



Differences in men and women volunteers within a parkrun environment

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Introduction

In society women tend to volunteer more than men, however, in sport they are less likely to volunteer than men (Matthews 2017). It has been argued by Downward, Lumsdon & Ralston (2005) that volunteering at large scale sport events can raise expectations of females particularly, both in terms of employment aspirations as well as their involvement in the sport. Significant differences from volunteering at sport events were found in that women expected experiences from events would contribute to their personal and social capital to a much higher degree. This study investigates potential differences in motivation and commitment between men and women volunteering in local parkrun communities which are fixed, recurring sport events.

Method

After receiving ethical approval from the academic institution and parkrun Research Board, 92 volunteers (male n=45; female n=47) completed an online survey comprising demographic information (age, employment status, gender), the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Porter & Steel 1982; MacLean & Hamm 2007) and the volunteer motivation questionnaire (Strigas & Jackson 2003). Data were analysed for differences in men and women's commitment and motivation responses using Mann-Whitney *U* tests.

Results

Mann-Whitney *U* tests revealed women ($M = 5.93, sd = 1.26, n = 47, p = .020, z = -2.33$) had significantly higher levels of parkrun pride on the commitment to volunteer measure than men ($M = 5.43, sd = 1.26, n = 45$). Women ($M = 3.09, sd = .89, n = 47, p = .03, z = -2.22$) also had significantly higher Egoistic motivations to volunteer than men ($M = 2.64, sd = .79, n = 45$). Finally, women ($M = 2.81, sd = .87, n = 47, p = .003, z = -3.01$) had significantly higher Leisure motivations to volunteer than men ($M = 2.26, sd = .72, n = 45$).

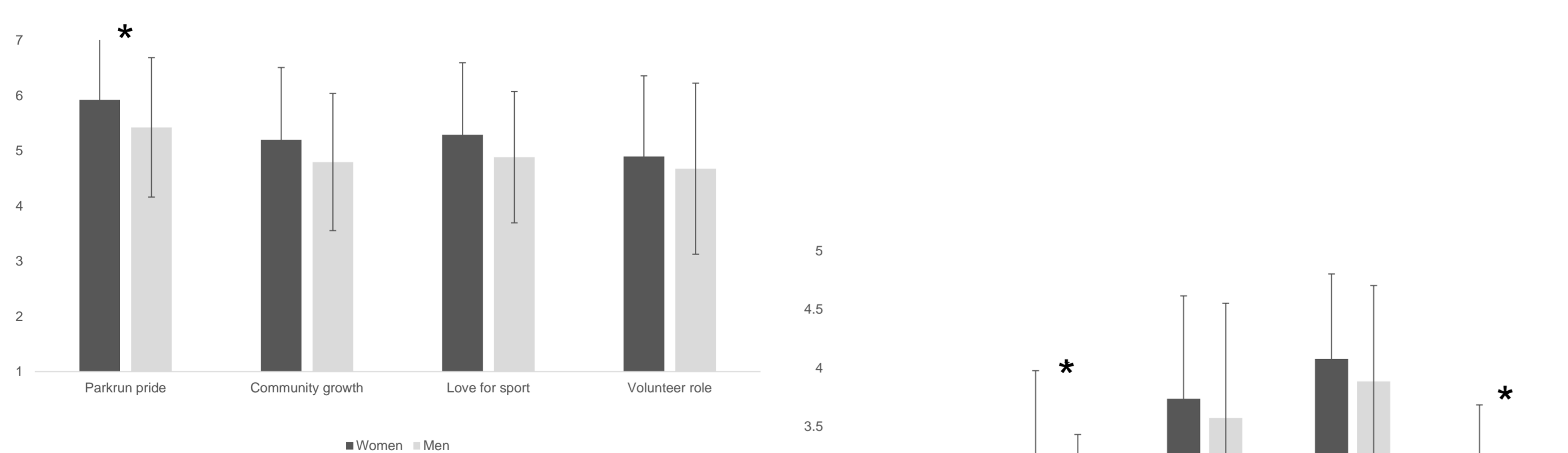


Figure 1 Differences between men and women's commitment to volunteer for parkrun. * $p < .05$

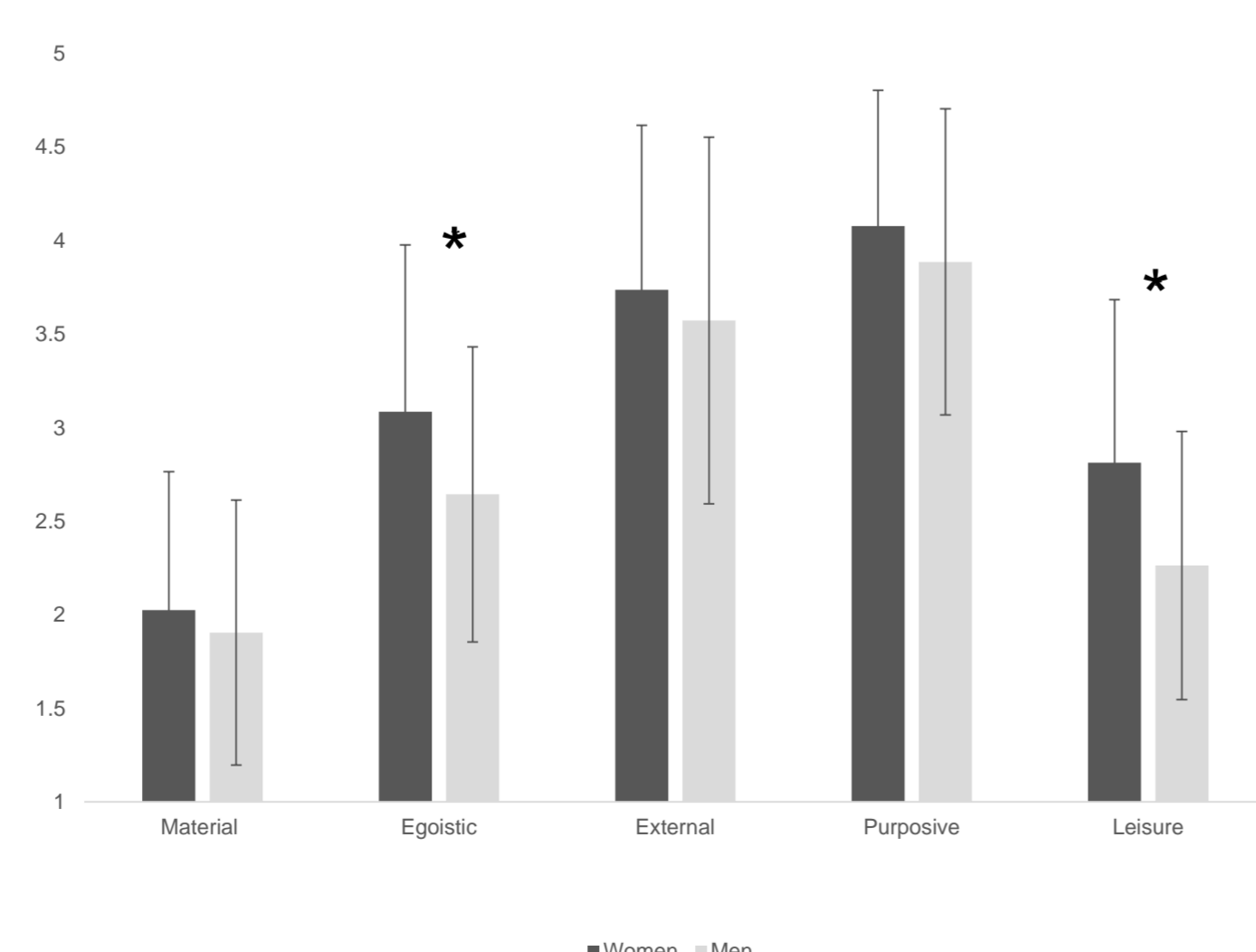


Figure 2 Differences between men and women's motivations to volunteer for parkrun. * $p < .05$

Discussion & Conclusion

The results indicate significant differences in leisure, egoistic and pride for women in terms of motivation and commitment to volunteer. The egoistic factor can be linked to self-actualisation, achievement leading to social acceptance, therefore focusing on personal and individualised desires to volunteer. These results are supported by Skirstad & Hanstad (2013) who suggest women's volunteerism aids personal expression and development with less emphasis on human and social capital, collective identity and belonging. Hustinx & Lammertyn (2003) suggest that reflexive or egoistic volunteerism is often limited in time and has an episodic character, which further supports these findings in relation to parkrun. It is therefore possible that parkrun with its unique non-traditional, non-committal approach to volunteering may increase numbers of women volunteering. These findings tentatively support studies focusing on physical activity and participation at parkrun, whereby identity, social support, purpose and feelings of value, appreciation and a perceived benefit of belonging have been found (Morris & Scott 2018; Sharman, Nash & Cleland 2018; Wiltshire & Stevinson 2018). However, further research is required. In conclusion, across all of the subscales measured, women reported generally higher levels of motivation and commitment to parkrun events than men. The significantly higher pride, egoistic and leisure motivations may reflect a greater desire for social approval amongst the women volunteers through perceptions of being valued within the parkrun environment. This aligns with the parkrun philosophy which creates a welcoming and indeed highly valued approach for all its volunteers which women seem to welcome significantly more than men.

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