A Case Study of Collaborative Value Creation in a University Affiliated Community Sport Partnership Program

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University-community partnerships have become increasingly popular in North America and around the world. These partnerships serve to connect universities with local partners in order to fulfill their roles as agents of community, education, and economic development. In particular, university athletic and recreation departments are initiating partnerships with local sport organizations as a way to enhance their presence and collaborate to advance joint interests and projects (Franco & Pessoa, 2014). The community sport partnership literature has focused on antecedents, process/management, and evaluation/outcomes (e.g., Misener & Dohery, 2013; Parent & Harvey, 2009; Svensson, Huml, & Hancock 2014). This research has typically focused on understanding the needs of and benefits for individual partners, rather than the collaborative value that can be created via the partnership. Thus, the current case study seeks to explore the collaborative value created and experienced within a partnership between a university athletic and recreation department in Ontario, Canada and its local non-profit community sport partners (e.g., minor hockey, soccer, volleyball clubs).

The collaborative value creation (CVC) framework (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014) is used as a theoretical backdrop for this qualitative study. The framework outlines five complementary and inter-related components for analyzing value and its co-creation, with related questions which serve to guide the current investigation: (1) The collaborative value creation spectrum (Who creates value? Where does the value come from? What kinds of value get created?), (2) Collaborative value mindset (What is the mental framework partners have about value creation and collaboration?), (3) Collaboration stages (How does the type of collaborative relationship affect value creation?), (4) Collaboration processes (How do different processes in the formation and implementation of a partnership affect value creation?), and (5) Collaboration outcome (Who benefits, and how?). Situating partnership research within the CVC framework recognizes the strategic importance of cross-sector collaborations in achieving organizational success and community impact (Austin & Seitanidi, 2014). The CVC framework therefore provides a holistic approach to re-conceptualizing university-community sport partnerships.

Semi-structured interviews are currently being conducted with the key stakeholders actively engaged in the collaboration, including 7 Presidents of partner CSOs and 7 university representatives (e.g., head coaches, athletic director, advancement officer). Interviews will be completed and transcribed verbatim by December 2019. The data will be analyzed using inductive and deductive coding techniques to identify key patterns and themes within each of the five components of the CVC framework (Patton, 2015).

Knowledge generated from the research may provide a roadmap to assist universities and non-profit community sport organizations in achieving collaborative value through cross-sector partnerships, thus enhancing their capacity to co-create and sustain meaningful sport participation opportunities for individuals and families.