Motives matter: The relation between motives and interpartner involvement in nonprofit–business partnerships

Gabi Spitz\textsuperscript{1,2} | Hans van Kranenburg\textsuperscript{2} | Hubert Korzilius\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}Institute for International Business Studies, University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, Utrecht, the Netherlands
\textsuperscript{2}Institute for Management Research, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Abstract
This paper explores what motivates nonprofit and business managers to engage in nonprofit-business partnerships. We use a relational-based lens to look at how the motives of nonprofit and business managers influence the intensity of interpartner involvement and commitment. Using survey data collected from senior managers involved with nonprofit-business partnerships in the Netherlands, we find that the motive of joint problem solving is the primary motive for managers to engage in partnerships. Nonprofit managers are primarily motivated to acquire knowledge and financial resources, while business managers enter partnerships for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and image improvement reasons. Our quantitative findings also refine the dichotomy of instrumental and moral motives by introducing a second dimension: the expected impact of motives (from low to high). Evidence shows that the motives help determine the nature of the partnership: low-social impact motives are associated with collaborations with a low degree of inter-partner involvement, while high-social impact motives lead to partnerships where there is a high degree of inter-partner involvement.

KEYWORDS
interpartner involvement, motives, nonprofit-business partnerships, relational-based perspective
INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades, relations between nonprofit organizations and (for profit) businesses have moved from interactions characterized by conflict to collaborative interactions (Ashman, 2001; Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Yaziji, 2004; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). These collaborations, also known as cross-sector partnerships, voluntarily take place to achieve shared goals through collective social action and aim at dealing with social or environmental issues (Al-Tabbaa, Leach, & March, 2014; Arya & Salk, 2006; Chen, 2010; Crane, 1998; Montgomery, Dacin, & Dacin, 2012; Overdevest, 2004; Samii, Van Wassenhove, & Bhattacharya, 2002; Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010). These nonprofit–business partnerships, as well as other cross-sector partnerships (e.g., between governments and businesses), are considered drivers of effective societal change (Sanzo, Alvarez, Rey, & García, 2015). These partnerships have moved from small-scale philanthropic and occasional transactional interactions to large-scale, long-term integrated and transformative relationships (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, 2012b; Cho & Kelly, 2014). These emerging types of partnerships with the involvement of substantial amounts of money, time, and other resources show a high degree of interpartner involvement and commitment of the partners (Bryson & Crosby, 2008; Das & Teng, 2000; Kale, Singh, & Perlmutter, 2000; Rondinelli & London, 2003; Van Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, & Brammer, 2016). Due to the increasingly long-term character and the relatively high level of commitment and interpartner involvement, such partnerships are considered collaborations and not labeled as less intense forms of interaction, such as coordination or cooperation (Bryson & Crosby, 2008). Interpartner involvement refers to the intensity of the interaction between partners required to manage the partnership (Van Kranenburg, Hagedoorn, & Lorenz-Orlean, 2014). Contractor, Woodley, and Piepenbrink (2011) show that the degree of interpartner involvement influences the collaboration process; the interaction is crucial to successfully manage and monitor the activities, outcomes, and benefits of the partnership.

There is a significant amount of literature on the scope and evolution of collaborations between nonprofits and for-profits from both the nonprofits and businesses’ perspectives (Al-Tabbaa et al., 2014; Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006; Cho & Kelly, 2014; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Although many research studies looked at the types, motives, and extent of nonprofit–business collaborations, to date, our knowledge on what motivates managers to engage in such partnerships and, subsequently, the intensity of the collaboration associated with the type of partnerships is limited (Brass, Longhofer, Robinson, & Schnable, 2018; Clarke & Crane, 2018; Ihm & Shumate, 2019; Zeimers, Anagnostopoulos, Zintz, & Willem, 2019). Zatepilina-Monacell (2015) stressed that research is needed to understand the choice of nonprofits and businesses to engage in a particular type of partnership. Notably lacking is an analysis of how the underlying motives of nonprofit and business managers relate to the intensity of the collaboration and its potential for effective societal change (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). Therefore, this article provides insights into the motives of managers to engage in particular types of partnerships characterized by a different degree of interpartner involvement and commitment of partners and their impact on societal change.

Literature shows that both instrumental motives of managers, such as access to resources, and moral motives play a significant role in engaging in nonprofit–business partnerships (Austin, 2000; Heap, 1998; Seitanidi & Ryan, 2007; Selsky & Parker, 2005). For instance, nonprofits are not primarily driven to increase their market position or to create financial value but to create an impact on social and sustainable development (Johnson, Dooley, Hyatt, & Hutson, 2018). It is, however, unclear whether the motives of nonprofit and business managers
are different or overlapping and what role motives play when it comes to engage in a particular type of partnership associated with the intensity of collaboration and commitment. Some scholars, such as Jamali and Keshishian (2009), claim that the motives of nonprofits and businesses to collaborate are divergent, while others, such as Yaziji and Doh (2009), emphasize that the motives for nonprofits and businesses to align overlap. They both look for access to networks to improve innovation and increase their legitimacy or reputation. Although the literature provides different kinds of motives that play a role in the manager's decision to engage in a particular type of partnership (Ihm & Shumate, 2019; Pesqueira, Glasbergen, & Leroy, 2020), it remains unclear how motives relate to the nature of the partnership and the intensity of the interaction.

Using survey data collected from senior managers involved with nonprofit–business partnerships in the Netherlands, this study explores the following question: How are underlying motives of nonprofit and business managers related to the degree of interpartner involvement in nonprofit–business partnerships? It contains two parts: first, we explore the difference between the underlying motives between nonprofit and business managers to engage in a partnership. Second, we test the relationship between the motives and the types of partnerships based on the intensity of interpartner involvement. The Netherlands is a valuable and interesting empirical setting to test our hypotheses because the country is considered a front runner in cross-sector partnerships. Historically and culturally, the Netherlands was one of the first countries to institutionalize partnerships between business and nonprofit organizations (OECD, 2016). Research among Dutch professionals has shown that a majority of employees from businesses and nonprofits believe that partnerships are the best way to solve global issues (Spitz & Van Geffen, 2016). Moreover, the Dutch government is a strong advocate of such collaborations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2017). Recent national and international policies, such as the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, have reinforced the Dutch ambition to deal with global problems through cross-sector partnerships (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2017). These trends and developments make the Netherlands a valuable and informative case to study: not only does the Netherlands have a lot of experience with nonprofit–business partnerships, they are open to it too.

This study contributes to the literature on nonprofit–business collaborations by exploring partnerships from a relational-based perspective by including the social context in which nonprofit–business partnerships operate (Priem & Bulter, 2001). Contractor et al. (2011) emphasized that deeper relational-based partnerships facilitate a higher level of involvement of partners than more distant partnerships. To our knowledge, no study exists that tests the theoretical relational-based types of nonprofit–business partnerships (Austin, 2000; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, 2012b; Cho & Kelly, 2014) and the underlying motives of nonprofits and businesses to engage in these types of partnerships. Another contribution to the nonprofit–business collaboration field concerns empirical quantitative insights. Several scholars have indicated that the majority of existing empirical studies on nonprofit–business partnerships are based on qualitative case studies and that there is a lack of quantitative research about nonprofit–business collaborations (e.g., Kourula & Laasonen, 2010; Murphy, Arenas, & Batista, 2015; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Zatepilina-Monacell, 2015).

## 2 MOTIVES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Various perspectives are used to describe the motives for organizational collaboration such as transaction costs, resource-based, organizational learning, strategic behavior, social exchange,
network, and corporate social performance (Murphy et al., 2015). All these perspectives have in common that motives are instrumental to the organization’s interests (Kourula & Laasonen, 2010; Rivera-Santos, Rufin, & Wassmer, 2017); therefore, many studies on nonprofit–business partnerships consider instrumental motives as the main reason for businesses to collaborate with nonprofits (e.g., Arya & Salk, 2006; Austin, 2000; Guo & Acar, 2005; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Melaville & Blank, 1991; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Instrumental motives are linked to the organization’s direct self-interest, such as improving their public image, competitive position, saving on costs, seeking legitimacy, and organizational benefits (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Davis, 1973; Waddock & Graves, 1997). A main instrumental motive for businesses to ally with other organizations is to control the resources of other organizations, for example, by pooling or getting access to resources and thereby improving the business’s competitive advantage (Das & Teng, 2000; Prahalad & Hamel, 1994; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Another primary motive is to lower the sum of transaction and management costs to improve their competitive position in the market (Contractor & Lorange, 1988; Gulati, 1995; Hennart, 2006).

Access to knowledge, contacts, and skills has been identified as instrumental motivations to engage in partnership for nonprofits as well as for businesses (e.g., Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002; Jamali, 2004; Pearce & Doh, 2005). For example, businesses look toward nonprofits to bring them legitimacy, access to technology and specialized knowledge, and access to networks they are not naturally part of (Arya & Salk, 2006; Inkpen, 2002; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Other motives are to improve the business’s image and improve their social status (Oliver, 1990; Stuart, 2000). Lem, Van Tulder, and Geleyne (2013) find that a business’s collaboration with a nonprofit organization can be seen as a form of stakeholder engagement and can help stimulate innovation in the context of sustainability.

Scarcity of financial resources (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002) as well as the acknowledgement that a partnership with businesses is often crucial to tackle complex social or environmental issues (Melaville & Blank, 1991) are major instrumental motives for nonprofits to seek partnerships with businesses. In the latter case, working with businesses to improve a particular issue can be a way of showing that the nonprofit organization can influence business practices (Yaziji & Doh, 2009).

Although many studies primarily focus on instrumental motives to explain the nonprofit–business partnerships, the literature about corporate social and responsible behavior does also provide other motives than merely instrumental ones. For instance, Aguinis and Glavas (2012) identify a difference between instrumental motives and moral motives. Moral or altruistic motives, such as stewardship, taking responsibility, and contributing to justice, go beyond the organization’s direct interests (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007; Bansal & Roth, 2000; Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997). Windsor (2006) also identifies two types of motives: economically motivated CSR and ethically motivated CSR. Brenn and Vidaver-Cohen (2009) make a similar distinction between the motives of organizations to engage in social initiatives; they distinguish between moral and practical motives. Graafland and Van de Ven (2006) show that moral motives lead to intenser involvement in CSR than instrumental motives, while Galaskiewicz and Colman (2006) find that moral motives are the primary reason for managers to work on CSR. Thus, engaging in CSR not only depends on the self-interest of organizations and their aim to survive in a competitive environment, but reasons of morality and the wish to do fair also play an important role. Hence, motives such as contributing to solving a social or environmental problem or living up to the CSR policy go beyond the business’s direct interests or tasks and as a result can be considered moral motives. This is also the case.
for nonprofits because they are mission-driven organizations by nature and nonprofit-making bodies by design (Johnson et al., 2018).

Hence, the literature provides different kinds of motives of nonprofit and business managers that are expected to play a role in establishing nonprofit–business partnerships. However, it is still unclear what drives managers from both kinds of organizations to engage in such partnerships. Based on the literature, we formulate the following two hypotheses:

**H1.** Instrumental motives have a higher importance to businesses than to nonprofits to engage in nonprofit–business partnerships.

**H2.** Moral motives have a higher importance to nonprofits than to businesses to engage in nonprofit–business partnerships.

3 | NONPROFIT–BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Nonprofit–business partnerships come in many shapes and forms. There are large-scale and small-scale partnerships, partnerships aimed at product or service development, and partnerships that engage in socially relevant projects that go beyond the partner’s core activities. These nonprofit–business partnerships are defined as voluntary collaboration between for-profit and nonprofit organizations that “have moved beyond cause-related marketing and philanthropy to encompass a close, mutually beneficial, long-term partnership that is designed to accomplish strategic goals for both partners” (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2006, p. 129).

The abundant strategic management literature on partnerships expresses three main views: the first is the transaction cost view that aims at lowering transaction costs (Hennart, 2006). Studies that look at partnerships from this perspective focus on the structure of transactions; for instance, at the role of contracts and other exchanges (Van den Hurk & Verhoest, 2016). The second is the resource-based view where organizations collaborate because joining their resources can create added value to improve the competitive advantages of a business (Das & Teng, 2000). Many scholars that study nonprofit–business partnerships use this view. Jamali and Keshishian (2009, p. 279), for instance, point out that many nonprofit–business partnerships are a way of pooling the strengths of partners to more efficiently reach their objectives: “Through successful collaboration, these two actors can complement each other and better allocate resources for the common good.” Babiak and Thibault (2009) address the importance of access to human resources as a driver of nonprofit–business partnerships, whereas Van Tulder et al. (2016) emphasize that from a resource-based view the success of nonprofit–business collaboration is partly defined by the inputs of partners in terms of resources (money, people, time). Like the transaction cost view of partnerships, the resource-based view has been criticized for its disregard to the social context in which businesses operate (Priem & Bulter, 2001). For nonprofit–business partnerships, this context is very relevant and vital to their potential to have an effective societal input (Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010). As Margolis and Walsh (2003) point out, there is tension between the private partner’s objective to make a profit and the public objective of nonprofits to increase social good.

This social context can be framed within a third theoretical perspective: the relational-based view. Dyer and Singh (1998) developed this perspective to explain the success of businesses not from within organizations but from the routines and processes between organizations. They refer to relational-based collaborations as relationships that are studied based on the routines
and processes in the collaborations between partners. Clarke and Crane (2018) also acknowledge the importance of a relational-based view to understanding cross-sector partnerships. Contractor et al. (2011) and Van Kranenburg et al. (2014) support this view and emphasize that the outcome of a collaboration depends on the intensity of involvement of partners.

Several scholars have categorized nonprofit–business partnerships from a relational-based view. For instance, Rondinelli and London (2003) categorize partnerships based on the degree of partner involvement in the collaboration. They identify types of partnerships that range from low involvement arm’s length relationships to medium involvement interactive collaborations and formal management collaborations with high levels of involvement. The level of interpartner involvement is defined by the frequency of interactions, resources involved, and the extent of a shared focus and level of coordination.

Byiers, Guadagno, and Karaki (2016) identify a spectrum of relational-based partnership types based on their relation to the organization’s core business in which interpartner involvement plays a role, while Lindenberg (2001) categorizes the relationship between nonprofits and businesses as one that ranges from no interaction (suspicion) to a merging interaction (integration). In turn, Austin (2000) as well as Austin and Seitanidi (2012a) use the increasing degree of partners’ involvement to distinguish between four partnership types—philanthropic, transactional, integrative, and transformational—that are considered to lead from relatively low to relatively high social impact, respectively. Cho and Kelly (2014) proposed a similar typology of relationships between nonprofits and businesses: patronizing/philanthropic, exchange/transactional, and communal/integrative. This study builds on the conceptual work of Austin and Seitanidi (2012a, 2012b) by exploring how the motives of nonprofit and business managers are related to the type of partnerships that emerge based on the intensity of interpartner involvement.

Austin’s collaboration typology gives the broadest perspective on the degree of interpartner involvement and commitment of partners in the different types of partnerships. In a philanthropic partnership, the business donates financial means to the nonprofit, without much further involvement. In general, there are relatively few resources involved in this type of partnership, the time frame is short, and the scope of activities is narrow. These partnerships are characterized by infrequent interactions between partners and likely to be driven by the organizations’ instrumental interests. The partnership type is of little importance to the partners’ missions, and the social impact is relatively low (Austin, 2000). In many philanthropic partnerships, businesses financially support the activities of nonprofits but are not actively involved in decision making processes or activities (Moratis & Van der Veen, 2010).

In the transactional partnership type, nonprofits and businesses both make a transactional contribution to pursue their individual goals; therefore, such partnerships seem to be instrumentally motivated. In comparison to the philanthropic type, more resources are involved, and the scope of activities is also larger. As Austin (2000) points out, there is more interaction between the partners, and the partnership is considered relatively important to the partners’ missions. Transactional partnerships are often retail partnerships in which the business gets access to new markets or new client bases, while the nonprofit gets support for its activities (Gray & Stites, 2013).

As part of the collaboration in the integrative type of partnerships, nonprofits and businesses combine their values, norms, and missions on the organizational level during long-term collaboration. The social impact of integrative partnerships is expected to be higher than in transactional partnerships, while partners interact intensively with each other. In line with a more proactive attitude of partners in this type of partnership, the resources involved are substantial,
and the partnership is considered to be of great value for the partners. In such collaborations, partners create organizational cohesion and work together in a way that integrates their moral values and strategies (Cozzolino, 2012).

In transformational partnerships, partners have a shared intention to realize their joint mission through the involvement of stakeholders and based on social innovation. Moral motives are expected to be an essential driver in such partnerships. The intensive and equal nature of the collaboration is also reflected in the enormous magnitude of resources involved, the intense collaboration, and the broad scope of activities. This type of partnership is considered to have an enormous social impact and to have a high potential to transform industries or value chains, compared to the lower degree of interpartner involvement types of partnerships (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b). While the transformational partnerships could potentially trigger a transformative change in industries, the collaboration process is quite complex; therefore, this type of partnership is relatively rare (Austin, 2000; Kindornay, Tissot, & Sheiban, 2014).

Table 1 summarizes the various types of relational-based partnerships concerning the degree of partner involvement as well as the complexity of the partnership. It shows that low interpartner involvement partnerships (philanthropic and transactional) seem to be driven by instrumental motives and are expected to create low to modest social impact, while high interpartner involvement partnerships (integrative and transformational) appear to be steered by moral motives and associated with the potential to generate high social impact (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Byiers et al., 2016). This study builds on the conceptual work of Austin and Seitanidi (2012a, 2012b) by exploring how motives are related to the type of partnerships that emerge based on the intensity of interpartner involvement. We hypothesize:

H3. Motives with low impact are more often present in nonprofit–business partnerships with a low degree interpartner involvement in comparison to a high degree interpartner involvement.

H4a. Instrumental motives are more often present in nonprofit–business partnerships with a high degree interpartner involvement in comparison to a low degree interpartner involvement.

H4b. Moral motives are more often present in nonprofit–business partnerships with a high degree interpartner involvement in comparison to a low degree interpartner involvement.

4 | METHODOLOGY

4.1 | Sample

Historically, nonprofits, businesses, and the government in the Netherlands have much experience with cross-sector collaboration, and current national and international policies, such as the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, have put cross-sector partnerships even more prominently on the Dutch political agenda (OECD, 2016). Dutch nonprofit and business employees working on a management or executive level with an affinity for nonprofit–business partnerships were approached online through mailing lists obtained from a newsletter that included information, news, and training for professionals active in partnerships in which nonprofits and businesses are involved. Within the broader field of nonprofit organizations, this newsletter
was particularly aimed at Non Profit Organizations (NPOs): Dutch nonprofits working on sustainable development and development cooperation mostly outside of the Netherlands. We used a 45-item online questionnaire in Dutch to collect data about Dutch nonprofit–business partnerships. It consisted of several parts, including general partner information concerning partnerships, general questions about specific partnerships, and the motives at play in these partnerships. The questionnaire was sent to 1,410 email addresses that received a newsletter about cross-sector collaboration in the Netherlands; 242 respondents participated in the survey study, which constituted a response rate of 17%. We used two selection criteria to obtain a suitable sample: first, we only included respondents currently working at a business or an NPO. Respondents from other organizations, such as governments or independent partnership brokers (consultants), were left out. Second, we only selected respondents that indicated that they have experience participating in a nonprofit–business partnership. Respondents with experience in other types of partnerships, such as public–private partnerships, were excluded. Furthermore, the respondents were senior managers. Of the 242 respondents, 107 were employed at a business, while 84 worked at an NPO (but not all of them had experience with nonprofit–business collaboration). The rest of the respondents were working elsewhere, for instance, as a government employee or as a consultant.

| Type | Philanthropic | Transactional | Integrative | Transformative |
|------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Description/characteristics | Relationship in which the company makes a financial donation to the NPO | Partners work together around specific activities in which all partners (financial or nonfinancial) exchange resources and participation contributes to the goals of their organization without a shared mission | Cooperation involving organizational integration; the partnership has a shared mission, and common strategies are embedded in the participating organizations | Cooperation focusing on joint learning and social innovation; partners not only have a joint social mission but also share the ambition to tackle this through social innovation, together with stakeholders |
| Level of engagement | Low | Low/medium | Medium/high | High |
| Interactions between partners | Infrequent | Occasional | Frequent | Intensive |
| Commitment of resources | Low | Low/medium | Substantial | High |
| Co-creation of mission | No | Weak | Strong | Conjoined |
| Coordination | Low | Low/medium | Medium | High |
| Social impact | Low | Medium | Medium/high | High |
In line with the selection criteria mentioned above, respondents that were not working at an NPO or business were excluded as well (resulting in 101 cases). Based on a comparison of the distribution of the type of organizations where the senior managers work (NPOs or businesses) in the sample and the address file (using a Chi-square test, $\chi^2(1) = 0.70, p = .40$), we tentatively concluded that there was no non-response bias in this respect (Fulton, 2018). Table 2 presents an overview of relevant characteristics of the respondents.

The majority of partnerships (74%) in our sample had their geographical scope outside the Netherlands, while 26% focused on the Netherlands. The data showed that some businesses and NPOs are involved in more than one partnership: the number of partnerships ranges from 1 to 5 in most cases (58%), but there were also more extensive partnerships ranging from 6 to 15 (25%), 16–20 (6%) to even over 21 partners (11%). In terms of their thematic focus, the partnerships were all aimed at stimulating sustainable development; most of the partnerships aimed at reducing poverty, improving food security, and/or tackling water and sanitation issues. More often than NPOs, businesses indicated to focus on biodiversity and climate change. A large majority of the partnerships (68%) were in the executive phase, while others were in the starting phase (13%), finalizing phase (13%), or had already finalized (6%) the partnership. The oldest partnership reported on in the survey was over 15 years old, while the youngest partnership in the data was only a couple of months old.

### 4.2 Measures

Based on the motives derived from the literature on nonprofit–business partnerships, we included nine motives as independent variables: CSR, problem-solving, financial, knowledge, network, legitimacy, image, innovation, and stakeholders. These were all dichotomous items (0 = no, 1 = yes).

We used Austin’s (2000) as well as Austin and Seitanidi’s (2012a, 2012b) typology of nonprofit–business relational-based partnerships using the distinct characteristics from the literature, such as the intensity of the interpartner involvement in the collaboration and the size of the invested time and money to describe the partnership types neutrally. We presented the respondents four different descriptions of characteristics of the types of partnerships (1 = philanthropic, 2 = transactional, 3 = integrative, and 4 = transformational). Table 1 shows the descriptions of the partnership types used in the questionnaire, including intensity of communication, size of invested resources, and importance to the organization’s mission.

After reading these descriptions, we asked respondents which of these they deemed most characteristic for their partnership. As the response rate for this question did not differ from that of other questions, and because respondents did not make any remarks about this question, we inferred that there were no issues with recognizing or understanding the partnership types. In our sample, the philanthropic and transactional partnership types made up a minority (2.73 and 32.9%, respectively), while the integrative and transformational partnership type (23.3 and 41.1%, respectively) formed the majority. Due to the limited number of different partnerships in our sample, we merged the four types of partnerships into a low degree of involvement of partners in the partnerships (types 1 and 2: philanthropic and transactional) and a high degree of involvement of partners in the partnerships (types 3 and 4: integrative and transformational partnerships). As a result, the new variable partnership type consisted of 36% low-degree interpartner involvement collaborations and 64% of a high degree of inter-partner involvement partnerships.
The number of partnerships that organizations are involved in is an indication of whether organizations find cross-sector collaborations important and how experienced they are in such partnerships; hence, we tested for a possible confounding effect. The literature indicates that larger organizations tend to be active in more partnerships than smaller organizations (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). As the frequency of the higher categories of the number of partnerships was relatively low, we combined them into a dichotomous variable for the number of partnerships in which the respondents’ organization was involved (0 = 1–5 partnerships; 1 = 6 or more partnerships).

4.3 | Statistical analyses

We used Chi-square analyses to test H1 and H2. To test the underlying structure of the motives of organizations to participate in partnerships, we used factor analysis and multidimensional scaling (MDS; Young & Lewyckyj, 1979). This is a useful and flexible tool to test and visualize the underlying structure or dimensions in data, using the distance between items as a starting point.
point (Kruskal, 1964). A measure of fit used in MDS is STRESS. A stress value close to zero indicates the goodness of fit, while values larger than 0.20 are considered inferior (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). After applying MDS, we conducted one-sided t-tests to examine the three directional hypotheses and calculated Cohen’s \( d \) to measure the magnitude of the effect independent of the sample size. According to Cohen (1988), the effect sizes of 0.20 are small, 0.50 medium, and 0.80 large.

Furthermore, analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were carried out to check for a possible confounding effect for the number of partnerships. To conduct the analyses, IBM SPSS (version 25) was used. For all analyses, \( \alpha \) was set at 0.05.

5 | RESULTS

5.1 | Motives and organization type

The results show that “solving a social or environmental issue” is mentioned most often by leaders from both nonprofits and businesses. The five highest-ranking motives for both types of organizations to participate in a cross-sector partnership were “solving a social issue,” “carrying out the CSR policy,” “access to knowledge,” “access to finances,” and “innovation.” Thus, the moral motives (solving a social issue and carrying out the CSR policy) were most important here followed by instrumental motives (access to knowledge, access to finance, and innovation). Looking at the types of organizations separately, the ranking was different (see Table 3). For managers at NPOs, the three most essential motives were solving (a social or environmental) problem, knowledge, and financial. For respondents of businesses, the order was solving (a social or environmental) problem, CSR, and image.

Table 3 shows that business managers mentioned the motives of CSR and image significantly more often than NPO managers. In contrast, the financial motive was chosen more often by respondents from nonprofits than by their counterparts from businesses. For the other six motives, there were no significant differences.

5.2 | Categorization of motives

Furthermore, we conducted a factor analysis to investigate the relationship between the motives of nonprofits and businesses to participate in a partnership. This procedure resulted in a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value of smaller than 0.50 and an insignificant Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, indicating that the data were not appropriate for factor analysis. However, MDS produced an interpretable two-dimensional structure of the motives involved in relational-based nonprofit–business partnerships (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows that the motives to participate into nonprofit–business partnership are scattered along two axes and divided into four quadrants. In the upper right quadrant, the motives, finances, knowledge, and innovation are clustered, while in the upper left quadrant, the motives network, stakeholder, and legitimacy are included. The lower left quadrant comprises the motive CSR. The motive image is also placed here, but is closer in distance to the motives in the upper left quadrant. The motive of solving a social or environmental problem is situated in the lower right quadrant at a relatively large distance from the other motives. A stress value of 0.12 \( (R^2 = 0.93) \) was found, which is acceptable. A one-dimensional solution
resulted in a much higher stress value, indicating that the data are multidimensional. Also, in nine iterations each item was repeatedly left out, but this did not lead to improved solutions.

Inspection of the visual configuration in Figure 1 suggests that the motives to participate in a partnership are configured along the following two dimensions: the vertical dimension relates to the distinction between instrumental and moral motives that is also present in the literature on relational-based nonprofit–business collaboration and CSR, whereas the horizontal dimension runs from low impact to high impact, and the social impact of the latter group of motives is considered higher than the first group of motives.

This led to a categorization of motives into four groups that indicate the intentions with which organizations participate in relational-based nonprofit–business partnerships.

| Motive          | NPO (n) | NPO (%) | Business (n) | Business (%) | $\chi^2$ | $p$    |
|-----------------|---------|---------|--------------|--------------|---------|--------|
| CSR             | 5       | 14.7    | 21           | 55.3         | 12.8    | <.001*** |
| Solve problem   | 25      | 73.5    | 23           | 60.5         | 1.37    | .25    |
| Financial       | 15      | 44.1    | 6            | 15.8         | 6.97    | .01*   |
| Knowledge       | 15      | 44.1    | 1            | 29.0         | 1.80    | .18    |
| Network         | 10      | 29.4    | 6            | 15.8         | 1.93    | .16    |
| Legitimacy      | 1       | 2.94    | 6            | 15.8         | 3.38    | .07    |
| Image           | 4       | 11.8    | 12           | 31.6         | 4.08    | .04*   |
| Stakeholder     | 7       | 20.6    | 6            | 15.8         | 0.28    | .60    |
| Innovation      | 10      | 29.4    | 7            | 18.4         | 1.20    | .27    |

Note: Degrees of freedom = 1.

* $p < .05$.
*** $p < .001$.

**FIGURE 1** Two-dimensional configuration of partnership motives
Instrumental motives with an expected high impact were called the “resource” category (a) because this quadrant contains resource-related motives. Motives that are instrumental with low impact were labeled as the “relational” category (b), while motives in the quadrant moral with low impact form part of the “policy” category (c). This contains motives that are well intended but not necessarily impactful. The fourth group of motives comprises the moral dimension in combination with high impact, which we labeled as the “responsibility” category (d), containing altruistic motives that are about taking responsibility for societal challenges.

Table 4 shows the comparison between the organization type (nonprofit or business, dependent variable) and the motive category. Effect sizes were in the range of medium to large, which is quite substantial. The \( t \)-tests showed that instrumental motives were more important to business managers than to nonprofit managers with regard to engaging in a nonprofit–business partnership. Therefore, we can accept H1. We also found a significant difference concerning moral motives, but the means were opposite to our expectations. Hence, H2 is not supported.

### 5.3 Motives and interpartner involvement

We also tested the relationship between the motives and the degree of involvement of partners in the partnership. Independent \( t \)-test samples did not show any significant results for the four separate motive categories and the degree of interpartner involvement. However, after using sum scores that combine the motives on the dimensions from the visual configuration (see Figure 1) into a low-impact dimension (consisting of motives 1, 5, 6, 7, and 9) and a high social dimension (consisting of motives 2, 3, 4, and 8), significant results were found. Table 5 shows the comparison between a low and high degree of interpartner involvement as well as high- or low-social impact motives and instrumental and moral motives.

For the moral and instrumental motive categories, there were no significant differences between a high and low degree of interpartner involvement partnership types, and the effect sizes were small. Conversely, the low and high-impact motive categories were statistically significant with quite substantial effect sizes close to 0.50. Also, the effect for low-social impact motives had a positive direction, and for high-social impact motives, a negative direction, which

| Motive category                  | Organization type | \( M \) | \( SD \) | \( t \) | \( p \)     | \( d \) |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------|--------|------|-----------|------|
| Moral (category 3 + 4)           | Business\(^a\)    | 1.47   | 0.92   | 2.68 | .005**    | 0.62 |
|                                  | NPO\(^b\)         | 1.00   | 0.55   |      |           |      |
| Instrumental (category 1 + 2)    | Business          | 1.11   | 0.95   | −3.00 | .002**    | −0.71|
|                                  | NPO               | 1.71   | 0.72   |      |           |      |
| Low impact (category 2 + 3)      | Business          | 1.34   | 0.85   | 2.64 | .005**    | 0.62 |
|                                  | NPO               | 0.79   | 0.91   |      |           |      |
| High impact (category 1 + 4)     | Business          | 1.24   | 0.85   | −3.05| .002**    | −0.71|
|                                  | NPO               | 1.91   | 1.03   |      |           |      |

Note: For categories, see Figure 1. Degrees of freedom = 70.

\(^a\)\( n = 38 \).

\(^b\)\( n = 34 \).

\( **p < .01 \) (one-sided).
makes these empirical findings consistent with Austin and Seitanidi’s (2012b) work. Therefore, there is support for H3 but not for H4a and H4b.

Finally, the ANCOVAs did not show an effect of the covariate number of partnerships on the relationship between motives and partnership types.

### 6 | DISCUSSION

This study provides valuable insights into what the underlying motives of nonprofit and business managers are to engage in particular types of nonprofit–business partnerships based on the intensity of interpartner involvement and commitment. Evidence is coming from Dutch nonprofit and business senior managers involved in nonprofit–business partnerships, a context that is particularly valuable and informative because the Netherlands is considered a front runner in the field of cross-sector collaboration and has a relatively long experience with executing and encouraging nonprofit–business partnerships. Our evidence shows that instrumental motives are more important for business managers than for nonprofit managers as a driver to engage in a nonprofit–business partnership. We do not find evidence for the hypothesis that indicates that moral motives play a more critical role for managers at nonprofits than for those at businesses when it comes to engaging in a partnership. Furthermore, our study confirms that low-impact motives are more often associated with a low degree of interpartner involvement partnerships than with partnerships that have a high degree of interpartner involvement. Our findings did not show the existence of a relationship between moral and instrumental motives and the degree of interpartner involvement partnerships.

This study provides three significant takeaways. The results show that moral motives, such as the wish to solve a social or environmental issue, play an essential role in the collaboration between nonprofits and businesses. Several conceptual and qualitative studies on nonprofit–business partnerships claim that instrumental motives based on the assumption of resource dependency, such as obtaining finance and getting access to knowledge and contacts, are also the dominant drivers behind the emergence of nonprofit–business partnerships (e.g., Arya & Salk, 2006; Austin, 2000; Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Melavilla & Blank, 1993; Yaziji &
Doh, 2009). However, our study finds that both nonprofit and business managers are strongly motivated to engage in nonprofit–business partnerships with the moral motive of solving a social or environmental issue. Therefore, these findings contribute to the current body of strategic management literature on partnerships that have not yet considered moral motives as a very relevant reason to participate in partnerships.

The study also brings new insights into the inconclusive literature on whether the motives of nonprofit and business managers are overlapping or divergent to engage in a partnership (e.g., Jamali & Keshishian, 2009; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Our finding shows that there was only a significant difference between the motives of managers at nonprofits and businesses in a few cases. CSR and improving the business’s image are significantly more critical motives for managers at businesses to partner with nonprofits than vice versa. In the case of CSR, this is understandable as businesses are the main actors in the field of CSR, while the motive of image improvement might indicate that partnerships can also be considered a marketing tool. Kolk, van Dolen, and Vock (2010) have described how businesses might expect that partnerships with social actors such as nonprofits have a positive effect on their image. Access to finance is a significantly more relevant motive for nonprofit managers that we studied. This is in line with the literature stating that the steady decline of public funding has led to resource scarcity in the nonprofit sector and to a shift toward collaboration with businesses in the hopes of attracting private financing (Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002; Sanzo et al., 2015; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Overall, this could indicate that nonprofits are inclined to search collaboration for resource-related reasons, whereas businesses seem less in need of resources but seek collaboration for reputation purposes. This is in line with the evidence that we found that supports the hypothesis that business managers are more likely to be motivated by instrumental motives than those at nonprofits.

Based on our refined categorization of motives, we addressed the relation between motives and the degree of interpartner involvement in the partnerships. Our analyses empirically relate the motives to seek collaborations that are present in the conceptual work of Austin and Seitanidi (2012a, 2012b) to the degree of interpartner involvement in nonprofit–business partnerships. Their work indicates that partners show less involvement in philanthropic and transactional partnerships. Our results indicate that the motives located along the low-impact dimension are associated with a low degree of interpartner involvement partnerships. In contrast, the high-social impact motives are associated with the engagement in a high degree of involvement of partners in partnerships. In other words, this study finds that organizations that engage in partnerships to improve their image, create more legitimacy, and enhance their network or work on marketing through CSR are more likely to engage in nonprofit–business partnerships that are characterized by a low degree of involvement among the partners and where investments in time and resources are modest. In turn, organizations that primarily seek partnerships to obtain resources (such as knowledge, finances, or innovation) and that focus on solving a social or environmental issue are more likely to participate in partnerships with higher degrees of interpartner involvement and larger investments of time and resources.

Partnerships based on these low-social impact motives lead to more shallow collaborations with little interaction and a low potential to generate effective societal change. This is problematic as nonprofit–business collaborations are increasingly intertwined partnerships that focus on complex societal or environmental issues and therefore require higher levels of interpartner involvement to make an impact (Contractor et al., 2011). When managers know what motives are at play in their organization and that of their partners, this helps them predict the required level of interpartner involvement and the potential to generate effective societal change through
the collaboration. It can help manage partnerships more effectively by consciously avoiding partners that are primarily seeking collaboration based on low-impact motives, such as improving their image or enhancing their network. Instead, managers that want to engage in partnerships with a significant social bearing should choose partners with motives in the high impact category. From the perspective of risk reduction, awareness about the motives of nonprofit and business managers seeking partnership is vital for professionals in the process of partner selection as well as in the design phase of the partnership. Otherwise, the collaboration might yield not only limited social impact but also inflict reputational risks on all parties involved, as some of the partners might be involved for purposes of window-dressing or greenwashing only.

Although this exploratory study provides new insights into the motives of nonprofit and business managers to collaborate and the degree of involvement, we also acknowledge the limitations of the study. This study regards nonprofits and businesses as relatively distinctive and internally homogenous sectors. It is the first step toward better understanding the emergence of relational-based nonprofit–business partnerships as a type of collaboration that is different from regular interbusiness collaboration. Future studies could look into the differences between the organizations in these sectors, including factors such as size, experience, and age of organizations. Perhaps, collaborations between partners that differ in size or experience might also have different levels of interpartner involvement and impact. A more extensive study could further look into the nuances of this motivation, perhaps leading to a more diversified view on the morality or instrumentality of CSR as a motive for businesses to engage in cross-sector partnerships. Although we confirmed the representativeness of the distribution of nonprofit and business respondents in the sample, the sample size of the study was relatively small, which is another limitation of the study. For future research that goes beyond an explorative scope, we recommend to increase the sample size and to focus on other geographical areas as this could show clearer and more robust patterns concerning the role of motives in nonprofit–business collaboration. In particular, it would be worthwhile to study the role of alignment of managers’ motives with regard to social impact and to test on a larger scale whether close collaboration (e.g., high interpartner involvement) leads to a higher level of social impact. The latter links to discussions by scholars and practitioners about value creation in cross-sector partnerships (e.g., Murphy, Perrot, & Rivera-Santos, 2012), which was not addressed in detail in this study. Additional research could help expand the knowledge on the performance and the social impact of the different degrees of interpartner involvement in partnerships, which might then be connected to the value created in nonprofit–business collaborations. As nonprofit–business partnerships are considered high-risk strategies, it would also be valuable to understand better how partners deal with adverse situations. Insight into this area can contribute to increasing the success of cross-sector collaborations. As quantitative studies aim for generalization and given the lack of empirical studies on country level, we would like to stress the importance of replicating this study in other cultural contexts to see if similar results arise or that nuance is needed in other settings. Taking into account that nonprofit–business partnerships are increasingly part of governance policies, a better understanding of how other actors, such as government or partnership brokers, influence the collaboration process would also be beneficial. This study reveals that motives are essential for the process of collaboration as they are related to the degree of interpartner involvement in nonprofit–business partnerships. With an increasing demand from society and governments on nonprofits and businesses to engage in collective action for sustainability, our research shows that motives indeed matter for a better understanding of nonprofit–business dynamics.
DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ORCID
Gabi Spitz https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9647-8740

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**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES**

**Gabi Spitz** is a lecturer and researcher at the Institute for International Business Studies of Utrecht University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. She is a PhD candidate at Nijmegen School of Management, Radboud University Nijmegen. Her research interests include cross-sector partnerships, corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

**Prof. dr. Hans van Kranenburg** is full professor of Corporate Strategy at Radboud University Nijmegen, Nijmegen School of Management, the Netherlands. He is head of the Strategic Management group at the department of Business Administration. He published on strategic behaviour of organizations, industry dynamics, alliances and networks, foreign direct investments, non-market strategies and stakeholder management.

**Dr. Hubert P. L. M. Korzilius** is associate professor of Research Methodology at the Institute for Management Research of the Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. His current research interests are: research methodology, method development, cross-cultural management, dynamic decision making, system dynamics and group mental models. He has published books and book chapters and in scientific journals, among others in the European Journal of Operational Research, Food Policy, Frontiers in Psychology, International Journal of Intercultural Relations, System Dynamics Review, and Systems Research and Behavioral Science.

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