Questionnaire survey form .................................................................221

LIST OF REFERENCES: ...................................................................................... 224
LIST of TABLES

1.1: Institutions of women’s football in South Australia 20
2.1: Four types of triangulation to verify and validate qualitative analysis 40
2.2: Stages of data collection 41
3.1: ‘Resource’ and ‘civic’ approaches to social capital 62
3.2: Summary of sport-related research fields 74

LIST of FIGURES

1.1: South Australian women’s football regions 14
1.2: Typical career pathway of South Australian elite women’s football players 27
2.1: ‘Tree nodes’ created with NVivo 49
4.1: South Australian women’s football systems and institutional connections 99

LIST of ACRONYMS

AIS  Australian Institute of Sport
FFA  Football Federation Australia
FFSA  Football Federation South Australia
FIFA  Fédération Internationale de Football Association (International Federation of Association Football)
LGA  Local Government Area
SAPSASA  South Australian Primary School Amateur Sport Association
SASI  South Australian Sports Institute
SAWSA  South Australian Women’s Soccer Association
SEWFA  South East Women’s Football Association
SSSSA  Secondary School Sport South Australia
WBSA  Western Border Soccer Association
Summary

There are several ways to look at the relationship between social capital and sport. While participation in sport can be seen as a vehicle of social capital accumulation, social capital arising from social relationships within a sporting community can be seen as a factor contributing to the development of players. This thesis explores the relationship between social capital and the development of elite South Australian female football (soccer) players. The central hypothesis is that social capital can play an important role in facilitating or undermining the technical development of players and their career opportunities. The aim of the study is to provide examples of how social capital accruing to both players and sporting organisations can ultimately affect the state output of elite players. The thesis contributes to the body of knowledge on social capital by offering a new perspective on the relationship between social capital and sport and a conceptual framework for further research on social capital as a factor of athletes’ development. The project is designed as an intensive research project drawing on the analysis of largely qualitative data. Research methods are both quantitative and qualitative, and include database analysis, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire survey. This work is of interest to sporting organisations wishing to widen their approach to talent development. In particular, its results can find practical applications in policies to strengthen connections and increase the resourcefulness of relationships across and within sporting institutions in Australia.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Edoardo G.F. Rosso
Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the great help provided by my principal supervisor, Ass. Prof. Clive Forster, whose guidance, expertise, encouragement and enthusiasm contributed immensely to this project. I also acknowledge the ongoing help and support provided by my secondary supervisor, Prof. Iain Hay, who enthusiastically engaged with the project, helped me for its duration, and completed the best team of supervisors that a PhD candidate could ask for. Thank you very much.

Thank you to the staff and fellow PhD candidates of Geography, Population and Environmental Management of Flinders University, and in particular, Dr. Beverly Clarke and Dr. Jonathan Sobels, who helped me testing ideas and gaining perspectives. Thank you also to Mr. Stephen Fildes, who provided precious help for the realisation of the map included in Chapter 1.

A special acknowledgement must go to all those who participated in the interviews and in the questionnaire that made this project possible. In particular, a great thank you to Ms. Wendy Carter, Mr. Kevin McCormack, Mr. Scott Dickson and Mr. Stuart Birch for their enthusiasm and the help they provided to access further respondents.

Finally, special recognition should go to my wife, companion and immense source of inspiration, Dr. Sara King, who supported me throughout this experience and played a major part in helping me become who I am today.

Thank you all.