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Examining Collaboration Among Nonprofit Organizations for Social Responsibility Programs

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Examining Collaborations among Nonprofit Organizations for Socially Responsible Programs

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Examining Collaborations among Nonprofit Organizations for Socially Responsible Programs

Abstract

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) increasingly implement socially responsible programs to address their responsibilities toward society. While collaborations are a valuable means to tackle complex social issues, NPOs also similarly collaborate with other NPOs for delivering socially responsible programs. However, the motivations driving NPOs to collaborate with likeminded organizations for socially responsible programs remain unclear. Using a single embedded in-depth case study research design, our purpose is to examine the formation of collaborations among sport federations and sport clubs for socially responsible programs. Reflecting the interplay between resource-based view and institutional perspectives, our findings intrinsically indicate that partners demonstrate similarity in their motivations to collaborate due to their organizational fit, but with some key differences in the complementary resources they seek. Organizational legitimacy, and resource exchange needs for socially responsible programs are driving the collaboration rather than organizational survival needs. The potential to create social value makes this nonprofit collaboration form unique.

Key words: nonprofit collaboration; social responsibility; nonprofit organizations; sport federations; sport clubs; interorganizational relationships; formation.

Introduction

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) increasingly embrace the term corporate social responsibility (CSR) to address their social responsibilities toward society (Lin-Hi, Hörisch & Blumberg, 2015). A recent study shows an increasing trend in adoption rates for nonprofits of communication and reporting schemes that express social responsibility, such as the Global Compact or the Global Reporting Initiatives Guidelines (Pope, Bromley, Lim, & Meyer, 2018). This upward frequency underpins a small but growing body of research examining this phenomenon in the nonprofit context (Acar, Aupperle, & Lowy, 2001; Lin-Hi et al. 2015; Pope et al., 2018; Robertson, Eime, & Westerbeek, 2018). These studies purport that it is valuable to discuss the social responsibility of all contemporary organizations not only in the for-profit but also in the nonprofit sector. The social nature of NPOs' activities should not automatically imply social responsibility given their recent irresponsible behaviors such as fraud, corruption or environmental damages (Lin-Hi et al., 2015; Robertson et al., 2018).

NPOs engage in socially responsible programs to play a role beyond service delivery for their members. These practices often extend beyond their core purpose. In the business context, CSR implementation regularly involves collaboration between profit and non-profit (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). Similarly, NPOs collaborate with other NPOs for delivering socially responsible programs.

More specifically, extant literature has only examined NPOs as the vehicle for businesses to implement their social responsibility agenda (Austin, 2000). NPOs enacting these practices themselves rather than acting as the recipients of socially responsible programs (Kourula & Laasonen, 2010; Omar, Leach, & March, 2014) have not received much attention and are still in need of empirical examination (Lin-Hi et al., 2015; Pope et al., 2018). While various studies exist regarding why business collaborate with NPOs (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Seitanidi et al., 2010) as well as why NPOs collaborate with business

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2
3 (Herlin, 2013; Omar al., 2014), we know little about motivations for collaboration between
4
5 NPOs for social responsibility.
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8 This study examines nonprofit collaboration, which concerns different NPOs striving
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10 to address problems - such as education, health and social cohesion (Gazley & Guo, 2015) -
11
12 through joint effort, resources, and decision-making and share ownership of the final product
13
14 or service (Guo & Acar, 2005). Although nonprofit collaboration has grown significantly in
15
16 recent years (Gazley & Guo, 2015), the scholarship in this field overlooks collaboration
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18 among NPOs in the delivery of socially responsible programs. To date, we lack
19
20 understanding of what drives NPOs to collaborate with likeminded organizations for the
21
22 implementation of socially responsible programs. A better understanding of the motivations
23
24 driving NPOs to collaborate for programs that can have an impact on society is a current
25
26 managerial and research gap. As such, empirical insights can help us bring to the fore the
27
28 mutual social value such collaborations can offer.
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33 Drawing on the nonprofit sport sector, the purpose of this study is to examine the
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35 motivations behind the formation of collaborations among sport federations and sport clubs
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37 for socially responsible programs. We study motives for engaging in collaborations to deliver
38
39 socially responsible programs from the most common theories used to explain nonprofit
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41 collaboration, namely resources-based view and institutional theory. Our research is
42
43 predicated on the following question: what motivates NPOs to collaborate with other NPOs
44
45 to implement socially responsible programs?
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49 The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it offers a fresh perspective in
50
51 nonprofit collaboration scholarship by exploring collaborations formation for non-mission
52
53 related activities amongst NPOs (i.e., mission that extend beyond their primary social
54
55 purpose). Second, the study expands knowledge related to NPOs and social responsibility by
56
57 broadening the role of NPOs in achieving socially responsible objectives, beyond their
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3 generally admitted activist, consultant or partner roles (Kourula & Laasonen, 2010). At the
4
5 same time, it enlarges the possible forms of collaboration for the delivery of CSR, beyond the
6
7 widespread cross-sectoral social collaborations (Peloza & Falkenberg, 2009). By paying more
8
9 attention to the spread of this social responsibility movement in the nonprofit domain from
10
11 the motivations for nonprofit collaboration formation, scholars and practitioners can gain a
12
13 better understanding of the nature of this phenomenon.
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16 17 **Theoretical Background and Literature Review**

18 19 *Social Responsibility in the Nonprofit Sector*

20
21 The applicability of the concept of CSR beyond traditional business has been debated
22
23 as CSR extends to other organizational forms such as small and medium enterprises (e.g.,
24
25 Amaeshi et al, 2016), public organizations (e.g., Dentchev, Eiselein, & Kayaert, 2018) and
26
27 NPOs (e.g., Pope et al., 2018). As such, scholarly activity now includes various organizational
28
29 settings despite the “corporate” limitation in the terminology used. Indeed, this general
30
31 evolution of CSR has been captured by Bondy, Moon, and Matten (2012) with the notion of
32
33 institution, used to describe that CSR has become a taken-for-granted concept spread outside
34
35 the classical business spheres.
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39 In light of traditional business, CSR is broadly defined as “companies taking
40
41 responsibility for their impact on society” (EU Commission, 2011). This study draws on the
42
43 large notion of social responsibility which encompasses the voluntary engagement for society
44
45 (“doing good”) and the prevention of irresponsible behavior (“avoiding bad”) (e.g., Carroll,
46
47 1991; Lin-Hi et al., 2015). As such, this paper builds on the small but growing body of
48
49 research on social responsibility in the nonprofit domain (Lin-Hi et al., 2015; Pope et al.,
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51 2018). When referring to this phenomenon, scholars have referred to CSR (e.g., Lin-Hi et al.,
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53 2015), nonprofit responsibility (e.g., Pope et al., 2018) or sustainability (e.g., Fifka et al.,
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55 2016).
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3 These studies contend that the social nature and character of NPOs could mislead us
4 into considering a NPO as being intrinsically socially responsible (Lin-Hi et al., 2015).
5
6 Driven by their organizational purpose, the role of NPOs is to provide a ‘social good’ or
7
8 service. NPOs are oriented toward social needs, influenced by public issues and changing
9
10 public expectations (Selsky & Parker, 2010). As noted by Lin-Hi et al., (2015) “since NPOs
11
12 engage themselves for the well-being of stakeholders and society as a whole by pursuing their
13
14 social mission, CSR in terms of “doing good” is closely related to their core business” (p.
15
16 1963). Consequently, one could consider that these NPOs are automatically seen as being
17
18 socially responsible. However, NPO’s socially responsible behaviors should not be taken for
19
20 granted given recent examples of irresponsible behaviors in the nonprofit sector (Lin-Hi et
21
22 al., 2015). Moreover, the assumption that NPOs are socially responsible per se cannot be
23
24 generalized to all NPOs. In the case of NPOs delivering services to a small audience, such
25
26 as sport organizations, considering the idea that NPOs are socially responsible is not valid
27
28 because they only provide social good to their members and therefore contribute to the
29
30 wellbeing of their members only.
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37 Carroll (1991) contend that the economic and legal responsibilities are ‘required’
38
39 primary social responsibility, while the ethical responsibilities are ‘expected’, and the
40
41 discretionary responsibilities are ‘desired’ secondary social responsibilities. Congruent with
42
43 this distinction, NPOs have the potential to exert positive social change (Aguilera, Rupp,
44
45 Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007) by embracing socially responsible programs into their agenda
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47 through, but also far and beyond, their primary social purpose. Social responsibility is more
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49 than doing good to society by building on organization’s core mission as it may also extend
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51 beyond organizations’ social purpose and existing institutional norms. Socially responsible
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53 programs are projects that neither necessarily nor explicitly derive from their mission
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55 statement. Beyond providing basic social services, NPOs secondary responsibilities can also
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3 consist in looking beyond their own interests and contribute to the needs of the community
4 and society. In other words, although NPOs are social in nature and already contribute to the
5 well-being of society, they can do more for society, beyond delivering social goods to their
6 members. That is, they participate in the society carrying out activities in several
7 environments through collaboration and interaction with various stakeholder groups (Acar et
8 al., 2001; Misener & Doherty, 2012; Lin-Hi et al., 2015; Robertson et al., 2018). For instance,
9 Misener and Doherty (2012) found, contrary to the traditional notion that NPOs are the
10 recipients of donations, examples that illustrated their desire to serve the community beyond
11 providing basic sport services for members. They reported that clubs collaborated with other
12 local NPOs to develop civic engagement among its athletes.
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26 As CSR is sensitive to institutional context, core social mission and organizational
27 characteristics (Athanasopoulou & Selsky, 2015), we contend the need for differentiated
28 research and distinctive approach to nonprofit social responsibility. Interestingly, Selsky and
29 Parker (2010) noted:
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36 “Organizations in every sector are confronted by and must respond to social
37 challenges. Yet, long established sectoral differences have traditionally led
38 organizations to frame social challenges in different ways and to address them
39 with different ends in mind” (p. 21).
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46 Thus, in line with Selsky and Parker (2010), we posit that the mature presence of
47 NPOs in CSR-related process as well as the reported socially responsible NPOs behavior may
48 call for an examination of the related collaborative means chosen to deliver social
49 responsibility. Moreover, Austin and Seitanidi (2012a) argued that “NPOs have embraced
50 collaboration with business as an important mode for the generation of value required for
51 successfully meeting their missions” (p. 9). Consequently, insights in the motivations for
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3 nonprofit collaboration for socially responsible programs are necessary to understand how
4
5 such intra-sectoral collaboration can create value.
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7 8 *Nonprofit Collaboration Formation* 9

10 A rich and diverse body of research has focused on nonprofit collaboration that spans
11 from within-sector (i.e., among organizations from the nonprofit sector) to multi-sector
12 partnerships (i.e., between organizations from two or more sectors) (Gazley & Guo, 2015).
13
14 This study delimits itself in collaboration among NPOs. Therefore, we invariably utilize
15 nonprofit collaboration when examining within-sector collaboration.
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21 In the nonprofit collaboration literature, most studies investigating within-sector
22 collaboration have looked at the types of collaboration (Foster & Meinhard 2002; Guo &
23 Acar, 2005; Proulx, Hager, & Klein, 2014), the formation (AbouAssi, Makhoulf, & Whalen,
24 2016; Snavely & Tracy, 2002; Sowa, 2009), the process (Tsais, 2009; Walters &
25 Anagnostopoulos, 2012) and the impact (Arya & Lin, 2007; Chen & Graddy, 2010), and
26 termination (Hu, Guo, & Bies, 2016). In the sport literature, special attention was paid on
27 sport federations and sport clubs collaborative capacity (Doherty, Misener, & Cuskelly, 2014)
28 to deliver various sport services (Sotiriadou, Bowens, De Bosscher, & Cuskelly, 2017; Vos &
29 Scheerder, 2014).
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42 Collaboration formation informs the decision by organizations to collaborate (Selsky
43 & Parker, 2005). Initial conditions, antecedents, preconditions, and motivations are frequent
44 areas in the collaboration formation literature (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b). The formation is
45 described as an important precondition to collaboration (Bryson et al., 2015). Most efforts in
46 the nonprofit collaboration literature relate to the motivations to form collaboration for
47 services delivery (i.e. programmatic needs in line with organizational goals including social
48 and elite sport services) (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Snavely & Tracy, 2002; Sotiriadou et al.,
49 2017; Sowa, 2009), the factors associated with collaboration forms (Guo & Acar, 2005;
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3 Proulx et al., 2014), the antecedents and capacity (AbouAssi et al., 2016; Foster & Meinhard,
4
5 2002), and the partners selection (Atouba & Shumate, 2015).
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8 For instance, Sowa (2009) suggested two motivation levels: motivations associated
9 with the service delivered and the organization. Guo and Acar (2005) examined the factors
10 that drive the implementation of formalized nonprofit collaboration - with age, size, budget,
11 linkages with other nonprofits and industry influencing the formalization. Atouba and
12 Shumate (2015) examined the factors that affect the structure and configurations of
13 collaborations – why NPOs collaborate with particular partners. The crux of their work is that
14 homophily – similarity in terms of attributes, geography and institutional – matters in
15 nonprofit collaboration.
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18 *Motives for nonprofit collaboration for socially responsible programs*

19
20 Empirical insights from nonprofit collaboration literature might not necessarily help
21 us understand the motives for engaging in discretionary-based socially responsible initiatives.
22 NPOs seem to be driven by resource motives in the case of cross-sectoral collaborations
23 (Omar et al., 2014). Collaborations provide access to additional resources, to learn skills, to
24 professionalize and eventually strengthen legitimacy (Austin, 2000; Herlin, 2013). However,
25 what drives NPOs to collaborate to deliver socially responsible programs and what can they
26 benefit from collaborating for non-mission related actions with likeminded partners remain
27 unknown. Other motives might be at play, and traditional theories and existing studies on
28 nonprofit collaboration (Austin, 2000; Sowa, 2009) seem to be unable to explain or do not
29 fully apply to this collaboration form. Potential differences in benefits for the NPOs pose
30 critical new research questions that have not been adequately addressed.
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34 Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015) as well as Gazley and Guo (2015) note that
35 insufficient attention has been paid to the characteristics of forms of nonprofit collaborations.
36 Earlier studies (Sowa, 2009; Sotiriadou et al., 2017) suggest that the motivations for nonprofit
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3 collaboration could be influenced by the nature of the service delivered. Accordingly, the
4 motivations to collaborate for socially responsible programs could differ from other
5 collaboration forms because the creation of positive social change (Aguilera et al., 2007)
6 underpins these collaborations. Collaborations represent an important vehicle to implement
7 socially responsible programs, as they have the ability to co-create value for both partners
8 (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). Yet, whether this value co-creation also applies to within sector
9 collaborations remains unexplored.

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19 Multiple perspectives (such as institutional theory, stakeholder theory, resource
20 dependence theory, transaction cost theory, or network theory to name but a few) have been
21 employed to theoretically underpin the study of collaboration (e.g., Barringer & Harrison,
22 2000; Guo & Acar, 2005). Responding to warnings that collaborations cannot be explained
23 by a single theoretical approach (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Oliver, 1990), the present study
24 is also fundamentally guided by principles found in institutional (Oliver, 1990) and resource-
25 based view perspectives (Barney, 1991). The interplay between institutional and resource
26 lenses has already been acknowledged in collaboration studies with multiple perspectives
27 (Barringer & Harrison, 2000) and is particularly relevant in the CSR context (Aguilera et al.,
28 2007). Resource-based view and institutional theory have been often used as theoretical
29 frameworks to examine nonprofit organizational motivations.

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Institutional forces and legitimacy

Institutional theory suggests that the environment pressures organizations to conform to prevailing rules, requirements and social norms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). These pressures stimulate organizations to pursue activities that may eventually increase their legitimacy and cause them to appear compliant with their environment (Oliver, 1990; Barringer & Harrison, 2000).

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3 Coercive, mimetic and normative pressures can explain why organizations are driven
4 similarly (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Coercive pressure stems from pressures on the
5 organizations by other organizations on which the former depends. For instance, NPOs
6 collaborate to meet legal requirements and mandates such as new reporting standards from
7 higher authorities (Guo & Acar, 2005). Mimetic isomorphism is the process in which
8 organizations copy other organizations' legitimate behavior. Consistently, NPOs may
9 collaborate for socially responsible programs by mimicking successful organizations that
10 have established best practices such as collaboration and/or social responsibility (Barringer &
11 Harrison, 2000). For instance, nonprofit collaboration are increasingly popular in the
12 nonprofit sector to deliver their core purpose, such as in the case of early care services (Sowa,
13 2006). Normative isomorphism refers to professional networks and industry standards that
14 contribute to spreading ideas, models and normative rules. For instance, the ISO and GRI
15 guidelines are important forces facing NPOs and seem to be contributing to the increasing
16 adoption of socially responsible programs (Pope et al., 2018). Such standards are actively
17 promoted as one of the preferred ways to meet social needs.

18
19 Institutional theory is valuable in explaining why NPOs collaborate for socially
20 responsible programs because it captures the related external social context (Athanasopoulou
21 & Selsky, 2015). NPOs are pressured to form collaboration for socially responsible programs
22 because the number of NPOs engaged in collaboration has increased and may therefore
23 become an institutionalized practice in the nonprofit sector (Proulx et al., 2014). Institutional
24 forces have also been used in nonprofit collaboration studies to examine why NPOs
25 collaborate for legitimacy purposes (Sotiriadou et al., 2017; Sowa, 2009, Guo & Acar, 2005).
26 These studies have particularly depicted normative and coercive pressures acting as driving
27 forces for NPOs (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Guo & Acar, 2005; Snalvey & Tracy, 2000; Sowa,
28 2009).

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3 Moreover, collaborations have become particularly commonplace and legitimate
4 means in the realm of CSR (Herlin, 2013). Studies found that it allows a win-win scenario for
5 both partners, simultaneously ensuring CSR and allowing NPOs to increase their capacity in
6 the fight against global problems.
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12 Furthermore, institutional forces are encouraging NPOs to adopt socially responsible
13 behavior. Robertson et al. (2018) indeed showed that community sport organizations face
14 increasing pressures from stakeholders to devote resources to socially responsible programs.
15 Societal expectations also apply to NPOs because of their significant scale and aggregate
16 social achievements (Austin, 2000) as well as sports negative impact (i.e., environmental
17 negative externalities and irresponsible behavior should be compensated by socially
18 responsible programs).
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29 Organizational compliance eventually ensures organizational survival, acceptance and
30 legitimacy (Oliver, 1990). A central premise of institutional theory is indeed legitimacy,
31 defined as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are socially
32 desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, value,
33 beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Accordingly, Sotiriadou et al. (2017)
34 suggested that when collaborating with clubs for elite sport services, sport federations
35 primarily seek legitimacy, understood as enhanced reputation as a center of expertise and a
36 leading role in the implementation of this service. Sowa (2009) further observed that NPOs
37 are more likely to collaborate to seek legitimacy when funders place a high value on
38 collaboration. In that study, she also put forward that forces also drive NPOs to collaborate in
39 a shared response to problems that cannot be dealt with at the individual organizational level.
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While institutional forces have been useful in explaining the external social context for social responsibility programs collaboration, this theoretical lens alone may be incomplete in

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3 offering a more rounded perspective in what motivates likeminded NPOs to collaborate for
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5 such programs.
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9 *Resource Based-View Theory.*

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11 The resource based-view theory adds to our examination by bringing to the fore the
12
13 importance of sharing resources as well as to accessing unavailable resources needed to
14
15 achieve these programs. This lens is used because collaboration for socially responsible
16
17 programs is a strategic option, but not necessarily the core purpose of a sport's reason for
18
19 existence. NPOs typically are resource constrained (Wicker & Breuer, 2013; Sowa, 2009)
20
21 and therefore need to acquire additional resources to implement socially responsible
22
23 programming. These resources could include for example human resources, financial,
24
25 technological, infrastructure and channels to attract participants to these programs (AbouAssi
26
27 et al., 2016). Viewed through the lens of the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) this need
28
29 for resource exchange can explain why collaborations occur in relation to socially responsible
30
31 programing in NPOs. Partners are seeking to acquire the complementary resources possessed
32
33 by each other. In particular, NPOs constantly seek to diversify their source of funding and to
34
35 leverage their capacity to become sustainable and effective in achieving their goals and
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37 programmatic needs (Arya & Lin, 2007; Chen & Graddy, 2010; Gazley & Brudney, 2007;
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39 Omar et al., 2014; Sotiriadou et al., 2017). NPOs hold unique capacity, expertise of which
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41 human capital (AbouAssi et al., 2016) and specific expertise (Chen & Graddy, 2010; Omar et
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43 al., 2014) are particularly salient.
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50 In this respect, the resource based-view theory brings an important nuance to the study
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52 by providing understanding of why these organizations collaborate beyond the need to
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54 become less dependent on their environment. The theoretical interplay between the
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56 institutional and resources-based view will allow us to discern the motivational forces behind
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58 collaboration for socially responsible programs. On the one hand, there may be pressures at
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3 play, yet on the other hand, value co-creation can occur when the needed resources are used
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5 jointly. Overall, the theoretical interplay is fundamental, as collaborating may improve
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7 NPOs' image, which in turn may attract new or additional resources. As noted by Herlin
8
9 (2013), "In the case of NPOs, resource acquisition and mission attainment depend on
10
11 organizational legitimacy because legitimate organizations are perceived as "more
12
13 meaningful, more predictable and more trustworthy" (Schuman, 1995, p. 575)" (p. 4).
14
15 Engaging in collaboration for socially responsible programs could allow an NPO to improve
16
17 its reputation or image and impress other members in its network such as resource-granting
18
19 agencies, external stakeholders, or the general public (Herlin, 2013). Ultimately, legitimacy
20
21 might open the doors to other collaboration that may ensure new resources and expertise
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23 (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Herlin, 2013; Selsky & Parker, 2005).
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29 **Method**

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31 The study adopts an interpretative and embedded single-case study design (Yin, 2013)
32
33 which has often been used in previous studies on collaboration (Austin, 2000). Single case
34
35 studies are appropriate because they enable theory testing, provide alternative explanations,
36
37 and contribute to refine existing theory through replication (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2013). This
38
39 study does not support that its findings are generalizable across all NPOs. However, it
40
41 uncovers conceptual and empirical patterns of nonprofit collaboration that may be
42
43 transferable to other settings with similar context and characteristics. The unit of analysis is
44
45 the within-sector collaboration between sport federations and sport clubs for socially
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47 responsible programs.
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51 ***Research Setting***

52
53 This research was conducted among national (Association Royale Belge de Hockey –
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55 ARBH) and regional (Ligue Francophone de Hockey - LFH) sports federations and sports
56
57 clubs operating in the French-speaking part of Belgium. Sports federations are sport-
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3 governing bodies that organize sports activities and competitions for their members (Winand
4 et al., 2013). ARBH is responsible for the representation of the sports discipline in
5
6 international sports structures, the national teams, the organization of international and
7
8 national competition, and the coordination of regional structures. LFH is in charge of
9
10 defining the strategic goals, the regulation, the promotion and organization of regional and
11
12 local competitions, sports activities and elite sports policy for their members. At the local
13
14 level, a dense network of nonprofit sports clubs is responsible for the provision of grassroots
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16 sports (Vos & Scheerder, 2014).
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22 Sports federations and sports clubs are nonprofit, service membership organizations
23 (Doherty et al., 2014). Specific characteristics of NPOs in general are found in these
24 particular NPOs (Winand et al., 2010). First, their strategic objectives are mostly intangible,
25 and hence, difficult to measure. Second, they are required to meet their stakeholders' needs
26 and expectations. Third, they are financially constrained, especially due to the annual funding
27 received from public authorities, member fees and the infrastructure costs. Fourth, their
28 internal functioning is often unclear due to the complex human resource balance between
29 paid staff and volunteers (Wicker & Breuer, 2013; Winand et al., 2010). Fifth, they have a
30 small-scale decentralization and flat organizational hierarchy. Sixth, they are moving to a
31 more business-like and professionalization logic (Maier, Meyer, & Steinbereithner, 214).
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45 The case study focused on joint socially responsible programs developed by hockey
46 federations and hockey clubs. In this respect, the study's context suggests a dyadic
47 collaboration among these NPOs. The focus was on two socially responsible initiatives,
48 which go beyond their narrow sport mandates. First, *Hockey Together* (HT), jointly operated
49 with several sport clubs and spread across the country with the support of the federations,
50 aims to integrate persons with a disability through hockey. Second, *Stick to Fair Play*
51 (STFP), designed by the federations and delivered with the clubs, aims to promote fair play
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3 values for hockey in Belgium through awareness campaigns. These initiatives should be
4
5 considered as discretionary socially responsible as they draw on and extend beyond these
6
7 NPOs core mandate and legal norms. Consistent with Guo & Acar (2005), these two
8
9 initiatives are joint programs. Table 1 offers a description of both initiatives.
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11

12 [table 1 here]

13 14 15 ***Data Collection***

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18 Two data collection techniques were employed in this study, namely, semi-structured
19
20 interviews and organizational documents. Collecting evidence from multiple sources offers
21
22 different dimensions of the same phenomenon and facilitates triangulation (Yin, 2013).
23

24
25 *Semi-structured interviews.* In total, 16 interviews were conducted from May 2016 to
26
27 March 2017 with key individuals involved in the design and management of the initiatives in
28
29 the national and regional federations and six clubs (see Table 2). We purposefully selected
30
31 key actors and “boundary spanners” who were considered as important informants since they
32
33 possessed specialist knowledge of the socially responsible program. Employing a “key
34
35 informant technique” and following the principles of theoretical saturation - denoting that no
36
37 new features emerge from the data in the analysis process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) - , we
38
39 selected and interviewed individuals actively and directly involved in the programs.
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43 [table 2 here]

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46 We questioned informants to reflect on their social responsibility vision, their
47
48 personal experiences, and their specific role regarding the socially responsible initiatives.
49
50 Participants were encouraged to discuss retrospectively the objectives and the process to
51
52 deliver the initiatives through collaboration. Furthermore, interviews explored the
53
54 informants’ perceptions (and their organizations’) motivations for engaging in socially
55
56 responsible programs through collaboration, the influence of key partners on the collaborative
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3 setting, the nature of the relationship with their partners, the evolution patterns, and the
4
5 challenges of working together with other NPOs.
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8 *Organizational documents.* Secondary sources provided valuable background
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10 information about the NPOs in question, their strategic orientation, and a decision and action
11
12 timeline of the initiatives. All this documentary material – such as annual reports, strategy
13
14 notes, brochures, press releases, and presentations to key hockey stakeholders – was either
15
16 available on NPOs' official websites or was provided by the participants during interviews. In
17
18 total, 52 documents provided information on the context within which socially responsible
19
20 programs were implemented.
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23 24 *Data Analysis*

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26 In line with Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework, we iteratively analyzed data
27
28 using both deductive and inductive reasoning. Initially, a number of themes originated from a
29
30 review of the literature on collaboration in general (Oliver, 1991), nonprofit collaboration
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32 (Sowa, 2009; Guo & Acar, 2005), and sports management in particular (Babiak, 2007;
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34 Sotiriadou et al., 2017). Consistent with the research question, the themes included motives
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36 related to resources (stability), efficiency, reciprocity, institutional (legitimacy, necessity).
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40 First, the lead author read the transcripts several times. Analytical memos as well as
41
42 temporal bracketing were processed to identify the major characteristics (Guo & Acar, 2005)
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44 and phases of the collaboration process. Following this, refinement of themes and
45
46 development of alternate themes took place. Once all interviews and document passages were
47
48 coded according to themes, they were carefully reviewed and then further scrutinized for
49
50 relationships and linkages. Analysis of the data was facilitated with Nvivo 11 software. To
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52 ensure consistency and credibility in the analysis process, the coding protocol and the
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54 interpretation of the data was discussed between all authors.
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Findings and Discussion

This study examines nonprofit collaboration between sport federations and sport clubs implementing socially responsible programs. We present our findings building on the perspective of those directly engaged in the collaboration. As a starting point for exploring collaboration among NPOs for socially responsible programs, two complementary theoretical frameworks were used for this study. The interplay between these lenses unveils the uniqueness of this collaboration form.

This study displayed two major motivations. Both federations and clubs pointed to *resource exchange and organizational legitimacy* as primary motivations. Our case shows that each partner reported common and diverse motives to collaborate to deliver socially responsible programs, as suggested by previous studies on collaboration formation (e.g., Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Sotiriadou et al., 2017; Sowa, 2009). The convergence between nonprofit partners' motivations underpins the relationship and eventually contrasts with the divergence between partners found in cross-sectoral collaboration (i.e., strategic versus altruistic goals) (Seitanidi et al., 2010) or in nonprofit collaboration (Sotiriadou et al., 2017).

As resource-based view theory suggests, organizations are not self-sufficient, and revenues are impacting the need for collaboration (Arya & Lin, 2007). The importance of resource in this particular case is not surprising, as NPOs operate in a complex environment characterized by resource scarcity (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). In fact, hockey partners are evolving in an unstable political environment that nudges them to work together in order to attain alternate supplies of resources. The data extract below illustrates the resource instability:

Budgetary speaking, sport is a poor sibling, so we do not have many resources and we are not going to develop them [these collaborative projects].

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3 Sponsorship is reaching its limits, political subsidies are what they are, so we
4 cannot hope to multiply by ten our financial income so we need to deal with
5 our shoestring means available, with what we have but (...) we also try to use
6 exchanges and contacts. (Federation 5)
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15 Contrary to the resource dependence perspective often mobilised to examine NPO
16 collaboration for service delivery (Gazley & Brudney, 2007; Sowa, 2009; Sotiriadou et al.,
17 2017), NPOs do not collaborate for socially responsible programs to exert power and control
18 over organizations with scarce resources (Barringer & Harrison, 2000). As Sowa (2009)
19 noted, NPOs first seek their basic programmatic needs before seeking to implement
20 complementary projects. In this case, collaboration is not a matter of organizational survival
21 needs.
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31 Rather, partners are motivated by the increase of complementary resources to develop
32 the joint socially responsible initiatives. Our results show that organizations primarily seek to
33 secure the survival of these initiatives that highly rest on the complementary resources
34 provided by partners. This means that in this context, NPOs mainly collaborate for the
35 survival of the initiative, rather than for their basic organization survival needs. As illustrated
36 by these extracts, resource exchange was central for the both partners: “LFH wished to
37 accompany closely clubs in the creation and development of their section” (LFH
38 organizational document). As explained by a club member, expanding the initiative with the
39 federation’s resources was central:
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52 Our goal since the beginning is that the project is open to all partners, so I
53 don’t ask more that the league joins. So the more people work on it, the
54 more I am glad in this collaboration. We can hardly develop something on
55 the national level without the federation support. (Club 3)
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3 The desire to pursue common goals stimulated NPOs to put their respective
4 competencies at the disposal of each other in order to converge toward the development of
5 socially responsible programs. The literature often identifies reciprocity (Oliver, 1990) as a
6 determinant to engage in such collaborations. As such, this clubs-federation synergy was
7 mutually expected to benefit both entities:
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17 The federation wanted to support the HT project and help to expand it and
18 encourage other clubs to open HT (...) But we are conscious that it is a two
19 way street: thanks to it we will have a visibility (...) it can open doors for
20 opportunities and give the envy to clubs to be part of the project. It always
21 works in both directions. (Club 6)
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31 A federation member also exemplifies his mutually beneficial position, “we work
32 closely with the clubs and they come also to us with projects” (Federation 1). This reciprocity
33 allowed NPOs to pool their competencies to converge toward the fulfilment of a common
34 objective: the development of the socially responsible initiatives to generate social progress.
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41 For instance, in the case of HT, clubs initially developed the idea, served as the
42 implementation platform through their infrastructure, human resources (sport practitioners
43 and volunteers), situated knowledge, geographical coverage and local connections with other
44 organizations and beneficiaries. The federation shared its political (acting as a lobby seeking
45 subsidies and visibility for the hockey community), human (professional staff), technical
46 (Expertise and competences), communication (information sharing), network and financial
47 resources as well as its legitimacy.
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3 The collaboration can facilitate information sharing, mobilize complementary
4 resources and acquire expertise. For instance, as explained by a federation member on a web
5 page, the resources exchanges: “It is the initiation, making primary contacts, the access to the
6 community and sharing experiences. I think each section is different but what is important is
7 sharing between you” (Webinar LFH, 03.26.2018). Statements like this illustrate that
8 informal resources such as learning, knowledge and diffusion of good practices were
9 important in the eyes of the partners.
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20 Moreover, NPOs reported that they seek to acquire new resources from other partners
21 as well as enhancing existing collaboration between clubs and federations and new
22 collaboration ties to reinforce the initiative. This network of resources and lobbying capacity
23 is illustrated here: “we work closely with the clubs and they come also to us with projects. To
24 help them, we seek subsidies from the minister” (Federation 1). As outlined in Table 1, the
25 collaborations for HT and STFP have in turn attracted additional supplies of resources from
26 public and private partners as well as new partners partaking in the initiatives.
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37 Surprisingly, these findings showed that rather than building on asymmetrical
38 interdependencies inherited from the sports structure in which sport federations, as governing
39 bodies, are traditionally occupying a hierarchical position over clubs (Babiak, 2007;
40 Sotiriadou et al., 2017), partners have altered this likely domination and competitive state
41 (Wicker & Breuer, 2013; Sowa, 2009) into a collaboration position. The lack of asymmetry is
42 illustrated in this quote: “We are not aware of everything that happens within the clubs but
43 our goal is to have as much information as possible. Not for control purposes” (Federation 2).
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53 The absence of asymmetrical motivation is an interesting insight to understand the
54 formation of nonprofit collaboration, because this is not systematically the case, as reported in
55 other nonprofit studies (Sotiriadou et al., 2017). This reciprocity can eventually be explained
56 by the significant organizational mission and identity fit between these NPOs and previous
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3 interdependence experience (Atouba & Shumate, 2015; Seitanidi et al., 2010; Walters &
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5 Anagnostopoulos, 2012).
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8 To some extent, these findings concur with Atouba and Shumate (2015) who found that
9
10 homophily (i.e., NPOs being more likely to collaborate when they have the same status)
11
12 influences the selection of nonprofit collaboration. In this case, these NPOs have similar
13
14 cultural and organizational characteristics that explain this complementary fit. These NPOs'
15
16 common mission is indeed influential for this fit: "Developing hockey is one of our main goals
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18 as a federation. It is in the ARBH's strategic plan. One of the elements is to increase the number
19
20 of sport participants. So why not people with a disability because none of this existed yet."
21
22 (Federation 1).
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26 The results also showed that sharing similar values is essential in this reciprocal
27
28 relationship. As one federation member highlighted; "There are regularly projects which are
29
30 always very well welcomed because they correspond to our values. For instance, with HT (...),
31
32 we absolutely want that it expands in the entire hockey field (Federation 2)".
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36 Ultimately, the resource perspective does not sufficiently provide a complete
37
38 understanding of the NPOs' motivations to collaborate. The desire to appear legitimate in the
39
40 institutional environment to eventually acquire additional resources to do good for society has
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42 been also evoked. The institutional perspective provides a more complementary
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44 understanding of what motivates NPOs. Our findings showed that organizations sought
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46 collaboration to enhance their legitimacy in order to enhance their organizational positioning
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48 by showing their capacity to have the right practices in place (Herlin, 2013; Sowa, 2006) and
49
50 demonstrate their capacity to create social value as in cross-sectoral social collaborations
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52 (Austin & Seitanidi, 2010a).
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56 Institutional pressures played a role in encouraging partners to increase their
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58 *legitimacy* in order to appear 'appropriate' in relation to their stakeholders' expectations and
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3 prevailing norms in their environment (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1990).

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5 Collaboration is indeed considered as a leading means to tackle various social issues (Austin,
6
7 2000; Gazley & Guo, 2015), while addressing social responsibility is a major strategic
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9 organizational concern (Seitanidi et al., 2010) for NPOs given its taken for granted institution
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11 nature (Pope et al., 2018; Bondy et al., 2012).

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15 Compared to the literature, our findings interestingly show that while previous studies
16
17 depicted mimetic isomorphism influencing NPOs to collaborate (Guo & Acar, 2005; Oliver,
18
19 1990; Sotiriadou et al., 2017; Sowa, 2009), organizations were not motivated by meeting
20
21 explicit institutional mandates or complying with collaborative requirements from funding
22
23 partners. Rather, collaborations were self-initiated in the context of the initiatives examined.

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26 Eventually, NPOs' collaborative behaviors are guided by the need to achieve
27
28 organizational legitimacy. In particular, all partners have shown that legitimacy played a role
29
30 in the collaboration, contrary to previous findings (e.g., Sotiriadou et al., 2017) which only
31
32 identified such determinant in one of the partners (the federation). Moreover, cross-sectoral
33
34 studies only identified legitimacy motivations with the business sector (Seitanidi et al., 2010).
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36 Although NPOs typically possess strong legitimacy attributes (Herlin, 2013; Omar et al.,
37
38 2014; Sowa, 2009), they strive for improved internal legitimacy (i.e. by their internal
39
40 stakeholders: the member-clubs, the staff and the volunteers) and external (i.e. by the external
41
42 stakeholders: sponsors, public authorities, sport organizations) reputation. For instance, LFH
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44 illustrated this drive to enhance their image as a leading organization due to their short
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46 lifespan:
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54 It is important for us to get known. That is, externally, that all our stakeholders
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56 know “we are now the league”, toward the Adeps [i.e., public sport
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58 administration], and all the subsidiary authorities, toward the French
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3 community, all local actors. (...) and internally, towards our clubs (...) Now,
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5 there are two leagues but the ARBH is still the national umbrella agency. We
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7 exist as a new entity. (Federation 3)
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12 Interestingly, several clubs were also driven by the opportunity to make their
13
14 members pride of their club:

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17 “So this club, if you are proud of what it does, notably, because it empowers
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19 people with disability through sport, if you are proud of that, of the colors of
20
21 your club, you will run faster” (Club 4)
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26 Using collaborative socially responsible initiatives, NPOs therefore seek to strengthen
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28 their image and their strategic position within their organizational field. Eventually, the
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30 results showed that organizations expressed their legitimacy motivation in different ways,
31
32 namely, to demonstrate their capacity to conform to their stakeholders’ expectations and
33
34 institutional norms, to solve social problems, and to act as a relevant actor of societal change
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36 building on the intrinsic nature of the NPOs (Lin-Hi et al., 2015; Pope et al., 2018; Seitanidi
37
38 et al., 2010). Consistent with legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995), these findings support that
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40 legitimacy can be both strategic/utilitarian and altruistic (Seitanidi et al., 2010; Selsky &
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42 Parker, 2005).
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47 Consequently, findings intrinsically indicate that partners demonstrate similarity in
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49 their motivations to collaborate due to their organizational fit, but with some key differences
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51 in the complementary resources they seek. Overall, the socially responsible program is
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53 driving the collaboration. Viewed as a desirable behavior and a valuable means to address
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55 social problems, the analysis finds that collaboration is a strategic response to legitimacy and
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57 resource needs for the socially responsible programs. The potential to create social value
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3 makes this nonprofit collaboration form unique. Partners are motivated by the aim to create
4 social value that leads to positive social change. This is the catalyst to these collaborations.
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8 Eventually, the study makes two contributions. First, this work generates original
9 insights into the formation of nonprofit collaboration. Although a growing body of research
10 has focused on the motivations of collaborations among NPOs for specific service delivery
11 (Sowa, 2006), this article contributes to this emergent field by examining motivations to
12 engage in nonprofit collaboration for social responsibility programs. This study contributes to
13 the nonprofit collaboration literature by providing an understanding of how motivations for
14 nonprofit collaboration for socially responsible programs differ from other nonprofit
15 collaboration forms depending on the nature of the issue addressed. This study shows that
16 there are differences in nonprofit collaboration formation depending on the purpose and on
17 the nature of the issue addressed in the collaboration. Social responsibility programs lead to
18 differences because of the social value creation aim.
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33 The findings originally point that NPOs do not compete for resource although there is
34 a general competition for resources in the general NPO context (Wicker & Breuer, 2013).
35 Elements of resource-based view and institutional forces provide explanatory power for
36 studying the singularity of the formation of collaboration for socially responsible programs.
37 Prior research found reducing the need to compete for resource and funding uncertainties,
38 cost savings and a desire to expand services beyond the capacity of partners to be important
39 drivers of the motivation to collaborate (Chen & Gazley, 2010; Guo & Acar, 2005; Sowa,
40 2006), whereas we have noted the nonprofit interest in using collaboration as a strategic
41 response to resource complementarity and social value creation. Overall, the theoretical
42 interplay is fundamental, as collaborating may improve NPOs' reputation, which in turn may
43 attract new or additional grant funding. Organizations also seek new partners to build future
44 relationships in order to enhance and mature existing collaborations. Essentially, these
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3 findings extend existing work demonstrating that both theories are equally important and
4
5 complementary driving forces of collaboration by NPOs (Arya & Lin, 2007; Barringer &
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7 Harrison, 2000). This study contributes to this growing body of research and knowledge by
8
9 applying two theoretical perspectives, which complementarily, offer a more rounded
10
11 approach on the motivations to engage in social responsibility collaborations.
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15 Second, this article contributes to a better understanding of the applicability of social
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17 responsibility in the nonprofit domain by examining nonprofit organizations collaborative
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19 motivations to implement such programs (Lin-Hi et al., 2015; Pope et al., 2018). These
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21 programs are often considered practices that extend beyond their core purpose. In this study,
22
23 NPOs are collaborating with likeminded organizations rather than serving either as recipients
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25 or vehicles of socially responsible programs of business (Kourula & Laasonen, 2010); a
26
27 stream of research that has predominantly attracted scholarly attention in the nonprofit
28
29 literature. The traditional perspective of NPOs as mere passive providers of CSR should be
30
31 abandoned. NPOs should rather be regarded as capable proactive implementers of socially
32
33 responsible practices. As such, there is some consensus that businesses are not responsible for
34
35 addressing all social issues (Amaeshi et al, 2016). That is, although the word “corporate” has
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37 typically been associated with large business organizations, CSR is now being embraced by
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39 organizations of all types and sizes, including nonprofit sport organizations. Moreover, this
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41 study shows that beyond cross-sectoral collaboration, other collaborative forms exist to
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43 implement CSR programs. Within sector collaboration can offer valuable benefits for
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45 organizations willing to implement their social responsibilities with likeminded
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47 organizations. As such, this study extends the roles of collaboration for the implementation of
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49 CSR by considering that profit organizations are not the only organizations capable of
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51 developing collaborations to implement socially responsible programs.
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Conclusions and Future Research

The purpose of this paper was to examine a particular form of collaboration within the nonprofit landscape. In this study, we have indicated key motivations for the formation of collaborations among NPOs for socially responsible programs. As such, three unique features of this collaboration can be highlighted. First, NPOs' motivations stemmed from the potential to create social value from the social responsibility programs implemented through collaboration. As such, this nonprofit collaboration form is unique because socially responsible programs are the catalyst of the collaboration. Second, reflecting the interplay between resource-based view and institutional perspectives, organizational legitimacy and resource exchange needs for socially responsible programs are driving the collaboration rather than organizational survival needs.

Third, the partners demonstrate similarity in their motivations to collaborate due to their organizational fit, but with some key differences in the complementary resources they seek. This suggests that a high degree of organizational characteristics and motivations fit among partners might increase chances to deliver social good at this stage prior to the collaboration implementation. In the case of sport, the network of partners is relatively dense and the degree fit is important.

The findings from this study are limited in their generalization to similar institutional contexts where implicit forms of social responsibility prevails and to similar organizational contexts where voluntary membership organizations are based on a federated structure. Yet, this study may be beneficial for managers willing to work in collaboration for socially responsible programs. Collaboration requires the understanding of the partners' motivation to collaborate. Motivations are preconditions of collaboration formation and many managers tend to miss this important part (Austin, 2000). Beforehand, managers should detect common

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3 characteristics and (seek) compatible motivations to inform the decision to partner or not to
4 partner. Managers can strategically oversee collaboration when they know partners'
5 motivations. Hence, this should minimize the risk of threats to the implementation of the
6 collaboration and eventually increasing the potential outcomes of the collaboration.
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8 Furthermore, as collaboration requires various sources, an effective manager should define
9 the resources their need, detect potential resources to exchange and eventually create new
10 resource flows through collaboration.
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19 However, the study is also subject to some limitations. First, the sports context limits
20 the findings' universality. Second, the study is based on a dataset collected in a relatively
21 short period. Third, adopting a single level of analysis limits the findings. These limitations
22 could be addressed through future investigation
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28 First, we encourage future studies to expand knowledge on social responsibility and
29 NPOs by examining whether and how NPOs from different industry outside sports
30 collaborate in the delivery of socially responsible programs. Second, as this study has
31 examined the static motivations of collaboration, a step forward could be opting for a
32 longitudinal perspective to capture the evolution of the nonprofit collaboration process
33 (especially within all the chronological stages of collaboration (formation, management and
34 outcomes) (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Hence integrating the nonprofit collaboration challenges,
35 resistance, and termination. Third, delving into individual or network-level factors, such
36 research could pave the way for a better understanding of how they intersect, addressing
37 issues such as leadership and organizational learning.
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Bibliographical paragraph

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Tables

Table 1. Contextual background of the case study

Characteristics	<i>Hockey Together (HT)</i>	<i>Stick to Fair Play (STFP)</i>
<i>Collaboration Form</i>	Informal collaboration and joint program initiative	Joint program initiative
<i>Collaboration Background</i>	Bottom-up initiative - one club	Top-down initiative - LFH
<i>Collaboration Components</i>	9 clubs, LFH and ARBH	ARBH, LFH and all clubs on a voluntary basis
<i>Collaboration Characteristics</i>	<p>Initially, this informal collaboration between LFH, ARBH and sport clubs encompassed distinct decision-making strategies, information sharing and resource exchange.</p> <p>Today, a formal joint program initiative is established between LFH, sport clubs and the Federation of Disability sport (LHF) via the creation of a new formal NPO 'Hockey Together'. The partners mutually share, transfer or combine resources among partners and collectively managed the NPO.</p>	Organizations establish an ongoing relationship through shared, transferred or combined resources. This initiative is coordinated by the three federations (ARBH, LFH and VHL), which collaborate with the clubs.
<i>Resources from Federation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical expertise and competences • Network of partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Staff, athletes and referees

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political skills • Staff and volunteers • Communication and learning platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and information sharing platform
<i>Resources from Clubs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers • Infrastructures • Geographical coverage • Situated knowledge and expertise • Local connection and beneficiaries access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers • Infrastructures • Geographical coverage
<i>Collaboration Evolution</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2009: HT initially started in one club • 2010: A second club joins the initiative • 2015: LFH supports the initiative • 2016: Collaboration convention between LFH and LHF; creation of Hockey Together • 2017: Public subsidies granted; Strategic guidelines developed by all the partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014: Creation of the first initiative “We respect” • 2016: New initiative ‘STFP’ launched by the LFH, with the support of ARBH and clubs; public and private subsidies granted • 2017 - 2018: Awareness campaign with national team athletes and with international referees

Running Head: COLLABORATIONS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Table 2. Outline of the data collection

Organization	Representatives interviews	Documents
<i>Federation</i>	8 informants	
National Hockey	President	Annual reports 2015; Strategic plan 2016-2020+; Websites; Press Releases
	Secretary General	
Regional Hockey	Project Manager	Annual reports 2015-2016; Strategic plan 2014-2018; Partnership Convention; Websites; Press Releases
	Project Manager	
	Secretary General	
	President	
	Board member	
Regional Disabled	Secretary General	Strategic plan 2015-2020; Websites and Facebook
<i>Hockey clubs</i>	8 informants	
Club 1	Past-President	Websites, Partnership Convention; Newspapers, Facebook
	Sport manager	
Club 2	President	Websites and Facebook
Club 3	President	Websites and Facebook
	Sport Manager	
Club 4	Social Manager	Websites and Facebook
Club 5	Vice-President	Websites and Facebook
Club 6	Vice-President	Websites and Facebook