Examining Partnerships in Amateur Sport:
The Case of a Canadian National Sport Centre

By

Katherine M. Babiak
B.A./B.P.H.E., Queen's University, 1991
M.A., University of Ottawa, 1994

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies
(School of Human Kinetics)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 2003

© Katherine M. Babiak, 2003
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Human Kinetics - Sport Management
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date August 6, 2003
This study explored the dynamics, challenges, and complexities encountered in forming, managing, and evaluating the interorganizational relationships of a nonprofit organization and its partners in the public, nonprofit, and commercial sectors. Using a partnership process model developed from various theoretical frameworks (Kouwenhoven, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Provan & Milward, 2001; Wood & Gray, 1991), this study examined three phases of partnership relationships (i.e., formation, management, and evaluation) to gain a better understanding of the interactions among partnering organizations in Canadian sport.

Qualitative research methods were employed to investigate partnerships of one National Sport Centre (NSC). Data were collected from three sources: 28 interviews, 110 organizational documents, and attendance at three organizational meetings. Interviews, relevant document passages, and field notes were transcribed and analyzed using Atlas.ti, a qualitative analysis software program.

Results indicated that environmental and organizational conditions facilitated the formation of partnerships. Interdependence among organizations, presence of a broker, presence of a network, and convergence of objectives were evident. Specific reasons for partnership formation included efficiency, stability, necessity, legitimacy, reciprocity, and asymmetry.

Partnership management structures and processes were central to interactions between organizations. Partners struggled to find a balance between pressures to compete and pressures to collaborate. Power imbalances, political dynamics, and control issues primarily related to resource concerns existed, and in some cases weakened the bonds among partners. Some partnerships were formalized, while others were loosely structured and primarily based on mutual trust, previous history, and personal interest. Ambiguities regarding roles and responsibilities, and 'representativeness' influenced how partners interacted and contributed to challenges in managing partnerships. Allocating resources was a prime concern for the organizations.

Several levels of analysis for outcome evaluation existed. At the community level, the performance of NSC athletes at international competitions was a key measure of success. At the network level, effective coordination of programs and services contributing to improved performances of athletes was perceived as an important measure of effectiveness. Finally at the organizational level, factors including ability to attract and retain partners, ability to remain economically viable through resource acquisition, and achieving legitimacy were all viewed as criteria to evaluate partnership effectiveness.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. ii
Table of Contents.................................................................................................................................. iii
List of Tables .......................................................................................................................................... v
List of Figures ......................................................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER 1: Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
The Partnership Phenomenon ................................................................................................................ 2
  A Definition of Partnership .................................................................................................................. 4
The Complexities of Organizational Partnerships .............................................................................. 6
Partnerships and Nonprofit Organizations ......................................................................................... 8
Canadian Sport Organizations: The Need to Build Interorganizational Partnerships .................. 10
  The Evolution of Canadian National Sport Centres: A New Form of Sport Organization .......... 12
Purpose and Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 17
Contributions .......................................................................................................................................... 19

CHAPTER 2: Synthesis of Literature and Conceptual Framework ..................................................... 21
Conceptual Framework ......................................................................................................................... 22
  Preconditions and Partnership Determinants .................................................................................. 39
  Processes: Organizational Interaction and Exchange ................................................................... 43
  Outcomes and Effectiveness ............................................................................................................ 55

CHAPTER 3: Research Methods .......................................................................................................... 61
Research and Writing Considerations ................................................................................................. 61
  Level and Unit of Analysis ................................................................................................................. 61
  Structure of Thesis ............................................................................................................................ 66
  Criteria of Soundness ......................................................................................................................... 67
  Ethical Concerns and Issues of Confirmability .............................................................................. 67
Selection of Research Paradigm ........................................................................................................... 68
Data Management ................................................................................................................................. 72
Data Collection ....................................................................................................................................... 72
Data Analysis and Reduction ................................................................................................................ 80
  Data Analysis Strategy: Preparation ............................................................................................... 80
  Data Analysis Strategy: Coding and Theme Building ................................................................. 81
  Data Analysis Strategy: Identifying Families and Memo Application .................................... 84
  Data Presentation / Display .............................................................................................................. 84

CHAPTER 4: Case Context .................................................................................................................... 86
The Research Site: An In-Depth Profile of Focal Organization ......................................................... 86
Partner Descriptions ............................................................................................................................. 97
  Founding Partners ............................................................................................................................ 98
  Sport Partners ................................................................................................................................. 105
  Corporate Partners .......................................................................................................................... 108
  Network Partners ............................................................................................................................. 113
Evidence of Growth in IOR Activity and its Implications for NSC (City) ........................................ 114

CHAPTER 5: Factors Influencing Partnership Formation: Strategic, Situational, and Resource-Based
Considerations ......................................................................................................................................... 122
Preconditions for Partnership Formation ............................................................................................ 123
  a) Primary Condition: Interdependence ...................................................................................... 123
  b) Primary Condition: Convergence of Objectives ...................................................................... 130
    Determinants of Partnership Formation – Converging Objectives to Form Partnership .......... 131
    Motivation to Form Partnerships – NSC (City) ........................................................................ 133
    Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) – Founding Partners ............................ 143
    Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) – Sport Partners .................................... 147
    Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) – Corporate Partners ............................ 152
    Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) - Network Partners ............................... 156
Discussion of Findings on the Convergence of Objectives ................................................................ 159
  c) Secondary Condition: Presence of a ‘Broker’ ............................................................................ 163
d) Secondary Condition: Presence of a Network ............................................................................. 167
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexities, Tensions, and Challenges in the Dynamics of Partnership Forma...</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 6: Managing Multiple Partnerships: Interaction, Exchange, and Dynamics</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Elements</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives and Strategy</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Responsibility and Authority</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Control Facilities and Systems</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Costs, Risks, Returns</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processual Elements</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal / External Coordination</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Trust</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 7: Evaluating Partnership Outcomes and Effectiveness</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Level Criteria of Effectiveness</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network (Organizational Set) Level Criteria of Effectiveness</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization / Participant Level Criteria of Effectiveness</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Effectiveness Criteria for NSC (City)</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Effectiveness Criteria for NSC (City) Partners</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Discussion of Effectiveness</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 8: Observations, Conclusions and Recommendations</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synopsis of Findings</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Recommendations</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Conclusions and Recommendations</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Conclusions and Recommendations</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Comments</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I – List of Acronyms Used in Dissertation</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II – Document Inventory</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III: Letter of Introduction</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix IV: Sample Informed Consent Form</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix V: UBC Ethics Approval</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix VI: Interview Guides</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix VII: List of Codes</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix VIII: Informant Pseudonyms</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.2: Breakdown of informant number, role, and relationship type..............................................77
Table 4.1: Partner financial contribution and percentage of total organizational revenue..........................89
Table 4.2: Federal government contributions to NSCs since 1994.................................................................100
Table 4.3: Provincial government contributions to the NSC (City) since 1995.............................................101
Table 4.4: COC's contributions to NSCs since 1995......................................................................................102
Table 4.5: University contributions to NSC (City) since 1994......................................................................103
Table 4.6: OLO’s contributions to NSC (City) since 1994..........................................................104
Table 4.7: CAC's contributions to NSC (City) since 1994.........................................................................104
Table 4.8: Increase of NSC (City) partners from 1994 – 2001.................................................................116
Table 5.1: Quotations illustrating strategic interdependence among partners............................................129
Table 5.2: Representative quotations for asymmetrical motivations from focal NSC..............................135
Table 5.3: Representative quotations for necessity motivations from focal NSC......................................137
Table 5.4: Representative quotations for efficiency motivations from focal NSC......................................139
Table 5.5: Representative quotations for stability motivations from focal NSC.......................................140
Table 5.6: Representative quotations for legitimacy motivations from focal NSC.....................................141
Table 5.7: Founding Partners’ representative quotations for efficiency motivations.............................144
Table 5.8: Founding Partners’ representative quotations for legitimacy motivations.............................145
Table 5.9: Founding Partners’ representative quotations for reciprocity motivations.............................147
Table 5.10: Sport Partners’ representative quotations for asymmetry motivations.................................148
Table 5.11: Sport Partners’ representative quotations for necessity motivations......................................149
Table 5.12: Sport Partners’ representative quotations for efficiency motivations....................................150
Table 5.13: Sport Partners’ representative quotations for stability motivations........................................151
Table 5.14: Corporate Partners’ representative quotations for legitimacy motivations..........................154
Table 5.15: Corporate Partners’ representative quotations for reciprocity motivations..........................156
Table 5.16: Network Partners’ representative quotations for reciprocity motivations...............................157
Table 5.17: Network Partners’ representative quotations for necessity motivations................................158
Table 5.18: Network Partners’ representative quotations for efficiency motivations............................158
Table 5.19: Summary of partnership formation objectives........................................................................159
Table 5.20: Summary of determinants of partnership formation in case study (Matrix)..............................160
Table 5.21: Representative quotations for presence of a broker...............................................................166
Table 5.22: Quotations illustrating presence of interpersonal network between partners........................169
Table 5.23: Summary of preconditions for partnership formation with NSC.............................................171
Table 5.24: Partnership meanings and understandings.............................................................................177
Table 5.25: Characterizations of dyadic relationships................................................................................183
Table 5.26: Overview of partnership interactions for NSC (City)..............................................................189
Table 5.27: Competition / collaboration dichotomy....................................................................................192
Table 6.1: Quotations related to shifting strategies and objectives between partners...............................201
Table 6.2: Role allocations and expectations within partnerships............................................................205
Table 6.3: Quotations illustrating ambiguity in representativeness............................................................210
Table 6.4: Formal support and control structures.......................................................................................213
Table 6.5: Monitoring and reporting mechanisms......................................................................................217
Table 6.6: Issues related to the division of costs, risks and returns.............................................................224
Table 6.7: Coordination and communication between partners...............................................................230
Table 6.8: Factors influencing development of trust among partners.......................................................235
Table 6.9: Examples of political interactions between partners..................................................................242
Table 7.1: Community level measures of sport network effectiveness.....................................................254
Table 7.2: Olympic Games medal count and standings for Canada since 1988.......................................256
Table 7.3: Tenure of partnership relationships with NSC (City).................................................................260
Table 7.4: Network level of organizational set effectiveness....................................................................263
Table 7.5: NSC (City) athlete medal performances in international competitions.....................................265
Table 7.6: Measures of organizational / partnership level effectiveness..................................................270
Table 7.7: Partnership effectiveness: Community, network, & organization levels of analysis...............281
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: The phases of collaboration.................................................................23
Figure 4.1: Schematic of the NSC's organizational set...........................................91
Figure 5.1: Sport Canada contributions of 2000-01..................................................124
Figure 5.2: Example of funding flow among organizations involved in study.................126
Figure 5.3: Preconditions of partnership formation in the NSC (City) organizational set – Reframed....197
Figure 6.1: Complexity of linkages in multiple organization partnership structures..........................208
Figure 6.2: Reframed summary of partnership interaction variables.................................248
Figure 7.1: World Championships medal counts for Canada since 1990..............................257
Figure 8.1: Phases of collaboration – REFRAMED......................................................293
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamics, challenges, and complexities encountered in the establishment, management, and evaluation of multiple interorganizational relationships among a nonprofit organization and its partners in the government, nonprofit, and private sectors. The rationale underpinning this study is to broaden the understanding of partnerships from the nonprofit perspective. As much research has explored relationships between corporate entities in the for-profit sector (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Doz & Hamel, 1998; Gulati, 1998), the results of these empirical investigations have often been assumed or taken at face value in their application to the nonprofit sector. Additionally, this study specifically addresses the issue of the examination of not only dyadic relationships with one sector (i.e., nonprofit - corporate relationships have traditionally been the focus for writing in this area (Austin, 2000, Sagawa & Segal, 2000) and much of the literature are accounts of leaders’ and managers’ experiences with partnerships as opposed to empirical studies), but rather with an array of organizations from other sectors including nonprofit and government. Thus, the domain of amateur sport offers a unique context and will provide an excellent opportunity to expand comprehension on various aspects of the partnership process for nonprofit organizations. Moreover, an inquiry into three phases of the partnership process (formation, management, and assessment of outcomes) provides a more in-depth analysis and exposes the issues and context necessary to understand the challenges and complexities associated with each of these phases.

In this chapter, the research project and its context are introduced, and the relevant concerns and issues associated with the phenomenon of interorganizational partnerships are outlined. Key factors underpinning the adoption of this new strategic approach are explored and several of the challenges and complexities associated with this approach are identified. Furthermore, the general developments of partnerships and their relevance to nonprofit organizations are detailed, and are situated specifically in the realm of Canadian nonprofit amateur sport organizations, the organizational sector within which this investigation was conducted. Finally, the research questions used to frame the investigation in this thesis and the potential contributions of this study are presented.
The Partnership Phenomenon

The 21st century has been envisaged as the age of alliances and partnerships (Austin, 2000). This view has been embraced by both practitioners and academics in many fields of study, and reflects how establishing alliances and partnerships has now become a central strategy in organizational design, structure, and function in the government, nonprofit, and private sectors (Austin, 2000; Doz & Hamel, 1998; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Spekman, Isabella, & MacAvoy, 2000).

Traditional western management theory typically viewed organizations as individual entities operating in potentially hostile and uncertain environments. Theorists posited that in order to survive and prosper, organizations needed to minimize potential and real threats, maximize their opportunities and exploit and manipulate their stakeholders for maximum advantage (cf. Jarillo, 1988; Kanter, 1989; Morgan, 1997; Park, 1996; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991). Organizations engaged in competition and rivalry to promote their own self-interest. Kanter (1989) illustrated how organizational theory literatures were dominated by a paranoid world view and that the prevailing philosophy was one of self-reliance, with a deep resentment for resource dependencies which forced organizations into relationships with other organizations. The perception was that organizations would seek any way to increase their own advantage in a relationship (Kanter, 1989). When it came to interacting with organizations in the external environment, there were two options available to organizations. They could either compete against the external entity to keep it outside of its own boundaries, or swallow and incorporate the entity (through mergers and acquisitions), thereby protecting and maintaining the organization’s boundaries.

This perception of organizational interaction however, has undergone a metamorphosis in recent years. A new approach to theorizing about the way organizations operate and are structured has emerged, precipitated by environmental factors, such as globalization, changing technologies, economic challenges, and evolving social expectations. The practices of collaborating, coordinating, creating partnerships, and cooperating have now become a main organizing principle for organizations in all sectors to deal with these environmental factors (cf. Clegg & Hardy, 1999; Doz & Hamel, 1998; Gray, 1989; Harrigan, 1995; Kanter, 1989, 1994). In practice, governments are embracing public-private partnerships (Boase, 2000; Kouwenhoven, 1993), while private enterprise organizations are creating strategic alliances, and joint ventures (Das & Teng, 2002; Osborn, Hagedoorn, Denekamp, Duysters, & Baughn, 1998; Spekman, Forbes, Isabella, & MacAvoy, 1998), and nonprofit organizations are reaching
out to establish collaborative relationships with other non-traditional partners (Alexander, 2000; Andreasen, 1996; Blau & Rabrenovic, 1991; York & Zychlinski, 1996). This intimates that innovation, strategic value, and effectiveness are more commonly generated within network or partnership types of interactions among organizations. Now, both academic as well as popular management literatures promote concepts such as ‘cooperating to compete’ or ‘co-opetition’ (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 1996; Preiss, Goldman, & Nagel, 1997). As a result, there is evidence to suggest that the extent and diversity of partnership activity has grown away from the periphery of an organization’s operations to where partnerships are now increasingly incorporated into an organization’s business level strategy (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Gray, 1989; Kanter, 1989).

The rationales for seeking and establishing partnerships with other organizations range from a means to enter into new markets, to a response to changes in their social, political, cultural, and technological environments, to accessing resources, power, knowledge, skills, and abilities that they would not have been able to develop or access on their own (Harrigan, 1988; Harrigan & Newman, 1990; Inkpen, 1996; Pfeffer, 1987). Capitalizing on opportunity and reducing uncertainty have been included among key factors in the decision to establish partnerships (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Kanter, 1994). According to several authors, interorganizational relationships are now generally considered to be beneficial and vital to the work and community lives of most people, and therefore, it is critical that academics and practitioners understand and effectively manage their complexity (Andereck, 1997; Child & Faulkner, 1998; Doz & Hamel, 1998; Wood & Gray, 1991).

The realization that partnerships have become firmly entrenched in a business’ thinking and strategy has resulted in what some authors have called a ‘partnership feeding frenzy’ (Spekman et al., 2000) or a pro-partnership bias, where practitioners and researchers exploring the phenomenon report on the tremendous advantages of engaging in collaborative relationships and describe the eagerness of organizations to form partnerships. Contributing to the pro-partnership bias in both the popular and academic literature, a number of authors have argued that organizations are never completely self-sufficient but frequently depend on other organizations to survive (Axelrod, 1984; Clegg & Hardy, 1999; Gray, 1989; Oliver, 1990, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This argument stems from the strategic dimensions of collaboration. It originates from the view that by focusing on enhancing an organization’s
strength, partnerships and alliances will offer new opportunities and help reduce potential threats in its environment; a situation that might not be possible had the organization attempted to achieve its goals and objectives alone. Furthermore, additional pressures to be more accountable, efficient, cost conscious, and professional have led organizations to engage in collaborative relationships (Gray, 1989; Oliver, 1991; Wilson, 1992).

In contrast to the pro-partnership position evident in much of the literature, other authors report the high failure and termination rates associated with partnerships and alliances (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Inkpen & Beamish, 1997; Spekman et al., 2000). Several barriers have been identified that may contribute to difficulties and inefficiencies in interorganizational relationships, and ultimately to failure. Barriers to successful partnerships may include partner manipulation or domination, differences in philosophy and values, lack of communication, lack of clear purpose, hidden agendas, unequal and unacceptable balance of power and control, financial and time commitments, and/or inequalities in return on investment (Harrigan, 1988; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Kanter, 1989; Oliver, 1991; Pant & Lachman, 1998; Spekman et al., 1998; Wilson, 1992; Wolfe, Meenaghan, & O'Sullivan, 2002). The risks and tradeoffs of partnerships, therefore, must be a key consideration for organizations contemplating the formation of any type of organizational interaction. Both the benefits and complexities of partnerships will be discussed in more detail shortly.

Organizational partnerships, in which exchanges of resources occur, can take on a multitude of forms. In the situation of cross-sector collaboration, even more forms of exchange are available to organizations. Because of the range of interaction types, it is critical to demarcate the scope of the research undertaken for this thesis. As such, the definition of partnership employed in this research will now be presented together with the justification for its use.

**A Definition of Partnership**

It is fundamental to understand the term partnership as it was used in this study before discussing the implications and relevance of interorganizational relationships. A criticism of the partnership literature concerns the lack of consistency among researchers in attributing a definition of the notion of partnerships (Auster, 1994; Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Wood & Gray, 1991). The multitude of different forms that partnerships can take contributes to this lack of consistency. Examples of the
multitude of structures of interorganizational relationships include: joint ventures, strategic alliances, board interlocks, contracting agreements, sponsorships, licensing agreements, long-term purchasing and supply contracts, joint development projects, or other resource and information exchange programs. In cross-sector collaborations for example, exchange structures can be funding relationships, philanthropic exchanges, or in-kind contributions. Typically, many of these exchanges have been broadly termed 'partnership'. This makes theoretical and empirical consistency difficult and can affect the interpretation and validity of results and conclusions.

In light of this criticism, there were general weaknesses in the definitions forwarded by authors who have studied partnerships. Furthermore, many of the definitions reviewed appeared to lack key ingredients that would encompass the relationships under investigation in this study. Thus, components of several definitions provided in extant literature have been integrated to develop a more encompassing notion of the partnership phenomenon in nonprofit organizations (cf. Oliver, 1990; Park, 1996; Roberts & Bradley, 1991; Spekman et al., 2000; Wood & Gray, 1991).

Wood and Gray (1991) developed a definition for collaboration which stated that “collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (p. 146). While encompassing several important variables such as the maintenance of organizational autonomy, interaction and exchange, and a common problem domain, this definition is missing a few critical elements. Specifically, the temporal dimension is missing. That is to say, collaboration is not a once only interaction, it is a dynamic ongoing process that changes and evolves over time. In addition, the notion of a partnership being mutually advantageous (although not always equitable) for stakeholders, which is not included in Wood and Gray’s definition, is a significant aspect organizations consider when entering into a relationship with another organization. Spekman et al. (1998) addressed these issues when they defined an alliance as a “...close, long-term, mutually beneficial agreement between two or more partners in which resources, knowledge, and capabilities are shared with the objective of enhancing the competitive position of each partner” (p. 748). Oliver (1990) also formulated a definition of partnership which stated that interorganizational relationships (IORs) “...are the relatively enduring transactions, flows and linkages that occur among or between an organization and one or more organizations in its
environment” (p. 241). This definition, while including key dimensions previously outlined, does not address the issues of conscious or voluntary membership and organization identified by Roberts and Bradley (1991) and Park (1996). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, partnership was defined as a voluntary, close, long-term, planned strategic action between two or more organizations with the objective of serving mutually beneficial purposes in a problem domain. The terms collaboration, exchange, interorganizational relationship (IOR), and partnership are used in this thesis to describe the interaction between two or more organizations that engage in exchanges.

The Complexities of Organizational Partnerships

As a result of their perceived potential, interorganizational partnerships have come to be seen in practice and reflected in the academic literature as a means of reducing uncertainty, acquiring resources, and solving organizational problems. It is often assumed that stakeholders collaborate voluntarily, sharing common goals, and equal power (Hardy & Phillips, 1998). Hardy and Phillips however, maintained that several issues might thwart or impair partnerships including exploitation, repression, questionable management practices, unfairness, and asymmetrical power relations, and that these issues are often neglected in the literature on collaboration. They also stated that a closer look needs to be taken at apparent cooperation to ensure that asymmetrical power relations are not overwhelming interorganizational relationships, thereby reducing the likelihood of synergy and creativity.

Although organizations enter into partnerships to capitalize on opportunity and reduce uncertainty, factors such as the loss of autonomy in decision-making, power, conflict, and control may create new challenges and raise additional uncertainties. Issues such as power struggles, control, conflict, trust, commitment, and unfairness are often neglected in the literature on collaboration (cf. Andreasen, 1996; Child & Faulkner, 1998; Gray, 1989; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Kanter, 1989; Oliver, 1990; Park, 1996). Kanter (1989) identified several of the political, management, interpersonal, and strategic vulnerabilities of partnerships. These included uneven levels of commitment, power imbalances, strategic shifts, imbalances of benefits, conflicting loyalties, premature trust, under-management, conflicts over scope, insufficient integration and absence of a common framework, and organizational politics. To these partnership vulnerabilities, Huxham and Macdonald (1992) added omission (where activities important to the achievement of objectives fail to be carried out. They may not have been identified, or do not fall
under responsibilities, or one organization assumes another organization is doing them), divergence (actions of various organizations become diluted across a range of activities rather than used towards common goals), counter-production (where organizations unknowingly work against the other), repetition (where two or more organizations carry out an action or task which need to be done only by one), and loss of control. Andreasen (1996) identified further consequences associated with the ineffective management of partnerships including wasted resources (alliances require time and effort which may compromise other activities), loss of organizational flexibility (partners may impose restrictions, guidelines, and limitations), and structural atrophy (a heavy reliance upon one partner, investments of time and energy in maintaining that relationship instead of dedicating energies to exploring the potential of alternative partners). Along the same lines, Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) suggested that partnerships may prevent managers from taking initiative in developing some essential organizational skills and capabilities because their partners already have them, thereby lulling them into a state of complacency.

These vulnerabilities have led to enormous difficulties in the management of interorganizational relationships (Park, 1996). Park suggested that the pursuit of divergent goals was a major obstacle in the coordination of multiple partners. These complexities are further underpinned by the attempt to unite co-specialized but widely different skills, knowledge, and expertise, contributed by often dissimilar partner organizations of different sizes, histories, and management styles (Doz & Hamel, 1998). Not only should this be a concern for researchers, but this is an important element for organizations to consider when they enter into partnerships with multiple organizations from different sectors, particularly when the distribution of power among them is unequal.

While the authors referred to in the previous paragraph clearly outlined the challenges associated with collaboration, they view those challenges as something that necessarily needs to be overcome and that fundamentally, the best interests of organizations are served by continuing to implement their partnership strategies (Ahuja, 2000b; Andercreek, 1997; Bergquist, Betwee, & Meuel, 1995; Harrigan, 1988; Kanter, 1994; Oliver, 1990, 1991). In other words, supporting the pro-partnership bias, these authors acknowledge that while partnerships will create some degree of complexity within their
organizations, they are still considered a good strategic alternative when operating in either turbulent or stable environments.

Much of the empirical research conducted on the topic of IORs has explored the preliminary phase, or preconditions, of establishing strategic partnerships in private, for profit organizations (cf. Bergquist et al., 1995; Kanter, 1989; Oliver, 1990). Less is known about this phase of the partnership process in nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, the aspect of partnership management has received little attention in the academic realm. In fact, Spekman et al. (1998) stated that "It would appear that while academics purport to understand the concept of alliance formation, the practice of alliance management continues to pose a significant challenge" (p. 747). Thus, while some empirical research has provided us with rationales underlying the need to establish strategic relationships, a great deal remains unknown as to the nature of these partnerships, their internal dynamics and characteristics, how they are managed and ultimately what their outcomes are. Scholars such as Doz and Hamel (1998), Kogut (1988), Park (1996), and Parkhe (1993) have suggested that the coordination of multiple partners with the purpose of achieving common goals is difficult because individual and group interests are often pursued over organizational or broader network interests and because of the high degree of managerial complexity involved in the process. Therefore, a shift in the research focus to interaction and exchange processes may provide us with insights regarding the factors that influence the management of these alliances, and may help clarify some of the unresolved questions linking partnership theory and practice.

**Partnerships and Nonprofit Organizations**

The practice of establishing linkages with other organizations has not been solely the domain of the corporate world. Public and nonprofit organizations have also begun establishing partnerships to deal with the unique challenges in their environments such as decreased funding, increasing expectations, demands for accountability, and the devolution of many health and human services to private and nonprofit agencies that remain loosely monitored and evaluated by the public entities that fund them (Austin, 2000; Blau & Rabrenovic, 1991; Pierre, 1998; Waltzer & Jacobs, 1998; Wilson, 1992). In these challenging times, nonprofit organizations realize they must become more business-like (Boyne, 2002), and businesses recognize that they must become more socially responsible (McWilliams & Seigel, 2001).
Leaders of organizations in all sectors realize that the attainment of these objectives might best be achieved through alliances or partnerships.

Many researchers who have explored the partnership phenomenon in the nonprofit sector have suggested that the nature of these strategic partnerships are complex due to the environmental challenges and the diversity of partners that are available (cf. Blau & Rabrenovic, 1991; Miller, 1980; Scott, 1983; Wilson, 1992). Complex goals, multiple constituencies, and fragmented environments often characterize the nature of nonprofit organizations (Alexander, 1998). The complexity evident in these types of organizations is often observable in performance measures which are unclear, in empirical challenges in measuring goals and objectives, in the need to comply with intricate government regulations, and in the nature of funding which is often fragmented with financial capital coming from several different sources. These factors make managing nonprofit organizations a challenge. Additionally, the location of the organization within competing sectors often pulls nonprofit organizations between institutional spheres with the realm of responsibility for societal concerns becoming more ambiguous (e.g., government, corporate, and other nonprofit organizations (Alexander, 1998)). Organizations in these different sectors often have specific managerial values, beliefs, norms, expectations, and ideologies, which may end up forcing a focal nonprofit organization in potentially incompatible directions. For example, a corporate partner might value financial profit, professional interaction, and competitive advantage, whereas a nonprofit partner might value equality, interaction, consensus, and community. Furthermore, an organization’s goals and objectives may conflict with those of their partners, their multiple constituencies may not have the same perceptions of the rationale behind the partnership, or they may have differing expectations about the outcomes of the partnership (of which they may not even be aware).

For the nonprofit sector, interorganizational partnerships are encouraged and are often perceived as the only alternative in the wake of decreasing financial support from traditional funding agencies such as various levels of government. These factors have led to changes in the dynamics of the sector as well. The boundaries between public, private, and nonprofit sectors have become less distinct with the divestiture of traditionally public services and programs to the nonprofit and private sectors. The nature of the nonprofit sector has also been influenced by the entrepreneurial activity and the encroachment of
for-profit firms into areas traditionally occupied by nonprofit organizations (Austin, 2000; Blau & Rabrenovic, 1991; Dees, 1998; Selsky, 1991).

A review of the relevant nonprofit sector research reflects similarities with the interorganizational relationship literature in that it has focused predominantly on describing nonprofit – corporate partnerships, and identifying the determinants of partnership formation for these relationships (Austin, 2000; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Wilson, 1992). The trend to reach out and create alliances with other organizations is gathering momentum in the nonprofit sector due to the factors previously outlined. Therefore, in order to capitalize on the potential benefits and opportunities of strategic partnerships, we need to understand more about the collaborative process discussed above, and the practical dynamics of how these processes unfold and can be managed most effectively (Gray, 1989; Kanter, 1994; Wood & Gray, 1991). As a context to examine the issues outlined above, the amateur sport system in Canada provides an excellent setting. In this system, cross-sectoral partnerships are becoming increasingly relied upon to help maintain sufficient support for amateur athletes and coaches. Furthermore, the particular issue of partnerships in this sector has not traditionally received a great deal of research attention. The next section briefly describes the background and history of the Canadian sport system.

**Canadian Sport Organizations: The Need to Build Interorganizational Partnerships**

The Canadian sport delivery system is comprised of organizational stakeholders from several sectors including provincial and federal governments, nonprofit National Sport Federations (NSFs), and multi-sport / service organizations (i.e., Canadian Olympic Committee (COC), Commonwealth Games Association of Canada, Coaching Association of Canada (CAC))\(^1\), as well as private / corporate organizations, including professional sport, sporting good producers and retailers, corporate sponsors, and the media. Nonprofit organizations can be single sport organizations such the NSF - Swimming Canada, or organizations serving multiple stakeholders such as the COC.

The structure of the nonprofit sport organization typically consists of a volunteer board of directors involved in the policy-making and leadership of the sport in Canada, and paid staff hired to carry out the day-to-day operations of the organization. The objectives of these organizations have been driven by the interests of their members, including athletes, parents, employees, volunteers, coaches,

---

\(^1\) See Appendix I for a complete listing of acronyms used throughout this thesis.
and officials. Funding for these organizations has typically been obtained through grants or subsidies from federal and provincial governments, membership fees, fundraising initiatives, corporate sponsorships, and sales of merchandise. The mandates of these organizations are to provide programs and services to Canadian athletes – either at the developmental (i.e., grassroots) or elite level of competition. Furthermore, they promote, develop, and regulate the sport, and serve as leaders in terms of providing expertise and highly technical knowledge, advocacy, and administrative support to ensure the efficient delivery of programs and services.

These nonprofit organizations, at the centre of sport delivery in Canada, have encountered many challenges and changes in their environment recently including budgetary restraints, pressures for more accountability, closer scrutiny of management practices, and ethical athletic performance. At the same time, they have had to deal with mounting expectations of excellence in performance (Mills, 1998). Another change that has affected these sport organizations occurred in 1996, when the federal government formalized its approach to funding NSFs with the introduction of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) (Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada, 1998). The SFAF shifted government policy from funding all NSFs to funding only those meeting stringent criteria for the 1996-2001 period. As a result, many NSFs now face the challenge of generating a substantial percentage of their own revenue (through increasing membership fees, merchandising, and partnerships) rather than relying on federal funding for their subsistence. The impact has resulted in more intense pressure for a fundamental transformation in the management processes and operations of these organizations toward a more corporate and business-like focus.

As a result, partnerships have become increasingly important for sport organizations, so much so that according to Mills (1998), "...the future of sport in Canada depends on strong leadership, partnerships and accountability. It is necessary to create stronger partnerships between the public and private sectors and between the various levels of government throughout this country" (p. 1). Similarly, other authors studying sport have suggested that shifts in government funding have led to the need for sport organizations to develop and formalize relationships with partners in the system (i.e., government, nonprofit sector, and the private / corporate sector) (Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Vail, 1994). Increasingly, partnerships in amateur sport are viewed as a means to obtain the necessary funds to continue providing
programs and services to athletes, to attain a degree of legitimacy in the sport (and corporate) world, and to gain skills, knowledge, and expertise that might not have been possible to develop and implement by operating independently. This organizational strategy is relatively new for sport organizations, and consequently, administrators and staff may lack the requisite understanding and skills to identify, establish, and manage new partnerships effectively, because sport organizations traditionally relied on one source of funding for their livelihood (i.e., the federal government). Supporting this claim, Thibault and Harvey (1997) suggested that one of the challenges that nonprofit sport organizations face is the lack of knowledge regarding the formalization and strategic management processes associated with the creation and management of partnerships. They argued that without a formal plan or map to guide the development of linkages, Canadian sport organizations might face serious managerial and organizational setbacks such as loss of funding, targeting inappropriate partners, or investing too many resources into inefficient relationships. A defined partnership strategy, they felt, would allow organizations to formalize how they identify the organizations with whom they want to partner, how these links are initiated and fostered, and what steps organizations take to assess if, and to what extent, their partnerships are successful. Given the administrative work necessary in initiating, developing, and fostering linkages, and assessing their effectiveness, the formulation and implementation of appropriate partnership strategies is crucial. The next section outlines in detail the series of events that led to the creation of a new form of sport organization, National Sport Centres (NSCs), which served as the site for this research. Also outlined are some of the key milestones in their organizational development that led to an emphasis on partnerships as a strategic imperative.

The Evolution of Canadian National Sport Centres: A New Form of Sport Organization

The federal government has provided financial support for the Canadian sport system for several decades because elite amateur sport was used as a vehicle for the government to achieve several objectives: for propaganda purposes to promote the nation, as an instrument of social cohesion, for the promotion of national unity and national identity, and as an instrument of economic development (e.g., construction of sports facilities, involvement of the corporate sector in sponsorships, hosting international competitions) (Macintosh, Bedecki, & Franks, 1987; Mills, 1998). Additionally, sport has been used in the promotion of foreign policy and international trade (Macintosh et al., 1987; Macintosh & Hawes, 1994;
Mills, 1998). Since the early 1960's, Canadian sport organizations relied almost exclusively on the
government to fund their activities. However, reductions over the past ten years in federal government
budgets have resulted in decreases in the level of financial contributions made to Canadian sport
organizations (i.e., in the 1985-86 fiscal year, Sport Canada's budget was $58.1 million, and in 1995-96,
it had decreased to $47.2 million). This has created a situation where sport organizations must justify
their activities (based on criteria established by the federal government through the SFAF) or seek
alternative means to maintain a consistent level of operation. There is now ample evidence that the
Canadian federal government is encouraging sport organizations to extend beyond their borders and seek
alternative avenues to secure financial resources (Mills, 1998; Summary Report on National Conference
on Sport and Corporate Sector, 1999). Nevertheless, despite encouraging Canadian sport organizations to
establish relationships with other partners, the federal government still plays an important role in sport
funding and delivery, and is often at the centre of decision-making and policy development (Macintosh et

Pursuant to the report from the Dubin Inquiry2 (1990), which conducted an in-depth investigation
of the Canadian sport delivery system, and other subsequent key reports (i.e., Best, 1994; Task Force
Report, 1992; Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada, 1998), recommendations were made regarding the
funding and administration of amateur sport. The implementation of these recommendations created a
shift in government funding which traditionally was allocated for the administration of sport in Canada to
a more 'athlete-centred' approach. This approach emphasized delivering services and programs to
athletes and coaches in a more decentralized fashion (i.e., in urban areas close to where they trained). It
was at this time that the federal government began strongly encouraging sport organizations to establish
partnerships with non-traditional partners (Summary Report on National Conference on Sport and
Corporate Sector, 1999; Task Force Report on Sport, 1992), such as private corporations from varying
industries, media, and other community, provincial, and national nonprofit groups. The rationale for these
directives was to shift the responsibility of funding amateur sport away from its traditional dependence on

2 The Dubin Inquiry resulted from Ben Johnson's positive test for performance enhancing substances at
the 1988 Summer Olympic Games in Seoul, Korea. Its objective was to investigate drug use among high
performance athletes, but evolved into a critique of the pressures associated with high performance sport
and the impact on the sport delivery system in Canada.
the federal government to other related or interested organizations. One of the vehicles proposed to achieve these objectives was the creation of an innovative approach to sport delivery – a new organization called National Sport Centre.

Since the 1980s, the concept of a system of multi-sport facilities throughout Canada has been contemplated by leaders and managers in the sport delivery system to help enhance athlete performance and to centralize training locations for national teams. Sport Canada (the federal government unit responsible for the amateur sport system in Canada) provided some financial assistance to NSFs in the early 1980s to house national level teams in specific locations across the country. These early Centres were primarily single sport Centres (e.g., for volleyball, hockey, or rowing), and did not provide an economy of scale or scope to the respective sports. More recently however (since the early 1990's), a particular structural change in the sport delivery system has been the development of a system of nonprofit Sport Centres across Canada to provide programs and services exclusively to elite athletes (i.e., federally carded, national athletes) in a more decentralized fashion. The Centres' initiative represents a commitment by three national organizations to address current issues in Canadian sport in collaboration. As such, Sport Canada, the COC, and the CAC have partnered to launch this network of NSCs which are intended to complement NSF programming in the pursuit of high performance excellence. The focus is on coordinating access and delivery of essential support services to athletes from a number of different sports.

In 1993, a pilot NSC was established. The purpose of the first NSC was to enhance the training environment for elite athletes to improve Canadian performances in international competitions. Over time, new Centres were created to work together with NSFs to coordinate the access and delivery of essential support services to athletes and coaches. Sport Canada's involvement in these Centres reflects the federal government's continued interest in supporting elite athletes and the development of the Canadian sport system. The COC's original focus was on the athlete service component of NSC programming. This commitment remains but has expanded to include a concern for the broader aspects of the Centres' activities. The CAC's involvement recognizes the Centres' opportunities and benefits for coach education and employment and as an optimal training environment for the pursuit of athlete excellence.
Several principles underpinned the creation of these Centres. These included (principles related to organizational structure, operations, and partnerships are italicized): to contribute to the holistic development of athletes (performance, personal, social, career); to provide a training environment near athletes’ homes; to increase cost effectiveness by providing programming and services on a multi-sport basis (economies of scale); to increase efficiencies through partnership and the coordination of programming among sport organizations and sport funding agencies; to lever additional resources for amateur sport from the public, education, and private sectors. The last three principles highlight the pressures faced by Canadian sport organizations to become less dependent on government funding, and more business-like, effective, and accountable (Government of Canada, 1985; Harvey, Thibault, & Rail, 1995).

Currently, there are nine NSCs throughout Canada at different stages of organizational evolution. Calgary, the first Centre created, has officially been in operation since 1994 (unofficially it has supported athletes since the 1988 Olympic Winter Games), and has several athletic and technical facilities housed in the University of Calgary and in the City of Calgary’s sport facilities. The NSCs in Montréal and Winnipeg were established in 1997 and are linked with facilities from the 1976 Olympic Summer Games and the University of Winnipeg (host of the 1999 Pan American Games), respectively. The NSCs in Toronto and Vancouver were founded in 1998 and currently operate as 'virtual centres', that is, they do not have dedicated facilities for athletes to access, but rather offer services and programs via extensive relationship building in the community with key stakeholders. The Centre in Victoria, the Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development (CCSD), is unique from the existing network of NSCs because of its source of funding. As a result of the successful Commonwealth Games held in Victoria in 1994, a legacy fund was created and the CCSD operates primarily from these monies. Efforts are being made to include the CCSD in planning related to the national network of Centres. In 1999, a seventh Centre was established in Halifax. This centre is unique in that all four Atlantic Provinces have collaborated to create opportunities for athletes from eastern Canada. Most recently in 2000, two new NSCs have been created in Québec City and Regina (Canadian Heritage, 2000a, 2000b). This network also includes additional regional Centres (e.g., Vancouver's Centre now has smaller satellite locations throughout BC, in Whistler, Abbotsford, Nanaimo, and the Okanagan), with a smaller scope of activity, that are developed in
conjunction with the hosting of future major games and Canada Games sites, or in locations where there are concentrations of national or provincial level athletes. Currently, several provinces are launching provincial and regional centre programs which are linked with the national network (Canadian Heritage, 2002a).

The impetus to expand the network of Centres across the country has been reinforced by various demands from the sport community. The first factor was the enthusiastic endorsement of the NSC in Calgary by elite athletes, coaches, and NSFs during the first two years of its operation. These stakeholders expressed a strong desire for the creation of additional Centres so that access could be improved for athletes throughout Canada. Secondly, the concept of a national network was strengthened with the endorsement of NSCs by the COC, who pledged $4 million to help create a network of Centres over the four year period between 1997-2000 (Canadian Heritage, 2002a).

Each NSC has developed its own culture and areas of expertise (e.g., sport specialties, sport medicine, athlete services). As a result, Centres may differ on the basis of their unique sport infrastructure environments, local funding and in-kind contributing partners, and the specific athlete, coach, and sport clientele. These organizations are founded on a network of partnerships with three sectors to deliver their programs and services: government, private/commercial, and nonprofit. This move towards the establishment of NSCs triggered the creation of a network of specific partnerships which I believe was ‘fertile ground’ from which to explore the establishment, management, and assessment of these IORs.

The nature and relevance of partnerships to NSCs will be explored further in this thesis, but a brief background of the structure of the larger network will now be presented. As outlined in the following passage, in addition to the three original national funding partners, each NSC is ‘encouraged’ to establish partnerships with their respective provincial government, other relevant local and provincial sport organizations, and the private-commercial sectors.

The National Sport Centre is based on a partnership of organizations committed to the development of high performance athletes. As such, Centre collaboration with National Sport Federations and Provincial Sport Organizations is essential to enable the Centre to support and enhance a comprehensive athlete development model that spans both national and provincial jurisdictions. In addition, the participation of the respective provincial government, education institutions which support the high performance athlete development process, other relevant local sport organizations, and, in the longer term, the corporate/private sector, is a key success factor for each Centre. (Canadian Heritage, 1998, p. 2)
The Centres promote and facilitate interaction among service providers (e.g., massage therapists, physiotherapists, or sport medicine experts) and work in partnership with local clubs, provincial sport organizations (PSOs), and NSFs to enhance the number and level of services provided to elite athletes and coaches. If the strategic partnership objectives of NSCs are considered, it is evident that by their nature the partners are very diverse (i.e., government, private, and other nonprofit) and the potential for divergent or conflicting expectations and goals may be high. Furthermore, the organizational objectives, agendas and interests of NSFs, the federal government, CAC, and the COC, may provide unique management challenges for staff at NSCs.

Thus, based on the supposition that different stakeholders in the NSC's organizational set may hold diverse views regarding the importance, objectives, and outcomes of the relationship, several important perspectives can be considered to provide an enhanced understanding of the dynamics and interactions between organizations engaged in a partnership relationship. Namely, the issue of the strategic motivations underpinning each organization's decision to engage in relationships with a particular NSC as well as a consideration of the collaborative evolution of the strategic interests of the set of organizations involved in the partnership will allow a clearer point of view regarding the processes inherent in partnerships. Additionally, the matter of resources and how they are allocated, valued, and used as elements of power or control to attain objectives that are beneficial to some organizations over others merits further exploration in this context. Finally, the question of assessing the outcomes and effectiveness of the relationships formed is also an important area of concern. Before elaborating on these perspectives in the next chapter, the purpose of this research and the research questions will be outlined.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

As an emergent and critical issue that sport organizations must face, partnerships have received relatively little attention in the sport management literature. Some authors have developed conceptual arguments to identify the preconditions associated with the establishment of partnerships in the context of sport for professional sport or municipal recreation organizations (cf. Cousens, Babiak, & Slack, 2000; Cousins & Slack, 1996; Crompton, 1998a, 1998b; James, 1999; Thibault, Frisby, & Kikulis, 1999; Thibault & Harvey, 1997; Vail, 1994). However, little is known about the approaches adopted by
nonprofit amateur sport organizations to create partnerships, how these organizations manage and maintain their relationships, how they determine whether partners are satisfied with their IORs, or whether organizational outcomes are being met through these partnerships. It is essential to understand the processes of partnership establishment, management, and assessment in order to provide theoretical and practical insights to the partnership issues faced by sport organizations in Canada. In addition, as much of the sport management literature appears to uphold the pro-partnership stance evident in the organizational management literature, issues of self-interest, power, politics, and social concerns have not been investigated in sport management studies (with the exception of Frisby, Thibault, and Kikulis (in press)). This study proposes to fill some of those gaps.

Exploring the complex nature of partnerships in nonprofit organizations and the challenges and opportunities they afford has significant implications for theory and research as well as practice and policy. The rationale for this study was grounded in the need to better understand the dynamic and multifaceted interactions inherent in the strategic partnerships of NSCs in Canada. This research outlines and explains preconditions and processes associated with the establishment and management of IORs among these nonprofit sport organizations and their partners. Furthermore, since few empirical studies have taken into consideration the aspect of the outcomes of partnership relationships, this research will consider a framework with which to better evaluate the effects of partnership interaction. Thus, in order to better understand the complexities of these relationships, three phases of the partnership process will be considered. The purpose of this research, therefore, was to explore the dynamics, challenges, and complexities encountered in the establishment and management of interorganizational partnerships, and the effects they have had on individual organizational outcomes as well as their impact on the broader Canadian sport delivery system. In order to investigate these dimensions, three research questions were developed.

RQ1: What were the strategic motivations of partnership creation, in particular, what interdependencies and other preconditions existed that led sport organizations to initiate relationships with other organizations?

RQ2: How did the focal organization (i.e., NSC) manage its multiple partners? Specifically, what political activities and social interaction factors were involved in the management of these partnerships? What complexities, challenges, and tensions were associated with this phase of the partnership lifecycle?
RQ3: What elements were perceived by the various organizations involved in this partnership network to determine the outcomes and ultimate effectiveness of the venture?

Contributions

This research anticipates contributing to theory, as well as organizational practice and policy, in the area of IORs. As stated earlier, much of the research in this field examines the preconditions associated with establishing partnerships among for profit organizations (Clegg & Hardy, 1999; Kanter, 1989; Oliver, 1990). Less attention has been given to this concern in nonprofit organizations, particularly in relationships other than with corporate partners. This study will provide a theoretical contribution by extending the empirical emphasis of investigating the motivations underpinning partnership formation to the examination of the processes associated with managing IORs, and how they are connected.

An additional contribution to the partnership literature will be the integration of a variety of theoretical approaches in order to more fully explain partnership formation and exchange. Empirical research has typically examined partnerships from a one-dimensional view, and as Wood and Gray (1991) argued, it is difficult to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of partnership using only one theoretical perspective. By employing multiple approaches to this phenomenon (e.g., resource-based view, resource dependency theory, transaction costs), a richer and more detailed perspective of interorganizational partnerships is attained. This research will be anchored in theory and will build upon empirical data to advance our knowledge about the challenges and opportunities related to the management of interorganizational partnerships.

As a contribution to practice, findings from this study may be applied by nonprofit sport organization administrators to better understand their partners’ motivations to form IORs. Extending this knowledge, managers may be better able to design and implement their partnerships by being able to target the partner with the best strategic fit to their organization, and subsequently to cater to their partners’ needs. Additionally, by recognizing elements that might prove detrimental (or conversely, advantageous) to relationships, administrators can more effectively identify and act upon important factors that may influence the behaviour and performance of organizations in partnerships. The findings will allow administrators in sport organizations to better understand the impact of their strategies on the relationships with their partners and will highlight for practitioners some of the outcomes of power struggles, and decision-making, conflict, trust, and control issues. Practitioners can use this information
to anticipate and manage obstacles and challenges and ensure that the relationships they build with their partners will flourish.

This research may contribute to two types of policy. First, it may contribute to government policies regarding the delivery of sport in Canada. Because of shifts in the federal and provincial governments' role in financing sport organizations and their push toward the formation of partnerships from different sectors, it is in the best interest of the government to ensure that these partnerships are successful and that the goals and objectives of all of the partners are being met to ensure long term involvement. Since policy guides a public organization's practice, this study can impact policies of the federal and provincial governments regarding sport organization partnerships and related plans, rules, and guidelines. Studies such as this one can be instrumental in contributing to policy making or policy change.

Second, the results of this study may serve to influence organizational policy. Plans, guidelines, and procedures relating to how partnerships are established, managed, and evaluated can help direct and maintain consistencies for an organization in its interaction with other partners. Additional organizational documents such as goals, objectives, and missions could also incorporate process issues examined in this study for the benefit of IORs.
CHAPTER 2: 
SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Interest in partnerships and alliances has not only proliferated in popular press business periodicals and in practice, but in the academic realm as well. A growing body of literature on the advantages and pitfalls of IORs, their high failure rate, and their growing prevalence in business strategies is now pervasive in many business, economic, sociology, and nonprofit journals. Very little research focuses on management, structure, outcomes, and other organizational issues associated with partnerships (Austin, 2000; Kanter, 1989, 1994; Spekman et al., 2000; Spekman et al., 1998). While a great deal of the partnership formation literature that does exist centres on private / corporate business (cf. Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Hitt, Dacin, Levitas, Arregle Edhec, & Borza, 2000; Oliver, 1990; Parkhe, 1993), and to a more limited extent on the nonprofit sector (Andreasen, 1996; Austin, 2000; Blau & Rabrenovic, 1991; Dees, 1998; Uhlik, 1995; Wilson, 1992), theoretical contributions to the formation, management and assessment of outcomes of IORs in sport management have been relatively limited, and empirical investigations of this phenomenon in sport organizations have been practically non-existent.

This chapter will review the literature related to partnership establishment, management, and outcomes, examine gaps and disparities in this literature, and outline the framework adopted for this study. First, the chapter presents an overview of the phases of the collaboration model used as the framework for this study. Since Wood and Gray (1991) argued that it is almost impossible for one theoretical approach to explain all aspects of partnership formation or organizational interaction, this thesis will pay particular attention to: (1) the strategic elements of partnership formation (including a consideration of resource dependency, exchange issues, core competencies and strategic ‘advantage’), as well as (2) the political and social dynamics involved in the creation and maintenance of the relationship. In order to make a case for the use of these approaches, the chapter presents a discussion of other theories used to investigate and understand IORs, and their particular benefits and drawbacks. By using multiple lenses to investigate partnerships, important learnings can be gained about IORs among Canadian NSCs and the sequence of events that evolve through organizational interaction.
Conceptual Framework

In order to explore the processes and motivating factors behind relationship formation, the dynamics of managing partnerships, and the criteria to assess their effectiveness, I drew upon several theoretical approaches and incorporated them into a comprehensive conceptual framework. The objective was to develop a research framework with a solid theoretical base that would be capable of capturing the richness and complexity of IORs. This framework is used throughout this thesis as a map to verify and build upon previous literature in the area of IORs, and furthermore to shed light on the interconnectedness of each of the phases through which partnerships progress.

Wood and Gray (1991) outlined three phases in the sequence of partnership development (illustrated in Figure 2.1). They are preconditions (environmental and organizational factors that exist and influence an organization’s decision to enter an alliance); processes (the establishment of the relationship, and its ongoing interaction and exchange); and outcomes (attainment of goals and objectives, as well as the evolution and changing nature of the alliance over time) (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Gulati, 1998; Kouwenhoven, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Wood & Gray, 1991).

To gain a better understanding of some of the reasons why public, nonprofit, and private organizations decided to enter into partnership as well as the focal NSC’s own motivations to form IORs, I considered several theoretical approaches presented in the literature that examined and described IOR formation, interaction and outcomes. Several theoretical models have been used to explain IOR interaction including transaction cost economics, strategic choice, institutional theory, organizational learning, stakeholder theory, and resource dependence (Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Kogut, 1988; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). As Child and Faulkner (1998) suggested "An overview of the main perspectives which can be brought to bear on cooperative strategy and management of alliances indicates that they provide numerous insights. Most of these (perspectives) are still underdeveloped...there are still potential synergies to understanding which could come about from combining some of them" (p.39). Out of a number of potentially fruitful approaches to examining partnership relationships, this study draws on two major approaches including a strategic management perspective (resource-based view, resource dependency, core competencies,
Figure 2.1: The phases of collaboration

Preconditions — Processes — Outcomes

Environment

Determining Need
- Interdependence
- Presence of network
- Convergence of objectives
- Presence of a broker

Strategic Factors (Antecedents)
- Asymmetry
- Reciprocity
- Necessity
- Legitimacy
- Efficiency
- Stability

Forming relationship
- Mutual trust
- Division of costs, risks, returns
- Objectives & strategy
- Conflict regulation

Interaction / exchange
- Division of responsibility & authority
- Resource exchange
- Business oriented thinking and acting
- Internal coordination

Evaluating
- Whose needs are being met?
  How are outcomes evaluated?
- Success: continue relationship / make adjustments if necessary
  Failure: terminate relationship or try alternative.
- Creation of social capital as possible outcome

Multiple partners =
- Multiple values
- Multiple expectations
- Multiple interests =
  Multiple challenges

Effectiveness
- Attainment of objectives & interests

Efficiency
coordination theories), and a social perspective (power-political, social contract, social exchange theories). The strategic perspective (an approach based on rational, logical and balanced assumptions) was selected to contrast the more normative and sentient features of social interaction (Child & Faulkner, 1998). Additionally, other views such as economic perspectives (transaction cost, economic efficiency theories), and stakeholder management views are incorporated into the overall framework, albeit to a lesser extent. These establish analytical dimensions that, taken together, allow a broader examination of the effect of partnerships on the efficiency, socio-political and structural aspects of a set of collaborating organizations. A more extensive discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches as well as the contributions they make to this study are outlined next, followed by a more detailed description of the phases of collaboration framework used to examine this phenomena in amateur sport.

Strategic Aspects of Partnership Formation

One aspect of this study is underpinned by the need to understand the motivation behind partnership formation and subsequently, how it affects the management of the relationship, and assessment of the outcomes of interaction. By considering theories of strategic management, prominence is given to key aspects such as organizational structure, resources acquisition and use, and strategic choice. This approach considers a theoretical logic of needs, opportunities, interdependence, and desire for control as central issues in a discussion of the formation of IORs.

The strategic management literature identifies important primary startup conditions, critical management processes as well as criteria for effectiveness that organizations in a partnership must consider. The strategic management process is concerned with formulating and implementing strategic decisions and directions for an organization. It considers the mission and major goals of the organization, the external environment and internal resources, strategic choice, organizational structure, the selection of integration and control systems, feedback, and assessment of outcomes (Galbraith, 1991; Hill & Jones, 1992; MacMillan & Jones, 1986; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1991; Porter, 1996). In this context, a strategic orientation explores how organizations can reduce threats and capitalize on opportunities using IORs. It also considers how the partners in an alliance regulate their behaviours so that collective gains are achieved. According to Quinn (1991), a strategy is a plan or pattern for integrating an organization's
goals, policies, and action sequences into a cohesive whole. The organizational goals will define where
the company wants to go, and the strategy defines how the organization will get there.

Based on an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, managers can make
decisions about whether the organization should select a competitive or a cooperative strategy to deal
with the context of their environment and their objectives. Competitive strategies are designed to allow
an organization to gain power and secure a prime position in their organizational domain. According to a
strategic management perspective, organizations can use competitive strategies to reduce complexity in
their environment by unilaterally gaining control over vital resource supplies, not just to reduce these
external threats, but also to gain a competitive advantage (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Mintzberg & Quinn,
1991; Porter, 1996; Wood & Gray, 1991). This traditionally organization-centred approach depicts
managers of a focal organization charting an independent course of action to gain a competitive
advantage (Gray & Wood, 1991), and is the context of thinking for much of the traditional management
literature cited in the introduction of this thesis.

Cooperative strategies on the other hand, are viewed as a way to achieve economic efficiencies
by concentrating on the costs of transactions, as well as vehicles to cope with environmental turbulence
and complexity, and to advance a shared vision (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Gray & Wood, 1991; Logsdon,
1991; Wilson, 1992). Cooperative strategies are also designed to enable organizations to reduce
complexity and gain advantage in their environments, but instead of competing, it is done through
establishing relationships with organizations in their immediate environment. Cooperative strategies that
embrace organizational relationships with one or several partners go through similar strategic processes
(i.e., formulation and implementation, interaction and assessment). The challenge with cooperative
strategies, however, is that related processes need to be negotiated and enacted with the input of
various partner organizations and diverse individuals functioning in different organizational capacities.

When organizations find themselves in vulnerable strategic positions (i.e., difficult market
situations or undertaking risky or expensive strategies), there is an anticipated high payoff for engaging
in collaboration. In uncertain environments, organizations may consider a partnership strategy to
enhance access to critical resources such as special skills and financial resources or more intangible
resources such as legitimacy, power, reputation that will help to improve or enhance the organization's
strategic position. The underlying logic in this case is need (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996). It could be argued that an environment of uncertainty exists in the Canadian sport delivery system, with shifts in public funding based on governmental priorities.

A strategic management approach is used to understand an organization's structure and processes and to identify the apparent and predicted factors that may influence the direction in which the organization will move. Strategic management is seen as an entrepreneurial activity in which firms must circumvent threats and exploit opportunities (Astley, 1984). Given that partnership strategies are created and implemented to secure advantage, reduce threats, and more fundamentally to ensure organizational survival, a focus on the strategic management process is relevant for this study and is expected to help explain how formal strategic factors and forces guide interorganizational activities and interactions (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986; Lorenzoni & Baden-Fuller, 1995; MacMillan & Jones, 1986; Stone, Bigelow, & Crittenden, 1999).

Related specifically to the literature on interorganizational partnerships, strategic management theory draws attention to the obvious "need for prospective partners to achieve a fit between their respective strategies so that the alliance makes a positive contribution to the attainment of each party's objectives" (Child & Faulkner, 1998, p. 31). This theoretical approach underscores the external and contextual factors at play that may influence partners' decisions to establish relationships. Additionally, it seeks to answer questions about the types of partners that organizations seek, why they select certain partners, and how their strategies may impact relationships among other partners. According to this view, three key themes are relevant for cooperative strategies: the motives for forming alliances (affected by environmental preconditions or antecedents), the selection of compatible partners, and the need to achieve some degree of understanding and integration among the partners' expectations, structures, and systems. Child and Faulkner (1998) suggested that this perspective might be useful in exploring the determinants of partner selection and the driving forces and effects behind different methods of managing IORs. The strategic management view assumes that alliance formation and management are essentially planned, rational, and analytical activities (Auster, 1994; Child & Faulkner, 1998).

Nonprofit organizations facing pressures to operate in a more 'entrepreneurial' or business-like manner (Austin, 2000; Crompton, 1989; Wilson, 1992), have turned to the adoption of partnerships to
deal with some of their strategic concerns. Blau and Rabrenovic (1991) argued that IORs are more important to control and coordinate work for nonprofits than are bureaucratic hierarchies; and these linkages are used to integrate programs within a community, coordinate services, obtain resources, and deal with government agencies.

From a sport management perspective, Thibault and Harvey (1997) suggested that sport organizations, particularly amateur sport organizations in Canada, lacked clear and defined strategies for partnership formation and management. They discussed the need to develop distinct strategies for establishing interorganizational linkages in sport organizations. They argued that if an organization has determined that the creation of partnerships will help achieve its objectives, the following should explicitly reflect their operational intentions: "...the strategy will allow an organization to formalize how it will identify the organizations it wants to partner with, how those links will be initiated and fostered, and what mechanisms will be developed in order to allow the organizations to measure if and to what extent the links are beneficial" (Thibault & Harvey, 1997, p. 58). Next, a discussion of the role of resources in implementing and achieving organizational strategies is discussed.

**Resources:** The role of resources has been used to explain and contextualize IORs from many perspectives. One component of a strategic perspective on the formation of organizational relationships such as partnerships, alliances, and joint ventures, is the view that IORs allow organizations to conserve resources, secure access to otherwise unattainable resources, share risks and costs, and ensure more even and predictable resource flows (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Oliver, 1997). A resource dependency perspective is characterized by the presence of interdependencies between organizations because of one organization's need to acquire particular resources that another organization possesses (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Several authors (cf. Amis, Pant, & Slack, 1997; Barney, 1991a, 1991b, 2001; Hitt et al., 2000; Mahoney & Rajendran, 1992; Miller, 1980; Priem & Butler, 2001; Provan, Beyer, & Kruytbosch, 1980) have suggested that certain resources can be considered a source of competitive advantage, or attraction for collaboration, and may serve to improve the strategic position of an organization by enhancing visibility and status to other organizations and employees. Interestingly, one of the fundamental ironies of partnering according to Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) is that in order to obtain resources,
organizations must have some in the first place, and further that some resources must be expended to acquire new ones.

Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) explored a resource-based view of partnership formation, where organizations are seen as bundles of resources. They defined resources as: strengths or assets an organization has that may be tangible (financial assets, technology, information, facilities) or intangible (reputation, managerial skills, social relationships, expertise, culture). They argued that "...strategic alliances arise when firms in vulnerable strategic positions need the resources that alliances bring or when firms in strong social positions capitalize on their assets to create alliance opportunities" (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996, p. 137).

Resource dependence theory however, differs from a resource-based view of the firm in that resource dependence focuses exclusively on resources that must be obtained from external sources for an organization to survive and prosper (Barringer & Harrison, 2000). The focus of the resource-based view of organizations is internal, although there is some recognition that important internal resources can be obtained from external sources. "From a resource-based perspective, rare and difficult to imitate internal firm resources are key to the firm's acquisition and maintenance of sustainable, competitive advantage" (Barringer & Harrison, 2000, p. 372).

In interorganizational partnerships, different types of resources may be exchanged among partners, each adding its own specific value to the overall efforts of the initiative. The magnitude of the joint value created is related to the nature of the resources deployed (Barney, 2001). The resource-based view, a strategic and economic perspective of organizational functioning, can be used to provide an explanation for the competitive advantage an organization possesses based on the attributes of the resources it owns i.e., value added, rareness, and inability to be imitated (Barney, 1991b). Underlying the resource-based view is the assumption that a resource with the appropriate attributes may ensure or at least contribute to an organization's enduring competitive advantage. A resource-based view can be extended to alliances by demonstrating that resources serve as the needs and opportunities for alliance formation (i.e., a need for additional resources that alliances can provide to compete effectively or in strong social positions so that they have the resources necessary to attract and engage partners). The partnership relationships themselves can also be viewed as important resources to an organization that
allows for enhanced power or authority within a network, greater access to resources through partnership relationships. Lamming (2001) considered the relationship itself as a resource, and that relationships among actors serve as a bridge to have access to the other resources of the partner. Strong alliances between organizations are difficult to imitate, rare, and can prove extremely valuable for partnering organizations. As such, partnerships fit the criteria that allow an organization to achieve a sustained advantage.

Austin (2000) discussed resource exchange with a particular focus on their relevance to nonprofit organizations. He outlined the progression of the nature of the exchange among nonprofit organizations and corporate companies. Exchange begins with the generic transfer of resources, shifts to the exchange of core competencies, and finally at highly integrated levels of collaboration, contributes to the creation of joint value. The perspective outlined by Austin is particularly relevant as many partnerships often function at different levels of strategic integration. This exchange process is reflected in the following quotation which illustrates the relevance of resources as a motive to form partnerships, and as a central player in the evolution of the relationship itself, contributing ultimately to the strategic concerns of all partners:

Partnerships are strengthened when the partners think continually about value creation, when they scrutinize each organization's resources and capabilities to see how they can be made to generate value. As a relationship progresses, the partners move beyond generic resource transfer and begin using their core capabilities and proprietary assets to generate benefits, thereby increasing their worth to the collaboration. At the higher relationship levels, partners should seek to synergistically combine their resources to jointly create benefits, a process that enhances the value of the collaboration because it produces benefits not otherwise attainable (Austin, 2000, p. 98).

The body of literature on nonprofit organizations and partnerships tends to focus on establishing partnerships based on the need to acquire resources (i.e., primarily financial – funding strategies), or on the motivation to achieve legitimacy (i.e., legitimation strategies) and provides practical advice in that area (Austin, 2000; Stone et al., 1999; Wilson, 1992). However, the literature has not explored the nature of the transfer of those resources among partners, nor how this exchange occurs. Furthermore, the majority of this work often examines resource dependencies of the dyadic interactions between two organizations (i.e., typically nonprofit and corporate partners). It does not consider the implications to organizations that may be dependent on the resources of more than one organization and the consequences that follow.
The 'pro-partnership bias' in the management literature discussed in Chapter 1, reflects an inclination for academics and practitioners to view an alliance strategy as being an effective and desirable means to obtain organizational objectives and access to scarce and valuable resources. An opposing argument for this resource-based approach provided by Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996), suggests that gaining resources from alliances can be slow and difficult, resulting in providing the opposite effect of the original partnering objective. As such, this alternative consideration of the issue reveals that while partnerships may provide many benefits, they also may introduce new and possibly unforeseen challenges to the organization. This view has not been the focus of attention for researchers, particularly those exploring the acquisition and exchange of resources among partner organizations.

In summary, the first component of this review of literature examined the strategic aspects of creating interorganizational partnerships, specifically investigating organizational resources from both an internal and external perspective. Furthermore, it identified the types of resources that may be exchanged between partnering organizations (intangible and tangible), as well as how partners viewed the exchange of resources as contributing to the value of their organizational strategies. These theoretical views will serve as the basis to answer RQ1 and will help uncover the strategic motivations behind the formation of partnerships for not only the focal organization, but for its multiple partners. These views will also facilitate an examination of how these motivations may complement or contradict each other. Finally they will help explain the resource exchange dependencies and dynamics occurring between partnering organizations.

**Political Perspective: Interests, Conflict, Power, and Social Position**

Granovetter (1992) suggested that strategic action takes place within a social context. He claimed that particularly in uncertain settings, or in situations where relationships become important, the interplay between the strategic and the social is essential, and argued that in these cases, executives tend to rely more on social processes in determining critical firm behaviours and outcomes. This political/social platform is an important one to consider in the investigation of interorganizational partnerships as it may impact both the impetus to create relationships as well as the interaction and exchange involved in the relationships themselves. This section reviews the key political factors identified in the literature on
interorganizational partnerships and contends that a clearer understanding of the processes of partnership creation and management will be provided by considering this view.

Several authors view organizations as political systems comprised of individuals who are politically active (Gray, 1989; MacMillan & Jones, 1986; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1991; Morgan, 1997; Pfeffer, 1992). A political view of organizational interaction can be defined as the "process by which self-interested but interdependent individuals and groups seek to obtain and use power to influence the goals and objectives of the organization to further their own interests" (Hill & Jones, 1992, p. 398). This view can be extended to partnerships when more than one partner with diverse interests is introduced to a collaborating network. Establishing and managing IORs can pose particular political problems. For example, all network members, even in cases where they are formally regarded as equals by virtue of their membership, may not have the same degree of power. Issues of policy, power, conflict, trust, control, and uncertainty may emerge at all levels during the establishment and management of partnerships. These political factors contribute to shaping the collaborative effort among organizations.

The control and exchange of particular resources may introduce political or power dynamics into the relationships among organizations, and therefore, are critical factors to consider further in the formation as well as management of partnerships and in the development of the theoretical framework used for this study. This political aspect of the framework is conceptually grounded in a bargaining power and resource dependence perspective. This perspective speculates that possession or control of key resources by one entity may make other organizations dependent on that entity. In a cooperative relationship, possession of scarce resources can be a source of power for the firm controlling them because to some degree, each firm can increase or withhold resources that are attractive to its partner (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997).

The strategic management perspective outlined in the previous section described an organizational process that was based on rational decision-making and rational behaviours to attain organizational goals. The political view suggests that in organizational decision-making and strategy, these processes are not always based on rational approaches and therefore, many factors such as individual perceptions, beliefs, expectations, accepted norms and interests, control of resources, and historical interaction may foster political activity in organizational life. Hill and Jones (1992) contrast the
rational view with the political view. The rational view assumes that total information is available, that there will be agreement on organizational goals and strategies, that there will be agreement over the best avenues to achieve these goals and strategies, that decision-making is carried out by a calculated logical plan, that there will be a uniformity in values, and finally that efficiency will be the primary orientation. Rational procedures are considered by many managers to be more objective and reliable and to lead to better decisions than political behaviour. The political view, on the other hand, assumes that only selected information is available, that there will be disagreement over organizational goals and strategies, and that incongruity will exist regarding the appropriate ways of achieving these goals and strategies. This view assumes that organizations are made up of groups that have separate interests, goals, and values. Finally, the political view assumes that decisions are disorderly, information is ambiguous and incomplete, and that the decision-making process is characterized by negotiation, bargaining and compromise. Disagreement and conflict are often present, so power and influence are needed to reach decisions.

Similar factors as those presented above may be at play in alliances, partnerships and joint ventures. Kanter (1989) suggested that all IORs have political vulnerabilities which are not evident to actors as the relationship is created or progresses through various stages. "...As a partnership evolves, its parameters are never completely clear at first, nor do partners want to commit fully until trust has been established. It is only as events unfold that partners become aware of all of the ramifications and implications of their involvement" (p. 160). Additionally, Kanter (1989) identified several political vulnerabilities an organization may face when creating and managing partnerships including: 

- susceptibility of partnerships (complexity of interests, conflicting loyalties);
- uneven levels of commitment (often apparent in alliances between large and small organizations);
- inequalities of power (resources, information – technical knowledge and relationship knowledge); and
- premature trust (no legal / contractual safeguards). Political interactions among individuals and organizations can trigger these vulnerabilities, and these vulnerabilities can influence political interactions.

People involved in a partnership face the problem of selling those around them and below them on partnership decisions. There are intensely political considerations in the minds of all the partnership players as they try to convince members of their own organization that they are not "selling out" when their decisions appear to offer benefits to the partner. At the same time, they must convince the partner that they are not "caving in" to parochial organizational interests when they argue their own company's case (Kanter, 1989, p. 147).
This theoretical approach considers organizations to be fundamentally political entities, and to understand them, one needs to appreciate the dynamics of organizational politics (Pfeffer, 1992). The socially constructed nature of organizations means that organizational environments are created and shaped by the actions of individuals and groups who populate them (Morgan, 1997). An understanding of these issues within an organizational setting will provide a foundation upon which partnership objectives can be met, organizational interaction will be effective, and social capital can be developed for the benefit of individuals and organizations.

The nature of organizational systems is that there are intrinsic conflicting dimensions in their design as systems of either cooperation or competition. This encourages political activity when individuals or organizations must work together to achieve a common goal, yet at the same time, they must compete for limited resources, power, control and legitimacy in their organizational environment.

Political theory can accommodate collaborating for competitive advantage as well...it views environmental complexity as that which makes pluralistic political processes possible: a simple environment would not hold so many conflicting interests, stakeholders, or routes to goal achievement. On the other hand, organizations will attempt to control complexity and turbulence to their own advantage by limiting the access of other organizations to needed resources, including political voice and influence and by securing public policies that favour them more than other political actors (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 142).

A political approach to investigating organizational phenomena assumes that organizational activity is interest-based, with many divergent interests assimilated and demonstrated in organizational processes (Morgan, 1997). This approach argues that organizations cannot be understood unless organizational processes and relations are considered. The focus on interactions among and between people is the approach adopted to accomplish this end. By investigating the formal and structural representations of organizations, we ignore the dynamics and informal processes that occur within and between organizations that produce the observed results (Pfeffer, 1982).

Morgan (1997) outlined a model of the political approach which included the following variables: interests, conflict, and power. He suggested that in order to understand interactions among individuals and organizations, it is beneficial to examine the processes through which individuals engage in political activity in organizations. When interests collide, conflict occurs, and the resolution of conflict is achieved through power. Morgan's model additionally incorporates dimensions of the expectations, values, beliefs, and perceptions of individual actors. The challenge is in understanding that political activity occurs on an
ongoing basis in organizational life, and that the introduction of more organizational actors may mean that political activity increases, becoming a more prominent feature that becomes harder to manage and control. This is an important aspect to help understand and manage multiple interorganizational partnerships. Although Morgan’s political dimensions are designed to examine individual level interactions, these same considerations can be applied to interorganizational exchanges, as organizations are interest driven, often facing opposition to their interests in interaction, and resolving these conflicts through negotiation based on power. Furthermore, interorganizational interaction is enacted at the individual level.

**Interests:** Morgan (1997) defined interests as "...predispositions embracing goals, values, desires, expectations and other orientations and inclinations that lead a person to act in one way rather than another" (p. 161). Understanding interest-based agendas in an organizational context will help shed light on how individuals relate to their work, and other actors, and what motivating factors underpin their actions.

Two types of interests identified by Morgan (1997) may be relevant when examining interests in IORs: **task interests** (connected with the work one has to perform), and **extramural interests** (personalities, private attitudes, and beliefs). These two types of interests differentiate the nature of political behaviour based on interests related to the organization or task at hand, and those related to the individual as a person. These interests can be further defined by the relations they have: shared, differing, and opposing. **Shared interests** are those held in common by stakeholders. **Differing interests** are based on values and expectations that do not interfere with one another. Finally, **opposing interests** are those that directly compete or interfere with one another (Wood & Gray, 1991). Understanding a partner’s interests can help to explain the basis of political interactions between organizations.

The relationship between actors and interests, according to Coleman (1990), is that an actor’s motivation will be to satisfy his / her own interests by exercising control over the resources or activities of the social system. At the organizational level, for example, these resources or activities could include: financial capital, information, technology, social relationships, reputation, or expertise. Coleman (1990) argued that when actors do not control the desired activities or resources, they will engage in certain
types of exchange transactions with other actors in an attempt to secure and achieve their interests with respect to those resources.

Politics, therefore, are intrinsic to any situation where people or organizations seek to pursue divergent interests, and individuals will aspire to advance their own interests. An interesting caveat to this assumption is that in a collaborative arrangement between two organizations, self-interests are expected to be suppressed for the good of the whole. This however, is not always the case as organizations may have a tendency to compete, and consequently, consensus may not always be achieved between the interests of interorganizational actors (Spekman et al., 1998).

Conflict: According to Morgan (1997), conflict results whenever interests collide; it may be interpersonal or interorganizational, and it rests in either a real or perceived divergence of interests. Alexander (1998) recognized that aspects of organizational conflict and control played a role in the degree of environmental complexity experienced by an organization. On one level, Alexander argued that organizations can be viewed as "...coalitions which vie for ascendancy attempting to define the organization’s primary vision and may be willing to compromise organizational performance for the good of its own coalition members" (p. 279). On another level, organizational actors have different professional motives with individual goals, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations, and their interests are important in shaping an organization's actions and structures.

Alter (1990) argued that in order to build the capacity to develop effective operations, organizations need both conflict and cooperation. She maintained that conflict is an inherent property of the process of organizing. It is inevitable, legitimate, and necessary, and can produce long term benefits for an organization (Alter, 1990). However, conflict is not a conceptually discrete organizational property. It is a systemic process that occurs simultaneously with cooperation within the organizational domain. Conflict is an organizational behaviour exercised in one of two ways; first, it is enacted in order to maximize control of dependency over other organizations, and second, it is enacted in the form of an oppositional process intended to prevent or impede the actions of another individual or organization (Alter, 1990). Conflict can be explicit (arguments, discussions, heated exchanges) or can be hidden beneath the surface (resentment, grudges, hidden agendas). In interorganizational systems characterized by more controlled, differentiated, and complex activities and structures, opportunities for conflict
increase at all levels (Alter, 1990). In these cases, Alter (1990) recommended that administrators and planners “should be aware of the possibility of high conflict levels and be prepared to prevent dysfunctional conflict” (p. 497).

**Power:** The development of formal alliances with external parties also changes internal roles, relationships, and power dynamics for organizations entering into them. Morgan (1997) viewed power as the way conflicts are resolved. The political use of power in organizations and how to gain power in IORs has been discussed by a number of authors (Birnbirg, 1998; Cavanagh, Moberg, & Velasquez, 1981; Das, 1999; Fiol, O'Connor, & Aguinis, 2001; Gray, 1989; Pfeffer, 1992). These researchers proposed that by moving outside of the realm of formal authority, or by straying from the established policies and procedures, individuals and coalitions engage in power dynamics that are inherently political. Pfeffer (1992) specifically defined power as the ability to influence behaviour and change events, to overcome opposition, and to motivate people to do things that they otherwise would not have done. He suggested that power is utilized and realized with the processes, actions, and behaviours of politics and influence. Power may be used in several instances according to Pfeffer (1992) depending on the degree of importance of the issue, for example in situations of interdependence, when resources are scarce, or when there are differing points of view (i.e., interests).

Morgan (1997) and Pfeffer (1992) also provided a broader perspective of several traditional sources of power which influence how, when, and why conflict can be resolved. These include personal sources and individual attributes such as energy and physical stamina, focus, sensitivity, self-confidence, charisma, and reputation. Sources of power also stem from structural elements such as formal authority; control of scarce resources; use of organizational structure, rules, and regulations; control of decision processes; control of knowledge and information; control of boundaries; ability to cope with uncertainty; control of technology; interpersonal alliances, networks, and control of 'informal organization'; and symbolism and the management of meaning.

Gray (1989) identified several key elements related to power dynamics in the interaction among partner organizations. Power sources such as stakeholder legitimacy (who has a legitimate stake in the partnership relationship), stakeholder capacity (some ability such as expertise, control over policy process, representative of constituencies), power to mobilize, and power to organize all play a role in the
IOR. Power to strategize, control of information, power to exercise influence, or power to authorize action are also key concepts during partnership establishment and management according to Gray (1989). Another aspect of power and control in IORs is the emphasis on organizational resources. In this case, control is underpinned by the notion of organizational actors wanting to control resources to limit the control of others (Coleman, 1990; Wood & Gray, 1991) which results in conflict.

Kanter (1989) also described power relations among partnering organizations and identified two aspects of potential power disparity that might play a role in organizational interaction. The first power imbalance she identified was based on resources and made the distinction between 'rich' and 'poor' organizations. From this view, it was assumed that 'richer' organizations would have more control and would provide the resources for collaboration on their own terms. These organizations could also ensure that the resources are used in ways that conform to their own standards and expectations. In this model, isomorphism begins to emerge among the resource deficient organizations where partnership structures and practices mimic the richer organization in order to facilitate the coordination function.

The second power imbalance suggested by Kanter (1989) was based on information or knowledge. According to Kanter, two sources of information contribute to power imbalances between partners: technical know-how (critical for decision-making) and relationship knowledge (for negotiation). The assumption in this case is that the organizations that possess both the technical know-how and the essential information regarding relationship dynamics will possess the greater degree of power, and will be able to drive partner interactions in ways that will serve the interests of their own organization as opposed to those of their partner.

Thus, power dynamics in and among organizations represent how political processes are enacted based on interests, conflict, and influence. The potential problems that can arise from political processes in interorganizational partnerships make it important to assess the relationship between power and influence processes to understand the best way to manage these relationships.

Several authors have characterized political activity negatively (cf. Hardy & Clegg, 1999; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Kanter, 1989). They explain the quest to satisfy individual interests, conflict, and power plays may be potentially harmful to organizations and that managers should be able to identify and possibly avoid the potential repercussions of these kinds of activities. However, these political activities
can, if used effectively, contribute to the success of an endeavour (Pfeffer, 1992), and should not necessarily be viewed as something that needs to be controlled or prevented. By exploring different interests and creatively and effectively dealing with conflict and power, a wider variety of alternatives may be considered that may contribute to successfully achieving organizational goals and objectives. Therefore, while political activity is an inherent and sometimes negative component of interorganizational interaction, it may be a necessary and potentially beneficial aspect of organizational action - if used appropriately. When parties are able to make constructive use of differences in interest, power, and perspective, results can be impressive for both organizations. In this case, political behaviour can be a positive force.

In contrast to the planned and deliberate strategic management view, the adoption of this theoretical perspective allowed me to explore how interests, conflict, power, trust, and the creation of social capital might be factors in dealing with many partners who have divergent interests and perceptions, and furthermore if/how power dynamics are resolved by the focal organization managing the varying interests of its partners. It is evident that each theoretical perspective (strategic / political) has its own particular strengths and weaknesses; however, each on its own is insufficient to explain the complexities of the phenomenon of partnership formation, interaction, or effectiveness. Barringer and Harrison (2000) suggested that organizations frequently have a 'portfolio' of reasons to form partnerships (i.e., acquisition of resources, cost minimization, learning key competencies) rather than just one. Similarly, Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) proposed that alliances are cooperative relationships that blend both strategic resource needs and social resource opportunities. They suggested that both strategic and social factors are critical to alliance formation and subsequently management, but that few empirical studies or theories have combined these approaches. As such, proposals have been suggested by authors such as Barringer and Harrison (2000) and Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996), that research in this area combine theoretical paradigms in order to better understand the reasons behind the formation of interorganizational partnerships.

Now that the theoretical foundation underpinning this research has been laid down, the framework adopted for this study (and presented in Figure 2.1) will be elaborated upon in more detail.
The next section explains the variables under consideration for the three phases of partnership interaction, and the rationales for selecting them.

**Preconditions and Partnership Determinants**

An Environment Conducive to Collaboration

In Figure 2.1, the element of environment is shown indicating that the context of interaction is underpinned by certain favourable circumstances. As such, political, social, and economic conditions are macro level environmental factors that contribute to creating a context that is advantageous for collaboration. For example, changes in public policy have resulted in a shift in responsibilities where social issues that were primarily the concern of federal governments are now more frequently being offloaded to the nonprofit and business sectors (Austin, 2000). These political forces are the result of a growing acknowledgement of the limits of government, and decreasing trust in government and politicians to provide traditional services. This shift has been exemplified in Canadian spheres such as medicine, transportation, education, and now sport.

The growing magnitude and complexity of today’s social problems has resulted in limiting the capacity of individual organizations to deal with them. According to Austin (2000) “…as the commons grows more complicated and the identity of the keepers becomes less clear, collaboration has emerged as the new mandate” (p. 8). These increasingly complex social pressures are particularly related to nonprofit organizations and illustrate the pressure on them to engage in collaborative activity. Through collaboration, organizations can better address social concerns such as poverty, drug use, youth crime, and health, which have been shown to be related to a great extent to fitness, physical activity and sport (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2002). This argument has been used by key stakeholders in the sport system to encourage increased government support in order to mitigate some of these social concerns.

Often, the question that organizations must face before making the decision to enter into a partnership venture is: what are the repercussions and outcomes if we act individualistically? Huxham and Macdonald (1992) claimed that organizations need to consider strategically how they might gain an advantage from collaboration. Forming IORs requires an understanding of the balance between the pitfalls that might occur through acting individually and those that may occur through collaboration. Huxham and Macdonald (1992) identified the pitfalls of collaboration to be a loss of control, loss of
flexibility, loss of glory, and an increase in direct resource costs (in contrast to arguments which suggest that entering into a partnership will result in the more efficient use of organizational resources (Astley, 1984; Child & Faulkner, 1998; Wood & Gray, 1991)).

Preconditions

Kouwenhoven (1993) claimed that four key preconditions were necessary to launch a public-private partnership initiative. Although developed as a framework to describe the formation of relationships between public and private organizations, these preconditions can be applied in the sport context as many of the relationships are also among public and private, as well as nonprofit organizations. These four preconditions include (see Figure 2.1): (1) interdependence (the recognition that organizations operating in a particular realm are connected to some extent (i.e., through connected funding structures, values, or other resources) and that through collaboration, mutually beneficial interests can be achieved); (2) presence of a network; (3) convergence of objectives (that a mutual problem serves as the impetus for a group of organizations to collaborate to solve it); (4) presence of a broker or ‘convenor’ (an individual or an organization that assumes the responsibility of initiating partnership activity and fulfills aspects of the relationship agreement throughout organizational interaction (Kouwenhoven, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Wood & Gray, 1991). This individual / organization is one who helps establish, legitimize, and ultimately, guide the stakeholders in the partnership.).

Determinants for Partnership Formation

Antecedents to partnership formation were considered by Oliver (1990) who proposed an array of determinants leading organizations to partner which incorporate to a large degree the theoretical dimensions considered in the framework for this study. Oliver explored the underlying strategic motivations that induce the formation of IORs in organizations. Oliver’s framework was used as part of the broader conceptual framework in this study (see Figure 2.1).

Oliver’s (1990) conceptual framework consisted of six generalizeable determinants underpinning IOR formation: asymmetry, reciprocity, necessity, legitimacy, efficiency, and stability. She posited that the decision to develop relationships with other organizations is based typically on multiple contingencies, and speculated that the literature on IORs was fragmented and that it did not sufficiently “distinguish between what causes such relationships or the conditions under which such relationships occur” (p. 241).
As maintained by Oliver (1990), these factors often predicted the nature of the relationship that could be formed and its impact on the structure and management of the organizations involved. Oliver viewed these determinants as the strategic motivations for organizations to establish IORs with other firms in their environment. However, empirical research examining partnership formation has neglected the multiple contingency approach to partnership formation. This approach can contribute greatly to a deeper understanding of partnerships. The six determinants will be described next in order to establish the theoretical factors under consideration for this study.

According to Oliver (1990), *asymmetry* motives allow organizations to exercise power or control over another organization or its resources, and are a key strategic factor in forming IORs. Yan and Gray (1994) suggested that the value of the resources possessed by each firm determines the degree of bargaining power it has in both negotiating the IOR as well as the outcomes of the interaction. Oliver (1990) identified both the “desire for control and the reluctance to relinquish control as reflecting asymmetrical motives in an organization’s decision to interact” (p. 244) as being fundamental considerations of this determinant. Interorganizational power can be viewed as a function of the size of the organization, the extent to which an organization has control over the rules governing the exchange of resources, the effectiveness of coercive strategies, and the concentration of organizational inputs (Provan et al., 1980; Provan & Milward, 2001; Wolfe, Meenaghan et al., 2002). The implications to organizations engaging in partnerships where asymmetry motives are present are the potential for resistance and tension around control of resources, sharing information, and decision making.

A second determinant outlined by Oliver (1990) was *reciprocity*. According to this determinant, IORs occur for the purpose of pursuing common or mutually beneficial goals or interests. This determinant is rooted in resource dependence and exchange approaches in the partnership literature, where assumptions are made that when resources are scarce, resource dependency may stimulate cooperation rather than competition. Oliver indicated that motives of reciprocity for linkage formation are characterized by balance, cooperation, equity, and mutual support, rather than by power, conflict, and domination. It is assumed that potential partners anticipate that the benefits of forming a linkage exceed the disadvantages, in particular the loss of decision-making ability, and the cost of managing the linkage.
Necessity was the third determinant outlined by Oliver (1990), who suggested that some IORs are formed as a result of a formal directive in order to meet the legal or regulatory requirements or mandates from higher authorities such as government agencies or policy legislation. If necessity was a factor, organizations would anticipate the repercussions of non-compliance, and consider establishing an IOR as the best alternative. Oliver viewed that while mandating a relationship may increase the frequency and nature of interactions among organizations, it also may reduce an organization’s perception of power over its environment.

According to institutional theory, firms tend to follow trends in their industries to gain legitimacy (cf. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1990). This fourth determinant suggests that institutional environments impose pressures on organizations to justify their activities or outputs, and one approach to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of funders, potential partners or competitors is by engaging in IORs. Institutional pressures motivate organizations to increase their legitimacy in order to appear congruent with the prevailing norms, rules, beliefs, and / or expectations of external constituents. These motives allow an organization to demonstrate or improve its reputation, image, or prestige. This way, an organization can impress other members within its network such as resource-granting agencies, external stakeholders, or the general public.

The fifth determinant, efficiency, is internally - rather than externally - oriented according to Oliver (1990). Efficiency is driven by an organization’s attempt to improve its internal input / output ratio. Based on this determinant, incentives of IOR formation may include an increase in return on assets or reductions in unit costs, waste, downtime, or cost per client. Thus, the ultimate outcome of this determinant is the economization of transaction costs among organizations (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Spekman et al., 2000).

Stability, the final determinant outlined by Oliver (1990), suggests that IORs, created as an adaptive response to environmental uncertainty, would serve to deliver predictability and dependability to an organization in its relations with others. Environmental uncertainty is generated by resource scarcity and a lack of information about environmental fluctuations, availability of exchange partners, and rates of exchange. IORs therefore are viewed as coping strategies to forestall, forecast or absorb uncertainty in order to achieve an orderly, reliable pattern of resource flows and exchanges. Economic factors play a
major role in the consideration of a partnership strategy, particularly for organizations in the nonprofit sector. Many nonprofit organizations, feeling the effects of decreasing government funds, in conjunction with an increasingly competitive environment for those funds, view the creation of partnerships as a means to access new sources of financial capital and increase economization of their existing scarce resources. Resource concerns in the formation of partnerships have been discussed by various authors (cf. Barney, 1991a; Dussauge, Garrette, & Mitchell, 2000; Hitt et al., 2000; Mahoney & Rajendran, 1992; Miller, 1980; Oliver, 1997; Priem & Butler, 2001), and frequently have been identified as the primary factor motivating organizations to enter into partnership relationships. The acquisition, control, and conservation of various types of technical, material, knowledge, and financial resources are offered as the rationale by these researchers for organizations to adopt a partnership strategy.

As outlined in Figure 2.1, the conditions proposed by Kouwenhoven (1993) and the determinants of partnership formation presented by Oliver (1990) comprise the 'preconditions' of partnership formation. These multiple dimensions underpinned the exploration of the motives and conditions, or context, evident for partnership formation between NSCs and their partners, and will help to answer RQ1 identified in Chapter 1 regarding partnership formation strategies and the impact of resource interdependencies among partners.

In this section, I have suggested that both strategic and political perspectives will provide a broader understanding of the dynamics and complexities of partnership formation. Both approaches have power and control as central issues in the discussion of the formation of cooperative relations. These perspectives will also be used to consider aspects of partnership management. The next section describes the key interaction factors under consideration between partners.

**Processes: Organizational Interaction and Exchange**

In order to address RQ2 (see Chapter 1) regarding the management of partnerships, the elements of organizational interaction and exchange must be explored. Because the theoretical aspects of partnership management are less developed than of its formation, less is known about the exchange process, and about how political interaction underlies these activities. Several empirical approaches which are conceptually rooted in various individual and organizational interaction theories, such as those
reviewed above including power, conflict and control, political dynamics, stakeholder management approaches, competing interests and values, and trust must be considered.

In the second stage of the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.1), the organizations in question have ultimately determined that they will engage in a partnership strategy to deal with environmental conditions and achieve their organizational objectives. The theoretical approach undertaken for the examination of the process phase also incorporated multiple lenses in order to understand the development of partnership formation and management in NSCs. As with the preconditions phase previously described, a strategic as well as a power / political lens was employed to examine the dynamics between partners, to explore the key structural and processual dimensions of the relationships formed and to help understand their subsequent impact on the outcomes of the relationship. The organizational level approach adopted in the preconditions section is complemented by a perspective that considers both organizational and individual level factors of social position and political interactions within the creation and management of the relationship.

Generally, in multi-firm alliances a hub firm (Lamming, 2001), network administrative organization (Provan & Milward, 2001), or focal organization is identified and designated to initiate relationships with, and maintain the organization and coordination of the network. In this research, the hub firm is the NSC, as it coordinates and manages the network of partners. According to Lamming (2001), the hub firm specializes in those activities that are essential to its competitive advantage while subcontracting peripheral activities to firms in the network that specialize in those particular areas. Opportunism on the part of network participants, an important concern in collaborative relationships, may be minimized through mutual trust and the organization's desire to remain in the network because of the perceived benefits involved (Jarillo, 1988). The issues of trust and opportunism will be discussed shortly.

First, however, the notion of partnership management needs to be clarified for the purposes of this study. The management lifecycle is thought to be a continuous process of identifying needs, determining the best method to fulfill those needs, evaluating the results of the plan, and modifying the strategic and operating plan(s). While good chemistry between partnership managers, a common vision, and strong rapport among senior executives are fundamental elements to completing an agreement, a formal alliance management process to screen, select, and manage partners is also critical to the ongoing
viability of alliances (Kaplan & Hurd, 2002). The management process entails engaging and interacting with individuals and organizations to carry out the common goals and objectives set out by the partnership and necessitates the consideration of both processes and structures. Ideally, partnership management requires organizations to work together, sharing people, knowledge, processes, and cultures. The governance structures must define the balance of power and allow for shifts over time. Roles and responsibilities of each partner for each process and subprocess must be defined with alliance manager(s) playing a key role in mapping out the tasks and overseeing their evolution. Partnerships require both sweeping vision and micro management and thus necessitate managers with unique abilities to shift between these two levels of administrative activity. The importance of gaining a better understanding of the implications of partnership management was offered in the following quotation “If organizations are to act effectively under these circumstances, it seems important to develop an understanding of the nature of inter-organizational relationships, directed not towards intellectual insight, but towards affecting the way in which people actually handle such situations in practice” (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992, p. 50). Thus, by developing an understanding of the nature of interaction between partners, findings from empirical investigations can be directed in part towards enhancing their management.

**Partnership Management**

A single point of contact between one organization and its external constituents characterized the traditional model of management. In this approach, one or few individuals patrolled the 'boundaries’ of the organization and controlled and managed information, products, and all other resource exchanges. The adoption of a partnership approach has led to an increase in the number of functions and the number of people involved, not just between two organizations, but often among several. Quality partnership management is a vital requirement for the continued success of the endeavour, and managing a partnership successfully requires that the expectations of the partners are reconciled and incorporated into the overall strategy for the alliance.

Several authors have emphasized the commitment to and investment in the strategic network as well as the longer time perspective of the network relationship compared to limited, individual market transactions. As a consequence, the care of the relationship becomes an important management issue. (Borch, 1994, p. 115)
Authors such as Kanter (1989; 1994), Spekman et al., (2000; 1998), Hwang and Burgers (1997), and Austin (2000) claim that much of the research on partnerships and alliances neglects the problems of partnership management. As a result, we do not know much about how organizations manage their partnerships. What are their concerns and challenges? What approaches do partnership managers feel work well and which are not effective in managing the relationship. The effective management of partnerships then is extremely important because as Kanter (1989) emphasized, one of the vulnerabilities of the relationship may be 'under-management' where many partnerships fail because of difficulties in implementation and execution. She reported that as much as half of the time top management spends on an average strategic alliance goes into creating it, 23% of the time goes into developing the strategic plan, and only 8% goes into setting up management systems and maintaining the relationship. Based on this information, one could speculate that the management of IORs is a disregarded aspect in practice, and could likely be an important contributing factor to the large failure rate attributed to organizational interactions (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Ettore, 2000; Kanter, 1994; Spekman et al., 2000).

A relationship is developed as two or more organizations build up activity links, resource ties, and actor bonds. Boundary spanners are individual actors involved in the relationship that cross organizational borders. Typically, in the past they were the top managers responsible for creating and negotiating the relationship, however, with alliances now involving multiple organizations for a range of objectives, actors involved in the creation and management of the relationships can involve the entire staff of an organization. Presidents, executive directors, board members, managers, coordinators and assistants now often play a role in interacting with partners.

The complexity of partnership management stems from its very nature. An alliance brings together two or more independent organizations, each with its own objectives, agenda, and culture. Several management challenges exist with the implementation of a partnership strategy including managing the relationship among partners, and mastering changes in each of the partner’s own organizations. These changes range from shifting the way organizations operate, adjusting staff roles and responsibilities, dealing with interpersonal issues, modifying the way individuals communicate, to approaching decision-making from a different point of view. Administrators that manage partnerships must adopt an 'alliance mindset' (Kanter, 1994) in order to incorporate the goals and strategies of the
partner organization while still maintaining a focus on the goals and strategies of their own organization. The challenge increases exponentially when managing a collaboration portfolio of multiple organizations. In order to accomplish these managerial challenges successfully, alliance managers must possess skills and competencies across different areas.

Several key elements of partnership management were considered in this thesis. I began with Kouwenhoven's (1993) strategic framework, which presents components of the exchange process that involve the choice of the structure and key management activities. Kouwenhoven's framework served as the basis for my investigation into the management of partnerships in amateur sport organizations. Elements of Kouwenhoven's model were adapted and relevant concepts from other authors were also added (Austin, 2000; Dussauge et al., 2000; Kanter, 1989, 1994). The distinctions between what these authors have speculated regarding partnership interaction and this study is that the political and social dimensions of interaction within various aspects of this framework are explored. This is one of the main contributions of this research. The categories explored in this section include macro management issues, organizing the alliance, communication, building trust, and ensuring accountability and results.

**Macro Management Issues**

The implementation of the organization's strategy (Andrews, 1996; Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986; Stone et al., 1999), considers how the elements of an organization's strategy are enacted and evaluated. In the interaction and exchange phase, managerial and organizational tools are used to direct and allocate resources to accomplish strategic objectives with the focus on the administration and execution of the strategic plan. Implementation of the strategy takes into account both the general environmental conditions and specific organizational factors such as the organization structure, integration and control systems, resources, relationships, organizational processes and behavior, and top leadership (Andrews, 1996; Galbraith & Kazanjian, 1986). Galbraith and Kazanjian (1986) and Galbraith (1991) identified people, structure, task, reward systems, and information and decision processes as major design variables necessary to implement an organization's strategy. While the focus of these strategic elements was concerned with the implementation of a single organization's strategy, there are parallels that can be drawn with organizations carrying out cooperative strategies. For example, in addition to taking into account critical human resources as a component of its strategy, an organization must also consider the
proper selection of partners and development of the relationship within the context of its strategy. Reward systems in IORs can consist of a contribution to each organization’s objectives, their respective level of legitimacy, and the creation of social capital between individuals working collaboratively. In addition, decision processes and information dissemination must be implemented to effectively control and coordinate activities among organizations, and to assess the development and progress of the strategy and the relationship.

Kouwenhoven’s (1993) partnership management framework suggested that organizations in the nonprofit and public sectors should embrace business and market oriented thinking and acting in order to operate effectively in partnerships, especially when allying with the corporate community. Cross sector partnering requires that nonprofit organizations consider and actively manage the distinctions in performance measures among organizations, the competitive dynamics often involved, organization cultures, decision-making styles and priorities, and incentive and motivational structures (Austin, 2000). Typically, cross sector partnering requires a shift from traditional ways of operating (i.e., reliance on one source of funding to support organizational operations). If managing this shift in operations is overlooked during the partnership the potential exists for delays, set backs, or altered outcomes. The drawback of this business-oriented mindset as experts have noted (Froese-Germain & Moll, 2001; Thibault, Kikulis, & Frisby, forthcoming), is that the involvement of the corporate sector could compromise or threaten the programs and services offered by public and nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit and public organizations may have concerns regarding the commercialization and the profit-making objectives of the corporate entity where commercial benefit accrues from the delivery of social services. The apprehension originates from concern that corporate organizations could compromise the social mission of nonprofit and / or public groups who often are in need of the financial resources offered by the corporate entity. This led Kouwenhoven (1993) to suggest that partnership management (particularly in public / private or nonprofit / private interactions) should ensure that the interests of the corporate sector do not threaten the beneficiaries of these programs or services.

As a result, another consideration for IORs, particularly between nonprofits and organizations in the corporate sector, is the protection and concern of third parties’ interests and rights. Kouwenhoven (1993) explained that in any situation where several organizations become involved in the delivery of
what was traditionally in the realm of government services, the rights and interests of the individuals directly influenced by the partnership should be safeguarded. In amateur sport for instance, the rights and interests of elite athletes, the beneficiaries of the programs and services provided by the collaboration, need to be at the centre of all collaborative activity. According to Froese-Germain and Moll (2001), the potential for exacerbating inequities in the system is illustrated in the following quotation: "History is strewn with lessons detailing the consequences of negotiations between a party that knows what it wants and a second party driven by need. Disaster for the need-driven party is a common result" (p. 2). These authors suggest the danger lies not only for the second party in need, but for the beneficiaries of the programs under consideration.

Organizing the Alliance: Structural Considerations

While partnerships should maintain some degree of flexibility and responsiveness to meet the changing needs of the involved partners and shifts in both internal and external environmental conditions, there should also be a degree of structure and organization in order to guide activity. Organizational and structural aspects of alliance management may provide insights into how firms interact with multiple partners and how political activities are infused within them. Kanter (1989) argued that structural integration mechanisms are essential for effective partnership interactions. Without these mechanisms in place, partners can fail to develop a legitimate process for joint decision-making or negotiation so that every decision is slowed by misunderstanding and conflicts. Thus, efficient systems and procedures are critical for the effective functioning of any IOR. This section identifies the key aspects concerning how organizations are structured to best meet all partners' objectives.

A strategic partnership requires sufficient support and control facilities to ensure that the objectives and the strategies of the partnership remain focused (Kouwenhoven, 1993). Support and control facilities could include guidelines, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), timelines, and critical paths. Without these elements, the potential exists for the relationship to stray from its initial objectives. Additionally, explicit agreement over the scope of the relationship needs to be outlined, because if it is not, decisions made during the evolution of the relationship may shift advantage toward or away from a particular partner in the alliance. Issues of scope should be a component of striking the initial bargain, but are also an ongoing concern for managers. As Kanter (1989) stated, "...like all dynamic social
arrangements, strategic alliances evolve, and as they evolve, they stumble into territories that one ally may not wish disturbed, or they bump up against limits that bother other members” (p. 168).

Another concern that should be addressed in organizing the alliance is that of conflict regulation, or the process adopted to diffuse situations in which conflict arises (Kouwenhoven, 1993). As mentioned in the previous section, the possibility of conflict is a serious and potentially hazardous outcome for the relationship when organizations with differing interests, cultures, mandates, and experiences come together to work collaboratively on a venture. Although organizations enter into partnerships with the intent to capitalize on opportunity and reduce uncertainty, factors such as loss of autonomy in decision-making, power, and control may create new challenges and raise additional uncertainties.

The nature of staff, management, and partner roles and responsibilities is another aspect of organizing the alliance that should be considered (Kouwenhoven, 1993). A multiparty alliance calls for an overall role redefinition of boundary spanning positions and requires experienced individuals who can be involved in all aspects of the business process. Staff members involved in partnership relationships may have added responsibilities, and require new and different skills to deal with multiple partners. Alliance actors must gain skill in writing contracts, be able to handle complex negotiations among organizations, take responsibility for business decisions, and represent their organization in strategy discussions. As Kanter (1989) suggested, “…overall, the development of strategic alliances is one more force toward politicizing the role of managers, making it essential for them to be able to juggle constituencies rather than control subordinates” (p. 152). Thus, the management style also requires a shift from the traditionally authoritarian, aggressive approach of dealing with staff and partners, to a focus on more egalitarian relationships, and sensitivity to the needs of others. When developing a network of cooperative relationships with multiple organizations, decision-making must be consultative because other organizations involved in the network are affected by the decision. In partnerships, the illusion of autonomy is lost, and unilateral action must decrease.

Process Considerations

Building Trust and Social Capital: Trust and its development has been a focus for researchers exploring the dynamics of interorganizational exchange (Borch, 1994; Das & Teng, 1998). Many authors have discussed the presence of trust at the outset of the relationship, and the development of trust
throughout partner interactions (Das & Teng, 1998; Hutt, Stafford, Walker, & Reingen, 2000; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Inkpen & Beamish, 1997). All action, including economic action, is embedded in a social fabric of opportunities to interact (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996), therefore it would be an oversight when investigating the creation and management of interorganizational partnerships to not consider the social aspects of cooperation. In fact, “...interaction and ultimately cooperation are likely to happen among people who know one another or... are 'friends'” (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996, p. 138). Strong social position enhances alliance formation by capitalizing on advantages such as contacts, reputation, and status that create opportunities for alliance formation. Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) suggested that relationships on a personal level create opportunities for cooperation by deepening awareness, trust, and commitment among parties within the partnership. They reported that the status and reputation of top management in an organization also enhanced the likelihood of cooperation. The premise of this argument was based on the view that, particularly in highly uncertain environments, these qualities signified the skill and trustworthiness of potential partners, ultimately facilitating cooperation. “Overall, the evolution of awareness, mutual knowledge, and trust through status and reputational processes and, more directly, social interaction is central to the creation of cooperative relationships” (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996, p. 138).

Theories of exchange building on inclusion of trust or norm-based contracts have gained interest among researchers (Larson, 1992; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). Trust and reciprocity are considered to be key factors that dominate the dynamics of IORs (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Kanter, 1989; Lorenzoni & Baden-Fuller, 1995; Thorelli, 1986). In IORs, trust is based on the willingness of one organization to interact with another based on the understanding and belief that the other organization will act in a way that will benefit rather than damage the relationship (Child & Faulkner, 1998). Likewise, Huxham and Macdonald (1992) suggested that it is critical to pay attention to the development of trust among collaborators on several different levels including trust in commitment, understanding, and ability of other organizations; trust that autonomous actions will be in the spirit of collaboration; trust in willingness to share credit; and trust in the benefits of working together. The challenge in the trusting relationship is that no party's actions will be guaranteed (i.e. because there is always the risk of opportunism that is the assumption in transaction cost perspectives of partnerships), and therefore confidence is necessary.
among partner organizations so that no one will take advantage of the commitment. One way to view the outcomes of trust and reciprocity is through the manufacture of social capital.

The notion of social capital refers to institutional arrangements which foster voluntary cooperation among individuals (Brown, 1998; Coleman, 1990). Elements such as social trust, norms of reciprocity and tolerance, values, beliefs, expectations, and networks of informal association are essential components of social capital. At the heart of social capital, is the question of coordinating activity to seek ways to solve problems of a social, political, or even economic nature (Brown, 1998). From an interorganizational perspective, the notion of social capital is important because the outcomes of social interactions could be of a political nature where interests, conflict, and power may negatively impact a relationship. Conversely, the outcomes of social interaction could be mediated by the creation of social capital where working from the point of one’s self interest leads to social trust and voluntary reciprocal interactions among individuals or organizations (Brown, 1998; Coleman, 1990).

Brown (1998) argued that nonprofit organizations have the capacity to build social capital because their relationships often grow out of informal associations that come together to respond to social concerns. Social capital, according to Brown (1998), is the informal associations and institutions that support cooperative action, and norms of tolerance and trust. He indicated that many challenges and problems are difficult to overcome with the resources, skills, and abilities of just one organization, yet he believed that an insufficient level of institutional infrastructure impedes the cooperation of organizations, particularly across the public and private sectors. Brown’s (1998) view was that organizational partnerships that develop appropriate institutional agreements and attitudes will create higher levels of social capital over time and thus create positive organizational outcomes.

In order to create social capital, Brown (1998) suggested that organizational actors should engage in direction-setting activities such as the establishment of ground rules, setting agendas, organizing subgroups, adopting a continual openness to searching for and analyzing information, exploring alternative options for action, and negotiating and coming to terms with an agreement. The partners must create goals, objectives, and action plans to which they all are willing to commit. These commitments will guide their actions throughout the relationship.
As political interaction is an integral part of relationships between organizations, individual and organizational interests may result in conflict and power struggles that can be mediated by the creation of social capital. The challenge for managers of these partnerships is to find the appropriate balance between acting on or suppressing self-interest in a way that will not create conflict or power dynamics. The following quotation by Kanter (1989) delineates some of the specific political issues managers of partnerships need to deal with:

People involved in a partnership face the problem of selling those around them and below them on partnership decisions. There are intensely political considerations in the minds of all the partnership players as they try to convince members of their own organization that they are not “selling out” when their decisions appear to offer benefits to the partner, and at the same time, convince the partner that they are not “caving in” to parochial organizational interests when they argue their own company’s case (p. 147).

Trust therefore plays a critical role in ongoing managerial activities throughout the lifecycle of the partnership. Mutual trust can be built on unofficial, social interactions (Kanter, 1989) and can bring about “…mutual respect and adaptation between organizations. It constitutes the lubricating oil in complex organizational partnerships” (p. 126). In IORs, trust is based on the willingness of one organization to interact with another premised on the understanding that the other organization will act in a way that will benefit rather than damage the relationship (Austin, 2000; Child & Faulkner, 1998; Geringer, 1991). Kanter (1989) suggested that “…as a partnership evolves, its parameters are never completely clear at first, nor do partners want to commit fully until trust has been established. It is only as events unfold that partners become aware of all of the ramifications and implications of their involvement” (p. 160).

**Communicating Effectively:** Because of their complexity, partnerships generally tend to increase requirements for intraorganizational integration, coordination, and communication (Kouwenhoven, 1993). With multiple organizations involved in the partnership, communication can become unmanageable or inefficient unless each partner is itself well-integrated. Departments that work in isolation could mean negative consequences for the partnership. Consequently, effective communication must be present at all organizational levels (i.e., within each organization and between partners).

According to Austin (2000) personal communication skills are essential for effectively managing the relationship. Individuals involved in managing partners indicate that a great deal of time and face to face contact is required to provide insights into signals and symbols of the relationship such as trust and sincerity. Participative skills, including information gathering, resisting preconceived ideas, listening,
testing assumptions, and seeking consensus are examples of critical partnership communication skills identified by Kanter (1989). Clear, consistent, and frequent communication among partners is critical because “…nearly every managerial action in a partnership seems to carry the additional weight of being scanned for ‘messages’ about ‘real’ motives, attitudes toward the partner, and sincerity” (Kanter, 1989, p. 157). As such, effective communication can serve as the basis to build trust between partners.

Accountability: An essential component of managing an interorganizational relationship is ensuring accountability of all the organizations involved. Supervision and monitoring of the alliance’s performance measurements pose particular challenges for the alliance manager. In order to avoid or alleviate ambiguity or disagreement as to the objectives of the venture or their attainment, Kouwenhoven (1993) advised that such matters should be discussed and negotiated explicitly.

Partnership agreements should balance the distribution of risks and rewards carefully in advance among partners (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Gray & Wood, 1991). This will lay the foundation for the efficient utilization of resources and will allow the implementation of creative tactics to leverage this network to achieve strategic competitive advantage. Some organizational costs to be considered may include increased human resource overheads due to time invested, loss of flexibility or bargaining power, and decreased decision-making authority (Oliver, 1991).

At the outset and throughout the relationship, responsibility and authority should also be discussed and negotiated. Control and complexity of the process needs consideration and a set of collective rules under which the partnership operates and is coordinated should be designed and adopted by all parties involved. This may serve to reduce the freedom of organizations that enter into these relationships because they must engage in consultative processes with their partners before decisions are made or actions are taken.

Each of the factors described above are represented in the process phase of partnership interaction in Figure 2.1. Without a doubt, these managerial constructs and the subsequent interaction processes they stimulate are the ‘meat and potatoes’ of interorganizational partnerships. The effectiveness of these interactions has implications for the final phase of the collaborative process, evaluating and assessing the outcomes of the partnership relations.
Outcomes and Effectiveness

The final component of the proposed phases of collaboration model was results and outcomes, or in other words, an assessment of the consequences the interaction has had for the organizations involved and/or for the broader network. A consideration of the partnership process would be incomplete without a discussion regarding the effectiveness of the venture; after all, most partnerships are entered into based on the assumption that the relationship will produce some type of beneficial outcome or that some form of common goal or objective will be attained through collaboration.

A large body of literature dating back to the 1960s has explored the notion of organizational effectiveness (Cameron, 1981, 1986; Lewin & Minton, 1986; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Organizational effectiveness (OE) research has been criticized for its attempts to identify a set of best criteria (Cameron, 1981) as no one list is applicable to all organizations or contexts. That is to say, various stakeholders can have different understandings of what effectiveness entails, and as such a particular list of effectiveness criteria cannot be identified. Furthermore, the identification of organizational goals, the measurement of often abstract or vague goals, and the ability to do so in a timely manner, have contributed to the challenges in the assessment of organizational effectiveness. Thus, the OE literature has shifted away from a goal-oriented perspective to a broader emphasis on a multiple constituency approach based on the notion of constituency priorities (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983).

Herman and Renz (1998; 1999) have discussed similar challenges in a nonprofit context. A complicating matter in this sector is the lack of profit motive. They suggest that the multitude of criteria with which to assess performance (e.g., size of organization, growth, effective management, attainment of program goals, financial stability) makes the interpretation and evaluation of effectiveness difficult. They conclude that a multiple constituency perspective should incorporate the ability to respond to the needs and expectations of stakeholders.

In the sport context, research has also been conducted on organizational effectiveness (Branch Jr., 1990; Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Chelladurai, Szyszlo, & Haggerty, 1987; Frisby, 1986; Koski, 1995; Wolfe, Hill, & Babiak, 2002). One theme which has become dominant in the context of sport is that often, competing values may exist regarding attainment of organizational objectives. For instance in the intercollegiate sport milieu, perceptions of effectiveness based on resource generation, enhanced institution profile, or winning, may compete with education and ethics as outcomes of intercollegiate
programs (Wolfe, Hill et al., 2002). In the amateur sport environment, effectiveness has also been viewed as spanning competing values such as high performance versus participation, resource generation versus ethics and integrity (Chelladurai et al., 1987; Frisby, 1986; Koski, 1995).

Considering the nature of partnership activity, it seems that this would be a rich site in which to examine OE, as it could be assumed that partners (as stakeholders) could have varying perceptions and interests regarding what effectiveness might entail. Furthermore, a broader and perhaps more important consideration might be assessing the challenges associated with evaluation of the effectiveness of the collaborative venture as a whole. The concerns of each partner organization, with their specific and individual goals and objectives, must be viewed in the context of the goals and objectives of the collaborative venture. The complex nature of partner and venture objectives introduces significant management challenges in efforts satisfy the various constituencies involved. The aspects of assessing partnership effectiveness are addressed next.

It is interesting that the aspect of assessing the outcomes and effectiveness of the partnership process has not been the subject of more empirical investigation, given that a high percentage of IORs end in failure (Harrigan, 1995; Kaplan & Hurd, 2002). While many IOR investigators have indicated the need to pay attention to the objectives and results of the relationship, this advice has been largely prescriptive and pragmatic. Few researchers have in fact proposed feasible theoretical approaches to measure and assess the outcomes and effectiveness of IORs. For example, Dussauge et al. (2000) simply identified that the specification of results of interaction in as much detail as possible was an essential element for ensuring the desirable outcomes of the relationship are achieved. Likewise, an evaluative component for partnership interaction was also suggested by Kouwenhoven (1993) who indicated that measurement (and ultimately achievement) of objectives and goals were critical components of any partnership endeavour.

Since partnerships have claimed a central role in many organizations’ strategies, it can be speculated that interaction and exchange processes are vitally important to organizations and that “... knowledge of the factors that are associated with partnership success could aid in the selection of partners as well as in the ongoing management of the partnership” (Mohr & Spekman, 1994, p. 136). In addition, evaluating success is critical for understanding whether partnerships are effective in delivering
the needed services, programs, or resources to the targeted clients (Provan & Milward, 2001).

Partnership managers can be expected to be interested in developing a body of knowledge concerning how to best achieve IOR goals, as well as how to best assess whose goals are being met, and at what cost. Furthermore, focus on this aspect of the process is timely given the changes currently taking place in the Canadian sport system. As partnerships represent a relatively new organizational strategy and with many resources already invested into the NSC venture, the topic of results and outcomes measurement and management appear to be a priority to improve determinations on alternative strategic options. With recent conflicting views on the objectives of the larger Canadian amateur sport system regarding an emphasis on winning medals at international competitions or a focus on the development of a more equitable and accessible sport system, the topic seems even more significant.

The challenges of assessing partnership effectiveness are closely related to those of examining organizational effectiveness (Provan & Milward, 2001) but are more complex. A common measure of evaluating organizational effectiveness has been based on the concept of satisfying the organization's key stakeholders (Harrison & St.John, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; James, 1999; Provan & Milward, 2001; Spekman et al., 2000). While this view also has relevance in determining the effectiveness of a group of collaborating organizations, such a network also requires dealing with multiple sets of constituencies who are working together on joint problems. Broader effectiveness criteria therefore must consider concerns on the basis of the attainment of individual organization's goals and objectives as well as the goals and objectives of the collaborating group of organizations. However, defining and quantifying the costs and benefits associated with partnerships is very difficult. Major problems include attributing quantitative values to qualitative benefits, isolating the impact or attribution of the introduction of the network (i.e., NSCs) to the sport system from other changes in the system, and showing causality and proving that a particular benefit is solely due to the formation of the network.

Network researchers (Provan & Milward, 1995, 2001) have argued that evaluating successful and effective organizational interaction is based not simply on the attainment of individual organizational goals, but rather whether the network of purpose is providing its intended services/products to its clients as well as the organization's (network's) ability to acquire scarce resources. A specific challenge with the evaluation and analysis of outcomes of interorganizational partnerships is the identification of
whose outcomes are measured. How much value does a particular organization place on outcomes? How and by what means are they measured? Many systems (or management) elements contribute to the success of alliances including clear and well thought out arrangements, dissemination of information, dispute resolution mechanisms, managing director authority, appropriate organizational form, and an appropriate exit formula (Provan & Milward, 1995, 2001; Saxton, 1997). It is a complex task to consider whose needs are being met, how outcomes are evaluated, and whether they contribute to overall effectiveness and efficiency for the parties involved.

Some authors emphasize that for sectors that provide multi-agency services, the effectiveness of individual organizations will not provide a clear enough picture of whether clients receive adequate support and services. As such, the evaluation of effectiveness of the network as a whole requires a different level of analysis and consideration. For instance, Provan and Milward (2001) argued that in order to assess the effectiveness of a group of collaborating organizations, three levels of evaluation need to be considered, namely, the community, network, and organization/participant levels. As this research was conducted at the organizational level of analysis, this will be the primary focus, however, community and network levels will also be discussed.

At the community level of analysis, considerations of effectiveness are based on the contribution they make to the communities they are trying to service (Provan & Milward, 2001). That is, do they provide value to groups or communities that “could not have been achieved through the uncoordinated provision of services by fragmented and autonomous agencies” (Provan & Milward, 2001, p. 419)? Thus in this case study examining amateur sport partnerships, satisfying the needs of the client group (athletes and coaches), in particular assisting them in their quest for improved international performance (measured by an increase in medals and improved international rankings), would be a community level consideration.

At the network level of analysis, the group of collaborating organizations must become a viable interorganizational entity if it is to survive, and this determination is often based on factors such as legitimacy and sustained external support. Other ways to consider network effectiveness include assessing the number of organizations involved in the venture (increase or decrease over time), the change in the range of services provided by the group of collaborating organizations, and the strength of
the relationships (Provan & Milward, 2001). An effective coordination system results in diminished duplication of services and increased efficiencies. The system structure (i.e., integration among service providers) is presumed to have a strong impact on network outcomes (Provan & Milward, 1995).

Finally, at the organization level of analysis, several factors should be considered for assessing effectiveness of an IOR. These include acquiring the necessary resources to achieve goals (such as organizational survival or enhanced services and programs), ensuring greater efficiency in organizational operations through partnerships, achieving legitimacy in the eyes of funding agencies and partner organizations, and achieving enhanced client (athlete) outcomes (Provan & Milward, 2001). Other authors have identified success in strategic partnerships at the organizational level as being a function of the long-term continuation of the interaction (Harrigan, 1988). This proposition was later challenged by Hamel, Doz, and Pahalad (1989) who proposed that merely measuring the longevity of the interaction might not accurately capture partnership success as partnerships are often deliberately dissolved after a certain period of time. Mohr and Spekman (1994) presented a model of partnership success based on satisfaction with aspects of partnership attributes, communication, and a means to resolve conflicts. Furthermore, a successful partnership would be one that fulfilled the initial organizational motivations for entering into the partnership. For instance, if an organization created the relationship to achieve administrative and organizational efficiencies, then the partnership could be viewed as a success if it attained those objectives as measured by the organization. Another consideration that makes assessing the effectiveness and outcomes of IORs challenging is that initial motivations leading an organization to form a partnership may change over the period of interaction. As such, myriad factors demand consideration in the determination of the effectiveness of IORs.

The outcomes at these three levels previously outlined can be considered to determine whether partnerships (and the presence of the NSC network) appear to be performing at a level that justifies continued government (public) and / or corporate support.

The phases of collaboration framework presented in this study (Figure 2.1) provides an overview of the essential steps involved in the process of organizational interaction. The review consolidated several theoretical approaches that contribute to the comprehensive nature of this study. The theoretical framework served as the foundation for the investigation into how National Sport Centres created
relationships, managed their diverse group of partner organizations, and how outcomes and effectiveness might be assessed. The processual factors presented helped to guide questions relating to the nature of the relationships, the difficulties that were encountered, and how they might be overcome.

The next section outlines the research methods employed to investigate the three research questions that explore the strategic motivations and resource capabilities of the organizations involved, the political and social interactions that play a critical role in partnership relationships, the general managerial competencies necessary to maintain effective relationships with partners, and how effectiveness was perceived by partners in the venture.
In Chapter 2, the theoretical and conceptual approach adopted for this study was reviewed. In that chapter, I argued that using one theoretical approach to investigate interorganizational partnerships would provide us with an incomplete perspective of the issues related to this complex phenomenon. Furthermore, investigating discrete aspects of the process, such as only formation, or only partnership management, also provides an incomplete picture of the nature of partnerships in organizations. Therefore in order to present a more complete view of the nature of IORs, an appropriate research design was formulated to address these dimensions that have not been fully explored in previous research.

In this chapter, I outline the research methodology selected to undertake this study and provide a detailed rationale for choosing the research case in question. An explanation of the data collection and data analysis processes is also provided. Chapter 3 begins with a discussion of the particular research and writing considerations arising from this investigation.

Research and Writing Considerations

As with all empirical research, an assessment must be made of the strengths and limitations of various research designs and techniques of data collection, handling, and analysis. In addition, several other issues were addressed prior to embarking on the research including the significance of both the level and unit of analysis, structure of thesis, ethical considerations, and issues related to qualitative data.

Level and Unit of Analysis

The choice of units and levels of analysis must be carefully and consciously made and not left to the beliefs and habits of the researcher, or to empirical convenience (Pfeffer, 1982). Auster (1994) captured the challenges of investigating and explaining IORs, and the benefit of adopting a multi-theoretical and multi-level approach in the following statement: "A multi-theoretical, multi-level explanation means recognizing the complexity of this phenomenon and using different lenses for shedding light on and unraveling different dimensions, while simultaneously paying attention to how understanding can be enhanced by blending and bridging approaches" (p. 33). Regardless of the focus of
the research, Auster (1994) recommends that individuals exploring dimensions of IORs should continually struggle with and keep the wide-angle lens and the larger picture in mind.

Consideration of both level and unit of analysis has serious implications for researchers investigating aspects of IORs. In order to avoid misspecification and misrepresentation of research findings, Rousseau (1985) reasoned that it is vital for researchers to explicitly address the role of the level and unit of analysis in organizational phenomena. According to Rousseau (1985), the study of organizations examines phenomena that are fundamentally mixed in level, and therefore researchers should embrace the practice of viewing dimensions of organizations from various levels. Several authors encourage a bridging of the gap among a macro perspective of organizations, environment, and strategy, and the micro perspective of individuals and groups within organizations. The result, according to Klein, Dansereau, and Hall (1994), is “...a deeper, richer portrait of organizational life – one that acknowledges the influence of the organizational context on individuals’ actions and perceptions and the influence of individuals’ actions and perceptions on the organizational context” (p. 243).

Similarly, the field of research on IORs has encountered specific challenges with respect to the level and unit of analysis. Researchers investigating partnerships (cf. Auster, 1994; Gulati & Singh, 1998; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995; Thorelli, 1986) have reported that this field has been characterized primarily by single level and single unit examinations. Auster (1994), Spekman, Forbes, Isabella and MacAvoy, (1998), and Gulati (1998) stated that most research on IORs has focused predominantly on dyadic entities, and has been conducted at the organizational level of analysis. This narrow research focus has been criticized for not providing a rich or deep enough account of the complexities involved in exploring interorganizational partnerships. These authors believe that research efforts should reflect the intricacies of changing strategic demands and environmental conditions.

Levels of Analysis
The level of analysis in theories of organizations is the level at which the activity is analyzed and further, is the level at which the explanation of the research findings is most productively focused. According to Neuman (2000), the level of analysis will delimit the kinds of theories, concepts, and assumptions that a researcher makes. For example, in the field of interorganizational partnerships, an economic or resource situated framework would require a level of analysis at the organizational level,
whereas, an investigation into the types of relational contracts or bonds that are formed among actors may require a level of analysis focused more on the individual.

Pfeffer (1982) distinguished between two levels of human interaction and social structure: micro and macro. The micro level is comprised of individuals and substructures, whereas the macro level depicts organizations as units within networks, populations, or communities. Pfeffer further described the individualist and the structuralist positions, which parallel the micro and macro perspectives. The individualist position contends that organizations do not behave, people do, and it is the nature of this human interaction that explains the processes occurring in organizations which produce the observed results. Micro constructs such as individual interests, power, conflict, organizational roles, and expectations are viewed as contributing to macro-conditions. The structuralist position is that organizations can be understood by focusing on larger macro-processes such as strategy and organizational structure. A discussion of these opposing views is relevant because this study explored the phenomenon of partnerships among organizations using both a political (micro) and strategic (macro) theoretical perspective. Neuman (2000) specified these levels even further. He distinguished between micro (social, psychological, individual values, interests, and expectations), meso (organizational), and macro (large-scale social structure).

Interestingly, much of the research on partnerships views firm interactions from the organizational level of analysis, yet implicit in the relationship among organizations is the function of the role of individual alliance actors (Lamming, 2001; Spekman et al., 1998). Because IORs are interacted at the individual level, it is important that this aspect of partnerships not be overlooked. As Ring and Van de Ven (1994) explained, “although our focus is on cooperative IORs, a macro-level phenomena, these relationships only emerge, evolve, grow and dissolve over time as a consequence of individual’s activities” (p. 95).

Therefore, based on the purpose of this research, and the use of a theoretical framework that encompassed strategic management (meso or organizational) and the political nature (micro or individual) of IORs, the incorporation of a multi-level approach appeared to be appropriate. The level of analysis at which activity was examined in this study included both the organizational level and the individual level of analysis.
One of the challenges in conducting qualitative research concerns the selection of the appropriate unit of analysis. Lee (1999) suggested that researchers often face confusion because the emphasis on the real world context may cloud their notions of the focus of their research interest. Determining the most meaningful unit of analysis, consequently, requires clarity on the part of the researcher in order to eliminate ambiguity and uncertainty in the research questions, in developing the research design, and ultimately in reporting research findings.

A study's unit of analysis is the phenomenon under investigation (Lee, 1999). It is the kind of empirical case or unit that a researcher observes, measures, and analyzes in a study (Neuman, 2000). The unit of analysis, however, can be deceiving and can create particular challenges for researchers (Lee, 1999). Pfeffer (1982) indicated that the unit of analysis should correspond to the level associated with the theoretical approaches employed.

The most obvious formal units of an organization include the individual, the formal group, and the organization as a whole (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999). Further units of analysis for examining IORs have included the dyad (the relationship between two organizations), the organizational set which has been defined as the set of linkages of one focal organization (Auster, 1994), and the organizational network (the multiplex bonds of organizations and their interrelationships) (Ahuja, 2000a; Gulati, Nohria, & Zaher, 2000; Nohria & Eccles, 1992).

Auster (1994) recommended a reorientation of interorganizational thinking where researchers use broader units of analysis. She believed that a useful alternative would be to use organizational sets as a dominant focus because of their reorienting effect, and suggested that “...they force consideration of the web of relations in which the dyad is 'embedded'. In doing so, they bring issues of power, dependence, exchange and reciprocity to the forefront” (p. 18).

Ring and Van de Ven (1994), on the other hand, maintained that the explanation of the emergence, evolution, and dissolution of IORs requires that studies address both organizational and individual units of analysis. They suggested that using the 'event' as the unit of analysis would allow a researcher to focus simultaneously on both the individual and the organization. Along the same lines, Spekman et al. (1998) described a partnership as a dynamic interaction among business and
interpersonal activities whose purpose is to achieve mutually beneficial goals. They believed that a deeper understanding of the interaction among individuals and partner organizations would emerge as a result of an examination of the relationship activities. Business and interpersonal relationship activities work together to support each other to contribute to the full strength of the alliance. This advantage is squandered when attention is diverted from either of these dimensions.

Gulati (1998) and Fombrun (1982) explored IORs from a network perspective and saw a benefit in broadening the unit of analysis as a powerful means of describing and analyzing sets of units by focusing explicitly on their interrelationships.

The focus on the firm or alliance as the unit of analysis and the description of external context in competitive terms has typically assumed an atomistic notion of firms evaluating alternative courses of action and does not take into account the actions of other firms or the relationships in which they themselves are already embedded.

(Gulati, 1998, p. 295)

Gulati (1998) did suggest, however, that the dyad can be a valuable unit of analysis, and that a resource dependence approach has focused on alliance formation at this level. The views of these authors indicate that there is variation in the recommendations of the unit of analysis that will provide the most insight and understanding into the phenomenon of IORs.

The research presented in this dissertation investigated (but was not limited to) the dyadic relationships of an organizational set. Therefore, the dyadic interaction or exchange between the NSC (City) and its partners was the unit of analysis. An organizational set is the array of linkages associated with one focal organization (Auster, 1994). The focal organization was the NSC (City) and its set was comprised of all of its partners including: Sport Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Coaching Association of Canada, a University, the provincial government, national sport federations, local community partners, and corporate partners (i.e., the partner organizations / groups are outlined in Figure 4.1 in the following chapter).

In the preceding paragraphs, I have identified and defined alternative units of analysis including the dyad, the organizational set, and the network. It would be slipshod not to address the weaknesses and limitations in the decision to investigate the dyads of an organizational set without considering network interactions among individuals and organizations. A network analysis is indeed a compelling and effective method to examine interorganizational partnerships and the dynamics of organizations involved
in a collaborative effort to serve a particular client group. However, because of the nature of this study I decided to focus instead on the dyadic relationships of an organizational set. One weakness of this approach is the assumption that there are no interrelationships among organizational partners in the group that would affect the dynamics of the partnership with the NSC. While conducting the study and analyzing the data, I did not discount the notion that broader ‘network’ interactions would impact and influence at different levels the actors and organizations I investigated (broader network relationships between organizations that are part of the NSC’s organizational set are depicted by dotted lines in Figure 4.1). Such interactions therefore, were considered as part of the larger context of this research.

**Structure of Thesis**

The structure of this thesis has undergone several changes since it was first proposed. One element that changed was the conversion from a three paper dissertation format to a traditional dissertation format. This decision was made because it is believed to be the most effective and efficient means to represent the theoretical framework, methods, and findings.

In the initial phases of conducting this research, it became evident that in order to fully comprehend the relevant management issues, there needed to be an understanding of why the relationship was created in the first place and the context of interaction. Therefore, although when this research was first proposed, the initial intent was to focus more on the management of partnership relationships, the findings will also report the antecedents or determinants of partnership formation. This will provide a richer context for understanding the managerial aspects of collaboration and is an important contribution to the literature as partnership studies are frequently reported without consideration of the context of interaction and how that context might influence further processes or exchange. Furthermore, it became evident that the issue of outcomes and results of interaction became an increasingly important consideration, ultimately meriting its own chapter for discussion as the challenges and complexities associated with this phase of interaction were expressed.

As the data was being collected, I realized that it would be challenging to categorize and situate concepts and findings into a single aspect of the analytical framework (i.e., partnership formation, management, or assessment outcomes). For example, the resources that are exchanged among organizations can be viewed as a strategic factor related to both the creation of the partnership and the
management of the relationship. As such, the coding approach was systematically implemented to allow for consideration of the context of the discussion, and whether it was related to either the creation and/or management of the relationship.

**Criteria of Soundness**

For qualitative studies, Marshall and Rossman (1995; 1999) discussed four criteria of soundness against which the trustworthiness of the research can be evaluated. Attention to these constructs ensured that the assumptions made by focusing on specific levels and units of analysis were addressed. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were considered as the criteria that reflect the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm and replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. Credibility was described as the ability to "...demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 143). Rather does the explanation fit the description of the case, and is the explanation credible (Janesick, 2000)? Dependability considers the "...changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study as well as changes in the design created by increasingly refined understanding of the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 145). Confirmability is a necessary step to corroborate whether the findings of the study can be confirmed by others. The construct of transferability in qualitative studies "...rests more with the investigator who would make that transfer than with the original investigator" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 143). Several approaches used to address and ensure that these criteria were met are discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

**Ethical Concerns and Issues of Confirmability**

In addition to the emphasis placed on ensuring that informants were aware of their rights as participants of the study, and that the guidelines of the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Sciences Committee for Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects were followed, further ethical matters were considered. In particular, informants whose direct quotations were used in this thesis were provided with an opportunity to comment on, augment, or change their statements. Since in most cases the electronic interview transcript consisted of over 20 pages of single-spaced text, I felt that most of the informants would prefer not to go through it in detail and would not have the time to assess it thoroughly. Consequently, when specific quotations were included as evidence in this thesis, the
verbatim quotations were emailed to participants to verify their accuracy and context. Many informants did not reply to this communication. Some however, did respond with editorial changes or requests that particular quotations be eliminated. Any such request made by an informant was accommodated. One informant commented about how strange it was to see her spoken words written and wrote to me in an email “I can’t believe how different my words look in black and white! I feel that some of these quotations don’t fully capture the meaning of what I was trying to say.” This informant provided me with extensive changes and edits to her quotations. This approach enhanced the validity and dependability of the findings, ensured that misrepresentation was reduced, and confirmed that what was being reported was a precise portrayal of their views and of the phenomenon.

Another way dependability of the data was addressed was during the interviews themselves. I made efforts to ensure the meaning and interpretation of the participants’ views and words were accurate and would be precisely represented in the research. For example, the following passage illustrates how I paraphrased the informant’s responses to make certain that meanings and interpretations were correct.

**KB** So just to recap then, your philosophy of partnerships is in your words giving a hand up, not a hand out. And you look for a partnership that can potentially help you achieve some of your organization’s strategic objectives as well?

**Private Sector Partner** Exactly, and those objectives are things like doing something for our employees that helps build morale. Or if you do something in the community that is different that is part of the profile for our organization and part of our strategy to play a role in our community.

I also maintained contact with the NSC throughout the data collection and writing process. I provided them with bi-annual progress reports which were included in board meeting packages (so that Founding Partners and some Sport Partners would also be briefed on the status of the research), a summary of my initial findings, and letters as required regarding any questions or concerns they had about my research. As a result, throughout the research process the NSC had many opportunities to comment and provide feedback on my work.

**Selection of Research Paradigm**

The design of empirical studies exploring various aspects of partnerships varies from longitudinal designs lasting a decade (Goes & Park, 1997; Provan et al., 1980; Provan & Milward, 1995), to quantitative survey research (Geringer & Hebert, 1991; Kale, Singh, & Perlmutter, 2000), to studies
employing exclusively qualitative methods (Eden & Huxham, 2001; Larson, 1992; Pasquero, 1991). These research approaches have contributed to the growing knowledge base in the academic literature regarding IORs. However, investigating the actual dynamics of partnership formation, management, and assessment introduces particular challenges. Therefore, the design of the study needs to consider the types of research questions posed.

In order to investigate and explain the strategic dimensions, interpersonal and interorganizational interactions, management processes and assessment of outcomes outlined in previous chapters, a qualitative research approach was selected. As further justification for the selection of this approach, I felt that the political and social dynamics and tensions I suspected existed between partnering organizations could be more effectively uncovered using qualitative methods. A qualitative approach is well suited to investigate the challenges and complexities encountered in the establishment, management, and outcomes of partnerships. This approach was selected to incorporate quality, depth, and richness in the responses from individuals, content of documents, and observations at organizational meetings that would not have been possible using quantitative research methods. Furthermore, because of the limited empirical research conducted on the management of partnerships in the academic literature, a qualitative approach was considered ideal to provide us with insights into the complexities and challenges associated with these processes.

A case study strategy was employed since the intent of the research was to explore an innovative approach to coordinating interorganizational activities (i.e., partnerships as a 'new' strategy for sport organizations). Stake (1995) defined a case study as "...the study of the particularity and complexity of a single matter, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). A single case, according to Stake (1995) could be an individual, a program, an organization, anything that is a specific, complex, functioning entity. Yin's (1994) definition adds that a case study is an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context made particularly relevant when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined. That is to say that the contextual or environmental conditions of a particular case may be very relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Marshall and Rossman (1999) commented on the distinctive characteristics of case study research stating that a case study approach "entails immersion in the setting and rests on both the
researcher's and the participant's views" (p. 61). This concept of relying on both the participant's and the researcher's points of view emphasizes the role played by each actor in defining the structure of the research, the questions asked (in the researcher's case), and the areas of emphasis with respect to their involvement in the interorganizational partnerships (in the participant's case). According to Stablein (1999), case studies in management share the focus on one complex organizational unit, as well as having a common representational process of incorporating multiple methods to understand the bounded system, collection, or population being examined.

Based on the this study's research questions, I felt that a case study approach would be the most effective means to examine the nature of the subject. The phenomenon under investigation was a complex and contemporary one, and the environmental and contextual conditions were relevant in the creation and management of IORs. Although this case study did not involve complete immersion in the setting, I was involved as an observer and participant in several key organizational meetings and events, and had access to most relevant actors, information, and documentation regarding the partnerships. The results of this research reflect both the participants' and my own point of view as a researcher.

Although the study design, data collection, and analysis for this research was guided by the previously described relevant theoretical perspectives as Yin (1994) suggested, the case study approach allowed for an emergent and evolving research design. This proved to be advantageous so that as issues arose during the process of sample selection and data collection, the design and framework I used as a 'map' were flexible enough to be modified (Stake, 1995). For example, prior to the data collection process, I had identified examining specific dyadic relationships between the NSC and each of its partners. In the first interview with a staff member of the focal NSC, I tried to engage in a conversation about each of the specific partnerships that existed between the NSC and the relevant organizations in their network (e.g., NSC – NSF, or NSC – corporate partner). I quickly realized that this approach would result in overwhelming the informant with specificity, and that he/she probably would not be able to answer many of these questions with a great degree of certainty at that level of detail for each partnership. Furthermore, this approach would extend the interview beyond the allocated 1.5 hours identified in the letter outlining the research that each participant had received. I therefore began grouping my questions around partnerships in specific organizational sectors such as nonprofit,
corporate, and government, and then breaking them down further into Founding, Corporate, Sport, and NSC Network partners. Using this approach, informants could provide examples of specific partnerships, but would not need to comment about their relationship with each one of the partner organizations. After two interviews using this approach, the design was modified and no further changes were required.

A qualitative approach can be driven by the biases and predilections of the researcher, and begs a reflection of researcher history and involvement in the process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). By way of background, my professional experiences with nonprofit sport and recreation organizations included volunteer and consulting involvement in community recreation associations, employment in a provincial organization which lobbied for opportunities for physical activity, health, and sport for children and youth, a position as coordinator of sport in Vancouver’s Olympic bid corporation, as well as the management and coordination of international sporting events such as Freestyle Skiing world cup and world championship competitions. After several years and obtaining extensive experience working in these sport and recreation organizations, I reflected on the relevant management developments during my tenure as both an employee and volunteer. I concluded that regardless of the organization or sector, one of the issues that demanded considerable managerial ‘energy’ and focus was the establishment and management of partnerships with other organizations and the difficulties associated with the assessment of their effectiveness. I realized the importance of these relationships – particularly for those organizations in the nonprofit sector as a means to access diverse sources of funding (primarily for organizational survival) and other resources, as vehicles to achieve legitimacy and prestige, and as channels to communicate and achieve organizational goals and objectives. Several of the organizations with whom I was involved were viewed as ‘leaders’ in the early adoption of partnership strategies, and I am fortunate to have had this practical experience to inform my research. While I viewed the strategy of entering into partnerships as something of a necessity and perhaps as an inevitable activity among organizations in the sport and recreation sectors, I was also aware of the practical managerial implications related to identifying partners, establishing the relationships, and managing partnerships over time. Given the effort required, I began to question their value, to consider the critical factors associated with the success or failure of these relationships, and whether eventually, the partnership pendulum might shift ‘back’ to where organizations would make attempts to regain their autonomy and
independence and strike out independently. When I undertook my doctoral studies I began to consider
the relevance of this phenomenon from the perspective of a researcher rather than a practitioner. The
advantage I gained from this work was a pragmatic understanding of the relevant partnership issues that
cut across all my professional experiences. This experience has helped me as a researcher exploring the
issue of partnerships in organizations by serving as a foundation to better understand and incorporate the
theoretical approaches used to explain various aspects of the partnering process. Furthermore, this
practical experience has provided me with a sense of the challenges and dynamics of partnerships from
the perspective of a practitioner, and recognition of the important empirical contributions an investigation
of partnerships could make to practice.

Data Management

Huberman and Miles (1998) described qualitative data management as "...the operations needed
for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage and retrieval" (p. 180), to ensure that data
remained easy for the researcher to access, and that systems of documentation be devised and
maintained to encourage efficient and organized record-keeping. According to them, data management
included the following interactive components: data collection and data analysis (which contains three
linked sub-processes): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing / verification. In this section,
data collection and data analysis will be addressed. The following discussion will use Huberman and Miles’
concepts to present the processes of data collection and data analysis.

Data Collection

Huberman and Miles (1998) described the starting point for the reduction of data as the selection
of the conceptual framework, the types of research questions explored, the specific case to be examined,
and the types of instruments used to collect the data. Together, these factors serve to define the nature
of the study and delimit the kind of data that is collected. Once these issues are determined, further data
selection and condensation occurs with the creation or acquisition of additional information such as field
notes, interview transcripts, organizational documentation, coding, identification of themes, and the
creation of data families.

The process of data collection for this research consisted of several steps, consistent with Yin’s
(1994) suggestion that case study research should obtain data from multiple sources. This data
triangulation, as an alternative to validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Janesick, 2000), allowed
corroboration, elaboration, or elimination (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) of findings and themes as the
analysis progressed. The study design incorporated multiple approaches to evidence gathering including
semi-structured interviews, document analysis, meeting observations, and field notes. Yin indicated that
overriding principles are critical for data collection in case studies, such as the use of multiple sources of
evidence (i.e., greater than two sources) that converge on the same set of facts or findings, and the
necessity for "...explicit links between the questions asked, the data collected, and the conclusions
drawn" (Yin, 1994, p. 78). According to Yin, the quality of the case study would be greatly enhanced by
the adoption of these principles and subsequent triangulation and substantiation of the findings.

Before any data could be collected, access to the identified organization was requested and
granted. Negotiations for entry and access were a critical part of the research process. In March 2000, I
contacted the President of NSC (City) by electronic mail with a letter outlining the proposed research.
Because we had a mutual friend who had mentioned my study to him, the initial response was positive,
although the President was concerned about the extent of involvement of people in the organization, and
the benefits NSC (City) would accrue as a result of its involvement in this research. Subsequent
communication, via electronic mail and telephone, addressed the questions and concerns of the
President. Access to the NSC was made possible by positioning the research as an opportunity to assist
the focal NSC and other sport organizations in the effective establishment, management, and evaluation
of interorganizational partnerships. An initial meeting was held, where the research was outlined in more
detail and the justification, need, and advantages of participation were more specifically outlined. At this
meeting, I was able to gather preliminary information about the organization and its partners. One hurdle
remained at this point in the research process. The President wanted to have approval from the entire
volunteer board of directors before launching the study. The President presented the research proposal
at the subsequent board meeting, and the board voted to approve the research, indicating overall
organizational 'buy-in' and support of the study. From a practical research standpoint, the step of
justifying the need for conducting this research was eliminated as the members of the organization all
were involved in making this decision. Furthermore, the 'buy-in' was beneficial in that most members of
the organization were aware that this research was being conducted within the focal NSC which facilitated the process of arranging interviews.

The first data collection approach included three comprehensive information interviews. The first was conducted with the President of the NSC to identify the goals of both the organization and its partnerships, the array of partners involved, and the prominent milestones and issues that defined its relationships among organizations. The President was centrally involved in forming and implementing partnerships throughout his tenure at the organization. His expertise, involvement in sport, and connections in the community provided him with the background to state that partnerships were becoming ubiquitous as a means of enhancing sport delivery in Canada. His particular strategic focus was on finding partners in the local corporate sector because he regarded it as an untapped source of funding for high performance sport. This information interview lasted over two hours, and was treated in a manner consistent with the other primary data collection interviews (i.e., transcribed and coded). Two other key staff members of the NSC were contacted to obtain initial information regarding partnership structures and key actors in the partnering organizations. These information interviews provided more context about who partners were, what role they played with the NSC, and importantly telephone, email, and mailing address information to be able to contact potential informants. Additionally, a preliminary study that I conducted in 2000 on the determinants of partnership formation in four other Canadian NSCs provided me with a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant issues and challenges related to the creation of partnerships for these organizations. This preliminary work helped in the design of the interview guide as well as in the identification of relevant organizational documents. Furthermore, the information interviews with the President and staff members, and the previously conducted study contributed to the concept of dependability in qualitative research as identified by Marshall and Rossman (1995). As a result, through the initial groundwork conducted in preparation for this research, dependability was addressed by attempting to account for any potentially changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for study, and by gaining an enhanced understanding of the setting which allowed refinement of the research design and tools as previously explained.

The second data collection approach involved the review and analysis of relevant organizational documents dating back to the inception of the focal organization (i.e., annual reports, business plans
from 1994). Records included website documents, mission, vision, and goal statements, strategic and marketing plans, research and annual reports, contracts, policy documents, sport articles, press releases, organizational / promotional documents, memoranda of understanding between the NSC and its partners, weekly organizational updates, and notes or minutes from meetings and interviews. Additionally, wherever possible, I collected similar relevant documentation from each of the partner organizations in the study. These documents were obtained through several means, including personal exchange, on-line internet access (for information such as media releases), or access to archives. In order to access website information and documentation dating back over the period of existence of the NSC (City), a website that maintained archives of retired web pages was searched. The ‘Wayback Machine’ (www.archive.org) allowed me to find and incorporate into the documentation evidence from NSC and partner websites dating back to 1999 that I was not able to attain through other avenues (documents earlier than 1999 were not available through this website and where possible were found in archive material of the focal NSC). I also accessed NSC libraries and/or archives, documents housed in NSCs and their partner organizations including business plans, and meeting notes. In total, over 110 organizational documents were collected and reviewed (see Appendix II for a complete document inventory). Documents were explored to gain a better understanding of organizations’ values and expectations regarding partnerships, particularly how the focal organization intended to use partnerships to attain its goals. These documents were also examined for any reference to how partnerships might be managed. Wherever possible, documents were compared to information obtained through other approaches such as interviews and meeting observations to identify any divergence between the messages communicated by organizational actors. Sections of the documents that were related to partnerships and other types of IORs were highlighted and entered into a word processing file. Documents were used both as an initial analysis tool, and as a means to provide background information, substantiate findings and facts, illustrate concepts, and supplement and support information obtained from the primary source of data (i.e., interviews). Analysis of these documents contributed to the identification of specific strategies, plans, and directions regarding IORs for the partners involved in this study.

The third approach, *in-depth interviews*, involved speaking with 28 NSC staff and partners identified as the primary alliance participants. Rather than restricting attention to a few key informants,
data was gathered from a broad network of alliance participants including a core management team at the NSC and a group of senior executives in several of the partnering organizations. Key partner organizations were initially identified based on listings in NSC annual reports and website information, and this was corroborated during the information interviews with the NSC President and staff.

Participants for this study were identified from various organizations, including: Sport Partners (i.e., national sport federations who had established a partnership or training centre with the NSC), Founding Partners (including the Canadian Olympic Committee, Sport Canada, the Coaching Association of Canada, the Olympic Legacy Organization (OLO – a pseudonym), a University, and the provincial government), private sector partners (including a large energy / oil company, a marketing / advertising firm, a pharmaceutical company, and an investment firm), and finally, the presidents of three other NSCs (NSC Network Partners).

The selection of informants for this case study was based on their degree of familiarity and expert knowledge of the organization's partnerships and their ability to report accurately and comprehensively. In their research on partnerships, Simonin (1997), Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996), and Geringer (1991) chose actors whose understanding and fields of action pertained to their interaction with other organizations. They viewed top managers as the most able to recognize and assess the relative importance of organizational dynamics, and also as the most qualified to report specialized information on strategic alliances. As such, participants in this study included key NSC managers and board members, and CEOs, vice-presidents, and directors (i.e., senior management) of the partner organizations.

A detailed breakdown of informant numbers, partner type, and characteristics of the general roles and responsibilities is provided in Table 3.2. More detailed descriptions of the informants for this study are provided in Chapter 4.
Table 3.2: Breakdown of informant number, role, and relationship type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th># Interviews</th>
<th>How relationship is defined / supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC Staff / Board</td>
<td>7 (12)*</td>
<td>Delivery of programs / services to eligible high performance athletes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding Partners</td>
<td>7 (6)</td>
<td>Common objectives / interests – financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Partners</td>
<td>7 (15)</td>
<td>Programming and service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Partners</td>
<td>4 (8)</td>
<td>Community involvement – financial / in kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Partners (Other NSCs)</td>
<td>3 (8)</td>
<td>Coordination of services across country / resource sharing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL INTERVIEWS 28

(* Number in brackets reflects total number of possible informants / organizations from which to select. i.e., 4 corporate partners were interviewed out of 8 corporate partner organizations in total. The number of Founding Partners organizations is 6, however, in one organization two informants were interviewed.)

Interview participants were contacted by telephone or electronic mail initially and then were provided with a detailed letter of introduction (example provided in Appendix III) outlining the research as well as the interview guide. This strategy allowed the participants to ask questions and / or prepare prior to the interview. All informants signed and submitted informed consent forms prior to participating in the research (see Appendix IV). In the letter of introduction, participants were also provided with information regarding the ethical treatment of subjects, in accordance with guidelines from the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Sciences Committee for Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects (see Appendix V for approval notices for in person and telephone interviews from UBC’s Behavioural Sciences Committee for Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects), and were informed that their participation in this research was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. Out of 32 people contacted, 28 agreed to be part of the study. The other four individuals were interested in participating, but were not available due to time constraints and / or scheduling challenges.

Interviews were conducted both in person and over the telephone. In total, 26 interviews were tape-recorded which ensured that accurate documentation of informants' comments could be established. In the remaining two interviews, detailed hand transcribed notes were taken due to technical problems with the recording equipment or to impromptu meetings which did not allow me to have the necessary equipment prepared. All interviews were semi-structured to provide a focus for the interview while allowing for personal expression and interpretation by respondents, and probing in particular directions and areas of interest by the researcher. The interviews explored participants' strategies, interests, views, perceptions, personal experiences, and expectations regarding the establishment, management, and
outcomes of their IORs. Additionally, questions were posed related to informants' (and their organizations') willingness to engage in partnerships and their perceptions of possible benefits of cooperation. Interview questions were developed based on the literature reviewed earlier, the preliminary research I conducted with the 4 other NSCs, and the information interviews with the President and two staff members. Two specific and complementary interview guides were developed. The first was created for the NSC staff / board which related to their perceptions of the organizational strategies behind partnership formation and contained detailed questions about their approach to managing and carrying out their partnership duties, as well as how they viewed the effectiveness of the relationship. The second guide was designed for partner organizations (including Founding Partners, Sport Partners, Corporate Partners, and NSC Network Partners) for the purpose of exploring their organization's motivations regarding partnership formation, their views on the interaction and exchange between organizations, and their observations about the effectiveness of the relationship (see Appendix VI for interview guides for both NSC staff and their partner organizations). The length of each interview ranged from one to two hours. In total, approximately 600 single spaced pages of interview / document transcripts were generated. As interviews were transcribed, I maintained a separate computer file to keep a record of frequently mentioned concepts and themes. Terminology was defined and identified from the strategic management, political, and interorganizational literatures. For example, statements about motivations to form partnerships were initially categorized based on Oliver's (1990) framework and included elements such as stability, necessity, and asymmetry. These categories were subsequently expanded and refined in further analysis, but provided the direction for the preliminary analysis. The transcribing and preliminary coding phase was extremely helpful in allowing me to become familiar with the data to make initial intuitive sense of the categorization system that would be created as the analysis unfolded (Huberman & Miles, 1998). When the transcription was complete, the initial list of concepts, themes, and terms contained over 100 items. These items formed the basis for the identification of codes during the data analysis process.

The fourth data collection approach involved observation at selected organizational meetings. Three meetings were attended, specifically a two-day national strategic planning session that included the presidents from all NSCs and key partners in the Canadian sport system, as well as two bi-annual day
long board meetings of the NSC (City). During these meetings, detailed notes were taken describing facts and documenting observations, interactions and discussions among partners, with a particular focus on strategic discussions and political behaviours or interactions. Before attending these meetings, I developed an observation guide where I specified elements of strategic discussions as exchanges relating to resource acquisition, organizational and partnership planning, approaches regarding what organizations to target for partnerships (i.e., corporate or sport), or how partnerships and their outcomes might be evaluated. I categorized political behaviours as exchanges that involved pressure tactics, influence, tensions, conflict, disagreement or discord, and how these were resolved. For example, there were concerns by some organizational members regarding the issue of athlete performances. Some partners felt that the only way to assess whether the NSC was achieving its objectives was by podium performance results (i.e., athletes winning bronze, silver, or gold medals at major international sport events), as opposed to the view of other partners who emphasized personal bests or top 8 finishes in competitions. These concerns, tensions, and disagreements were noted as part of political behaviour observations. This data collection technique provided me with an opportunity to witness and record social situations in the work environment, and interaction among individuals (i.e., better understand the 'contextual realism' involved in interorganizational interaction). An important advantage of this source of information was that these observations supplemented, supported, and/or contradicted interpretations and perceptions offered during interviews or within organizational documents.

Finally, a journal was kept to document the study process, maintain field notes, organize the project development, and highlight experiences, challenges, and reflections throughout the period of the study. The researcher journal provided a context for the study and elaborated on the interactions and processes that I experienced and allowed me to reflect on my role as the researcher.

Using these five varied sources of information, it was possible to triangulate or corroborate and augment the data in order to identify discrepancies across sources. It was also possible to resolve problems of misunderstanding, inaccuracy, and differences in meaning or interpretations. As a result, the case study approach using multiple data sources and methods provided a more comprehensive portrait of the intricate web of relationships and interactions of a working partnership.
Data Analysis and Reduction

Consistent with Huberman and Miles' (1998) interactive data analysis model, the process of data reduction begins once the relevant data is available. Data storage and retrieval issues are critical at this stage. Once a logical and reasonable system has been created by the researcher, data summaries, coding, and theme development are undertaken as further means of data selection and reduction.

Due to the extensive amount of data collected throughout the course of the study, a logical organization and retrieval system was critical. All audio-taped interviews were labeled with date, location, and the participant's name. All informants were assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity in the presentation of results, but a system was required to keep track of informants and what each one said. All electronic interview transcripts were maintained in a separate computer file to allow ease of access and ensure system organization.

Data Analysis Strategy: Preparation

The first stage of data analysis included the assignment of interview transcript files into a compatible format with the qualitative analysis software program, Atlas.ti. This program offers tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful information from extensive amounts of data in a creative, flexible, yet systematic way (Scientific Software Development, 1997). While I was aware of the significant time investment required to develop the skills and learn the intricacies of a new software program, I understood that because of the volume of data generated in this study, it would ultimately be more efficient and effective to organize and manage the data with computer assistance, as opposed to manually.

The next step was the analysis of the organizational documents I had collected. I analyzed the content of all documents for any reference to, or statement made about, any interorganizational relationship (e.g., alliance, cooperation, collaboration, network, partner, partnership, sponsor, or supporter). All passages relating to any type of interaction between or among organizations were highlighted. Highlighted passages were transcribed into a computer file, assigned to Atlas.ti, and subsequently treated in the same manner as the interview transcripts (i.e., analyzed and coded). Additionally, meeting notes, field notes, and the researcher journal were also transcribed and included with the interview and organizational documents in Atlas.ti.
Once the relevant information was synthesized into an organized, logical format within Atlas.ti, the data analysis phase was initiated. Analysis of the data enabled identification, expression, and sense making of the conceptual partnership framework used as the basis for this research.

**Data Analysis Strategy: Coding and Theme Building**

After documents, interviews, and notes were formatted and assigned as Atlas.ti files, the coding process began. Coding captures meaning in the data, and consists of "labeling passages of the data according to what they are about or other content of interest in them" (Richards & Richards, 1998, p. 214). Using the previously created code list as a starting point, all codes were entered into the Atlas.ti program, critically examined, defined, and reevaluated for duplication, clarity, and applicability. To ensure consistency and reliability in the process, these codes and their definitions were assessed by an independent researcher (see Appendix VII for a complete list of codes used in analysis). This researcher played the role of 'devil's advocate' as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (1995) to build on the confirmability of the findings and reduce bias in interpretation. The issue of confirmability parallels the traditional concept of objectivity (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) or what Miles and Huberman (1994) call validity, and merits attention in order to "...remove evaluation from some inherent characteristic of the researcher (objectivity) and place it squarely on the data themselves" (p. 145). The role the independent researcher played was to critically question the initial list of codes that I had developed. When this independent researcher had questions regarding a particular code, its definition or its relevance, these issues were considered, discussed, and debated. As a result of this review, many codes from the initial list were combined, redefined, eliminated, or new ones were added. The process of coding was iterative and the list was modified several times through the course of the analysis. As the analysis phase progressed, new codes were created and several of the existing codes were either eliminated or amalgamated with codes that were more reflective of emerging concepts. After the first round of analysis, I had a total of 112 codes related to partnership formation, management, and outcome aspects and other contextual types of issues.

Interview passages were then assigned corresponding codes. For example, when one informant from the focal NSC discussed the how the success of the partnership with corporate firms was evaluated, she claimed that continued support would indicate partnership success in the following quotation: 'to
determine whether the partnership with our corporate partners is successful, I guess would be whether they continue to support us. For instance, at the end of the year whether they decide to renew their arrangement with us would be our only indication of whether it was successful.' This quotation was coded as 'Outcome – success' from the code list to indicate that the context of the conversation centred on how partnerships were evaluated. In the memo section, a notation was made regarding that the statement was made specifically about NSC's corporate partnerships.

Organizational documents were treated the same way as the interview transcripts. All relevant material pertaining to any partnership created or any reference to how they were managed was transcribed into a Microsoft Word file and entered into Atlas.ti. Further analysis included the creation of a table which contained a summary of each of the organizational documents and its partnership content. A search was conducted for terms related to IORs and compared to what informants said. A newsletter from the focal NSC entitled 'Week in Review' was also analyzed over a period of one year for any content related to partnerships, IORs, and sponsorships. In total, approximately 50 'Week in Review' documents were analyzed.

Initially, larger passages of text were identified for general meaning and assigned corresponding codes. For instance, if an informant had discussed her organization's motivation to form a partnership with the NSC, the initial code on the text segment might have been Determinant of partnership formation. The next step was the reexamination of the data and a specific analysis for key words or sentences that provided more detailed concepts and insights. Continuing with the previous example, the informant might have suggested in the discussion that the primary motivating factor for forming the relationship was to enhance administrative efficiencies between organizations. In this case, the code would have been reassigned to Determinant of partnership formation – efficiency.

The Atlas.ti program maintains a running balance of the frequencies of use for each code, as well as a record of all quotations that were highlighted in the interview text, for analysis and transfer to word processing documents. In total, 1,855 relevant quotations were generated from the 29 primary documents (i.e., 28 interview files, and another file which included passages from organizational documentation, field notes, journal reflections, and notes from meetings / minutes). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that researchers start with some general themes derived from reading the literature.
and add more themes and sub-themes as they progress through their analysis. Thus, I began theme building with the map or conceptual framework I developed from the literature, and then further relevant themes were identified based on the emphasis placed on them in interviews, documents, and observations. As a test for whether these codes and themes in the interview and document data were appropriate and confirmable by other researchers, another independent reviewer (different than the one that had examined the coded list initially) was asked to code one section of an interview transcript using the list of codes and definitions developed. This coded section was compared with my initial analysis and discussed and debated in detail with the independent reviewer to determine consistencies and/or contradictions in understanding. Through this exercise, I was able to clarify, confirm, and further refine certain codes, general themes and their application to the data.

Some codes had very high numbers of quotations associated with them. In an iterative process, I reviewed and reassigned codes a second time for consistency in coding and relevance (credibility and dependability). Wherever there was a code that had a large number of quotations (over 40 quotations) associated with it, I found that often sub-themes would emerge upon reexamination. For example, the original code for all comments related to factors motivating organizations to enter into partnerships was 'Determinant of partnership formation'. Upon coding several interviews, this particular code contained over 125 quotations. After analyzing the content of the quotations, the code was further broken down into the following 6 sub-themes for motives to form partnerships following Oliver's (1990) framework: access to resources (stability), efficiency, asymmetry, legitimacy, reciprocity, and necessity. An important concern needs to be addressed at this point. The formation of themes was not strictly bound by guiding frameworks, but was developed in a way which alternative explanations could be accommodated. For instance, one aspect that did not fit within Oliver's original framework and which will be discussed in Chapter 5 was the formation of some types of partnerships based on interpersonal interaction, previous history, or 'friendship'. This motive did not fit exactly with Oliver's initial six determinants and therefore needed to be addressed differently.

Once all interviews, document passages, and notes were coded, I organized them into themes and patterns. These categories were then further scrutinized for relationships and linkages between them and further application and/or confirmation to the initial framework was made. Major themes regarding
motivations to engage in partnership strategies, the exchange of resources, political and social dynamics, management concerns, and perceptions of partnership effectiveness were drawn from the data.

**Data Analysis Strategy: Identifying Families and Memo Application**

In Atlas.ti, families are a device used to cluster codes for easier handling of an especially large number of interpretative objects and/or primary documents (Scientific Software Development, 1997). One important objective of organizing the information into families is to manage large amounts of objects by classifying them into sub-sets (e.g., all theoretical codes, or particular primary documents). For instance, when categorizing the factors motivating organizations to form partnerships, I was able to isolate comments made by, and thematic categories associated with, particular groups such as only the Founding Partners, or only the Corporate Partners. In this way, the clustering of codes and quotations was facilitated, and allowed for easy comparison and theme identification within and between groups. Five families were formed for this study, including: NSC (City) informants, Founding Partners, Sport Partners, Corporate Partners, and NSC Network Partners.

Additionally, throughout the data analysis process, detailed notes, ideas, comments, and links to the theoretical framework were kept through a system of in-program memos, one of Atlas.ti’s functions. As the coding and analysis process unfolded, I maintained a system of memos and comments that allowed me to organize ideas and thoughts as they arose at the time of coding. This memoing process also facilitated the identification of the relationships among themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). These comments and memos were used as a basis for the emergence of the findings. The information documented in these memos helped to organize and provide a context for the discussion of the findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Once the coding was completed, the documents analyzed, and the field notes reviewed, the task of compiling, shaping, forming, and drawing conclusions from the considerable amount of information began.

**Data Presentation / Display**

Throughout the following chapters, the results of the analysis and theme-building will be presented using representative quotations. A number of direct quotations from respondents were selected as exemplars of themes because I felt that these particular quotations would lead the reader to quickly understand the related concepts and theories being discussed. It should be noted that although at
times there may only be one representative quotation to support an argument, Wolfe (1989) building on the suggestions of others, presents an argument based on principles that less emphasis needs to be placed on the number of times an issue has been raised, but rather the conceptual strength and importance of the themes themselves. That is to say, a theme addressed within the data less frequently may be more relevant and central to the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation than an often repeated concept.
CHAPTER 4: 
CASE CONTEXT

In this chapter a description will be provided of the focal organization (the National Sport Centre) and its partners from the Founding, Sport, Corporate, and NSC network, as well as an overview of the political and social environment in which these relationships emerged. The context and the nature of the partnerships established by the focal organization will also be discussed. First, a description of the NSC in this case study is presented and followed by the organizations interviewed as partners of the NSC's organizational set.

The Research Site: An In-Depth Profile of Focal Organization

The site for my investigation of interorganizational partnerships was a National Sport Centre in Western Canada, identified hereafter as NSC (City) (the name of the city will not be revealed for purposes of anonymity and will simply be referred to as City), the focal organization, or the Centre. This site was selected because it offered the desired mix of processes, individuals, interactions, and structures of interest, that Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggested are essential components for sound research. Furthermore, having been in operation for 8 years, this site was at a more advanced stage of organizational evolution than were other Centres in Canada. Consequently, it had the greatest number of established IORs and placed a high level of importance on these relationships. This factor allowed for richer perspectives and insights on the dynamics, challenges, and complexities of interactions among partners and on the partnership management, development, and evaluation processes. Additionally, differences in their operational structure presented interesting insights with respect to partner interaction (i.e., NSC (City) was considered a facility-based Centre as opposed to other NSC locations that operated as virtual Centres). Finally, a factor that cannot be overlooked was my own interpersonal network, which allowed for easier access to the organization.

In the late 1980s, the city hosted the Olympic Winter Games. From that event, a large legacy was left for Canadian sport, specifically facilities, financial resources, and a significant pool of human resources such as experienced volunteers and sport administrators. A number of these world-class facilities were located on the city's university campus. With the legacy in mind, a group of national leaders in Canadian sport came together with the purpose of creating a centre where Canadian winter
athletes (initially) could maximize the use of the physical facilities built for the Games, as well as the unique services that a university campus could provide. The concept of a National Sport Centre was born in 1994, six years after the Olympic Games were hosted. The underlying philosophy and purpose of this organization was to ensure that athletes were provided with physical, psychological, and competitive opportunities to allow them to thrive in competitive as well as the personal and professional realms.

Improved podium results (i.e., medals in national and international sport competitions) was the primary goal of the organization, with longer term objectives including the development of the athletes as individuals and community leaders (National Sport Centre - (City), 2001). One of the cornerstones of the Centre’s organizational values and philosophies was collaboration. The “maximum utilization of resources – achieved through partnering and teamwork” (National Sport Centre - (City), 2001, p. 5) was an integral management strategy.

The head office of this Centre was located on a large urban university campus (approximately 23,000 students) (University of (City), 2002). Several winter sport facilities, all legacies from the Olympic Games, including a long track speed skating oval, short track speed skating rinks, and several hockey rinks were located in the immediate vicinity of the management office of the Centre. Additionally, excellent swimming and diving facilities were housed within the recreation complex of the University. The Centre was also within a 20-minute drive from other Olympic winter sport installations including bobsleigh and luge tracks, ski jumping, freestyle skiing, and snowboarding, and approximately 45 minutes to downhill and cross-country skiing. In addition to the facility legacies, the Centre was also in close proximity to other services and programs provided primarily by the University which eligible high performance athletes could access. Specifically, these included: coaching, sport medicine, nutrition, sport psychology/mental training, sport sciences, massage, biomechanics and sport physiology, strength and conditioning, personal and professional development such as career development, financial management, academic support, and transition counseling.

The National Sport Centre’s office was located between the speed skating oval and the student recreation centre, in one of the main entrances to the Kinesiology complex. The physical office consisted of two sections. The central office, which was primarily an administrative centre, housed the President, office manager, National Coaching Institute (NCI) director, communications coordinator, marketing
manager, and marketing director. This part of the office had three rooms which were used as workspace, and a small waiting area with a workspace for the office manager / receptionist. The second office, located across the hall, was a drop-in centre for athletes, where they could obtain services such as personal and professional development, use computers, and access reference books and reports. The athlete services manager and support staff were located in this office. In total, at the time the research was conducted, the Centre had a staff of 12.

Today the focal NSC has established itself as a major provider of services to high performance athletes competing in both winter and summer Olympic sports. To illustrate the growth of this organization, at the end of 1999, organizational documents indicated the following:

Now, at the end of our 5th year, NSC (City) services extend to 182 carded athletes\(^3\), 100 senior national team athletes, and approximately 75 development-level athletes, in 40 sports. Taking a collaborative approach, the NSC (City) has established Partnership Agreements with 17 of these sports.

(National Sport Centre - (City), 1999a)

A number of national, provincial, and local partners are now contributing to Canada's NSC network. Organizational documents from NSC (City) list several categories of relationships, identifying different levels of corporate partnerships including Sponsors, Friends, and Community Members (National Sport Centre - (City), 2001). Additionally, Founding Partners\(^4\) are identified as those organizations involved in the conceptual creation of the NSC organization, and in the provision of financial assistance.

---

\(^3\) Athletes are identified by cards allocated at different levels (i.e. A, B, C, C-1), and are reimbursed according to standing. The Canadian Athlete Assistance Plan provides several kinds of financial benefits to eligible athletes. For example, the program offers living and training allowances, tuition support and support for child-care expenses. A and B cards are awarded to athletes based on their international performance at Olympic Games, Paralympic Games or World Championships. C cards are intended to support athletes with demonstrated potential to reach A- or B-card status.

\(^4\) A distinction must be made here in order to clarify the terminology used by the focal NSC, other NSCs in the network and the original partners in the venture. Prior to 2001, the terms 'founding partners' and 'funding partners' had been used interchangeably by NSC (City) and the organizations that launched the NSC network. Within organizational documentation, the terms appear to define the original partners in the venture (i.e., the COC, CAC, Sport Canada, and in the case of the focal organization in this case study, the University, the Olympic Legacy Organization, and the Provincial Government). However, with the identification of and growing reality within the network that funding might be attained from sources other than the original partners, it was determined that the most appropriate terminology to identify these initial partners would be 'Founding Partners'. This term signifies that these organizations were responsible for launching the initiative. As was presented in a comprehensive report outlining the future of the NSC network, "It is contemplated that the term Founding Partners is sustainable, while Funding Partners will become outdated as outside Corporate Partners become more prevalent as sources of additional funding" (National Sport Centre Network, 2000) p. 1). This distinction was made in a report provided to the network of NSCs in 2001 (National Sport Centre Network, 2000). Most organizational documentation prior to this date does not distinguish between founding and funding partners. Throughout this paper, the original partners of NSC (City) will be referred to as the Founding Partners.
on a yearly basis to the Centre. All Founding Partners have a representative who serves on the Board of Directors of the NSC and has voting rights. A detailed list of partner financial contributions as a percentage of total organizational revenue for the fiscal years 1998-2001 are outlined in Table 4.1 (A-C).

Table 4.1: Partner financial contribution and percentage of total organizational revenue.
A. Based on information from Annual Report, 2001 (National Sport Centre - (City), 2001); (Year 2000 – 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Financial Contribution</th>
<th>% of total revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
<td>$137,133</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLO (Olympic Legacy Organization)</td>
<td>$187,304</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COC</td>
<td>$250,854</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>$35,120</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>$107,031</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Canada</td>
<td>$600,377</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Generated*</td>
<td>$354,540</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,672,359</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Based on information from Annual Report, 2000 (National Sport Centre - (City), 2000); (Year 1999-2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Financial Contribution</th>
<th>% of overall revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
<td>$124,542</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLO</td>
<td>$135,719</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COC</td>
<td>$245,890</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>$31,934</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>$105,382</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Canada</td>
<td>$466,233</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Generated</td>
<td>$486,990</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,596,690</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Based on information from Annual Report, 2000 (National Sport Centre - (City), 2000); (Year 1998-1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Financial Contribution</th>
<th>% of overall revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
<td>$124,962</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLO</td>
<td>$136,453</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COC</td>
<td>$249,925</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>$34,472</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>$116,344</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Canada</td>
<td>$449,577</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Generated</td>
<td>$324,615</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,436,348</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Self generated revenue comes from corporate partners in the form of money or in-kind products/services. This category also includes money generated through grants, awards, or through sales at sport or fundraising events.
Other partners of the Centre include training centre sports\textsuperscript{5}, service providers, facility owners, and other local community organizations. In the case of NSC (City), a relationship with the municipal government of the city had not been established, although it is expected from the Founding Partners that some relationship will be formed with the local government. In addition to these identified partners for NSC (City), a network of eight other National Sport Centres exist across Canada who also offer a standardized menu of programs and services to carded and national team athletes. The relationship among the network of Centres has evolved, although there are tensions regarding the rate of growth of the Centre network nationally because of the resulting increase in competition for resources. Presidents from all NSCs meet biannually to discuss relevant issues and plan future directions. This network of organizations spans a broad range of cooperating but legally autonomous organizations.

The NSC (City) operates in the central position within the set of collaborating organizations. It coordinates the interests, resources and expectations of the complex web of multiple partners in this study. Figure 4.1 graphically depicts the organizational set and other linkages among NSC (City) and its identified partners. The focal NSC was formed as a result of a (joint venture) partnership among three national Founding Partners: the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Coaching Association of Canada, and Sport Canada. These three organizations provided the original funding to launch the NSC network initiative in 1994, as well as the necessary infrastructure, expertise, and legitimacy within the system to establish the first Centre. As a prerequisite to ensure the three national Founding Partners continued to participate in the venture, the newly formed NSC (City) was required to secure the involvement of the provincial government, educational institutions, the Olympic Legacy Organization and in the future, a commitment from the corporate community to support the organization (either financially or by providing in-kind resources). The resulting structure consisted of a Board of Directors with representation from the three national Founding Partners, as well as members of the provincial government, the university,

\footnote{Training centre sports are sport organizations that have established a 'mini network' to deliver their sport. For example, the national diving association is a partner with a National Sport Centre. In addition to this relationship, the diving association incorporates their provincial association and local level clubs to create synergies and efficiencies in delivering the sport in a particular area. Synergies might include sharing facility time, coaching expertise, and equipment. In general, most of the organizations who are partners with the NSC have established some sort of training centre.}
Figure 4.1: Schematic of the NSC's organizational set.

Arrow represents DYADIC RELATIONSHIP (i.e., where interaction was explored for this research)
the Olympic Legacy Organization, individuals from the local corporate community, and other relevant stakeholders in the system such as athletes and coaches. While the Board was responsible for strategic direction, a staff complement carried out the day-to-day activities and implemented the Board’s decisions. The following paragraphs outline the purpose and strategies of the focal organization, and the key activities in which it is involved.

According to the 1997-2002 NSC (City) Strategic Plan, the purpose of the focal organization was "...to create an excellence environment whereby top Canadian athletes would have the opportunity to compete against the best in the world" (p. 2). As part of this Strategic Plan, the 'Principles of Philosophy', 'Core Strategies' and 'Strategic Actions' were outlined as key aspects of the plan. For the purpose of this study, only those components related to working in partnership, interacting, or collaborating with other organizations were identified and analyzed. As one of its key principles, the NSC specifically outlined the concept of 'partnering and teamwork' as the basis of its organizational functioning. In this document, the partnership principle was positioned as fundamental to enhancing the programs and services offered by the NSC as well as more efficiently using organizational resources:

... by working with a number of partners and by utilizing a team approach we can increase the quality, diversity and frequency of our programs and services and thus better serve the needs of the athletes and coaches. We are committed to nurturing a partnership and a team approach to the provision of our programs and services for the benefits derived from pooling of resources and in the interests of economy.

(National Sport Centre - (City), 1997b, p. 7) (Emphasis added)

In order to operate within the partnership principle, the NSC identified and implemented two core strategies: 'To acquire new, and manage all, resources effectively and in a business-like manner', and 'To optimize our relationship with stakeholders in the Canadian sport system' (p. 9). To achieve the first core strategy of acquiring and managing resources effectively, the NSC (City) acknowledged that several strategic actions were necessary, including: increasing revenues for the period 1997-2002 to expand programming and ensure a balanced budget; developing an internal and external communications plan; ensuring ongoing evaluation and accountability procedures are followed; and developing measures to ensure cost-effectiveness. These resource generation and management objectives are intricately connected to, and impacted by, the partnership strategy adopted by the NSC (City). For instance, one avenue to increase revenues for the period was to establish relationships with the corporate community and secure long term financial commitments from local (and national) private firms. In order to effectively contribute to the organizations, these relationships needed to be strategically relevant (i.e.,
help to achieve the goals, objectives, mission, and values) to both the focal organization and potential corporate partner firms, and they also needed the appropriate monitoring, communication, and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure their effectiveness.

The second core strategy related to partnership was to 'Optimize our relationship with stakeholders in the Canadian sport system,' and it specifically identified a focus on strengthening the relationship with Founding Partners. The key activities highlighted under this strategy were to: a) Develop a partner recognition program (visibility, invitations to events), and b) Develop, implement, and monitor a communications plan with funding partners. Building effective and efficient working relationships with NSFs was also emphasized as an aspect of the core strategy with the directive to 'Provide opportunities for the NSC staff to meet regularly with NSFs.' It is clear therefore, that the focal organization does identify the role partnerships play as a critical element within their organizational strategy and as a key factor in organizational design and functioning. Furthermore, as identified by this documentation, the primary aspects of activity within these relationships includes 'increasing revenues,' ensuring 'cost effectiveness,' the 'recognition' of partners and 'communicating' effectively with both Founding and Sport Partners.

Sport organizations are a critical component for the NSC (City's) organizational partner set. They provide the coaches, athletes, technical expertise, events, and support, in other words, key resources to ensure the partnership functions on an operational level. NSC (City) requires full interaction with these sport organizations to achieve its objectives. NSC (City) had developed an extensive grouping of sport partners ranging from team to individual sports, winter and summer sports, land, water, and ice sports. Typically, the sport partners sign agreements (or MOUs) regarding the nature, degree, and duration of the interaction, and document expected goals and objectives related to athletic performance (i.e., participation in X number of international events, achieve X number of personal bests or top 16 (in the world) performances).

In terms of the growth and structure of the network of NSCs as a whole, the group of Centres has evolved in function and grown in number over the past five years. Once the sport community (including Founding Partners, NSFs, athletes, and coaches) considered the NSC (City) pilot site's first three operational years to be successful, plans were put in place by the three national Founding Partners
to expand the network across the country. New logistical challenges were introduced: how many more would be established, where they would be located, how much funding would be allocated from the national Founding Partners, what kind of support would be secured from local and provincial organizations, who would the new corporate/community partners be, and how would the sport partners at the NSCs be selected and distributed. These challenges are discussed in more detail in the following chapters about partnership formation and management.

Concerning structure and governance mechanisms, the network of NSC organizations is overseen by a 'Coordinating Committee' composed of representatives from each NSC (typically the President), as well as representatives from the three national Founding Partners (Canadian Heritage, 1998; National Sport Centre Network, 2000). This Coordinating Committee is responsible for developing a strategic plan to secure relationships with national corporations to support the activities of the national NSC network. Another current focus of the Coordinating Committee at the time this research was conducted was to create an 'identity' for the network of Centres, more specifically, a consistent name, image, and brand that would characterize and identify these organizations across the country. Due to the actions undertaken by the Coordinating Committee, during the period between data collection and submission of this thesis, the National Sport Centres became known as Canadian Sport Centres, and NSC (City) changed its name to Canadian Sport Centre – (City). A new logo was also created which was intended to reflect the formal partnership between the eight other National Sport Centres located across the country that have now joined together in what they called a 'consortium' (National Sport Centre Network, 2000). However, since the data collection occurred when the organization was still known as NSC (City), the organization will be represented as such throughout this document. A brief overview of the seven informants from the focal organization is provided next.

**Interview Sample for NSC (City)**

Interviews were conducted with five staff members of the focal organization and two members of the Board of Directors, resulting in a total of seven informants from this organization. In some instances individuals were interviewed twice (i.e., the President and the Vice President - Athlete Services). In the case of the President, the first meeting was an information interview where the NSC's partnerships were described, key informants were identified, and final approval for the study was gained. The second interview with the President lasted over 2 hours and included discussions of partnership formation and
management from his perspective. In the case of the Vice President – Athlete Services, two interviews were conducted because of scheduling difficulties. Multiple interviews were combined into a single document for each respondent to facilitate interview count and identification.

The majority of the informants from this organization had been with the NSC (City) since it was created, or joined shortly after its inception. For the most part, they had all experienced the evolution of the NSC network across the country, and the changing dynamics that resulted from the introduction of these organizations into the Canadian sport system.

PRESIDENT: The President of the focal organization had been in this post since the inception of the organization in 1994. He was very well connected and knowledgeable about not only the sport system in the community of (City), but also provincially and nationally. Because of his tenure in his role with the NSC (City), he was viewed as a knowledgeable and expert resource for the national network of NSCs, as well as other sport organizations in the province. He had definite views on his role, who he served, and the vision of the NSC. His job description was: within policy guidelines determined by the Board of Directors, the President assumes primary responsibility for the policies, programs, and activities of the NSC (City); represents the Centre as its senior officer in major negotiations with other bodies; and develops and maintains communication and collaboration with other key agencies (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997a). Carl will be the President’s pseudonym throughout the remainder of this document.

Vice President – MARKETING: This individual had an extensive background in sport as an athlete, spokesperson, and administrator. She had been an Olympic level athlete competing for Canada and was extremely well connected and recognized within the sport and business community in (City). As a result of her personality and sport celebrity status, she felt she was able to more easily access the corporate community to seek support for the NSC’s programs and services. The job description for this role was: oversee the fund development initiatives of the NSC, including the Marketing Committee, charitable donations, and development of new fund raising programs; and coordinate all NSC external communications including, weekly bulletins, quarterly newsletter, and Annual Review. VP – Marketing’s pseudonym is Carrie.

Vice President – ATHLETE SERVICES: This individual’s sport background was also as a competitive athlete. The role of Athlete Services involved coordinating with other Athlete Services
representatives in the NSC network as well as with the athlete program coordinator at the COC. This individual also has contact with representatives from the partner sport organizations and other NSFs to provide services to teams and carded athletes. Responsibilities in this position included facilitation of athlete sponsorship (self-marketing) profiles and co-ordination of public speaking workshops and media relations seminars, and other personal and professional development initiatives. The pseudonym of Joan will be used for VP – Athlete Services.

NATIONAL COACHING INSTITUTE DIRECTOR: The National Coaching Institute (NCI) was launched simultaneously with the NSC (City), and is considered to be a key subunit of the organization. The NCI is responsible for educating and training high performance coaches, and providing them with personal and professional development support. The Director of this institute came from a background in amateur sport, and has held the position of Director since the NCI began. At the time the research was conducted, two individuals coordinated the NCI’s activities (i.e., the Director and one support staff / student). The NCI has close connections with the Coaching Association of Canada, and the University where many faculty instructors are contracted to teach courses, and to provide technical sport information and services to coaches and their athletes. Laura is the pseudonym used for this informant.

MARKETING / OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR: This informant worked in a support role primarily for the President and the Vice President - Marketing in terms of maintaining and managing IORs. Once a partnership (corporate, sport or government) was formed, this individual communicated with and carried out the responsibilities of the relationship. She was also an organizational contact for Corporate Partners and Founding Partners as necessary, typically responding to questions, concerns, or requests. The role involved more long-term interaction with partners in ensuring that objectives of certain partnerships were being met. The coordination of information to be shared among Founding Partners, such as Board meeting material from the president’s office was another element of this individual’s responsibility. The marketing / office administrator will be referred to as Linda throughout the remainder of this document.

BOARD MEMBER (A): This individual had served as Chair of the Board of Directors of the focal NSC for 3 years. Concurrently with the role as Chair, he held a seat as a voting executive member on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Olympic Committee. Although he had extensive expertise and knowledge in international and national sport, his professional background was in the corporate sector.
The rationale to include this individual as a member of the focal organization rather than a Founding Partner member was because of the key role he played on the Board of Directors of the NSC. Although he acknowledged that he “wore many hats” in his sport involvement, the context of the interview was focused on his position as a member of the focal organization. Board Member A’s pseudonym is Edwin.

BOARD MEMBER (B): This informant was a recent addition to the Board of Directors of the NSC - within one year of when this research began. This individual’s role on the Board was as a representative from the corporate community, and because of her background in the private sector, she was assigned to a committee to work on securing corporate partnerships within the local community for the NSC. Board Member B’s pseudonym is Carla.

The previous section provided background on the organization that served as the focus of this research. It presented the nature and key characteristics of the relationships established by NSC (City) with its groups of diverse partners and its strategic concerns. The following section outlines in more detail the partner organizations that were involved in this study, their structures, their mandates, goals, and objectives.

**Partner Descriptions**

In order to examine the data and present the results in a systematic manner, a logical categorization of the diverse partner organizations was necessary. A plausible means to achieve this was to characterize partner organizations based on their affiliations and sector groupings. Anchored in these groupings, the following four categories were created for this study: Founding Partners, Sport Partners, Corporate Partners, and Network Partners. The rationale for these groupings was guided in part by the structure of the sport system in general, and more specifically, by the categorization mechanism utilized by the NSC. Furthermore, as the results indicated, these groupings were relatively consistent with the views and opinions of informants involved in this study. For instance, for the most part, individuals in the ‘Corporate Partners’ category had similar views and opinions on the issues discussed. Appendix VIII identifies the partner categories, the organizations and individuals involved, and the pseudonyms that will be used to identify their comments throughout this thesis.
Founding Partners

At the time this research was conducted, six organizations were considered Founding Partners of the focal NSC: federal government, provincial government, COC, University, OLO, and CAC. Each of these founding organizations was represented in the research by interviews with at least one individual – in some cases, two. All of the Founding Partners have representation on the Board of Directors of the NSC, and as such are involved in decision-making and strategic planning for the organization. Next, a more detailed description of each of the Founding Partner organizations is provided, including an historical background, an overview of their organizational strategies, goals and objectives, as well as a profile of their contributions to the NSC (City) and the network of Centres as a whole.

Federal Government

The Canadian federal government's involvement in amateur sport dates back to the early 1960s when it first provided financial support to athletes and organizations with the dual objectives of enhancing Canadian performance at international competitions and improving the health and wellness of the population in general (Macintosh et al., 1987). Today, the objectives of the federal government's involvement in sport and physical activity have not changed considerably, except that the stakes have significantly increased (Mills, 1998). The existing view is that sport continues to have tremendous implications for social cohesion, economic development, promotion of foreign policy, and social development, welfare and health. In fact, the direct and indirect economic impacts of the sport industry in Canada approach approximately $8.9 billion of the Gross Domestic Product (Mills, 1998). Amateur sport and hosting international sporting events such as the Olympic Games or the Commonwealth Games have economic promise for positively impacting the sport sector, as well as others such as tourism, infrastructure, media, and various levels of government who generate substantial tax revenues (Mills, 1998).

Sport has a vital impact on Canadian society. As such, the federal government has charged an agency called Sport Canada with the mission to:

...strengthen the unique contribution that sport makes to Canadian identity and culture. Sport Canada supports the achievement of high performance athletic excellence through fair and ethical means, and works with partners to sustain the continued development of the Canadian sport system.

(Canadian Heritage, 2002c)
In an effort to use resources more efficiently, decrease financial reliance on government, and kindle innovation and progress, a trend toward collaboration and cooperation has been observed within many government sectors. As a result, there has been a marked increase in the formation of public-private partnerships over the past decade (Robillard, 2001). Consistent with this trend, Sport Canada has actively called for the establishment of partnerships among organizations in the sport system. It has extended this call to the corporate sector and has attempted to facilitate involvement from corporate organizations in amateur sport by hosting a conference in conjunction with the National Conference Board of Canada on 'Sport and the Corporate Sector' in 1999 (Conference Board of Canada, 1999). Consequently, the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport declared the concept of partnership to be an essential component of the directions taken by the department.

To reach our goal, we must find the best possible solutions to address the weaknesses in our system.... No government can claim, on its own, to change the system. The support of the sport community is essential, as is that of the work with numerous partners and the population at large. Three principles support my actions: leadership, partnership and responsibility. I want to be a leader and coordinator in partnering closely with the sport community, so that sport becomes the business of all Canadians. (Canadian Heritage, 2000c)

While this partnership research was being conducted, a national consultation process was under way to create a new Canadian sport policy, one that had not been amended since it was originally implemented in 1961. In June 2002, a new act to promote physical activity and sport was passed in the House of Commons (Government of Canada, 2002). This act was designed to "increase participation in sport, support excellence and build capacity in the Canadian sport system" (Government of Canada, 2002). To further entrench the notion of the necessity of partnerships in sport, this act identifies specific objectives to encourage private sector financial involvement in the development of sport as well as emphasizes the role of government as facilitator to help make possible the creation of partnerships among sport organizations and all levels of government.

As a result of the desire to coordinate and improve service for high performance athletes and coaches, three national Founding Partners merged their resources and energies to create one National Sport Centre. The federal government’s financial contribution to the focal NSC, and to the network as a whole, has increased over the past nine years although its contribution to the sport system overall has decreased. However, the original intent was that the government’s investment in the Centre network would be viewed as “base financing intended to lever additional support from other sources” (Canadian
Heritage, 1997). (See Table 4.2 for an overview of government contributions to the focal NSC and to the national network of NSCs). To date, this objective has encouraged provincial organizations to become partners of the Centres, but appears to have had limited effect in generating substantial interest among corporate partners.

Table 4.2: Federal government contributions to NSCs since 1994
(approximate values based on information from NSC / Sport Canada Annual Reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NSC (City)</th>
<th>Contribution to NSC Network incl. NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-95 (1 Centre)</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96 (2 Centres)</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97 (3 Centres)</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>$610 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98 (4 Centres)</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>$1 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99 (6 Centres)</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
<td>$1.6 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00 (7 Centres)</td>
<td>$466,233</td>
<td>$1.45 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01 (9 Centres)</td>
<td>$600,376</td>
<td>$3.4 M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Federal Government selects individuals from across Canada to serve as representatives and voting members on each NSC’s board of directors. These representatives become familiar with the activities, challenges, and outcomes of particular Centres, and report back to the government concerning the issues confronting each Centre. In addition, an individual from Sport Canada serves as a spokesperson for the federal government on the National Coordinating Committee of the Centre network. In the following chapters, this organization will be referred to as the federal government or Sport Canada and the informant’s (a senior administrator in Sport Canada) pseudonym will be Iris.

Provincial Government
A nonprofit Crown Corporation (Foundation) (a branch of the Provincial Government) was formed as the result of a merger of two government departments in the early 1990's. This Foundation adopted a broad mandate to facilitate and enhance activities, lifestyles, and legacies in sport, recreation, parks, and wildlife programs in (Province) (National Sport Centre - (City), 1999b). Its central focus is to “provide core funding grants to provincial sport, recreation, parks and wildlife organizations” ((Province) Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, 2000) through the provision of grants for community projects. In the sport domain, the Foundation targets primarily grassroots and developmental level sport organizations located in the province. One of its main operating principles is to “maintain and enhance

6 The federal government does not provide an annual funding contribution to the CCSD (Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development) – a component of the National Sport Centre network in Victoria. As part of the $62 million contribution for the 1994 Commonwealth Games, the government committed a $10 million dollar legacy to this Centre.
partnerships for program delivery" ((Province) Sport Recreation Parks and Wildlife Foundation, 2000). A planned action to achieve this involves deliberate communication on a regular basis with partners.

The Foundation's financial involvement has increased slowly over the period of partnership with the NSC (City). Table 4.3 presents the financial contributions from 1995-2001.

Table 4.3: Provincial government contributions to the NSC (City) since 1995
(approximate values based on information from NSC Annual Reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$ Contributed to NSC (City)</td>
<td>$105,600</td>
<td>$107,900</td>
<td>$117,000</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
<td>$137,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A representative from the Foundation serves on the Board of Directors of the NSC (City), and contributes to several committees established at the Board level. Throughout the following chapters, this organization will be referred to as the provincial government and the informant, the Director of the Foundation, will be identified as Andrew.

Canadian Olympic Committee

The Canadian Olympic Committee (COC)\(^7\) is a nonprofit organization and the largest private sector funder of amateur sport in Canada, second only to the federal government in the amount of its contribution. Today, this organization has over $109 million in assets (Canadian Olympic Association, 2001). The COC is the organization recognized by the International Olympic Committee to represent Canada's interests in the Olympic Games and Pan American Games, and its focus is unquestionably on the support of high performance Olympic level athletes and coaches. In particular, two components of the partnership with the federal government and CAC to create a network of Centres satisfy the COC's organizational goals and objectives. These are the athlete services component, particularly the counseling and transition services, and the sport science component, principally sports medicine care and sport science research.

A key element of the COC's mission is to create and nurture collaboration with agencies, groups, and individuals that share their mission. In its strategic plan, the COC identifies and makes a distinction between its partners and other stakeholders. For instance, it classifies partners as educators, high performance sport system (athletes, coaches, NSFs), participants in COC activities and programs, sponsors, governors, Olympians, and Bid Cities / Organizing Committees. Stakeholders include media,  

\(^7\) In 2002, the Canadian Olympic Association officially changed its name to Canadian Olympic Committee.
provincial grassroots sport organizations, donors, general public, youth, and students. The COC is the only organization involved in this study that made a distinction regarding the nature of their IORs. It identified partners as “those who invest in our services. All partners are stakeholders” and stakeholders as “those who have an interest in what we do. Not all stakeholders are partners” (Canadian Olympic Association, 2000). The organization has extended the partnership philosophy internationally where it pursues cooperation agreements with other National Olympic Committees. These agreements formalize an exchange of knowledge, particularly relating to coaching assistance, and technical and sport medicine information (Canadian Olympic Association, 2000).

The COC has contributed financially to the focal NSC since its inception, and to most other NSCs since their creation. In general, the amount invested in the NSC (City) has increased from 1995 when figures were first available. An overview of the level of financial support contributed to NSC (City) and the network of NSCs is presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: COC’s contributions to NSCs since 1995
(approximate values based on information from NSC / COC Annual Reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC (City)</td>
<td>$38,400</td>
<td>$140,270</td>
<td>$247,493</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>$245,890</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total contribution to NSC Network including NSC (City)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$1 M</td>
<td>$1 M</td>
<td>$1 M</td>
<td>$1 M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A representative of the COC sits on each of the boards of directors of the network of NSCs, allowing for extensive involvement and influence on strategic decisions affecting NSC direction and structure. At the operational level, a member of the COC staff assists in the coordination of the group of athlete services managers operating in each Centre exercising control and power with respect to functional level decisions. Additionally, an appointed individual from the COC represents the organization on the National Coordinating Committee of NSCs. Throughout the following chapters, this organization will be referred to as the COC and the informant, a senior administrator, will be designated as Larry.

University

When the NSC (City) was being established in 1994, this Founding Partner, after some negotiation, agreed to provide the NSC (City) permanent office space on their campus. It was strategically advantageous for the NSC to be situated in this location because of the close proximity to a large base of athletes, sports science services, administrative services, and a world-class speed skating facility. The mission of the Faculty that acts as the primary link with the University administration with
respect to the partnership with the NSC is to provide and promote educational and developmental opportunities in recreation, sport, and lifestyle activities for students, employees, alumni, and the general community (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997a).

As is evident in Table 4.5, over the 8 years the NSC has been in operation, the University has provided an estimated $19,000 to $39,000 per year of in-kind services to the NSC (e.g., rent for office space, internet connection, mailing services). The NSC works closely with the Faculty of Kinesiology, which provides access to instructors for the National Coaching Institute and to sport medicine expertise for eligible athletes and coaches (i.e., consultation on injury prevention and recovery), sport science (i.e., physiology, biomechanics), sport psychology, and nutrition counseling. The benefit of the relationship for the Faculty of Kinesiology is that access to Olympic level athletes and coaches allows their faculty and staff to conduct ongoing in-the-field research to develop professional and scientific expertise concerning elite athletes.

Table 4.5: University contributions to NSC (City) since 1994
(approximate values based on information from NSC Annual Reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC (City)</td>
<td>$ not available</td>
<td>$19,200</td>
<td>$21,500</td>
<td>$39,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>$32,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The University is allocated one voting representative on the NSC Board of Directors. At the time this study was conducted, an administrator in the Faculty's Athletics and Recreation department served in that role. Additional responsibilities included representation on other committees (i.e., sport selection committee), and liaising with the Dean of the Faculty and the President of the University. Throughout the following chapters, this organization will be referred to as the University and the informant will be identified as Randy.

Olympic Legacy Organization
As a result of the financial legacy of the Olympic Winter Games, the Olympic Legacy Organization (OLO) is now the Canada's largest private funder of winter sport organizations and athletes. It provides support for the development of Canadian Olympic winter athletes through facilities, training, funding, event organization, education, and sport delivery systems. Its mission is to be "an internationally recognized leader in the development of Olympic winter sport athletes - a key partner enhancing
Canada’s best ever performances at the Games” (City) Olympic Development Association, 2001). The OLO’s priority is:

...the development of Canadian Olympic winter sport athletes and the organizations that serve them. Our emphasis is both on developmental programs for the committed athlete and support for the international, high-level performer.

((City) Olympic Development Association, 2001)

This organization provides financial and operational support and assists with accounting and administrative activities for only the focal NSC. It has no financial ties or resource exchange with the other NSCs in the national network. An account of OLO’s financial contributions is presented in Table 4.6. As a ‘Founding Partner’ of the NSC, the organization is allocated one position with one vote on the NSC Board of Directors. Other responsibilities for the Board representative include participation on training group and other committees.

Table 4.6: OLO’s contributions to NSC (City) since 1994  
(approximate values based on information from NSC Annual Reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC (City)</td>
<td>$ not available</td>
<td>$115,200</td>
<td>$107,900</td>
<td>$117,200</td>
<td>$137,000</td>
<td>$136,000</td>
<td>$187,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two top-level administrators of this organization were interviewed for this thesis. Throughout the following chapters, these individuals will be identified as Josh and Allan and the organization will be referred to as Olympic Legacy Organization or OLO.

Coaching Association of Canada

As an original national Founding Partner of the network of NSCs, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) has provided financial support to NSCs and NCIs throughout the network of Centres. The CAC contributes to coach education and employment and recognizes the NSCs as an optimal training environment for the coach-athlete team’s pursuit of excellence. Table 4.7 highlights the level of financial contribution the CAC has provided to the focal NSC since its inception.

Table 4.7: CAC’s contributions to NSC (City) since 1994  
(approximate values based on information from NSC Annual Reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1994-95 (1 Centre)</th>
<th>1995-96 (2 Centres)</th>
<th>1996-97 (3 Centres)</th>
<th>1997-98 (4 Centres)</th>
<th>1998-99 (6 Centres)</th>
<th>1999-00 (7 Centres)</th>
<th>2000-01 (9 Centres)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC (City)</td>
<td>$ not available</td>
<td>$105,600</td>
<td>$97,000</td>
<td>$117,233</td>
<td>$116,344</td>
<td>$105,000</td>
<td>$107,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The organization’s mission is “to promote and improve quality coaching throughout Canada” (National Sport Centre - (City), 1994, 1997b), through securing resources, providing education and
professional development, and generating increased awareness of the important role of the coach in the sport system. In addition to its partnerships with key organizations, its sponsorships and charitable donation tax status enable the CAC to finance coach education programs.

The NCI is a diploma program in high-performance coaching, established in 1994 as a joint program of the CAC and the NSC (City). Its objective was to educate coaches and produce more and higher quality coaches for Canadian athletes. In some NSCs, NCIs operate as a sub-unit of the NSC, in others, they operate as separate entities with different structural and operating agreements. In NSC (City)'s case, the NCI functioned as a combined unit with NSC (City), that is, operating agreements, administrative concerns, resource flows and strategic decisions were the responsibility of the NSC (City). In addition to coaching education, the CAC also provides other services through the NSCs such as access to information and expertise, professional and personal development services, and mentorship services for coaches.

Throughout the following chapters, this organization will be referred to as the CAC, and the informant, a senior administrator within the CAC, will be identified as Kevin.

**Sport Partners**

Over the past 30 years, National Sport Federations in Canada have focused their operations to serve elite / high performance athletes and coaches supported financially by annual grants from the federal government. Over the last ten years, the federal grants to these organizations have diminished. As a result, NSFs have made strategic internal adjustments (i.e., elimination of certain programs, services, or staff), and have engaged in strategic external activities to identify and secure new sources of funding and new avenues to enhance operational efficiencies. These organizations have had to learn to partner in order to share resources, including basic administrative operations, as well as sponsorships. The introduction of the network of Centres has provided both opportunities and threats for NSFs, in the sense that NSCs represented increased competition for scarce resources from the traditional federal source. Furthermore, sport organizations were initially uncertain about the strategic advantages these Centres could provide. Finally, a general tendency towards territory protection resulted in initial resistance from NSFs to partner with the NSCs. On the other hand, the forces acting on these organizations to create partnerships have also been powerful. For instance, it soon became clear that unprecedented
access to facilities, programs, and services would enhance their athletes' and coaches' achievements. Some NSFs who became partners early with NSC (City) experienced considerable success in international competitions. This spurred greater interest in these Centres - the "me-too" mindset stimulated sport organizations to associate themselves with one or more NSC. Today, there are very few Olympic sport NSFs that are not associated in some way with a NSC. It has now become clear that NSCs are a critical element in the partnership equation for NSFs. NSCs, while once viewed as compulsory or mandated partners by the national Founding Partners, are now viewed as a source of customer or client benefit, and a competitive advantage for NSFs.

A strategic objective of the NSC (City) was to "build effective and efficient working relationships with NSFs" (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997b). When NSC (City) was formed, eight National Sport Federations became sport partners (National Sport Centre - (City), 1994). As of 2001, the focal organization claimed 17 organizations as their partners. The list of organizations has changed over the years; however, several sports have been consistently involved with the NSC (City).

The funding base of the NSC (City) is supplemented by contributions from NSFs and PSOs that partner with the Centre to enhance existing single-sport programming. Since the level of funding commitment by the national funding partners for individual NSCs is based on both the volume of high performance activity at the respective site and existing budget realities, there are pressures to maintain or increase the level of service to athletes and coaches to continue receiving comparable funds. High performance activity is currently defined by the number of nationally carded athletes training at the NSC, and level of NSF investment in high performance programming at a site (Canadian Heritage, 1998) (i.e., involvement in training centres, coaching education, or athlete services). Thus, the acquisition of more athletes, coaches, and more partner sports is important to the financial viability and organizational legitimacy of the NSC (City).

As key partners of the NSC (City), NSFs receive from their partnership an array of essential programs and services for their athletes and coaches. These programs and services include specifically: i)

---

8 At the time this research was conducted, a sport partner selection process was being implemented throughout the NSC network. NSFs were allowed to apply to be a partner with one or more NSC. The selection and evaluation of the sport partners was completed internally, where sports were ranked on fit and relevance with each Centre. A national meeting was held to discuss and negotiate the national sport partnerships to ensure that the distribution of sports across the country was fair and consistent (i.e., to avoid over or under representation of a sport in a particular region).
sport science (e.g., physiological testing, monitoring and consultation); ii) massage and regeneration, sport psychology, nutrition consultation, strength training; iii) sport medicine (e.g., immediate access to sport medicine physicians and physiotherapy) iv) coaching; and v) athlete services (e.g., career, personal wellness, academic, and life skills). Guided by the philosophy that success in all areas of life contributes to the performance of the athlete and coach, the athletes are encouraged to access the many activities, workshops, and professional/resource personnel. For each of the aforementioned areas, the NSF contributes a predetermined amount to cover the cost of materials, supplies, testing, presentations, supplements, and consulting services.

The NSC (City) also has partnership agreements with sport Training Centre Committees (National Sport Centre - (City), 2000b). Although these partnerships do not specifically address the NSC’s organizational goal of podium performance at international competitions, the investment in training group cultivates a strong foundation for developmental athletes and coaches.

NSC (City) support will not only assist the top athletes of today, but our approach will also allow us to identify stellar talent at a young age (i.e., 12-15 years old), and provide a world class training environment that monitors their progress through identified markers for their sport.

(National Sport Centre - (City), 1997a)

Training Centre Committees include a number of key stakeholders in the partnership, including NSFs, PSOs, local clubs, the NSC, and other key partners such as universities or facility owners. In exchange for these programs and services offered by the NSC, the NSF partner must agree to provide the following support for the Training Group: it must provide coaching services to its athletes, as well as provide international competitive opportunities throughout the duration of the contract. The NSC (City) has formed partnerships with over twenty training groups based in the (City) area, offering support and assistance to athletes at four different levels on a graduated basis, commensurate with their international athletic performance (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997a).

Partnerships also occur between NSFs and the NCI of NSC (City). The NCI Committee launched a new vision and a new partnership initiative with the NSFs to establish national standards and criteria for coach certification that will culminate in a required professional membership. The purpose of this new partnership is to elevate the coaching education model in Canada to a profession.

Six NSFs participated in the research, and seven informants were interviewed. The six sports represented both Olympic winter and summer sports, and ranged from large to small in terms of
participants, staff, and funding. Representatives from the participating organizations included Executive Directors, Vice-Presidents, coaches, and a technical director. The individuals represented their organization in the partnership with NSC (City), and as such had a good knowledge of the partnership dynamics. Their years of expertise in a sport administration position ranged from 5 to 20. Their partnership management responsibilities varied in scope from establishing the partnership and negotiating the terms of the agreement to carrying out the daily activities and functions of the relationship, such as coordinating the use of the athlete and coaching service provided by the NSC. Therefore, a knowledgeable and informed group of experienced individuals served as NSF representation for this study. The informants will have the following pseudonyms: Sport 1 (Steve and Isabelle), Sport 2 (Keith), Sport 3 (Corey), Sport 4 (Richard), Sport 5 (Frank), and Sport 6 (Yves).

Corporate Partners

Although the form of government intervention in the affairs of the community is slowly evolving from payer to player, the private sector is being asked to play a greater role in ensuring the viability and sustainability of various Canadian communities. This is especially true of the sport community. With government funding of sport below the level of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the sport community is increasingly relying on the corporate sector to fill the financial void. This is clearly demonstrated by the vast increase in requests for sport funding and sponsorships received by corporate Canada over the last several years.

(Conference Board of Canada, 1999, p. 1)

Currently, the involvement of private corporations in Canadian amateur sport is mostly at the Olympic level (i.e., for bid candidates, for sponsorship of games, for the COC) and / or for specific premiere sporting events (e.g., world cup events, world championships, Pan Am Games). As such, major financial support from corporations occurs more infrequently with individual sport organizations. Individual and smaller sport organizations might be the beneficiaries of more limited amounts of financial assistance because of the fragmented approach to secure support currently in place. As a result, corporate organizations that are inundated with requests for support might only decide to dedicate a small amount for a limited time period.

An increasing number of requests are coming from over 50 NSFs and other sport organizations and athletes. As a result of this tremendous competition for corporate support, many corporations find it confusing and time-consuming to deal with the substantial number of requests from many individual organizations and to decide where their support will have the greatest impact.

(Conference Board of Canada, 1999, p. 6)

The NSCs join the NSFs in the shift to seek corporate financial support. The NSC (City) has made great efforts to initiate relationships with companies in the private sector.
The following paragraphs portray the NSC partners who participated in this study. At the time the research was conducted, the NSC had eight organizations that were classified in the ‘corporate’ category. Thus the four corporate partners interviewed for this study represent half of the total corporate organizations involved in partnerships with the NSC. Obviously, it would have been desirable to include representatives from all eight corporate organizations in this research, however, this was not possible due to logistical factors (i.e., expense, interview timing, and availability).

In various NSC organizational communications, these companies are identified as ‘supporters’, ‘friends’, ‘corporate partners’, and even ‘sponsors’ (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997a, 2000a; National Sport Centre Network, 2000). The corporate partners do not sit on the Board of Directors of the NSC, and do not have direct involvement in the decision-making or strategic direction setting of the NSC. For the most part, they play a role of support, contributing resources such as cash, expertise, services, or products. For example, one corporate partner of the focal NSC provides relocation services to athletes who need to change residence in order to be closer to their training site. Another corporate partner, an organization that manages real estate in the city, provides subsidized apartment rentals to athletes who are recipients of NSC services and programs. A description of the four corporate partners that were part of this research study follows. In order to maintain anonymity, the names of the organizations and the individuals interviewed will not be identified.

**Vitamin Supplier**

Vitamin Supplier is a national supplier of vitamins, non-prescription drugs, and over the counter medications and is part of a large international health care products company. This pharmaceutical firm provided products such as vitamins and pain relievers for athletes with the ultimate objective of contributing in a positive way to their training and competitive results. The relationship with the NSC was initiated as a result of the organization’s previous involvement with amateur sport organizations, including swimming and figure skating. NSC (City)’s VP Marketing had heard about Vitamin Supplier’s association with other NSFs and felt that sort of connection would be valuable to the NSC (City). Contact was initiated with the Vitamin Supplier’s area sales manager to request support for the NSC’s high performance clientele.

The Vitamin Supplier’s involvement began at a time when there was increased scrutiny over the use of banned substances by high performance athletes (a result of the Ben Johnson steroid scandal in
1988), and the necessity to train and compete without the use of prohibited performance enhancing substances. Over time, the relationship progressed from an exchange of small quantities of product samples (primarily vitamin supplements) for a few athletes on an infrequent basis to the provision of more products (pain relievers, vitamins) with more monitoring of the number and type of products distributed. Vitamin Supplier provided an estimated $8,000 - $10,000 worth of products to the partnership with NSC (City) on a yearly basis (Informant Interview, Feb., 2001). As of 2001, Vitamin Supplier had an agreement to provide their product to several of the NSCs in the national network (Informant Interview, Feb., 2001). In addition to its in-kind support of the NSC (City), Vitamin Supplier also provided the NSC with 11 laptop computers for the athletes to use while on the road for training or competition.

Despite the increased monitoring of donated product, the relationship between NSC (City) and Vitamin Supplier appeared to be relatively informal, in the sense that there were no contracts or limits imposed on the relationship (i.e., if more product were requested with rationale, it was generally supplied). The agreement appeared to be based on the trust and confidence established between the individuals involved. In exchange for the products provided, Vitamin Supplier received a tax receipt, as well as an increased profile in the way of recognition and gratitude through the NSC’s communication vehicles such as weekly updates, annual reviews, newspaper advertisements, and other promotional tools. The contact points between organizations were between the area sales manager from the Vitamin Supplier organization, and the Vice President - Marketing, the VP - Athlete Services, and the Marketing Assistant of the NSC (City). Throughout the following chapters, the informant from Vitamin Supplier will be identified as Aaron.

**Big Energy Company**

A locally headquartered international corporation, this organization had a value of $14 billion dollars (Canadian). Big Energy Company was very successful in the oil and gas industry, and had, as a cornerstone of its organizational philosophy, an emphasis on corporate social responsibility in the communities in which it operated. In its documentation, the organization identified its motivation for involvement with communities as:

> The Company believes its commitment and proactive approach – partnering through time and resources with employees, neighbours and other businesses – help to create and sustain vibrant communities. Vibrant communities contribute, in turn, to a nation’s strength.

With an annual budget of $3 million committed to local and provincial community projects ((Province) Energy Company, 2001a), the Company’s funding priorities were initiatives that reflected the corporation’s core values such as: health and wellness, education, youth, and environment.

Big Energy Company had a history of involvement with the NSC, commencing in 1994 with a financial contribution of $21,000 for a speaker series / education program for youth (National Sport Centre - (City), 1999a). Big Energy Company’s organizational literature outlined the program as follows:

While podium performance is the goal, the NSC’s long-term objective is the development of athletes as individuals and community leaders. (Company) believes that Olympians and international calibre athletes are great role models and through their experiences can educate, empower, and inspire young people to “Be the Best That They Can Be” en route to fulfilling their own personal goals and dreams. (Company) and (Foundation) are community partners in the sponsorship of the NSC’s (speaker / education program). The program offers the opportunity for Olympic and international-calibre athletes to speak to students and school athletes about: pursuing excellence in life; the importance of physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle; goal setting; commitment; self-confidence and self esteem; and how to deal with success and disappointment. In 1999, the (speaker / education program) Team visited 46 schools and spoke to 6,000 students in (City) and in communities in the province. The (speaker / education program) is offered to (Company) community schools throughout the province, at no cost to the school. ((Province) Energy Company, 2001b)

Support and contributions to NSC (City) for program funding from Big Energy Company increased over the years as the partnership developed. As of 2000, Big Energy Company was contributing $25,000 of its total $3 million community support budget to the speaker / education program (in connection with a National Charitable Foundation that also contributed a matching amount) (National Sport Centre - (City), 1999c).

The relationship between the Big Energy Company and NSC (City) began with a personal association formed between two individuals (the VP – Community Relations of Big Energy Company, and the VP Marketing of the NSC (City)) who had worked together on different events in the local community, including a local Booster Club, hosting the Olympic Games, and various fundraising projects (Informant Interview, Feb., 2001). In exchange for its financial contribution to NSC (City), Big Energy Company received a tax receipt and similar recognition and gratitude afforded to other corporate partners like the Vitamin Supplier. Contact points between the organizations were between the Vice President – Community Relations and the Corporate Relations Coordinator of Big Energy Company who served as administrator for the speaker / education program and the Vice President Marketing of the NSC (City), as well as the Marketing Assistant.
Since the data collection period, this Big Energy Company has subsequently merged with another large Canadian oil and gas company, but appears to continue its relationship with the NSC. Documentation had not yet been developed to identify the new venture's corporate giving strategy. Throughout the following chapters, the informant from Big Energy Company will be identified as Dennis.

**Investment Company / Private investor**

This corporate partner is different in form than the others in this category. For a period of time, a large investment corporation was a partner with the NSC. When the partnership champion at the company left to form a financial capital organization, that champion maintained his connection with the NSC (City) by contributing personal funds. Therefore, in this case, the actual partnership / donor relationship was primarily with one individual in a leadership position within the organization. This situation still satisfied the objectives of the NSC (City) who outlined in its Business Plan the need to secure support from both individuals and the private sector (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997a).

The interaction initially began with the champion's involvement in the NSC through his company and investment of his company's resources in the NSC. The partnership eventually shifted to where his company was no longer involved and he began supporting the NSC out of his 'own pocket'. This individual had a great deal of passion for, and interest in, amateur sport. He had become involved in amateur sport by financially supporting individual athletes with his own money to allow them to train and compete. The relationship has further developed to where the NSC (City) now uses the individual's resources (i.e., connections, experience, knowledge, and reputation) to leverage more financial support from the corporate community in (City). This individual now sits on a NSC (City) committee designated to seek funds from the corporate community. Throughout the following chapters, this informant will be referred to as David.

**Advertising / Media Firm**

The final corporate partner included in this study was an Advertising / Media firm. Advertising / Media firm was a local company that had recently grown to three offices nationally. This relationship began when a Vice President of the firm formed an acquaintance with the President of NSC (City) while on a trip to a hockey tournament in Europe. These individuals found that they had much in common, particularly a passion for the sport of hockey. The relationship began as a hypothetical discussion about potential avenues to access advertising and marketing knowledge and expertise as applied to the NSC.
Upon returning to work, a follow up telephone call from the President to inquire whether the firm would like to help with the NSC's marketing initiatives resulted in the establishment of a relationship that has lasted since 1996 (National Sport Centre - (City), 1996, 1999a). As a result, this individual offered to provide valuable services such as report design and production, marketing expertise, and corporate image creation. In total, the Vice President of this firm estimated that they exchange approximately $30,000 - $40,000 of work / in-kind services on an annual basis as a result of their partnership. Advertising / Media Firm's current involvement includes image development and management through assistance with logos, tag lines, and annual reports as well as developing promotional and marketing strategies for events and programs.

(Advertising Company) provides creative expertise, producing the 'NSC look' for our logo, our regular publications and letterhead, our 'Annual review', and many other projects. They are also working with us to promote and plan our 'Kangaroo Countdown', marking one year to the day to the beginning of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia and the 5th anniversary of the National Sport Centre (City), and the National Coaching Institute (City).

(National Sport Centre - (City), 1996, p.15)

As a synergistic outcome of this relationship, this company was contracted to conduct an extensive market research project and propose an initial marketing strategy document for the Network of Sport Centres across Canada. Throughout the following analysis and discussion chapters, the informant from Advertising / Media firm will be identified as Murray.

**Network Partners**

The NSC Network has its roots in the creation of NSC (City) (National Sport Centre Network, 2000). Essentially, this network evolved from the experience gained at the NSC (City) — that is, it was not planned, structured, or specified. For example, the concept of regional centres (smaller sub-centres offering programs and services to both elite athletes and coaches training in remote locations and developmental level athletes and coaches) was not part of the original Centre plan, although several NSCs have implemented this type of structure within their own organizations. Additionally, the total number of Centres (9) was not a predetermined objective at the outset. While there was speculation that more Centres would be established in various locations across the country, the number, location, and structure of these new organizations was not set. The creation of new Centres occurred as a process of geographic necessity, political influence, and as a response to pressure to meet the interests of equity throughout the country.
The Canadian network of NSCs is also defined by its Founding Partners. The Canadian Olympic Committee and Coaching Association of Canada are national funding partners of the NSCs in Atlantic Canada, Montréal, Toronto, Manitoba, Calgary, and Vancouver. Sport Canada is a direct national funding partner of each of these Centres and a principal in Victoria through the Canada Commonwealth Legacy Fund, which it created in partnership with the Sport and Community Development Branch of the Government of British Columbia and the Victoria Commonwealth Games Society (National Sport Centre Network, 2000).

While a number of factors distinguished each of the Centres, one strategic marketing document described the offerings as a checkerboard, potentially impacting coordination and reputation (National Sport Centre Network, 2000). For instance, each of the Centres' mission statements carry common elements, although the larger cause is imprecise: they are at different stages of both program and market development; some operate NCIs, while others are only associated with NCIs; each has its own logo and/or community image, but their corporate identities are in most cases reduced to hyphenated acronyms; some Centres are bilingual; and, they have varying levels of controlled communications (i.e., newsletters, web sites, brochures, annual reports). Certainly one commonality between these organizations is the identification of the need for increased financial resources (National Sport Centre Network, 2000).

Three NSCs in the focal NSC's network, each at a different stage of evolution, were asked to participate in this research. At each of the participating Centres, the top administrator was interviewed. The three network partners will be designated as Adam, Ivan, and Jerry in the following sections of this document.

This section has described the National Sport Centre (City) and its partner organizations, their particular characteristics, motivations, and strategies regarding partnership formation and interaction, and their history and level of involvement with the network of NSCs and the NSC (City) in particular. The next section examines the growth of partnerships in the focal NSC.

Evidence of Growth in IOR Activity and its Implications for NSC (City)

As mentioned at the outset of this dissertation, the phenomenon of organizations working together to achieve mutual goals and objectives has grown over the past several years. This movement
has been examined and confirmed in theoretical and empirical studies in fields other than sport (Alexander, 2000; Andreasen, 1996; Austin, 2000; Baum, Calabrese, & Silverman, 2000; Dees, 1998; Doz & Hamel, 1998; Eisenhardt & Galunic, 2000; S. Sagawa & E. Segal, 2000). The partnership trend has affected amateur sport organizations and there are many examples of strategic restructuring in that domain. Before examining why partnerships with the focal organization were formed, it is necessary to present evidence of the growth of these IORs in sport in general and within the focal organization in particular. Informants in this study, many of whom had been involved in the Canadian sport system for decades, witnessed this shift and suggested that sport organizations now operate in an environment where partnership linkages are becoming more common.

Almost all of the informants who participated in this research indicated that they had seen a marked increase in the number of relationships established among sport organizations within the past ten years, and that organizations appeared to be working together more often and more effectively. The following quotations by two individuals who have extensive involvement and experience with the Canadian sport system support the contention that there has been an increase in partnership activity in amateur sport.

I definitely have seen an increase in the number and the type and the nature of partnerships. I believe in sport anyway, in the last 10 years, we started getting more involved in partnerships.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

The shift from operating independently to working in partnership is commonly attributed to reductions in government support to sport.

In my experience, I would say that there has been an increase in partnership activity among sport organizations through the 90′s. I would attribute it to the cutbacks in government funding that happened beginning in the early 90′s. Prior to that point, I think the feeling was that most organizations had enough resources that they could do things on their own. Then when the government started to cut back, there was a real feeling that people had to work together to attain their objectives.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

Analogous to the general growth of partnership activity within the wider sport delivery system, the NSC (City) in particular showed evidence of an increase in the number of partnership linkages formed over the period of its existence in most categories. Within its organizational documentation, the term partnership became more prevalent over this nine-year period, and it was reflected not only in the mission and goals statements, but also in the strategies and objectives of the organization. Table 4.8
demonstrates the growth in the number of organizations identified as partners of the NSC (City) from 1994-2001, based on information from multiple organizational documents.

Table 4.8: Increase of NSC (City) partners from 1994 – 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founding Partners</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Partners</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21 trg.* group</td>
<td>23 trg. group</td>
<td>32 trg. group</td>
<td>22 trg. group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17 sports</td>
<td>17 sports</td>
<td>17 sports</td>
<td>17 sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Partners</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19 (sponsors &amp; friends)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6 sponsors</td>
<td>6 supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14 'friends'</td>
<td>6 sponsors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81</td>
<td># not available</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Partners</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of 'partnerships'</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of athletes / coaches accessing NSC services</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*trg group: training group / committee)

The data presented in Table 4.8 reflects the increased level of service delivery and the associated increase in partnership formation throughout the seven-year period. Also highlighted in this table are the number of athletes serviced (the growth of which drives increased levels of assistance, and necessitates more resources), the number of corporate firms that have relationships with the NSC, the number of sport partners (including salary sharing contracts and training group partnerships), and the number of service providers contracted by the NSC (expertise for athlete training and development). As can be seen in Table 4.8, the number of Founding Partners has remained consistent. However, the nature of the partnership has changed with some Founding Partners increasing their financial contributions as well as their involvement and interests in the relationship (Tables 4.2 - 4.7 illustrate the growth in resource contributions).

It must be noted that although I did not identify as partners or interview the focal NSC's service providers in the organizational set for this research, they were considered by the board and staff members of the NSC (City) as a key component of NSC service delivery. Service provider relationships were regarded as critical to expand and maintain the level and quality of programs and services for athletes and coaches. As Greco (1997) suggested, outsourced expertise exchanges are strategically critical to organizations that often do not have the abilities, knowledge or skills to provide to clients on their own, and these service relationships are increasingly being viewed as Greco (1997) stated, the 'new partnerships' that organizations must consider.
While the foregoing suggests that the number of partnership relationships established by the NSC (City) has grown, in the broader sport system this strategic restructuring of organizations was neither rapidly adopted nor quickly enacted. As the next quotation demonstrates, for most organizations, a great deal of conceptualizing, convincing, and assuaging of concerns and questions about the process and its implications for sport organizations occurred.

Partnerships have started to become very important for Sport Canada particularly over the last six or seven years. We began by engaging in the conceptual discussion around the why's and how's of partnership creation, and then moving it into action and actually forming the relationships. However, this has taken a long time.

Iris (Founding Partner)

With respect to organizational structuring, the NSC operates in a traditional hierarchical form. The staff report to the President of the organization, the President reports to the Board of Directors, but feels accountable to the clients, the athletes and coaches.

I believe some people would say I work for a board. I believe I work for 400 athletes and coaches, they are my bosses. I may have to tell [the Chair] who is on paper my boss what is going on but I do not work for him. ... but I would say that most people would say here's your employees and this the CEO and this is your chairman of the board I say no, the way we work is here's the board who gives the staff directions but we work for these [athletes and coaches]. And that's not your traditional way and I say that a little bit in jest but I think that's the way we work so it all boils down to how do we make it better for our shareholders, who are the athletes and the coaches.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

This quotation reflects the President's philosophy about who and what is the 'raison d'être' of the organization, that is an accountability to, and a focus on, athletes and coaches. The philosophy contributes to one source of internal organizational tension: the organization views itself as committed to the betterment of athletes' and coaches' experiences, yet it also wants to ensure that its partners benefit from the endeavour as well. On occasion, there appeared to be competing interests in this regard. For example, one issue identified was the bilingual delivery of services and programs to athletes. It was perceived that having this policy imposed by the federal government did not necessarily contribute to, or support, the mission of providing a high performance environment for athletes in particular Centres, but rather only fulfilled the mandate of the federal government and focused on their policies.

Kevin (Founding Partner)
Despite ample theoretical and practical evidence and even political expectations suggesting that a partnership strategy would benefit sport organizations, there was and still remains a level of perceived reluctance and reticence to forming partnerships within these organizations. This finding is endorsed by much of the organizational change literature (Alter, 1990; Buchko, 1994; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Oliver, 1992) that suggests there is often resistance to strategies which require changes or modifications to the status quo. From many interview accounts, the adoption of the partnership strategy appeared to have been met initially with skepticism and resistance. Although there were pro-partnership pressures external to the sport system, and with organizations in other sectors experiencing widespread partnership formation and even success (i.e., other nonprofit organizations (Austin, 2000)), there were several relevant factors leading to inertia and even disinterest in the partnership process within the Canadian sport system. These included territory protection, lack of managerial experience and expertise in this area, and the historical reliance on government funding. One informant observed from experience:

The sport delivery system per se, is probably the most traditional of all in terms of being slow to change, being slow to react to change, with people wanting to retain their fiefdoms. But even though there are very strong economic and common interest issues, it is often very difficult to bring some people together to partner, particularly in the sport area because sport people tend to be traditionalists and narrow thinkers by and large. I am not sure if that is fair or not, but that is kind of my own scientific observation through association over the years.

Randy (Founding Partner)

Another critical aspect of this initial resistance was the entrenched nature of the sport system, and the seeming lack of competitors or alternatives to the existing paradigm. Barriers to change were lowered however, with the appointment of a new Secretary of State for Amateur Sport in Canada who had a vision to change the way sport was delivered as well as its traditional reliance on government for funding.

One of the unique things about sport in Canada is that it is perceived to be a monopoly, and it is rarely challenged because it has no competitors, or competition if you will. There is no alternative to what sport is doing. So, when, some visionary person (like [the Secretary of State]) tries to radically change the system, change the structure of the sports system, people are extremely reluctant because they do not see that it is necessary. There is no real reason to change.

Laura (NSC (City) Member)

Paradoxically, since partnerships have been proposed as a means to facilitate an organization’s access to resources, a lack of financial resources was cited as being a further factor in limiting a sport organization’s opportunities to seek new partners. This paradox was also pointed out by Eisenhardt and
Schoonhoven (1996) and Kanter (1994) who suggested that often organizations find themselves in a position where they need resources to access more resources. This new strategic initiative also required a significant investment of time and energy, at a premium in over-extended sport organizations, to learn a new way of operating.

In my experience I don’t think sport organizations are really good at partnerships, nor do they tend to seek them out frequently. That’s because unfortunately, most of them are fairly isolated for many reasons, they just haven’t got the dollars to reach out to organizations outside their boundaries and furthermore, they have not bought in in terms of non-traditional partnerships for their organizations.

Adam (NSC Network President)

Informants provided numerous examples of resistance to partnering despite the potential efficiencies claimed by collaboration. For example, maximizing the use of facilities or achieving administrative efficiencies for sport organizations with common origins (e.g., water, ice, and racquet sports) were acknowledged, but were not perceived to be convincing enough to motivate organizations to work together.

Many people have suggested for years that sport organizations need to collaborate. For example in the aquatic sports the National Council for Cooperation of Aquatics has been around forever. You’ve got swimming, diving, water polo, synchro, and you know they’re competing for pool time and other valuable resources, and they’re seeing each other in the pool all the time, but rarely do they do things together, like joint planning, joint recruiting, coordinating schedules. It seems crazy to me.

Laura (NSC (City) Member)

Furthermore, unknown variables such as the impact on an individual’s job or organizational profile were also cited as being barriers to collaborating. For instance,

[Winter sport] is in the same office out at the [Olympic facility] as [another winter sport]. It makes a lot of sense for them to partner together with the national and provincial organizations. But once again, there are politics and ego involved. It is inefficient to have side-by-side provincial offices and national offices. Why can’t we combine them and have one office? What people are scared of is that they could be out of a job, or maybe their organization is going to start taking a little bit of our glory away from us. So you have all that stuff you need to deal with when you consider forming partnerships. That is just human nature.

Andrew (Founding Partner)

These examples illustrate the context, culture, and mindset regarding working in collaboration within the national sport delivery system. With respect to NSCs in particular, it became clear that respondents felt that there was initial reluctance from NSFs to forming partnerships with them for several reasons. At that time, the mindset within the sport system was already skeptical of and resistant to the partnership approach in general. Another factor was the ambiguity associated with the concept of NSCs, and in particular, the apparent vagueness of their mandate. Many NSFs felt threatened that NSCs would take over some of their administrative responsibilities or trespass on their territory (i.e., high profile
athletes and sport delivery network), thereby weakening even further their position in the funding pool. 

Even some of the focal NSC’s most successful Sport Partners (in terms of athlete performances at international competitions) that joined at its inception went through time consuming deliberations about allying themselves with NSCs and adopting a partnership strategy. In the end however, the financial implications and the cost saving possibilities were among the most important determining factors in convincing the group to partner with the focal NSC.

I felt that if we were going to get any new dollars into our sport, we needed to be aware of the plan around National Sport Centres as far as Sport Canada was concerned. Then respond to that plan. Not many people were open to that. In fact there was a huge groundswell from sport organizations against moving in this direction. But I saw it as an opportunity. I had to sell my board for two years, and it was NOT easy for me. I had to actually show them how it was going to be relatively affordable, and that is where the partnership side of things came in.

Corey (Sport Partner)

There appeared to be a couple of important environmental aspects that precipitated the shift towards accepting and adopting a partnership approach among these organizations. First, as has been stated, a decrease in government funding to amateur sport, was coupled with the appointment of a new Secretary of State for Amateur Sport in 1999, who ‘overhauled’ the system by encouraging these organizations to generate new sources of funding from the corporate sector to lessen sport’s traditional reliance on government (Canadian Heritage, 2000c; Conference Board of Canada, 1999). Second, one or two key NSC Sport Partners enjoyed successful performances at international competitions. One informant believed that it took the success of one a major summer sport to foster partnerships among NSCs and other sports.

Keith (Sport Partner)

Swimming has paved the way for these kinds of partnerships a long time ago. They have realized the benefits of being involved with NSCs. They are in almost every NSC in the country, and as a result are doing very well in international competitions.

Another successful winter sport organization, since becoming a partner with the NSC (City), experienced great success in its international performances. This sport represented over 50% of the medals won at the Olympic Games in the 1994, 1998 and 2002 Games (i.e., 4 medals at the 1994 Games out of a total 13 Canadian medals; 9 medals at the 1998 Games out of a total 15 Canadian medals; and 9 medals at the 2002 Games out of a total 17 Canadian medals). These successes all followed the establishment of a partnership between the sport organization and the NSC (City). The informant indicated that:
We can measure the level of services provided and the impact that the services have had on our high performance objectives. In the case of [Sport], the results speak for themselves. Our partnership with the NSC has played a crucial role in the achievement of our podium success.

Frank (Sport Partner)

It cannot be claimed that these successes were simply the result of forming a partnership with the NSC (City), however, the programs and services provided by the partnership provided the sport with key resources to help them excel. Once other NSFs witnessed the success, many sought to emulate the model and began to initiate partnerships with both the focal NSC and NSCs in the emerging network, as well as with other sport and non-sport organizations. What has transpired is that NSFs now appear to be very eager to partner on all levels. This point is illustrated in the following interview passage:

One of the partnership groups who wanted to explore partnerships with us, I am not going to mention the name, but I asked this person how many open partnership files did they have right now? The Director told me they have over 60, and I am thinking well how are you going to get anything done?

Adam (NSC Network President)

With the emergence of new organizations like NSCs that are underpinned by the partnership philosophy, this organizational structuring approach has seen considerable growth as a strategic option for the sport system. From a pragmatic and theoretical perspective, however, questions arise from these changes. First, from a pragmatic view, it appears that while there has been a movement within the sport system to create more partnerships, the total number being established among organizations does not address the issue of their quality, how organizations effectively manage these relationships, or how they evaluate success. From a theoretical perspective, it is imperative to understand the forces leading organizations to partner, and the factors that play a significant role in the shift to form IORs. Thus, the following chapter attempts to build on and extend the existing literature on interorganizational partnership formation and further develop related literature in the nonprofit sector.

In this chapter, the context for this research was presented which illustrated the growth in the number of IORs of various types by the focal organization. As discussed next, the growth in the number of relationships requires increased coordination, efficient communication, streamlined exchanges, and a great deal of time to manage the boundary between individuals of the partnering organizations. This background will provide the context for the following discussion on the phases of the collaboration model and will help to illustrate many of the ‘partnership processes’ including views and interpretations of what a partnership is and how it is represented in the organizations involved with the NSC (City).
In this chapter, the research findings related to the *phases of collaboration model* (Figure 2.1) outlined in Chapter 2 are addressed. Specifically, this chapter presents the strategic, situational, and resource-based considerations that led to the adoption of a partnership or collaborative strategy. The findings outlined in this chapter address the following three questions: what pre-existing conditions were present to facilitate the formation of partnerships, what factors motivated the formation of these particular relationships, and finally, what challenges and complexities were involved in the creation of multiple interorganizational partnerships? In particular, the focus is on the elements of Kouwenhoven's (1993) model of necessary partnership preconditions as well as Oliver's (1990) IOR framework. A discussion of the findings of the partnership preconditions will be presented in the following order:

a) a discussion of the structural and strategic interdependences between partnering organizations;
b) an examination of the convergence of objectives between partnering organizations with specific attention to Oliver's (1990) framework;
c) a discussion of the presence of a broker for particular partnerships; and
d) a consideration of the role that network interactions played in the formation of partnerships.

Once the motivations underlying partnership formation became clear, I suspected that there might be a relationship among these motivating factors and the structure of the relationships that had been formed. Understanding the basis or motivation of the collaboration can help explain patterns of coordination and interaction among organizations. These factors are also discussed in this chapter to demonstrate the linkage between predetermining factors and the organization of the partnership.

These issues illustrate the tensions, complexities, and ambiguities associated with partnerships, the interdependencies among partners, and the challenges of finding a common meaning of partnership among such a diverse group of partners. A 'reframed' summary of these conditions and factors and their interconnectedness is presented at the end of this chapter in diagram form in Figure 5.3. Moreover, as will be explained in Chapter 6, many of the preconditions discussed in this chapter influenced organizational interaction and formed the basis for challenges in partnership management.
Preconditions for Partnership Formation

Throughout the course of the analysis of organizational documents, observations of meetings, and interviews with the focal organization and its partners, it became apparent that organizations entered into partnerships for multiple reasons, and that numerous favourable situational and environmental conditions were necessary in order for these relationships to be formed. The presence of these conditions supports the contentions of various authors (cf. Barringer & Harrison, 2000; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Hutt et al., 2000; Oliver, 1990; Van de Ven, 1976) who have argued that forming relationships is often not a function of one factor. Rather, a multifaceted view of IOR formation should be presented as "...a complex phenomenon involving both strategic and social factors operating within a logic of needs and opportunities" (Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996, p. 148). Several critical conditions and opportunities were present for partnership formation among the focal NSC and its partners. The following discussion addresses Kouwenhoven's (1993) four key preconditions for partnership formation (e.g., primary conditions: (a) interdependence among organizations and (b) convergence of objectives; and secondary conditions: (c) presence of a broker and (d) presence of a network).

a) Primary Condition: Interdependence

According to the conceptual framework proposed for this research, one of the necessary environmental conditions or antecedents that could facilitate the formation of partnerships was a degree of interdependence, or mutual reliance, among organizations. In the context of the Canadian sport system, there was clear evidence of extensive interdependence among the organizations involved in the partnership with the focal organization, and among many other organizations in the environment as well. Although Kouwenhoven (1993) did not specify at what level or what type of interdependence might be relevant, it became clear that in this case, there were two distinct aspects to this precondition, namely structural and strategic.

Structural Interdependence

Structural interdependence manifested itself primarily among organizations involved in the sport system that are instrumental in the delivery of high performance sport in Canada (e.g., NSFs, NSCs, COC). Many of these organizations had similar structures with boards of directors and paid employees, and they often served the same athlete and coach clientele. For example, a NSF responsible for the day
to day administration of programs and services for elite level athletes and coaches who participate in snowboarding would work with the COC during Olympic competitions and for other Olympic-related activities. The NSF would rely on the COC to provide the human, technical, and financial assistance necessary during these events. Additionally, this same NSF would use their NSC partner for training and servicing teams or athletes who are part of that Centre by contributing to coaching salaries or athlete training and development services. Furthermore, coaches from this sport would receive educational training and assistance from the NCI as well as the CAC. Finally, since snowboarding is a winter sport, the OLO would support the elite athletes and coaches of this organization by providing access to facilities or other critical training services. Thus, this structural interdependence is evident in terms of the organizations' practical administrative and functional operation. This example could effectively be applied to most NSFs.

Another example of structural interdependence was clear in the allocation of financial support to the organizations mentioned above. The funding structure of the Canadian sport system is complex. As such, there appeared to be a great deal of interdependence and mutual reliance within the sport funding system as financial resources were funneled and exchanged among organizations. Yet in many cases the funds ultimately originated from one primary source – the federal government. With respect to the funding of NSCs, a portion of the federal government's annual sport funding budget is targeted for these organizations (see Figure 5.1 as an example of one year's contributions).

**Figure 5.1: Sport Canada contributions of 2000-01**

![Pie chart](chart.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Contributions</td>
<td>$82,060,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COC</td>
<td>$415,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>$2,900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCs</td>
<td>$3,400,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Canadian Heritage: Sport Canada, 2002)
It is important to illustrate the nature of the network structure to establish and demonstrate the interdependencies and complexities among the collaborating partners. The flow of resources, financial and other, is best described with examples. For instance, Sport Canada provides financial support and input on strategic direction to the network of NSCs. As of the 2000-01 funding year, Sport Canada funded 47 NSFs\(^9\) (Canadian Heritage: Sport Canada, 2002), many of which are also simultaneously sport partners of the NSC (City) (or other NSCs in the national network). Sport Canada also provided financial support to both the COC (0.5\% of Sport Canada budget) (Canadian Heritage: Sport Canada, 2002) and the CAC (3.5\% of Sport Canada Budget) (Canadian Heritage: Sport Canada, 2002) (Figure 5.1). In many cases, where a traditional 'funding' relationship used to exist between the federal government and sport organizations, it is now being called a 'partnership' by NSFs, and other sport delivery organizations, although in terms of structure, degree of interaction, and the nature of the relationship, little appears to have changed. However, the federal government now has representation on the boards of directors for the NSC (City) and on each NSC in the national network. This is a new strategy in terms of organizational structure and interaction as there has been no previous official representation from the federal government on boards of NSFs, or other multi-sport organizations.

An example of this interdependence can be illustrated by the case of the CAC. The federal government is the chief funder of this organization, providing it almost $3 million per year (Figure 5.1). A portion of the money received by the CAC in turn (approximately $107,000 per year) is allocated to the focal NSC and comparable amounts to the other NSCs in the network that operate NCIs, to support the training and development of coaches. Similarly, the partnerships established between NSCs and NSFs reflect transactions of the funds that originated from the federal government. A graphic representation of the flow of financial resources through the network is shown in Figure 5.2.

\(^9\) Sport Canada contributed financially to 102 organizations in total during the funding year 2000-2001. These organizations included NSCs, multi-sport organizations (such as Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association, Coaching Association of Canada and the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union), and games / hosting organizations (such as Edmonton 2001 World Championships in Athletics). The figure indicated in the text represents only those single sport federations that are Olympic sports or recognized as such (i.e., while rugby is not recognized as an Olympic sport it receives financial support from Sport Canada; it is recognized by the International Olympic Committee-although not officially an 'Olympic Sport'). Technically, the sports that partner with the NSCs must be Olympic sports.
Figure 5.2: Example of Funding Flow Among Organizations Involved in Study

Arrow denotes exchange of financial capital
Arrow head indicates direction of flow.
Therefore, when one organization is economically prosperous or conversely, suffers financial hardship, it inevitably influences many other organizations in the network in the form of reductions (or increases) in resource flows. This has been evidenced by the rise, fall, and recent rise of the federal government’s funding of the sport system over the years. Thus, as a system, sport is increasingly investing energy in attracting financial support from the corporate community to gain some perceived security and stability. Partnerships of this nature are extremely valuable to sport organizations. With respect to the formation of partnerships, corporate partners did not report or demonstrate structural interdependence (either financial or functional / administrative) with the focal NSC or with any other sport organizations in the system.

Another example of the structural interdependence evident in this case was the extent to which individuals served in different capacities (e.g., as a member of the staff, director on the board, or a volunteer) of many organizations involved in the network. For example, a member of the staff of the focal NSC served in a decision-making position on the executive of the Board of Directors of the COC for several years. The ‘convenor’ of one of the Sport Partners sat on the Board of the NSC as a coaching representative, simultaneously holding the positions of head coach of the (university) varsity team, and the national team. In another example, the President of the focal NSC served on a committee of several of the community, provincial, and national training organizations associated with the NSC. The President also played a key decision-making role with partners of the NSC.

I have been working with (NSC President) recently. He sits on my board of directors for the 2005 (major international sport event). He is one of the key directors on our board.  
Andrew (Founding Partner)

This degree of structural interdependence and interconnectedness also served as the basis of a network between partners and will be addressed shortly.  

These examples of how organizations and individuals are linked in many different areas and play key decision-making roles for other organizations illustrate the structural interconnectedness among partners in the network. These structural and resource interdependencies among organizations can complicate relationships when the players involved are perhaps working to satisfy competing interests, or mediate divergent objectives. The previous examples provide a general overview of the degree of
interconnectedness and the exchanges among organizations in the collaborating set that was examined for this study.

**Strategic Interdependence**

Closely related to structural interdependence, strategic interdependence among the organizations in this network was also clearly exhibited. Specifically, there appeared to be interdependence, and some argued duplication, among many of the goals and objectives of the organizations involved in the partnership with the NSC (City). In most cases, forming partnerships mutually satisfied an element of each partner organization’s purpose or objectives. As such, the effective coordination among organizations served to achieve the goals and objectives of all organizations involved in the partnership.

Strategic interdependence manifested itself not only among the organizations that were part of the sport system. Private sector firms also exhibited strategic interdependence with sport organizations in the sense that as part of their goal and value statements, the objective of social responsibility or making a contribution to the communities in which they operated was expressed as a goal / objective of private companies. Through partnership with a sport organization such as the NSC (City), it was believed that this goal would be satisfied.

This common ground, or strategic interdependence, is also reflected in the mission and goal statements of many of the partner sport organizations. The partners appeared to rely on organizations in the sport system to carry out organizational activities for athletes and coaches at different levels. For example, the mission of Sport Canada was to support the achievement of high performance excellence and the development of the Canadian sport system. One of their strategic directions was to focus on elite athletes and coaches in order to enhance the ability of Canadian athletes to excel at the highest international levels (Canadian Heritage, 2002c). The COC also supports the achievement of excellence in high performance sport and maintains an athlete and coach focus that addresses their needs and expectations (Canadian Olympic Committee, 2002). Similarly, the CAC exists to enhance the experiences of all Canadian athletes through quality coaching, with one of their core strategies focused specifically on coach education and training, in particular, to provide the foundation of skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to ensure effective coaching leadership for Canadian athletes (Coaching Association of Canada, 2002). The OLO also supports high performance athlete and coach development, specifically with 14
winter sport organizations ((City) Olympic Development Association, 2001) through direct financial assistance and operational support of facilities (training opportunities and competition venues). These organizations all have as part of their mandate the strategically interconnected commitment to support the training and development of Canadian high performance athletes and coaches.

The focal NSC’s objectives are strategically aligned with all three national Founding Partners in the following ways. First, as one of the NSC’s key objectives is to support coach development and education, the NSC has a clear association with the CAC through the presence of the National Coaching Institute. As such, the NSC (City)’s partnership with the CAC exemplifies and supports the strategic connection related to coaching. Second, the NSC supports primarily those athletes who are competing at national or international levels, satisfying the strategic objectives of other partners including the federal government, COC, and the OLO. Third, the specific strategic connections among the focal NSC and its partner NSFs lie in their mutual objective to service athletes and coaches and to develop their skills and abilities to allow them to participate and succeed in international level competitions. It is not surprising that these interdependencies exist with the national Founding Partners as they are collectively responsible for the creation of the NSC.

The strategic interdependencies among these organizations, with each responsible for a largely unique but sometimes overlapping aspect of athlete or coach development, illustrates the close strategic ties that exist among organizations involved with the NSC. Because of these connections, it seems reasonable to assume that there would be advantages to implementing a coordinated effort to achieve these mutual objectives and that a common platform existed to make this possible. Table 5.1 contains representative quotations from partner organizations illustrating their strategic interdependencies with the focal NSC.

**Table 5.1: Quotations illustrating strategic interdependence among partners**

| Corporate | 1. The fact is that the corporation works in the community, and it needs to give back to the community. I think that in all corporations there is a sense of that. When I talk to other CEOs, they're busy, but once you get them to do it, all of them have some project that they believe in. Ours happens to be amateur sport.  
David (Corporate Partner) |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | 2. We have decided as a company, that being a good corporate citizen is part of our values, and helping Canadian athletes to perform better is something we can do to achieve that goal. You can't run a business on it. It is just sort of duty and I guess you hope to help athletes improve.  
Aaron (Corporate Partner) |
3. It is not likely that the partnership with the National Sport Centre is going to help contribute to our bottom line. So you do it for different reasons. It is more as I say a bank account of good will and because it is something that our CEO firmly believes in.
   
   Dennis (Corporate Partner)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>1. We feel that partnerships have to be developed, strengthened, and stabilized in order for us to achieve our mutual goal of a better sport delivery system in this country.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keith (Sport partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. There was a relatively logical strategic fit between our organization and the goals of the NSC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corey (Sport partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Founding</th>
<th>1. It probably comes more into some of the strategic questions, but one of our core strategies, one of our priorities is educating high performance coaches. And through the partnership with the NSCs, there is now this network of National Coaching Institutes to deliver that program. We could not have done that on our own. In terms of that original definition of having common goals and being able to help each other attain those common goals, this is a perfect example of that. We would not have been able to do that without these partners.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kevin (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network</th>
<th>1. There has to be a basis for partnership. In other words, if there is no common ground for us to have a partnership there is no need to have one. Our common ground is an authentic desire to help improve athletes and coaches in Canada. Improve their performances and their lives. So that is really where it all begins and ends.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adam (NSC Network President)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Partnerships help in particular for lobbying and developing our collective vision for sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ivan (NSC Network President)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Kouwenhoven (1993), these dimensions of interdependence would be an essential condition for an organization to decide to engage in partnership activity. Without this degree of prior interdependence and reliance among organizations, the formation of partnerships would encounter more challenges and would require more justification from decision-makers. Although it provided the conditions necessary for organizations to partner, the degree of structural and strategic interdependence among organizations in this case also appeared to lead to increased complexity and challenges (e.g., ambiguities, tensions, politics, and control aspects in interactions) as will be discussed in Chapter 6.

b) Primary Condition: Convergence of Objectives

Kouwenhoven’s (1993) framework also indicated a convergence of objectives as being another critical condition to partnership formation. As described in Chapter 4, the act of creating a network of NSCs by the three national Founding Partners indicated a convergence of objectives, namely the enhancement of the high performance sport delivery system in Canada, specifically through the provision of programs and services in a decentralized fashion. Situational factors such as decreased funding served to pressure organizations to consider partnerships and as a result, produced a common ground. Organizations involved in this network claimed that there were two primary purposes to forming
partnerships: a) to contribute to the enhanced delivery of the amateur sport system or b) to ensure the effective functioning of their own organization. The objectives of the potential partners do not have to be identical, but they must not be incompatible (Kouwenhoven, 1993). This convergence of objectives has links to Oliver's (1990) motivations for partnership formation (determinants of partnership formation including: asymmetry, reciprocity, necessity, stability, legitimacy, and efficiency), discussed next, where important strategic advantages are gained for the organizations involved in partnerships.

**Determinants of Partnership Formation – Converging Objectives to Form Partnership**

As a starting point for exploring partnerships, the strength of Kouwenhoven's (1993) model lies in its consideration of the pre-existing conditions among organizations that are contemplating collaboration, and provides further clarification as to how those aspects contribute to the facilitation or hindrance of linkage formation. While it does explain some of the immediate contextual aspects relevant to the formation of partnerships, it does not sufficiently consider the external environmental and political pressures compelling organizations to work together. Nor does it expand on specific strategic determinants for partnership formation. Additionally, since Kouwenhoven's framework was developed to explain the dynamics of public-private partnerships, it may not allow for the dynamics present in other types of IORs, such as those formed between two or more nonprofit organizations, or between nonprofit organizations and private sector companies, or partnerships among multiple organizations in all three sectors. Thus, additional strategic IOR determinants such as those outlined in Oliver's (1990) framework need to be considered. The following section expands on Oliver's framework to examine further the motivations and convergence of objectives reported by the organizations in this case study for adopting a partnership strategy.

Understanding what factors motivated the formation of interorganizational partnerships is important to consider. The strategic decision to form partnerships impacts all other aspects of the organization, for example, accounting, decision-making, planning, managing human resources, communication (internal and external), as well as marketing and promotions activities. In this study, partnership formation objectives varied with the requirements and existing resources of individual firms. However, many of the organizational objectives do reflect similarities to the literature on corporate sponsorship and sport marketing practices (Amis et al., 1997; Copeland, Frisby, & McCarville, 1996;
Cousens et al., 2000) as well as other non-sport related literature on strategic determinants for partnership formation (Das & Teng, 2002; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Oliver, 1990; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). For example, as discussed in more detail shortly, organizations in this study wanted to attain objectives such as forging links with local business communities to enhance their profile and image within the community, acquire valuable resources, improve organizational effectiveness, or satisfy the personal objectives of decision-makers such as an interest in amateur sport.

The anticipated advantages associated with a partnership strategy may include improved efficiency through coordinated use of resources, increased stability in acquiring and maintaining resources, enhanced legitimacy in the eyes of not only the federal government, but other sport and nonprofit organizations, or increased power over another organization and its resources. These motivations and their implications for sport partnerships are particularly important in the current climate of scandal and unethical business practices that have recently affected many sport organizations (such as the International Olympic Committee, and Olympic Bid Cities). Although in-depth strategic planning and forecasting can minimize the risk associated with entering into a sponsorship or partnership agreement, there remain several unknown variables. For instance, an organization may fail to gain advantages that a partner offers such as media exposure, or the international performance of an athlete or team may negatively affect the partner’s reputation and image, or a potentially controversial activity may tarnish the image of the sponsoring firm. Olympic scandals for example, have shaken the foundation of many of the corporations that have associated themselves closely with Olympic-related organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee, organizing committees of the Olympic Games, and even National Olympic Committees (Jennings, 2000).

As with any organizational strategy, the adoption of a partnership approach requires setting basic, long-term goals and objectives for the venture as a whole, in addition to adopting a coordinated course of action, and subsequently allocating resources. An effective organizational strategy requires an ability to respond to shifting demands, changing sources of supply, fluctuating economic conditions, technological developments, and actions of competitors (Robbins, 1990). As a structural arrangement, the decision to pursue partnership strategy is often motivated by the assumption that access to resources will improve. Several strategic aspects were considered in the context of the focal NSC and its partners.
Oliver's (1990) six determinants of partnership formation were all present in varying forms and to differing degrees of relevance within this case study and demonstrated the convergence of objectives of the various partners involved. The strategic determinants for forming partnerships (e.g., asymmetry, necessity, reciprocity, legitimacy, stability, and efficiency) are more closely examined in the next section. First, an exploration into the focal organization’s motivations to form partnerships is presented, followed by a consideration of each of the partner groups’ reasons to establish a relationship with NSC (City).

**Motivation to Form Partnerships – NSC (City)**

1. Asymmetry: “We don’t want to be held hostage by our partners.”

   The interview and document data revealed that power and control dimensions and political interactions appeared to be present in many different contexts and on many levels in the formation of partnerships. As Oliver (1990) argued, both the “...desire for control and the reluctance to relinquish control” (p. 244) reflect asymmetrical motives in an organization’s decision to interact. A key finding indicated that the focal NSC felt a need to create partnerships to maintain their status, influence, and position within the larger sport delivery system as well as to gain and maintain valuable resources. However, there was reluctance to relinquish control of valuable resources such as money, athletes, and coaches, as well as a keen desire to seek control of these same resources for the NSC’s own power advantage. Another motivation for the focal NSC to form strong partnerships – particularly with sport organizations and Founding Partners – was to mitigate the impact of the development of more NSCs across the country. Among the Founding Partners, NSC (City) initially appeared to have more influence than other Centres, and the addition of new Centres across the country caused the focal NSC to become concerned with its position in the network. For instance, for the first three years of its existence, the focal NSC was essentially the ‘only game in town’ (i.e., there was no competition from other NSC organizations). With the creation of new Centres, the focal NSC felt that they were losing some control and status within the network. This had implications not only for their political positioning (i.e., strength in the network), but for continued or augmented resource acquisition from the Founding Partners as well. With the federal government directing the creation of new NSCs, political tensions were introduced and resulted in power and control issues particularly between the focal NSC and the federal government.

   There was also a degree of skepticism and difference of opinion regarding Sport Canada’s relationship with the NSCs and with other Founding Partners. Many felt that while Sport Canada claimed
to be working in ‘partnership’, it remained reluctant to relinquish control. This was illustrated by the
government’s unilateral political decision to grow the network of Centres with little or no opportunity for
existing NSCs to question or influence this approach. There appeared to be clear differences of opinion,
and different perceptions concerning the areas of emphasis (i.e., equity or excellence) within the
organization. A shift to an equity-based system would mean fewer resources and less support from the
three national Founding Partners for the focal NSC. The specific concerns of the leadership within the
NSC (City) revolved around the perception that growth of the network may result in a decrease in
financial contributions, and ultimately a situation where greater effort to justify needs would be required.
While there is an assumption that becoming involved in IORs compromises decision-making freedom, this
was clearly a concern for the focal NSC.

Several authors argue that the efforts of organizations to control interdependencies predict
Another asymmetrical aspect to the relationships was, as Oliver (1990) suggested, to retain control over
their own organization and its resources. This aspect was clearly evident within the NSC (City) as it
expressed intentions to cast off its funding dependency of the government. This motivated the focal
organization to seek alternative sources of funding. Quotations 1 and 2 in Table 5.2 illustrate the negative
sentiments concerning the government’s degree of control in the growth and development of the network
of Centres. Gray and Wood (1991) concurred that organizations might have to sacrifice autonomy in
order to gain valuable resources and stated that the challenge here is to “...focus on minimizing
interorganizational dependencies and preserving the organization’s autonomy while recognizing that
interorganizational relationships are necessary to acquire resources” (p. 7). Ironically, if the argument
that an organization will be able to control its interdependencies is indeed a motivation to form a
partnership, then by doing so, the focal organization transfers its interdependencies to another entity,
thereby resulting in further loss of autonomy and control.

There were intense competitive pressures within the national NSC network to attract more sport
partners and athletes in order to maintain or increase funding levels from Founding Partners. This
pressure resulted in a situation where there was latent competition among these organizations, although
on the surface NSCs leaders claimed to collaborate. This collaboration / competition contradiction was
prevalent in many organizational interactions. Quotation 3, 4, and 5 (Table 5.2) reveals the asymmetrical dynamics perceived among NSCs that compete for sport partners, athletes, and coaches. The acquisition of a greater number of athletes and coaches through the sport partners satisfies the asymmetrical motivations over other NSCs in the network by providing continued levels of financial resources from the Founding Partners. As is discussed in the following chapter, partnership motives of power and control play a central role in influencing the exchange dynamics among partners in this study. Organizational power has often been presented as a function of control over the rules governing exchange among partners (Harrigan & Newman, 1990; McDonald, 1999; Pfeffer, 1992; Provan et al., 1980; Skinner & Guiltinan, 1986). In this research there were varying degrees of power dynamics operating at different levels. For instance, within the network of NSCs, the NSC (City) had greater power as a function of its expertise, knowledge, image, and reputation.

Table 5.2: Representative quotations for asymmetrical motivations from focal NSC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC (City) – Founding Partners</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think the NSC (City) has been very successful in raising dollars but nowhere near what we should do if we really want to achieve my vision of decreasing the impact and reliance on the federal government. I would love to go and tell them to stick it. Now, I never will because I want their money and I think they should provide some money to sport and I never want to let them off the hook. But I don't ever want to be held hostage by them and I think we are at times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have some real concerns about the network of NSCs. I think they are the best thing that has happened in sport in the last 15 years but at the same time, we are another organization. I am concerned about the number of Centres that we now have. It is evolving and growing so much that now they are all over the place. It is just an election promise here, another election promise there. Now all of a sudden you have nine - and soon to have 47 in my mind. The way the government is doing this is hurting us because you have X dollars and now you are spreading it thinner. Whereas the original intent in my mind and the reason I got involved was to be singularly focused on the high performance side of it. I do not think we are anymore. We are now more worried about equity. The government dollars are more worried about equity than excellence. I think that is a problem. We have to form and strengthen our partnerships in order to keep our heads above water and survive in this expanding system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC (City) – Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. The NSC is in direct competition with the national sport federations. So all the sport federations out there are trying to raise money and needing to raise money and they [the federal government] impose this new structure of Sport Centres and put them in direct competition with the sport federations – this really stresses the relationship because they are competing and collaborating at the same time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The problem is that the NSCs operate as independent little units, and then you throw in all the other sports organizations that are competing for corporate sponsorship and support... it becomes quite a competitive power struggle between these organizations for attention from the corporate sector ... I think any chance you get to amalgamate and share resources through forming partnerships makes the process much more efficient for NSCs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray (Corporate Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. My observation with the NSCs across the country is that even though they are all working together, they are also all in competition with each other for the pool of athletes and the sports available. That is not right. There needs to be something done about that.

Yves (Sport Partner)

2. Necessity: “We are obliged to carry out what the government tells us to do.”

Oliver (1990) suggested that some organizations would view the formation of IORs as obligatory in order to meet the legal or regulatory requirements or mandates and pressures from higher authorities, such as government agencies, policy, or provincial or national legislation. Other authors have identified that the determinant necessity involves coercive pressures that force organizations to adopt formal partnerships when required to do so by others (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Stone et al., 1999). These coercive pressures were thought to stimulate the formation of IORs when they might not have occurred voluntarily.

The exchanges among the NSC (City) and its Founding Partners were different than those with the other partnership types because the three nationally-based Founding Partners essentially created the focal NSC (and the subsequent NSCs in the network), and because the NSC depended primarily on these organizations for continued financial support. As discussed shortly, the notion of a ‘partnership’ comes into question among these organizations – primarily because of their ‘mandated’ nature. Because of the control over resources and the power based on their role in forming the new NSC, the national Founding Partners have much influence in setting the ground rules regarding many aspects of the organization and the relationship. As one of Sport Canada’s strategic directions was to facilitate, through partnerships, the development of a sustainable and diversified public and private resource base for the ongoing development of the sport system, this objective took form in the creation of the NSC network. Although there did not appear to be any overt legal or regulatory requirements to compel NSCs, sport organizations, or corporate firms into partnerships, there were pressures and expectations from the Founding Partners, the federal government in particular, that a strategic partnership approach would be implemented (Quotations 1 and 2, Table 5.3). These pressures and expectations were primarily aimed at the NSCs and NSFs. Because of the unique dynamics among the national Founding Partners and the NSC (City), the relationships became more hierarchical and imposed than equal. Quotation 3 in Table 5.3 below illustrates this point. It appeared that sport organizations and NSCs in the national network wanted to avoid the implied repercussions of non-compliance, and considered that establishing partnership was
the best course of action. For example, one of the repercussions might be a reduction in the level of federal government funding support to their organization if the focal NSC did not demonstrate that it was actively seeking and implementing partnerships with sport partners or corporate partners.

There are many issues of power and control even within this determinant of necessity. Oliver (1990) viewed that while mandating a relationship may increase the frequency and nature of interactions among organizations, it also may reduce an organization's perception of power over its environment. The focal NSC was formed to work directly with sport organizations to achieve the objectives of the Founding Partners. Essentially, the NSC has had its direction set. The degree of choice is in the sport organizations with whom the NSC will eventually collaborate and even this is constrained by the decisions made at the national network level of NSCs. There are also limitations placed on the focal NSC as to which corporate partners they can target because of potential conflicts with corporations who have contributed to both COC and CAC (i.e., Chrysler is an automotive partner of COC, and NSCs cannot form a partnership that conflicts with this one (i.e., develop a relationship with another automotive partner)). On one hand, there are pressures to partner, on the other hand, there are restrictions placed upon the choice of partners. Quotations 4 and 5 in Table 5.3 illustrate this point. Control over its environment for instance is compromised for the NSC in this case.

The danger with forming IORs based on this approach is that when partnerships are mandated or legislated, and thus formed out of necessity as Oliver's (1990) framework suggests, the aspect of the quality and value of the interaction may be questionable. Authorities (such as governments) with more power may expect that a partnership strategy might be the most effective strategy to alleviate system-wide concerns (i.e., with respect to decreased overall funding), however, if the process is not examined thoroughly and implemented strategically, many of the pitfalls associated with partnerships may occur.

Table 5.3: Representative quotations for necessity motivations from focal NSC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC (City) – Founding Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. On one hand the government is spending more money on the other hand they are not spending more money because they are creating more centres. I think they are putting subtle expectations on the other funding partners meaning COC in particular and the CAC that they should give money to every centre also. Well they do not have money to give to every centre. The only way that you can give money to other centres is by taking it from the existing centres. And I am in favour of working together but I am not in favour of penalizing and bringing everyone down to the lowest common denominator. But that is what’s going on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Well [Secretary of State's] agenda is a political one and that is the problem. I understand that. His agenda is votes. Mine is medals. Big difference. That is why we cannot rely on government. That is why the sooner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


we can reduce the reliance on them the better. I believe government should always be involved in sport because I think it is important to whatever. For the country and youth development and everything else related to that. Having said that we are way too dependent on them, and we are obliged to carry out what they tell us to do.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

3. We are retaining the services for them (the NSC) to do work for us [the Founding Partner]. They are more in effect our employees; it is an employee – employer relationship. Or that the Centres are in effect undertaking a franchise kind of operation where the roles and responsibilities have been given to them from head office.

Larry (Founding Partner)

NSC (City) – Corporate Partners

4. The concern you always have in this whole partnership thing is to make sure that there is no crossover between organizations. We have corporate partners at the COC, and as an example, let us assume our sponsor is Chrysler in the automotive area. Then we have money going to the NSC, so the problem is that there is great potential for conflict in terms of whom they target as corporate partners. We really cannot allow the NSC to go out and do a deal with Ford for instance. It gets a bit dicey because it would be incompatible with our corporate relationship with Chrysler. We have to be careful about what corporate partners the NSC targets.

Edwin (NSC (City) Member)

5. Government generally has not been very successful on a program design level to bring in corporate partners. Corporate partners just do not look at the government and partnership in that way generally. So part of the reason was to create an entity, a Sport Centre with its own board and then the expectation is that that Centre as it develops, will seek out other private sector partnerships that made sense.

Iris (Founding Partner)

3. Efficiency: “Too many players involved in the sport system forces you to partner with people if you want to get extra resources and be more efficient.”

The transaction cost perspective of IORs, suggests that the choice of governance forms (i.e., partnerships in this case) is implemented to pursue economic efficiency by reducing the costs of transactions among organizations. Each of the representative quotations in Table 5.4 supports the contention that a primary motivation for the focal NSC to form partnerships was based on the objective of achieving efficiencies in its organizational operations. The results from this study suggested that for the focal NSC in particular, the desire to use resources efficiently was one of the most important factors motivating the formation of partnerships (Quotation 1 and 2, Table 5.4). The objective to form partnerships for efficiency reasons was evident primarily in the relationship among the focal NSC and its sport partners. Partnerships were perceived as a means to allow sport organizations more buying power, consolidate superfluous resources, and maximize the use of resources such as financial capital, human resources, knowledge, and expertise – in summary, to enhance performance. Economies of scale would use existing and new resources better and allow each of the organizations to work with their strengths, create synergies, improve capability, reduce transaction costs, and develop efficiencies in the areas of athlete and coach services, training, and education.
While the literature outlines that efficiency is a rationale for partnership formation, the collaborative spirit necessary to realize efficiency requires some effort to achieve. This was the case when the President of the focal NSC suggested several organizations should work together to achieve efficiencies in purchasing power for office resources (Quotation 3, Table 5.4). Furthermore, the management of an increasing number of organizations involved in the system may not prove to be efficient but on the contrary, may encumber efforts and decrease efficiency in the long term.

Table 5.4: Representative quotations for efficiency motivations from focal NSC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC (City) – Sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Partnerships are a much more difficult strategic approach, but they can also be much more rewarding, and they make us use our resources more efficiently as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I talked about the need for partnerships for our organization with respect to the buying power advantages they would provide. In terms of efficiency and problem solving, we have had to form more partnerships to be able to expand what we are trying to do and to look at new initiatives. To me they are a must because we are just not able to do it alone. No one can do it alone anymore. I think in other countries they can. Here we cannot. You are forced to work together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I think the increase in partnerships in sport is primarily the result of limited resources. I also think that because of this, we are trying to maximize the impact of our resources. But a big problem is that we have a large number of players or partners in the system. Too many in my mind. All with a little bit of money or a few resources. So it forces you to partner with people if you want to get extra resources and be more efficient. I think another reason why there has been an increase is we have common organizational needs. I feel that by working together better there is better buying power. Now I do not think we have done a very good job of that I still think there could be a lot more partnering within and between sports. We could save tremendously on the business operations and administration side with things like office supplies or computers, stationary. If we work together better we could get volume discounts and we do not do that. About three years ago I brought together a group of sport people and (Consulting Company) and we tried to look at it from strictly the administrative side of sport – issues such as buying computers and office space and desks and papers and pens. The question was, can we work together in that respect to enhance our buying power? And although everyone loved the idea, it did not happen. This is between sports, and one of the reasons it did not happen is that they said I cannot even get my provinces to buy in cooperation with the national organization how can I get one sport to partner with another? So they all thought it was great, they all thought we would save money and people from [Consulting company] thought we would save 30 to 40 percent. But it did not happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stability: “There are lots of challenges in terms of getting a commitment to long-term funding that is going to affect the decision to form partnerships.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stability, in the context of this case, was also revealed by the focal NSC as a clear motivation to form partnerships. Oliver (1990) suggested that environmental uncertainty is generated by resource scarcity and a lack of information about environmental fluctuations. It was apparent that confidence in the funding environment was low and therefore it was difficult for the focal organization to predict future funding with confidence from most Founding Partners. Quotations 1-4 in Table 5.5 illustrate NSC (City's) uncertainty and anxiety with respect to sources of funding. Additionally, there was a highly competitive
environment for limited sources of funding with the growth of the network from one NSC to nine, and the presence in the marketplace of other sport (and non-sport) organizations seeking new and increased resources. Therefore, the strategy adopted was to seek additional partners (and consequently, alternate supplies of resources) to serve as a moderating effect on environmental fluctuations in their funding efforts (see Quotation 3, Table 5.5).

The shift from relying on government for funding resulted in pursuing relationships with corporate organizations to try to establish a reliable pattern of resource flows and exchanges. Quotations 5, 6, and 7 in Table 5.5 illustrate how corporations are now being targeted for long-term commitments and deeper involvement in their interactions with sport organizations.

**Table 5.5: Representative quotations for stability motivations from focal NSC.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC (City) – Founding Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ... the NSC network has to get a different funding formula. Maybe Sport Canada funds every Centre to a certain extent or maybe they have two or three different levels for funding Centres. Or maybe the COC only funds four of the 10 Centres. Maybe coaching only funds three of the 10; I don't know. But I do not think everyone that is involved can expect to get the same level of service or the same level of funding. It is going to be interesting to see what happens. We pride ourselves right now on saying we are a nice big happy family and we are working together but deep down that might not necessarily be the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Well, it is scary. Many sports appear to want to be dependent on government, they do. We saw that three years ago around the Canadian Olympic Committee board when we were talking about really going out on our own and being less dependent on government and the board voted it down. Because they thought it would be a domino effect. Once you say goodbye to Sport Canada, then the provincial governments would pull out and all that kind of stuff. They were very very afraid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. So there are many challenges in terms of getting a commitment to long-term funding that is going to affect the decision to form partnerships, and that allow the Centres to grow and know what they are dealing with. For example, the COC has just gone through a significant budget cutback, resulting in this quadrennial, a significant reduction in the amount of money available for the Centres this quad compared to last quad. That is an example of how our commitment to the partnership is not reduced at all, but the amount that we are able to contribute has indeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When you combine all of these external factors, it puts the pressure on the organization, so therefore you are going to have to go out and market. If you are going to go out and market, you are going to have to develop some partnerships. And I think this is where it all started. From the cutbacks and us not saying we're really strong and we believe in this and now let's get moving ahead and I think that's what has really happened to us with the partnership is the funding cutbacks. So, we have to do something if we are going to survive. And the logical thing to do is we have something to offer, let's try to put it together and offer it to a partner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC (City) – Corporate Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. I think at that time we used to say through whoever corporation I'd like to partner with you. I don't have any money, you do, and that was kind of the extent of it. It was all looking for money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Things do not happen without partnerships, there are just not enough human or financial resources to make things happen. You have to have partners.... The question is do we just take these corporations’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
money in a one shot deal? That does not interest me as much. I like being in bed together for a little bit longer and try to build a relationship and get some long term funding so we know we will be secure financially for a while.

Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

7. What the NSC is looking for from its corporate partners is financial support to achieve more long-term stability.

David (Corporate Partner)

5. Legitimacy: "The reason we are creating partnerships] is to try to get some profile in the business community so we can get some more money."

This determinant is closely related to necessity in that there are forces compelling an organization to respond to external pressures – economic, social, or political - to appear legitimate. While not as explicit as a directive to form a partnership from a higher authority, legitimacy factors are equally as powerful. These forces also existed to motivate the NSC to appear congruent with current practices of forming alliances and partnerships in business and nonprofit organizations. The formation of alliances was then perceived by its members to enhance the reputation, image, and prestige of the focal organization, allowing it to access more financial resources from the corporate sector. Furthermore, the NSC’s acquisition of sport partners suggested to the Founding Partners and to the greater sport system in general that it was working toward achieving its goals of collaboration and partnership. Quotations 1, 2, and 3 in Table 5.6 reflect these motivations to gain profile or enhance their reputation by forming partnerships.

**Table 5.6: Representative quotations for legitimacy motivations from focal NSC.**

**NSC (City) – Corporate Partner**

1. ... we were trying to get more credit and more recognition through developing partnerships. The reason we are doing this is to try to get some profile in the business community so we can get some more money.

   Carl (NSC (City) Member)

2. The National Sport Centres were under a lot of pressure to get their concept off the ground, and if they could not get a major sport like ours to agree to be a partner, it did not reflect very favourably on those guys. They needed our sport to become their partners to make them look good.

   Corey (Sport Partner)

3. The intention of NSC (City) senior management is to secure ongoing support from existing partners, while attracting new support from individuals and the private sector.... The NSC understands that corporate sponsorship and support from the private sector requires a thorough comprehension of the reciprocal benefits that each partner receives from such a partnership.

   (National Sport Centre - (City), 1998, p. 1)

Due to previous financial support of the federal government, the need for sport organizations to seek external funding sources has not existed. However, as a result of reductions in funding, there is a growing interest and focused effort on the part of sport organizations to tap into the resources available
outside the traditional means. Breaking from 'tradition', amateur sport organizations have begun to
initiate partnerships and collaboration more extensively with organizations in the corporate sector (based
on the motivation of legitimacy, tied closely to the concept of reciprocity). This is illustrated clearly in
Quotation 3 (Table 5.6) from the NSC (City's) Business Plan (1988), where it emphasizes the necessity to
consider the potential reciprocal advantages to all parties involved in the relationship.

The NSC (City) identified the benefits of creating partnerships with the corporate sector to
include growth of additional revenue streams (sharing costs and resources), innovation, and enhanced
and continued provision of services and programs (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997b; National Sport
Centre Network, 2000). Based on this documentation, it is clear that the NSC views these corporate
relationships as 'partnerships'. Broad exchange criteria have been established to which corporations must
agree. For instance, as a 'partner' of the NSC, corporate firms must agree to several conditions outlined
in the NSC's 1998-2002 Business Plan, including: "Commitment to high, international standards of service
and performance"; "Commitment to a sharing and partnership approach"; and "Recognition of our 6
Founding Partners" (National Sport Centre - (City), 1997a, p.1).

The relationships that are established by the NSC (City) with corporate partners are voluntary in
the sense that while there are broader expectations and pressures (from Sport Canada and the COC) that
the NSC will secure a portion of its funding from corporate organizations in its environment (and thereby
reduce the funding burden from these organizations), the specific organizations to approach are not
prescribed. As such, the NSC (City) used its discretion to explore relationships with organizations in
various industries (e.g., high tech, service, pharmaceutical, financial) within its local / provincial
community. However, a major concern of this strategy to seek corporate partners, acknowledged by the
Founding Partners (the COC in particular), was the issue of duplication. NSCs were not to target
corporate organizations that were already partnered with the Founding Partners. Furthermore, as will be
discussed shortly, the challenge of increased competition from other sectors such as the arts, culture,
education, and health care organizations for these partnerships plays a critical role in the strategies
employed for partnership identification and engagement.

Thus, for the NSC (City), of the six determinants proposed by Oliver (1990), the primary factors
motivating the formation of partnerships were necessity, efficiency, asymmetry, stability, and legitimacy.
The implications of these findings will be discussed after a presentation of the motivations and objectives to form IORs of the partner organizations are presented.

**Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) – Founding Partners**

The Founding Partners indicated three primary motivations to form partnerships, with particular focus on the relationships formed among the national Founding Partners themselves, and with other organizations in the sport network. The primary objectives to establish new IORs revealed by members of the Founding Partner group included efficiency, legitimacy, and reciprocity.

1. Efficiency: "The only way we are going to move ahead and be effective and more efficient is to establish creative and innovative ways of doing things through partnerships."

The data indicated that a primary factor motivating Founding Partners to establish linkages among organizations was to gain efficiencies and economies of scale on two levels: for their own organizations and for the greater sport delivery system. Although efficiency is a motivation that is internally driven rather than externally oriented (Oliver, 1990), this case study showed that efficiency motivations were present in the system to varying degrees in order to better use the Founding Partner’s resources such as knowledge, expertise, and money and to create synergies by collaborating with other organizations that either possessed or needed these resources. Therefore, a main incentive to partner was the promise of enhancing internal organizational functioning and improved use of organizational resources. The external condition of the reduction in government funding to sport organizations was a precursor for this increased internal desire for efficiency as were the interdependencies (i.e., complementary missions and objectives) among organizations (See Quotations 1 and 2, Table 5.7). Because the costs related to launching the NSC network for an individual organization would have been prohibitive and unsustainable, many of the Founding Partners’ aims were to allocate and use resources efficiently and partnering was regarded as a way to do this (Quotations 3, 4, and 5, Table 5.7). The desire to use resources efficiently motivated Founding Partner organizations to establish linkages with the NSC (City) and encourage linkages among NSCs and other sport organizations (Quotation 6, Table 5.7). The intent of this determinant is to reduce and distribute transaction costs among organizations in order to allocate and use resources wisely.

Organizational documents also supported this argument (cf., Canadian Heritage, 1998, 2002a, 2002b). It becomes clear that the Federal Government views the partners as those organizations that
launched the NSC initiative (i.e., COC, CAC) by committing and consolidating their own resources.

Consequently, Sport Canada perceives the creation of the network of NSCs as the vehicle to achieve their objectives (Quotation 7, Table 5.7).

**Table 5.7: Founding Partners’ representative quotations for efficiency motivations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Founding Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> Partnerships are necessary because very few of the sport organizations we partner with have sufficient resources to complete a project from start to finish, entirely on their own. So I think it is a resource issue. We worry about our resources as well, and by resources I mean money. It also generally flows from a way of achieving our mutual organizational objectives through this more efficient joint venture method.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> The example of NSC (City) is good because you have a number of agencies all of which have common objectives. Our mission is quite clear. Our mission is a very simple one, and that is the complete support of Canada’s winter Olympic athletes. So we are certainly interested in them being served. The COC has similar objectives, Coaching Association too. All of them have kind of similar objectives, but it makes no sense to have all of them taking a different skill and us looking after technology and massage, and having the COC looking after strength and training and nutrition. So there is a good case for consolidation of resources to target some specific outcomes and this is what the NSC provides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> So we said OK, we really want to enhance the whole high performance area through the Centres’ concept to enhance what individual sports are doing. Instead of having forty individual sports working out arrangements with sport sciences, or sport med people, let’s try to develop some efficiencies by centralizing those folks and those resources, and letting them work with three, four, five, six different sports, and not duplicate as much. We develop partnerships based on resources and utilizing those resources effectively to create efficiencies and synergy, and dedicate resources for a common purpose. We are trying to reach out to non-traditional partners that have not been involved in sport delivery to help us achieve those efficiencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> From our perspective, the motivation to partner was based on what was happening in the political and economic environment. The mid 90s were a period of huge government cutbacks and deficit fighting. Our department’s objective was to lever and maximize the use of our resources. That was part of what I think spearheaded the thinking for the Sport Centres and the development of that structure in partnership. I think that discussion was from the perspective of doing something more focused and better for high performance and so the model of Centres made some sense. Also the model of Centres that were being designed were virtual Centres, not facility based – not bricks and mortar. So the idea was not to build a multi purpose facility, bring athletes there, and do that in a number of Centres across the country, it was more bring the resources to expand and build on the support services to athletes and coaches at the high performance level. And do that via the virtual centre type of concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.</strong> If you talk to those who were involved in the very early discussions about changing the way sport was run, I think certainly from a government perspective the early 90’s was a time of great pressure and change. ... Ministries were experiencing budget cuts and they were divesting of groups from being as dependent on the government. We recognized that you just cannot keep giving enough money to single bodies for them to do the job effectively so let’s try an efficiency model – let’s move toward encouraging the formation of partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong> The only way we are going to move ahead and be effective and more efficient, aside from getting more money, which we are not counting on, is to establish creative and innovative ways of doing things through partnerships. And that is what we are planning on doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **7.** The partners view Centres as a major vehicle to achieve the objective of enhancing the level and
increasing the efficiency of delivery of services for high performance athletes and coaches. The Centres initiative represents a commitment by these three national organizations to addressing current issues in Canadian sport in partnership. (Canadian Heritage, 1998)

2. Legitimacy: "I do not think it is politically correct anymore to 'go it alone'. That is why partnerships are being promoted."

It also appeared that in this study, institutional pressures played a role in motivating the Founding Partner organizations to increase their legitimacy in order to appear congruent with norms and expectations of organizations in their environment. One manner to enhance organizational legitimacy was through the formation of partnerships. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that institutional pressures (e.g., normative, coercive, and mimetic) influenced organizations to adopt new structures, strategies, attitudes, and values. The adoption of the partnership formation strategy resulted in new governance structures among organizations, new attitudes towards working collaboratively, and new values related to the importance of partnerships. This case revealed that shifts in the external institutional environment led corporate, nonprofit, and public organizations to form IORs. The opportunity to enhance organizational reputation was another institutional pressure that motivated the Founding organizations to form partnerships. From a government perspective, pressures to improve fiscal responsibility while meeting the needs of the public were of prime importance. This legitimacy motivation would enhance the government’s image in the eyes of voters and would contribute positively to re-election. In addition, it was not viewed as being politically correct to work in isolation (Quotation 1, Table 5.8). The motivations to appear congruent with the prevailing norms, rules, beliefs, and/or expectations of external constituents would therefore pressure an organization to improve its reputation, image, or prestige.

Embedded processes and organizational forms represent institutional structures, and changes to these structures are often slow and difficult to implement. A shift to working in partnership represents a new institutional structure and Quotation 2 in Table 5.8 highlights an example in this case. Quotation 3 (Table 5.8) illustrates the mimetic pressures facing organizations, particularly government organizations to engage in partnerships.

Table 5.8: Founding Partners' representative quotations for legitimacy motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Founding Partner - NSC (City) (other sport organizations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think there are some political and legitimacy issues and perceptions that it is not politically correct any more to be talking in terms of vertical tunnels, or vertical administrative structures or this is my fiefdom, that sort of thing. I do not think it is politically correct anymore to 'go it alone'. That is why partnerships are being promoted not just in our organization, but in others as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. We are just staring to get into and explore this new way of operating [in partnerships]. I think that from that perspective the Minister has now a kind of a growing group of corporate business advisors who will help develop thinking – that entrepreneurial partnership thinking a little bit more. I mean it is a huge step to move governments from former ways of doing businesses. Universities are slow and big governments are even slower to change the way they do business. But we need to make this shift.

Iris (Founding Partner)

3. At the time, there was a big thrust across government in general that in the areas which involved contributions and programs to go out and partner where it made sense to do so. We saw other government ministries were doing it so we also felt we had to.

Iris (Founding Partner)

3. Reciprocity: "...it is quite an impressive display of sharing and of being very open ...and trying to work together in a harmonious situation for the betterment of sport."

In contrast to the assumption that resource scarcity will induce competition, reciprocity motives suggest that to the contrary, resource scarcity stimulates cooperation. In this study, the determinant of reciprocity played a role in the creation of the Centres by the three national Founding Partners.

Specifically, they created a partnership to pursue common or mutually beneficial goals or interests, and did so based on the premises of cooperation, collaboration, and coordination (Quotation 1, Table 5.9).

The other Founding Partners in the network also reported that their organization's decision to form partnerships was motivated by reciprocity (Quotation 2-5, Table 5.9). This motivation was characterized by balance, cooperation, equity, and mutual support, rather than by power, control, conflict, and domination (Oliver, 1990).

The motive of reciprocity is reflected in Huxham and Macdonald's (1992) concept of collaborative advantage, where the focus is on developing synergy among organizations for the purpose of achieving common goals. The term collaborative advantage is deliberately intended to contrast with the more familiar term of competitive advantage present in much of the organizational strategy literature (Barney, 1991a; Grant, 1991; Oliver, 1997; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). Collaborative advantage is a form of competitive advantage which stems not only from natural or historical attributes, but from the various elements of a local economic system working together more effectively than their counterparts elsewhere. This advantage can be gained through strategic alliances with the assumption that organizations would be much stronger with partners than they would be on their own. Thus, their competitive advantage is based on the attributes gained through cooperation. Quotation 6 in Table 5.9 demonstrates a philosophy of collaborative advantage and reciprocity in the sport system. Collaborative
advantage means achieving objectives of partnering organizations better than could have been attained independently (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992).

Table 5.9: Founding Partners’ representative quotations for reciprocity motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Founding Partner - NSC (City) (other sport organizations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In terms of developing a philosophy of partnerships with the national Founding Partners, the main point is that we have a common goal, and there is a feeling that the organizations we are partnering with can contribute to that common goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Our motives to form partnerships were to work with organizations that had similar objectives as we do. We felt that by pooling resources, we would eliminate recreating the wheel of individual programs. By using the experience of others, we pool resources to collectively create a much better system. What we gain through developing partnerships is the same thing that we provide to our partner. Physical, financial, intellectual resources to help us achieve our mission by allowing us to keep delivering programs. So this is what I am talking about, two plus two is not four when you form partnerships, it is six or eight. This would be the basic premise of the partnerships we form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Everyone is there for the same reason. We are all there for the developing athlete. We are all there to reach the podium. We are all there to make sure the coaches and officials and athletes have the best services possible. I do not think there is any question – and the way we have decided to do this is through collaborating and sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We got involved because we knew that there obviously was going to be mutual benefit – that is important. There has to be mutual benefit. We felt that we would absolutely work towards achieving our objectives by collaborating with the NSC (City). For it to be a long time true partnership, both people have to bring something to the table that the other finds useful and that that creates a sense of synergy and partnership rather than a superior / inferior relationship. Now, what they bring to the table does not have to be equal, but it has to be beneficial and important. What you end up with is a win-win scenario.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Some of those resources we exchange are intangible. If you look at the list of the bullets I have put together on the Kinesiology side, that list is longer than what the NSC gets back. But then if you look at it from a dollar value, the dollar value on the NSC is much bigger than even the dollar value in kind even on the Kinesiology side. One has to recognize that it is always not just a quid pro quo in terms of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I think we began forming partnerships based on logic and based on the principles of sharing information and efficiencies, whereby the knowledge one is gaining is equally important to the other. And we as Founding Partners have encouraged this throughout the network of Centres. So it is actually quite an impressive display of sharing and of being very open with the best practices and what is functional and trying to work together in a harmonious situation for the betterment of sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) – Sport Partners

The focal NSC’s sport partners indicated that they formed IORs with NSC (City) for four reasons. These reasons are asymmetry, necessity, efficiency, and stability. Each of these is discussed below.

1. Asymmetry: “...we’ve tried to take control of our destiny and chose to use the Centres when we could and when we felt it would best fit with what we were trying to do.”

Although the NSFs initially resisted forming liaisons with the focal NSC, after it proved itself successful in terms of generating resources, helping particular NSFs achieve improved international
performance, and maintaining funding support from the federal government, NSFs began to feel pressures to partner with the focal NSC to maintain federal government financial support for their own programs. Many NSFs were resistant to support this type of initiative because they viewed it as a threat to their already tenuous level of financial support from the government. Quotations 1, 2, and 3 (Table 5.10) highlight this perception of the power and control associated with the financial resources of the NSCs, and how, by taking the initiative to shape their future, NSFs began to form partnerships based on asymmetrical conditions in order to regain some control. Over time, these pressures created an overwhelming influx of applications to NSCs by NSFs for their consideration of partner status. Quotation 4 in Table 5.10 highlights the desire NSFs felt to regain control of valuable resources through the partnership approach. By forming partnerships with particular NSCs, NSFs also strengthened their position with respect to other NSFs in the sport delivery system.

Table 5.10: Sport Partners’ representative quotations for asymmetry motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is the belief out there that the Centres are trying to build their own strength with desires of having more control over the delivery of sport in Canada. I have chosen those words fairly carefully, and it is a perception, but again from within the NSF community there are some sensitivities and we have tried to take control over our destiny and chose to use the Centres when we could and when we felt it would best fit with what we were trying to do. It was not a matter of saying they are there and we are going to use them without even thinking about it. We are taking control of our destiny and we still are the shepherds of (our sport) if you will in Canada today. And the Centres are there to service (our sport).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard (Sport Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The NSFs still may see the NSCs as a threat for two reasons: 1. Because money that was targeted for them has now been moved to fund the NSCs. 2. Because of the high profile partnership building that is occurring in the provinces with the NSCs, and the NSFs can't seem to do this on their own and want to change this. One of the ways to overcome this threat to their power and funding base is to ally themselves closely with the ‘enemy’. If you can't beat them, join them kind of thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan (NSC Network President)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I think there was huge concern from the sport organizations because the NSC was another political agency. Meaning they did not really know what the NSCs were all about. There was the sense that NSCs were stealing from the funding pot and influencing the autonomy of the NSFs. So, I guess in a sense that to maintain their level of independence in the system, national sport organizations offensively began to form partnerships with the NSCs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey (Sport Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Now there is a certain amount of anxiety from other NSFs who now want to jump on the NSC bandwagon. There are only a certain number of financial resources that are available. They want to get on board so that they can secure their share of funding over other sport organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey (Sport Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Necessity: "There absolutely are pressures and expectations from the government and the network of Centres for us [sport organizations] to become partners."

Sport partners of the NSC (City) also formed relationships with the focal organization due to necessity motives. In the previous motive discussed (i.e., asymmetry) (Quotation 1, Table 5.10), a sport
partner suggested that his sport organization formed partnerships based on their own initiative and when it would provide them the most advantage (i.e., that the decision was voluntary). The same sport partner reported that to some extent, the formation of partnerships is imposed through pressures and expectations from the federal government (i.e., mandated). The expectations of the three national Founding Partners are reflected in Quotation 1 and 2 (Table 5.11) suggesting that there are both voluntary incentives and mandated pressures leading or forcing sport organizations into partnership with the focal NSC and other NSCs in the national network. As a form of coercive institutional pressure for conformity (Buchko, 1994; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1997), these findings of necessity support contentions that organizations are influenced by pressures arising from the central government or state or from other organizations upon which firms are dependent. In this case, because sport organizations are dependent for essential resources on the government and other Founding Partners, pressures on NSFs to conform to the directives of these organizations arise from these resource dependencies. In this case, partnerships are formed because the perceived threats of non-compliance are reduced levels of sport funding to their organization from the federal government.

Table 5.11: Sport Partners’ representative quotations for necessity motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There absolutely are pressures and expectations from the government and the network of Centres for us (sport organizations) to become partners. I really sense that. And we've felt that and we have had the question asked of us by the Centres and they have used some political pressures and tactics to suggest to us you have got to get involved... you have got to get involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard (Sport Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is expected that the majority of federally supported NSFs will seek affiliation with one or several of the National Sport Centres for the next four years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Canadian Heritage, 2002a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Efficiency: “Working in isolation did not work, we needed to move forward, always move forward. In some ways, for the NSO the partnership was a cheap way to have full time work – it made it more efficient in terms of utilizing the resources better.”

Sport partners also established relationships with the focal NSC to generate resource-based efficiencies and economies of scale. The economical and effective use of organizational resources was a key motivator to form a partnership with the focal NSC. For all of the NSFs interviewed in this study, the best expertise external to their organization was accessed through establishing strategic linkages with the NSC (City) thereby allowing the NSF to invest resources in building their own core competencies. There was a perception among the sport partners that working alone was no longer either effective or efficient. For sport partners with limited resources, partnerships were a means to increase cost efficiencies,
concentrate on improving their own competencies, and increase their capacity to compete more effectively in the sport delivery system. Through partnerships, these organizations wanted to improve their client services and help athletes compete at higher levels in international competitions. The quotations in Table 5.12 demonstrate the efficiency motivations expressed by sport partners in this study.

**Table 5.12: Sport Partners’ representative quotations for efficiency motivations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Working in isolation did not work, we needed to move forward, always move forward. In some ways, for our NSF the partnership was a cheap way to have full time work – it made it more efficient in terms of utilizing the resources better. They did not have to pay for someone to coordinate the collaboration, or at least they did not have to pay as much.  
  Keith (Sport Partner) |
| 2. The ultimate idea in our partnerships is to capitalize on the efficiencies they provide. Let’s not focus on trying to do something in house with a generalist. Let’s go to where the experts are and use the broad ranging knowledge in the field. In that sense, through our partnership with the NSC (City), we have access to an amazing supermarket of support, resources, and expertise. For us as a small sport organization, those efficiencies are very important.  
  Richard (Sport Partner) |
| 3. There is also an economy of scale factor involved for us. The NSC, for example, hires a strength trainer and he ends up working with swimming, snowboarding and [our sport]. It becomes better for all of us and he ends up having a permanent job. Because none of these sports need this guy on a full time basis. If we were all to pay him separately it would cost us a lot more, and also we would have a hard time finding guys like him, because, I can only pay him $5000 a year for his services. Swimming can only pay him $10,000 and snowboarding can only pay him $3,000, he would not be able to make a living at it. You see what I am getting at? This expertise can be transferred from sport to sport so it makes it more economical and efficient for all of us.  
  Isabelle (Sport Partner) |
| 4. Our involvement was basically an economy of scale argument that precipitated the general movement of sport organizations in the direction of national multi-sport centres and partnerships, because many sports had gone to centralized operations. Weightlifting, you name it, they had all tried it. But the cost of creating the infrastructure to support the sport in wherever we are going to be, was prohibitively expensive to hire your own exercise physiologists, your own coach, your own athlete services person and so on. I saw the merits in going the decentralization way, which was creating athlete services locally and sport services locally, and geared towards the needs of the athletes and the coaches in the high performance game and providing these services through partnerships. I still believe it is the right way to go, and that is why we have jumped in as a partner.  
  Corey (Sport Partner) |
| 5. Working independently, there would be no way that these organizations could hire a track and field coach of my calibre. They would not get the same guy for what they pay me. But by working together in partnership, they have a good coach here because of that – it is much more efficient for everyone.  
  Keith (Sport Partner) |
| 6. If everybody is going off on his or her own little tangent, it is too expensive. That is why we have started working together more. We cannot get things done the way we could get them done if we did not have good partnerships.  
  Corey (Sport Partner) |

4. Stability: “…the NSFs had their budgets slashed in that period. So they had extremely valid concerns about not having adequate resources.”

Stability was also an important consideration for sport organizations. In an environment characterized by financial uncertainty, NSFs in this study reported that the pursuit of financial security...
and stability often motivated their decisions to form partnerships with the focal NSC. Table 5.13 highlights the concerns sport partners had regarding their interests and motivations to improve and maintain organizational stability through their partnership with the focal NSC. One of the Founding Partners who had extensive involvement with NSFs and the launch of the NSC network, asserts in Quotation 1 (Table 5.13) that due to the uncertain funding environment these sport organizations were motivated to partner to improve their financial viability. The informant’s familiarity with the situation provided him with insight into how external pressures prompted NSFs to seek stability through partnerships. Stability considerations were primarily related to a lack of financial resources, frequently resulting in the loss of staff, questionable program quality, the failure of services and staff skills to meet the changing needs of the organization, and an increased reliance on volunteers to support the organization. Respondents indicated that the advantages partnerships provided to their organizations included prolonged financial commitment and improved security regarding sources of funding (Quotations 2 and 3, Table 5.13).

For NSFs, the introduction of the network of NSCs brought their own existence and relevance for the sport system into question and decreased their stability within the system. By collaborating, sport organizations perceived they had more control over their future, and also more stability. For instance, one Sport Partner discussed how his sport was a partner in each of the NSCs across Canada. The implication of this was that it provided this NSF greater stability in the form of revenue and the provision of services to their athletes (Quotation 4, Table 5.13). Stability motives were questioned by one sport partner however. He suggested that simply assuming that a partnership would provide stability to an organization without consideration of other implications of the relationship was a serious concern and one he felt that other sport organizations had not taken into account (Quotation 5, Table 5.13). Ironically, the greater the number of partnerships that are formed, the more complex the system becomes, and the less stability is ensured for the organizations involved because of various coalitions of organizations competing for environmental resources.

**Table 5.13: Sport Partners' representative quotations for stability motivations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. After we started the (City) Centre, the sport federations had a number of meetings with the national partners where they expressed very strong concerns about the set up of the NSCs. The concern again was resource based, that if Sport Canada in a shrinking budget was going to commit resources to the Sport Centres, it was going to come directly out of the budget for the NSFs. The NSFs had had their</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
budgets slashed in that period. They ended up having to cut junior team programs and international competitions for their national teams. So, they had extremely valid concerns about not having an adequate or stable source of resources. But what happened was that because of these cutbacks in government funding, the individual sports and individual organizations realized that they just could not do what they had been doing. They just didn't have the resources to continue doing everything they had been doing previously. There grew a real acceptance of doing things in partnership.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

2. ...systemically, I sold the concept that these partnerships with NSCs would be an enhancement in our organizational stability and prolonged growth for the simple reason that it was extremely difficult for clubs in our sport to continue to underwrite the high performance game, as the needs of high performance were shifting to a much more professional approach. And because of that shift, the club system was running into financial and human resource difficulties in trying to provide those services to the national team program. We needed to reduce the amount of uncertainty in our environment in terms of funding and make sure we were still able to maintain our standards of sport delivery to all of our athletes across the country. The partnerships allowed us to maintain some constancy and sense of stability within our sport, and we really felt stronger working together than working alone.

Corey (Sport Partner)

3. ...one of our motivations was that we recognized the value of increasing stability in our resource supply that this partnership brought to our sport.

Keith (Sport Partner)

4. Our sport is in all of the NSCs now. When we started, nobody else wanted to be in. Now that there is not enough money, everyone wants to be in. Unfortunately for us, with this new application system to NSCs, it means our position is a little more tenuous, perhaps less stable.

Corey (Sport Partner)

5. One of the overriding guidelines that sport partners needed to communicate to NSCs in order to start a partnership was that the relationship was expected to not only provide greater stability, but that it also had to add value. It could not be a replacement for another system. In other words, if you were coming into the relationship, it was not because you were looking for a new agency or organization to bail you out of what you were in, or replace money that you had lost in funding cuts. But rather the existing infrastructure needed to continue to support the sport program, and whatever you brought to the partnership was going to add value to the partnership. That is a really big challenge, and it is not easy because there was not a lot of money in the sport system to begin with. And frankly, most of the administrative people in NSFs were looking for the financial bailout. Meaning that they were not really prepared to ante up any more money. They were just prepared to try to find somebody to try to help them underwrite what they were already doing. And that was not acceptable. I think that that actually was a very good philosophy to frame the way in which these partnerships or these NSCs should operate.

Corey (Sport Partner)

Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) – Corporate Partners

The motivations of corporate organizations to become involved as partners with the focal NSC differed greatly from those of its Sport, Founding, and even NSC Network partners. The very concept of partnership was brought into question for this group with a number of respondents claiming that the relationship itself was not a ‘genuine partnership’. The structure and nature of the relationships among corporate partners and the NSC (City) were markedly different because of the distinct motivations leading to their formation. In this case, it appeared that one of the primary motivations for corporate firms to establish relationships with the NSC (City) was to gain legitimacy as a result of being perceived in their community as socially responsible citizens. Reciprocity was another motive, although corporate reciprocity
was distinctly different than that exhibited by other partners. Reciprocity motives were centred on individual interests rather than on strategic organizational initiatives.

1. Legitimacy: "We became involved because of the fact that the corporation worked in the community, and I truly believe that it is necessary to give back to the community. I think that in all corporations there is a sense of that—we need to be responsible citizens. It improves our community image if we do."

As a motive to form partnerships with the focal NSC, legitimacy considerations figured prominently for corporate partners. The corporate partners interviewed for this study all indicated their legitimacy concerns were founded on the need to be viewed as good corporate citizens in their communities (Quotation 1 and 2, Table 5.14). Through an association with a cause such as amateur sport, it was perceived that greater legitimacy in the public could be gained for their respective organizations. The interest in corporate social responsibility suggests that organizations experience pressures from multiple stakeholders (i.e., employees, community groups, governments, suppliers, stockholders) to devote resources to socially responsible causes such as adopting environmentally sustainable business practices like recycling or pollution prevention or supporting local businesses (McWilliams & Seigel, 2001). Organizations that function in a socially responsible manner subsequently gain legitimacy and approval from community stakeholders.

However, because these socially responsible relationships do not contribute in a direct way to private sector profitability (nor was there any expectation from the informants that these relationships should contribute to profitability (see Quotations 5 and 6, Table 5.14)), some consideration was given to the costs of the interaction to the private sector organization. Quotation 3 in Table 5.14 addresses the resource concerns regarding the connection with the NSC (City) contemplated by corporate firms. The costs associated with these relationships included the allocation of staff to carry out the functions of the relationship, as well as products offered by firms, such as vitamins and pain relievers. Socially responsible partnership costs need to be acceptable to the budgets of the private sector firms: the capital, material, or labour costs resulting from the relationship should not be a financial drain on the organization.

The speaker series / education program offered a good fit for the Big Energy Company in terms of satisfying its corporate social responsibility objectives (with a broad reach both in the city and around the province) and aligning with its image of leadership, excellence, and success (Quotation 4, Table 5.14). In this sense, strategic objectives of the relationship were realized, and the value exchanged..."
between organizations was visibility and the perception of social good, both of which have intangible value.

Copeland et al. (1996) suggested that philanthropy is no longer a corporate reason for selecting sponsorship opportunities, however, the results in this study indicate that philanthropically motivated reasons for relationship formation indeed played a role in selecting a partnership opportunity. One informant suggested that partnership implies an exchange (Quotation 5, Table 5.14), but the expectation was that nothing would be returned. This organization contributed valuable material, human, and financial resources to the partnership, but the purpose was not to receive equitable resources (either financial or visibility) in return from the NSC (City). Rather, the benefit of the involvement was generated through the positive feelings, and enhanced corporate image (e.g., visibility) developed in the local community. As such for these corporate partners, claims of philanthropy and corporate social responsibility are supported - i.e., corporate organizations giving altruistically to sport organizations.

Some authors have maintained that corporate partners are increasingly reluctant to enter into sponsorship or partnership agreements with sport organizations without a better understanding of how the venture is going to provide them with a sustainable competitive advantage (Amis et al., 1997; Copeland et al., 1996; Cousens et al., 2000; Wolfe, Meenaghan et al., 2002). These authors argue that the corporate sector's involvement in sport is becoming more sophisticated - either they do it on a smaller scale and view it as philanthropic (as with the NSC) or they demand more sponsorship / partnership opportunities that tie in well with their corporate marketing strategy. One could argue that the corporate partners involved with the focal NSC have agreed to become partners to satisfy strategic concerns such as corporate social responsibility, which would provide them with an enhanced community image and perception.

Table 5.14: Corporate Partners' representative quotations for legitimacy motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> We became involved because of the fact that the corporation worked in the community, and I truly believe that it is necessary to give back to the community. I think that in all corporations there is a sense that we need to be responsible citizens. It improves our community image if we do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David (Corporate Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> It is a fundamental value of ours that if you are going to be able to attract employees to commit to you, you have to be socially responsible. And where the local area we operate in does not have all the resources we need, then you want to have a good solid community base. You want to have amateur sport programs, you want to have a swimming pool, and you want to have a gymnasium. You want to have a good hospital with an MRI. You want to have all these different things, and that does not happen on its own. It takes some leadership to do it. So through this partnership, we are helping develop sport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

154
and recreation systems, and in a roundabout way, it is helping the communities we operate in help themselves and others.

Dennis (Corporate Partner)

3. So we decided as a company, with the objective of becoming good corporate citizens, that helping Canadian athletes to perform better is something we can do under our budget. Having said that, our partnership was not for the NSC to make money, nor was the intent for us to make any money from it either. You cannot run a business on a relationship like this. It is just our corporate duty I guess. You hope to do it and help the NSC athletes improve their performance.

Aaron (Corporate Partner)

4. You are investing in the NSC, not because it can give you profile, because it cannot. It can give you access to some of the athletes, and some of the athletes are prepared to support the concept of [our speaker's program] and that benefits our organization to some extent. But you know we do not invest in it because we end up with signs at major Olympic events or world championships. It is more because of the belief in finding some way to support the athletes. It is more to build a bank account of good will.

Dennis (Corporate Partner)

5. Going into it from a corporate perspective, we never expected anything from the partnership. Typically, the word partnership to me would suggest that there is something expected. That you are going to give something and that you expect something in return. I can honestly say that we never expected to get anything back from NSC (City). We did not go into it thinking that there was going to be any huge returns for us. I think that what we have got from it was the ability for our employees to meet Olympic athletes, the ability to work with people like the staff there, and the ability to give back to the community. That has been a great experience. But I do not think that we ever expected to get any huge monetary gains or anything like that from it.

Murray (Corporate Partner)

6. I think most companies would make the decision to partner based on a public relations' perspective. That would give them the ability to say hey, we are a good community partner, and because we are involved in the community that makes us a good company. For the most part, I think that we would look at our pro bono type of work that way. But there are other areas and groups that we could partner with that would give us more public exposure than with the National Sport Centre. So, from our perspective the profile is not important. But if you are looking at [big energy company], for instance, their involvement in sports is on a greater level, and I think that does directly tie to their image in the community as being an organization that is giving something back to their community. So, I think companies look at it from that perspective. That hopefully the public sees them as giving something back to the community, or sport, or to anything else. I think that that is part of it from a PR perspective – a good news story. But I do not think any of them ever expects to get financial gain from it. I mean these relationships are definitely not going to help the bottom line.

Murray (Corporate Partner)

2. Reciprocity (Individual): "Our CEO values sport and fitness... and so the investment in the partnership reflects that. That is why he's chosen to partner with the National Sport Centre."

While Oliver (1990) suggested that reciprocity motives would be founded on the collaborative ideals of an organization rather than on competitive intentions, this view did not unequivocally apply to the corporate sector group involved in this study. Individual level, as opposed to organizational level, reciprocity, however, was found to be a key consideration for corporate informants to form relationships with NSC (City). Many respondents indicated they felt their personal experiences or personal values and ideals were either analogous to, or reflected in, amateur sport. In essence, these corporate partners were motivated to become involved with the focal NSC for reasons of genuine personal interest, values, or beliefs. For example, the Vice President of the Advertising firm expressed passion, common values, and
interests related to amateur sport, and felt that it was critical for the private sector to support athletes and amateur sport organizations (Quotation 1, Table 5.15).

Although relationships established among individuals can be an effective way to initiate an organizational relationship, unless an attachment has been established with the organization as well, it may not provide an enduring advantage to an organization (Arino, de la Torre, & Smith Ring, 2001; Borch, 1994; Inkpen & Beamish, 1997). This relational view is at odds with a strategic approach to partnership formation, where it is argued that in order to make partnerships work and ensure their long term viability and effectiveness, organizations should align their strategies and objectives rather than be based on individual interests and values. Quotations 1-4 in Table 5.15 all demonstrate the personal beliefs and interests that motivated the corporate partners to form a relationship with the focal NSC in this case study.

Table 5.15: Corporate Partners' representative quotations for reciprocity motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporate Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Because of my involvement in sports from a personal and corporate perspective, I see a great need for companies to assist the sporting world. Especially the amateur sporting world. So just as some companies would look at the arts or other areas to commit time or energy, because I have a love for sports and a background there, putting our team together with (the NSCs (City) was a really easy decision for me to make.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray (Corporate Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When I talk to CEOs, they tell me that they want to get involved because most of them have some project that they believe in. Many of them have an interest in this level of sport because that is what they did when they were kids. Someone may have been a nationally ranked softball pitcher, another may have played for the Canadian water polo team. I see that all the time. They go: well you know, I would like to give back to sport and to the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David (Corporate Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Typically the way this works is one of the senior people within the organization knows somebody in sport would ask: can you help us out in doing this? Furthermore, the person in the organization usually has a personal interest in this cause. So, then we will look at the cause and decide if we can commit that kind of time and energy to it. That is exactly what happened in our office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray (Corporate Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Another one of the reasons we decided to become involved with the NSC (City) was because it was something in which our CEO firmly believed. That some of our athletes in this country are abysmally treated. Our CEO is probably one of the fittest individuals in the city – he is an athlete himself. He believes in sport, he has those values like the athletes. Because that is where his values are the investment reflects that. That is why he has chosen to partner with the NSC (City).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis (Corporate Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Motivations to Form Partnerships with NSC (City) - Network Partners**

Other National Sport Centres in the Canadian network also indicated multiple motivations to form relationships with the focal NSC. However, there were contradictory messages from informants who claimed that partnerships were completely voluntary and enacted by choice, while others suggested that
external pressures and expectations from the government and/or Founding Partners led to the formation of relationships. In general, the findings showed that the primary motivations of NSC Network Partners were reciprocity, necessity, and efficiency.

1. Reciprocity: "We have formed partnerships to gain reciprocal benefits between our Centres. To gain synergies...by sharing, it benefits both our organizations, particularly when resources are scarce."

All of the network respondents expressed generally that a collaborative and cooperative approach was the best means to pursue the common goals, objectives, and interests of the network. Network partners felt that the way the NSC network was structured engendered a collaborative philosophy rather than competition and rivalry among organizations. Respondents felt that a key reason for forming partnerships was to capitalize on the knowledge and experience of the focal NSC, and the synergies generated among organizations. However, this does not mean, as has been discussed, that competitive and power dynamics were not present in the interactions among these partners. Therefore, while these respondents outwardly advocate reciprocity to form partnerships, simultaneously conflict, power, and control issues were at play. Quotations 1-7 in Table 5.16 support the finding of reciprocity as a motivation for the network of NSCs to engage in IORs.

Table 5.16: Network Partners' representative quotations for reciprocity motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We have formed partnerships to gain reciprocal benefits between our Centres. To gain synergies. By sharing expertise, in particular in the area of sport medicine and science, the sharing of workshop materials. For instance, staff participation in drug workshops. It benefits both our organizations, particularly when resources are scarce. The partnership allows us to share our menu of services and programs, and share our athletes as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. We agreed right from the beginning to share all resources and all information with each other. Some of us do that better than others, not because we are hiding it just because we do not get it out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The partnerships came together because as agencies we needed help to move forward our own agendas with the recognition that resources are limited as well as to avoid duplication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is first are the partners agreeable and agreed upon a specific objective or goal? Whether it be to serve athletes, support coaches, or buy the same bottled wine, or whatever. That has to be agreed upon. Series of objectives and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. On an informal basis, the attainment of new resources enhances what they are providing. New access to other organizations would be an indication of success. Also, they would review the athlete and coach's perspectives and determine whether they had been well serviced. Had the partnerships helped them achieve their potential? This would be one of the key indicators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I think that our Centre network evolved in partnership because we have predetermined network goals, network objectives, and we've agreed to collaborate on them not just in spirit and in philosophy but</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
financially, keeping in mind that there is an overarching goal for all the network to provide better programs and services to Canadian athletes and coaches. Not just Alberta athletes, Manitoba athletes, or BC athletes. So, we have taken a larger context and worked towards that larger context.

Adam (NSC Network Partner)

7. I think there needs to be that willingness and priority to make this work as a network. And you know it is almost like we need a reason.

Jerry (NSC Network Partner)

2. Necessity: "The government still supplies the lion's share of dollars. So there is certainly an obligation to listen to their ideas, and implement their directives."

Another motivation to form relationships reported by respondents was necessity. Many network respondents suggested that because the federal government and other Founding Partners expected collaboration and maximum value for their money, there was no choice but to work together. Quotations 1 and 2 in Table 5.17 describe the general sense that sport organizations are bound to function in a way that satisfies the requirements of the federal government, the major funder.

Table 5.17: Network Partners' representative quotations for necessity motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We all know it is better to work cooperatively but it does not seem like unless there is somebody telling you, you have to do this that it emerges as everybody's top priority. Therefore, we do it because we have to, and we go down the road even though we still have many roadblocks in our way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The government still supplies the lion's share of dollars. So there is certainly an obligation to listen to their ideas, implement their directives and act on their behalf. We really do not have that much of a problem doing that – even if it means partnering more to get more resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Efficiency: "...collectively we can work more efficiently. We know that, but sometimes that is a challenge."

Finally, the motive of efficiency was indicated by network partners as a key basis for partnership formation. Collaboration on various organizational functions allows for economy of scale benefits to be shared among network partners (Quotation 1, Table 5.18). However, one respondent indicated that despite strong conceptual support for achieving these kinds of efficiencies, a partnership is a challenge (Quotation 2, Table 5.18).

Table 5.18: Network Partners' representative quotations for efficiency motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network Partner - NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We also partner to tap into expertise – for instance to collaborate on marketing. This makes the process more efficient and effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. So again collectively, we can work more efficiently. We know that, but sometimes that is a challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry (NSC Network Partner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion of Findings on the Convergence of Objectives

The previous discussion of findings related to the convergence of objectives that led organizations to form partnerships illustrated the range of motivations involved in partnership formation among the organizations collaborating with the NSC (City). Furthermore, the section portrayed the often conflicting and contradictory, or even incompatible factors at play in the formation of partnerships among organizations (such as reciprocal and asymmetrical motivations). Through the data collection period, I suspected there were multiple factors encouraging or motivating organizations to engage in a partnership agreement with the focal organization. After having immersed myself in the interview, meeting, and documentation data, I can report that at some level all of the six determinants proposed by Oliver (1990) were at play in each of the relationships among partners in this case study. As expected, the determinants emerged as more or less significant for particular informants. Thus, based on the findings, it can be concluded that for the focal NSC, five motives asymmetry, necessity, efficiency, stability, and legitimacy, played a significant role in the formation of relationships with its partner groups. The objectives of efficiency, legitimacy, and reciprocity played a role for the Founding Partners to establish a relationship with each other and with NSC (City). For Sport Partners, the central motives in their partnership formation with NSC (City) were asymmetry, necessity, efficiency, and legitimacy. Corporate Partners established relationships with the focal NSC based on legitimacy and reciprocity objectives. Finally, NSC Network Partners reported reciprocity, necessity, and efficiency as motives to form partnerships. Table 5.19 summarizes these partnership formation objectives.

Table 5.19: Summary of partnership formation objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Necessity</th>
<th>Reciprocity</th>
<th>Asymmetry</th>
<th>Legitimacy</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC (City)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Partner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding Partner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Partner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Partner</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.20 summarizes in matrix form, the convergence of objectives and factors motivating organizations to form partnerships. The horizontal axis (shaded) reflects the factors that prompted the focal organization to enter into relationships with each of the identified families of partners. The vertical axis (shaded), presents the reasons that motivated the partner organizations to form a relationship with the focal NSC. The lighter shaded boxes illustrate the interdependence and interconnectedness among organizations in the network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Partnering With Focal NSC</th>
<th>Corporate Partners</th>
<th>Founding Partners</th>
<th>Network Partners</th>
<th>Sport Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focal NSC Partnering With</strong></td>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>Not mandated to work together, but do so to prevent duplication of effort. Exchange knowledge, ideas, and programs. Efficiency and reciprocity are chief incentives.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focal NSC needs sport partners to carry out its organizational mandate / activities. Necessity and efficiency driving factors behind the creation of these relationships.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate Partners</strong></td>
<td><strong>Philanthropic relationship satisfies strategic imperative of contributing to community. Reciprocity and legitimacy.</strong></td>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founding Partners</strong></td>
<td><strong>Convergence of objectives (i.e., reciprocity), efficiency.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3 national partners involved in all 9 Sport Centres in Canada</strong></td>
<td><strong>Founding partners also financially support Olympic sport organizations.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network Partners</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relationship among NSCs evolved over time. Some NSCs wanted to access resources to create efficiencies, and avoid imbalances of power and influence (asymmetry).</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sport organizations seek partnerships with several Centres in Canada.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sport Partners</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attain benefits for athletes who otherwise would not have access to entering into relationship (efficiency and asymmetry).</strong></td>
<td><strong>True ‘partnership’ is questionable, traditional funding support provided with expectations of performance.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>NSCs want to attract sport organizations as partners because it increases their funding base / legitimacy.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While institutional forces, power and control objectives, and individual interests all played a role in motivating organizations in this case to form partnerships, the findings overwhelmingly suggested that
resource scarcity and the dependence on external sources for resource acquisition were the major factors in most of the organizations' decisions to partner. What became clear from interviews, as well as analysis of the document data was that many organizational interactions were underpinned by the acute desire and critical need to acquire and maintain resources for organizational functioning.

The role that resources played in this case study was fundamental in both the formation of the relationship, and throughout the interaction processes among partners. Not only was access to resources a critical factor in the formation of strategic relationships, but the possession of key resources provided those partner organizations with increased levels of power and control over decision-making and strategic direction setting. Furthermore, the possession of certain types of resources (i.e., knowledge, expertise, strong relationships, and key individuals) was perceived by some partners in the sport and network groups to provide the focal NSC with an enhanced competitive position within the network of Centres, and the sport system in Canada. These resources were perceived to add strategic, functional, and operational value to their organizations. The findings from this study appear to be congruent with those of theorists who have explored the role of resources and organizational power (Harrigan, 1988; Inkpen & Beamish, 1997; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and who support the contention that power and control is often furnished to organizations who possess the most valuable and difficult to attain resources. Yan and Gray (1994) also suggested that the value of the resources possessed by each firm determined the degree of bargaining power it has in the negotiation and outcome of the partnership.

An economic perspective, with its emphasis on the costs of governing exchange (transaction costs), argues that choice of governance forms (such as partnerships) pursues economic efficiency, by economizing the transaction costs between organizations. From this perspective the selection of collaboration as a means to govern a particular problem, is founded on the objective of achieving efficiency. The problem with a collaborative approach however, is the risk of opportunistic behaviour from participants. Transaction cost economics assumes opportunistic behaviour (Child & Faulkner, 1998) and recommends an administrative or hierarchical solution when interorganizational dependency is as strong as it is within strategic alliances. Through formalized contracts and centralized authority, problems appearing within cooperative exchange relations may be solved. After a period of interaction however, many forms of organizational interaction are based on the gradual development of trust, which helps
firms to lower that part of transaction costs related to safeguarding against opportunism (Kogut, 1988; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992, 1994). These important considerations, relevant to the context of partnership formation, will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

A strategic management perspective’s basic tenets suggest that organizations pursue partnerships to increase competitiveness, enhance access to resources, or block moves of competitors (Axelrod, 1984; Gulati & Singh, 1998; Jarillo, 1988; Kogut, 1988). The strategic management view argues that collaborative agreements will help enhance the market power and strategic position of an organization. Although some of these strategic considerations have relevance for nonprofit organizations (i.e., need for resources to attain / maintain stabilities), others motivating factors outlined by Oliver (1990), such as the need to gain legitimacy, or the need to respect directives from higher authorities should also be taken into account when considering the motivations to partner.

Partnerships in this case study were often viewed as mechanisms to cope with uncertainty. Organizations reported both offensive and defensive reasons to form partnerships, such as anticipating and preparing for new political developments like decreased funding support from the federal government, protecting and solidifying their existing positions within the sport delivery system, sharing financial risk of expensive training support for athletes and coaches, and achieving economies of scale by combining and coordinating service delivery capabilities. They were also formed to facilitate learning by way of sharing expertise and competencies.

As Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) argued, failure to consider multiple explanations of alliance formation leads to an impoverished view of the context in which firms decide – or are forced – to form linkages with one another. Theoretical explanations, including institutional forces, power and control interactions, transaction cost factors (efficiency), corporate social responsibility, and resource dependency concerns all contributed to the understanding of partnership formation in this case. One of the contributions of this study is that it considers more than the multiple explanations of alliance formation for the focal firm; it extends the analysis to consider the motives of the partners to create IORs. Furthermore, new insights gleaned from this analysis were the consideration of the partnership formation objectives from a cross-sectoral perspective. That is, these findings extend beyond simply relationships within the profit sector. Oliver’s (1990) conceptual framework was a useful starting point to consider
partnership formation motives and the framework's application is perhaps wider than was initially proposed (i.e., beyond the private sector, and beyond simply dyadic relations between two organizations). A gap appeared in the framework developed for this case. While Oliver's (1990) model focuses on organizational level determinants, individual determinants, such as personal values and beliefs appeared to play a key role in the motivation to create relationships among the NSC and corporate organizations. Next, secondary conditions related to partnership formation are discussed.

**c) Secondary Condition: Presence of a 'Broker'**

A secondary precondition necessary for partnership formation proposed by Kouwenhoven (1993) focused on the function of individuals who were able to champion the relationship and successfully bring the partnership to fruition. Kouwenhoven suggested that a broker’s presence played a key role in facilitating both the formation and management of relationships. Wood and Gray (1991) also acknowledged the necessity for an individual to bring together organizations in partnership and identified this person as a 'convenor' or champion.

While Kouwenhoven's (1993) framework proposed that one condition for partnership formation was the presence of a broker, he did not fully consider the possibility of more than one individual serving in this role within an organization. One interesting finding in this study was that there was not one individual broker responsible for all partnerships, but rather there was evidence of the presence of several different brokers, each playing a key role in the formation and maintenance of their own particular relationship with the focal NSC. Furthermore, within the NSC itself, different individuals were generally responsible for their own partnership groups. For example, one broker from the NSC (City) focused primarily on relationships with corporate partners. Another individual was responsible for establishing connections and facilitating partnerships with sport organizations. More broadly, a number of brokers from the national Founding Partners were instrumental in bringing about the whole concept of NSCs. In this case, it appeared that 'brokers' were present for not just the focal NSC, but for each of the partner organizations as well. These individuals, because of their positions, credibility, history and expertise in sport, as well as connection in the corporate community, were able to operate like the spokes
in the wheel linking organizations. They were organizational boundary spanners who interacted outside
the periphery of their organizations and created a relationship that was intended to lead to collaboration. The role of the broker varied with each of the relationships involved, from influencer, to orchestrator, to implementer. While the influence of a broker appeared to be present to some degree in all of the relationships formed, they were particularly relevant for two of the NSC's partner groups, namely corporate partners and sport partners.

In this case it appeared that there were at least two individuals who had adequate ‘partnership currency’ to be able to assume the role of broker with private corporations to establish key partnership systems and acquire resources to support the focal NSC. These two individuals in particular had credibility based on expertise and involvement in the sport system, high profile connections within the local corporate community, and the ability to carry through a resource exchange. For instance, when asked how partners were attracted to, or approached by, the NSC, one staff member responsible for seeking corporate partnerships indicated that because of her background and reputation, she was able to assume the responsibility and achieve success at it (Quotation 1, Table 5.21). This particular staff member was the key broker for corporate partners for the NSC (City). Her background as a prominent Olympic athlete, her involvement in many sport and corporate endeavours in the community, and her charismatic personality, were all cited by focal organization staff (Quotation 2, Table 5.21) and corporate partners interviewed for this study as contributing to her success in attracting corporate partners in the local community. In fact, one member of the NSC’s board of directors who herself had made several unsuccessful attempts to seek corporate partnerships pointed out the broker’s strengths and suggested these be used strategically by the focal NSC (Quotation 2, Table 5.21).

Each corporate partner also had an individual who was responsible for community partnerships and served as the liaison, or partnership broker, for their organization. For instance, Big Energy Company's Director of Public Affairs had worked with the NSC corporate broker on several committees related to sport in the past and felt that (Vice President Marketing) was the most effective individual to

---

10 To use a spoke/wheel metaphor means to understand its properties, function, and behaviour. Strung out to support the wheel, tension exists between spoke, hub and rim – the tension must be true not warped, spokes bear the load of the wheel, the load is distributed evenly across spokes.
facilitate and secure corporate firms as partners for the NSC. He reflected on NSC corporate broker's personality and ability to secure corporate partnerships in Quotation 3 (Table 5.21).

The perceptions held by many of the NSC corporate partners demonstrated the need for the right person to play the role of the broker. Another corporate informant commented that the Vice President Marketing of the NSC (City) represented an advantage, strategically speaking, as a broker for securing corporate partners (Quotation 4, Table 5.21). This informant outlined the qualities that a broker should possess, such as credibility based on experience and respect. As pointed out in the literature, the importance of the broker's role also illustrates the necessity of a network of personal connections (i.e., knowing someone at a senior level in the organization who might be willing to take on the cause) (cf. Astley & Fombrun, 1983; Borch, 1994; Brown, 1998; Hutt et al., 2000; Thompson, Frances, Levacic, & Mitchell, 1991; Waddock, 1988). A complementary strategic fit is also a critical element in this process (i.e., is this a cause with which our organization is willing to get involved and do we have the sufficient resources to develop this relationship further?) (cf. Auster, 1994; Bergquist et al., 1995; Gulati et al., 2000; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992).

In the NSC (City)'s case, the combined effort of the NSC staff broker (Vice President Marketing) and the corporate champion (David) resulted in fund raising effort that involved targeting specific private firms where one of these individuals had contacts and where the target had an interest in amateur sport. The strategy used was to leverage these relationships to raise money – preferably on a long-term basis – for the focal NSC. These interpersonal relationships carried a great deal of weight in attracting resources and were based on personal goodwill and being indebted because of previous dealings. The approach was to identify people who had an interest in amateur sport, and make contact with them as illustrated in Quotation 5 (Table 5.21).

While there were primarily two individuals responsible for seeking corporate partners at the local / community level when this research was conducted, it was clear that these two were not the only actors in NSC (City) involved in forming partnerships with the corporate community. The president of the focal NSC also attempted to generate corporate partnerships, and individuals from the national coordinating committee of NSCs assumed some responsibility for identifying and securing corporate partners for the network of NSCs. The corporate firms that the coordinating committee targeted for partnership however,
were more nationally focused (i.e., large, nationally based corporations rather than local companies). Furthermore, these relationships were designed to be associated with one of the Founding Partner organization’s activities (i.e., Kellogg’s became a corporate partner of the NSC network through the efforts of the CAC).

Within the Sport Partner group as well, the role of the broker was instrumental. Within many sport organizations, there were individuals who played key roles in coordinating the formation of the relationship between the NSC and their sport. The presence of a broker or relationship champion was even more relevant for partnerships among sport organizations and the focal NSC in order to overcome the skepticism and trepidation present during the establishment of the relationship. Thus within sport organizations a broker within their organization was often necessary to initiate and facilitate a partnership with the NSC (City) (Quotation 6, Table 5.21).

The President of NSC (City) typically undertook the role of broker for the NSC among all of the Sport Partners when it came to partnership formation. The President, along with a committee, made decisions about what organizations should be sport partners. The President was the staff member in charge of initiating these relationships, and developing and negotiating, in collaboration with the potential Sport Partner, the strategic criteria and operational guidelines for the partnership.

It was evident that even though there were barriers, perceived challenges, and a multitude of pitfalls associated with creating a partnership, these were overcome, resulting in the formation of enduring relationships among the organizations in this case. One explanation for this is that the presence of a broker or champion served an important connection, and built an excitement around the possibilities of the partnership. These individuals had a vision, a belief in, and a passion for the partnerships they worked to develop, whether the partnership was established to improve international performance, achieve corporate social responsibility, or enhance administrative operations.

Table 5.21: Representative quotations for presence of a broker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Well, attracting partners is a challenge. I will be honest with you, the partners that we have on board now got on board because of me. Because they know me and I was able to go in there, be passionate, sell them, and get them excited and all that .... Since I left, there has not been a lot of new money, maybe a few thousand dollars from events and foundations, but besides that, there is no new money. And that makes sense because I bring credibility to the situation. I can go in there and I can sell sport. I mean I have no problem saying why it is really great to invest in sport or athletes or coaches. I can get these people excited. Other people in the organization have different styles and different capabilities when it comes to seeking partners that might not be so effective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carrie (NSC (City) Member)
2. ...the Sport Centre has an invaluable asset in (Vice President Marketing). I mean she is one of the most charismatic people I have ever met. People just like her instantly. She has instant credibility because of her role in sport. When (Vice President Marketing) says this is what being an athlete is like, people go, OK, I will believe you because you were in that position once. She can say that because of her experience. And she is also down to earth - people like her. As far as I am concerned, she should almost be pushed as the mascot of the Sport Centre and used to represent the Centre in its dealings with the corporate community. 

Carla (NSC (City) Member)

3. (Carrie) came to some events where her job was to recruit corporate partners for the Sport Centre. So anybody who meets her falls in love with her and she can easily and quietly pick your pockets.

Dennis (Big Energy Company)

4. The person going after corporations needs to be somebody who is very outgoing like the Vice President Marketing obviously is. The fact that she has a history in sport is really beneficial, because I think people respect that and respect what she has to say about NSCs. They can say this person has been there. There is never the question: what does this person know about this? You immediately gain respect for her when she is talking about athletes' needs because she lived it, she did it, and she sees it on a daily basis. And I think that is a much easier thing for a sponsor or a potential sponsor to deal with. Especially when there are so many groups that are out there looking for a corporate sponsorship, or corporate partnership, or corporate support, whatever you want to call it. Why wouldn't we give money to education? Or why would we not give money to the arts? It is a tough sell and having somebody like (her) makes it a lot easier for people to deal with. I would not wish that marketing job on anybody who did not have some kind of background in sports, because I just think it is too hard a sell.

Murray (Corporate Partner)

5. There are a lot of people who do not care about the sport world, and that is OK. But there are some people out there who do care. The challenge is how do you find them? And the crassness of how it works is that David will phone up a couple of his buddies and they owe him, so they will donate. We know we are going to get money through David. Bet your bottom dollar they are going to phone David six months down the road and he owes them. That is the way it works. All it is is a phone call. You need a champion like him. David has been a true champion and he has been personally committed to the Centre. That helps because it is easier for him to go in and say look I have already given $125,000, so I want you to. For example, we met with (President) we gave David a list of our corporate targets and the follow up we had done. He looked at our donation list and saw a $1,000 dollar donation from a company run by a friend of his. Well, David looked at this list and said, $1,000? I gave him $100,000 for the United Way, I will phone him. He gave us $1,000 and David gave his cause $100,000. That guy owes him big time. That is typically what it takes.

Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

6. It was tough at first because of the resistance. Each one of the organizations in the (sport) training group had their own representatives coming to the table with different ideas as to what the partnership should be. And I was the broker between them all. My executive director's confidence in me was "you do this because you are pretty good at putting those deals together." That is a skill or quality I have for whatever reason, and I think you need to have somebody who can do that.

Corey (Sport Partner)

d) Secondary Condition: Presence of a Network

In this study, previous history, prior experiences, and personal interactions of key individuals appeared to facilitate the formation of the IOR. This view (i.e., these informal personal or individual level associations) moves away from strictly strategic or economic-based motivations and focuses instead on relational interactions and social capital that has been accrued. It is important to focus on the 'people side' of the equation because despite their promise, many alliances fail to meet expectations, partly resulting from the lack of attention given to understanding and nurturing the close working relationships and interpersonal connections that unite partnering organizations. While personal relationships among
boundary spanning members may serve as a basis to create, shape, and modify the evolving partnership, economic and strategic theories of exchange often overlook the role of people and their importance in both the formation, management, and assessment of IORs (Hutt et al., 2000). Even economic-based interactions must contain elements of mutual trust, dignity, and exchange of a social and personal kind (Arino et al., 2001; Borch, 1994; Hutt et al., 2000; Roman, Hayibor, & Agle, 1999). This section identifies the personal level network associations present and how they served to facilitate optimal conditions for partnership formation.

In this case, previous personal or professional interactions, historical ties, and personal interest and values associated with the sport cause demonstrate the presence of a network at the individual level. One partner for instance, suggested that it was critical that some degree of personal association needed to be present to provide the necessary foundation for partnership formation (Quotation 1, Table 5.22). While previous history or personal ties were not evident for all partnerships, as many were formed despite a lack of this individual interaction, there was clear evidence that these ties were present with organizations in both the corporate and sport communities (Quotation 2, Table 5.22).

A key strategy adopted by the focal organization was leveraging these personal relationships and contacts to attract and retain partners, particularly corporate partners. A member of the focal NSC commented about the nature of these interpersonal relationships in Quotation 3 (Table 5.22), suggesting the strong connection he feels to individuals he works with as a partner. The importance of having some personal connection to, or history with, individuals appeared to be critical for the focal NSC. These findings support the results of Hutt et al. (2000) who found that alliance formation was supported because of a network of direct interpersonal contact among executives and established business ties. Hutt et al. (2000) suggested that these relational ties were a critical condition necessary for alliance formation.

The approach implemented by the focal NSC to secure corporate organizations as partners involved identifying champions or key advocates (broker) who had personal relationships or contacts with other profitable organizations who might be able to provide financial resources to the NSC. One employee of NSC (City) was given the responsibility to seek and attract corporate sponsors because of her wide-
ranging personal connections in the corporate community of (City), however reported difficulty in doing so because she did not have the necessary personal relationships yet (Quotation 4, Table 5.22).

David, the individual whose organization initially began as a corporate partner of the focal NSC and who later became a champion of NSC (City), mobilized his extensive connections within the corporate community to attract and secure individuals from other local companies to become supporters (or ‘partners’) with the NSC. The strategy was to target the key decision-makers in private firms to establish interest and use personal relationships (Quotation 5, Table 5.22). Another example of the role played by interest and interpersonal relationships in the formation of connections among organizations is the corporate partner who provided financial resources because his daughter, an Olympic athlete, received support from the focal NSC (Quotation 6, Table 5.22). This example adds credence the argument that the donation of resources is often based on the interests and values of the individual holding the resources. Quotation 6 demonstrated how a corporate executive had close ties to the organization through his daughter’s athletic endeavours, and he had a stake in his involvement in ensuring the financial resources donated by his firm went into a venture that would ultimately benefit his daughter, him, and his organization. This type of strategy is often used by sport organizations as a precondition of relationship formation (Quotation 7, Table 5.22).

These findings on personal interdependence support claims by Inkpen and Beamish (1997) who suggested that individual interaction among organizational members had a important function in contributing to not only the formation but the long term maintenance or attachment of the partnership relationship. In this case, the partners typically developed organizational commitments to each other because of individual relationships that existed before the partnership was formed. Inkpen and Beamish (1997) also posited that personal bonds of friendship and familiarity can lead to norms of group inclusion and escalate the commitment by parties to a cooperative relationship. However, while a focus on interpersonal relationships has its merits, the danger with adopting this kind of strategy is that if it is not well executed and embraced by the entire organization, or if there are any changes in role or function of the individuals involved, it could negatively impact the relationship and / or effectively put an end to the partnership. Thus, this kind of strategy needed to be managed.

Table 5.22: Quotations illustrating presence of interpersonal network between partners.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>People tend to have to have some personal 'connect' before they just do something out of the blue. That</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
was the case for me becoming involved with the NSC.  

David (Corporate Partner)

2. The relationship was a natural progression. There were many personal interactions, meetings and arrangements here just like in any partnership. (President) and I got along extremely well, and we just kept talking, and then he said, do you guys want to come on board? Let’s see what we can do. So, that is how the whole thing evolved.

Keith (Sport Partner)

3. I get involved in some partnerships because of the people who are there. If those people change, I don’t know if I would have the same commitment to it. I understand that... but I would hope that people are partnering with us not because of me or because of [the staff] or because of whomever else. But I know that happens. And for me to say it does not happen would be contradicting everything else I have said regarding the importance of relationships with people.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

4. All our partnership building is based on personal relationships. (Vice President Marketing) has a ton of contacts. People will tend to give money to something because they are giving it to (Vice President Marketing) on the trust that she is going to direct it to athletes who need it. She is like a one-woman donor attractor. A lot has been done just through being (Vice President Marketing) ... and knowing people and being so involved all over the place. As a result, she has developed some relationships with some of the key people around town in the oil business. And that is the idea - try to find ways to get wealthy corporations interested in the work of the NSC and get some money. I haven’t been able to do that yet because I haven’t built up my contact base.

Carla (NSC (City) Member)

5. It worked because I had the connections. I knew the presidents of all these oil companies. That is who I would be dealing with on behalf of the NSC (City) and they were my friends. Therefore, it was easier to ask them for money.

David (Corporate Partner)

6. I know that the reason (private company) came on board as one of our corporate partners was because the CEO’s daughter had a wonderful experience in sport and he wanted to give back in some way to the NSC. We had a good discussion about that. That is why those things happen. There is some sort of connection. There has to be a connection.

Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

7. For example, if we wanted to get a company on side as a partner, we would do some research about the person making funding decisions. Maybe the president of (Petroleum Company) happens to have a son who is a very good track and field athlete. Then that is who we are going to go after. We are going after (Petroleum company) because we know his son is an up and comer in track and field, he will be going to all kinds of meets and events. His dad loves the sport, so that is who we are going to go see. We are going to go make a pitch for funding to his dad. This is perhaps a bit of an underhanded way of doing it, but it does work and we do it all the time.

Andrew (Founding Partner)

By virtue of their strategic and structural interdependencies, the complementary nature of their goals and objectives, and the work of brokers in drawing together these organizations, the presence of a network among the partners of the NSC (City’s) organizational set was strongly indicated. Network connections and interactions among organizations lead to a reliance on reciprocity, collaboration, complementary interdependence, and an informal climate oriented toward mutual gain. The key goal for resource-poor entrepreneurial organizations is to build network exchange structures with outsiders that are identified as critical resource suppliers, and that can stabilize the organization as a player in its targeted markets (Larson, 1992). In this case, the presence of the network contributed to the challenge
of investigating the IOR due to the complexity of interaction, the connectedness (i.e., financial, strategic, individual) of the organizations involved, and the national scope.

Kouwenhoven (1993) identified interdependence and convergence of objectives as critical conditions required for the formation of partnerships. He suggested that meeting the condition of interdependence between potential partners was essential, but not sufficient on its own. That is to say, other conditions were necessary to support the formation of IORs. In particular, Kouwenhoven identified the convergence of objectives as another primary condition required for partnership formation. As secondary start conditions, Kouwenhoven argued that the presence of a network in which "...individuals of the various parties meet one another informally creates the opportunity for open communication channels and consultations [sic] situations" (p. 125) could help facilitate the formation of partnership relationships. Furthermore, a broker or champion who acts as intermediary facilitator between organizations forming partnerships was not always necessary, but valuable particularly in situations when rivalry existed or when there was not a "natural inclination towards cooperation" (p. 128). Organizations and individuals may be more likely to engage in partnership formation because of this interconnectedness. Therefore, in this case, it appeared that sufficient preconditions existed to stimulate the formation of IORs among the focal NSC and its partners. As a summary of the previous discussion of the findings of the necessary partnership preconditions present in this case, Table 5.23 highlights the presence or absence of these conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.23: Summary of preconditions for partnership formation with NSC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Start Conditions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founding Partner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial Gov't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate Partner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Energy Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin Supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising Firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sport Partner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One point of note, while this research uncovered sufficient existing preconditions for partnership formation, the degree to which these preconditions influenced the organizations’ decisions to form a partnership is still not known. That is, it is still uncertain whether one precondition was more or less influential than another. For instance, how much influence can a broker have upon relationship formation? To what extent did an interpersonal network facilitate the creation of partnerships between organizations? These aspects need to be explored in future research.

### Complexities, Tensions, and Challenges in the Dynamics of Partnership Formation

“There is a fine balance to be struck between gaining the benefits of collaborating and making the situation worse”

(Huxham & Macdonald, 1992, p. 50)

The fine balance between gaining the benefits and avoiding the disadvantages of collaborating alluded to by Huxham and Macdonald is characteristic of most types of IORs. Particularly with the high failure rate of partnerships and alliances reported by many authors (Harrigan, 1988; Mohr & Spekman, 1994), this balance needs to be managed. A number of theorists have pointed to the complexities and challenges associated with partnership creation and management (Alexander, 1998; Hellgren & Stjernberg, 1987; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). These complexities and challenges have been attributed to factors such as environmental constraints, diversity in organizational aims, difficulties in communication, difficulties in developing joint modes of operating, managing perceived power imbalances, building trust, managing accountability while still maintaining autonomy, and managing the logistics of working with partners who are geographically dispersed.

The findings from this study suggested two main areas where complexities and challenges were associated with the creation of partnerships among organizations. Perhaps the most apparent example of the challenges in the partnership dynamics was in the meanings and interpretations actors attributed to the relationship among organizations. Second, the competitive / collaborative dichotomy proved to be a source of complexity for the organizations involved. These issues will now be examined more closely.
a. Meanings and Interpretations

Given the external and internal pressures to establish partnerships, the variety of organizations involved, and the newness of this form of organizational structuring and strategy for sport organizations, there appeared to be multiple meanings, interpretations, and insights as to what constituted a partnership, and uncertainties as to whether the relationships in question were in fact what was frequently referred to as 'genuine' partnerships. That the term partnership became ubiquitous among sport, government, and private sector organizations was emphasized in one informant's view that "... absolutely everybody is using the term partnership these days – but not necessarily in the way it was meant to be used" Iris (Founding Partner).

In contrast to what has been presented in the literature, the notion of partnerships was not as 'neat' or as obvious as what I had anticipated when I began this research. Among and within organizations discrepancies and incongruities existed as to what a partnership was. The issue of relationship characterization and analysis was a factor that became clear in the data as both significant and central to the subsequent aspects of partnership development and management. If two organizations had different ideas of what the relationship between them actually was, then it stood to reason that these inconsistencies could lead to friction in following interactions. Several questions emerged that are addressed in the following section: How did the focal organization and its partners interpret the concept of 'partnership'? What characterized a partnership for these organizations? Were there disparities among the focal organization and their partners concerning the concept of partnership? Did the identified partners in the study view themselves as being in a partnership? Representative quotations are used throughout this section to illustrate multiple interpretations and characterizations, and wherever it was relevant, organizational documentation is used to support the contention that there were discrepancies and divergences between meanings not only among organizations, but within them as well.

i. Interpretation and classification of partnership

Within the focal organization, there appeared to be disparate concepts and emphases on the interpretation and characterization of partnership. One informant expressed his perceptions in terms of what the NSC (City) could get out of the partnership interaction from another organization (Quotation 1, Table 5.24). His view was that the partnership must contribute to their organization. Furthermore, he
viewed a partnership as being founded on individual working relationships as opposed to organizational interactions. As presented previously, it is clear that in this case study individual relationships played an important role in the formation of the IORs of NSC (City). For this informant, the notion of partnership involved the key factor of equitable exchange (i.e., that value will be exchanged among groups, and that it will be a 'win-win' for the organizations involved). In other words, each organization would benefit in some capacity from the relationship, and this exchange should contribute to the ultimate objective of ensuring that the clients (i.e., athletes and coaches) get the best support possible in order to improve performance. A successful partnership would contribute to the objective of financial stability and allow the organization to focus more on attaining its goal of improved athletic performance at international competitions (i.e., increased medal count).

Other focal organization informants had different views on what partnership meant, and what it meant to be a good partner. Another informant's (Quotation 2, Table 5.24) interpretation of partnership placed emphasis more on the functional and operational aspects of the relationship than on the strategic and value added characteristics. The informant introduced the concept of equity in the relationship, perhaps because of their position within the organization to carry out the objectives of the interaction. The view of equal interests, equal involvement, common values, and a collaborative determination of goals and action, through discussion and consensus are relevant in the partnership process. For this informant, success would be characterized by the actions of communication, negotiation, conformity and agreement on objectives and goals, and assignment of responsibilities. These two interpretations are distinct in the emphasis on either larger goals and objectives, and more practical managerial interactions. This perspective makes sense as the first respondent was responsible for managing strategic concerns, while the second informant was responsible for managing many of the partners on a daily basis.

A final illustration of how partnerships were defined within the focal organization comes from another NSC informant (Quotation 3, Table 5.24). This informant's definition encompasses and reflects several of the previously discussed theoretical concepts including common purpose, differing investments (resource contributions), the benefits and liabilities involved in partnership (related to transaction costs and stability considerations), and the need for control and influence within the relationship, although equity is not necessarily required.
Informants in the corporate partners group had interpretations of what partnership meant that were distinctly different from members of other groups in this study. A key distinction for members of this group centred on the notion that partnership relationships are close in nature in both an individual and strategic sense where much is shared and known among partners. The notion of boundaries among individuals and organizations became blurred and encroached on several dimensions (i.e., personal, social, task related) as the relationship became more than just a business arrangement. Many of the examples provided by this group centred around the type of relationship formed between legal partners or within a marriage (Quotation 4, Table 5.24). For this informant, the relationship is focused on a task and a clear outcome. There is an investment of effort into the venture and partners are obligated to invest their time and energy into achieving their goals.

The informant from Big Energy Company distinguished between two types of partnership entered into by his organization. He differentiated partnerships that served to further business related objectives of profit, market share, and technology development (i.e., strategic alliances, joint ventures etc.), and those that served to satisfy the socially responsible and philanthropic objectives of the company. Within the second type, the relationships formed were viewed more as an investment into the community from a charitable standpoint as opposed to a relationship with the purpose of attaining a financial benefit. Since this organization was a major player in the oil and gas industry, an industry that has had an image of operating in a manner that puts the profit motive before the environment, one way to be viewed as socially responsible to the communities in which they operated was to support local organizations through partnerships (Quotation 5, Table 5.24). In these types of partnerships the relationship is established based on a benefactor–recipient basis where one organization views itself as helping another build its own capacities. Organizational documentation supported this claim: "The Company believes its commitment and proactive approach – partnering through time and resources with employees, neighbours and other businesses – help to create and sustain vibrant communities. Vibrant communities contribute, in turn, to a nation's strength" ((Province) Energy Company, 2001b).

The Founding Partner group involved with the focal organization also had differing views from other organizations on what partnership meant. Because of their important role in supporting Centres across Canada (i.e., their extensive individual background in sport, financial contributions and associated
power), their views on the meaning of partnership and the nature of the relationship with the NSC was markedly different. Similar to other organizations involved in a relationship with the NSC however, informants in this group considered that a partnership required elements of pooling resources (e.g., human, financial, physical, intellectual, time) to create synergies, the presence of trust, and the notion of mutual gain for the partners involved (Quotation 6, Table 5.24). This explanation implies that power and control based on the possession of scarce and valuable financial resources characterized the nature of the relationship between sport organizations and the federal government. The fair and equitable use of these resources is brought into question in the relationship between the government (who controls the lion’s share of financial resources), and sport organizations. The view is that if there is too large a disparity in power and control among organizations, the relationship might not be considered a true partnership. This could prove to be an issue for the federal government who espouses a partnership approach while many in the sport community are skeptical that this approach is actually being implemented.

A final example of a Founding Partner’s definition of partnership deals with the common ground, or interdependence, that all partnerships need. There needs to be a sense that the investment of their resources will result in the achievement of their common organizational goals (Quotation 7, Table 5.24).

Sport partners’ responses also focused on equity and value. The return, measured in a number of ways, on the investment in the partnership was important. The contention that value must be perceived by the partners was suggested by one sport partner in Quotation 8 (Table 5.24). Interestingly, this was the only informant who suggested the potential that partnerships might have negative implications for an organization, exhibit political dynamics, or that individuals might take advantage of others within a partnership. Another sport partner raised the interesting point of equity among partners based on the amount of money invested, suggesting that the relationship is independent of the amount invested (Quotation 9, Table 5.24).

The notion of dependency was also raised as an element of many sport partnerships. The partnership literature positions the notion of dependency as an undesirable condition that needs to be overcome, given the potentially destructive consequences associated with being reliant upon others (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Stevenson & Greenberg, 2000). The assumption made by researchers is that if there is an imbalance in the degree of dependency felt by one organization over another, then issues of
power and control could come into play (Armstrong-Doherty, 1996; Inkpen & Beamish, 1997; Pfeffer, 1992). In contrast, another informant claimed that a mutual dependency was a necessary element of a successful partnership (Quotation 10, Table 5.24).

Sport partners in this study have clearly adopted the notion of partnership as an essential element of their organizational operations. For example, one sport partner's organizational documents indicate that a component of their vision was to establish "...a strong partnership network with major companies and organizations working together on win-win strategies" (Winter Sport Canada, 2003). It is evident that there are disparities in perceptions of how partnerships should be integrated into the organization, how they should be treated, and what some of the key factors in their interpretation are. Many of these views on partnership contain the notions of exchange, interests, and commitment in order to achieve common goals, and this is consistent with the findings from the determinants of partnership formation.

Overall, most informants claimed that these relationships were based on common objectives and an investment of resources to achieve a goal that would be unattainable if they were to do it on their own. There were distinctions among the corporate partners, however, concerning what a partnership was. The corporate group felt that overall a partnership relationship was a much closer and stronger relationship than suggested by other parties. These interpretations are reflected in how each of the partners views their relationship with the focal NSC.

Table 5.24: Partnership meanings and understandings.

1. In terms of what is a partnership, I always ask what the win-win is for us and what could go wrong? What is the value added? The partnership must contribute something to our organization. I think the clearer you can be about the purpose of the partnership the better. The other thing in terms of a successful partnership is does it allow us to service our clients better? It all boils down to: are we making a difference and providing better services and programs to our stakeholders – the athletes and coaches? I think partnerships are all based on people or based on relationships. People make it work not organizations. We may have a relationship with [Olympic Legacy Organization] but [it] does not do anything for us but the people that we deal with are the key. The [Foundation] is an organization. However, the organization does nothing for us - the people do.

   Carl (NSC (City) Member)

2. I look at a partnership as a marriage with equal interests, and equal involvement in determining what the important areas or goals are. Then, through a communications process, the responsibilities, actions, and timing of individuals need to be determined and effectively shared. It may not be equal in terms of who is doing it, but it has been discussed and determined that the best person to get the job accomplished is the one who has the most knowledge, insight, and ability given the environment that they are in. I think open discussion and consensus are critical. I do not think you have to agree, but you can agree to disagree and move on to the next thing. I guess my philosophy is to try to create a sort of communication environment and ensure that I have buy-in and agreement from the partners on what we are doing.

   Joan (NSC (City) Member)
3. ...a partnership is a group of different interests, more than one who gather together for a common purpose. The group shares in the benefits and the liabilities as to their invested interest in the partnership. And their interests can be divided mathematically in many different ways. They can be equal interests, or they may not be equal interests. The interests are usually determined by the representation on the committee or in our case the board. So in our case we have funding partners and non-funding partners, and each one has a vote.

   Edwin (NSC (City) Member)

4. I have been in many partnerships, and a partner is someone who you say, ok, we have a task here. And you and I and the people who are sitting around the table who have to do this and everybody has got to pull their weight, and they are morally and ethically bound to do so. Once you truly come together in a partnership, the partners are the closest confidantes both from a business perspective and a personal perspective – it is an extremely intimate relationship. You end up knowing everything about your partner – very much like a marriage.

   David (Corporate Partner)

5. Our basic philosophy in terms of partnerships is it is part of the umbrella called capacity building, which is a hand up, not a hand out. And that is how we try to structure our investments in the community.

   Dennis (Corporate Partner)

6. ... a relationship where there is mutual gain, and the gains are well recognized and understood. Two groups or more bring something to the table that is to the benefit of each of the partners and to the collection as a whole. I think everybody has to contribute something to make it a true partnership. For example, one might say that the sport governing bodies have a partnership with Sport Canada. Well I am not really sure that is a partnership in the true sense of the word because Sport Canada is the one with the money and you have the sport organizations trying to dance to the tune so to speak, or to structure what they are doing so that they can max out the money that they get. The most important thing for a partnership to be successful, I believe is trust, and that is sometimes the hardest thing to overcome. Perhaps the aspect that is impacted the most is giving up control over single decision-making and having to become more involved in collective decision-making. You can no longer make unilateral decisions, now you have to do them in concert with another group or collection of people or a board that might manage this partnership. If you do not have that trust among all the groups participating in the partnership, then I do not think it will work.

   Randy (Founding Partner)

7. In terms of a philosophy of partnership, the main point is that there is a common goal, and there is a feeling that the organization you are partnering with can contribute to that common goal. So those are really the two conditions I think you need to have - the sense that you are both working towards the same end and you can help each other to attain that goal.

   Kevin (Founding Partner)

8. I would describe a partnership as commitment from two or more parties that are investing resources in common for a shared objective and goal. Without that commitment, the partnership cannot exist. For a partnership to be fruitful each party must feel that it is contributing as much as it is receiving. If you feel that you are being abused or that you are taking advantage of another, this is not a true partnership. Cards are on the table and there are no hidden agendas in partnerships.

   Frank (Sport Partner)

9. You have decided you are going to put your money on the table. The amount does not matter. I am putting my money on the table. If I am putting five times the amount of money you are putting on the table, we are still partners.

   Corey (Sport Partner)

10. My definition of partnership would be to find a common vision, and a common goal. One not necessarily with finality, but with a direction. The glue to me is the main objective – the viability, the importance, and the recognition of the value of the relationship. And my vision is to include my sport first and to assist other sports with their athletic base development second. And if the other partners see this as an important objective in their organization, then we are on the same page. Then we can start a partnership. Now we still may find that there are problems, which we always do. But at least I find that if the vision is common, if you see the same reasons, the same goal, if you all love the sport, then it is much easier to hammer out difficulties that may come with any kind of partnership. Without that common goal, I cannot see this partnership working. If there is any hesitation to other partners, or one says I do not need it, then
my partnership is on very shaky ground. I would have to go back and convince them that this is good - and I do not want to convince my partners what we are doing is good. I have to convince them about other things. That is enough convincing.

Keith (Sport Partner)

ii. Partners’ characterizations of the dyadic relationships

Despite the momentum and the pressures leading organizations toward partnerships, variance was detected between what a partnership was perceived to be (as identified by informants in the previous section) and how the informants actually viewed the dyadic relationships among organizations in this case. This issue raises several questions and reservations about the interactions that may have implications for the ensuing phases of the relationship. After describing their view on how they interpreted the partnership, several respondents from the partner groups indicated that upon reflection, the relationships that had been established with the NSC were not in fact ‘genuine’ partnerships. Even within the focal organization, there were disparities in individual’s interpretations as to whether the relationships formed with sport, corporate, network, and Founding organizations were really partnerships. Many NSC informants felt that their relationship with their Founding Partners was a ‘genuine’ partnership, based on the perceived commitment and level of close personal interaction with the Founding Partners. Quotation 1 (Table 5.25) expresses the concepts of proximal closeness (i.e., geographical location), interpersonal closeness, and fostering relationships with individuals of the partner organizations. On the other hand, a member of the focal organization questioned the degree of closeness actually present between Sport and Founding Partner organizations and expressed sentiments regarding the disparity between words and actions in practice (Quotation 2, Table 5.25). This perceived disconnect ultimately affects the interaction among partners and the quality of the exchange, and was acknowledged by several respondents in this study.

Similar partnership concerns existed with respect to the relationship with organizations from other sectors, for instance the corporate partner group. One NSC member suggested that she did not believe that the relationships with corporate firms were partnerships (Quotation 3, Table 5.25). The distinction between a business partnership and a donor relationship is an important one to identify. One of the complexities regarding partnership formation and partnership management was the vague understanding and characterization of the relationships formed among organizations. The relationships sport organizations create with corporations were viewed as more donor relationships characterized by
altruism, or corporate social responsibility, with a tax benefit. On the other hand, another NSC member that had fund raising responsibilities felt that the relationships with corporate organizations were partnerships. Quotation 4 (Table 5.25) illustrates the confusion and contradictions associated with the perception of how a partnership is characterized by members of the NSC.

Another informant raised an issue that became prevalent throughout the interviews, particularly among corporate partners and the focal organization. That is, the distinction between a sponsor and a partner. Within the past five years, sport organizations have begun to view private sector firms involved in their organization as partners and have communicated this in organizational literature, advertising, and other promotional vehicles (Quotation 5, Table 5.25).

A corporate sponsor describing the nuances between these two types of organizational relationships indicated that the two are interchangeable from a corporate perspective. He then described the relationship between his organization and the NSC as a partnership. His comments challenge the view that a partnership is an exchange type of relationship – this partner did not expect anything from the company’s perspective. What this individual and company did get in return was the feeling of goodwill and sense of helping a cause that he personally believed in that was provided through the partnership (Quotation 6, Table 5.23). When another corporate informant considered whether the relationship he and his company had with the NSC, he demonstrated the discord in understanding (Quotation 7, Table 5.25). The disconnect in this case is that he did not view himself as a partner, but others in the focal organization did. His relationship with the focal NSC is based on personal interest and social relationships. The nature of these corporate relationships is typically related more to philanthropic and community involvement concerns than to business development or strategic purposes for business growth.

Perhaps the most evident disparity of views of the dyadic relationships between the focal organization and its partners came from several members of the Founding Partner group. Some members of this group expressed clear opinions that the relationships established by these organizations and the focal NSC were not in fact genuine partnerships. Most of the national Founding Partners viewed the real partnership as the one established among themselves to jointly create the network of Centres (i.e., COC, the CAC, and Sport Canada) (Quotation 8, Table 5.25). This view, that the true partnership exists at the national level among the three original funding partners who launched this project, is supported in
documentation as well (Canadian Heritage, 1998, 2002a; Canadian Olympic Committee, 2002). As a result of this initial venture, other organizations have been brought in as contributors and are viewed as independent partners at each of the respective NSCs throughout Canada. Iris, like other Founding Partners, also questioned the nature of the relationships between the federal government and sport organizations like the NSC – suggesting that the term partnership is often used in sport without a clear definition of what it means. She clearly distinguished between partnership and formalized collaboration with the relationship between the NSC and the federal government falling under the category of formalized collaboration that can be related to perpetuating control with respect to resources.

Another informant from a Founding Partner organization made a clear differentiation concerning the nature of the relationship between his organization and the focal NSC. He claimed it was important to note that there were many ways to define partnership, and felt that how it was defined impacted on how the relationship was carried out. Similar to Iris' perspective, Larry clearly viewed the relationship among the three national Founding Partners as being the real partnership, (Quotation 9, Table 5.25).

In support of the argument that sport organizations are not creating partnerships as defined in Chapter one, another Founding Partner claimed that a partnership was a relationship with extremely strong ties between organizations (Quotation 10, Table 5.25). This statement demonstrates how the strength of, and commitment to, the relationship often becomes a basis for determination of partnership.

The sport partners offered a different perspective on partnerships than members of the Corporate or Founding Partners group. A consistent theme throughout the interviews with sport organizations was the emphasis on how to best service their partners. They appeared to be concerned with a focus on servicing partners and often employed the notion of reciprocating, serving or acknowledging contributions, not necessarily working collaboratively. The general view from sport organizations was that similar to a sponsor relationship, the partner is paying for their services as opposed to making a mutual investment. As a result, sport organizations tended to view their partnerships with the focal NSC from a customer service perspective (Quotation 11, Table 5.25).

Network partners viewed the relationships among them and the focal NSC as more closely linked. The NSC organizations were formed at different stages over a nine-year period, and have essentially the same mandate, goals, and objectives to service athletes and coaches in different locations throughout the
country. Because of their common mission, the general understanding among the informants was that the relationships among them were closer and more strategically oriented (Quotation 12, Table 5.25). As a network, NSCs have shifted from viewing their relationships as simply partnership or collaborative interactions to the position that they are a close union of associations with more business-like relationships (Quotation 13, Table 5.25). Informants in this group identified different levels of relationship interaction with each other and with funding partners, corporate firms, and sport organizations. NSC network partners, for example, collaborated on a variety of programs such as joint marketing initiatives, regional sport centres, sport science programs, athlete services, and continuing interactions in support of high performance training groups and their coaches.

From the informants’ responses, it was evident that there were many different perceptions of partnership, and a variety of views on how an organization’s particular relationship with the focal NSC was characterized. These findings suggested that the relationships of one organization (i.e., the focal NSC) spanned a broad range of types and levels of interactions. Informants characterized organizational relations to take the form of partnerships, sponsorship relationships, benevolent, philanthropic associations, formalized collaboration, joint ventures, employer-employee type of relationships, franchise structures, and even as client – customer relationships. With this assortment of interpretations, there appeared to be no overall congruence in recognizing and classifying the interactions. It was evident that within the groups there were a variety of concepts being used to describe and understand partnerships, and to define the nature of their linkages with organizations in their environment, often with little congruency among organizations.

The question that these different interpretations raise is: what are the implications of these variations in meaning and perception? Incongruity in perceptions and even mutual expectations for the alliance are a function of complexity and are also a persistent source of potential conflict among organizations (Austin, 2000). While having different views of what a partnership is might not result in the demise of the relationship or even the long term malfunctioning of the organization, recognizing the different types of relationships that exist and their different dimensions is of particular importance for the organizations involved and also serves to illuminate organizational interaction theories (Wood & Gray, 1991). Having a clear understanding and knowledge about how partners specifically view their
relationship does have implications for its effective operation as such an understanding allows managers to make more informed choices about their partnering strategies. The differences of opinion illustrated in this case are typical of nonprofit organizations who must balance the expectations of multiple partners that span the spectrum of sectors who might have different understandings of what partnership is based on their own background and experience (Austin, 2000). Potential ramifications include mounting tensions, resource exchange issues, and managerial challenges such as negotiation and communication breakdowns, and the assignment of roles and responsibilities for actionable results (Child & Faulkner, 1998; Doz & Hamel, 1998).

**Table 5.25: Characterizations of dyadic relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characterization</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I feel our relationships with the funding (Founding) group are partnerships because of the commitment. When I think of a business relationship, I think of an exchange of resources, but maybe not on as a personal basis as this. With the Founding Partners, we have a close relationship. For example, we are sort of treated like family here at the University. The NCI for instance uses and pays for expertise in the faculty. And so it is a very close working relationship, and I see it more as a type of partnership, rather than just a business transaction. Linda (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I think that at times what we have is a superficial partnership. We say we are partners but we are not really partners. We do not really act that way. Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Well, I do not believe the NSC’s relationships [with the corporate sector] ever can be a true partnership in the strictest sense. First of all, in my profession, a partnership has a specific meaning. A partnership is an enterprise formed by two or more individuals for the purpose of conducting business. That is not really what we are talking about here. I think the relationships that are formed by amateur sports organizations such as ours for the purpose of fundraising are more joint ventures, because a joint venture is a similar relationship except in my view, it is shorter in duration. So hypothetically, if we the NSC, needed to raise some money or to put on an event that would be a short-term duration thing, we would effectively go out to the corporate sector and sell that service. The corporate sector would then pay for it and get something in return. That, in my opinion, is a different relationship. It is a donor relationship where the corporate sector is giving money because it altruistically believes that amateur sport is a great thing, and it wants to support it and make sure that Canadian athletes get the best chances. And for that, there should not be anything much in return if it is going to be a gift. A tax receipt fortunately or unfortunately plays a role in this because these corporations would also like to be able to take a reduction. And in order to do that, they need to get a receipt, or else they need to have done whatever they did for business purposes. But the donor relationship is such a different relationship than a business partnership. Carla (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I consider our corporate relationships to be partnerships, and I think they do too. When I talk to them, I always mention partnership. We always bring something to the table - that is really important. They may never utilize what we bring to the table, and we have to really dig deep because it is sometimes difficult to identify what items of value we can give them. We cannot put their name in lights. What we can give them is possibly some access to athletes. We can give them tickets to national sport events or the world championships. And the association with excellence and just knowing that they are helping Olympic athletes, or maybe an ad in the [City newspaper] at the beginning of the year to say thank you. It is nice to do that kind of stuff. It is just a great feeling for them to know that they have been a part of [athlete’s] success in winning an Olympic medal. And whether you can call those partners, I do not know. Because a partnership is having a relationship and I do not know whether they are. You know I would hope that we would have a relationship with those individuals or companies that come on board. But how do you define a partnership? People give and take I suppose, but in many of our situations, people have given us the money and they have not asked much of us. Some sponsors take advantage of the invitations and the tickets that we offer. Others are too busy. But we continue to try to keep a relationship going and to keep...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. In a true partnership there is an exchange of some type of resource. There is an expectation of receiving something out of it. That is not the case with our relationship with the NSC. We don’t really want anything out of it... I think that the word sponsorship and partnership as they pertain to the NSC could be interchangeable from a corporate perspective. Corporate sponsorship is not necessarily delivering a cheque to the NSC for them to do things, but it is gifts in-kind that we offer. It is probably over the course of a year, $30,000 or $40,000 worth of services that the NSC would be forced to pay if they were a paying client. We are not going to write a cheque for the NSC because we are not a big enough business to do that. But if we can deal with it from a gift in-kind perspective then that is something that clearly most small or mid-sized companies that have an interest in sport would be capable of doing.

Murray (Corporate Partner)

7. Our relationship with the NSC is not exactly a partnership. It is more of a cause that I want to be involved with. I think [the people at the NSC] are great and so I am very comfortable going out with them and presenting their case because I think they have got a good cause, and there are not a lot of people helping sport, and sport is very important. So my definition of a partnership is definitely not this, but it is something I am very interested in and I want to increase my involvement in it.

David (Corporate Partner)

8. To me the real partnership is between the federal government, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the Coaching Association of Canada on a broad base to support a multiple number of Centres. This original partnership has created some synergy that has allowed seven other Centres to be created with provinces, local cities, and universities getting involved in joining into that partnership.... So the Centres are the first true partnership we [the federal government] have established, and in the whole picture of things it is really a micro activity. I mean partnering with a few hundred thousand dollars annually is not huge money. We talk about sport organizations as being partners with us, but really, it is not a partnership relationship per se. It is the traditional funding relationship with contributions.... It really depends on how you define partnership and I mean no doubt this is different than Microsoft and IBM joining up in a partnership where they are both looking at increasing their share capital as a result.... The problem is that absolutely everybody is using the term partnership these days – but not in the way it was meant to be used. To me, in the case of Sport Canada and the NSC, you could almost replace partnership with formalized collaboration. The relationship has been formalized with set time frames and multi-year commitments to providing some resources which then levers up more than the value of what is invested.

Iris (Founding Partner)

9. My sense is that some of the people involved, possibly me included, may have a different interpretation of what partnerships are. For example, we have a partnership with the Coaching Association of Canada and the sport department of the Canadian government, where we actually have a signed agreement that outlines the conditions of the partnership criteria, the fact that we are all bringing something to the table. There are conditions to that relationship. We have mutually agreed upon directions, objectives, and goals, and we all respect that we each have a commitment to fund for a period of time and support for a period of time, those objectives that we all believe in. And typically, in our case the partners are not necessarily what I would call equals in the way we talk about it in sport, but they are both parties coming together to do something that is mutually beneficial for that partnership. I would therefore call our relationship with CAC and Sport Canada to fund the National Sport Centres a partnership, but as it relates to our partnership with the focal NSC, it is, in my view, a distinctly different variation. As a Founding Partner, I do not view our relationship with the Centres in the same way that I would see us having a partnership with CAC and Sport Canada. We are in effect a group of funding organizations that are providing the support and the systems for the Centres to effectively operate and undertake the roles and responsibilities that have been given to them - we do not technically look at them as a ‘partners’. The COC, is funding those Centres, but our operating relationship with those Centres actually works to some degree as more of a close collaboration liaison and support of each other and trying to get out and complete our mutual objectives. I think what is interesting is the concept of partnership and how it kind of gets used or misused in sport and the role that they claim within these organizations. Clearly there is a difference between what I would call our partnership there and the partnerships of the NSC (City) with other Sport Centres. In my opinion, the partnerships in the case of the Sport Centres are with the network of Centres together. As a group I think
they are operating, in my view at least, in a partnership model, sharing information, resources, best practices, engaging in dialogue on how to improve directions, sharing materials and information on athletes and on the support of programs, training groups. I think it is actually an excellent example of collaboration among a number of Centres who could frankly be operating very independently. They have chosen to operate in a collaborative, partnership role. However, in my mind, I would distinguish those two relationships as distinctly different.

Larry (Founding Partner)

10. I think the word is misused a lot. I believe a true partnership is when entities assemble all their resources, and essentially commit their full energies. There is no half stepping in a partnership. As a result there is a huge commitment. We throw the word around in sport a lot. I think we have a lot of joint ventures, I think we have a lot of strategic investments. I do not know whether we have very many partnerships in that traditional sense of the word. You know, when two people get married, they are forming the seminal partnership where they combine their resources, and the two become one - the legal union becomes one entity. We end up in many instances, with joint ventures which are necessary because very few organizations have sufficient resources to complete a project from start to finish entirely on their own. So it is a resource issue and it generally flows from a strategy of achieving organizational objectives through this more efficient joint venture method. In many instances you see in these joint ventures, that the board is a collection of trustees each interested in ensuring that their own stake is protected or advanced, rather than focusing on the work that needs to be accomplished. I hold a little more tightly to the view that partnership is something a little more sacred than the notion of just a few groups deciding they are going to consolidate efforts. I do not want to get hung up on words, but I think there is a distinction. The word is over-used in sport. I do not know if people really have a good understanding of what a partnership really is. For example, in the legal profession, they are really in a partnership because they are bound by contract and they really are committed. In sport, with corporate sponsorships for example, relationships between organizations are often not so tightly bound. For instance, if [a corporate company] decides that they are going to opt out of their funding partnership, well, they opt out, and then they are easily replaced with another company. There is a continuum of relationships in terms of strength, and partnership at one end of the continuum is a union really of two entities and that is not what is happening in sport. They are working together, but they are not a full union of two entities.

Allan (Founding Partner)

11. I look at it as these partners (NSCs) are also our customers. They have their own desires and wishes and self-serving interests and they feel obviously that there is something to be gained by partnering with us. We are here to make sure that they are well served by being a partner with us. We treat them as customers whether it be the NSC, our marketing agency or the agency that we work with for hosting championships. So again, they are our customers and we are their service providers just as much as they are for us. That's key. I think that has to be more than just lip service. We have to demonstrate that and walk that talk all the time.

Richard (Sport Partner)

12. A close working partnership involves a lot of give and take with a lot of communication back and forth. I see a different partnership with COC and Sport Canada where the involvement is more at arms length. And I think we [the network of Centres] have a pretty good balance in how we how interact and how information from the various centres is consolidated. It is a pure relationship between Centres as opposed to one where somebody has a financial hammer. So our relationship with NSC (City) is very much a close working relationship.

Jerry (NSC Network Partner)

13. We have realized that we are more than a network. We are describing ourselves as an organization or consortium able to respond to athletes' needs across the country.

(National Sport Centre Network, 2000)

iii. Taxonomy of organizational interaction

The literature presents an abundance of IOR forms, many relevant specifically to interactions among private enterprise organizations. While authors acknowledge that different types of partnerships exist (Das & Teng, 2002; Kanter, 1994; Kaplan & Hurd, 2002; Oliver, 1990), none discusses the multiple
forms of interaction occurring within the same network of organizations working together. Furthermore, the partnership literature overlooks the critical determinants of relationship formation that lead to the development of specific relationship types (e.g., x determinant (reciprocity, legitimacy...) might lead to y relationship type (philanthropic or benevolent)).

The analysis of the documents and interviews showed that the partnerships examined in this case functioned at different organizational levels, often concurrently. For example, network NSCs, sport organizations, and the focal NSC engaged in joint program partnerships, or collaboration to provide programs and services to a common clientele. A joint venture was undertaken by the three national Founding Partners to form the NSC network and these organizations were involved in strategic and program level concerns with NSC (City). Philanthropically-based interactions were evident in relationships among the focal organization and its corporate partners and these sponsored programs as well as simply providing financial donations. Finally, agency-sponsor linkages were formed between the Founding Partners (critical resource supplier) and the NSC (City) (agency receiving funds) (Austin, 2000; Oliver, 1990). Collaborative relationships among the organizations involved in this study were found on different levels, including: strategic, project specific, programs and services delivery, recognition and awareness, and benevolent or philanthropic.

Some informants suggested that the relationships established were in fact partnerships (i.e., a close long term relationship where resources are exchanged to achieve a common goal (Doz & Hamel, 1998)), others used the terms interchangeably. Others were emphatic that the relationship was not a partnership, but rather a joint venture (i.e., a relationship that combines resources from more than one organization to create a new organizational entity (the child) which is distinct from its parents (Harrigan, 1988; Inkpen & Beamish, 1997)), or collaboration (i.e., participants work together to pursue a meta-mission while also pursuing individual missions. Organizations have relative freedom and autonomy, and individual units are independent and can choose to work together toward common goal (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Limerick & Cunnington, 1993; Wood & Gray, 1991)). Austin (2000) distinguishes among three levels of collaborative action between nonprofit organizations and corporate firms: philanthropic, transactional and integrative. It appeared that most of the corporate relationships established by NSC (City) were philanthropic with perhaps one (the relationship with big oil company)
demonstrating a shift towards the transactional level. According to Austin, the philanthropic stage is characterized by the following dimensions: the engagement is limited (i.e., annual solicitation for funding); the relationship is of peripheral importance to the overall mission of the corporate firm; the magnitude of resources invested is small; the scope of activities is quite narrow; the interaction between organizations is relatively infrequent; the managerial complexity of the relationship is simple; and the strategic value to the organization is modest (Austin, 2000).

What the results from this study demonstrate is that based on the form of interaction among organizations, actors have differing views on the nature of their relationships. One hub organization may establish many alliances each based on differing motivations, with different forms and structures, and with different objectives. While there were differences in organizational form and structure, each relationship did appear to have several consistent themes: 1) Each relationship emphasized goals and objectives that were compatible and often related to the partners' strategic intent. 2) Each relationship exhibited an exchange of resources between partners. 3) All partners felt that the relationships established were mutually beneficial to some extent. Returning to my original definition of partnership, a close, long-term, planned strategic action between two or more organizations with the objective of serving mutually beneficial purposes in a problem domain, it appeared to be appropriate for some of the relationships that were studied, but inadequate for others. For instance, it did not adequately explain the relationship between the national Founding Partners and the NSC – although it was relevant in the context of the joint venture relationship formed by those national partners. In this case, it was shown that alliances among organizations were close, long-term, dynamic interactions of both business and interpersonal activities in which resources, knowledge, and capabilities were shared with the objective of enhancing the competitive position of the partner.

These meanings and interpretations are important in order to establish a clear concept of managing relationships – both for organizations as well as their partners. The real dangers of misinterpretations and miscommunications are reduced when there is a common understanding of the nature of the relationship. Managers need to recognize this to access the potential of the partnership and maximize the collaborative advantage. A summary of the partnership groups and the nature of
interactions (program, strategic, operational) between each of them and the focal NSC is presented in Table 5.26.

b) The Competitive / Collaborative Dichotomy

An important factor reported by many of the organizations involved in this research was the paradoxical and simultaneous forces to both collaborate and compete. This section demonstrates how the tensions between cooperation and competition were present within the formation stages of the alliances and contributed to the complexity of the formation process. The competitive and collaborative nature to all alliances – particularly intra-sectoral alliances (i.e., between two or more nonprofit organizations, or between two or more corporate firms) has been identified by authors such as Austin (2000), Kanter (1994), and Huxham and Vangen (2000). These authors claim that dual pressures often create tensions within (because of internal struggles related to a reluctance to sacrifice autonomy) and between firms (because of a desire to gain relative power over others and to secure a prime position within their general organizational domain (Wilson, 1992)). Many of these tensions are founded on the premise that alliances are not a naturally occurring business phenomenon, that is, managers do not want to be dependent on others or share in decision-making activities between organizations (Spekman et al., 1998). This latent competitive behaviour is evocative of the way Kanter (1994) described organizations traditionally operating in hostile, competitive environments where pressures reside to attain the objectives of securing resources and power within the system, to gain advantage over other organizations.

The concept of competitive rather than collaborative advantage was discussed by Huxham and Macdonald (1992), who suggested that advantage need not be advantage over another organization, but could be advantage over the situation that would follow if there were no collaboration. Organizational theorists have presented the notion that competitive advantage occurs between organizations where one intends to gain a benefit over the other (Barney, 1991a, 1991b; Grant, 1991; Oliver, 1997). In this study, however, there appeared to be concern over both levels of advantage seeking, that is advantage over other organizations as well as advantage over the situation that would have ensued were there no collaboration. Informants from both the focal organization and partner groups reported pressure to resist and engage in collaboration simultaneously. These behaviours have made the introduction of a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partners</th>
<th>Partnership Determinant</th>
<th>Characterization of partnership with NSC</th>
<th>Level of collaborative action</th>
<th>Example of collaborative activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sport (NSFs) | *Stability* – Share risks  
*Efficiency* – Reduce costs of service delivery  
*Asymmetry* – Exert control over access to resources  
*Necessity* (not voluntarily based) | • **Joint Program** – formal contractual / transactional exchange | Operational / functional | • Pay for service – i.e., massage therapy, physiotherapy, nutrition services  
• Communication  
• Coordination of services for athletes and coaches  
• Synergy of program use  
• Training Centre Committees |
| Corporate | *Legitimacy* – enhance firm’s prestige, image, and profile | • **Philanthropic**  
• Charitable / benevolent intentions  
• Informal – no (or limited) contract  
• Limited ‘strategic’ involvement with NSC | Individual | • Facilitating / creating synergies with private companies to seek resources for NSC  
• Providing advising / expertise in corporate environment |
| Founding | National Partners  
*Efficiency* – increase economies of scale  
*Legitimacy* – enhance profile in sport system  
*Reciprocity* – obtain synergies in program delivery | • **Joint Venture / Strategic Alliance** (NSC is the ‘child’)  
• Formal agreements between three national partners | Strategic | • Decision-making, committee representation (i.e., national coordinating committee,)  
• Resource contribution – financial, in-kind services  
• Expansion of network nationally  
• Guidance and leadership |
| Founding | Local Founding Partners  
*Efficiency* – increase economies of scale  
*Legitimacy* – increase agency’s acceptance and prestige  
*Reciprocity* – facilitate information exchange | • **Agency – sponsor linkage** | Project | • ‘Kangaroo Kick Off’ (a send-off event for NSC (City) athletes before leaving for the Olympic Games in Sydney, 2000) |
| Network of Centres | *Reciprocity* – facilitate exchange of clients  
*Efficiency* – reduce costs to service delivery  
*Necessity* (not voluntarily based) | • **Joint Program**  
• Consortium | Strategic | • Decision-making – i.e., marketing strategies, sport partner selection, communication, image development |
| Network of Centres | | | Program | • Joint marketing initiatives  
• Sport Science Programs  
• Athlete Services Programs |
partnership approach in the sport system challenging and have resulted in relationships that are often strained and tense. Because of the difficulty in controlling the perceived power imbalances among partners due to resource inequities and political backing, the challenge of building trust initially resulted in feelings of ambiguity, resentment, uncertainty, suspicion, and tension. Informants indicated that the current sport funding structure contributed to the internal tensions and continued competition apparent in the network. Financial resources from the federal government are allocated to NSCs based on the requirements outlined in Quotation 1 (Table 5.27).

The funding structure reinforced the institutionalized competitive nature among sport organizations. The predominant view was that there were a limited number of athletes and sports that could be serviced in the country – that it is a zero sum game where funding one group means another group will receive less. The more athletes and sports serviced by one NSC meant that other NSCs would service less, and therefore receive less funding from the government. NSCs, as a result, often saw themselves competing against each other for resources – funding from Founding Partners, private companies, athletes, and sport organizations with whom to collaborate (Quotation 2, Table 5.27).

One sport partner felt that this competition among NSCs for sport partnerships was detrimental to the sport delivery process (Quotation 3, Table 5.27). One of the challenges facing the NSC network was that while they were introduced into a formalized and institutionalized sport system that had been in existence for several decades, they were functioning organizationally and structurally in a much different manner than had traditionally been the case: they were founded on operating through partnership and collaboration. Nevertheless, many of the pressures and the competitive culture of the existing sport system had been transferred into the NSC network, and this contributed to some challenges particularly in initiating relationships and ensuring trust among partners. Several informants suggested that the sport delivery environment was inherently competitive, often leading to a resistance to partner (Quotation 4, Table 5.27). This view was echoed by another member of the NSC who commented that the existing funding structure contributed to competition among organizations (Quotation 5, Table 5.27).

The data suggested that competition for the focal NSC existed on many levels, for various resources and reasons – often for the same reasons that organizations felt pressures to collaborate; for instance, competition to receive funding from the federal and provincial governments, and competition to
receive recognition in the form of financial or in-kind resources from corporations, competition to claim athletes as their own (commonly, NSCs promote and publicize athletes who receive support from their Centre). These circumstances contributed to the complexity of the system and the challenges that played a role in both the formation and management of IORs. Competition for, and acquisition of, resources played a key role in the partnership formation dynamics. As such, many respondents reported sport organizations were initially skeptical and resistant to agree to form partnerships with NSCs because of the competitive basis of the relationship (Quotation 6, Table 5.27).

With the advent of partnerships, NSFs reported that they found themselves competing among each other, NSCs, and other sectors more aggressively for resources such as staff, athletes, and/or financial resources to allow them to provide superior athletic experiences, knowledge, and expertise. Informants in this study reported that NSFs were viewed as competing for limited funding dollars that have been traditionally distributed through governments. When the federal government changed their funding framework in 1996\(^\text{11}\), the perception among NSFs was that this change introduced greater competition among sport organizations. In addition, with the creation of the NSC network, NSFs perceived increased competition in the system for both government funding as well as corporate support. Thus, a new funding framework and new player in an already under-funded arena introduced two key competitive factors (Quotation 7, Table 5.27). Another network president indicated he understands the rationale that created suspicion and resentment, however, he felt the funding received by NSCs would not have made a significant difference. He explained his view in Quotation 8 (Table 5.27).

NSC (City) documentation acknowledged the degree of competition for financial resources. Ironically, the organizations outlined in Quotation 9 (Table 5.27) are ones that the NSC has formed partnerships with as well. Both the interdependence and competitive nature of the relationship among the organizations involved in the NSC partnership was evident in Quotation 10 (Table 5.25) from the President of the focal NSC. What contributes to the complexity and ambiguity of the situation for the

\(^{11}\) The Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF) is the process used by Sport Canada to identify which NSFs will be eligible for Sport Canada contribution programs, at what level, and under what conditions. Sport Canada developed this framework as a means of ensuring that federal government funding to the sport program contributes to the achievement of federal priorities and policy objectives for sport. It is based on several national and international criteria, including number of participants, performance criteria at international competitions, athlete-centred focus, equity, and presence of a multi-year plan that contains an accountability agreement.
individuals involved in these positions is that they are competing directly on one level (i.e., to attract corporate sponsors), yet are collaborating on another level (i.e., delivering programs and services to athletes and coaches). While many of the organizations involved in the partnership target private companies in the city to become sponsors or partners, many individuals from these organizations also serve on several common boards of directors while working closely with others in various sport-related activities. Thus, individuals are privy to many strategic level decisions, approaches, tactics, and contacts used to attract partners and attain funding.

However, despite their inherent nature to compete, sport organizations now feel pressures and independently realize that the best way to access new resources is to align themselves with a NSC. Now it appears that there is a new form of competition among sport organizations: competition to align themselves with as many NSCs as possible. The newfound desire to partner is illustrated in Quotation 11 (Table 5.27) from a sport partner.

The multitude of organizational players creates a complex competitive environment for the focal NSC, and expands the challenges it faces to successfully acquire and maintain its valuable organizational resources. It can be argued that these organizations are concurrently (and ambiguously) seeking collaborative advantage (Huxham, 1996; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992) while attempting to gain a competitive advantage. These ambiguities and tensions are one element of a complex environment that contributes to challenges and barriers to the formation and effective management of partnership relationships. On many levels, competition among organizations is a healthy condition, because it forces organizations to focus their energies and resources on making strategic decisions, resulting in more effective and efficient functioning (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992). Similarly, collaboration among organizations is viewed a means to ensure effective use of resources, and efficient integration of expertise, knowledge, structure, and programs.

Notwithstanding the benefits and drawbacks associated with both competing and collaborating, the practice of forming partnerships in the sport delivery system appears to have significant momentum (Quotation 12, Table 5.27).

**Table 5.27: Competition / collaboration dichotomy**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The level of funding commitment by the national funding partners for individual National Sport Centres will be based on the volume of high performance activity at the respective site and existing budget realities. The former is currently defined by the number of nationally carded athletes training, and NSF investment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in high performance programming, at a site.  

(Canadian Heritage, 1998, p. 5)

2. National Sport Federations, Provincial Sport Organizations and Local Sport Organizations can be both partners and cooperatives (i.e., "Partner Sports"). Yet, NSFs, PSOs and LSOs (Local Sport Organizations) also compete for resources. The same can be said for National Teams and Provincial Teams, particularly those headquartered near or in the same region as NSCs. 

(National Sport Centre Network, 2000)

3. In my observation, the NSCs across the country are all in competition with each other for the pool of athletes and the sports available. And that is not right... something should be done about that. When we are talking about a NSC, we should consider which sports should gravitate to which Centre, so that they are not in competition and so there is true collaboration and coordination in the system. 

Yves (Sport Partner)

4. We are often hesitant to partner in sport. That is because sport is extremely competitive. Competing against other sport organizations is a huge problem for any sport organization. The funding structure in Canada makes sports competitive against each other and it is amazing to me that this is still the case. 

Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

5. I think the nature of sport is competitive. I think the system has set us up to be competitive. First of all, sport in and of itself is competitive. We are not used to cooperating; I am used to beating you and not working with you. But from a funding standpoint I also think this system has made us more competitive because the way it has worked is there is only X number of sports that can be funded. So the better you do that means I go deeper down the system. As a result, that forces me to compete against you instead of work with you. Rather than have a system that says if we all do well, we will all get more, we say if you do good that hurts me, and that's the system we are in. It is not a good system. 

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

6. There was a lot of hesitation on the part of sport organizations to form partnerships at the beginning. First of all, the NSC is in direct competition with the national sport federations. So all the sport federations are out there trying to raise money and needing to raise money and then you impose this new structure of sport centres and put them in direct competition with the sport federations. It really stresses the partnership and it has posed many challenges in interaction between organizations. 

Kevin (Founding Partner)

7. When the network of the NSCs was being formed there were suggestions from the sport side that this is another organization that is going to compete for dollars from the government and the corporate sector. 

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

8. NSFs feel that NSCs have stolen their program money. But the $3.4 million that we get as a group of Centres, if it was to be evenly divided among the 40 some sports it would be less than $100,000 a sport which really would not allow them to do much more than they are doing now. 

Adam (NSC Network Partner)

9. From a fund development perspective competition is quite fierce. There are many groups competing for the same dollars, such as: Locally - 20 national teams fundraising - All other sports groups and not-for-profit organizations, as well as the National Sport School, (Olympic Legacy Organization), Local Sport Facility, (City) Soccer Centre, sports clubs, Olympic Oval, University Athletic Department). Nationally - other National Sport Federations - to an extent, other Centres. 

(National Sport Centre - (City), 1997b)

10. The difficulty we have is we do not have enough people helping us raise money. I am the one going downtown to try to raise money. These guys from the [Olympic Legacy Organization] are not going to help us raise money. [Olympic Legacy Organization] is down there trying to get the same money as we are. They are after the same companies. [Provincial Crown Corporation] is after the same companies. The University is after the same companies. That is another problem – we are working with these groups, but we are also competing with them for sources of funding from the companies downtown. It often makes things very confusing for us, and for the companies too. 

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

11. Because of our success with NSC (City) and our involvement in most Centres across the country, there is a
certain amount of anxiety from other national sport federations who now want to jump on the bandwagon. Sport organizations have realized that there are only a certain number of resources that are dollars that are available. That is why now so many sport organizations are clamouring to partner with NSCs.

Corey (Sport Partner)

12. It is pretty much a throwaway word right now and that is too bad. It has really lost some of its original intent in many ways. Just to give you a concrete example, last weekend we were in Toronto, it was a little bit embarrassing that the NSCs as a collective were almost holding court for other organizations that wanted to be partnered with us. Over the two days we were there, we probably had four or five groups come in and explore where they could become partners. Groups we had not worked with before directly like Athletes CAN, Spirit of Sport Foundation, Commonwealth Games Association, Canada Games, and a couple of others. And it almost felt to me that there was an unplanned willy-nilly need to say that you have a partnership with somebody. With no outcome or no understanding of what you could actually do together. Quite frankly, I think that in some cases we are trying to over-partner. I was a little disturbed by the fact that at a couple of the meetings there was really no common ground. I mean that there is common ground in everything if you want to find it. But how many of these can you manage and can you actually say we can work together effectively?

Adam (NSC Network Partner)

Conclusions

This chapter examined aspects of both Kouwenhoven’s (1993) contextual precursors and Oliver’s (1990) determinants of partnership formation, and found that elements of both of these theoretical models were evident and applicable for relationship formation in the context of the Canadian sport delivery system. The contribution of these findings to the nonprofit partnership literature is that the framework developed for this study incorporated both the contextual conditions and strategic determinants motivating the formation of partnerships. For instance, these findings provide empirical support to Oliver’s contention that organizations form partnership for multiple motives such as necessity, legitimacy, and efficiency. Furthermore, it supports Kouwenhoven’s claim that the contextual conditions of interdependence, presence of a broker, presence of a network, and convergence of objectives are present when organizations establish relationships. These concerns are important when considering subsequent aspects of partnership interaction. The findings from this study also built upon the work of these authors by illustrating the individual level factors at play within the context of partnership formation, as well as exploring relationship formation between multiple organizations rather than dyadic interactions.

In addition, the results presented in this chapter demonstrated that the original actors attributed diverse understandings of the meanings and characterizations of partnership. The views on partnership characterization ranged from formalized collaborations, to joint ventures, to sponsorships, to employer–employee relationships to what many informants referred to as “genuine” partnerships. One factor contributing to this disparity in views was the different relationships the focal NSC had with each group.
For instance, from the perspective of the corporate informants, corporate relationships tended to be more philanthropically-oriented. On the other hand, NSC informants understandably viewed these relationships as closer and valued them highly. This divergence led to feelings of frustration and uncertainty about how to position partnerships with other potential corporate partners. The lack of clarification or distinction in any organizational documentation regarding the meaning attributed to partnership, as well as to how partnerships with different groups are characterized contributed to the confusion. These findings should caution those involved in managing partnerships not to assume that because a relationship has been formed that all involved will have the same understanding of it. This is of particular importance to managers who deal with a wide variety of partners. The interpretations that firms and constituents make about partnership interactions may affect decisions about how to exchange and use resources. The interest to understand these differences will enable them to see the complexity of partnerships more clearly and to think systematically about strategic paths and choices. Organizations should spend time exploring a common understanding of the term partnership to better focus on what the organization is trying to achieve through the IOR, and on the mechanisms for doing so. The previous discussion does not imply that this disparity in understanding would eventually result in the termination of these IORs, but rather that until clearly defined, these partnerships may result in instability, tension, miscommunication, misunderstanding, and power struggles.

The initial findings discussed in this chapter describe the formation of interorganizational partnerships as a strategically motivated organizational activity rife with power dynamics (often the result of resource inequities) and political interactions. The tensions and complexities inherent in these relationships served to enable and constrain simultaneously the formation and development of partnerships. Partnerships were enabling for these organizations in the sense that they provided access to scarce resources, such as financial capital, expertise, and organizational legitimacy. However, at the same time the growth in the number of organizational partnerships introduced constraints to organizations, including competition for the scarce environmental resources as well as challenges in coordinating the growing number of relationships. In other words, the formation of partnerships often appeared to be both contradictory and complementary to the organizations involved. This is reflected in the ambiguities between competition and cooperation evident in the relationships among organizations.
The pro-partnership bias discussed in Chapter 2 was evident in the context of the sport system, and was illustrated by the growth of partnerships of the focal NSC over the period of its existence. The sport organizations investigated in this study have come to believe that through partnerships much more can be accomplished than by operating independently. The growing number of relationships formed and the shifting attitudes towards forming IORs reflects this view. It is evident that the organizations involved in the NSC network of partners are increasingly 'working together' at some level of interaction. Some relationships have been identified as closer, strategically aligned working relationships, others as more arms-length relationships, and still others as only transactional or exchange relationships with each organization benefiting to a limited extent. It is clear from the data that all organizations involved, regardless of sector, have embraced the philosophy of partnership. The partnership philosophy appears prevalent in much organizational documentation including business plans, strategic planning documents, position papers, marketing reports, annual reviews, and promotional material, as well as in discussion with members of these organizations, where the growth and now critical importance of partnerships within the sport system was expressed repeatedly. Figure 5.3 highlights the 'reframed' findings reported in this chapter and presents a refined perspective of the conceptual model presented in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.1).
Figure 5.3: Preconditions of partnership formation in the NSC (City) organizational set - REFRAMED

Interdependence

- Structural
- Strategic

Presence of a Network

Convergence of Objectives
- Help amateur sport
- Help own organization (not necessarily same, but not incompatible)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Necessity</th>
<th>Reciprocity</th>
<th>Asymmetry</th>
<th>Legitimacy</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collaboration

PARTNERSHIP FORMATION

Brokers

Competition
CHAPTER 6:
MANAGING MULTIPLE PARTNERSHIPS:
INTERACTION, EXCHANGE, AND DYNAMICS

In the previous chapter, the key dimensions of partnership formation and the strategic factors that motivated the organizations in this case to adopt partnership as an organizational structure were examined. In Chapter 6 what happens next is explored – the interface among partner organizations and the efforts made through these relations to achieve both partnership and organizational goals. In this chapter I will identify the dynamics and interactions present in exchanges among partners in the NSC network, and will frame the key managerial issues involved in the interaction of multiple organizations based on the constructs proposed by Kouwenhoven (1993). Some of the key hurdles and political dynamics confronted by the focal organization in managing its network of partners are also explained.

A partnership manager with partners of various sizes and from multiple sectors is like a circus performer whose specialty is to keep a number of plates spinning simultaneously. This spinning plate analogy has several parallels to partnership management. Plates of different sizes spin on sticks at different speeds, the number of plates spinning is related to how busy the performer is managing the speed of rotation, how quickly he or she must act, how much time he/she spends with each plate and with decision-making regarding which plates to spin next. Similarly, the partnership manager who has multiple partners – most likely of varying importance and size – has responsibilities to pay attention to the partners and ensure that the momentum of the relationship continues. However, the circus performer / partnership manager must concentrate on each plate, but he/she must also consider the influence of all the plates and their impact on each other (e.g., fragility of plate (some are made of fine china and will break on contact with floor, others might be made of a stronger material which might sustain one or even two falls), vibration, and distance between plates). To complicate matters, imagine that the platform supporting the sticks and spinning plates is on wheels – a mobile unit whose purpose is to move in a specific direction. At the same time as the performer focuses on keeping the plates spinning, the performer must move the entire unit in its intended direction without dropping any plates. This undertaking would be a challenge to say the least. This is what some informants have likened the role of
a partnership manager to – multiple tasks, varying responsibilities, organizations wanting more or less, not always predictable but interconnected in nature.

The partnership lifecycle model presented in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.1) integrated process and structure considerations relevant to organizational interactions and exchanges. Structural factors included the development and evolution of objectives and strategy; division of responsibility and authority; division of costs, risks, and returns; and adequate support and control facilities. Factors related to the partnership process included mutual trust, coordination (internal and external), conflict regulation, resource exchange, business oriented thinking and acting, and protection of third parties' interests and rights. Evidence from this research suggested that all of these factors played a role in the formative and exchange stages of partnership relationships – in other words, partnership management. In Chapter 6, I will examine how these elements were critical aspects of partnership interaction, how they were interrelated, and how the tenuous dynamics within each factor both enabled and constrained the growth and development of these partnership relationships.

**Structural Elements**

**Objectives and Strategy**

Each organization or group of organizations had their own motivations and objectives to form a partnership with the focal NSC, and ultimately within a larger network of collaborating organizations. Corporate partners for example, while supporting the cause of elite athletic success and winning medals at international competitions, had philanthropic or benevolent objectives with respect to the relationship. Their primary intent appeared to be achieving corporate social responsibility by making a contribution to their communities. National sport federations, on the other hand, had goals and objectives congruent to the NSC with respect to athletic performance. This congruence facilitated the working relationships between the NSC (City) and its NSF partners in that there was less ambiguity regarding the goals and objectives of the relationship. However, there was some tension among the Founding Partners, and in particular, with the federal government with respect to goals and objectives, specifically regarding the expansion of the network of NSCs. This issue will be discussed in more detail shortly.

While the objectives and strategies associated with partnership formation are typically considered prior to organizational interaction, aspects of this structural element were revealed as important during
the partnership interface and exchange and resulted in political dynamics within the network. Over a period of time of close relations, the objectives of some of the partners were divided between emphasizing an elite concentration and ensuring equity and opportunity for all, which some believed were mutually exclusive, that is, a focus on one cannot include consideration of the other. With the creation of NSCs, and specifically during the period of data collection, there was a movement from developmental emphasis to elite focus, or to ‘sharpen the focus’ on elite sport, as the NSC President put it. The impetus for this switch emerged from the federal government’s shifting objectives and strategy related to the NSC network. At issue was the perceived unilateral (and unplanned) action on the part of the federal government to expand the network of Centres so that there would be equitable access across the country, resulting in an equity rather than elite dichotomy, an issue that the Canadian sport system has struggled with since the 1960s. Several of the other Founding Partners disagreed with this direction, creating friction and frustration and political tension among partners within the organizational set. The argument from the Founding Partners was that if the objective of the NSCs was to service elite level athletes and help them achieve international success, resources should be concentrated on particular areas of strength (geographically and sport specific). The federal government, as the steward of public funds, began to moderate the initial focused elite level strategy, and began to fund the creation of new Centres in key locations across the country to provide equitable access for athletes so they would not have to train away from home. As such, smaller cities were granted NSCs such as Saskatoon and Québec City (Canadian Heritage, 2000a, 2000b). Quotations in Table 6.1 highlight the views of the informants regarding this perceived unilateral undertaking by the federal government. The more established and larger NSCs and Founding Partners viewed this development as diluting the national sport strategy, draining money and other resources from their own Centres. This evolving configuration of the network was attributed by informants to a lack of initial strategic planning with respect to the future direction of the network of Centres (Quotations 1, 2, and 3 Table 6.1). One of the major consequences of this new direction for the NSCs and partners was the creation of new NSCs across Canada on what most informants felt was an ad hoc basis. Quotations 1, 2, and 3 illustrate their dissatisfaction with this emergent strategy. The challenges were compounded with the perception of one Founding Partner that there was no binding partnership, meaning that any one of the three national Founding Partners could
either increase, decrease, or completely withdraw their support for the NSC network venture at any time.

Members of the focal organization reported frustration with the directions of the federal government on this network strategy because it had repercussions on its own resources, objectives, power, control, and network and partner dynamics (Quotation 4, Table 6.1). The political purposes identified by this informant relate to the objectives of the federal government to demonstrate equitable distribution of taxpayer resources across the country. The federal government representative recognized the tensions that this action caused within the network and for the focal NSC (Quotation 5, Table 6.1), although were not in a position to be able to do anything about it.

### Table 6.1: Quotations related to shifting strategies and objectives between partners

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>One of the weaknesses of the Centre system right now is that there is no identifiable plan, commitment, guarantee, or description of exactly where we want these Centres to be in the next five to ten years. This makes the Centres vulnerable to whatever decisions are being made by those that fund them – the Founding Partners. The long-term plan can eventually be put in place, but then the lack of some sort of central authority to ensure it gets done becomes the issue. There needs to be accountability for it to be completed, for some kind of overriding authority to say to all the Centres, this is where and how it is going to evolve. The absence of accountability results in what we have today, which is in effect an uncontrolled growth in new Centres. If I wanted to create a Centre tomorrow in Saint John's, New Brunswick I could – that is how silly it is. Part of what we are raising as a major issue is the whole concept of uncontrolled, unplanned growth and direction for Centres for the long-term. There is no problem identifying that as an issue. What is more challenging is to come up with a solution and have everybody agree with it. Especially when there is no binding partnership. Larry (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What has transpired is that Sport Canada, or more I think the Secretary of State in his desire to see more Centres in Canada because he quite likes them, created a couple new Centres on his own, and effectively committed sport money to do it. So what we see is a growth in the Centre development area, a growth in the number of Centres, without consensus by other partners that this growth is a) feasible, and b) logical. Certainly at least four Centres, in the prairie provinces and the east, have been created through the emphasis of the government of Canada's interest in helping in those areas, and developed in their minds these Centres to ensure 'equity' throughout the country. Larry (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>We have to make sure we are all on the same page here, because if we look like we are all going in different directions, this is not going to fly. The thing that concerns me is, now I am not criticizing Sport Canada, but Sport Canada goes in tangents. They go off one way for five years, and then go off in a completely different way for another seven years. They finally find a model in Europe that is really great so we try to do it in Canada. Or they find a system in Scandinavia that really works so next thing you know, we are going to do that. What really concerns me is that this model is good right now, but in five or seven years, ten years, all of a sudden it is no good, it is not going to work any more and we have to change. I am also concerned about them cutting the finances to the NSC, because we are running on a shoestring right now. We use every penny we have, and we could use a lot more. At this NSC, our athletes are not getting enough money and now the government wants to spread around their financial resources to create more new Centres. Andrew (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Now of course, the government wants to have more Centres and we are not very excited about that, because that is watering down the product from what we are trying to develop. In addition, many of the Founding Partners just do not have the resources to put money into all of them. Of course the government is creating these Centres more for political purposes than anything else. Edwin (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>There was a lot of conceptual discussion regarding the structure of the network, but it has certainly evolved. ... two new Centres have been essentially created in the last six months and that was a political decision of 201...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sport Canada. In fact the COC is not a partner in those. They have not said that they are going to put money in those; I mean they may or may not as we go forward. Recently, there have been lots of discussions about how many Centres we need and what is their purpose. [President] and this Centre have led a charge to say let’s not fully divert from our model of sharpening the focus and going to the podium. And [President] has been a very strong critic saying directly to [Secretary of State] why do you keep watering things down by going on this sort of equity track and saying you have to have one there, and you have to have one there, and you have to put one up in Nunavut. Well there is only so much money in the system and you are now spreading it nine ways. I think part of the tensions between us and the other Founding Partners, and us and the Centres is the discussion of how many Centres there should be and who can have influence on that. I think more at the NSC level, I would characterize it as conflict or I would characterize it as a combination of conflict and lack of power that certainly I and my predecessor had and continue to deal with.

Iris (Founding Partner)

The introduction of the new organizations (NSCs) in the network were perceived as threats to the stability and long term future of the existing Centres and the focal organization in particular. As Huxham and Vangen (2000) explained, external factors may shift, resulting in partners changing directions and purpose during the course of the relationship. Changes in government policy can result in a renegotiation of objectives. Fragile collaborative structures result from tenuous environmental forces that drive their initiation and shape their formation. According to Huxham and Vangen, there is a cyclic relationship between the nature of the participating organizations and the focus of collaboration with the participants defining the focus and the focus defining new participants. This process may be referred to as domain shift: each time a new participant is involved such as a new NSC organization, the focus, or domain alters slightly and other organizations become relevant. New members bring new agendas, both their own and the interpretation of their organization's agenda, and the purpose of the partnership will be reanalyzed and if necessary, renegotiated. Huxham and Vangen predicted that there would be a continuously iterative process of negotiating purpose with these changes, and hence coalition building and membership changes throughout the relationship lifecycle. As this research ascertained, the Founding Partner relationships with the focal NSC remained relatively stable over the period of the organization's existence in the sense that there were no changes in membership in this category, however, the introduction of new Centres across the country presented new dimensions of power, control, and extended levels of coordination among the network of Centres, and particularly for the focal NSC.

A shift in objectives and strategies throughout the evolution of the partnership can change the nature of partner interaction over time. What makes the management of these relationships challenging is that change in one relationship may change the nature of other relationships involved in the collaborative venture as well. The formation of new NSCs in the network changed the structure and
processes of responsibilities within the focal organization. For instance, structures and processes were implemented to deal with more Centres and more competition for partners such as targeting specific sports to service; coordinating efforts to collectively assign different sports to each Centre so that one sport might not take advantage to be in all Centres while another sport is overlooked; changing goals and objectives such as focusing on developmental athletes through regional centres as opposed to only elite level; and taking on the burden of sharing information with all newly formed Centres. Although this phenomenon is not something that is addressed in much of the partnership literature (Das & Teng, 2002), Austin (2000) does consider potential changes within a relationship over time, however, he does so only within the context of a single relationship between a nonprofit organization and a private sector firm. From a larger network perspective, this is clearly an important aspect to examine in future research.

**Division of Responsibility and Authority**

One of the key functional aspects of partnership management is the division and allocation of responsibility and authority (Kouwenhoven, 1993). In this study, it was revealed that this was also a domain where tensions, conflict, and confusion arose regarding roles and expectations, allocation of key resources (human - competencies, training, time; and financial), where there was often ambiguity in representativeness particularly when managing multiple interdependent partners. This confusion and complexity was compounded by unequal resource contributions, and asymmetrical power dynamics.

*Roles and expectations:* In terms of allocating and assigning specific roles and responsibilities within the partnership structure, there appeared to be little role specialization within the focal organization and its partners. The focal organization had particular staff that dealt primarily with corporate partners for instance, or with sport partners. However, this did not preclude these individuals from interacting with other partners within their organizational set. For instance, the Vice President - Athlete Services dealt with sport partners, service providers, and Founding Partners including the COC and the University (Quotation 1, Table 6.2).

A factor contributing to role uncertainty appeared to be the President’s history within the organization, or what can be characterized as the ‘boiled frog phenomenon’ where one can be so immersed in the environment that its change goes unnoticed. Since he was part of the evolution of the focal organization and dealt with fewer partners when it was formed, as the relationships developed and
grew in number, he continued to play a key role in ultimately overseeing over 160 different IORs. Staff members perceived reluctance on his part to give up control over these responsibilities (Quotation 2 and 3, Table 6.2). With so many partnerships, the challenge faced by the focal organization was ensuring their effective management as one member of the NSC observed in Quotation 4 (Table 6.2).

Furthermore, the relationship with one of the Founding Partners illustrated how highly bureaucratic organizations proved to be challenging partners because different individuals were responsible for different areas (Quotation 5, Table 6.2). This example illustrates how the organizational structure of partner organizations can influence the interaction among partners. It also highlights how perceived reductions in transaction costs by forming partnerships are not necessarily gained because efficiency is affected due to the increase in time and energy necessary to work through administrative issues.

Founding Partner organizations typically reported that they experienced no significant changes in their organizational structure resulting from the formation of relationships with NSCs. Additional roles and responsibilities associated with managing aspects of the relationship fell to existing staff within the organization, and the relationship was treated as any other program would be (i.e., human and financial resources assigned, administrative responsibilities carried out) (Quotation 6, Table 6.2).

The tensions appeared to arise when roles were not clear and expectations between partners were not met. When expectations were not clarified between the staff members who implemented the partnership (as opposed to the individuals involved in higher strategic decision-making), tension and conflict arose, creating stress among members of partner organizations. For instance, one focal NSC staff member expressed frustration in working with NSFs who did not respond according to her expectations because the procedures and processes for interaction were not clear enough (Quotation 7, Table 6.2).

Similarly, another Sport Partner indicated that a focal NSC staff member’s reluctance to relinquish control resulted in her going to another Centre to get what she needed for her athletes (Quotation 8, Table 6.2).

To further illustrate the distinction between partners who make global strategic decisions and those who are responsible for administrative concerns (implement the relationship and interact with the partners), Quotation 9 (Table 6.2) reflects how, at different levels, there are differing perspectives of the relationship interactions. Another partner reflected on the difficulties associated with partnership stemming from uncertainty regarding both the objectives of the relationship as well as the practical
implementation and managerial activity that needed to occur to achieve success (Quotation 10, Table 6.2). This example illustrates some of the fundamental problems associated with partnership management, namely a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities within the relationship.

Table 6.2: Role allocations and expectations within partnerships

1. On a day-to-day basis [Vice President - Athlete Services] main contacts are going to be the other National Sport Centre Athlete Service people, and I think the main funding partner she deals with – there’s two of them, the COC and then the University. She deals a lot with National Sport Organizations because we are trying to get lists of athletes. And when I say National Sport Organizations, I mean primarily the coaches. She deals with probably some service providers. So on a day-to-day basis, I think those are her key partners.

   Carl (NSC (City) Member)

2. And you know the staff situation at the National Sport Centre is pretty light, and the job is huge, so it is very difficult, particularly with our growing number of sport, corporate and network partners. [President] is trying to do everything – and that is just not possible.

   Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

3. [President] has been the key instigator in establishing and managing many relationships, especially as it pertains to the sport partners and our service providers. I think all of us have a role in maintaining those relationships, but the key role has been certainly the President – he really has a lot on his plate.

   Linda (NSC (City) Member)

4. Well, it is tough, and that is why the partnerships take a lot of time because I have had to deal with the caretaker, with the ice guy, with the general manager of the Oval, whoever works in the lab. You do it 15 times with 15 individuals, because it is not as if they are all onside, because the boss [at the University] says you will be onside. So that takes time. ... I end up doing most of it.

   Carl (NSC (City) Member)

5. But the biggest frustration is the University because it is a big institution. It is not a business. At the University it seems like I have to talk to 40 people before I can get anything done. There is little clarity on assigned roles or responsibilities with their partnership with us. I tell you it can get pretty confusing. With any other of our Founding Partners I talk to one person to get something done. Now, I have relationships with a lot of other people at those Founding Partner organizations, but if I need an answer I talk to one individual. That is the difference. One partnership is a lot more efficient than the other.

   Carl (NSC (City) Member)

6. The partnership has not resulted in any significant structural changes in our organization. It has resulted in some new and different responsibilities for some individuals, but it has really been another program that people are responsible for as opposed to any kind of restructuring. We have not hired someone that is specifically responsible for National Coaching Institutes or National Sport Centres. Each staff and board member is responsible for that so there are a variety of different functions that are really spread over multiple people. For example, the administration for the National Coaching Institute committee is done by one of the support staff at the CAC office. They set up the meetings, arrange the travel, and would do the administration related to that. Things like the brochure for the NCIs or the website or database things, those are all done by whoever is responsible for that function within the CAC. So it is really an additional program that those people have responsibilities for within their area of expertise.

   Kevin (Founding Partner)

7. I would say that one of my biggest pet peeves with our NSF partners is that you initiate a meeting to share in the philosophy of (our programs), or process or expectations, and then you have an expectation that there will be some follow up, and there is no follow up. I keep going back to the table and saying so when is this going to happen? Or when can we do this? But the roles, expectations, and timelines are really unclear and fuzzy. In my position, that is one of the hardest things about working together.

   Joan (NSC (City) Member)

8. ... This administrative structure and not being clear about who does what is causing a great deal of frustration for our sport. For instance, there was an incident where one of our athletes needed knee surgery urgently. I said to NSC (City) I need to schedule surgery as soon as tomorrow. [President] was so busy I could not get in touch with him quick enough. He is the one, he is the only one who can do that but he does not have the time and he will not delegate the authority to anyone else. And it is frustrating. So do you know
what I ended up doing? I ended up calling another NSC and they were able to work it out immediately. I really feel that in [President’s] case, he does not delegate enough, he takes too much responsibility on his shoulders, which makes it ineffective because he has so many sport partners, as well as taking care of all the other partnerships his Centre is involved in.

Isabelle (Sport Partner)

9. Funding partners put in roughly 70% of the budget so they expect to have quite a bit of influence on decision-making, so that kind of tension I think is always out there. That is at the board level. I think when it gets down to the staff level and the operational level, those problems are not nearly as significant. I think that the staff of the Centre really determines how to meet the needs of the different partners within the program. They realize that they have to provide certain services to Canada Games or provincial level athletes because that is one of their partners. They realize that they have to make sure that there are programs for coaches that there are athlete services that there is recognition of different sponsors, all those kinds of things. So I think at the staff level, it is managed quite effectively.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

10. That is what I want - a better understanding of what the objectives and purpose of the collaboration are, and on a day to day level what actions need to take place that will help contribute to that success from our end.

Richard (Sport Partner)

The tensions in role allocation, responsibility, and expectation appeared to be simultaneously a result of, and a contributor to, complexity in partnership structure. One of the challenges with this research was identifying the individuals who were in charge of managing the relationship. It became evident that managing IORs meant different things to different individuals. Some individuals considered the manager as the person who made the decisions, while others saw the manager as the person who implemented the programs and services and other activities of the partnership. The findings suggested that management relationships were complex, operating on multiple levels. For example, the relationship between the NSC (City) and the COC operated on multiple levels (e.g., strategic, operational, project-based) and several individuals maintained this relationship. Three distinct levels of operation included 1) The Treasurer of the COC represented the COC on the NSC (City) Board of Directors who, at the time of this research, served as the Chair of the NSC (City)'s Board, 2) A senior administrator at the COC was involved in distributing money to the focal NSC, and in carrying out managerial duties at the senior administrative level, and on another level of coordination, 3) the Athlete Services Manager of NSC (City) worked in collaboration with a staff member at the COC who communicated with, and coordinated, all Athlete Services Managers in NSCs across Canada. As a result, the coordination and analysis of these relationships is multifaceted and requires a macro view of the organizations, the relationship and how those relate to the larger set of collaborating organizations. As Huxham and Vangen (2000) argued, the complex structure of collaboration, along with membership and representativeness, often contribute to ambiguity with respect to roles, authority, and responsibilities. This research uncovered multiple layers of
collaboration with many partnerships functioning on more than one level (i.e., decision-making, strategy, program implementation).

According to Huxham and Macdonald (1992), it is not uncommon in the nonprofit sector for collaborative networks to overlap or for new collaborations to emerge from within established ones. Complexity exponentially increases when there are multiple organizations involved in the alliance. Because increases in the number of organizations involved in a network “result in exponential increases in the number of possible interorganizational ties, coordination in a large network tends to be a challenging and highly problematic activity” (Provan, 1983, p. 81). Given the number of partnerships that have recently been initiated by the focal NSC (i.e., over 160), as expected hierarchies of collaboration emerged based on possession and allocation of key resources. For the NSC, more resources or a growth in the funding base meant more complexity, more partners to manage, an expectation of more services offered to athletes, which lead to the need for more funding and more partners. Furthermore, the number of concerns which any collaborative structure is aiming to address makes a complex structure inevitable (Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Spekman et al., 1998). In this case, the interests to be addressed through this collaborative structure included educating coaches, ensuring athletes learned about personal and professional development, facilitating training environments through research and access to facilities, ensuring that athletes in the developmental stages were trained sufficiently to contribute to Canada’s medal count, and more generally ensuring the needs and objectives of all partners were met.

Other structural factors contributing to complexity in the formation of partnerships in this case study include the preexisting number of linkages among many of the partners (i.e., sport, government, corporate), the strength of linkages and their impact on the power and control dynamics involved in partnership formation (e.g., funding sources, area of emphasis, perceived contribution to strategic objectives), and the nature of linkages formed (e.g., mandated, voluntary, necessary). This structural complexity is represented graphically in Figure 6.1.
Figure 6.1: Complexity of linkages in multiple organization partnership structures

Focal Organization – staff and board

- President
- VP Marketing
- Marketing Coordinator
- VP – Athlete Services
- NCI Director
- Chair of Board of Directors

Partner Organizations

- Sport Partners
  - NSF Presidents
  - Technical Directors
  - Athletes
  - Coaches
- Network Partners
  - Presidents
  - Athlete Services
  - NCI Directors
- Corporate Partners
  - Individuals
  - Foundations
  - Local / National Companies
- Founding Partners
  - COC
  - CAC
  - Olympic Legacy Foundation
  - Sport Canada
  - Provincial Government
  - University

Dimensions of relationship

- ‘Mandated Partners’
- Sport related decisions
- Several different sports – relationships with all / many
- Some sports – closer in geographic proximity – easier to manage

- ‘Mandated Partners’
- Network of NSC related decisions
- Decisions on which sports to support
- Tensions related to funding
- Coordinated network – to attract corporate funds – must be sure not to compete with ‘Founding Partner’s’ partners (i.e., Chrysler for a car sponsor)

- Voluntary partners
- Complexity introduced because many different types of corporate partners were identified (i.e., individual – encourages other corporate partners, donates own money to NSC; foundation – strictly for $ exchange; company – philanthropic – enhances legitimacy of both organizations (corporate social responsibility)

- Need other partners in order to launch an NSC
- Partners providing $, expertise, legitimacy
- Involved in strategic decision-making of Centres
- All have representation on Board of Directors

Coordination of organization members/staff and board
Complexity because some board members are founding partners – board is decision-making body
A final factor contributing to structural complexity was the overlap among the activities and objectives of organizations. Many of the organizations involved had parallel missions to support elite level performance and development (i.e., COC and NSC (City) were both concerned with athlete services and professional development, OLO and winter sport NSFs were both focused on serving athletes participating in winter sports, and the NSC (City) and the University were both committed to measuring and developing systems to facilitate elite athletes to excel). As a result of this overlap, some sport organizations did not appear to be clear on their roles and responsibilities (Quotation 10, Table 6.2). Obviously, the lack of understanding regarding the purpose and objectives of the focal NSC contributed to the confusion regarding roles and responsibilities within the partnership itself.

Because of 'representativeness' of partners, the opportunity for individuals to cross communication channels and misconstrue information is increased. For example, the federal government representative on the Board of Directors represents the partner, but does not make funding decisions. For most corporate partnerships, the people who established the partnership remain involved at a certain level, but are not typically responsible for carrying out daily duties within the relationship (i.e., the executive at Big Energy Company was in charge of making decisions to financially support the focal NSC, however, his assistant was responsible for scheduling speakers, events and other activities for the program they sponsored). The following discussion on ambiguity in representativeness demonstrates some of the implications and challenges associated with a high degree of structural complexity in a partnership network, and links to the presence of a network construct discussed by Kouwenhoven (1993) in Chapter 5. This ambiguity subsequently impacts authority, decision-making, negotiation, and other fundamental aspects of partnership management.

Ambiguity in representativeness: One effect of IOR growth and complexity is that members find themselves increasingly being part of multiple partnerships, in different capacities, playing multiple roles – in other words, they often experience ambiguity in representativeness. In a system that is as interconnected as the Canadian sport system, where individuals volunteer, represent numerous entities, or 'wear multiple hats', this ambiguity in representativeness can take on greater scope (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). In this case, informants, particularly Founding Partners who sat on the decision-making
body (Board of Directors) of the NSC (City), tended to act concurrently as representatives of the NSC and their employer organization (Quotations 1, 2, and 3, Table 6.3).

The degree to which individuals in a collaborative group are representative of their organization varies and is influenced by its size, their position, and their personal interest in the subject of the collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2000). As such, in this case there appeared to be ambiguity concerning the degree to which an individual in the partnership is representative of their organization. Because of the high level of interdependency among organizations, many individuals were involved in different administrative or volunteer capacities at different levels in the partner organizations (Quotations 3 and 4, Table 6.3). Various administrative positions within the organization also required different responsibilities and degrees of communication. This introduced a management complexity because partners sat on the Board of Directors and simultaneously represented their own organizations. Many actors, such as the President of the focal organization, were also involved in numerous side partnerships and relationships with other groups such as training committees, and the national coordinating committee of NSCs.

In one particular partnership between the focal NSC and the University, tension was revealed relating to the authority of individuals to make decisions. This form of ambiguity in representativeness manifested itself as friction regarding the status or position of the individual representing the University on the Board of Directors and their rank of authority within their organization. Tension and frustration was discernible on the part of the President of the focal organization who desired a higher degree of partner authority on the NSC board. He felt that having a decision-maker with great 'clout' would eliminate unnecessary channels of communication between different administrative levels and would afford a greater degree of closeness and understanding of the details of the NSC (City) and its partners. Thus, ambiguity in this sense had to do with having the 'right person' making decisions as a partner (Quotations 5 and 6, Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Quotations illustrating ambiguity in representativeness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>... it happens I guess more from a government perspective, a board member can be in a conflict of interest situation. I mean some days of the week I am involved in discussions about funding commitments to National Sport Centres and then another day of the week, I am sitting here as a member of the NSC board and I'm saying gee we need more money from government or for us to succeed. You know there is that aspect of when you are a member of a board, you really have those fiduciary responsibilities. And I do not even represent an organization, I represent the government, which really is the steward of public money, so it is a very convoluted circle. Iris (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A good example of how confusing this partnership structure can be happened to me the other day. Not only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

210
am in the Chair of the Board of Directors of the NSC (City), I chair the finance committee for the COC. And we were putting together the budget for the next couple of years. Of course I was interested in the budget process from the COC’s perspective, but also had a bit of a vested interest in this National Sport Centre and what they were going to get. And the president of the COC was giving me a hard time about which hat was I wearing.

Edwin (NSC (City) Member)

3. So I have about three different or four different jobs so to speak, or job titles I can use within this partnership. I am national coach, I represent the coaches on the Board of Directors of NSC (City), I am the coach at (University), and I manage the (sport) training centre. I can have four different business cards. Sometimes it is a challenge to know who you are representing at various times and in different contexts.

Keith (Sport Partner)

4. We have another complication as well. I am the president of this Centre, but I also carry the hat of NCI director. So I would communicate and coordinate with other NSC presidents and with NCI directors on that level. That is another layer of complexity.

Jerry (NSC Network Partner)

5. This is the third University representative we have had on the board since we started. I would love to have the president of the University sit on our board. I do not say this in any disrespect but not a junior member of a faculty or a lower level administrator. I think again one of the successes we have had with our other Founding Partners is that they have been key people within for example, the COC in terms of having an executive board member. We have had the president of the [Olympic Legacy Organization], the president of the Coaching Association of Canada, the general manager of the [Provincial] Sport Foundation. The only one where we do not have a representative at the top end I would say is at the University. That is just because their model is not the same. It is not a business model.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

6. I represent the University on the board. My role on the board is simply a voting member. I do not necessarily make decisions. At the end of the day, if we were to make significant change to the relationship, I would not make that unilaterally. That is something that would be made by the Dean in cooperation with the President. So I represent the University and I vote on the board as a member of the board, I participate on the board and whatever subcommittees I am involved in as a University partner.

Randy (Founding Partner)

Support and Control Facilities and Systems

In order for a partnership to function efficiently and effectively, support and control facilities and systems are key structural elements that need to be in place. Partner control in alliances can be seen as a regulatory process by which the partners’ pursuit of mutually compatible interests is made more predictable (Das & Teng, 1998). For the purposes of this study, support and control facilities focus on contractual control aspects such as policies and operating procedures, formalization, supervision and monitoring (accountability), and evaluation of the relationship or establishing metrics for success. These systems can take the form of both formal and informal interfaces (exchanges) to deter opportunistic behaviour. Formal interfaces provide a frame of reference under which an alliance operates. These include control and reporting mechanisms through which firms structure their interaction (i.e., board of directors, management and personnel policies and procedures, contracts and joint development agreements, and the execution of operational integration). Informal interfaces on the other hand, reinforce personal commitment and trust, provide access to personal information and contracts, and
foster the development of informal networks that allow managers to accomplish various tasks at different levels of the organization (Borch, 1994; Spekman et al., 2000; Spekman et al., 1998). In this case, it appeared that formal interfaces were less of a consideration and that a great deal of emphasis was placed on informal interfaces. This section will explore formal interfaces and will examine how these structures both enabled and constrained relationships among organizations.

Formal contractual arrangements and policies employed to guide the partnership were a source of uncertainty and confusion among the relationships established by the focal NSC. There appeared to be little consistency among groups of partners with respect to implementing these systems and as such, they appeared to be loosely structured and enforced. For instance, most Founding Partners typically had a letter confirming funding for the fiscal year (Quotation 1 and 2, Table 6.4). One Founding Partner did not (Quotation 3, Table 6.4), resulting in an agreement that was even more informal. Based on other control systems such as Board of Directors participation, involvement in budget management, and open communication, this informant felt that these activities precluded the need to form more formal and binding agreements. As demonstrated in Quotation 2 (Table 6.4), many partners argued that formal policies were unnecessary because they constrained the flexibility of the partnership and impinged on the cooperative spirit of the venture. These results suggest that frequently formal control systems were rejected in favour of informal, trust-based interactions. Quotations 4, 5 and 6 (Table 6.4) support the claims made by Founding Partners regarding the lack of formal support and control systems in this case. For instance, Quotation 6, by the President of the focal NSC illustrates the degree of informality regarding structures, policy and procedure aspects of the relationships formed by this organization. This lack of documentation is a major management concern as a large proportion of the knowledge regarding partnership relationships rests with one person.

Interestingly, even among the three national Founding Partners who established the joint venture to form the network of NSCs, there was no formal contract, and as stated by one informant, the restrictions regarding the federal government's fiscal agreements prevented any sort of long term commitment (Quotation 7, Table 6.4). From a structural and strategic perspective, the absence of a long-term commitment among partners might contribute to organizational or network instability or vulnerability – just what the partnership was designed to overcome.
With respect to Corporate Partners, again there were no formal agreements or policies in place to guide or provide a context for those relationships (Quotations 8, 9, and 10, Table 6.4). Many Corporate Partners felt that it would make the relationship too formal or bureaucratic, and envisioned more problems and challenges with formal, legal contracts than without them. For instance, when the company he was working for asked for signed agreements, one partner had to convince the brands (of the pharmaceutical products he was donating to the NSC) that the project had been manageable for three years without such controls and restrictions (Quotations 9, Table 6.4). One explanation for the lack of consistency regarding support and control facilities for Corporate Partners was the nature and level of interaction of the relationships. In other words, because the relationships with Corporate Partners were primarily philanthropically-based, and relatively minor in terms of the amount they contributed based on a measure of their size such as annual revenue, with primarily cash or in-kind services and/or products exchanged for tax receipts, it was agreed there was no perceived need for formal control mechanisms in the relationships. As a result, with Corporate Partners as well, formal support systems were rejected in favour of informal interfaces, reinforced by personal commitment, goodwill, and trust among partners. In this way, considerable emphasis was placed on trust and commitment, both process elements in partnership management, which fostered the development and growth of many of these IORs. Loose arrangements such as the ones evident in this study have both benefits and drawbacks. It is advantageous for the focal organization because it demonstrates that partners participate because they value what the relationship is about. The relationship validates their norms, values, and expectations, and allows more flexibility, room for creativity, and change in the partnership. But as illustrated earlier with the Founding Partners, an absence of formal arrangements introduces a risk that the partner might unexpectedly withdraw from the agreement.

However, because of factors that have been previously addressed (i.e., suspicion and turf protection concerns, and a lack of clearly defined agreements between partners), one Sport Partner reflected on how a lack of mutually agreed upon policies and structures among organizations negatively influenced the relationship (Quotation 11, Table 6.4).

Table 6.4: Formal support and control structures

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>In this partnership we just write down a few things and away we go. That is how it has worked. We do not have a lot of paperwork, a lot of rules and regulations. We like to see results. With the NSC, we have a little contract that says we will provide you X number of dollars a year, and in return [President] comes to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
our board meeting once a year and gives us a report. He sends us his annual report, his financials, and then any status updates. He has a newsletter that comes out so we send it out to all of my board members. And I report to the board about the successes of the NSC too when I do my report. We keep them informed of what is happening at the NSC. But it is not a complicated, detailed type of agreement, like you have to put our logo on everything you do because he does that anyway. So we do not have all that detail in there, it does not do us much good. We sign it and he signs it, and I guess if we do not give him the $137,000 he can do something about it. But there is not a lot of legal jargon in there. There are just a few expectations and reporting structure, basically that is what it is.

Andrew (Founding Partner)

2. ... you also have to be careful about having it too carefully spelled out, too prescriptive or too much of a legal contract. Because the more formal it gets the more detailed it gets, the more legalese you get into, then I think there is a danger that it could encroach on the cooperative spirit of the partnership. Though the lawyers might like to have a more detailed contract, I think the more detailed contract inherently says well, we do not trust one another. And the lawyers would say, that is not true, we are just covering ourselves better. So we only have a letter of agreement. We have resisted efforts from the legal office on campus to have a more formal contract. They understand that, they accept that. So even the nature of the agreement you have to look at carefully, because you do not want it to be too prescriptive. You need some openings, you need some flexibility. Furthermore, we do not have formal policies or regulations that guide our relationship. I think you want to keep it as informal as possible to create that true sense of partnership that it is not a legal agreement ... you are doing it because you both believe in something. It is like a prenuptial agreement. If you have a prenuptial, how can you have a really strong level of trust established there at the beginning? I think when you have a prenuptial, it is almost like I do not think this is going to work, so we better have this figured out before we start.

Randy (Founding Partner)

3. No, there is not a written contract as such between the CAC and the NSC (City). I guess we have not seen it as necessary. We have the business plan, we have the (City) Centre budget, we are on the board of directors, and we see that there is lots of communication and accountability inherent in that system that we have not seen it necessary to sign a contract as such. So, there is not one at this point and there is not a perceived need or a plan to create one.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

4. Relatively little attention has been placed, however, on protocols for partnership within each Centre. Only recently has attention shifted to include the need for partnership protocols among and between the constituent Centres in the merging national network

(National Sport Centre Network, 2000)

5. Well with service providers we have a special kind of agreement. Minimum credentials they have to meet. They have to submit invoices and I guess that is kind of an agreement. With sports we have a partnership agreement, with most of our Founding Partners we have an annual agreement we have to sign in order to get money. The [Provincial Government] is kind of a verbal agreement, it is in writing but it is a generic letter. With the CAC I get a phone call once a year from their president and we talk about budgets. That is typically how it works.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

6. I am the one who knows all the details and idiosyncrasies of these partnerships, if I get hit by a bus, there would be trouble because things are not always written down. It is all up here in my head. There is a need for this to change, I suppose. The issue is who is going to invest the time to put it all down on paper. Again, these things are all very important, but when are you going to find time to do it? I am too busy doing other things, and really there has not been a situation where we have really needed them yet. Having said that, I think a partnership suffers if you do not have the policies and procedures in place.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

7. What is in place is in effect an unsigned agreement, a verbal commitment amongst the Founding Partners to work together based on their financial contributions. We actually attempted to pull together a three party agreement that basically signed and committed all parties to that for a length of time, and although we were in accordance with the vision what we couldn't do effectively was bind the government of Canada to a longer term commitment than the one year annual contribution. So, in effect what we have is really a partnership that is based on mutual commitment and support. However, if one of the partners were to decide that they could not afford to support the Centres, for example if the government of Canada changed from the current party to another party that chose not to support high performance sport in
Canada, there is the potential for the government of Canada to withdraw support completely from the Sport Centres. This to me is one of the most vulnerable aspects of this venture. Having said that, the government of Canada's contribution and commitment to Centres currently is one that is very strong. But if you were looking at it strictly from a vulnerability perspective, Centres would look at it in terms of commitment and say, we anticipate the following but we cannot be absolutely assured because there is no written agreement. And so all the Centre agreements for example are for one year, not long term. Many of the partnerships that we talk about here have no formal boundaries. They provide opportunity for any of the quote 'partners' to walk away if they wish. There is no compelling rationale or binding agreement that would keep somebody at the table if they did not want to be there.

Larry (Founding Partner)

8. Other people are surprised to hear we do not have contracts with our corporate partners. Which I believe is good because we are not administratively top heavy, and those agreements take time and money, because you have to use lawyers. It just complicates things. So I think we have been very lucky to not be forced into those situations. It is the way you do business in this city - there is a level of trust, an honour system, a handshake. I really believe that. And I think we have been very lucky in that we have not had to enter into any complex contract with our corporate partners. They just give us the money, and that is that. ...

Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

9. Our partnership with the NSC has been very loose. They asked us for some product, and we just came and dropped it off. We never really signed a contract or anything. To be honest, we did not really want contracts. When I first met with our brand people I said, we do not want to get too formal on this. Because originally they started talking about well we will put it in a product request and send them to you automatically. I just said no. The trouble when you get down to the contracts becomes that you either end up shipping stuff they do not need or if they run out early and need more and cannot get it because of contract stipulations – it just becomes a huge mess. So I said let's keep it simple, let's not create a whole bunch of bureaucracy. We set up a dummy account and called it NSC, and the product gets shipped to the people who are getting it there, and ends up being charged to that account. Now at first because some of the brand people have budgets to work with and they went oh, this could get out of hand. And I said well this has not got out of hand in three years, no it cannot get out of hand. So they have accepted what I have set up to go there. Now how long it will stay that way who knows? If there are any changes in our organization, we might have to reevaluate our product donations to the NSC at some point.

Aaron (Corporate Partner)

10. Our policies and contracts with our partners are very general. This is one thing our company prides itself in - my handshake with you will be good enough. We try to avoid a lot of bureaucracy. I would like to think we are doing that in terms of partnership contracts. Why say in fifteen pages with a lot of 'party of the first party', when you can do it in one page? If there is a misunderstanding or misinterpretation you sit down and you hammer it out. You clarify, but you do not have to get bureaucratic about it.

Dennis (Corporate Partner)

11. Being in a partnership with the NSC (City) is like an activity called 'caving'. Because there are no policies, stable arrangements, or systems to direct our interactions you have to go by feel in the dark, and often times you do not know where you are going. When you inevitably take a wrong turn in the dark, you get in trouble ... and what has resulted is that we have a master / servant relationship instead of a real partnership.

Steve (Sport Partner)

Recently, in the partnership literature, theories of exchange incorporating inclusion and trust or norm-based contracts have gained interest among researchers (Borch, 1994; Larson, 1992; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). In contrast to market or hierarchy-based governance (management structures), the concept of relational contracting stresses the open-ended aspects of transactions, where "...the exercise of choice (of contract content) is an incremental process, in which parties gather increasing information and gradually agree to more and more as they proceed" (Borch, 1994, p. 116). These types of
interactions differ from discrete market contracts where a formal agreement listing all obligations and duties is the reference point for the exchange. To some degree, the partners implemented relational contracting, although explicitly, were by in this case. Relational contracting suggests that previously established social capital will foster and strengthen IORs particularly since relational contracting stresses the open-ended aspects of interorganizational transactions. Borch (1994) outlined the application of the concept of relational contracting to strategic alliances, suggesting that "...the exercise of choice (of contract content) is an incremental process, in which parties gather increasing information and gradually agree to more and more as they proceed" (p. 116). This differs from traditional market interaction among organizations where a formal agreement listing all obligations of each organization is the reference point for the exchange.

Based on this view, the coordination principle has to be rooted in personal and trust-based relations among actors responsible for managing the exchange agreement. The shortcoming associated with relying on personal and trust-based relations as a foundation for organizational exchange is that changes in relationships among individuals in boundary spanning roles will inevitably entail a change in identity (i.e. employee turnover) and induce emotional, social, or financial costs. The absence of formal agreements can prove to be detrimental to any of the relationships if a period of instability is ever encountered. While, as Spekman et al. (2000) argued, a partnership is not predicated nor built on a contract, these formal support and control structures help guide the relationship among alliance partners.

Other formal support and control structures that help to sustain IORs include monitoring and reporting mechanisms designed to gauge the growth and attainment of the objectives of the relationship. In this case, the monitoring and reporting arrangements were founded on allocating and monitoring the use and value of the resources invested and the resources attained through the partnership. The means that partners used to monitor the relationship were based on frequent personal interaction, meetings of the Board and other subcommittees, and reports (i.e., annual, financial, bi-annual updates) and presentations provided by the focal organization (Quotations 1, 2, and 3 Table 6.5). As described in Quotations 1 and 2 (Table 6.5), the provincial government's relationship with the focal NSC required continual justification because the goals of the organizations were not fully congruent (i.e., developmental, grassroots sport focus compared to elite sport). This encouraged frequent reporting to
ensure continued support, particularly of the results of, and benefits to, provincial athletes. The provincial government as a partner was required to be accountable to its constituents, and needed to justify its involvement with the NSC, and demonstrate how other provincial organizations would also benefit from the government’s involvement with the NSC.

Similar to the previous section that addressed the contractual agreements employed to guide the relationship, the monitoring and reporting process among partners appeared to be loose and unstructured. For instance, over time, one of the Founding Partners’ contributions grew substantially. When the relationship was initially formed, there were no formal processes for monitoring and reporting on the status of the money invested. As the contribution grew, the expectation was that the organization would become more rigorous in its monitoring of resources invested (Quotation 4, Table 6.5). This suggests that the level of control is a function of the resource contributed to the relationship (i.e., if the amount is minimal relative to the overall resources of the organization, then the mechanisms for control will be negligible. However, when the amount invested is considered to be substantial then support and control mechanisms such as monitoring and reporting are expected to be higher). This suggestion seems to be supported in some Founding Partner and Corporate Partner relationships in this research.

**Table 6.5: Monitoring and reporting mechanisms**

1. Our strategy to keep our eye on things with this partnership was that I would sit on the board and I would monitor it. We have 105 provincial sport and recreation associations that we give a grant to every six months. And the board said, let’s treat the NSC exactly the same way as a provincial sport association, we will give them a cheque every two years so we don’t get into a lot of extra paper work here and a whole pile of monitoring and everything else. In return, they will submit an annual report, they will submit financials. It is a good system, but I guess it is camouflaged a little because if there was a review of this program every year, a logical question a board would ask, is what are the benefits of us supporting this thing? What have the results been? Where are (Province) athletes? But by doing it this way, they do not ask these questions because they do not say to basketball, where are all our (Province) athletes in basketball or in track and field? To them, our relationship with the NSC is just like another provincial sport association.

   Andrew (Founding Partner)

2. Because of the apparent difference in our missions one of the strategies we have adopted is that I ask (President) to do all of these presentations to our provincial organizations, provide information about the NSC, and talk about their programs. Because we could get a question from someone in the provincial sport system about why we are investing money into a national organization that does not have a primary concern for provincial athletes. If that happened, it could become quite political. Our budget is wide open to everybody. The PSOs could say why are we giving the NSC $137,000 a year, what are we getting out of this thing? So we have to justify it, and this way, we have an answer for that. We explain to them what the national organization gets out of it, what the kids when they left (Province) to train are now elite level athletes, some of our (Provincial athletes) are elite level too. This was part of the investment you made. And now our strategy is to open it up a little bit more so you can get some of your developing athletes in here to try to get them up that channel. So that is another one of the strategies you have to use – you have to nip that in the bud before the question comes.

   Andrew (Founding Partner)

3. There are written reporting mechanisms where the National Coaching Institute provides written reports, the National Sport Centres provide written reports through the coordinating committees. And then from a
From the focal organization's perspective there were no explicit and consistent means of overseeing their partnerships. That is, each partner had different methods and measures for tracking the progress and outcomes of the partnership. The relationship with Corporate Partners was particularly unstructured with respect to monitoring. In general, the Corporate Partners did not expect or implement any form of monitoring or reporting structure, which caused confusion and concern for members of the focal organization who reported that their efforts at communication were met with little in return (discussed in more detail in the section on communication and coordination below). One Corporate partner expected minimal monitoring and accountability for what was done with the product (Quotation 5, Table 6.5). According to this partner, how the relationship evolved over time needed to be closely monitored, as it could 'get out of hand' and ultimately become a drain on resources. However, the partner held the NSC staff responsible for monitoring the flow of product.

With respect to the partnerships among NSCs in the network, there were also very loose mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and control. Quotation 6 (Table 6.5) illustrates how no
formal structures existed for the partnerships among NSCs. The accountability among organizations in this case was based on professional integrity (i.e., honesty, responsibility, trust), and an informal agreement to work together.

Because of the well-documented potential for organizations to exhibit opportunistic behaviour in IORs (Birnbirg, 1998; Das & Teng, 1998; Jermier, 1998; Kanter, 1989), the function of support and control facilities appears to be highly relevant within the context of managing partnerships. Das and Teng (1998) argued, however, the notion of confidence in partner cooperation within an alliance comes from two distinct sources: trust and control (i.e., formal control). Das and Teng maintained that control mechanisms have an impact on the trust level, while the level of trust moderates the effect of control mechanisms. That is, if trust exists, the assumption is that formal control mechanisms are not necessary because opportunistic behaviour will not occur. Conversely, formal control mechanisms might inhibit the development of trust between partners. The findings from this research suggested that actors within partner organizations did consider the requirement for formal control facilities to guide the relationships and to ensure that objectives were being met, however, they often stressed the importance of trust-based relations in interactions among individuals and organizations. Thus, as acknowledged by Das and Teng (1998), this balance between trust and control is supported through the findings of this research. The role of trust will be discussed in more depth in a subsequent section in this chapter.

**Division of Costs, Risks, Returns**

According to Kouwenhoven (1993), one of the primary focuses and activities in the management of IORs, and potentially a major source of tension, is the division of costs, risks, and returns among the partners. Partners enter into relationships aware that it will cost something and will often provide something in return. Central to this expectation is the exchange and dissemination of resources that contribute to the achievement of the partnership's objectives. Of all of the activities related to partnership management, this one is particularly susceptible to political forces and issues of power and control. This section examines concerns with resource equity, quid pro quo (i.e., something for something, equal exchange, or substitution), negotiation, and resource allocation decision-making.

For some IORs, the division of costs and returns is more or less a transactional interaction with little risk associated. The NSC's relationships with service providers, organizations like physiotherapists or
massage therapists that provide outsourced expertise and skills, are examples of this type of relationship. With other partners, such as sport partners, network partners, and Founding Partners, the relationship is a little more complicated when the interconnected sport system funding structure is introduced.

The first area of concern for this element was how the partner costs of the interaction were assessed and distributed. The assignment of value to the contribution was often a key concern for the focal organization, the partner, and the larger organizational set. For instance, with one Founding Partner, the contribution was perceived to be unequal by the focal organization and other members of the Founding Partner group (Quotations 1 and 2, Table 6.6). This lack of support contributed to ongoing power and control dynamics within the IOR. For example, the exchange of resources was viewed as inequitable by the President of the focal organization (i.e. space, location, and services for the NSC in exchange for recognition, increased international profile, and $600,000 in service revenues for the partner). Of all the Founding Partners, the President believed the University was the largest benefactor from the relationship. As a consequence of this inequity, the President felt that the University should not have the opportunity to be Chair of the Board of Directors of the focal NSC (a position of considerable power). Because of these perceived resource imbalances, underlying tensions and frustrations existed between the focal NSC and the University partner as well as political dynamics between the University and the other Founding Partners. From the Partners' point of view, the University was primarily focused on serving its own interests, as opposed to working for the greater good of amateur sport.

Quotations 3, 4, and 5 (Table 6.6) specifically address the aspect of distribution or allocation of resources both within the dyadic partnership relationships and within the organizational set. Some Founding Partners were concerned with how the resource supply to NSCs would be affected, and how resources should be allocated once the new network identity and structure had been established (i.e., name and logo change from National Sport Centre (City) to Canadian Sport Centre (City)). Quotation 3 expresses the concerns of several partners regarding how the change might impact their organizations. The new marketing program, where NSCs would work to attract corporate partnerships as a group and divide the benefits among themselves, created anxiety for the NSCs with an established presence in the local and provincial corporate market (e.g., focal NSC). The perception was that the investment of effort and resources in a collaborative, national NSC marketing campaign was considered a possible risk for the
focal NSC in that this investment might weaken its own corporate funding resource base and erode some of its own status within the network. These dynamics emerged as a concern over the struggle for power, control, and the maintenance of stability. Quotation 4 provides an example of how the formula for the allocation of revenues and/or expenses would operate among the network. Quotation 5 is another example of how one Founding Partner organization weighed the costs and benefits of leveraging their partnerships to enhance the level of financial support for its partner organizations (i.e., NSFs and NSCs). In the end, the partners decided that the costs to work out an arrangement with corporate partners (i.e., legal arrangements, image issues, equity concerns) would outweigh the benefits.

Another source of tension with respect to the division of costs, risks, and returns was the dichotomy between regional and national interests. Quotation 6 (Table 6.6) demonstrates how a delicate balance existed between contributions that focused on national (i.e., elite) interests and regional (i.e., developmental) interests. This tension reflects the original objectives and strategies that motivated the partnership, and is directly relevant to the costs, risks, and returns associated with investing resources in the partnership venture. For instance, a Provincial Government partner is essentially making a long-term investment for the benefit of their province’s athletes who are at the developmental stage. As the investment does not immediately impact their desired outcomes, they need to regularly justify their involvement in the partnership. The investment of resources in the partnership needs to be assessed and valued appropriately.

A further key concern with the division of costs, risks, and returns was the actual allocation of the resources contributed by the partners. Quotations 7, 8, 9, and 10 (Table 6.6) demonstrate how financial resource contribution concerns had to be negotiated. In terms of how value is attributed to particular resources provided by various partners, Quotation 7 (Table 6.6) illustrates how one sport partner, a member of a training centre committee, managed the allocation of resource costs for the partners. For instance, partners in this case could not designate resources to a particular area, such as coaching or nutrition programs. This example illustrates the political nature of the negotiation process, and how a final and amenable agreement was reached. It also demonstrates the role that influence and political interests and agendas played at this stage of relationship interaction. In another example, a member of the focal NSC was reluctant to provide money to the University for them to do research not related in a
straightforward way to elite sport, fearing that they would not be receiving direct value from their partnership (Quotation 8, Table 6.6). Quotations 7, 8, and 9 (Table 6.6) reflect how the division of costs, risks, and returns to organizations in partnerships must involve a priori consideration. As a strategic action, the process of pooling resources, whether they be financial or in kind, allows the venture both more latitude in allocating resources to key operational areas, and more flexibility if any of the partners’ contributions increase or decrease over the duration of the relationship. This managerial activity requires an ability to understand organizational finances and have particular accounting skills to manage these relationships.

Additional costs were identified, in the form of planning time and human resources, when expectations and the division of authority and responsibility were not clearly articulated or fully understood. Quotation 10 (Table 6.6) expresses one NSC member’s concern that one of the Founding Partners assumed that the more money they contributed, the more managerial assistance they would obtain from the NSC (alluding to the comment made (in Chapter 5) from a COC member who characterized the partnership between NSC and founding partners as an employer – employee relationship). This issue is associated with partnership process concerns such as communication and coordination in the sense that expectations and responsibilities were not openly discussed among partners. While the focal NSC works to keep their existing Founding Partners satisfied (see Quotation 15, Table 6.6), tension is introduced because although these partners contribute a large portion of the focal NSC’s operating budget, the imposition on their activities, particularly when unanticipated, frustrates the NSC staff.

The allocation of resources to support the relationship is a critical managerial function in all partnerships. While this function is typically based on rational managerial intent, it is also underpinned by political forces and power and control issues. Factors such as turf protection, competing interests, perceived resource inequities, and influence tactics contributed to the some of the political tensions in these partnerships. The NSC (City) at the centre of this network needed to manage these dynamics. Whereas many of the organizations involved in this study indicated that a primary motivation to engage in partnerships was improved organizational efficiencies, the process of allocating resources within the partnership structure resulted in unanticipated costs in the form of increased time, travel, communication,
and coordination (Quotation 11, Table 6.6). As the partnerships evolved, the calculation of costs related to some aspects of partnership transactions became more detailed and formalized (Quotation 12, Table 6.6). For the NSF – NSC partnerships, because exchanges were based on tangible services and programs offered to athletes and coaches, this cost determination became critical in order to assess and evaluate accurately the value of the services exchanged.

In terms of the Corporate Partners, the division of costs, risks, and returns did not appear to be a major concern. One Corporate Partner, because of the nature of their product (i.e., pharmaceutical product), considered the risks associated with not monitoring its distribution (Quotation 13, Table 6.6) and the potential consequences of unmeasured or unanticipated growth in product distribution. For example, if there were a sudden increase in athletes requesting the product, or if developmental level athletes were able to take advantage of these services offered by the NSC (City), it might result in increased product expenditures by Vitamin Supplier on the partnership. This circumstance would then require a reexamination of the costs and benefits of the relationship itself. The focal NSC, however, was aware of the costs and risks associated with forming relationships with organizations from the corporate sector. Quotation 14 (Table 6.6) demonstrates the awareness of the need for tangible returns for the corporate partners in order for them to agree to contribute substantial financial resources to the NSC. This issue, expressed by a member of the focal NSC, relates to perceptions and expectations of what a corporate investment will provide and what they can provide to corporate firms in a partnership. This informant expressed the concern that there was not a well thought out plan to distribute the costs, risks, and returns within corporate – NSC relationships yet, and cautioned against asking for large financial contributions without a plan in place. Finally, in Quotation 15 (Table 6.6), another member of the focal NSC revealed the allocation of effort related to both forming and maintaining relationships. The view was that a great deal of time and effort is necessary to attract and establish relationships, particularly with corporate organizations, and that the subsequent effort required to maintain existing relationships was a good investment.

The political tensions and challenges associated with resource allocation in diverse organizations that are establishing a collaborative venture are characterized by power struggles, potential exploitation, and control dynamics (Spekman et al., 1998). Asymmetry was inherently evident as a factor in the
formation of many of the IORs investigated in this research. While the evidence for asymmetrical motives of partnership formation was implicit in this case (i.e., informants did not verbally express the desire to gain control or power within the network as a motivating factor for creating the partnership), power dynamics were unequivocally present, particularly with respect to accessing and controlling valuable resources.

**Table 6.6: Issues related to the division of costs, risks and returns**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | A successful partnership is when people say what can I give to make this better, and from a Founding Partner standpoint that is where our success is. At least five of our Founding Partners say that and act that way all the time. They say what can I give to make this operation stronger? One of them, however, says what can I get out of this? I think at times there is a concern with the lack of support from the [University]. Sometimes we really feel that there is a 'them versus us' mentality with this relationship. There was a real concern in the minds of some of our other partners that the [University] gets many advantages by us being here for very little contribution on their part. The contribution being space, and great location, and access to some services within their bureaucracy. But we give them lots of credit, and profile, and international recognition for the [University] and we buy about $600,000 worth of services from them. So I say they are likely the biggest benefactor in this relationship. Yes, we get great expertise and so on and they do help us but we likely spend over $600,000 here. So it is not equal in my view. And because it is not equal, my personal opinion is that they should never be allowed to be the Chair based on their contribution.  
Carl (NSC (City) Member) |
| 2 | The [University] is not an equal partner, yet they exert sort of a proprietary interest. I think at times, because they provide heat, light, space and administrative support, and that is worth something. I have some reservations however in that I am not sure that [University] as an institution is really committed to high performance sport - it is not central to their mission. I am talking about a high performance mission and the president of the [University] is saying well, why is it we have all these resources invested in the NSC, and we do not have enough money in our biology classes? Here we are doing this stuff for athletes and a lot of them are not even students here. And because our missions are a little offside, it becomes really difficult to get anything else out of the [University] in terms of resources. We have been clamouring for more space, and they have been really reluctance to give anything else to us.  
Allan (Founding Partner) |
| 3 | As a Founding Partner we have to be concerned about that the issue of the greater NSC network, losing our identity and losing our resource base, because we have laid some groundwork here. We don't mind being flexible, but we're not going to destroy everything that we've put together as six solid partners here right now working in the [Province] and [City] area and allow other smaller less developed Centres to take control of some of the resources we worked for. And [President] is very aware of that sensitive issue.  
Andrew (Founding Partner) |
| 4 | This is still a work in progress, but a good example is how we negotiated with [Corporate Organization] to give an amount of money to the network of NSCs. Then the question was, how do we distribute that amount of money. Another example was last year. The collection of Centres wanted to hire somebody to do a job for the whole network of Centres, so how do we charge that back to the Centres. That is a good example of the Centres coming together and coming up with a formula of what they feel is appropriate to share revenues or expenses. And that I think is solidifying the partnership. The formula that they had come up with is basically that 50% of the cost or the revenue is distributed equally among all of the Centres, and the balance is distributed on a formula where there are four larger Centres that get more national support, Toronto, Montréal, Calgary and Vancouver, and then there was to be with two smaller Centres, Atlantic Canada and Manitoba. So there are still some issues out there, there are still some inequities, but there are some pretty concrete things that have been done to move the whole system along.  
Kevin (Founding Partner) |
| 5 | I would not call it a conflict, but there was an issue with the COC marketing department. They were looking at options regarding whether they would go out and try to attract, let's say Chrysler as a sponsor. At the same time, the COC was also representing some of the NSFAs and they thought they could leverage those relationships with Chrysler to get a larger amount with some of the money then earmarked for NSFAs as well as possibly using it collectively for the National Sport Centres. Well it turned out to be too risky for the COC in
6. There is always tension between regional interests and national interests. I do not want to overstate that because I think there is a high level of trust and a strong willingness to work together within the Centre structure. But there is a natural tension from the perspective of certain national interests really trying to look at the overall importance of the Centre and its contribution to national goals and contribution to international success. Regional interests on the other hand, have concerns that may be more developmental or focused on what may be best for their own region as opposed to what is best nationally. I think those tensions come out in how much money people are putting in and so it is a fair distribution or commitment of financial resources for what they are getting out. I think some people think that regional interests should be providing more.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

7. So we sit in a room and we do a matrix of contributions. On the left hand side of the ledger if you will, are all your incomes -who is bringing what to the table. So we talk about coaching salaries for example. One partner might say I am putting my money into coaching. And the provincial association politically says I want my money in coaching. [NSF] also says I want my money in coaching. Then I have to say, hey guys, we have other expenses that we need to address as well. That is a really good example, because that is exactly what happened. Once you put the money on the table, you have to subscribe to one of the original tenets of partnership, and the original tenet is that the whole is essentially greater than the sum of its parts. It is my responsibility to let them know that whatever you put on the table here, we are not tracking these dollars. If you can get them to buy that then you can go to the next step. Sometimes, an institution like a university pays a portion of a coach’s salary and they need to be able to show that, and that is fine and you need to be flexible enough to let them do that. So we go all the way across and then you have the budget, and the budget is presented on the income side as cash and value in-kind. And equally on the expense side, it is represented as cash, expenses, and expenses in-kind. But all of the partners need to know what the bottom line is, that if you spend this money here, you don’t have that money to spend over there. Make the call, but know that you cannot dictate where your particular resources are going to go.

Corey (Sport Partner)

8. I understand that some of the money we provide to the (X/University) goes to research. The only consolation I have is that it is sport-related research, it is not steel balls in knees of cats or something totally non-related like that, so at least we are getting something out of our contribution.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

9. I think it is important that the partnership concept is not that CAC is responsible for coaching development, and Sport Canada is responsible for something else, and COC for something else. It is very much a partnership concept where all of the funding partners put their money into the Centre budget and the money is not earmarked for any particular purpose. It is earmarked for the overall Centre plan. Having said that, the Centre partners have certain expectations of what is included in the Centre plan, and our expectation is clearly that there is a coaching development component to the Centre program, but we are also supportive of the need for the athlete services, for sport science, and sport medicine, for the overall concept of what the Centres provide. So we are trying not to pigeon-hole each of the partners or the finances into particular areas. We are trying to say the concept of a NSC is to improve high performance sport, to provide improved services to coaches and athletes, to improve athlete development and coach development. That has been an important point and really an important learning as we’ve gone through it, because some of the other partners in some of the Centres have felt that the support that is coming in from any one partner does not cover all of the expenses in that program area. So, CAC is putting $100,000 into the Centre in (City), but the Centre in (City) spends more than $100,000 in coaching. But that is not the intent that there is not that kind of relationship that Sport Canada is putting in their money to support the full plans, so a significant amount of their money is going into coaching rather than into sport sciences, and athlete services, and so on. That took a little bit of discussion for people to understand that aspect of the partnership, but I think it makes it a much stronger partnership.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

10. I think the COC has more power in deciding how to allocate resources because since 1985 they are the ones who said we will look after career services, although it is a nominal point there. They have filtered most of their funds into the National Sport Centres for the purpose of focusing on personal and professional development for athletes, although not all their money goes to the holistic area. But that is really what they
want us to be doing as Athlete Services Managers. So they would have more power to determine how things should be in that area. I think that is an assumption that if they give us more money, we will help facilitate some of their needs that were not, in my view, part of the partnership agreement in the first place. Maybe we have not discussed that openly on the table if that is part of the relationship in exchange for their quarter of a million dollars – it has just been assumed on their part. As a result we did not anticipate this and did not incorporate it into our plans or plan our time around it. And when the crunch comes, we are torn we have to provide service to our partners, but we have our own program, we are getting athletes into professional development. And now they are asking us on top of this. Joan (NSC (City) Member)

11. We have seen in some sports that the maintenance of the NSC relationship was costly to organizations from the point of view that it took a lot of resource time, workforce time away from traditional aspects of our business to servicing that relationship through meetings and correspondence, developing documentation and reports, and so on. Richard (Sport Partner)

12. When I came here [President] was giving [Sport Scientist] big money to run the sport science support program. But they had no way of really accounting for what it costs to run this. They could not determine how to assess it or justify it. They did not know. Then I actually developed the fees and charges system. So if we do a blood test we now know that this is the hard cost, this is the consultative cost, this is how you debit it, this is the money you do. I helped to set that whole mechanism up and now we know exactly how to allocate the costs for this service to a sport organization in a partnership with the NSC. Corey (Sport Partner)

13. The one concern you always have is: can it mushroom to a point where things get very costly and be a drag on your revenue... Aaron (Corporate Partner)

14. In a partnership you cannot always bring equal elements. It is like a partnership between husband and wife - you kind of hope it is 50/50. Sometimes it is more give and take through the journey, but what you strive for is that equal give and take. So yeah, I am asking you for $25,000, [President] is asking for a million, well, that scares me. They give us a million, OK, what are we going to do with that million? We do not even have a business plan. How are we going to use that money? Let me tell you, they will want to know how that money is being used. We do not have that in place. Tax receipts are something we can give them. Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

15. From a private sector standpoint it takes 18 months to two years to try and cultivate the relationship. Once you have them on side I think it is relatively easy to keep them on side. With our Founding Partners for example we get a million dollars. In my mind, I am going to devote a lot more time to keeping them happy because I think it is easier to keep them happy and keep that million dollars than it is to go out and get a new million dollars. I do not have to do very much I believe to keep that million dollars coming. ... Now that is because they are committed to sport and that is what they are mandated to do. At the same time, I want to go get a new million dollars, but it is going to take a lot more time to get that new million dollars. And when you look at your time, I think about getting a million dollars from a company I would likely have to put in more time to keep them happy than getting a million dollars from the government. That is not necessarily the way it should be. So I think those percentages are likely true on the corporate side: seventy-five percent in establishing a partnership and twenty-five percent or less on its maintenance. Carl (NSC (City) Member)

Processual Elements

Processual elements in partnership management include interpersonal interaction such as communication, coordination, consultation, trust, and conflict resolution. These interpersonal, intraorganizational, and interorganizational aspects are fundamental to any type of business interaction. In this case study, processual elements of partnerships introduced tensions, but also served as the bond...
that held together the individuals and organizations. This section describes internal and external coordination processes as well as the function of trust in maintaining partnership relationships.

**Internal / External Coordination**

Effective coordination among network partners has been viewed as a key processual function, closely linked to many other aspects and outcomes of the collaborative process including trust, organizational learning, human resource allocation, communication, and well planned and coordinated resource exchange systems (Eden & Huxham, 2001; Hutt et al., 2000; James, 1999; Mohr & Spekman, 1994; Spekman et al., 1998). For instance, trust is built through effective communication, and good communication helps to further develop mutual trust among partners. Good communication (i.e., with multiple partners this could include the following aspects: done in a timely manner, listening and interacting with partners, ensuring that clear and concise information is exchanged between all partners, being honest, and ensuring that partners understand the messages communicated to avoid misunderstandings) in pursuing a cooperative strategy is critical. Poor communication however is often identified as one of the reasons for partnership inertia or failure, due in large part to the time required to manage the logistics of communication, the reluctance to give proprietary information to partners, and the lack of efficient systems to share information in quick and efficient manner among organizations (Eden & Huxham, 2001; Kanter, 1994).

Child and Faulkner (1998) explained communication as an event that occurs between both personnel working jointly on the partnership (internal) and the partners (external). They indicated that internal and external communication needs to be coordinated seamlessly for the partnership to function effectively. Information exchange is more complex than the flow of data from one firm to the other. Open communication in an alliance context implies a greater depth and intensity of information exchange and the ability for relevant information to cross permeable organizational boundaries in numerous places (Spekman et al., 2000). Internal and external communication between partners is almost universally agreed upon as a key aspect in effective organizational coordination (Mohr & Spekman, 1994).

First, I will examine external communication among partners in this study. Not surprisingly, all informants in this study claimed that one of the most important features of maintaining effective partnerships was good communication (Quotation 1, Table 6.7). For the most part, members of the focal
organization and its partners claimed that they were satisfied with the frequency, quality, and nature of communication taking place. Many informants, the partners as well as the focal NSC, felt that their good communication contributed to the strength of their connections (Quotations 2 and 3, Table 6.7). Talking to partners as equals, clarity, consistency, and frequency were all reported as being essential for successful partnership interactions.

Quotations 4 and 5 (Table 6.7) demonstrate one of the challenges of coordinating and communicating in physically dispersed partnerships. The issues and concerns of geographic distance and the challenges of communicating across provincial boundaries were discussed. Quotation 4 explains that technological capabilities have helped to maintain a consistent level of communication among partners, but that nothing can replace face-to-face interaction. This informant suggested that while the mandate of NSCs is never overlooked, the daily operations of the organization often take precedence. When NSC partners meet to discuss issues a shift in thinking from individual organizations to the network is required and that is often a challenge.

In another example of geographic proximity, the NSC and one of its Founding Partners showed how location allowed some partners to interact more frequently than others (Quotation 5, Table 6.7). The focal NSC and the University were able to interact on a more frequent basis because they were in the same building. This allowed the President, and other focal organization staff, to meet with or communicate in other ways more easily and frequently with this Founding Partner. If one assumes that frequent communication between two partners leads to a better working relationship, what is surprising about this finding is that while the focal organization reported higher levels of interaction and communication with this Founding Partner than with the others, management and strategic issues previously discussed continue to exist (e.g., allocation of roles and responsibilities, support and control mechanisms, and division of costs, risks, and returns (Quotation 6, Table 6.7)). Quotation 7 (Table 6.7) highlights the frustration felt by the University representative on the Board of Directors in terms of the quality and frequency of communication between the focal NSC president and himself. The informant attributed this to the level of decision-making power he had within the institution, and the personal dynamics among individuals.
However, informants were aware of the controlled flow of information among partners. Partnership managers used their discretion to determine the information exchanged. One reason this occurred was to mitigate an increasing demand for more detailed information that would require more time to share with each of the partners. This information filtering suggested that only high-level (i.e., strategic) information is shared, leaving the details of the relationship out of the IOR discussions. As Spekman et al. (2000) claimed, there needs to be discretion in the information that is shared among partners because sharing proprietary information can weaken a partner’s position if that information is used to further the cause of the benefiting organization. This is common in alliances, and open communication among partners does not mean sharing and giving free access to all information. In this case, the focal organization president reported withholding information for the purposes of decreasing complexity among partners, particularly the Founding Partners (Quotations 8 and 9, Table 6.7). The informant also acknowledged the time consuming nature of coordinating communication among partners and the question of what aspects of information to share (i.e., financial, operating, program).

Quotation 10 (Table 6.7) reflects a common dilemma faced by staff members of the focal organization concerning their relationships with Corporate Partners. Focal organization members commented they were uncertain about how to best service Corporate Partners. The typical response was that communication with these firms in the form of updates, athlete results, annual reports, letters, and invitation to events, was the strategy employed to manage these partnerships. Although there was a keen desire to increase the engagement of Corporate Partners in the relationship, members of the focal NSC expressed frustration that their regular communication efforts were not being reciprocated by the Corporate Partners. There was concern that the Corporate Partners do ‘not want anything in return’, that they felt ‘out of the loop’, and that they did not attend sporting events to which they were invited. Perhaps, using Austin’s (2000) typology, this reflects the philanthropic stage of the partnership. From the Corporate Partner’s perspective, the partnerships were fulfilling the function of corporate social responsibility and that was the extent of the relationship. In return, they were satisfied to receive a tax receipt, and know that they contributed in some way to the training and development of Canadian amateur athletes.
With respect to internal communication and coordination, informants in this study suggested that it did affect organizational operations of the focal NSC, as well as relations with their partners. For instance, Quotation 11 (Table 6.7) from a member of the focal organization suggests that the flow of information within the organization posed a barrier to effective partnership management. Because there are connections at various levels across partnering organizations, effective network collaboration required coordinated communication among top management who developed the broad goals of the partnership and monitored progress, and middle managers / operational personnel who developed plans for joint activities, and carried out the day to day work of the alliance (Hutt et al., 2000). The different units within the NSC (City) all interact with many of the same Founding Partners, Sport Partners, Network Partners, and some Corporate Partners. Given the number of partners involved with the focal NSC, internal coordination and communication is critical.

Internal operational coordination became an issue for some sport partners who expressed frustration with their interactions with NSC (City), particularly with respect to formal control structures and reporting mechanisms, which impacted decision-making and interorganizational processes (Quotations 12 and 13, Table 6.7). Communication difficulties were also reflected in Quotation 14 (Table 6.7) by a network partner who reported that external coordination of the network was difficult to attain because of inefficiencies in internal communication and coordination.

**Table 6.7: Coordination and communication between partners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The only way to maintain a partnership is to constantly cultivate it. Good communication and openness are key. To be available and open are also important.</th>
<th>Frank (Sport Partner)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[President] and I are on the phone just about every day. Oh yeah, we talk. Lots of communication. He is a great communicator. And that is one of the reasons that this partnership is so strong.</td>
<td>Andrew (Founding Partner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You talk with people not to people - to me that is critical. You try and understand their side of it. You must be clear, you must be consistent, you must have regular communication, you must discuss and importantly, you must listen. And it all takes time. But this open communication is what I feel has made our partnerships work.</td>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A willingness and an ability to communicate regularly are critical in a good partnership. And I feel we do a pretty good job of that most of the times. In terms of practically implementing it, I think there needs to be a technology requirement because phone conferences and e-mails will only get you so far – particularly when you are spread out across the country like we are. I think we would need whether it is through our computers or whatever, some sort of regular face-to-face interaction. We always get more done that way. And it is a strange type of thing because you live your own life within each centre and you have your projects and you have your challenges and so forth. Then when we are together we have this whole other layer of challenges and things we have to do that while they are associated with our daily work - really, they are way beyond your daily reality. You have to do them in kind of a removed setting and they are a totally different</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

230
level of work that you have to do. Sometimes making that separation is tough and communicating on all those levels is even tougher.

Jerry (NSC Network Partner)

5. I talk to our partners fairly regularly. I would say based on location, we are talking to someone in the University every day. Whether it is the person who sits on our board or whether it is the Dean or whether it is the Athletic Director or manager of the (speed skating facility), everyday I am talking to people here. And I think part of that talking is building relationships because you are always looking for something - financial resources, information, developing contacts whatever. Or they are looking for something - more and more they are looking for something.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

6. In terms of lack of information I think what contributes to this lack of information is maybe not keeping our partners informed or perhaps our mission is unclear or there are unclear expectations regarding what we can do. I will use a university example, perhaps it is not an unclear mission it is that their mission is different than our mission. Their mission meaning research, teaching, is different than ours which is educating coaches and providing service to elite athletes. But at the same time we have to work together. But we are not that interested in each other's overall missions, and sometimes that affects how we communicate with each other.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

7. Regular communication is important. [President] and I do not have a regular reporting or meeting relationship. [President] would rather deal with the dean or president instead of me because I am just the Director of [Department] here. So there are situations where he has gone directly to the Dean about issues. I try not to let that interfere with my relationship with him, but I do wonder why come to me at all? Why don't you just go there? So I think direct and regular communication is really important. I feel that is probably a weakness in our relationship. The level of communication could definitely be better between us.

Randy (Founding Partner)

8. As far as getting information out there, I do not share detailed information with the board. Part of that is a strategy on my behalf. I just think you can share too much because the more information you give some partners, the more they want, and then it becomes dicey and very time consuming.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

9. In terms of information sharing, I know we have not purposely withheld anything from them [the federal government] but I am cautious how much we give them. And no one has said anything about that. We give them financial stuff more regularly than we give program reports. And I am going to continue that way until I am told otherwise.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

10. We do have a regular quarterly newsletter that we send out to our corporate partners. But there has never been a lot of contact between them and us. We invite them to events and things and most often they do not come. For example, one of our corporate partners is so difficult to get a hold of, we continually let them know that we really appreciate the subsidies they provide our athletes with, but there is just never any communication. They never ask for anything. Until recently, it has actually been six years since we have been involved with them, and we are the ones who always instigate the communication. We sent them out an invitation to come for lunch, but it is tough to get them involved. We always ask our corporate partners - do you need anything, how can we make this partnership better, is there anything we can do for you? No. Even with some of the contacts I have been in regular communication with over the last little while, there is nothing they want in return. So it is hard - when you talk about a partnership you do want them to be in the loop. That is why we send them the “Week in Review” and the newsletters. We are also thinking about setting up a communications arrangement where we plan to send out personal letters to our corporate partners on a quarterly basis. A personal letter to say this is what we are doing. We are also thinking about incorporating this tactic just to help them feel that we really do care about their involvement and we would like them to see our facility, come in for a tour, we would love to take you around and do things like that.

Linda (NSC (City) Member)

11. I find even among our own staff, communication is not where it could be. And that really affects how we work with our partners. Sometimes you just get caught up in your own area and say, this is so important, I have to do this, and therefore I don't have time to talk to [President] or [Marketing staff] or anyone about what is going on in their areas and with our partners. And they do not have time either - they are also very busy. But all our partners are so connected, the challenge is to find out the specifics about the issues, and then ensure follow up. I can tell you it is tough to know who does what – to coordinate this system. The
other challenge is that there are so many levels, with the president involved in some aspects, sending letters and communicating with the partners and me dealing with another person at the same organization at a more operational level. If you deal with the president on one issue, maybe there is another person involved in coordinating the logistics and in sport, you probably know all of these people on different levels. There is a real coordination process that needs to be undertaken which we really have not done.

Joan (NSC (City) Member)

12. I would say the NSC (City’s) internal communication needs some work big time. Where I am as a sport partner, I find the weaknesses in our relationship are especially within the communications aspect. I mean communication and good coordination of services is a huge part of our relationship as a partner – it should be a priority, and they are very weak on that, I find.

Isabelle (Sport Partner)

13. There are so many inconsistencies in our communication with the NSC. Often, I cannot get the same answer twice. Their internal coordination system is not effective, there are too many people to deal with and hoops to jump through and it holds up decisions. Furthermore, the decisions that one person makes often get overturned by someone else. Which is why things are so inconsistent – and as a partner, it is hugely frustrating and very confusing to deal with.

Steve (Sport Partner)

14. Well I think it is because of the immersion that everybody has been in their own particular situation we have seen instances when internal communication within Centres has not been as good as it can. This Centre and our athlete services manager are not totally aware of everything that they have on their plate and as a result, we are not working as closely as we need to. Again, this is a result of our coordinated efforts not being as far along as we need them to be. In the next few years the network of NSCs are going to become closer and the relationship will become more formalized. It is just not efficient the way it is now. The eight of us now are doing things very independently operationally which cannot be efficient. And we are trying to put ourselves together but there does not seem to be a lot of willingness or eagerness for us to do that for some reason that I do not understand. Internally not within our group, but really from some of our Founding Partners as well.

Jerry (NSC Network Partner)

While many of the focal organization’s partners were satisfied with the level, intensity, and frequency of communication, there were both internal and external coordination and communication issues that affected the relationships with some partners. Informants indicated that there were hurdles to overcome to improve their communication and coordination activities. These challenges manifested themselves in various ways including tension (i.e., dissatisfaction with decision-making processes and time), resentment (i.e., appointed representative does not have decision-making power and President questions his role), political dynamics (i.e., skipping chain of command within organization), and confusion (i.e., uncertainty and misunderstanding regarding the roles, responsibilities, and activities occurring at other organizational levels and within different departments in the focal organization).

Interaction and exchange exist within partnership management, coordination, and communication. If these processes are not successfully implemented, performed, monitored, and evaluated, the other structural and processual systems are less effective or worse, break down. Open and effective communication and information exchange provide partners a basis on which to make decisions, develop control and support structures, allocate resources, and assign roles and responsibilities.
Communication is not a one-way discussion as some individuals reported in this study, it is sitting down and exchanging information and developing strategies that work for all parties. Coordination and communication are constant, ongoing issues for partnership management.

**Mutual Trust**

Informants in this case reported that mutual trust was an essential element in both the formation and maintenance of their IOR. For the most part, they reported that mutual trust was high in their relationships. For example, the common refrain, ‘there is a lot’ or a ‘high level’ of trust, was expressed in most of the interviews conducted (Quotations 1 and 2 (Table 6.8)).

Respondents indicated that trust was developed in several different ways over the period of their interaction. One NSC member indicated, in Quotation 2, that these included communicating, being transparent, adding value, and showing action. Trust existed (prior to partnership formation) having been developed through favourable past personal and professional associations. Because of the interconnected nature of the sport delivery system in Canada, many of the actors in this network had worked together or socialized in the past. Quotation 3 (Table 6.8) illustrates how trust was engendered by the NSC President as a result of the length of his tenure, and his vast professional and social networks in the sport system. The Board gave the President room to make decisions and take action because the Board (i.e., the partners) trusted and respected him. This trust and respect was built up through the relationships with various individuals from partner organizations, and is also a result of his experience and knowledge. In Quotation 4 (Table 6.8), a Founding Partner demonstrates how his history with the new president of the OLO – a key member in the NSC partnership - contributed to the level of confidence and trust that this individual would add value to the relationship. According to this Founding Partner, other partners needed to get to know this individual before they could feel some assurance regarding his position and how he would impact their group. Favourable past association in either a personal or professional context helps build and develop high levels of trust among partners (Spekman et al., 2000).

Another key factor contributing to high levels of trust in this partnership was the focal organization fulfilling their commitments through action, and by demonstrating leadership and responsibility. Quotation 5 (Table 6.8), from a Network Partner is representative of the views of many informants. Furthermore, the level of expertise of the people around the table, gained from national and
international sporting experience, served to ensure that greater trust would be formed among organizations in this sport example.

Quotation 6 (Table 6.8) alludes to the levels of complexity in IORs and how, on some levels of interaction, trust can exist, while on others it is a more delicate issue. In this case, trust is linked to an understanding of the overall objectives of one Founding Partner (the federal government) and their actions with respect to their organizational strategy for the formation of NSCs across the country. The relationship between President and Founding Partner (board representative) was reported to be strong, and based on a foundation of openness and trust. With the politically elected representative, however, the trust did not appear to be as strong due to prevailing political directions and objectives that might compromise the focal NSC's position within the network.

A Founding Partner demonstrates how socializing with partners is a good way to encourage interaction, become more familiar, and foster trust on a personal level (Quotation 7, Table 6.8). According to this Founding Partner, a foundation of trust and understanding gained through social connections with the partners will serve business interactions when the time comes. The social connections and interactions demonstrated in these IORs corroborate research findings of Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven (1996) and Borch (1994) who claimed that norms built through social relations should serve as stepping stones in trust-based interactions among actors. In other words, interpersonal interactions will help partners build individual level trust.

With respect to Sport Partners, informants reported that a high level of trust and positive interaction among organizations had developed over time. Quotation 8 (Table 6.8) expresses how one sport organization and the focal NSC have become closer and more interconnected over time, based on interactions, strategies, and structures. Furthermore, the experience and knowledge of the focal NSC contributed to positive interactions among these organizations. This informant also reports that past favourable associations have contributed to high levels of mutual trust. Another Sport Partner (Quotation 9, Table 6.8) explains that business risks can be mitigated with trust. High levels of trust permit confidence that a partner will be good to their word.

Quotations 10, 11, and 12 (Table 6.8) all relate to trust within Corporate Partner relationships. Quotation 10 relates to support and control structures and the balance between formalizing these
structures and operating in an environment of trust. As previously examined, formal contracts and policies did not define the relationships among the focal NSC and its Corporate Partners because, as the Vice President - Marketing reported, there was a high degree of trust among partners that the financial and other resources exchanged would be used for appropriate means (i.e., directed to athletes and programs). The partners felt that formal contracts and agreements would be restrictive and limiting, preventing the relationship from adapting to change. A focal organization member expresses concern in Quotation 11 (Table 6.8) when trust is placed in the individual as opposed to the organization. For the most part, the Vice President - Marketing was responsible for forming and managing partnership relationships with Corporate Partners. However, in the period that this research was conducted, this individual had resigned her role as Vice President - Marketing, and the responsibilities were divided among organizational members. This quotation therefore, shows the apprehension felt by one of the individuals who was assuming some of the responsibilities of Corporate Partner management. Quotation 12 (Table 6.8) expresses the favourable past association aspect of trust development. The individual from this partner organization has worked with members of the focal organization on previous occasions and has developed personal relationships, thereby improving trust within the partnership.

In terms of operational level interaction, trust was strained between Network Partners due to the presence of strong egos and personal level interactions (Quotation 13, Table 6.8). Trust was impacted by individuals holding various positions and the power struggles in their relationships. There was a perception that individual egos negatively impacted trust, that the partners did not listen, that they did not feel it necessary to gather information to find out how the 'best' NSC conducted its business, and that they did not extend formal introductions when they first assumed their organizational role. Thus, at this level of interaction, building trust among organizations could be initiated by suppressing individual egos and making an effort to exchange information. This is distinct from higher management level interaction where it was reported that trust was high among partners. The disparity is a significant dimension in the maintenance of IORs, and an important aspect that contributes to the complexity of managing these partnerships.

Table 6.8: Factors influencing development of trust among partners

| 1. I believe that there now is a lot of trust between each of the partners in this network. |
| Andrew (Founding Partner) |

235
2. I think there is a high level of trust with our corporate side. I think there is a high level of trust both ways with our sport partners but that did not happen overnight. It has taken time. So now I would hope, based on the relationships we have developed with people, that there is a level of trust. To me if there is not trust there is not a partnership, so those to me are almost synonymous. If you do not have trust you do not have partnership. And if you have a partnership then you have trust I would say. How do you build trust? I think you share information, you share resources, you're open, transparent, clear, you demonstrate value, show action.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

3. [President] has been here for about six years and has built up a lot of trust over that time. He had an extensive background and a broad social network in [Province] before taking this position. It has helped him immeasurably, knowing all the people he knows and the things that he has done. He has always been in sport and so he has developed relationships with people from Sport Canada, from the Coaching Association, from the COC, and Olympic Legacy Organization, as well as from our organization. You develop that history and you have that track record, and once you get that built up over a period of time and you are consistent with your track record and consistent with your decision-making, people say run with it – they place their trust in you because of it. That is why we have faith in partnering with him. The reason it works here is because [President] has so much respect from the Board members and they trust him. If he phones them up he always puts the goods on the table. And if he explains to them what is happening and gives them a recommendation, 99% of the time they will accept that recommendation because he has all the background, he has the information. It might be questioned a little bit, there might be a couple of things added to it, but the whole philosophy has not changed. As a result, I feel that this organization runs very very smoothly. We are lucky to have [President] because he is so well respected.

Andrew (Founding Partner)

4. At first, the trust thing was a bit challenging because everybody was just getting their feet wet. But now for example, with Olympic Legacy Organization a new president has been appointed whom I have known for 10 or 15 years. So I did not have any problem with him but you know, other people have to get to know him on a personal and professional level. First of all, he is not from [our province]. We are different here and maybe a little proud - why are we bringing somebody in to head up Olympic Legacy Organization from outside the province? That is the way some people think. Now, he has been with us for about two years. So there is not any animosity I think, but the partners just wanted to ask a few questions and get to know the guy and stuff like that to be able to trust him in the larger group.

Andrew (Founding Partner)

5. I think trust is still developing but it is at a high level because right from the beginning we have had quality people around the table and certainly [President’s] leadership has helped to bring us together, and that has a lot to do with the level the trust is at now. He is the most transparent person you will find. We have access to each other’s books, each others minutes, each others’ programs, and anything else that we are doing so that also definitely helps in building the trust. There is a real high level of trust that I think that we all realize we have been created to be a network not to stand alone. The other thing that contributes to trust is that we have all been assigned certain duties as far as the collective goes and although we have not necessarily been perfectly timely with it because we are short on resources, we have followed through almost on every occasion and done our jobs as required by the collective. That has helped build the trust.

Adam (NSC Network Partner)

6. I think that there is a high level of trust in the partnership yes, but I think my answer and probably [President] might say it depends on who you are talking about – which part of the partnership structure in our situation, the government. Because I am not sure he would say there is the same level of trust with Secretary of State [head of Sport Canada] and what decisions he might decide to make and that he would not just go ahead and make them unilaterally. Whereas he would probably have more confidence that (our department) would not make those decisions unilaterally. So, I think it depends - on a personal level, there is no question that there is trust, but there are dynamics as well. I do not think there are trust issues among any of the other partners that are here at the table. I think there is a recognition that there are some uncontrollable forces at various times. But the trust issue to me is that I can talk comfortably to [President] to say you know, I really think you need to find a way to talk to the Secretary of State and provide him with some thoughts and views because he seems to be developing the thought that we should be going X direction. [President] would have that kind of trust that sort of interaction would happen with me.

Iris (Founding Partner)

7. Once you break down those barriers and you get the trust factor going in there, and you socialize a little bit, things start working a lot better. We do a lot of social, people-oriented activities with our partners now, like
all the partners of the NSC might go to a (NHL) hockey game together. [President] always has a couple of functions during the year, like he has a Christmas party coming up that people get together, so there are certain ways that you can break down these barriers when you talk informally. You can really build interpersonal trust, and then it works a little better when you get back around the table to do business.

Andrew (Founding Partner)

8. A huge amount of trust has developed between [our sport organization] and the NSC over the period of our partnership, and we have become much more interdependent in our systems, strategies and structures as a result. This partnership is really good. And it is really good because there is a lot of experience in high performance [sport] in this community and in this organization, and that is a stated objective of the entire provincial section that the (City), the University, have all been involved at some level - there is a big history of it working together, developing the system, and building relationships.

Corey (Sport Partner)

9. It is trust or confidence in your partner that makes you want to do more with them and for them. And you go to your partner for a favor they have the confidence that OK, I am going to do this for them but you are going to deliver. So I am not wasting my time, because if we are in it for mutual benefit it will not be a waste of time for either of us. For example if I go to [President] in [City] and say listen, this club really needs another coach, we do not have the dough right now but in a couple of years we will. So if you can front it for a few years maybe 70%, we'd do 30%, and then we'll flip that over in a few years. It is going to be potentially rewarding but we just cannot do it now. We need it right now. You know somewhere down the road I want [President] to be able to say, you're right, I can see it, or perhaps say, I'm not even sure that I see it but I know you guys are doing your homework and I trust you. I am in. And if it fails, I know you did your best because you always do. It has to get to that point where you just inherently say, here is your allowance; go. And here is a buck because you are a good kid and I trust you.

Richard (Sport Partner)

10. I think we have been very lucky in that we have not had to enter into any complex contract, or any contract for that matter with our corporate partners. They just give us the money, and there is that trust. There is a huge level of trust. I do not see the need for us to ever start putting together more formalized agreements it just complicates things. Most of our corporate partners give us money and say use it wherever you need it. Some specify their money for certain of our programs. For both, the message we leave them with is trust us, this is not going to go into administration, it is not going to go into my salary. We will redirect that down into programs. There is a huge level of trust with our corporate partners.

Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

11. I would hope that our trust with our corporate partners is not based only on a relationship with one individual. I guess the concern I have is that the relationship may be with [Vice President - Marketing] and not the National Sport Centre. I think that is a problem to a certain degree, because we would hope that even if she is not here to foster that relationship, that does not mean that the corporate partner would no longer be interested. They might say we have really enjoyed her at our meetings and it is great to go golfing with her, whatever. And that is because she is a celebrity in this town. To me as someone who is dealing with these corporate partners, that is definitely a concern. I do not know if we know how do we overcome that. How do we make sure that it is a partnership, that trust is developed with our organization and not just with one person.

Linda (NSC (City) Member)

12. Trust works both ways too. For instance, with [Vice President - Marketing] and the President there, I have known the two of them for the last 15 years and you just build that sense of trust over time.

Dennis (Corporate Partner)

13. I would say most of the Athlete Services Managers of the NSCs have a great degree of trust between them. But there are some NSCs where I would say the trust is minimal. I think that it is mostly due to personalities and egos, where they think that what they have in their province is the be all and end all. As a result, some NSCs have not been open to listening to what has evolved and what has developed. For example, when one new NSC opened, their athlete services person came here and gathered information. She went to a couple of other operational NSCs as well. And same with most of the Centres. But I would say that never happened with one particular Centre and that is the one that has conflict with all of us. None of them have ever done any cross Canada orientations when they got the job to gather information and introduce themselves. I feel this has really affected the trust between our organizations.

Joan (NSC (City) Member)
This section has explored mutual trust as a construct connected to many structural and processual elements within partnership interaction. For instance, trust was linked with formal support and control facilities such as policies and contracts as a means to forego these mechanisms. Trust was also related to the confidence that objectives and strategies set out by partners would be met. Thus, when the federal government decided to create more NSCs across the country, trust appeared to be eroded to some extent between the focal NSC and the federal government. Another example of trust as an attribute of partnership management was its connection to communication and coordination. This study demonstrated how trust was closely related to open communication and how close interaction and coordination contributed further to the development of trust among partners. Furthermore, trust was a function of favourable past association, and actors in this study demonstrated numerous business and professional connections and interactions. In this case study in general, respondents felt that trust served as an insurance policy against their partners' opportunistic behaviours.

For many smaller enterprises, such as the ones examined in this study, cooperative relations often mean an unanticipated burden on limited management resources. Motives of efficiency sought by partnership formation were underpinned by the objectives of economizing the transaction costs among organizations. One of the key problems with alliances, however, is the risk of opportunistic behaviour from participants. A transaction cost economics perspective takes opportunistic behaviour for granted, and recommends administrative or hierarchical solutions to prevent it when dependency is as strong as it is within strategic alliances. The prevailing view was that through formalized contracts and centralized authority, problems appearing within cooperative exchange relations may be solved (Borch, 1994). However, as a governance mechanism contracts would limit partnership flexibility and adaptability, and constrain action. A contract is defined as an explicit understanding or obligation to act in a certain manner in the future. Norms built through social relations should serve as building stones in trust-based contracts among actors. Because of the limits of formal control methods such as contracts and policies, theories of exchange have begun building on the inclusion of trust- or norm-based contracts and have gained interest among researchers (Larson, 1992; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). Perrow (1986) claimed that economic relationships also contain elements of mutual trust, dignity, and exchange of a social and
personal kind, and that factors such as social norms, personal relationships, or trust should be reflected in the forms of governance.

These social norms, personal relationships, and high levels of trust, lead to the development of social capital (Brown, 1998; Burt, 1997). Although the concept of social capital has not been used extensively in exploring IORs, it has been used to examine how strong ties among individuals contribute to an individual’s access to resources, and social, economic, and political opportunities (Baker, 2000) in other settings. Organizations, as well, can use social capital to benefit in the form of information, ideas, business opportunities, power and influence, emotional support, goodwill, trust, and cooperation. In this study, social capital, or the resources available in and through personal and business networks (Baker, 2000), served to make these partnerships operate even when the performance of the venture was not what was expected or despite forces that could potentially damage them.

The development of social capital might be a function of attachment among the partners, or the binding of one party to another (Salancik, 1977). Attachment among partners develops through experience in the collaborative relationship and through investments the partners make in the relationship over time (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997). When the partners have developed a strong attachment, inertial forces may block the pressures for change in the relationship (i.e., shifting power, ending the partnership). If firms have worked together in the past, they will have a basic understanding about each other’s skills and capabilities. As was shown in this case, partners have developed commitments to each other because of a social or professional level relationship that existed prior to forming the partnership. Attachments in collaborative relationships may be the result of individual or structural ties that reflect the prior history of the relationship. Individual attachment reflects the socialization of individuals during their involvement in exchange activities, and is important early in a relationship, but diminishes in significance as the relationship persists. Individual attachment may be represented by personal relationship among partnership managers. Such managers may initiate a relationship based on personal knowledge and trust that in the early years of the partnership provides a buffer against the normal pressures of collaboration (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997).

The concept of attachment suggests that personal bonds can lead to norms of group inclusion and escalate the commitment by parties to a cooperative relationship (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997). As
shown in this research, many partnerships were formed based on the personal bonds of friendship and respect - a key contributor to the commitment shown by partners of the focal NSC. An important factor for partnership managers to consider is that the likelihood of the termination of IORs decreases over time because economic exchanges become transformed into socially embedded relationships. One implication of this phenomenon is that because individual attachments are closely related to the tenure of individual boundary-spanning managers involved in the partnership, a high turnover of managers can lead to a loss of relationship continuity and a reduction of individual attachment (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997; Weiner & Alexander, 1998). This was one of the concerns of the focal organization members who worried about the status of the Corporate Partners’ relationships because the Vice President - Marketing who had formed the attachment with these organizations was leaving her role.

Structural attachment reflects the history of organizational investments made since the formation of the partnership. Structural attachments should increase with the duration of the relationship as formalized procedures replace some of the coordination of partnership activities through personal contact (Inkpen & Beamish, 1997). This may also explain why structural aspects, including support and control facilities such as contracts and policies, were not as highly emphasized in many of the relationships among partner organizations in this case study. Continuing business relationships often become overlaid with social content that generates strong expectations of trust and forbearance. Thus, attachment can lead to the formation of partnerships that have an existing stock of ‘relationship assets’ or social capital, and a high degree of interpartner trust.

**Underlying Political Issues**

Throughout this chapter, the political dimensions of partnership management have been presented within the framework of partnership processes. Dividing responsibility and authority has inherent potential for political activity. Partners will want to secure benefits for themselves and / or their organization. Similarly, the division of costs, risks, and returns is also another area where political activity was evident, particularly with one of the Founding Partners (the University). Uncovering these political interactions within the context of partnerships builds on the existing literature and contributes to a better understanding of some of the aspects that might hinder partnership interaction. The following paragraphs provide examples of different underlying political issues uncovered in this research. By no means are
these examples exhaustive, however, they illustrate challenges that can emerge as a result of political activity within partnerships.

Political issues were evident at many different levels within this case. At the Founding Partner level, in particular with the federal government, political decision-making impacted NSCs and illustrated how decisions can be made unilaterally, despite operating within a partnership model. Since the federal government was responsible for providing the majority of resources to the NSC, its power and control was evident through political interactions. The expansion of the network of Centres across Canada introduced the relevance that partner interests play, particularly when one partner controls valuable resources. Another example of the influence of this particular partner in the system related to their expectations. In Quotation 1 (Table 6.9), Iris discussed how the control lies firmly in the realm of the government with respect to particular decisions. Thus, differing interests and concerns, and importantly control of resources, appeared to have activated political dynamics within NSC (City)’s partnerships.

The power held by the federal government in the partnership was particularly evident in a national coordinating committee meeting I attended. The participants (primarily NSC presidents) involved at the meeting frequently sought approval from the Sport Canada representative. The need for constant validation of directions, decisions, and actions left me with the impression that Sport Canada’s endorsement was important, and perhaps perceived as necessary by the NSC presidents. One might be led to believe that the dependence of NSC’s on government funding for their operations contributed to asymmetrical power relationships and further political activities.

At the provincial government level, Andrew discussed concerns related to the expansion of the NSC network and how it impacted his organization. His view was that for his organization’s particular interests (amateur sport, grassroots), the growth of the network would be detrimental because it would mean that athletes who were already receiving the bare minimum in terms of financial assistance and support by way of programs and services would be receiving even less. However, as a ‘minor player’ he had no political power or leverage to resist the stronger federal government initiative (Quotation 2, Table 6.9).

One relationship in particular demonstrated greater ‘political’ activity than others. The University’s relationship with the NSC appeared to be characterized by tensions and conflicts from the start.
The perceived lack of commitment (although the Faculty of Kinesiology was committed, there was very little institutional commitment from the University as a collective), inequity in resource contribution (compared to their perceived return on investment), and the bureaucratic structure leading to frustration and confusion regarding achieving what needed to be done, all contributed to these political tensions (Quotation 4, Table 6.9).

In addition to the issue of commitment and resource allocation, territory and turf protection concerns were raised by informants. The role of the NSC (City) and its perceived authority in the Canada’s high performance sport system manifested itself in political interactions with NSFs leading to extensive dialogue and negotiations between partners (Quotations 5 and 6, Table 6.9).

Overall, the control of resources contributed much to the political dynamics and influences occurring within this case. The unique situation of having the federal government as a powerful partner (because of its control over financial resources for sport in Canada) involved in a collaborative structure such as the NSCs, led to a great deal of political activity. Political issues within the context of multi-sectoral partnerships can contribute much to our knowledge of the challenges involved in managing collaborations.

Table 6.9: Examples of political interactions between partners

1. In this NSC, there are a number of conflict and power concerns. For instance, there is a need for this NSC as a recipient of national funds to undertake some things in terms of our social policies. Most of which aren't a problem. But official languages is one which has not been fully resolved. Certainly if this NSC had its way, it wouldn't do too much in the way of providing any kinds of French language services, but because they receive half a million a year in public funding, there are some issues there because there are some athletes in some sports from Quebec that come here to train. That is one example where there is some potential for conflict and it sort of deals with the power side in the sense that there may be a degree of unequalness to the partnership where we say sorry it is not good enough for you to do nothing you need to have these things available in French, you need to have some staff with French language capacity. I think that is going to continue to be an issue because it is a tradeoff well: how much money do we spend doing that, and is it worth spending X thousand dollars to translate these documents when only three people are reading them. And well if there is a network of Centres, aren't the Francophone athletes in Atlantic and Quebec, but that always does not work. If the water polo team is here, that is where you train. If the oval is here, this is where you have to go.

   Iris (Founding Partner)

2. We have no choice. We have no power to change anything. We just have to do what the bigger partner says.

   Andrew (Founding Partner)

3. When we met with the [University] to discuss the terms of the partnership they were looking for certain benefits, but I wouldn't define that as the same definition of partnerships that we talked about earlier. They were looking for heavy subsidization of their sport science program and put that as a strong requirement of them being involved, and to begin with, they really wanted to control the program. They didn't see the need to set up a separate administration. They proposed that the program could come under the Dean of Physical Education, and that was quite different from what we had in mind. We had in mind a partnership that would bring together the different
elements of high performance and we saw the [University] as one of those partners. But to put them in charge of the program I think would have really restricted the focus of the program to high performance.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

4. [University] is not an equal partner, yet they exert sort of a proprietary interest I think at times, because they provide heat and light and space, and that is at a premium. I'm talking about mission for high performance sport, and the president of the University is saying well, why is it we have all these resources invested in the NSC, and we don't have enough money in our biology classes, and yet we're doing this stuff for athletes and a lot of them aren't even students here.

Allan (Founding Partner)

5. One of the biggest challenges that I have is forging relationships with the NSFs, because they don't understand what we're trying to do. In some cases, if they have their own program they feel a bit threatened, and don't understand what we're doing. They see it as duplication and then they behave in ways to protect their territory like not trying to cooperate with us and resisting our efforts.

Laura (NSC (City) Member)

6. A big concern was in the relationship with the NSFs and how they were going to fit in. The concern was that they were losing their authority with respect to their own athletes in that sport. And because of that perception of loss of authority, the relationship was really worn down between NSCs and the sports. They wanted to ensure that they were not losing any power in forming a relationship with the NSC.

Edwin (NSC (City) Member)

Conclusions

If collaborations were clearly defined static entities, considerable efforts would be needed to nurture them through their early stages but their maintenance would not be a priority. However, because collaborations are not static processes, the nurturing process must be expected to be required indefinitely. Partnership management processes and structures are often overlooked in the IOR literature, and few theories have been used to explain partnership interactions, except perhaps power and control theories (Das & Teng, 1998; Emerson, 1962; Hardy & Clegg, 1999; Harrigan & Newman, 1990; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Oliver, 1990; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Provan et al., 1980; Skinner & Guiltinan, 1986). The results of this study suggested that partnership interaction processes are important to examine to potentially improve their efficacy. By understanding how motivations and dynamics between partners shape interaction, partnership managers can better assess what aspects of the relationship need to be fixed, better managed or terminated in order to ensure a good return on the partners' investments. Many of the dynamics of organizational interaction and exchange are an outcome of the original motivations for partnership formation. Furthermore, with an understanding of both the motives for formation and how these influence the dynamics of interaction, managers and researchers can be cognizant of the outcomes and results of partnership exchange.
Data from this study demonstrated that many incongruities and asymmetries existed in the dynamics among organizations. For instance, uncertainty was expressed by several informants regarding roles, objectives, and strategies of the partnership, however, formal mechanisms for support and control appeared not to be emphasized. Another example of problems associated with partnership management was the ambiguity of representativeness faced by organizational partners, where individuals who play diverse roles in different organizations involved in the partnership expressed the internal struggles and tensions they experienced. Finally, some partners indicated that incongruity of objectives led to further tensions among partners. For example, the provincial government’s emphasis on grassroots sport development and the focal NSC’s emphasis on elite sport appeared to be conflicting. While they may not be mutually exclusive, the provincial government partner needed to continually justify why they were involved as a partner with the focal NSC. Similarly, the NSC - University partnership demonstrated key differences in organizational missions leading to friction. These ambiguities and asymmetries can lead to partnership strain and be destabilizing to IORs. While no organizations involved in the partnership appeared to have counterproductive or ‘terminally incompatible’ overall strategic goals and objectives, both chronic and acute issues were evident. Not unexpectedly, interpersonal- and resource-based tensions were evident at different times in each of the partnerships examined, further contributing to the challenges faced by partner managers. Tensions arose among the partner organizations and the focal organization (i.e., the dyad), and network dynamics influenced relationships in this organizational set (i.e., federal government decision to form more NSCs across Canada affected resource distribution, introduced new players into the system, and further diffused valuable sport resources such as athletes, coaches, and sport organization partnerships). It appeared that these tensions were evident as a result of both structural and processual factors. The findings from this research concur with the results of a study conducted by (Frisby, Thibault, & Kikulis, in press) who found that several aspects of IORs in leisure service organizations contributed to what they termed ‘under-managed’ partnerships. For instance, they claim that “developing partnership management plans that clearly stipulate roles, expectations, reporting mechanisms, and procedures are also needed to build capacity” (p. 20).

Contrasting propositions regarding resource scarcity also contribute to complexity in this case. The suggestion that resource scarcity motivates organizations to cooperate with each other is present,
but so are the power dynamics indicating that resource scarcity prompts organizations to attempt to exert influence or control over organizations that possess the required scarce resources. Many of these complexities contribute to tension and the unstable and insecure nature of many of these relationships. The relative importance of the relationship to partners also influences the management dynamics among organizations (i.e., a large partner with more resources such as the federal government or a corporate partner, may be less reliant on the partnership for survival, whereas a smaller nonprofit organization such as the focal organization is highly dependent on the continued support of the federal government).

Furthermore, this study shows the challenges faced by sport organizations that make it difficult to manage the broad range of partners. These include the significant time investment required, lack of staff training and education in partnership management, and the growing number of organizations that want to be partners, or as Spekman et al. (2000) suggested, the ‘feeding frenzy’ around alliance formation draws some organizations to the alliance because it is the thing to do.

While these findings did not suggest that the focal organization lacked the capacity to manage their partnerships, they did imply that there was a tenuous balance among many aspects of partnership management. Because many of the partner organizations are fundamentally implicated in the daily operations of the NSC (i.e., sport partners interact with NSC on various athlete or team issues frequently, network partners share information, programs, and resources regularly, and some Founding Partners such as the University have regular dealings with the focal organization), the management of these partnerships takes on a very large role for the focal organization.

An important aspect to explore in the future is the change in partnership relationships over time, what causes that change, and how that change influences partnership dynamics and interaction. As a dimension that might further add to the complexity of the partnership, this is a critical component to investigate. Even within this case, several of the partnerships changed over the period of interaction, with the result that some partners ended up contributing more resources and becoming closer (i.e., the COC started their relationship with the focal NSC with little investment, and now contributes a great deal more, in terms of financial and human resource support). What was presented in this dissertation is a snapshot of partner interaction. What it does not address is the evolution in the relationships over time, nor does it explore how the relationships have changed over the period of interaction. These are
important questions that future research needs to investigate. As a starting point, this study can serve as a point of reference investigating this shift in partner interactions.

One dimension that served to reduce some of the challenges and the tensions that inevitably arise when forming partnerships was the pre-existing presence of trust among organizational members. As was found in this case, and supported in the literature by several authors (cf. Borch, 1994; Das & Teng, 1998; Hutt et al., 2000; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Ring & Van de Ven, 1992), interorganizational collaborations often develop out of one-to-one interactions or interpersonal relationships among individuals in the organizations concerned. Because of previous interactions and past histories, actors involved in this partnership demonstrated that varying degrees of trust existed before a more formal organizational-level collaboration was initiated. According to Huxham and Macdonald (1992), a partnership may be regarded with suspicion if it does not develop from existing relationships, unless the organization has an explicit mandate to create a partnership. This might be one factor that explains some of the NSFs' initial reticence to form partnerships. Initially, there was mistrust and deep suspicion about the motivations of the organizations within the new NSC network. However, the pre-existing interdependence among individuals subsequently allowed trust to build between the partners. As Huxham and Macdonald claimed, it is essential to pay attention to the establishment and development of trust among collaborators at varying stages of the relationship since this is the foundation of interaction. Varying dimensions of trust should be considered, for example, trust in the commitment, understanding, and ability of other organizations; trust that autonomous actions will be in the spirit of collaboration; trust in the willingness to share credit with partners; and trust in the benefits of working together.

What prevented these organizations from abandoning the partnership when confronted with politics and power plays? I believe there were two primary reasons. First, many of these relationships were mandated, that is, the organizations involved, particularly the Sport Partners, Network Partners, and some Founding Partners, had little choice in working together. Understandably, this directive introduced different dimensions and dynamics of partnership interaction. The second reason was the high level of social capital that had been built prior to partnership formation, and developed throughout the eight-year partnership interaction as the NSC grew to its current state. A summary of the key partnership
management elements discussed in this chapter are presented in Figure 6.2. This graphic representation illustrates the connections and impact of certain elements such as trust on the others.

In the next chapter, the potential results and outcomes of partnership interaction and how effective partnerships were evaluated are described.
Figure 6.2: Reframed summary of partnership interaction variables

**Preconditions**

- Interdependence
  - Structural
  - Strategic

- Presence of a Network

- Convergence of Objectives
  - Help amateur sport
  - Help own organization
    (not necessarily same, but not incompatible)

**Partnership Formation**

- Collaboration
  - Broker

- Competition
  - Broker

**Partnership Interaction**

**Structures**

- Objectives & Strategy
  - Shifting objectives as relationships evolved (e.g., focus on elite vs. equity). Source of tension as it affects resource acquisition and exchange.

- Div. of Responsibility & Authority
  - Roles & resp. loosely structured. Ambiguity of representativeness – actors representing several organizations in different ways.

- Support & Control Facilities
  - Little evidence of formal contracts, policies, & procedures regarding partnerships. Heavy reliance on trust.

**Processes**

- Mutual Trust
  - Trust based on past history, previous interaction. Development of social capital sustained relationship through tensions and conflict.

- Internal Coordination
  - High reported communication and coordination. Communication levels associated with mutual trust.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Necessity</th>
<th>Reciprocity</th>
<th>Asymmetry</th>
<th>Legitimacy</th>
<th>Efficiency</th>
<th>Stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 7: 
EVALUATING PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES AND EFFECTIVENESS

The appropriate selection of partners, diligent planning, and competent relationship management are essential to maintain long-term, productive interaction among organizations. Often, the fundamental measure of the effectiveness of a partnership rests upon the achievement of goals or the measurable outcomes identified at the outset of the relationship or throughout the period of interaction. These goals involve the assessment of several groups or actors including the community, the collaborative network, stakeholder organizations, and individuals (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). A difficulty in evaluating effectiveness is that frequently unforeseen or unintended outcomes emerge throughout the period of interaction – some beneficial and others detrimental to the relationship. In this chapter the key actors’ desired partnership outcomes, as well as how these outcomes were connected to the initial motivating factors are examined. Building on this, consideration is given to whether the key actors felt they were achieving their objectives through the relationships they had formed. It became apparent during data collection that what individuals perceived to be important in the relationship, and the reasons for forming it were critical in understanding the relationships that had been established and why they appeared to endure. During many of the in-depth interviews, the discussions concerning what made the relationship effective became a key consideration. In organizational documentation, such as the annual reports produced by the focal NSC, a tally of athlete performances including Canadian records, world records, international medals (at world cups and world championships), and Olympic medals was offered as evidence of the effectiveness of the organization and its justification of the contribution of partnerships in achieving these objectives. The purpose of pursuing this line of discussion was not to measure empirically or evaluate the effectiveness of the partnerships (i.e., were the relationships established between NSC (City) and its partners putting more athletes on the podium at international competitions?), but to probe what individuals involved in the day-to-day interaction considered to be important elements of their partnerships’ success or failure. This chapter therefore, will highlight some of these perceptions and views and discuss opportunities for examining the construct of effectiveness in future IOR research endeavours.
To elicit and organize the informants’ points of view regarding outcomes and effectiveness, I chose to use a framework for partnership and network effectiveness offered by Provan and Milward (2001). It became clear in the analysis of the data that partnership effectiveness was measured at different levels. Therefore, one of the issues raised in this chapter deals with level of analysis. Provan and Milward (2001) presented a framework for evaluating public-sector organizational networks, and they suggested that there were three levels of analysis when considering pressures to perform from a broad range of stakeholders. These levels are community, network, and organization / participant. While these levels are related, each has its own set of effectiveness criteria that must be considered. Since the organizational level of analysis was the primary level of investigation for this study, a brief discussion of the community and network levels will be offered followed by a more in-depth analysis of the organization / participant criteria of effectiveness. The focal NSC was embedded in a larger sport delivery network consisting of eight other similar constellations of organizational sets (i.e., other NSCs and their partners) as well as other sport organizations servicing athletes, coaches, and competitions at provincial, national, and international levels. As a result, the community, network, and organization / participant levels of analysis were clearly considered to be important by the informants in this study. To clarify further, the term community was defined by Provan and Milward (2001), who conducted their research on health care delivery networks at a local level, as being a physical location, such as a municipality or local district. For this study, I have chosen to define community as a group of interests, in this case, the sport community, at a national level including all stakeholders with a vested interest in elite sport delivery, because while the effects of a particular sport organization may be felt within a civic location, the community that benefits is not restricted geographically. At the second level of analysis, Provan and Milward (2001) identified the network as a group of organizations functioning in a coordinated manner to service identified clientele (e.g., in their case, the homeless or mentally ill (Provan, 1983; Provan & Milward, 2001)). For this research, I have designated the network level in Provan and Milward’s definition as the organizational set, meaning the group of collaborating private, public, and nonprofit organizations that provided programs and services to elite athlete and coach clientele. One caveat was that the understanding of network used by Provan and Milward (2001) assumed interaction between not only the focal organization and the partners (i.e., dyadic relationships), but among all of the collaborating
organizations (as described in Chapter 4, Figure 4.1). The third level, organization / participant, considers each specific organization and its clients involved in the larger network.

It was argued in Chapter 5 that organizations enter into alliances for multiple reasons: to meet specific objectives such as improved efficiency or increased stability, to gain power or control over other organizations, or to enhance their legitimacy. For the alliance to prosper and achieve these objectives, all partners must establish metrics for success, be able to quantify and track their accomplishments, and spot and address emerging problems. Partnership performance 'scorecards' should provide a balanced view of the partnership including a consideration of the objectives that are being met, and the sustainability of the partnership. Other factors to consider include monitoring the status of the strategic, financial, organizational, and operational objectives, and identifying resources that contribute to sustainable competitive advantage and program success. Two questions are essential in the assessment of partnerships: what is effectiveness for the organizations involved, and what are the criteria for the measurement of their effectiveness.

The framework used to describe the phases of collaboration in Chapter 2 presented the development of IORs over time, albeit in a linear fashion. However, in practice checks and balances, assessments, measurements, and evaluations do not occur only in the final phase of collaboration, nor does the attainment of the relationship's objectives occur at the 'end' of the interaction, nor does it indicate the success, or termination of the relationship. As evident in many of the dyadic relationships investigated in this research, shifts and changes occurred throughout the period of interaction and often influenced other relationships within the network. For example, the COC's role in the partnership with the focal NSC expanded over the eight years. The COC increased its funding contributions, as well as its involvement in the athlete services area in particular. Therefore, as stakeholder management theory (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983) would suggest, each partner might base their determination on whether they viewed the partnership as effective on a number of different criteria, expressed here as questions: is the relationship serving the objectives of their organization in particular (i.e., is the partnership helping them achieve their organizational goals); and because these organizations are part of a larger sport delivery network, are the relationship activities improving the performance of Canadian athletes on the international stage? The focal organization, serving in the key role of coordinating and administering the
activities of a number of partners from different sectors with different motivations for being involved, would need to conduct a separate assessment of each of the relationships based on its type and objective in order to determine the achievement of goals and outcomes.

The following constructs were developed based on the classification of commentary made by informants during the in-depth interviews as well as on an assessment of organizational documents, including partner agreements and literature that set out goals and objectives. The question that was posed to the informants of the focal NSC and its partners and that will now be considered is how was the effectiveness of the relationship assessed? In the following discussions, I am not suggesting that I have attempted to examine each of these levels of analysis in-depth, that would be beyond the scope of this study, but that these considerations were raised by the informants involved in this study as being relevant aspects to consider. This will provide fodder for future researchers exploring the impact that partnerships have had on the Canadian sport system.

**Community Level Criteria of Effectiveness**

While each dyadic relationship may be considered successful on its own, all of the multiple relationships may not meet the system's larger objectives, and as such needs to be considered. It may be that the individual relationships are effective, but that the overall efforts of partner organizations in the sport system, or community, are not achieving their objectives (Provan & Milward, 1995). Conversely, many of the individual relationships may be unsuccessful, but the overall objectives of the sport system are being met, making the evaluation of effectiveness even more challenging. This section will examine the goals and criteria of effectiveness identified by members of the study's organizational set as they relate to the larger Canadian sport delivery community.

At the broadest level of analysis, interorganizational networks can be judged by the contribution they make to the communities, or client groups, they are trying to service. The community in the sport system consists of individuals or organizations who financially support elite sport such as the Federal Government, the COC, CAC, NSOs, PSOs, local sport groups, corporations, the media that report on amateur sport, the general public (or taxpayers) (Table 7.7 at the end of this chapter summarizes the constituents at each level of analysis and the criteria of effectiveness). These 'Principals' monitor and fund the network and its constituents (Provan & Milward, 2001). Clients are participants who receive the
services provided by the network – in this case, the elite athletes and coaches benefiting from the programs and services of the sport system. Criteria for effectiveness at the community level, according to Provan and Milward (2001), would include factors such as the overall cost (i.e., in this case, the expenditure to achieve medals at international competitions, and the impact on other primary social considerations or communities of interest such as education, health care, or infrastructure development (the concern being that other social issues are more important to address than elite level sport)). Another criterion for effectiveness, according to Provan and Milward (2001), is the development of social capital within the community. A final criterion at the community level is whether the perceived problem is solved (i.e., are athletes able to thrive, is an athlete-centred approach being used, are they following international doping guidelines, are they winning more medals and performing better at international competitions?).

It is difficult to attribute the measure of community level success to the efforts of the focal NSC, indeed of all of the NSC networks on the overall outcomes of the system. Other variables might have influenced the outcomes of Canada's elite athletes over time, such as increased or decreased governmental funding, and the efforts of other countries to improve their amateur sport systems. For example, Australia, frequently Canada’s point of comparison and rival in Olympic competition, invested millions of dollars of government funds in their sport system during the years leading to the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000. As a result, Australia's Olympic standings increased steadily from a 15th place finish in 1988, to a 10th place finish in 1992, to a 7th place finish in 1996. At the Sydney Olympic Games, the Australians finished 4th overall in the medal count. Over the same period of time, Canada did not meet its medal expectation of continued improvement, placing 24th in 2000 (down from a previous standing of 21st at the 1996 Games) (see Table 7.2). However, in addition to Olympic medal counts, other criteria of effectiveness for the high performance sport system became relevant including personal bests, and top 8 finishes in world competitions. In Quotation 1 (Table 7.1), one informant discussed the difficulties and dichotomies in assessing the effectiveness of the high performance sport system. Measuring effectiveness by the criteria of athlete improvement or personal best is a function of how athletes in other countries perform in comparison.
Other partners viewed the issue of measuring effectiveness as a challenge. For stakeholders such as the federal government, metrics for evaluating effectiveness included the number of carded athletes serviced, the number and type of services and resources provided to athletes and coaches, and the degree of improvement in international performance (Quotation 2, Table 7.1). For this Founding Partner, the process of evaluating success was a government-driven initiative to ensure accountability and demonstrate some investment benefit. The questions, why are we doing this, are we getting anywhere, and are we seeing an improvement in the level of performance of Canadian athletes drove the accountability framework to justify spending on elite sport. This reflects the diversity in the evaluation measures and processes employed by the stakeholders (Provan & Milward, 2001) in the sport community.

Quotation 3 (Table 7.1) discusses the challenges within the sport delivery system with respect to investing resources and clarity of the outcomes. The direct investment of resources, however, does not necessarily guarantee the desired outcomes. Similar to the issues raised in Quotation 2, measuring the criteria of effectiveness is a challenge because of the varied areas of emphasis from different stakeholders. Furthermore, political pressures to satisfy a number of stakeholders was viewed as potentially interfering with achieving the desired outcomes. Political pressures may resulting in multiple and sometimes competing outcomes include for instance, satisfying grassroots and developmental interests, or ensuring all services offered in both English and French languages, or providing a foundation for career transition for athletes, or ensuring gender equity. Meeting several interest groups needs can be problematic, especially since they may not agree on what constitutes successful community level outcomes.

**Table 7.1: Community level measures of sport network effectiveness**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It has always been a problem - how do you measure whether you are doing a good job in this sport system? It is a continuing discussion and there is a broad spectrum of answers to that question. One spectrum being how many gold medals did you get at the Summer Olympic Games? At the other end of the spectrum, are our athletes improving overall and getting personal bests. What we saw in Sydney is that yes, we have many athletes who are really improving, but they are improving at a slower pace than athletes from other countries, so that does not fit your podium test. That whole thing is still being debated in the sport community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edwin (NSC (City) Member)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2 | Across government, we are generally starting to get much more accountability-based and are beginning to develop evaluation frameworks. We are doing that for the NSC network as well as for other multi-sport organizations. We need to do that as part of the process for Treasury Board who beyond the political process, hold the keys to the bank vault and say Sport Canada is accountable for the $80 million dollars it is handing out for the good of sport. Things we would consider then for effectiveness are the number of sport organizations serviced, what percentage of carded athletes are using the Centre, what kind of services are |

254
provided, what kind of improvements in performance have there been, what kind of resources can coaches access, and the holistic service of athletes. Our challenge has been trying to identify some of those key things and how they can be measured. Are they actually getting help with life skills development and the ability to transition after they retire? I do not think sport organizations generally have measured these things that effectively. A few organizations are starting to design evaluation frameworks but we are at the thinking stage and there needs to be the transition to doing it and being accountable for it. In government for years, it used to be Sport Canada reporting back to Treasury Board and saying yes, we expended the money, here is the list of bodies that it was expended to and yeah, we won some medals and these athletes were carded. We made sure that everybody followed Treasury Board guidelines and we know that this sport did not have their meeting in Florida for a week - all of those kinds of accounting things. Finally somebody said are we getting anywhere? Why are we doing it? That is what we are trying to get to now.

Iris (Founding Partner)

3. An effective partnership has to begin with clarity of outcome. What is it that you are expecting at the end of the day? How are you going to measure your outcomes? Then I think it becomes pretty simple. If you deal by investing $150,000 a year, you should be able to produce 75 widgets, and if you produce 75 widgets, you have met your expectations. If you have only produced 40, you have to re-tool. You have to think about it from that perspective. One of the issues that confuses sport a little is the diversity of outcome. One advantage of the NSC concept is that it should be focused on performance, on high performance. We do not want to hear about, well, I am not sure we are 100% clear on what success would be. If, for example, every Canadian international athlete finished 8th, but four years after their sport career was over they were fully employed successful business people or professionals earning six figures a year, would that be success? I am not sure it would. Part of me says if they have that kind of talent, they probably would end up being successful regardless, but they finished 8th in their athletic career. We think we should be on the podium. We think we are capable of that. In sport, we prefer to be successful and politically correct while we are doing it. It is a lot to ask. To me, the hallmark of our Olympic success is not to be politically correct, it is to be excellent. Political correctness is nice, it is good, it is great. But excellence is why I am in this business. I would rather have our athletes on the top step of the podium, and have Don Cherry as the chef de mission if that is what it takes. And the NSCs have some capacity to resist the homogenization of Canadian sport by focusing on elite performance.

Allan (Founding Partner)

One of the key measures of effectiveness at the community level of analysis was the achievement of medal performances at international competitions such as world championships and Olympic Games. A compilation of the results of Canadian athletes was conducted over a period of 15 years, from the 1988 Seoul summer Olympic Games to the 2002 Salt Lake City winter Olympic Games. The data in Table 7.2 highlights Canada’s Olympic Games’ medal counts and overall standings since 1988. Shaded boxes represent the years where NSCs were operational and serving athletes and coaches. The summary indicates that overall, Canadian athletes’ performances at the summer Olympic Games have declined in terms of medal counts over this period. At the winter Games, medal performance has remained relatively stable, or improved marginally.
Table 7.2: Olympic Games medal count and standings for Canada since 1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Olympics</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Bronze</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Overall Standing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988 (Seoul) Summer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 (Albertville) Winter</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992 (Barcelona) Summer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 (Lillehammer) Winter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 (Atlanta) Summer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 (Nagano) Winter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 (Sydney) Summer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 (Salt Lake City) Winter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(International Olympic Committee, 2003)

As mentioned previously, medals at Olympic Games, although the ultimate objective, represent only one potential community level measure of effectiveness of the Canadian sport system. Another measure of effectiveness frequently used was medals won at world championship events. World championship medals are highly desirable and a major objective for elite athletes and coaches as these events occur more frequently. Obtaining information regarding world championship performance was challenging as there was no sport database which gathers and compiles such extensive information in Canada. The information presented in Figure 7.1 was provided directly from Sport Canada, and highlights Canadian medal results at world championship events since 1990. This information provides only raw medal counts and does not compare the medal standings from other countries; therefore we do not have a good context for comparison yet. These results also suggest that there has been no significant improvement in overall medal count over the past 12 years, with overall totals remaining relatively stable over this period at an average of 25-30 medals per year. The absence of this kind of comparative information points to a weakness in Canada’s performance measurement system.

These medal counts can be used as benchmarks of how well or how poorly the sport system is doing on a broad level in comparison to other countries that are the main competition. Medal counts have become one of the most important measures of effectiveness for many individuals involved in the elite sport system. Measures such as personal bests and top eight rankings still remain relevant, but the focus has shifted over the past two years to an emphasis on winning medals. For example, recently, in a departure from tradition, the COC, in conjunction with the NSCs, set clear medal objectives for future Olympic Games. The stated goals for elite athletes in the sport system are to finish 8th overall at the
Canadian Medal results at Worlds 1990-2002

Limits and Considerations:
Annual variations in medal results are due to a number of factors, notably:

a. World Championship (WC) frequency is sport-specific. Some sports have annual WCs, notably most winter sports (e.g., speed skating, figure skating, curling). Most summer Olympic sports have annual WCs except in Olympic years. Some sports have WCs every 2 years (odd years) and some every 4 years (most summer team sports such as soccer).

b. Number of medals/events per sport: there are 32 Summer Olympic sports (300 events) and 12 Winter Olympic sports (78 events), plus a dozen non-Olympic sports (water ski, racquetball, rugby, squash). The number of medal events per sport ranges from 46 in athletics, to 1 in baseball.

c. Changes in frequency: starting in 2001, the aquatics sports (i.e., swimming 32 events, diving 8 events, synchronized swimming 2 events, and water polo 2 events) moved their World Championships from once every 4 years (even year between Summer Olympic Games) to every 2 years (odd year).

d. In Summer Olympic years, the number of World Championships is vastly reduced, since none of the 32 summer Olympic sports held a WC in that year (1992, 1996 and 2000).
funding amateur sports, and 61 percent said governments should be spending more on amateur sports, but only five per cent said the focus should be on developing Olympic champions (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2001).

The evaluation of how coordinated systems, such as the one investigated for this study, contribute to overall community level outcomes is essential. Examination of these outcomes at all levels of analysis (i.e., community, network, organization) will contribute to understanding how the effectiveness of the sport system as a whole can be improved. Potential for future research in this area is significant. The focus should be broader and consider community, network and organizational levels of analysis.

**Network (Organizational Set) Level Criteria of Effectiveness**

In order to service its target clientele effectively and remain economically viable, the network itself must become a functional interorganizational entity. As the organization that maintained and oversaw the growth of this network, the focal NSC served as the network administrative organization (as defined by Provan and Milward (2001)), in that it disseminated funds, administered, and coordinated the network operations. The focal NSC could also be viewed as the broker among partner organizations, as Kouwenhoven (1993) described. Constituents in this group include primary funders and regulators such as Sport Canada, the COC, CAC, the corporate partners, member organizations such as the NSF partners, the University, the Olympic Legacy Organization, and the focal NSC. Provan and Milward (2001) identified several ways to evaluate effectiveness at the network level. In the organizational set studied for this research, the effectiveness of the network as a whole was assessed in a number of different ways.

One way to determine the effectiveness of the network can be by evaluating the ebb and flow of organizations into and out of the network (Provan & Milward, 2001). Provan and Milward (2001) suggested that there is no minimum number of organizations required to make a network succeed, however, the network needs to attract and retain members to survive as a viable form of organization particularly in the early stages. Once established, a mature network will focus on maintaining relationships, with the entry of new organizations into the network balanced by exiting organizations. Large networks have many political advantages, but what they gain in political strength, they may lose in efficiency in the delivery of services. This study showed the growth in the number of partnerships over
time (refer to Table 4.9 in Chapter 4) and demonstrated the rapid growth in organizations that were both beneficiaries and providers of services within the network (e.g., principal funding and service providers and agent NSF partners). This growth coincided with an increase in the clientele serviced as well (i.e., increase in athletes and coaches serviced).

Closely related to the growth of the network was the length of time the partner organizations had been involved. Quotation 1 (Table 7.4) demonstrates one criterion that a member of the focal NSC used to evaluate the effectiveness, or success of the relationship. The President of the focal NSC felt that the measures of length of time as partner and growth in either financial or in-kind contributions would indicate to him that the partnership was successful. Interestingly, and contrary to advice from partnership consultants (Austin, 2000; S. Sagawa & E. Segal, 2000; S. Sagawa & E. Segal, 2000), the President indicated that he was not clear about what factors these Corporate Partners would use to measure partnership effectiveness. For both Corporate and Founding Partners, the focal organization assumed that if a partner were not satisfied with the relationship, they would no longer continue to participate. Therefore, the focal NSC used time in the partnership as a measure to determine the success of the relationship. There has been some debate in the IOR literature as to whether this is an effective factor when determining the success or failure of a partnership. Worthy of note, however, while some authors have discounted the length of the relationship as having any bearing on its success or effectiveness (Hamel et al., 1989; Harrigan, 1988), many informants in the focal organization regarded a continuation of the relationship as an indicator of success or at least a suggestion that the partners were satisfied with the relationship. Particularly from the perspective of many of the focal NSC members, one of the main determinants of the success of their relationships with their private sector partners was the continuation of the interaction over the long term (Quotation 2, Table 7.4).

The NSC staff member responsible for securing private sector partners for the focal NSC also used the measure of private company tenure as partners to indicate effectiveness and partner satisfaction (Quotation 3, Table 7.4). Using the measure of relationship length for Founding Partners may not be representative of the larger picture because they have stronger ties and more of a vested interest in a successful venture. Therefore, there may be more of an inherent expectation that Founding Partners remain involved despite the fact that they renew their commitment on a yearly basis. Some sport
partners also have no alternative but to collaborate with the NSC (City) because certain sport facilities are physically located there, and thus they collaborate out of necessity.

Many of the private sector organizations listed in the organizational documentation, particularly the ones interviewed for this study, have been partners with the NSC (City) for several years. For instance, the Big Energy Company has been a partner since shortly after the NSC was formed (i.e., seven years ago). The Vitamin Supplier has also been providing products to NSC athletes for the same period of time. Table 7.3 shows the approximate length of tenure of the relationships for the organizations that were part of this research. Sport partners have typically been involved with the NSC for a number of years. In general, no partnership terminations were reported, but rather, new sport partners were added. The Founding Partners have all been involved with the establishment of the focal NSC, and as such have long tenures as partners with the focal organization. Furthermore, Founding Partners have had a history of interaction (i.e., Sport Canada and COC since 1961, Sport Canada and CAC since 1972), illustrating the network level interactions present in this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.3: Tenure of partnership relationships with NSC (City)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Sector Organizations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Energy Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin Supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising / Media Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial firm / independent supporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sport Partners</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founding Partners (all)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the length of involvement may raise questions about the value of these partnerships to the NSC (i.e., partners have been around for a long time, but have they provided increasing value to the organization?), the fact that the relationships have continued might suggest that they have in fact, been beneficial to the organizations involved. Hamel et al. (1989) suggested that relationship longevity would not be a good measure of partnership effectiveness because some partners are purposively dissolved after a period of time. Harrigan (1988) based partnership performance on partnership success, survival,
and duration, and partner indicated assessments of effectiveness. However, if exit barriers are high, successful strategic alliances are not necessarily indicated by long-lived ventures; and short-lived ventures can be judged as successes from both partners’ perspectives if they have achieved their strategic purpose. For some sport organizations, however, it could be speculated that exit barriers to the relationship were high as there was heavy competition for ‘sports’ at NSCs across the country and making the effort to apply to another NSC would use valuable resources. Furthermore, there were specific geographic locations where a sport organization might excel over others due to physical features such as facilities, mountain or water access, or even weather. Inkpen and Beamish (1997) suggested that there are strong forces supporting the status quo of an existing relationship. They claimed that once a partnership has been established, links among individuals and organizations have been forged, and over time, these connections can become stronger. As a result, these established connections are difficult to remove, and partnership failure takes time.

The length of tenure of the partnership in this case might suggest, particularly for private sector partners, that there is some level of commitment and as a result, satisfaction with the outcomes of the relationship, whether they be at a personal or organizational level. As such, the enduring nature of the relationship in this case could be used as a criterion of effectiveness. An exploration into those partnerships that did not last or ended prematurely would be valuable for future research into how partner organizations determine effectiveness. Although this information reveals on one aspect of how partnership success was viewed, it is possible that the criteria of length of the relationship was biased based on the nature of interaction among the partners (i.e., many had worked together from between 3 and 5 years). The results reflect those relationships that were longstanding, and partners that were interviewed could be considered to be from successful relationships. Other organizations from the private and sport organization sectors that have terminated partnerships with the NSC need to be considered to better assess their perceptions on the partnership with the NSC. It was clear from the data that similar to the multiple reasons evident for partnership formation, that there were multiple reasons for determining the effectiveness of the partnership venture and its outcomes.

Another means to assess effectiveness, as identified by Provan and Milward (2001), was to consider the range of services provided by the network; specifically, the mix, or content of services
provided, and how they collectively address the needs of the clients, or athletes and coaches. The range addresses whether there are too many services, producing a duplication of effort and confusion for members and clients of the network, or too few services and not meeting client needs. Interestingly, none of the respondents alluded to this aspect directly in any of their conversations. Quotations 4 and 5 (Table 7.4) demonstrate the confusion associated with evaluating the effectiveness of the partnership network, and the challenges in defining the criteria to measure that effectiveness. This was the closest any informant came to making the connection between programs and services provided and desired outcomes, such as improved performance. In Quotation 5, a Founding Partner questions the allocation of resources in the NSC budget and whether the strategy of funding the NSC rather than funding a sport organization directly would provide the best return on the investment, that is, more medal performances. The uncertainty around evaluation evident within the NSC network and lack of clarity from any of the partners has led to tensions around this issue. Perhaps the right mix of services and programs will result in superior athletic performances, and the connection between the two was implicitly understood by experienced informants. It is a valid point to consider, particularly when the menu of programs and services offered by the focal NSC is quite complex and the number of service providers has grown considerably since the organization was formed. As another focus for future research, the connection between the programs and services provided and athletic performance would be a valuable contribution to partnership research in sport organizations.

The strength of the relationship between and among network partners, or multiplexity, was another factor considered essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the network (Provan & Milward, 2001). Ongoing support for organizational goals and objectives (Quotation 5, Table 7.4) and relationship building with other partners in the network (Quotation 6, Table 7.4) are important to maintain the strength of the network. In Quotation 6, a sport partner indicates that as a result of being involved with the focal NSC, they have been able to leverage one partnership to work with other non-traditional partners and become better at partnerships in general. The leveraging of one partnership to form more relationships is related to political interactions and power development as well. More partnerships mean a higher profile, increased legitimacy, and ultimately improved access to resources which can be used to enhance the position of an organization within the sport system. Partnerships have allowed this
organization to develop relationships within the sport system that they may not have. The partnership, therefore, has added value to the organization and helped to achieve the desired outcomes.

Quotations 7, 8, and 9 (Table 7.4) illustrate the fundamental paradox of partnerships, particularly with nonprofit organizations that work as a coordinated network, where individual interests are sometimes sacrificed for the greater good. Success in this case is based on committing to work for the greater whole rather than focusing on a self-interested objective. As such, one of the performance measures is the degree to which the relationship gets athletes on the podium, rather than how it affects each partner's organizational goals.

**Table 7.4: Network level of organizational set effectiveness.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>If the private partners stay with you and they increase their contribution it tells me they think it is fair. I do not know what they get out of it or what they think is good or not good. Because I do not think they would do that if they were not happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (NSC (City) Member)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I think the way we measure effectiveness with our partners is based on their decision to renew or extend the relationship. That would be our only indication of whether it was successful. For instance, if they initially agree to a one-year contract and then extend the partnership to a four-year agreement that is an indication of the relationship's success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda (NSC (City) Member)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I think we have been fairly successful over the years in reaching out to the corporate community because the ones that we do have on board right now want to stay on board, they are pleased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie (NSC (City) Member)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I think one of the issues is that we do not really know how the Centres and their partners should be evaluated. Should we be evaluated by strictly the number of carded athletes who spend the majority of their time training in our Centre? Some people believe that is the measure. Others might see the assortment of services that we provide to help athletes win those medals as being a measure? Others believe that is fine, but let's look at where the athletes came from. For example, a good number of the national women's volleyball team members are from Québec yet they would have to call Manitoba their home Centre. At the end of the day, I do not know if the number of carded athletes who are training in one Centre is even a success measure, or maybe it is how many medals they win in international competitions. One of the current tensions in our network is how are we evaluated, how do we get our points and our dollars in the future if funding is redistributed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam (NSC Network Partner)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I have not concluded yet whether we should be investing more money in the National Sport Centre partnership, and less money into cross-country skiing for example. I am at a bit of a loss as to how to measure whether we are getting a better return on our investment there or a better return on our investment out of putting it all into cross-country skiing programs. We put about $3 million a year into sport development, and about $175,000 of that goes into the NSC. What would happen if we put $500,000 into NSCs and less money to sport organizations directly? It is hard to measure what the effectiveness would be. Are you going to get more athletes on the podium through the NSC or through funding programs in cross-country? We have to have some balance, but in terms of would we get the best bang for our dollar by taking all the money and putting it into the NSC, I am not sure on that. And that is a constant analysis that we are trying to go through is to try to sharpen the focus a bit is to see where do we get our best results. Should we be putting more money into facilities or into programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan (Founding Partner)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>One of the simplest ways we evaluate effectiveness as a network is are we continuing to agree on common goals and objectives and do we remain supportive of each other's individual goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam (NSC Network Partner)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. This partnership has helped us inside the sport, and it has fostered better relationships with agencies that have been on the periphery. In other words, it has made us better partners with the multi-sports centre, and to know those people in the sports system. It has made us better partners with the universities. It has made us better with the (CAC) because some of their funding is implicated in that. Those kinds of collaborations are big value added components, and people do not even really appreciate it. For example, one of the other agencies is the COC, because they put money into it and suddenly you are in business with them and they have a lot of clout.

Corey (Sport Partner)

8. The other thing in terms of an effective partnership is you concentrate on measuring output versus measuring things to protect your own survival. I believe one of the key reasons for our success, regardless of athlete or coach, is I think I have been able to convince people to go at the output, meaning get more athletes on the podium. I have never had anyone say to me you have to give [Olympic Legacy Organization] more credit, or you have to give CAC more credit, or Sport Canada needs more recognition. I have never had any of our Founding partners say [Olympic Legacy Organization] their mandate is winter sport. We only want to work in winter sport we do not want to help summer sports. I have never had [Provincial Government] say to me only (provincial) athletes, we do not want to help these guys from Saskatchewan. I have never had anyone say that, and I think that is an effective partnership. They have committed to the NSC concept. They do not worry about the recognition because they know if we do this, they are going to get a lot of recognition.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

9. I think for sport to survive in the country, not just survive but to thrive, we have to work together better. It might mean that a sport like hockey or figure skating takes less to help than bobsledding and swimming that are not high profile sports for example. The problem is that sports do not mind partnering as long as they do not lose anything. But sometimes when you partner you might lose. You might lose individually but the greater good is achieved. It is tough to convince people to think that way, but that is where we are headed, and that is how we are going to measure whether it is successful or not.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

10. The partners commit to the output – i.e., international results, and there is no discussion about territorial protection or credit. The partners are always seeking ways to give to the partnership rather than search for what they can get from the partnership...These partnerships are unique in sport since cooperation is now the fundamental business tenet and not competition.

(National Sport Centre - (City), 2000b, p. 1)

Since the efforts of the network were directed towards working in a coordinated fashion to improve the performance of clients that access programs and services, one of the measures of effectiveness was medal performance at Olympic and international events. However, as Stone et al. (1999) claimed, it is difficult to assess the relationship between the presence of the partnership and achieving a particular organizational or network goal, particularly in a service oriented system. Vague and subjective outcomes, however, such as improved service provision are once again difficult to measure. While the effectiveness of the relationships was not empirically measured in this study, informants did state that athlete performance was a factor considered by the organizations to determine whether the partnerships contributed to network objectives. To conclude that the presence of new NSCs in the Canadian sport system is the only reason for improved Canadian performance would not be accurate. NSCs may have worked to coordinate and improve amateur athletes’ training experience, they may have
contributed to enhancements in personal and professional development. However, the Centres are clear on highlighting when ‘their’ athletes perform well in international competitions. The performance results are communicated to all partners and members of the sport community in weekly email reports, newsletters, quarterly updates, and annual reports. For instance, Table 7.5 highlights athlete performance results reported in the focal NSC’s annual reports from 1994-2002. This table, in comparison to Tables 7.2 and Figure 7.1 provides a sense of how athletes from this Centre contributed to the overall medal count at Olympic Games and World Championships. For instance, at the 1998 Nagano Games, out of the total 15 medals won by Canadian athletes, 9 of them (60 percent) trained or received services from the NSC (City). At the Sydney Games, of the 14 medals won, 3 were won by NSC (City) athletes. Finally, at the Salt Lake City Games in 2002, 8 of the 17 medals won were athletes from the focal NSC. The higher medal counts and percentages in the winter Games can be explained by the fact that many of the athletes who trained and received services at the focal NSC were winter athletes. The focal NSC claims to have contributed to “the positive and dynamic impact on the performances of its athletes” (National Sport Centre - (City), 1994, p. 16).

### Table 7.5: NSC (City) athlete medal performances in international competitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Olympic Games</th>
<th>World Championships</th>
<th>Other International Competitions (i.e., Pan Am Games, Commonwealth Games)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7 (Pan Am)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>2 (Atlanta)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>9 (Nagano)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5 (Paralympic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17 (Commonwealth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38 (Pan Am)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>3 (Sydney)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11 (Paralympic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>8 (Salt Lake)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organization / Participant Level Criteria of Effectiveness**

Finally, at the organizational and participant levels, the criteria of effectiveness of the relationships are somewhat different than at the other levels. This level of analysis focuses on aspects of the relationships between and among groups and individuals and how these aspects might impact organizational effectiveness. At this level, the motivations reported for the formation of partnerships in Chapter 5 are considered a starting point to assess the success of the venture. For instance, these motivations may include enhancing access to resources, achieving legitimacy, becoming more efficient
through relationships, controlling conflict or asymmetries between organizations in the network, or meeting the requirements of funding agencies. As Provan and Milward (2001) suggested, "...despite the broader value that may accrue to the clients and the community at large as a result of the integrated delivery of services through a network, network members still strive to ensure the survival of their own agency. Networks can contribute significantly to organization-level outcomes" (p. 425). This section examines how agencies involved in the network benefited, beginning with the focal NSC.

**Partnership Effectiveness Criteria for NSC (City)**

The challenge for the focal organization, as it manages and coordinates multiple partnerships from its position at the centre of the hub, is to ensure that each relationship attains its goals, and that the synergies of all of the interactions among organizations contribute to the positive direction of their own organization and the network as a whole. Specifically, the NSC (City) evaluates success based on three criteria: the performance of athletes and coaches, the increase in number of athletes accessing programs, and the increase in the number of service providers and partners supporting athletes and coaches (National Sport Centre - (City), 2001). In addition, it also has clear objectives that cannot be met without its partners. It became clear through the interviews that members of the focal NSC viewed the success of their partnership relationships to be based on a number of factors. Of the motives identified in Chapter 5 related to partnership formation, those associated with the focal NSC's objectives for establishing relationships were: efficiency, legitimacy and necessity, asymmetry, and stability. As discussed in the previous Chapter, there were several constraints to efficiency identified in the management of the relationships, such as confusion over roles and responsibilities, increasing external expectations to form partnerships, and changes in strategic objectives which resulted in a shift in the focus of funding from elite to equity. While partnerships have indeed afforded access to new sources of funding for sport (such as from the private sector or non-traditional partners such as educational institutions), they have also contributed to administrative complexity which may not always enhance efficiency. Partnerships may have introduced more complexity into the system of sport delivery in Canada, but they have also provided organizations with unparalleled access to resources, knowledge, and expertise previously unavailable.
With respect to resource acquisition or stability, Quotation 1 (Table 7.6) alludes to how this is used by the NSC (City) to measure partnership effectiveness, but goes beyond the acquisition of resources, and emphasizes the need to leverage those relationships and resources to increase stability over time. In Chapter 4, I presented the annual contributions of the Founding Partners. In general, these findings suggested that there was a marked growth in contribution levels over the NSC's period of operation. This growth in funding could be used as one means to evaluate whether these partnerships have been effective, as supported by one member of the Focal NSC (Quotation 2, Table 7.6).

Another measure of partnership success for the focal NSC is closely linked to efficiency and stability. The measure indicated in the data was the assessment of whether these relationships had contributed to the organizational goals. In addition to not being specific enough to quantify, one of the problems with this measure is that the focal organization has several broadly stated goals and objectives, such as podium performance, development of athletes as individuals and community leaders, support of developing athletes, and development of accountability and self-reliance. The following quotation illustrates the complexity explained by Stone et al. (1999) who suggested that nonprofit organizations face increasing pressures to specify measurable performance indicators. They claimed that "little agreement exists over how to define and measure performance in nonprofits because of their vague goals, multiple constituencies, and uncertain relationship between service activities and outcomes" (p. 382). For the NSC (City), organizational goals broadly encompassed indicators of success such as focus on medal targets in Olympic Games, assisting athletes in the achievement of personal bests, and balancing their lives with holistic focus (i.e., transitioning from athletic competition to work, education, and self improvement). Another means of evaluation is based on other organizational activities such as the degree of athlete-centredness, development of organizational accountability, self-reliance, and efficient utilization of resources through partnering to service athletes. Members of the focal organization reflect on these challenges and ambiguities in goal attainment in Quotations 3 and 4 (Table 7.6) but do not indicate that these means of evaluation have been quantified or are measurable. In Quotation 3, the informant raised the points of efficiency, reduction of duplication of efforts, podium performance, and satisfaction of partners and clients with the services provided as perceived measures of effectiveness. However, these performance indicators are empirically difficult to measure and were still under
considerable debate. Quotation 4 also highlights an effectiveness measure as efficiency in the delivery of services through a coordinated system. Through this integration of services, athletes and coaches receive a broad range of coordinated services, and as a result of effective coordination, the effort becomes more efficient. Implicit is the view that efficiency in coordinated services allows athletes to focus on training to secure a podium performance (a measure of success). Similarly, Quotation 5 (Table 7.6) refers to the outcome of efficiency and how the partnership approach has contributed to the overall efficiency for the organization and the network. Before the concept of National Sport Centres, the sport system was fragmented and uncoordinated. With the new training centre partnerships, the informant perceives more efficiency, with resources now more consolidated and a system that is easier to manage. While decision-making in a partnership may take longer, there is the overall perception that it is more effective. Finally, Quotation 6 (Table 7.6) introduces another criterion of effectiveness for the focal NSC, reciprocity in communication and openness among partners. Many informants of the focal organization felt that good interaction and open channels of communication and contact were a means to determine whether partnerships were effective. As such, efforts were made, particularly with corporate partners, to ensure that they were kept up to date on the activities and events of the NSC (City).

**Partnership Effectiveness Criteria for NSC (City) Partners**

For NSC partners, effectiveness criteria also appeared to be related to the motivations to form the relationship as well as the desired outcomes. Motives such as efficiency, legitimacy and reciprocity were all fundamental elements for measuring the effectiveness of the partnership. NSC (City) partners also employed criteria of effectiveness including client outcomes and resource acquisition. This section highlights the multiple views of effectiveness held by these stakeholders.

For some partners, partnership effectiveness appeared to be assessed by client outcomes such as the graduation of provincial athletes through the system to the elite level (Quotation 7, Table 7.6). This Founding Partner's interests, for example, were to ensure that developmental athletes received the benefits of the partnership as well. Furthermore, the holistic approach for athlete training was also considered important, and a measure of effectiveness for this partner. A different Founding Partner provided a further example of effectiveness, based on client outcomes, in Quotation 8 (Table 7.6), emphasizing the development of high calibre coaches. Sport partners used client outcomes (athlete and /
or coach) as a criterion to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership. Quotations 9, 10, and 11 (Table 7.6) demonstrate the measures of effectiveness for these sport organizations. However, even these outcomes were somewhat dissimilar in that they ranged from having athletes on Olympic teams (Quotation 9), to podium performances (Quotation 10), to improvement compared to athletes not affiliated with any NSC (Quotation 11).

Quotation 12 (Table 7.6), also from a Sport Partner, expressed how access to resources and financial stability was a factor used to determine the effectiveness of the relationship. In other words, did the partnership contribute towards the financial bottom line of the organization? This quotation expresses the level of uncertainty regarding expected outcomes and measures of effectiveness within the NSC network, and particularly what that meant for their own organization. Similarly, in Quotation 13 (Table 7.6), the University partner did not evaluate the relationship formally or establish measures of effectiveness within the context of a documented performance management system. The informant reported, however, that the institution appears to be generally satisfied that the relationship with the NSC (City) is a successful relationship by virtue of the resources that it receives. These resources may include access to expertise such as coaching and programs for their own intercollegiate teams. The relationship enhances the reputation of the University in the sense that high profile Olympic athletes are students and train there. The partnership also provides the University access to financial resources from the NSC (City) for the use of certain facilities. This relationship experienced tension that was reported by both partners (i.e., NSC (City) and University). Some of these tensions were based on personal issues, while others were based on organizational concerns such as the board representative’s level of authority, and perceived resource exchange and valuation inequities. For NSC network partners as well, the acquisition of resources was a clear indication of the success of the partnership (Quotation 14, Table 7.6). As an avenue for future research, the investigation of effectiveness of partnerships and networks must include input from all relevant stakeholders such as athletes and coaches as was suggested by the NSC network informant.

Another criteria which appeared to be a factor in the evaluation of effectiveness was the degree of satisfaction with the relationship. As Mohr and Spekman (1994) argued, partner satisfaction was one measure of the success of a relationship. This is an affective and perceptual measure and it has not been
quantified to assist with its evaluation. For some partners, success was based on both individual and organizational level satisfaction. For instance, Quotation 15 in Table 7.6 illustrates how one Founding Partner in particular gained personal enjoyment and value from the relationship with the focal NSC. A Corporate Partner also used individual or personal level satisfaction as a measure of the effectiveness of the involvement of his firm (Quotation 16, Table 7.6). This partner reported that he had no financial objectives or expectations for financial gain entering into the partnership. Success for this informant was based on how he personally felt about his contribution or the organization’s contribution to the NSC. He values amateur sport, and the knowledge that he could positively contribute to athletes provided him with a sense of satisfaction and achievement. Throughout the interviews, most partners reported that they were pleased with their involvement with the NSC (City).

The results of this study indicate an overall general satisfaction on the part of the partners with the relationship. Satisfaction was indicated on many levels including individual (i.e., working with nice people), and organizational (i.e., feeling that the partnership contributed to organizational success), however, it also appeared there was dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the relationships such as feelings of commitment, interpersonal dynamics, and confusion regarding roles and responsibilities. While this dissatisfaction contributed to managerial and even interpersonal tensions between and among partner organizations, it was not considered sufficient to end the relationships.

Table 7.6: Measures of organizational / partnership level effectiveness

1. With the private sector, what would work best is if the partners were committed to the NSC year after year. That they would say that every year we are going to commit a certain amount of funds so the NSC could count on that money and budget for it. Building on that, is not only are they going to give the money, but they are going to come closer to what I think a partnership concept is, which is they will give the money, and they will promote the relationship as well. For instance highlighting in their annual report that they support the NSC. Then maybe going even farther where they are able to identify what they do so that another person looking at it will say we support the NSC and that means you do this. That is what I would call a successful relationship. The higher up in the hierarchy of the organization the support comes, the better. Because if the president of [Big Energy Company] is overt about his organization supporting the NSC and makes a big deal out of it, then other local companies might say well [Big Energy Company] is doing it, it must be worthwhile.
   Carla (NSC (City) Member)

2. My only gauge of success is whether or not the partners have increased their financial support.
   Carl (NSC (City) Member)

3. The other thing we really pay attention to in terms of successful partnerships is: are they helping us better service our clients? Are we making a difference and providing better stuff for our athletes and coaches? And importantly, not duplicating efforts with our partner organizations. There may come a time when the COC says if the NSCs are not working, shut them down. I have no problem with that. If we are not making a difference shut me down now. I do not want to waste my time here. The fact that we are not shutting down and people are saying we are doing a good job then people are supportive of what we are doing. That is my only evidence that things are working out. And the athletes are on the podium. That is the
4. One way we have been able to measure the effectiveness of this partnership for the NSC has been the
effect on the environment here where you have the athletes working with the sport medicine, sport
scientists, and psychologists, the academics working so closely with the athletes, rather than each group
working in a vacuum. They are now working together. We have been able to bring them together and both
groups are really excited to have us there. This collaboration and coordination did not occur before.

Edwin (NSC (City) Member)

5. Before the partnership push happened, the way we operated in sport was primarily with lots of side
agreements. We would have one with [winter NSF], the [facility] would have one with [winter sport]. We
would have one with [summer NSF]. It did not make a lot of sense. In [summer sport] we used to have one
with [summer NSF], we had one with [summer PSO], the [University] club had one with [summer NSF].
We might also fund a coach for $50,000. So we would give our money to [summer NSF] to pay the coach,
but they would owe us some money so they would give us a cheque for $20,000 for something else, so
what we were doing is exchanging cheques, so I was well let's put it all in a pot. So it is a little slower, but
at the end of the day it is more efficient.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

6. One of our success factors is being able to engage and involve our partners in the things we are doing.
Whether it is developing the strategic plan, or attending a conference, or the sports selection process, we
try to involve them so that they feel more a part of it. I would say that on the other side they would also
involve us in their things. They have been very good at doing that. So from that standpoint that is one of
the ways we know this partnership is effective.

Carl (NSC (City) Member)

7. There has been an increase in high performance athletes that have come from [province]. We have kids
who were in the [Provincial] Games, who might have gone to the Pan Am Games or the Commonwealth
Games and maybe to the Olympics. The benefits are not there nearly as much as we would like to see
them yet in terms of performance, but we know that is not going to happen right away. We would look at
benefits and successes for (provincial athletes). We are certainly concerned about the effectiveness of this
partnership, and I think if we can see some of these kids moving through the system, we could really
begin to evaluate the partnership’s effectiveness. We want them to receive the performance benefits, but I
think we also want to see the holistic approach for the athletes too. Not only going to the podium at no
cost. Focusing on how to help those kids when they leave the podium and how they get back into real life
again. That is another success story that we would be interested in as a Foundation. Just do not take the
kid and get him there and forget about him. They do a very good job of that here. And our board is very
interested in that.

Andrew (Founding Partner)

8. Well, I think that the major measure is results, and for us, it is related to the success of the NCI program.
The kinds of measurements relate to things like how many NCI students graduate with an NCI diploma,
how many are then working in high performance sport, how many are appointed to national team jobs,
and then what kind of success do they have as national team or developmental coaches. Those are the
kinds of measures we would be looking at to evaluate the program and the success of the partnership
really is a reflection of that. If the programs are not a success, then it does not matter how good you feel
about the partnership; it is not a successful partnership. We are not able to collect all that data at this
point in time. An example from one Centre is that there were 11 graduates of the NCI who were part of
the Sydney Olympic team. That is very significant to have that number of NCI graduates as Olympic
coaches. But we are trying to collect data on the employment status of the graduates, because that is of
critical importance. I think the other answer in that vein is that the planning process is really going to lead
us to much clearer objectives and expectations, and hence be able to do a better job of measuring the
success of the Centres, and hence the success of the partnership. I think other measures are things like
financial contributions, whether the partners are willing to commit more money to the Centre programs,
that their assessment or their feeling is that the Centres are successful, and so they’re willing to commit
more resources to it. We have already seen that with the Federal Government where they almost doubled
the amount of support they were committing to Centres and we are hopeful that that will continue to
grow. We are anxious to see the provincial governments make more of a commitment to Centres. So I
think that will be another important measure of the strength of the partnership and the success of the
partnership. So from CAC’s perspective, there is no doubt that this has been extremely beneficial to
achieving CAC’s corporate objectives. It is an extremely healthy partnership. We could not attain or
accomplish what we are accomplishing without this partnership.

Kevin (Founding Partner)

9. A sign of a successful partnership would be for every NSC to have a swimmer on the Olympic team. For example with two of Centres, those areas had not had a kid on the Olympic team before, so that was significant in terms of results. These factors basically activated an entire provincial swimming program, so that they had a better pool of athletes for themselves. That is part of it we are looking for international performance results.

Corey (Sport Partner)

10. We can measure the level of services provided and the impact that the services have had on our high performance objectives. In the case of [Winter sport], the results speak for themselves. Our partnership with the NSC has played a crucial role in the achievement of our podium success.

Frank (Sport Partner)

11. From a formal perspective it is very difficult to measure effectiveness. Since this is fairly new to our organization, it makes it even more difficult. What we have done to measure success is use a variety of performance indicators to measure the performance in particular of the national team program. What we will be able to do from those is to articulate the net effect of the NSC relationship based on when it started and how performance has changed over time for the athletes in the Centre. That is, are those athletes improving to a level and at a rate greater than those who are not affiliated with the NSC program? So we do have a variety of measures that basically just look at raw performance of their specific programs.

Richard (Sport Partner)

12. Another way we evaluate the relationship is how much money we get for our coaches and for hosting events in those Centres. That is the bottom line. So in any case our end of the bargain is easily measured in the sense of what we want, knowing what we can deliver. What they can deliver is very measurable. What they want, what is their ultimate objective? What defines success of the Centre? Is it that they have some teams that are improving their international standing? Well, yes that might be it. Is it that they have 200 people being serviced whereas a year ago they had 100? Maybe. I don’t know. What I want is a better understanding and on a day to day level what actions need to take place that will help contribute to that success from our end. We are very new at this and those understandings may come over time and certainly it’s going to be something I’ll be pushing for because, as I say, I want them to want to do more for us and us to do more for them. And to both of our net benefit.

Richard (Sport Partner)

13. I think that initially the management of the NSC did not really understand or accept the value of sport science to the development of athletes. There was no sense of how, if they were spending $200,000 on testing and training, what value were they getting back for it? Were they getting $200,000 worth of performance increase? I think that there was some initial questioning about that, but through the partnership I think there has been a better acceptance and understanding that yes, this is very important stuff. We may not be able to say that through this yearly testing it has produced three more medals, but it is extremely important to the development of the athletes. From our perspective, I am not sure that we as a Faculty have ever said gee, is this working for us? We have never gone through that formal evaluation. But the question is: how do we measure effectiveness? The number of times the NSC complains that the lights do not work, I don't know if you base it on mundane things. The NSC would try to measure its own effectiveness based on the number of medals that the athletes and the sports get because that is their goal, to get athletes on the podium. But what do we get out of this? I would have to say that we have not set any formal objectives, so therefore we are not in a position to evaluate it. Other than to say subjectively and anecdotally, I think the Faculty is pleased with the association and relationship. It is beneficial to us; it is beneficial to many of our coaches. It has proven beneficial to our programs. For instance, we would not have the national swimming centre here without the NSC, and that has been a big benefit to our own intercollegiate program. It brings us a higher level of stature. It has been good to bring that money into the lab to help support its working activities. But we did not set any of those out ahead of time, and as I said we have not gone through a formal evaluations per se, but we would probably point to some of those things to say, yes, it is a good relationship.

Randy (Founding Partner)

14. On an informal basis, the attainment of new resources to enhance what we are providing, and increased access to other organizations would be an indication of the success of the partnership. Also, another measure we would use would be to review the athlete and coach's perspectives and determine whether they had been well serviced. Did they perceive that the partnerships helped them achieve their potential?
15. I really enjoy it here. I really enjoy watching kids (athletes), and I often get to spend some time with them when I am here. That is important in the partnership and for me personally. Also, we have a very good working relationship with the staff. That is the relationship and rapport that [President] has established which is great. Because he has got great staff, great people, and I get a lot out of that.
Andrew (Founding Partner)

16. The way I would evaluate the success of the partnership is to personally feel good that we have helped. I do not think that there is any other way to evaluate it. It is like making a donation to the Cancer Society. How do you evaluate that? You feel good about it because you think that your contribution, regardless of the size, can maybe help save somebody's life. Well, I would look at this the same way. I think that if our contribution helps Canadian athletes, then there need not be anything else. I would be lying to you if I would say it would not be great to get some kind of financial benefit through other sponsors. That would be good, but that is not how I would evaluate the partnership. Because I went into it not expecting to get that, and it really deals with people's expectations. If you are going to invest money in the stock market with the view of losing that money, then if you make money, it is a bonus. And that is the way we look at this too. It is a good deed thing, let's help out.
Murray (Corporate Partner)

Alternative Criteria of Effectiveness: Achieving Competitive Advantage?
Many theoretical approaches to understanding the dynamics of interorganizational relationships have been founded on resource dependency considerations, which suggest that an organization will be obligated by external sources such as funders, whose ongoing support is critical to survival, to form partnerships. Another approach, the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, a combined strategic and economic perspective, looks inward at the role of organizational resources and their attributes (both tangible and intangible) to determine which ones may confer a competitive advantage. According to the resource-based view of the firm, organizations are bundles of discrete resources which may contribute to an organization’s sustained competitive advantage within their industry (Barney, 1991a, 2001; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Oliver, 1997). The specific resource-based characteristics that provide an organization competitive advantage are the value of the resources, the ease of their acquisition (how scarce they are in the environment), their transferability between and among organizations, and the degree to which they can be imitated by competitors (Barney, 1991b, 2001; Grant, 1991).

The RBV can be used to provide an explanation for the extent of an organization’s competitive advantage, or how it compares to other organizations in its environment. Advantage can be determined by those distinctive competencies which give a firm an edge over its rivals as opposed to any external characteristics such as industry structure. The ability to effectively form and manage multiple IORs can be considered a distinctive organizational competency. This kind of competency would contribute to
sustainable advantages such as a securing financial support for the NSC and winning more medals at international competitions, which would enhance the image and reputation of Canada on the international sport stage. As such, the RBV has recently been applied to better understand the formation, long term maintenance, and subsequent outcomes of many types of organizational relationships (Amis et al., 1997; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Hitt et al., 2000).

The concept of RBV in IORs can be examined in several ways. For instance, one can consider the resources exchanged between and among partners as the unit of analysis. In this case, financial, physical, human, technological, and organizational resources, as well as the resource of reputation may be assessed to determine which bundles of specialized resources provide an organization with a benefit over other organizations (Barney, 1991a; Grant, 1991). Other researchers have investigated the partnership relationship as the unit of analysis, or in other words, view the partnership as a key organizational resource (Amis et al., 1997; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Hitt et al., 2000).

In this study, the resource of partnership was suggested to provide an advantage to the focal NSC. For instance, partnerships provided an advantage locally against competition from other organizations seeking financial assistance from the corporate community. Many other partnership relationships, particularly with the national Founding Partners, continue to be structured as funding relationships that have existed for years within the Canadian sport system. Two recent changes have been that more organizations are now involved in the funding process (i.e., provincial governments, multi-sport organizations, and educational institutions), and these arrangements are now called partnerships. For this reason partnerships with the Founding Partners should not be viewed as a discrete resources or relationships possessed by one organization. However, some of the other IORs created by the focal NSC may prove to be strategically advantageous for them, such as those formed with certain sport organizations, or key corporate firms.

The concept of gaining a competitive advantage advocated in RBV theory can be contrasted with the concept of gaining a collaborative advantage in collaborative theory (Huxham, 1996; Huxham & Macdonald, 1992). Some authors suggest that competition is less likely in the nonprofit sector since cooperation is particularly appealing when the profit motive is absent (Provan & Milward, 2001), "because the potential downsides of cooperation, such as reduced autonomy, sharing resources, and increased
dependence are less likely to be seen as a threat to survival” (p. 416). In the corporate sector, competitive advantage is associated with above average economic performance, but that performance increment can be difficult to measure in a nonprofit organization such as the NSC (City). At the network level of analysis, the collaborative advantage can contribute to overall goals and objectives of the group of organizations coordinating and collaborating such as the organizational set that was examined for this research. For these organizations, collaborative advantage means that they are able to provide programs and services that will allow athletes to win medals and represent Canada internationally. Frequently, however, nonprofit organizations find themselves in the so-called advantage purgatory, where at the network level, they have to balance whether to consider advantage for themselves and their own interests, or for the larger good of the system.

At the organizational level of analysis, competition between and among organizations exists even within nonprofit firms. Demands to gain resources from a limited supply and pressures to survive when other organizations provide similar services introduce possibilities to compete. As highlighted in Chapter 5, the sport system in particular comes from a competitive tradition, making it more likely that organizations will compete for top spot in terms of how much money they receive from the federal government, provincial government, and corporate organizations to secure their long term survival. RBV contends that resources that are rare or unique, valuable, and non-transferable would provide an organization with a sustained advantage over others. This sustained advantage could be considered one criteria of effectiveness, or at least another way to view effectiveness in partnership relationships in terms of organizational survival from the focal NSC’s perspective. Further contributing to this competitive environment, each Centre possessed unique and valuable resources that contributed to their strength and degree of power within the network. The focal NSC attained power and authority within the system by virtue of their length of tenure as the first NSC established. Furthermore, it had developed specific technical and administrative knowledge and expertise, which were of value to the other NSCs in the network. The benefit of working with Founding and Corporate Partners the longest (resulting in the formation of social capital within those relationships), as well as having programs which were shared with other Centres (i.e., athlete services model, NCI programs) were factors that contributed to the focal NSC’s image and reputation. These resources, being the most difficult to imitate and
exchange among organizations are ones that are potentially highly valuable, non-imitable sources of sustainable advantage (Amis et al., 1997; Spekman et al., 2000). However, what was still uncertain with respect to these issues was whether (a) the partnership itself was the resource that provided competitive advantage or (b) the partnership was a vehicle by which the desirable resources of enhanced image and reputation were achieved? Amis et al. (1997) argued that sport partnerships can be a valuable and cost effective tool with which to develop a firm’s image and reputation from the corporate perspective, however, research has not explored this question from a sport organization’s perspective.

Of the resources identified at NSC, sharing expertise and programs and services with other NSCs to create efficiencies may decrease opportunities for competitive advantage. However, this is where collaborative advantage becomes relevant. The concept of the NSC network has established itself as more than an experiment. That is not to say that all NSCs are safe from downsizing by the Founding Partners. If that were to happen because of decreases in the national Founding Partners’ level of financial contribution, certain NSCs that are viewed as productive or effective (that is, in terms of servicing athletes and winning medals) would likely remain in operation, and the others would be closed. The focal NSC benefits directly from having Olympic facilities accessible to its athletes, and this advantage provides tremendous gain for this NSC.

The length and the symbiotic nature of the relationship represent a heterogeneous distribution of resources. There appeared to be a common link in values among organizations; a strong tie and clear relationship between the activities of the sport organization and the objectives of the partner organization. The length of time the focal NSC has been in operation produced advantageous name association with some of the local corporate organizations, and with NSFs, and other sport organizations. However, the commitment to partner with some groups was conducted on a very fragmented, almost ad hoc, basis with no real strategy to develop corporate partnerships. The focal NSC’s strategy was to go after everyone ‘downtown’ (where corporate firms are located in the city), identify people with a particular interest in sport, and establish relationships based on that interest. As individual relationships and roles change within the organization, this approach may not provide sustainable connections among organizations in the long term. There would be very little strategically linking the NSC with corporate
partners, except for perhaps individual relationships. Once the individuals who forged the relationships left, presumably there would be nothing securing the relationship, and it would end.

The corporate partnerships formed by the NSC may not be a source of competitive advantage for the organization as they currently exist (even though, Amis et al., (1997) do indicate that developing an advantage through IORs takes time). They are easy to identify and understand: the NSC identifies corporate partners in all its communications and outlines specifics of the partnership relationship. For example, in annual reports, newsletters, and updates, the NSC identifies a local real estate organization that provides subsidized housing for athletes living in the city. These relationships are also imperfectly transferable if the relationships are based upon personal relationships between individuals in organizations, or based on personal interests of individuals in corporate organizations. For example, the informant from Advertising Company had a keen personal interest in sport and valued the contribution it made to society. Other individuals from partner organizations became involved based on a personal relationship with the Vice President - Marketing. There was a tenuous link to organizational objectives for the corporate partners in these relationships in terms of the relationship highlighting their level of corporate social responsibility (CSR). However, these corporate firms could just as easily have gained the same objective of CSR by aligning with another nonprofit organization that serves a different cause such as the arts, education, or health care. It therefore appears that these relationships can be easily substituted for both the focal NSC and its Corporate Partners. The NSC (City) can relatively easily go to another corporate organization for funding or in-kind exchange such as printing capabilities, moving services, marketing and design support, and the corporate partners can certainly go to many other organizations that can help them fulfill their interest in being socially responsible corporate citizens. In fact, some already do support other sport endeavours. Furthermore, these partnership relationships are not clearly owned or controlled by the focal NSC. While partnerships have provided valuable financial resources and some degree of legitimacy to the NSC, particularly with the corporate partners, there is sense that the NSC wants more than just money from its partners.

Partnerships can provide a sustainable strategic advantage to NSCs – if designed, implemented, and managed properly. The partnerships with the national Founding Partners most likely would not provide strategic advantage for the NSC (City) because these organizations are involved in all of the NSC
partnerships and therefore these relationships are not unique or rare. However, there is potential for the focal NSC to create a sustainable advantage over other NSCs and sport organizations by strengthening partnerships with the provincial government, the Olympic Legacy Organization, University, sport partners, and partners in the corporate sector.

The returns generated by a firm’s resources depend on two factors - sustainability of the competitive advantage and the ability of the firm to produce benefits from its resources and capabilities. Partnerships, if they are viewed as resources, can indeed provide an organization with a sustained level of advantage, whether it be internal such as organizational survival, or external as in enhancing strategic position over another organization.

A Discussion of Effectiveness

The above discussions presented the construct of effectiveness at different levels of analysis within the group of collaborating organizations, that is: the organization, the network, and the broader community. As mentioned in Chapter 2, researchers have addressed the concerns of effectiveness within organizations from several perspectives. Some of these include rational goal, open systems, internal process, participant satisfaction, competing values, and multiple constituencies (Cameron, 1981, 1986; Herman & Renz, 1998, 1999; Ostroff & Schmitt, 1993; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Many of these same concerns can be applied to the context of interorganizational relationships. The challenge however, is that empirical research on effectiveness has received very little attention in the context of IORs. As well, in applying the various approaches to studying OE, it is clear that investigating effectiveness of IORs could take many forms.

In the context of IORs, it is difficult to completely apply the perspectives developed to investigate OE. How do you, for example, assess effectiveness for a group of organizations who share one program or one element of their organization's operations? When organizations have different mandates, different structures, different values and cultures, different resources, and different motivations for collaborating, how can one truly understand effectiveness? Should partnership effectiveness be studied from the point of view of the focal organization? What about the partner-organizations? If their goals are not being met and they are not fully satisfied with their involvement in the partnership, then even if the focal organization judges the partnership to be effective, partners may not perceive it in this way and
subsequently opt out of the relationship. In essence, this situation could be perceived as partnership failure. What about instances where certain goals are met while others are not? For example, more resources may be acquired by the focal organization, the NSC (City), however podium success may be not be attained. This lack of success may eventually lead to less resources being funneled to the NSC.

As Provan and Milward (2001) suggested, a way to extend the study effectiveness is to consider collaborative efforts of all organizations involved in the partnership. This is essentially partnership effectiveness. Partnership effectiveness becomes complex, when one considers the dyadic relationships involved between the focal organization and each of its partner organizations and when one considers the network of relationships between all organizations involved in the partnership.

Given these issues, it is clear that the topic of partnership effectiveness merits further research.

**Conclusions**

The substantial difficulties in evaluating organizational effectiveness are compounded in the examination of relationships between and among organizations in a network because of the number of key stakeholders, the diversity of their interests, and the nature of the network's performance management system. Table 7.7 provides a summary of the three levels of analysis that could be used to examine network effectiveness and identifies criteria outlined by informants in the study. The challenging issue for both theorists and practitioners is how to determine when a successful or effective partnership exists, and further, how discrete relationships contribute to the successful functioning of the network as a whole? The value of an intangible asset such as a sponsorship deal, personal relationships, social capital or partnership can be difficult to ascertain and measure. Certain measures such as return on investment (ROI) or market share are commonly used to determine the effectiveness or performance of an investment, however, in the case of nonprofit organizations, such as the ones in this case, such easily quantifiable measures were frequently unsuitable. If a partnership increases legitimacy and awareness of amateur sport, contributes to medals won, or ensures an organization more resources or power, the partnership can be considered successful. It is often difficult to separate the effects of a particular organizational relationship from other partnerships or organizational activities being carried out at the time. These are all considerations researchers need to explore in future research in this area.
Perhaps it is because of these challenges that exploring the effectiveness and success of partnerships has generally been an area that has been overlooked by IOR researchers. Provan and Milward (2001) suggested that it was primarily because of the difficulties associated with designing appropriate studies to generate good responses that this has been the case. The question whether networks such as these really achieve the outcomes expected at the outset is the central issue. Fifteen years ago, Harrigan suggested that even then, there was no authoritative agreement with regard to the efficacy of cooperative strategies (Harrigan, 1988). Based on more current research by other authors (Amis et al., 1997; Andereck, 1997; Hutt et al., 2000; Provan & Milward, 1995, 2001), this still appears to be the case, because as they argue, good comparative network data that are tied to outcomes are still scarce. As such, it is premature to conclude with certainty that networks are effective mechanisms for solving complex problems in the sport system in Canada, despite their promise. More research is necessary in this area to identify what reasonable measures organizations would consider to evaluate effectiveness (i.e., in the case of amateur sport it may be client outcomes such retired athletes with jobs, continual improvement in athletic performance, medal performances, public relations skills acquired, number of sport role models available; or organizational level outcomes such as resources secured, efficiencies gained or level of legitimacy enhanced), and which ones are deemed most important. Furthermore, another area that needs to be explored is the relationship between the level of interaction (i.e., strategic, administrative), the outcomes of the partnership, and how that is linked to the overall performance of the organizational set, and its ultimate impact on the overall sport delivery system.

The framework for evaluating the effectiveness of the larger network proposed by Provan and Milward (2001) provided a good starting point for clarification of the issues and criteria that could be explored in future research on network effectiveness. Expanding the range of informants to include athletes and coaches who benefit from these network initiatives would also deepen our understanding in terms of their views on the quality and effectiveness of the services they were receiving from the network of sport organizations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Analysis</th>
<th>Key Stakeholder Groups</th>
<th>Effectiveness Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (Sport Community)</td>
<td>PRINCIPALS and AGENTS (Funders and athletes / coaches) Funders – Sport Canada COC, CAC Canadian Heritage Olympic Bids Client Advocacy Groups (i.e., Athletes Can and grassroots sport / development lobbyists). Politicians (Denis Coderre, Sheila Copps) Media General Public</td>
<td>• Cost to (sport) community of forming NSCs and of investing in the sport system as a whole (to the possible detriment of other critical social areas such as education and health care) • Building social capital – individuals and organizations develop bonds of trust and reciprocity in sport system by collaborating to achieve high performance goals • Public perception that ‘problem’ is being solved (i.e., athletes are able to ‘survive’ and rights are being met – i.e., athlete-centred approach; winning more medals, better performances by Canadian athletes at international competitions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>PRINCIPALS and AGENTS (Primary funders and administrators / service professionals) Regulators Network Administrative Organization (NAO) – NSC (City) Partner Organizations Corporate Partners Founding Partners Sport Partners NSC Network Partners Service Providers Facility Operators</td>
<td>• Network membership growth (i.e., more organizations becoming involved) • Range of services provided • Absence of service duplication (efficiency) • Relationship strength (multiplexity) • Member commitment to network goals • Creation and maintenance of Network Administrative Organization (NSC City) to coordinate services • Integration / coordination of services • Cost of network maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization / Participant</td>
<td>AGENTS and CLIENTS Member agency board and management Agency Staff (NSC City) Individual Clients (athletes and coaches)</td>
<td>• Agency survival – sport organizations involved (i.e., focal NSC, sport partners) continue to exist and thrive • Enhanced legitimacy (of being involved in partnership) in eyes of public, sport community, funding agencies • Resource acquisition (stability &amp; competitive advantage) • Decrease cost of services provided (efficiency) • Enhance service access for athletes (physiotherapy, massage) • Client outcomes – i.e., more medals; better performances, well rounded individuals • Reciprocity – satisfaction with partnership because needs are being met • Necessity – have met requirements of funding agencies • Minimum conflict for multi-program agencies across multiple networks • Power (Asymmetry) – competitive advantage still sense of competition between some sport organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Without partnerships, we would not be able to exist.
Carrie (NSC (City) Member)

The phenomenon of partnerships, more than just a passing fad in organizational theory, has firmly established itself as a strategy that nonprofit, government, and private sector organizations have begun to employ to create greater value and capacity by leveraging resources and competencies of individual organizations. Today, few social issues (e.g., health, recreation, education, sport) do not fall into a domain where collaborative, coordinated interorganizational partnerships would be an advantage. Literature on collaboration in general, and on collaboration in nonprofit organizations in particular, has suggested that partnerships can facilitate better access to client services, foster the development of innovative solutions that could not be created by a single entity, help reduce duplication in services, and allow organizations to conserve resources otherwise spent competing for clients and dollars, focusing instead on their core business (Austin, 2000, Sagawa & Segal, 2000).

The old model of individual 'silos', operating independently and providing all services related to particular need, will be too costly and too rigid to survive. Instead, organizations will shed extraneous functions, moving to shared services based on core competencies and ultimately to collaborative alliances. (Sagawa & Segal, 2000, p. 9)

This empirical examination of partnerships in nonprofit sport organizations provided an examination of the relevance and necessity of the collaborative alliance strategy as well as the challenges and complexities involved in the interactions between and among organizations with different mandates and from different sectors. Furthermore, the outcomes of the relationships and the combined efforts of the network were addressed in this research as a key part of the partnership process. This research furthered our understanding of the partnership phenomenon by using the sport context to uncover the complexities of the partnership process from formation, to interaction between organizations, to assessing outcomes. An examination at different levels of analysis, namely the individual and organizational, further helps to shed light on our understanding of partnerships. This broader conceptualization of the interaction between multiple partners from different sectors demonstrates that we still have much to learn about partnerships.
The experience of exploring, identifying, interpreting, and analyzing the relationships established between and among organizations was certainly not without challenges. From the research process itself, to the extensive complexities existing within these partnerships, teasing out the nuances was thought provoking. There is much potential for research on this topic both practically and theoretically, as many questions remain unanswered with respect to specific management concerns of coordinating a network of diverse partners, as well as considering other integrative theoretical perspectives.

This final chapter synthesizes and summarizes the findings of the case study and presents the implications for organizations from both pragmatic and theoretical perspectives. As with any research undertaking, weaknesses and limitations exist and should be discussed. The particular weaknesses present in this research are identified and discussed in this chapter. Finally, recommendations arising from this research are provided for partnership managers or those involved in coordinating and governing interorganizational relationships, as well as for academics investigating this fascinating and important organizational topic.

**Synopsis of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore the dynamics, challenges and complexities encountered in the establishment, management and evaluation of multiple interorganizational relationships among a nonprofit organization and its partners in the government, nonprofit and private sectors. Specifically, three research questions were proposed to address the unique challenges present within a network of multi-sectoral partners. The first research question focused on exploring the preconditions associated with partnership formation and the particular resource concerns that might have influenced organizations motivations to partner. The second research question addressed the issue of partnership management and the factors involved in this process. The issue of political interaction between partners was also considered. Finally, the third research question investigated the aspect of how partnerships might contribute to an organization’s goals or to the larger collaborative objective. The findings of each research question are summarized below.

The research framework employed in this study was designed by incorporating a range of theoretical approaches to demonstrate the influence of multiple rationales on partnership formation and the influence of many factors on partner interaction. Based on the findings of this research, a more
holistic view than has been taken in previous research— a view that incorporates strategic-, economic-, and transaction-oriented theoretical approaches—should be adopted in future partnership investigations. Most notably, in order to more thoroughly understand the intricacies and nuances of why and how organizations interact, it is essential to contextualize the nature of the interaction. This study uncovered both 'rational' and 'social’ explanations of partnership formation between and among the organizations in this network. As Granovetter (1992) argued, rational models, such as transaction costs theory, overlook the social relations (human network) function that is embedded in all kinds of organizational exchanges. Both rational and social approaches can explain aspects of the motivation to form partnerships as well as features of interorganizational interaction once the partnership has been formed. Strategic-, economic- and transaction-oriented theoretical approaches effectively complement the individual and social dynamics features of partnerships and help to explain more fully the motivations and dynamics of partnership formation, management, and ultimately, their intended outcomes.

**Preconditions:** This research uncovered numerous motivations behind partnership formation in the nonprofit-public-corporate organizational set studied. While there are similarities, many of these motivations were different for organizations from the identified groups: Corporate, Sport, Network, and Founding Partners. Specifically, the findings concerning corporate firm partnership motivation and interaction, building on frameworks from Austin (2000) and Sagawa and Segal (2000), suggested that the relationships with the focal NSC were generally philanthropic or transactional rather than more integrated strategic exchanges. The corporate organizations involved in this research reported that their primary motivation for becoming involved with the focal NSC was to contribute to the community (corporate social responsibility; legitimacy), and because they had a personal interest in sport (individual reciprocity). Thus, while the relationship benefits the focal NSC in the sense that it helps to secure scarce resources, the corporate-nonprofit relationship in this organizational set did not evolve to the point where it was integrated more fully into the overall mission or strategic objectives of either partner.

Not surprisingly, resource dependency was an important factor in the motivation to form partnerships. For most of the nonprofit organizations involved, including the focal NSC and Sport Partners, the desire to become more stable by acquiring needed resources was an important factor in the decision to form partnerships. Once acquired, the nonprofit organizations reported a strong desire to use
scarce resources effectively. Consequently, organizations including the Founding, Sport, and Network Partners as well as the focal organization reported that coordinating and cooperating to generate efficiencies in their use of resources was an essential factor in their decision to form partnerships. One interesting aspect that differentiates this research from previous investigations on partnerships is the consideration of the element of necessity (i.e., mandated directives from funder or strong external expectations and pressures) as a significant motivation to partner. This aspect adds a new dimension to understanding internal and external motivations to form relationships and how various forces interact. For instance, when the focal NSC was formed, the development of partnerships with other organizations was expected by the national Founding Partners to generate resources and create efficiencies. In that sense, the NSC informants felt they had no choice. Interestingly, the NSC also formed partnerships to avoid being 'held hostage' by the government, to gain stability, reduce dependency, and to some extent, gain power over other organizations competing in the same system. The NSC viewed dependency and its implications for power relations in the context that an organization could lessen its dependency and increase its power by cultivating alternative sources of desired resources through partnership. It is important to examine and understand the motivations to form partnerships within an organizational set, particularly as these motivations are likely to influence the dynamics of partnership interaction, and serve as a relevant basis for evaluating outcomes.

Other findings from this research worthy of note were the divergent views on what partnership meant, and whether the informants felt that the relationships established between and among organizations in this case were in fact partnerships. The complexity in number and type of relationship, and the interactions between and among individuals made assessing these relationships complex. Partnership appeared to be a broad term for the informants that conveyed many forms of interorganizational cooperation, including funding relationships, joint ventures, joint programs, corporate sponsorships, and operating alliances. As such, partners often did not have a clear or common conceptualization of the nature of their relationships, what it meant to be a partner, or what their partners' expected. These disparities in perspective frequently contributed to the frustration felt by partnership managers. One of the clearest examples of this was the relationship between the focal NSC and its corporate partners. NSC informants expressed the desire to have corporate firms more actively
involved through collaborating on various aspects of the NSC, attending meetings, or being involved in more strategic level decisions. However, because of the corporate partners’ motivations to form the partnership with NSC (City) (i.e., individual interest, corporate social responsibility), the motivation or incentive to become involved at higher organizational and strategic levels was weak or nonexistent.

**Management:** With respect to partnership interaction or management, much literature has paid attention to the control of alliances at different phases in order to mitigate the risks associated with cooperation between and among organizations with varying objectives. Other researchers have found that management’s excessive concern with control can be counterproductive and that attention should be paid to issues of trust and social interaction within partnership interaction (Arino et al., 2001; Borch, 1994; Das & Teng, 1998; Nooteboom, Berger, & Noorderhaven, 1997). The findings from this study suggest that partnership management between and among a group of multi-sectoral partners is a delicate balance between formal mechanisms of control such as policies, contracts, and guidelines, and informal mechanisms or social means of management including trust, communication, and personal relationship building. As such, partners were required to educate, negotiate, influence, compromise, and most importantly, trust the others’ motivations and actions. However, management’s adoption or preference of informal mechanisms of control should not result in the absence of a well conceived and implemented performance management system.

Not surprisingly, tensions among partners existed at all levels of functioning (strategic, operational) around resources and competition for scarce resources such as money, support, product / services in-kind, and expertise. These tensions were evident in many interactions, primarily among the focal organization and the Sport, Network and Founding partners. Some of the tensions were a result of the perception that partners were not ‘pulling their weight’ (e.g., the relationship between the University and the focal NSC). Other tensions resulted from the lack of a clear consensus regarding the objectives, purpose, or measurement of the performance of the NSC network. This resulted from the federal government’s decision to ensure equitable distribution of Centres across the country which was perceived as opposing the concept of excellence held by many of those involved in the focal NSC.

Although the federal government wielded considerable power within the network as a function of its control of financial resources, there appeared to be no formal chain of authority within the partnership
network. As a result, organizations, NSC (City) in particular, used other means to create power for themselves and their organizations such as demonstrating a demand for their programs and services (by increasing the number of clients served, services provided), forming IORs, or recruiting influential individuals to represent the organization. Provan et al. (1980) claimed that organizations that have existed for a long period have thereby demonstrated their ability to maintain and defend a particular area of expertise that provides them with the resources needed for survival. Powerful groups in the organizational environment, such as funding bodies, are less able to resist pressures from a coalition of cooperating organizations than from one acting on its own. Thus, the more an agency expands its IORs, the more it can mobilize power in an effort to obtain scarce resources when the situation demands. A common way to develop these interorganizational linkages is through engaging in joint programs with other agencies or by having members on their boards of directors who also serve on the boards of other organizations that may be important for the agency's survival. These close connections between and among organizations were evident in this case study and contributed to the focal NSC's power within the network of Centres as well as within the larger sport delivery system in Canada.

Evidence of personal and professional histories between individuals working within the sport system was found in addition to the interorganizational connections. These previous experiences, combined with a shared sense of purpose to service elite athletes served as the basis for the development of social capital between organizations and individuals. The social capital served to maintain strong bonds between organizations and individuals, and thus contributed to the perceptions of success and effectiveness of the partnership.

Outcomes: An important area in any partnership relationship is the management of the outcomes associated with collaboration, although little empirical work has been conducted in this realm of IORs. In this case, key considerations regarding outcomes were expressed by the informants, and were outlined in organizational documentation. Not surprisingly, different stakeholders had divergent views, and as such, there was no clear consensus on outcomes among the partner organizations, nor was there any evaluation tool to assess what made a partnership effective. This case proposes three levels of analysis with which outcomes and collaboration effectiveness could be examined in future research, and categorizes some of the possible outcomes. At the community level of analysis, the broader community of
interests, or stakeholders, included the general taxpaying public, the media, and the sport community at large. At this level, the desired outcomes included attaining medals at international competitions, supporting 'clean' performing athletes (i.e., no use of banned performance enhancing substances), and developing athletes who are good citizens and ambassadors of the country. At the network level, where a distinctly identified set of organizations collaborate, effectiveness is evaluated differently. The focus is on outcomes resulting from the efforts of the organizations to work together and how those outcomes impact targeted athletes' performances. For instance, factors for consideration at this level were the degree to which athletes who received services and accessed programs at the NSC (City) were improving their performances and winning medals; the extent to which the organizational set was stable and / or growing in terms of resource acquisition; the degree to which services and programs provided the right mix to ensure athlete and coach success; the coordination of organizations to reduce or eliminate duplication and enhance efficiency; the strength of relationships among partners; and finally, the degree to which the partners were committed to the overall goals of the network. At the organizational level, the criteria to evaluate the success of the partnerships ranged from achieving stability in accessing resources, to efficiency in using those resources, to legitimacy by engaging in partnerships. Other considerations at the organizational level were whether or not the partnerships helped meet the requirements of funding agencies, and whether or not they served the reciprocal needs and expectations of the organizations involved. Strategic alliances are multifaceted relationships that change over time. Importantly, how they change depends largely on the strategic choices the partners make (Austin, 2000) through the process of interaction and exchange. Thus, the concept of measuring outcomes and effectiveness is not a discrete event that occurs once during the relationship. It is a continuous process of evaluation, adjustment, re-implementation, and re-evaluation. These considerations need to be explored in future research. Further questions can focus on why this organizational set did not have as explicit a performance management system in place as one might expect of a partially publicly funded entity.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Several conclusions can be made based on this research into one organization’s strategic relationships. Based on these findings, a number of preliminary recommendations can be proposed regarding both the theory and practice of interorganizational relationships.
Theoretical Conclusions and Recommendations

From a theoretical standpoint, this study illustrated the interconnected nature of the phases of the partnership relationship, from formation to management to results and outcomes. In order to understand many of the management and interaction issues, it is necessary to understand the motivations to form the partnerships. Furthermore, for researchers examining partnerships, the motivations behind partnership formation are closely linked to the criteria of effectiveness. Researchers exploring partnerships among organizations should not disregard the influence of the broader context on the interaction between partners in an organizational set.

This investigation has contributed to the knowledge of IORs in several different ways. It has shown that when multiple theoretical concepts are applied, our understanding of the formation of partnership relationships is improved. The major findings from this study extend earlier results of authors such as Oliver (1990), Kouwenhoven (1993) and Austin (2000) by demonstrating that organizational linkages modify dependencies on resource suppliers such as the federal government.

This study is relatively unique in that it integrates the findings from both sides of the (multiple) dyadic relationships in the partnership network (i.e., focal organization and partner firms). This approach provides a dual perspective on all aspects of the partnership process addressed by this research (i.e., preceding conditions, determinants of partnership formation, aspects of partnership management, and desired outcomes), and brings to light new considerations and concerns regarding partnership formation, management, and outcomes from both sides of the partnership dyad. From a theoretical perspective, future investigations into IORs should examine the phenomena using input from both sides of the partnership dyad: the focal organization and partner organization. This is necessary in order to gain more detailed information regarding interaction and exchange processes between and among organizations, which is not available when only one organization's perspective is investigated. The dyadic organizational level perspective of partnership provides an important contribution to understanding the discrete interactions between organizations and the implications those connections have on IOR management, and the achievement of outcomes.

However, IORs, particularly in the nonprofit sector, are often too complex to be explained adequately when only dyads are examined. Interaction, communication, and funding exchanges occur
between the focal organization and its set of partners, but also among the partner organizations involved in the set. This was clearly detected and reported in the case presented in this research, and often made it challenging to differentiate when informants were referring to dyadic interactions or the larger sport network. Some researchers (Lorenzoni & Baden-Fuller, 1995; Provan & Milward, 1995, 2001) have emphasized that the strategic centre, or focal organization in networks of partnerships, is responsible for leading, setting rules, and building capacity among the partners, thereby ensuring that value is created and structure, strategy, and direction are provided. Therefore, future research could focus more broadly on the strategic centre as well as the entire network of linked organizations where partnerships are affected by these broader interactions. By studying linkages in networks, it is possible to examine the behaviour and activities of an entire group of connected organizations as well as those specific IORs that comprise the network. Furthermore, a clearer picture of the connections, relations, impacts, and outcomes can be gained from this perspective.

With respect to data collection, methodology, and research design, many authors have used qualitative approaches to examine IORs (Amis et al., 1997; Borch, 1994; Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven, 1996; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Weiner & Alexander, 1998; Wolfe, Meenaghan et al., 2002), however, few have used them to explore formation or exchange dynamics. Qualitative approaches certainly have some advantages over quantitative approaches, particularly in the exploration of partnership formation and management because it allows for a richer and more comprehensive investigation into the interactions between individuals. However, there were some complications with this approach that need to be addressed. The challenge faced when investigating how partnerships are managed became evident in this case study when identifying the appropriate informants. Since the objective was to investigate partnership interaction, and since the focal organization was relatively small in terms of staff members, it was straightforward to identify and include all of the employees of the focal NSC in the study. However, even these individuals functioned at different levels and in different departments within the organization (i.e., strategic decision-making, operational, or administrative capacities). When it came to identifying the informants for the partner organizations, the individuals who had the most knowledge and degree of interaction with the focal NSC were chosen, however, they were not always the 'right' individual to question regarding levels of interaction between organizations. For instance, the COC informant was
knowledgeable and involved in the formation of the NSC network and had been integral in several aspects of the strategic decision-making process, however, he was not as well versed with issues that occurred during the daily interaction between organizations (e.g., athlete services). While this made categorizing the data challenging, the qualitative approach was particularly appropriate for the nature of the study, and allowed me to explore and identify specific organizational interaction issues. For future studies, it is recommended that researchers consider the types of questions being asked as well as the level of interaction investigated. Investigations that employ both quantitative and qualitative approaches can add great value and support to these initial qualitative findings.

Concerning corporate involvement with the focal NSC, while it was a small sample in this case, the findings appeared to contradict some of the literature (Amis et al., 1997; Copeland et al., 1996) that suggests corporate firms want more return on their investment out of their partnerships and attempt to align their partnerships to corporate objectives and culture. The findings in this study indicated that corporate involvement in amateur sport is based more on a social responsibility mindset than on a desire for a financial or strategic return, and that individual relations rather than organizational level considerations played a large role in both the decision to partner as well as the momentum to continue the relationship. Initially it was surprising that this was the case, however, upon further consideration, the scope and scale of involvement of the corporate firms in this study (i.e., the amounts of resources – product or money – contributed to the relationship represented a small proportion of their overall operating budgets) as well as the local nature of the partnership could be considered as possible explanations for these findings.

The partnership framework that was proposed at beginning of this thesis identified important considerations at three stages of the partnership process. The framework integrated different theoretical approaches (Austin, 2000; Kouwenhoven, 1993; Oliver, 1990; Provan & Milward, 2001) by which to consider partnership formation. It also highlighted key elements of concern in the partnership management phase. Finally, the framework allowed the outcomes of the IORs to be contemplated. The framework was appropriate because it supported the examination of dyadic interactions between the focal NSC and its partners. The weakness of the framework was that it did not represent effectively the influence, pressures, and dynamics experienced by other organizations involved in the larger network of
Future Research

This study raised several lines of questioning that can serve as the basis for further examination and exploration of the IOR phenomenon with the objective of extending our knowledge regarding collaborative theory. I expect this process of discovery to continue as I persevere in investigations of organizational relationships and apply further the concepts developed in this study. Some important areas for future consideration in research on IORs in nonprofit organizations in general, and sport organizations in particular are highlighted below.

Questions regarding the interplay of motivations to form partnerships could explore which are perceived to have the most influence on the decision to partner. That is, what are the most important factors motivating organizations in different sectors to collaborate. This information is useful to organizations seeking partners in order to tailor partnership proposals to organizations or companies that complement their needs and objectives.

A notable area that requires further investigation concerns the desired outcomes of collaborative efforts. A resource-based view of the firm can contribute to our understanding of what resources play a part in providing a partnership or a network of collaborating organizations an advantage over other organizations or networks. What resources are considered to be valuable, unable to be imitated, and rare in a partnership exchange, and how are they applied to provide a group of organizations some degree of success or advantage? Much of the business literature differentiates between competition and cooperation and emphasizes the apparent contrast between the two (Hamel et al., 1989; Kanter, 1989). How do these two seemingly opposing approaches achieve balance in collaborating nonprofit organizations so that the desired outcome is achieved?

Perhaps because of the need for nonprofit organizations to acquire resources from nontraditional partners, much of the research on partnerships in nonprofit organizations focuses on relationships among corporate partners and nonprofit organizations (Amis et al., 1997; Andreasen, 1996; Austin, 2000; Dees, 1998; S. Sagawa & E. Segal, 2000). Organizational interactions do not occur in a vacuum, and as such, should be considered in the context of the entirety of their functioning. Since corporate partnerships are
Figure 8.1: Phases of Collaboration – ‘REFRAMED’

**PRECONDITIONS**

- Interdependence
  - Structural
  - Strategic

- Presence of a Network
- Convergence of Objectives
  - Help amateur sport
  - Help own organization
    (not necessarily same, but not incompatible)

**PARTNERSHIP FORMATION**

- Collaboration
- Broker
- Broker
- Competition

**PARTNERSHIP INTERACTION**

- STRUCTURES
  - Objectives & Strategy
    Shifting objectives as relationships evolved (i.e., focus on elite vs. development). Source of tension as affected resource acquisition and exchange.

- Div. of Responsibility & Authority
  - Roles & resp. loosely structured.
  - Ambiguity of representativeness - actors representing several organizations in different ways.

- Support & control facilities
  - Little evidence of formal contracts, policies and procedures regarding partnerships.
  - Heavy reliance on trust.

- Division of Costs, Risks, Returns
  - Assignment of value.
  - Related to power & control issues.
  - Allocation to achieve objectives of elite sport.
  - Related to objectives and strategy.

**PROCESSES**

- Mutual Trust
  - Trust based on past history, previous interaction.
  - Development of social capital sustained relationship through tensions and conflict.

- Internal Coordination
  - High reported communication and coordination.
  - Communication levels associated with mutual trust.

**OUTCOMES**

- Organization Level Outcomes
  - Organizational survival
  - Enhanced legitimacy
  - Resource acquisition
  - Efficiency
  - Necessity – meet requirements
  - Reciprocity
  - Asymmetry

- Network Level Outcomes
  - Growth of network
  - Range of services
  - Absence of duplication
  - Strength of relationships
  - Success-outcomes (performance)
  - Coordination of services

- Community Level Outcomes
  - Cost to sport
  - Building social capital
  - Public perception that ‘problem’ solved / addressed

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NSC</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Founding</th>
<th>Network</th>
<th>Corporate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

293
highly desirable for nonprofit organizations, what degree of influence, power or control do corporate organizations have over interactions with other organizations involved in the network?

A final area for future research to examine is why organizations who have begun to collaborate withdraw from the effort. This information will fill a gap in the literature that has not been thoroughly investigated. Many researchers report a high percentage of failed partnership relationships, however, few explore what contributes to these failures. Possible explanations to consider are whether organizational interest or perceived interdependence has declined, or whether personal, managerial, or other strategic issues were the cause of the relationship’s demise. A related line of research would address what occurs when partnerships have achieved their objectives.

**Practical Conclusions and Recommendations**

As evident from the opening quotation in this chapter, in this decade, organizations more frequently require partnerships to function and survive. In today’s business environment, partnerships have become essential to many organizations, and in particular, nonprofit organizations. However, partnerships can be both enabling and constraining to the organizations involved, and managers need to understand the factors that enhance their objectives while avoiding factors that hinder interaction. This is simple to advocate, but often difficult to achieve, where pragmatic and emotional considerations often take precedence. Based on this preliminary research several practical conclusions can be offered.

First, territorial issues, such as the ones identified in this case, can manifest themselves in many ways. They may occur when a real or perceived overlap exists among the core services of the partner organizations, when ambiguity exists regarding the allocation of decision-making authority or role function, or when the partnership seeks support from the same funding sources or power bases as its constituent partners (Weiner & Alexander, 1998). Dealing constructively with territorial issues such as these requires significant managerial skill to avoid further ambiguities, contradictions, and tensions within the relationship, as well as to increase the likelihood that partner organizations will act in ways that are consistent with the interests of the partnership even in the absence of legitimate authority or administrative control. Some strategies that can be used to manage territorial issues include choosing partner organizations carefully, socializing partners to encourage them to understand the organization and accept the values and vision of partnership (i.e., develop interpersonal relationships, site visits,
participate in events and social functions, facilitate the flow of communication and information), requiring reasonable commitments of physical, financial, or human resources that can be realistically exchanged, and jointly setting targets against which performance can be measured. Furthermore, roles and responsibilities of all partners should be clearly defined in a positive and creative way.

Interpersonal relationships and informal structures appeared to play an important role in the management of partnership relationships in this case. Personal relationships and interactions can enhance trust and build social capital between partners; however, relying on these means of interaction and conflict resolution also presents problems. The potential exists to create an atmosphere of favouritism, political expediency, and mistrust (Weiner & Alexander, 1998). Moreover, interpersonal trust is not easily reproducible. The departure or acquisition of organizational members requires that new interpersonal relationships be established and trust be rebuilt which takes a considerable amount of time and effort. The alternative, more formal control mechanisms such as policies, contracts, and guidelines can be considered. However, the typical response to this approach is to circumscribe the contracts with partners outside the boundaries of the organization in a tight legalistic manner. Contract-making and policing can be difficult and costly, and formal contracts, which are relatively inflexible, are suitable only where the behaviour is easy to describe and is relatively static. Problems with contracts arise because partnership relationships tend to be creative and flexible and as such are difficult to capture and enforce contractually. Managers must weigh the options between these two alternative means of control and determine an appropriate balance.

Many forms of IORs were evident in this case. Different forms have significant implications for interaction between partners and the management of relationships. For instance, funding relationships with national partners may be dealt with in a different manner than joint program partnerships or philanthropic corporate sector relationships. Partnership managers need to identify and define explicitly what the nature of the partnership is with their different partner organizations, and communicate this continually to all members of the focal organization as well as to the partner organizations.

Another consideration in this case was the pro-partnership bias, or the 'feeding frenzy' leading organizations to form partnerships. Organizations in this study reported that two reasons a partnership strategy was employed were: to enhance power and legitimacy in the eyes of funding organizations (i.e.,
organizations can build their 'power' through interorganizational linkages; power over dependencies, power over other organizations, or as a defensive strategy to counter threats), and to augment service provision to growing numbers of athletes and coaches becoming clients of the focal NSC. Unrestricted growth in partnership formation, as was alluded to in this case, can cause substantial coordination, communication, and administration problems. Focal organizations need to consider their available resources, and what they will require to manage a large group of partners. Practical considerations may necessitate adding new partner organizations; however, managers must consider the reasons behind their actions. At the same time, partnership managers must assess continually the advantages they receive from existing partnerships, and must remember that when it comes to contemplating expanding the number of partners, the most important consideration is the quality of the relationship, not the quantity of partnerships formed.

Partnership managers would also benefit by thinking about IORs as a web of alliances rather than several discrete relationships. A focal organization is more than a broker or organizer of dyadic interorganizational activities. In addition to developing important tools such as creating a vision in which partners play a critical role, developing a strong image, effective systems and support, and creating an atmosphere of trust and reciprocity, they also must play the role of leading and orchestrating these systems, perceiving the full business idea, and understanding the role of all parties in many locations across the network. Managers of relationships must ensure that appropriate core skills, competencies, and capabilities are developed that complement other partners' in the group to make them more effective and competitive as a whole. Assumptions, perceptions, and priorities with the network conceptualization are different in that organizations must consider themselves to be working for the good of the whole, and not for the benefit of their own organization.

In terms of policy concerns, organizational policies (closely connected with formal control mechanisms), might help to guide organizations with aspects of partner selection, with procedures to address conflict resolution, and may make certain that aspects of forming partnerships, managing the network, and achieving outcomes are the domain of the entire organization, as opposed to the individual or individuals directly involved in their formation or management. Regarding policy issues at the governmental level, the development of partnerships are the basis of consideration for funding support
from the federal government. Other sectors such as health care or education, dealing in public-private partnerships, often engage in matching contributions (i.e., funding agencies will match the financial resources an organization can attract from other partners), and this might become a policy factor to take into account if the pro-partnership bias continues to exert itself in the sport delivery system.

Sport organization partnerships can enhance Canada's image internationally in terms of athlete support and performance. It can be argued that the success of the NSC (City) is dependent on its external partners. In a system such as the one in which the NSC operates, it takes many partners operating in a coordinated fashion to make the system work. Partners are required for funding support, program delivery, specialized expertise, and image enhancement. The managerial implications to be drawn from this research relate to the manner in which partners attempt to manage the scope and tone of their relationship. Trust, commitment, communication quality, joint planning and problem resolution all serve to better align partners' expectations, goals, and objectives. These factors contribute to partnership success. The challenge, however, lies in developing a management philosophy and culture in which independent and autonomous organizations relinquish some sovereignty and control, while engaging in planning and organizing activities which take into account the needs of the other party.

Limitations

The old adage that says that 'no one is perfect' applies to nascent researchers and empirical investigations as well. Qualitative research in a social setting presents limitations and reviewing them here may help future researchers learn from my experience and take into consideration these obstacles and challenges for the design of their own projects.

When I initiated this study I was unaware of its most challenging aspect: the examination of the 'management of partnerships'. The approach adopted in this research allowed a preliminary assessment into the issues involved in the management of partnerships. It did not explicitly measure related variables or assess the effectiveness of the management of IORs. Management is a dynamic phenomenon and the intricacies of alliance conditions influence the unfolding of interaction processes. It is difficult to fully understand the nuances of partnership interaction simply by observing meetings, reading organizational documents, and conducting interviews with some of the individuals involved. While these methods may be sufficient for preliminary research, future explorations can benefit from a multi-method approach to
explore management styles, methods, and the achievement of outcomes. Such research could include surveys, focus groups with representatives from each of the organizations in the network, or participant observation to allow a researcher to be more immersed in the topic under consideration.

Other limitations concern the empirical investigation of interorganizational partnerships, specifically the levels of investigation in the organization. As mentioned, I interviewed almost all of the members of the focal organization, both managers and staff, but the partners interviewed were primarily the decision-makers who only occasionally carried out the activities. While these informants knew about strategic issues and aspects of partnership formation as well as evaluation of partnership outcomes, they were usually not involved in daily operations unless there was something that was of serious concern. Partnerships require multiple levels of engagement, including ties between executives, between relationship managers, and at operational levels. These multiple levels within the relationship bring structural integrity to the partnership which is necessary because if there is not continuity among the levels, communication and operational breakdown are at risk.

**Concluding Comments**

This research sought to identify and describe key challenges that arose in the formation, management, and ultimately, achievement of desired outcomes of partnerships in the nonprofit context using amateur sport organizations as a research site. Although this is the first study of this kind in amateur sport, the findings suggest tentative guidelines for future research on partnership management development in this area. First, the study of interorganizational relationships among sport organizations and organizations in the nonprofit, government, and corporate sectors requires multiple theoretical frameworks to appropriately explain partnership formation, management, and the achievement of outcomes in a manner which captures the complexities of these organizational interaction phases. With many important challenges facing sport organizations, the formation of cross-sectoral collaborations such as the one examined in this research, will become more common. As such, it is important for managers to understand the advantages, disadvantages, and necessary management tools before they make a commitment to participate in IORs. A more unified, multidisciplinary approach to examining the motivations, dynamics, and characteristics of effective IORs in the nonprofit sector will contribute to the creation of knowledge that is useful to both researchers and practitioners.
REFERENCES


Appendix I – List of Acronyms Used in Dissertation

CAC – Coaching Association of Canada
CCSD – Commonwealth Centre for Sport Development
COC – Canadian Olympic Committee; formerly known as the Canadian Olympic Association
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
IOR – Interorganizational Relationship
NCI – National Coaching Institute
NSC – National Sport Centre
NSC (City) – National Sport Centre that was the site of the case study for this research
NSF – National Sport Federation; organizations responsible for the delivery of specific sports in Canada such as the Canadian Figure Skating Association or Rowing Canada
OE – Organizational effectiveness
PSO – Provincial Sport Organization
RBV – Resource-Based View
SFAF – Sport Funding and Accountability Framework
### Appendix II – Document Inventory

1. NSC – MANITOBA: ANNUAL REVIEW, 1999
2. PODIUM PROGRAM 2000 – NETWORK BUSINESS PLAN
3. NSC – NETWORK PODIUM PROGRAM 2000 – BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
4. NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE – MEMO – SPORT TRAINING GROUP PROPOSAL
5. NSC PROFILE (SPORT CANADA)
6. CANADIAN HERITAGE NEWS RELEASE - OCTOBER, 1998
7. SPORT CANADA CANADIAN HERITAGE NEWS RELEASE, MAY 7, 1999
8. SPORT CANADA NSC – POSITION PAPER
10. SPORT CANADA REGIONAL CONFERENCES ON SPORT DISCUSSION PAPER
11. SPORT CANADA; DENIS CODERRE SPEAKING NOTES 2000
12. SPORT CANADA NATIONAL CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA – NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SPORT AND THE CORPORATE SECTOR
13. SPORT CANADA – PRESS RELEASE APRIL 11, 1997
14. SPORT CANADA – PRESS RELEASE JANUARY 1997
15. SPORT CANADA – PRESS RELEASE JANUARY 1995
16. SPORT CANADA – PROGRAMS AND POLICIES
17. COA – PRESS RELEASE APRIL 1999 AGM REPORT
18. COA- NSC (WEBSITE INFO)
19. COA- CANADIAN SPORT COMMUNITY (WEBSITE INFO)
20. COA COMMUNIQUE JANUARY 2001
21. COA – STRATEGIC PLAN 2001-2004
22. COA- CANADIAN HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT COUNCIL PROPOSAL 2000
23. ASRPWF – FOUNDATION CORE BUSINESSES (WEBSITE DOCUMENT)
24. NSC CALGARY – STRATEGIC PLAN 1997-2002
25. NSC CALGARY – ANNUAL REVIEW 1996-97
27. NSC CALGARY – ANNUAL REVIEW 1999-2000
28. NSC CALGARY – WEBSITE DOCUMENTS
29. NSC CALGARY – ANNUAL REVIEW 1997-98
31. NSC CALGARY – UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY NATIONAL SWIMMING CENTRE BROCHURE
32. NSC CALGARY – SPORT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
33. NSC CALGARY – BROCHURE
34. NSC CALGARY – FIVE YEARS IN REVIEW
35. NCI CALGARY – BROCHURE
36. NSC CALGARY – BOARD MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 1, 2000
37. NSC CALGARY – PRESIDENT’S REPORT AUGUST 2000
38. NSC CALGARY – MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION REPORT AUGUST 2000
40. NSC CALGARY – SPORT SELECTION PROCESS
41. NSC CALGARY – SHARPENING FOCUS DISCUSSION PAPER
42. NSC CALGARY – UPDATE – SUMMER 1999
43. NSC CALGARY – UPDATE – SPRING 2000
44. NSC CALGARY – WEBSITE DOCUMENTS
45. NSC CALGARY – BOARD MINUTES FEBRUARY 2001
46. NSC CALGARY – BOARD MEETING MINUTES AUGUST 28,2000
47. NSC CALGARY – PRESIDENT’S REPORT AUGUST 2000
48. NSC CALGARY – ATHLETE SERVICES REPORT AUGUST 2000
49. NSC CALGARY – FUND DEVELOPMENT AUGUST 2000
50. NSC CALGARY – LETTER TO NSC PRESIDENT
51. NSC CALGARY – STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK 2001-2005
52. NSC CALGARY – TRAINING GROUP SELECTION
53. NSC CALGARY – VISION FOR SPORT IN CANADA – BOARD DISCUSSION
54. NSC CALGARY – ANNUAL REVIEW 1994-95
55. NSC CALGARY – ANNUAL REVIEW 1995-96
56. NSC CALGARY – ANNUAL REVIEW 1997-98
57. CAC – MISSION
58. CODA – WEBSITE DOCUMENTS
59. CODA BROCHURE – CORPORATE REPORT
60. ALBERTA ENERGY COMPANY – IN THE COMMUNITY (WEBSITE DOCUMENTS)
61. ALBERTA ENERGY COMPANY – EXCERPTS FROM PRESIDENT’S SPEECH
62. LUGE – TRAINING CENTRE AGREEMENT
63. FREESTYLE – NSC – CALGARY – MOA
64. CFSA – SPORT PROPOSAL TO NSC NETWORK
65. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #1
66. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #2
67. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #3
68. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #4
69. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #5
70. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #6
71. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #7
72. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #8
73. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #9
74. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #10
75. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #11
76. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #12
77. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #13
78. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #14
79. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #15
80. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #16
81. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #17
82. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #18
83. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #19
84. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #20
85. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #21
86. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #22
87. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #23
88. Week in Review – Vol. 4 - #24

Notes / Minutes from Meetings / Interviews

112. NSC Network - Marketing Committee Agenda (2000)
113. NSC - Calgary, Board Meeting Package (August, 2000)
   Includes: Minutes from previous meetings
   Staff Reports
   Budgets / Balance Sheets; Financial Statements (2000)
   Draft Marketing and Communications Plan
   Memo – Call to Sports for Training Group Partnerships
   Discussion Paper – Sharpening the Focus on High Performance
   AGM Agenda (August 2000)
   AGM Minutes (September 1999)

114. NSC - Calgary, Board Meeting Package (February, 2001)
   Includes: Minutes from August meeting
   Staff Reports
   Financial Statements
   Personnel Policy
   NSCC Governance
   Letter to Jean Guy Ouellet
   Strategic Plan and Accountability Framework for 2001 – 2005
   Training Group Partnerships – Sport Selection Process

115. NSC – Calgary – Minutes from February 2001 meeting
116. (Personal) Marketing Committee Meeting Notes (August 2000)
117. (Personal) Board Meeting Notes (August 28, 2000)
Appendix V: UBC Ethics Approval

2 Approval notices from UBC Ethics Committee (face to face & telephone interviews)
Appendix VI: Interview Guides

For (NSC (City) Members)

The partnership paradigm: Examining interorganizational dynamics in the Canadian sport delivery system

Interview questions for Kathy Babiak's doctoral research.

1. In your opinion, has there been an increase in the number of partnerships in sport? If so, what do you feel are the conditions (economic, social, political) that have contributed to the development of partnerships in the Canadian sport delivery system?

2. What role do partnerships play in the NSC now? What role do you see them playing in the next 5 years?

3. Can you describe your approach / philosophy of partnerships? (i.e. values, beliefs and expectations) What is a successful partnership in your estimation?

4. What factors motivated your decision to form a partnership with your partners (Founding, Sport, Corporate, Network)? i.e., how did these partnerships come about? Can you please provide specific examples?

5. How do you define the relationship? i.e., is it an alliance, partnership, collaboration? What does this mean to you?

6. What 'resources' are exchanged between the NSC and your partners from the different groups? In your estimation, is there a fair distribution of resources in the partnership network? Do you perceive the alliances to be relatively equal in terms of the level of benefit gained by each member of the network?

7. Who typically determines the flow of resources between organizations? How are resources allocated to ensure that partnership and organizational goals and objectives are met?

8. What managerial skills and perspectives do you use to manage / deal with partners? Can you please provide specific examples? Do you feel that your partnerships are well managed?

9. What kinds of problems have you had to address over the life of an alliance? Can you please provide specific examples?

10. What is the role of the alliance manager in determining the success / failure of a venture?

11. Did the co-ordination of these partnerships affect the internal structure of your organization? (i.e., were new positions created? new programs developed? additional responsibilities for staff?)

12. Are there formal rules or policies which guide your organization's activities with respect to this partnership?

13. In terms of communication behaviour, how would you assess your partnerships based on: quality (i.e. timely, accurate and relevant information is exchanged); information sharing (i.e., extent to which critical, often proprietary information is communicated to one's partner; being knowledgeable about each other's businesses); participation (i.e. engage jointly in planning and goal setting; specifying roles, expectations and responsibilities).

14. Would you consider there to be a high level of trust in your partnerships? What does this mean in terms of your interactions?

15. How do you build trust and the commitment and co-ordination of strategies in your partnership?

16. Do you understand the interests of your partners in engaging in the partnership with your organization?

17. What are the potential causes of conflict in your partnerships (i.e., managerial ideology, uncooperativeness, lack of information, value dissonance?), and how do you overcome them (conflict resolution)?

18. Who typically has priority in interorganizational decision-making? How are decisions negotiated between your organizations? To what extent are there asymmetries in power between partners?

19. Are there professional and personal (interpersonal) networks / relationships between partners?

20. What is the ultimate objective of your partnerships? (i.e., to learn from partner? to teach partner? to provide services together with partner?)

21. How do you measure objectives / effectiveness / success in the partnership?

22. What compromises have you had to make as a result of this partnership?

23. Are you satisfied with your partnerships? What would you improve about the relationships between your organization and Founding, Corporate, Sport and Network Partners?
For Partner Organizations

The partnership paradigm: Examining interorganizational dynamics in the Canadian sport delivery system
Interview questions for Kathy Babiak’s doctoral research.

1. In your opinion, has there been an increase in the number of partnerships in sport? If so, what do you feel are the conditions (economic, social, political) that have contributed to the development of partnerships in the Canadian sport delivery system?
2. What role do partnerships play in your organization now? What role do you see them playing in the next 5 years?
3. Can you describe your approach / philosophy of partnerships? (i.e. values, beliefs and expectations)
   What is a successful partnership in your estimation?
4. What factors motivated your decision to form a partnership with NSC (City) i.e., how did this partnership come about? Can you please provide specific examples?
5. How do you define the relationship? i.e., is it an alliance, partnership, collaboration? What does this mean to you?
6. What ‘resources’ are exchanged between you and the NSC? In your estimation, is there a fair distribution of resources in the partnership network? Do you perceive the alliance to be relatively equal in terms of the level of benefit gained by each member of the network?
7. Who typically determines the flow of resources between organizations? How are resources allocated to ensure that partnership and organizational goals and objectives are met?
8. What managerial skills and perspectives are required to manage / deal with partners? Can you please provide specific examples? Do you feel that this partnership is well managed?
9. What kinds of problems can alliance managers expect to address over the life of an alliance? Can you please provide specific examples?
10. What is the role of the alliance manager in determining the success / failure of a venture.
11. Did the co-ordination of the partnership affect the internal structure of your organization? (i.e. were new positions created? new programs developed? additional responsibilities for staff?)
12. Are there formal rules or policies which guide your organization’s activities with respect to this partnership?
13. In terms of communication behaviour, how would you assess this partnership based on: quality (i.e. timely, accurate and relevant information is exchanged); information sharing (i.e. extent to which critical, often proprietary information is communicated to one’s partner; being knowledgeable about each other’s businesses); participation (i.e. engage jointly in planning and goal setting; specifying roles, expectations and responsibilities).
14. Would you consider there to be a high level of trust in this partnership? What does this mean in terms of your interactions?
15. How do you build trust and the commitment and co-ordination of strategies in your partnership?
16. Do you understand what are the interests of the NSC in engaging in the partnership with your organization?
17. What are the potential causes of conflict in this partnership? (i.e. managerial ideology, uncooperativeness, lack of information, value dissonance?) and how do you overcome it (conflict resolution)?
18. Who typically has priority in interorganizational decision-making? How are decisions negotiated between your organizations?
19. Are there professional and personal (interpersonal) networks / relationships between partners?
20. What is the ultimate objective of the partnership? (i.e. to learn from partner? to teach partner? to provide services together with partner?)
21. How do you measure objectives / effectiveness / success in the partnership?
22. What compromises have you had to make as a result of this partnership?
23. Are you satisfied with your partnership with the NSC (City)? What would you improve about the relationship between your organization and the NSC?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix VII: List of Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Formation - Challenges       | Management - Network of NSCs |
| Formation - Convener         | Management - Organizational skills |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - access to resources | Management - Partnership activities |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - asymmetry | Management - Partnership evolution |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - efficiency | Management - Passion / belief / values |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - legitimacy | Management - Policies / Contracts / Formalization |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - necessity | Management - Political - Autonomy |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - personal | Management - Political - Co-opt opposition |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - reciprocity | Management - Political - Commitment |
| Formation - Determinants of Partnership Creation - stability | Management - Political - Conflict |
| Formation - Increase in partnerships | Management - Political - Control |
| Formation - Partnership initiation | Management - Political - Ego |
| Formation - Political - Buy in | Management - Political - Expectations |
| Formation - Political - Interests (differing) | Management - Political - Interests (common) |
| Formation - Political - Personal relationships | Management - Political - Interests (differing) |
| Formation - Political - Personal values | Management - Political - Legitimacy |
| Formation - Political agenda | Management - Political - Power |
| Formation - Political process | Management - Political - Relationships between partners |
| Formation - Political will | Management - Political - Tensions |
| Formation - Resources - Competition for resources | Management - Political - Trust |
| Formation - Resources - Economy of scale | Management - Political - Trust - effort to build |
| Formation - Resources - equitable | Management - Political Process |
| Formation - Resources - exchange | Management - Professional approach |
| Formation - Resources - Financial | Management - Reporting |
| Formation - Resources - Human | Management - Resources - Consolidation of resources |
| Formation - Resources - Knowledge | Management - Resources - Contribution |
| Formation - Resources - lack of | Management - Resources - Coordination / allocation |
| Formation - Resources - Physical | Management - Resources - Growth |
| Formation - Sport partners | Management - Resources - Knowledge |
| Formation - Strategic - Corporate social responsibility | Management - Resources - Maintaining |
| Formation - Strategic - Expectations | Management - Resources - Quid Pro Quo |
| Formation - Strategic - Goals / objectives | Management - Resources - Stability |
| Formation - Strategic - Leverage | Management - Resources - Time |
| Formation - Strategic - Mutual benefit | Management - Responsibility - Ambiguity in representativeness |
| Formation - Strategic - Partner selection | Management - Responsibility - change structure |
| Formation - Strategic advantage | Management - Responsibilities - roles and expectations |
| Formation - Strategic investments | Management - Servicing partner |
| Formation - Structure | Management - Strategic - Organizational learning |
| Formation - Values & Principles | Management - Strategic - shifting purpose |
| Management - Accountable | Management - Strategic Planning |
| Management - Administrative skills | Management - Structure |
| Management - Board of directors / trustees | Management - Tolerance for ambiguity |
| Management - Challenges | Other - Context |
| Management - Communication - frequency | Other - Interpretation of partnership |
| Management - Communication - practice (Good) | Other - Nature of relationship |
| Management - Communication - practice (tensions and challenges) | Other - Organization background |
| Management - Complexity | Other - Synergy |
| Management - Cooperation | Outcome - Evaluation |
| Management - Coordination | Outcome - Success |
| Management - Decision making | Outcomes - Relationship improvement |
| Management - Efficiency | Outcomes - Ending the relationship |
| Management - Expertise and knowledge | Outcomes - Length of commitment |
| Management - Leadership | Outcomes - Satisfaction with Partnership |
| Management - Leverage | Sport - Collaboration |
| Management - Monitoring | Management - Negotiation |
### Appendix VIII: Informant Pseudonyms

Partner categories, organizations and pseudonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner Category</th>
<th>Partner Organization / Position</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSC (City)</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Carl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VP Athlete Services</td>
<td>Joan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VP Marketing</td>
<td>Carrie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing/Office Administrator</td>
<td>Linda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NCI Director</td>
<td>Laura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board Member A</td>
<td>Edwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Board Member B</td>
<td>Carla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>Federal Government / Sport Canada</td>
<td>Iris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COC</td>
<td>Larry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Randy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Olympic Legacy Organization A</td>
<td>Josh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Olympic Legacy Organization B</td>
<td>Allan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching Association of Canada</td>
<td>Kevin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Sport 1 (Winter sport)</td>
<td>Steve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport 1 (Winter sport)</td>
<td>Isabelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport 2 (Summer sport)</td>
<td>Keith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport 3 (Summer sport)</td>
<td>Corey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport 4 (Summer sport)</td>
<td>Richard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport 5 (Winter sport)</td>
<td>Frank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport 6 (Winter sport)</td>
<td>Yves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>Vitamin Supplier</td>
<td>Aaron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big Energy Company</td>
<td>Dennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investment Company / Private Investor</td>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertising / media firm</td>
<td>Murray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network</td>
<td>NSC Network Partner 1</td>
<td>Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSC Network Partner 3</td>
<td>Jerry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSC Network Partner 2</td>
<td>Ivan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>