Sport Events and Residential Happiness: Development of a Measuring Instrument

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One-off sport events are out of the ordinary, and can trigger a variety of short- or long-term impacts on host communities such as economic, tourism, social, and sport participation impacts (e.g., Brown & Massy, 2001; Ritchie, 1984). Event impacts refer to changes caused by short term stimulation directly through an event, and may lead to planned and unplanned, tangible and intangible outcomes and legacies for the host community (Preuss, 2007). To date, most of the literature on event impacts and outcomes has focused on mega-sport events (MSE), which are major events, irregular, one-off, large in size and scope, and significant for the host community and beyond (e.g., Gaffney, 2013; Maennig & Porsche, 2008). Furthermore, the majority of these studies have focused on planned and tangible benefits, such as economic, tourism and/or infrastructure impacts. With numerous examples of significant economic losses resulting from hosting a MSE (e.g., Kesenne, 2012), there is a shift to examine less tangible benefits, such as social impacts (e.g., Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; Smith, 2014). Moreover, recently researchers have started to focus on impacts of non-mega sport events (NMSE), as they are more likely to build on the existing resources of a city, and to benefit local people and companies, without generating the same (financial) risks (e.g., Smith, 2012: Taks, 2013).

While sport sociologists have focused on social capital as an intangible outcome of sport events (e.g., Misener & Mason, 2006; Smith, 2009; Taks, 2013), sport economists have started to show interest in capturing the value of happiness. However, up until now, this research has focused on measuring the value of happiness as it relates to sporting activities in general (Rodriguez, Kesenne, Humphreys, 2011) rather than sport events (Rodriguez-Pose & von Berlepsch, 2014). Indeed, the majority of happiness studies have focused on the link between sport participation and happiness (e.g., Downward & Rasciute, 2011; Forrest & McHale, 2011; Kavetsos, 2011). Although participation in sport and physical activity has been shown to have a significantly positive relationship with happiness (e.g., Huang & Humphreys, 2011), the link between hosting a sport event and happiness is assumed but has received minimal empirical attention (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). Since there has been some indication that hosting a sport event does have an apparent “feel-good” effect on the host community (e.g., Maennig & Porsche, 2008), there is merit for additional empirical investigation of impacts on the happiness and well-being of community residents as a result of hosting a sport event. As stated by Kavetsos and Szymanski (2010), “it would seem to be a much stronger justification for public spending on these events if it could be claimed not that they will make us rich, but that they will make us happy” (p. 160).

The purpose of this study was to develop items and constructs to capture the notions of well-being and happiness in the context of sport events. A detailed review of related sport and happiness literature resulted in the creation of a survey based on documented recommendations and limitations regarding the measurement of happiness. The review of literature started with exploring four different realms: (a) literature on social impacts and social capital, as examples of intangible benefits of events (e.g., Heere et al., 2013; Misener & Mason, 2006; Taks, 2013); (b) the economic literature on valuing the intangible effects of sport events, such as consumer surplus (e.g., Campbell & Brown, 2003), public good value (e.g., Johnson & Whitehead, 2000), opportunity costs of events (e.g., Crompton & Howard, 2013), and “psychic income” (e.g., Downward et al., 2009); (c) the book by Rodrigues, Kesenne and Humphreys (2011) on “The economics of sport, health and happiness: The promotion of well-being through sporting activities”; and, (d) specific literature on happiness, Subjective Well-Being (SWB) and satisfaction (e.g., Diener, 2000).

The term “Subjective Well-Being” (SWB; Diener, 2000) was used as the foundation for capturing the concepts of happiness and well-being. SWB is comprised of four main components: overall life satisfaction, satisfaction with important domains, frequent positive affect (emotions), and infrequent negative affect. Thus, these four components served as a baseline to measure happiness. Studies have used a variety of ways to capture the notion of SWB and
happiness. Hopkins and King (2010) used a vignette. Other studies on sport and happiness relied on a single item to capture happiness (e.g., Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2011; Davis & End, 2011). In their study on “General and specific question sequence effects in satisfaction surveys”, Kaplan, Luchman, and Mock (2013) recommend to also include specific well-being measures.

Based on the recommendation by Hopkins & King (2010), the first section of the developed survey includes a vignette describing an individual with high SWB. As such, this vignette serves as a common reference point for defining “happiness and well-being” and allows the researcher to overcome interpersonal incomparability inherent in happiness research (Hopkins & King, 2010). Following the vignette, a single-item question assessing the current overall state of happiness and well-being of the respondent was included to assess the first component of SWB (overall life satisfaction). “Overall happiness and well-being” for both the hypothetical individual described in the vignette as well as the respondent was captured using a six-point Likert scale (1 = “Not happy at all” to 6 = “Very happy”). Furthermore, this item was placed after the vignette (as recommended by Hopkins and King, 2010) and as a general well-being question, it was placed before specific well-being measures (as recommended by Kaplan, Luchman, and Mock, 2013). Although a variation of this single-item happiness measure is frequently the sole item included in sport and happiness research, a more holistic understanding and measurement of happiness and well-being was desired for this study.

Following the vignette and the general well-being question, the second component of SWB (satisfaction with important domains) was captured by three items measuring satisfaction with life at home, health status, and employment situation using a four-point Likert scale (1 = “Not at all satisfied” to 4 = “Very satisfied”) (Connolly, 2013). Furthermore, the third and fourth components of SWB (frequent positive affect, infrequent negative affect) were captured using a measurement of affect dimensions (Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004). Thus, this section provides respondents with an opportunity to specify what emotions he/she has experienced within the last week on a six-point Likert scale (1= “Not at all” to 6 = “Very much”).

In order to assess the relationship between hosting a sport event and residential happiness and well-being, questions were included to assess attendance at the hosted event, general awareness of the event, and the relevance of the event to the respondent (Sport Involvement Inventory by Shank & Beasley, 1998; see also Mutter & Pawlowski, 2014). The final section assesses socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, relative income, education level, occupation, household status, and ethnicity) as these factors have consistently shown a predictable relationship with happiness (e.g., Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Rodriguez-Pose & von Berlepsch, 2014). Another variable to take into consideration when assessing happiness and well-being is the weather (e.g., Connolly, 2013; Zhou, 2012). This survey is designed to investigate the impact of hosting sport events on residential happiness and well-being and will be piloted in the context of a variety of sport events.