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Examining organizational change in the implementation of a modified soccer program

By

Julie Legg

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Faculty of Human Kinetics  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Human Kinetics  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2015

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Examining organizational change in the implementation of a modified soccer program

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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the process of change at the community sport level by identifying the impetus for change, responses to change by stakeholders, and the factors that constrained or aided the change process. The context of this research is two community soccer associations in Ontario undergoing a long-term structural redesign mandated by the provincial soccer association. Cunningham's (2002) Integrative Model of Organizational Change serves as the theoretical framework for the research. Stakeholders from local soccer clubs as well as the Ontario Soccer Association identified key factors and experiences influencing the implementation and success of change. Pressures, creating a new template, communication, responses to the change, and capacity were all elements participants identified in contributing to the effectiveness of the change process. An outline of practical implications during change is included for sport practitioners.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisors, Dr. Ryan Snelgrove and Dr. Laura Wood, for their guidance and expertise throughout the thesis process. I appreciate the time you both spent working with me as well as everything you did to go above and beyond in making my time at Windsor valuable.

Thank you to both Dr. Jess Dixon and Dr. Andrew Templer for their feedback throughout the process as thesis committee members. Your knowledge and contributions are greatly appreciated.

I would like to acknowledge my friends and family for their help and support in making this accomplishment possible. To my parents, thank you for your support in my pursuit of further education. I cannot thank you both enough for everything you continuously do. To Emily, thanks for providing your opinion and assistance through countless inquires. I am happy to have progressed through the thesis process with you as my roommate and friend. To Taylor, thank you for always being there no matter how far the distance. To my fellow graduate students, thank you for making my M.H.K. experience an enjoyable one.

Finally, thank you to all the kind individuals who took the time to participate in interviews. This research would not be possible without you.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OSA- Ontario Soccer Association

LTAD- Long-Term Athlete Development

LTPD- Long-Term Player Development

# RESEARCH ARTICLE: EXAMINING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A MODIFIED SPORT PROGRAM

## **Introduction**

Pressures exist, both internally and externally, for sport organizations to remain effective in a competitive marketplace (Amis, Slack, & Hinings 2004a; Cunningham, 2002). Managing change is therefore a predominant element in the overall management of sport. As such, the study of organizational change has become increasingly important to the sport industry, as changes are occurring based on new innovations, strategies, and commercialization in sport (Amis et al., 2004a). Within the context of the youth sport sector specifically, changes are occurring based on a growing concern that current structures and programs do not facilitate the achievement of desirable objectives, such as providing sport for all or developing elite athletes (Skille & Waddington, 2006; Torres & Hager, 2007). Traditional North American sport structures have been criticized for focusing heavily on winning and adult goals, rather than having the goals of youth participants in mind, such as fun and skill improvement (Green, 1997; Wiersma, 2012). Furthermore, over-organization, adult control, injury or abuse, and professionalization are some of the problems associated with the traditional North American design of youth sport leagues (Green 1997; Shuttleworth & Wan-Ka, 1998; Wiersma, 2012). One of the major challenges in managing these potential issues is that the structure and policies of traditional sport organizations are largely formed by volunteer committee members, with each individual having opinions or motives that may not consider the best interests of all youth participants (Chalip & Scott, 2005).

Organizations representing various sports have chosen to respond to these types of challenges in different ways, most of which have involved minimal action. In order for sport to be appealing to a broader range of youth participants than is being targeted with current structures, there is evidence that change in program design may be beneficial (Green, 1997; Hill & Green, 2008; Skille & Waddington, 2006). This study focuses on the efforts of one particular organized sport currently going through a change process, specifically youth soccer in Ontario. In order to address some of the issues with current sport practices, the Ontario Soccer Association's Long-term Player Development (LTPD) strategy aims to create a soccer environment that focuses on skill development that is appropriate for each individual age group (Ontario Soccer Association, 2014a). The plan aims to increase player enjoyment, decision-making, skill development opportunities, and age appropriate playing environments (Ontario Soccer Association, 2014b). Changes include the removal of standings and scorekeeping, smaller playing fields, fewer players per game, and travel and playing time restrictions. The Ontario Soccer Association has made these policy changes, in the form of new structures and rules, mandatory for all Ontario soccer programs starting in 2014 for players under the age of twelve.

Modified sport programs are designed to downplay competition and focus on elements such as skill development, enjoyment, socialization, fair play, and increased participation (Chalip & Green, 1998; Hill & Green, 2008; Shuttleworth & Wan-Ka, 1998). These modified programs attempt to design sport in a way that eliminates traditional sport problems such as over competition and adult control before issues can occur. Changing the way sport programs are designed has the ability to bring emphasis back to components of sport such as fun and skill development that have recently been

overshadowed by the move towards elite competition with year-round sport offerings and highly specialized training (Green, 1997; Wankel & Sefton, 1989). Despite the potential benefits that can be derived from modifying the way sport leagues are designed, most have received significant resistance from stakeholders and ultimately failed (Green, 1997; Chalip & Green, 1998). However, one of the major limitations of extant research on the implementation and management of modified sport programs is the lack of theoretical basis of the research. The consequence of limited theoretical development has arguably made the research of limited use for developing applicable guidelines for use by practitioners. Thus, this study employs an organizational change framework as a way of building a theoretical understanding of the process of change for modified sport league implementations and seeks to identify concepts and processes that will aid sport managers involved in managing radical change.

The modification of a sport league involves appealing to multiple stakeholder groups (e.g., participants, parents, coaches, league management) and managing their concerns. With such a variety of perspectives involved, it can be challenging for change to occur, even when there is evidence that change is necessary for an organization (Cunningham, 2002). Change can also have unintended consequences in organizations when plans are not fully monitored and thoughtfully implemented, leading to potentially undesirable states instead of positive outcomes (Bloyce, Smith, Mead, & Morris, 2008). The process of change therefore requires an understanding of the factors that can contribute to a successful transition. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine change within the context of Ontario youth soccer associations. Specifically, this research will examine the success factors and constraints that exist in the implementation and

continuance of a youth sport league experiencing change. Current research on change in sport has primarily focused on elite level organizations, such as professional teams or national governing bodies (e.g., Austin, 1997; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995b; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings 1995a; O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011).

Community level sport will be examined in this organizational change research, adding additional depth to the knowledge of change in sport based on the different stakeholders, pressures, sources of funding, and management structures that exist at this level.

Theoretically, this study builds upon Cunningham's (2002) integrative model of organizational change. Further examination of this model may provide insights to previously unconsidered variables and will investigate the applicability of this model at the community sport level.

### **Literature Review**

Change can involve the implementation of new practices within a current organizational design, or change can be more extreme and influence a complete shift in organizational practices. A change that occurs within the existing organizational template is referred to as convergent change, whereas change that causes a move to a new template is labelled as radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The current study deals with radical change because there is a completely new approach to the design of a soccer league being implemented. Radical change has been found to occur in a nonlinear manner, which makes the process challenging to predict and implement (Amis et al., 2004b; Brock, 2006). To help illustrate the complexities of radical change, Cunningham (2002) suggested a model for organizational change that included factors influencing the

process and success of change from one template to another. His model will be discussed next to frame the radical change process and its elements.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Integrative Model of Organizational Change**

Developed by Cunningham (2002), the Integrative Model of Organizational Change (see Figure 1) considers institutional theory, population ecology, strategic choice, and resource dependence as theoretical change perspectives to ensure a holistic view of radical change.

### **Institutionalism**

Institutional theory provides the basis of Cunningham's (2002) model. The institutional environment influences an organization by exerting pressures to follow particular practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Stevens & Slack, 1998). Institutionalism establishes norms and rules within environments to guide behaviour and socially acceptable practices (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013; Washington & Patterson, 2011). As Washington and Patterson (2011) framed it, institutionalism is a social construct that is used to gain legitimacy. Institutionalized processes can occur within smaller group settings, organizational levels, or an organizational field (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Institutionalism creates environments that are predictable and stable but in doing this, ultimately constrains the process of organizational change (Oliver, 1992; Washington & Patterson, 2011). In the context of sport, this stable structure is likely to be a challenge to shift or break because of the cultural connection sport has within individuals in North America (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Therefore, it is likely

that institutionalized practices work to prevent change, unless these norms and traditions are shifted in a way that is seen as beneficial to stakeholders.

### **Population Ecology**

The perspective of population ecology focuses on the concept of competition between organizations for scarce resources (Cunningham, 2002). The theory of population ecology postulates that change occurs by selection, with successful choices surviving while unsuccessful organizational adaptations become extinct (Cunningham, 2002). Based on this assumption, the previous organizational practices in Ontario soccer can be viewed by the organization as an approach that was no longer seen as effective or desirable, leading to change. Whereas, the new changes were seen as suitable in other countries worldwide and therefore appear to be an acceptable sport structure for organizations to achieve desired sport outcomes.

### **Strategic Choice**

The theoretical perspective of strategic choice focuses on power within organizations and postulates that decision-making is largely based on the choices of key organizational members (Cunningham, 2002; Stevens & Slack, 1998). The theory focuses on the differences that can occur based on individual choices within organizations and the degree of choice available in organizations can be constrained by the internal organizational structure as well as the external environment (Stevens & Slack, 1998). However, this theory of change focuses more on the differences that can occur based on individual choices within organizations, rather than a dependency on the external environment to pressure or shape change (Stevens & Slack, 1998).

## **Organizational Template**

The current design or structure of an organization tends to be influenced by institutionalized practices within an organization's field, which makes organizations more similar (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The values, beliefs, and ideas common within an organizational field all contribute to the structure or template in place (Brock, 2006; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). In Cunningham's (2002) model, the current template of an organization undergoes shifts to develop a new organizational template based on the processes involved in radical organizational change.

## **Deinstitutionalization**

The process of deinstitutionalization can be a conscious or unconscious organizational practice, which suggests change can be strategic or environmentally influenced (Oliver, 1992). In radical change, deinstitutionalization is facilitated by a calculated plan to implement new or different practices.

Different organizations may experience the same change differently based on a variety of starting points and influential factors that can occur throughout the change period, exemplifying how the features of institutionalized practices can occur within each different organization (Kikulis et al., 1995a). Organizational members have a choice of how to respond to change, which is influenced by past experiences and learning (Kikulis et al., 1995a; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Understanding institutionalized practices can help organizations build upon current ideas and practices to create readiness for change that is consistent with organizational views (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013).

Within Cunningham's (2002) model of organizational change, three specific pressures that contribute to deinstitutionalization are identified, including political,

functional and social pressures. Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) also support the idea that a combination of these pressures can lead to change occurring.

**Political pressures.** Political pressures can occur within an organization as well as external to an organization (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002; Bloyce et al., 2008; Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Internal pressures can arise when there are issues with organizational performance or when members' ideas conflict with the current practices (Oliver, 1992). Externally, political pressures tend to occur based on dependencies with other organizations (Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Practices enforced by these external relationships influence dependent organizations. When changes occur within this relationship, cause for change is created because organizational influences have changed (Bloyce et al., 2008; Oliver, 1992).

**Functional pressures.** Technical or functional pressures that occur can bring into question the validity of organizational practices (Oliver, 1992). Functional pressures often occur when there is a change in rewards associated with activities, when social and economic successes conflict, or when an organizational goal becomes more specific (Oliver, 1992). Externally, changes in competition or the emergence of new information can create functional pressures to increase efficiency or effectiveness (Brock, 2006; Oliver, 1992). Functional pressures influence an organization's desire to provide the best product or service possible and this desire can lead to change occurring.

**Social pressures.** Social pressures can also contribute to deinstitutionalization (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Social pressure can determine whether an organization is in agreement with institutionalized practices and whether or not traditional methods are actively or passively abandoned (Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachy &

Bruening, 2011). Outside pressures from society can also lead to deinstitutionalization of practices that are no longer seen as socially acceptable, such as practices that are no longer deemed environmentally safe (Oliver, 1992). Along with these social influences towards change, deinstitutionalization can occur when an organization's structure shifts, altering the social environment (Oliver, 1992).

As demonstrated, many different pressures can occur internally and externally to an organization to create a push for change, especially within a competitive marketplace (Casey, Payne & Eime, 2012; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Oliver, 1992). Coercive pressures may be effective at initiating the change process, but it is challenging to accomplish any full transition through radical change without the support of organization members (Amis et al., 2002; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011).

### **Moderating Factors**

In addition to pressures that influence change, there are competing forces within an institution that can impede or enhance the change process (Oliver, 1992). Cunningham (2002) labelled inertia and entropy as moderating factors that have opposing effects on the rate of change within organizations (Oliver, 1992). Factors that can inhibit the change process are described as inertia (Oliver, 1992). Traditional practices, fear of change, and personal investment are several ways inertia can be manifested to slow organizational change (Amis et al., 2002; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Resistance is also most likely to occur when change is being implemented in areas central to organizations, such as decision making structures or processes (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004b). When individuals in power do not support change, resistance is likely to be high in an organization (Amis et al., 2004a). Regardless

of the source of resistance, inertia is likely to occur at some point throughout the change process due to the frame breaking nature of radical change. Conversely, factors that increase the speed or aid in the process of change are viewed as entropy (Oliver, 1992). When change is supported within an organization, it is more likely that the process will occur at a quick pace (Amis et al., 2004a).

Ambivalence has also been explored throughout the change process and can contribute to the moderating factors outlined by Cunningham (2002). Ambivalence is the occurrence of uncertainty with both positive and negative thoughts, feelings, and actions that have the potential to lead to entropy or inertia from the same individuals in different situations of change (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). It is suggested by Welty Peachy and Bruening (2012) that ambivalence should be added to theoretical models on change, indicating that it may be another class of moderation to consider within Cunningham's (2002) model. Adding the dimension of ambivalence can help conceptualize more accurate predictions of change behaviour and will therefore be investigated in this study (Piderit, 2000).

### **Value Commitments**

Within Cunningham's (2002) model, different types of commitment to values influence the perspective of change held by stakeholders, a concept originally developed by Greenwood and Hinings (1996). The values and inclination to change are linked to two different types of commitment, including competitive commitment and reformative commitment (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). When some organizational members support the traditional organizational template and others prefer an alternative template, competitive commitment occurs (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Conversely, the

strongest type of commitment for change is reformative commitment, as this states that all organizational members reject the current template and favour a new alternative (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Without congruent values to proposed changes, the commitment of organizations to change will be limited and changes will only occur on a superficial basis and will not be enough to support a true shift to a new template (Amis et al., 2002; Amis et al., 2004a).

### **Late Stage Moderating Factors**

When radical change occurs, an old organizational template that is no longer deemed successful changes to a new template (Brock, 2006; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Factors identified by Cunningham (2002) that influence the final stages of a transition to a new template are capacity for action, resource dependence, power dependence, and an available alternative.

**Capacity for action.** Essentially, capacity for action refers to the ability of an organization to manage and carry out the change process from one template to another (Amis et al., 2004a; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Casey et al. (2012) found that organizational processes, organizational resources, and systems and control were three categories that influenced an organization's capacity for change. Communication during implementation, proper funding, the efforts of staff and volunteers, the leveraging of relationships and networks, and formalization of structures were all elements that contributed to the successful implementation of new health promotion initiatives and strategies (Casey et al., 2012). Specifically within non-profit organizations, the implementation of organizational change can be challenging due to their reliance on volunteers over paid staff (Amis et al., 2004a; Casey et al., 2012). Difficulty focusing on

change and complying with prescribed changes can occur because volunteers are already busy giving their time to help run day-to-day organizational operations in addition to their lives outside of the organization (Casey et al., 2012).

**Resource dependence.** Resource dependence is included as an influential factor in the model because change decisions are guided based on the environment organizations depend on (Cunningham, 2002). The dependencies present for organizations influence decision-making and also determine which influences can exert power on organizations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Periods of high uncertainty, such as during the change process, are likely to induce more resource dependency as organizations look to others to help provide solutions to change (O'Brien & Slack, 2004).

**Power dependency.** The level of power individuals and groups have on or within an organization can dictate the amount of influence these actors will have in the change process (Amis et al., 2004a; Casey et al., 2012; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Substantial power and influence can be used to block change within an organization or even be manipulated as a tool to gain support for change (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013; Amis et al., 2002; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Radical change, as a consequence, is more likely to occur when it is supported by powerful groups and individuals, whereas a lack of support slows any change (Amis et al., 2002; Amis et al., 2004a; Austin, 1997; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

**Available alternative.** The availability of alternatives refers to the number of new organizational templates that could be considered by an organization for the possibility of

change (Cunningham, 2002). New organizational forms that have been deemed unsuccessful are eliminated and only the most favourable forms remain as alternatives, as a population ecology perspective would predict (Cunningham, 2002).

### **New Organizational Template**

Organizational change is a process that can be influenced by a number of factors. Each change situation can be considered somewhat unique and the extent to which various factors play roles in the change process is potentially variable within each industry, environment, and individual organization (Cunningham, 2002). Although the model by Cunningham (2002) is meant to frame the change elements known to be involved in radical change, this research will examine the intricacies of change in a specific sporting environment. Further, the views of multiple stakeholders will be examined to understand how change occurs from multiple perspectives.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

In order to understand the process of organizational change from the perspective of the key stakeholders involved, participants consisted of individuals from one of four groups: coaches, parents, board members associated with one of two different youth soccer clubs in Southwestern Ontario, or staff members at the Ontario Soccer Association. All participants were adults (i.e., aged 18 or above). Involving each of these stakeholders allowed for a more comprehensive view of change than one perspective could provide. Local club members were involved with the organization of the association (i.e., board members) or directly involved with boys or girls under 12 teams (i.e., coaches, parents) that have adapted new playing guidelines mandated by the Ontario

Soccer Association. All local stakeholder groups (i.e., coaches, parents and board members) were represented in the participant pool at each organization. A total of sixteen representatives were obtained from local soccer organizations, with each respective group represented at each organization. Additionally, four individuals from the managerial staff at the Ontario Soccer Association were recruited to participate in this study. Thus, a total of 20 participants participated in semi-structured interviews. Pseudonyms are used throughout the study to maintain the anonymity of study participants.

### **Recruitment**

Research Ethics Board (REB) approval at the University of Windsor occurred prior to any participant contact and before data collection took place. Consistent with the process approved by the REB, in order to obtain the most direct access to participants, the researcher attended team functions to recruit participants for the study. While attending games, contact information was obtained from any interested individuals and e-mails were sent to arrange interviews with these potential participants. In addition, a snowball sample process was approved and used to obtain additional study participants beyond those recruited in person. Participants selected the time and location of the interviews.

### **Data Collection**

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty participants. A semi-structured approach ensured all key topics were covered with each participant consistent with the theoretical framework employed, but also allowed for the exploration of new topics or concepts germane to the process of change. Employing an interview guide also helped the researcher focus on the participants' responses rather than continually thinking about the next question that could be asked (Charmaz, 2006).

Reflection on participant responses and further probing is what can lead to the discovery of knowledge beyond existing theory. Participants were asked about their personal experience with the change as well as information pertaining to the soccer organization, the youth athletes, and some of their expectations of the rules (see Appendices A, B, C, & D for full interview guides). Any additional questions asked that were not included in the interview guide were related to the participants' responses and directly relevant to the research study (i.e., understanding the change experience of stakeholders in a modified sport implementation). The decision as to the final number of interviews conducted was determined based the concept of theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), which refers to a state of well developed understanding of the phenomena and the determination that further data collection would add little to the development of initially derived insights. To avoid reaching a conclusion that theoretical saturation had been obtained prematurely, the intended number of interviews with all stakeholder groups was conducted. Following these planned interviews, it was concluded that theoretical saturation had been reached and further interviews were not likely to result in additional insights as many of the same experiences had been described by participants and a wide range of experiences had been collected.

Participants were invited to choose an interview location that was most suitable for them. Interviews were voice recorded so that interview transcripts could be transcribed verbatim. Once interviews were transcribed, participants were contacted through their previously obtained e-mail addresses and sent their full interview document to review if they desired. Participants were informed that all information from the interview would be used in a confidential manner, but if they wished to add or withdraw

any comments they were able to respond to the e-mail within 10 days to do this. No changes were requested by participants.

### **Data Analysis**

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and initially coded according to themes found in Cunningham's (2002) theoretical framework of change. Any passages of text not related to the theoretical framework but applicable to the change process were coded inductively (e.g., communication process). The purpose of coding data initially in relation to the theoretical framework was to facilitate a direct comparison of the present findings with previous research. That is not to say that the researcher was not open to alternative conceptual descriptions where appropriate. Scholars who wish to see more theoretical development and less nuanced findings in qualitative work have advocated for the use of an approach that relates qualitative findings directly to previous research (Prus, 1996). Thus, the approach to data analysis followed in that tradition. Following the initial coding of data it was subsequently coded inductively. The purpose of coding the data inductively within one of the broader categories found in the model was to potentially derive new insights or concepts. Furthermore, the process of inductively coding allowed the researcher to describe the change process as it related to the context under study. The purpose of the discussion section of the manuscript is to reflect on the usefulness of the theoretical framework employed and identify any additions, modifications, contextual nuances, or its apparent trans-contextual applicability.

### **Trustworthiness**

To ensure rigor was maintained throughout the qualitative data process, the concept of trustworthiness was followed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986). Specifically,

Lincoln and Guba described trustworthiness in terms of four concepts, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is related to internal validity; having results that accurately reflect the concept being measured. In this study, credibility was obtained by having a substantial number of detailed interviews and verifying transcripts with participants. Transferability was addressed by interviewing a variety of stakeholders at multiple organizations and leagues to allow the research to be applicable to multiple contexts. Furthermore, an adequate description of the potential contextual nuances of soccer in Ontario was identified, where applicable, to allow the reader to make comparisons to other sport contexts. Dependability is related to the concept of reliability, which involves having consistent results using the same method. Dependability was managed by asking about different stages of the change process to ensure members were relaying their true thoughts and beliefs about the process, not just their current feelings. Additionally, an interview guide has been included to provide future researchers with an opportunity to ask the same questions. Confirmability is the extent to which results are those of the participants and not the researcher. This concept was followed by frequently representing data directly through participant quotations over summary statements. This approach allows the reader to assess the reasonableness of the analysis and derived concepts.

## **Findings**

### **The Need for Change**

Developing an understanding of the first stage of the change process (i.e., deinstitutionalization process or the impetus for the change) first involves a focus on the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA), the governing body for soccer within the province of

Ontario. Interviews with four members of the OSA all suggested that the changes started to arise with the introduction of policies and philosophies from national bodies.

Specifically, the Canadian Soccer Association designed goals for Long-Term Player Development, as published in the document *Wellness to World Cup* in conjunction with Canadian Sport for Life's Long-Term Athlete Development model. The Canadian Sport for Life initiative aims to improve elite level athletics in Canada as well as encourage more Canadians to be active for life (Canadian Sport for Life, 2011). The national and provincial Long-Term Player Development plans in soccer contain developmental stages originating in the Long-Term Athlete Development plan from Canadian Sport for Life (i.e., Active Start, FUNdamentals).

The *Wellness to World Cup* document released in 2008 sparked the initiation of changes in soccer. Based on the documents and ideas produced by national bodies, the OSA closely developed its own plan of action to focus on Long-Term Player Development based on recommendations from a multi-disciplinary committee. The Long-Term Player Development plan implemented by the OSA is very similar to the Long-Term Player Development plan outlined by Canada Soccer, including complementary resources, structures, and objectives (Canada Soccer, 2014). As the national and provincial plans intended, study participants felt both retention and elite development were goals of the new changes. A community soccer board member suggested that the different values and justifications were to appeal to different levels of soccer participation:

Originally it was basically at the World Cup level for the men Canada sucks so we have to come up with some better players. Well then they quickly backtracked

and realized that was pretty self-centered to do that and they said well we've got to cut back on these parents being really really super competitive and the coaches being super competitive with the younger kids. That's what kills the kids; they don't want to come back anymore. (Ben)

An OSA representative felt that the changes allowed the values and services to shift from solely an elite focus.

I was hired specifically for this role; this role never existed before...the association provided somewhat of a resource to the grassroots members, it wasn't a great amount of time or a great amount of resource, the focus was on the elite player, a player who was going to go play for Canada. We still do that but we've shifted a whole bunch of financial resources and human resources to servicing that area of the membership specific to the grassroots area and servicing them, providing them with membership services that we hadn't done before so there's been a bit of a shift in the association's provision of services. (Jim)

The goals of the implemented change outlined by the OSA itself are to provide a fun environment, to encourage trial and error, to provide an age appropriate learning environment, and to educate coaches (Ontario Soccer Association, 2015). These goals were to be achieved by changing the rules of play for youth soccer participants under the age of twelve, including the elimination of scoring in games, travel restrictions, and fewer participants on the field at one time, all of which became mandatory for the summer of 2014.

Within the development of the change and its implementation, OSA representatives stated a number of purposes to support the theory behind the change. A

fun youth-friendly approach to soccer was described as a main reason to make modifications; an idea that was based on youth survey results from across Ontario as well as other supporting countries such as the United Kingdom, Brazil, and Australia. An OSA staff member, Jim, explained this by stating, “This is what the kids want, because we want to build an environment the kids want to be in, this is why they play sports, they don’t play sports for the same reason that adults think they play sport.” OSA members felt the modifications created an environment that was more suitable to youth needs. As Jim explained, “The players are in an environment now that cognitively they are able to handle, physically they’re able to handle, and spatially they’re able to handle.” Additional rationales for the change included player retention, skill development, improved elite results, de-emphasis on competition, and time and travel management strategies to limit player injury or burnout. While different members of the association focused on different aspects of the plan, Ken summarized changes by stating soccer is looking to improve in a number of different levels of delivery: “We want the sport of soccer to be the sport of choice by the community and as such we’re looking at the recognition, retention, and recruitment of community members in playing the game so that’s all encompassed in part of what I call LTPD principles.”

### **Communicating the Need for Change**

To convey the new Long-Term Player Development goals to members, the main medium of communication used by the OSA was the twenty-one district representatives across Ontario. In turn, these representatives were expected to communicate information about the change to their local clubs.

We communicate with those twenty-one districts and say here's the latest and greatest decision from the OSA, here's the logic behind it, here's the rational, here's the process, here's the resources to support it, to help educate and communicate with your members in your district. (Jim)

In addition to this line of communication, the OSA created positions for technical advisors to assist in the dispersal of information. These individuals were responsible for holding information sessions across the province and aiding various organizational members through the change process. Additional forms of communication during the change that were cited by participants to inform local soccer clubs included the OSA website, paper resources such as pamphlets, and travel league meetings. The Ontario Soccer Association representatives mentioned coaching courses specific to Long-Term Player Development stages, special LTPD community champions, and multi-day workshops geared towards the changes but very few local association representatives mentioned knowledge of these new LTPD offerings.

The two local soccer clubs examined within this study provided responses as to why soccer was changing in Ontario that were similar to the ideas presented during interviews with OSA employees and within its literature. Phil explained the fun and youth-centered approach by stating that, "The idea, hopefully, is that if you get young children involved in sports and make it fun for them off the bat they're going to play sports throughout their life more and be more physically active, and all the benefits that arrive from that." As well, the change objective of improvement in elite competition was mentioned, "The idea behind this Long-term Player Development was to find the better

players and develop them to be more competitive down the road.” With this came goals for national team improvement:

I think you’ll see [national teams] slowly climbing up the ladder, we’ve been almost there to make the FIFA World Cup but we’re not quite there yet and maybe with this Long-Term Player Development I think hopes are that [it] will help with our national teams down the road. (Bill)

Other information included knowledge on creating more opportunities for skill development.

Through the OSA initiatives, in the taking of a goal kick all the opponents must go back to their own center line, the idea being that little whoever’s taking the goal kick can try and set up some sort of play and get the ball out away from their goal and develop some sort of...passing and playing rather than just...kick the ball as far as she can and somebody kicks it back, you know. (Phil)

Providing age-appropriate environments and de-emphasizing competition were mentioned and described as well by local soccer club representatives. For example, one member expressed this philosophy by stating, “It’s the idea to take that competitive angle out of sport, that they’re supposed to be focusing on skills and not necessarily winning that game.”

In addition to member clubs being informed of the required changes, coaches and parents also needed to become aware of the new rules. Parents frequently stated that they found out about the Long-Term Player Development changes through the coaching staff. Other sources included the local soccer club, league convenors, OSA resources, and peer communication. OSA members as well as a few local soccer club board members

mentioned media attention with regards to the change, but parent and coach stakeholders did not notice this form of communication when asked. Although one individual sought out an OSA session and signed up for e-mail notifications, several individuals said they were never informed of the changes. For example, Henry said, “I wasn’t really formally told why they were changing the rules. I was just like really okay well...” Informal communication was more evident at this level than the club level, as Henry explained, “it was mostly through the grapevine, usually at the soccer field either parents or other coaching staff or convenor mentioning a few things.” Individuals at this level also stated similar ideas about the change, but a number of these philosophies were based on their own interpretation of information that was not necessarily directly obtained from the official sources or literature. Many participants stated the goals of focusing on fun, de-emphasizing competition, skill development, and age-appropriate environments. For example, Max described the following philosophy, “As far as the not keeping score and having standings, it was more about fun and skill development rather than winning and just scoring goals and only focusing on that skill I guess.” Another respondent, Tim, stated that, “They want to make it more user friendly for other kids. To get them the ability of having more touches on the ball.”

### **Responding to the Change**

**Organizational responses.** OSA members spoke very positively of the changes, although they were open to talking about resistance to the change and the issues that occurred during the change process. Conversely, parents, coaches and board members reported a variety of emotions and opinions based on the LTPD changes and how this new plan affected their soccer experience and their child’s experience.

Although local soccer clubs also played a large role in the implementation of the program as well as the OSA, the clubs' responses tended to reveal both positive and negative reflections. Local soccer club board members felt the change was something they were required to implement and it was clear there was some resistance at the participant level. Ben shared his response to first hearing about the new changes from an OSA representative by saying, "[The OSA] decided this at the board level in Toronto and this is the way it's going to be. Well excuse me, aren't you interested in anything we've got to say?" One association even discussed the possibility of operating as a league outside of OSA sanctioning due to the new changes being required.

There was some thought that for our serious competitive teams you have to...the only serious competitive league is through the OSA and its various affiliates.

There was some thought we should just have our house league non-sanctioned with the OSA and just try to procure insurance from somebody and then get our referees insured through the same group and set up a non sanctioned OSA league, but it has its draw backs too. There is the structure of the OSA and they provide referees clinics and coaches clinics, not for free mind you, but there are advantages to belonging to the OSA because you get some of these clinics and training, and that kind of stuff. (Phil)

Phil further described some of the concern with regard to the changes and issues it may create for the organization, "With the LTPD we were really worried about what it was going to do to our program in that a lot of us of the old school at first didn't think that the ideas of no scores and no standings was a positive move." Ultimately, both local soccer clubs implemented the changes as they saw fit and attempted to make the new rules

successful. Issues were certainly discussed with interview participants at this level but there was also positive feedback about the new plan. Cliff provided some positive observations stating, “With the drills, one thing is that the kids are getting more learning, more skills, more touches on the ball.” Other positive responses included reflection on player retention throughout the change, as board members were happy to see the changes did not affect registration numbers.

Both OSA members and community soccer club board members anticipated resistance from the initiation of the change and attempted to take steps to minimize resistance. Jim from the OSA said, “People don’t like change no matter what it is, they like to do the same old same old so we had to obviously create many programs and many resources to help that communication and education of the members.” As time passed, it was anticipated that the new practices would become more engrained in the game and the change would become less averse and more natural for stakeholders. One local soccer club board member, Justin, demonstrated this belief by saying, “if this sticks through, there could be more acceptance of this. Like, why would you keep score in a game? That’s for teenagers. That’s when they keep track of score.”

**Stakeholder responses.** As anticipated, there was a great deal of resistance from stakeholders. Study participants discussed different sources of resistance occurring throughout the change process for all stakeholder groups, including the OSA itself. The fact that “people do not like change” was repeatedly stated, and participants gave many examples of the opinions they had themselves as well as what was discussed by others. For example, when asked about how he felt when he heard about the new changes Tim said, “Very unhappy. Like I said, it’s soccer, it’s part of the game. I think we’re kind of

coddling kids too much.” Much of the resistance to change appeared to be around the discontinuation of scores and standings. Describing the lack of positive responses he typically heard from various stakeholders, Drew, a local soccer club board member said, “...most of the ones I got were kind of griping or the sarcastic comments about ‘oh we’re not keeping score we don’t want to hurt kids feelings’ and you know, ‘wouldn’t want them to have to be competitive’...”

Many parents saw minimal benefit to abolishing scores and standings, some specifically stating they viewed it as taking away from the value of the game. Jen, a parent, was just one of many stakeholders to state an opinion along the following lines, “that’s what the world is, there are winners and losers in everything in life.” Similarly, a parent Ted said, “Well you’re not teaching them. You have to build the winning into them.” A large number of individuals were said to still be keeping their own informal scores, including board members, parents, coaches, and players. The OSA itself acknowledges that people will still keep score (Ontario Soccer Association, 2014a), and study participants indicated this to be the case. When talking about youth players, Liz said, “Oh they totally kept score. They knew exactly who scored what goal and in what order.” The reason for removing scores and standings therefore seemed pointless to many individuals because it was kept informally regardless of the rules, and players knew how the game was going. Jane said that the score was still well known by youth participants, “Unfortunately, my way of thinking is that kids keep score themselves and whether they actually physically keep score at the game or not the kids are going to remember whether they dominated or not that game.” Some participants who were aware of media coverage

regarding the changes in soccer felt that the competition aspect of scores and standings was the main topic in coverage, showing a focus on this area of the change as well.

Another area where members questioned the appropriateness of the changes was in regards to the age levels and competition levels which the plan affected. A number of participants felt the changes that were applied to youth players under the age of twelve should have only been applied to younger children.

I'd like to see maybe eleven year olds, not eleven year olds but twelve year olds at least start to get where its more competitive and keeping score again because those kids that age I tell you right now they'll know the score. (Drew)

There were respondents from all community level stakeholder groups who felt the change should have only affected house league or recreational level players. These people saw the rules as being more suitable to a house league environment. The attitude towards implementation in travel soccer was summarized by Phil saying, "we still have a problem with our travel teams in that for all intents and purposes it's a series of exhibition games. Well, I'm travelling to London or to Sarnia for a game that has no scores and no standings." Another participant, Justin, described how there was a difference in mindset when it came to comparing house league versus travel, saying:

The travel coaches and players, they all have that innate competitive oomph to them that puts them at a higher level, so now when they're competing without a result it's kind of 'why are we competing' type thing. It does seem kind of odd. Discussing both age and competition level, Liz said, "Travel, I think if you're going to ask them to play at an advanced level then I think the rules need to be relevant for their age and you don't need to be almost making it younger." In addition, by modifying the

changes to fit the needs or desires of their organization, both local soccer clubs in this study had a situation where older aged travel players were not keeping score in their games while younger house league players were. Having this particular situation created even more animosity about the scorekeeping and standings debate, as stakeholders did not understand this discrepancy.

Despite the negative responses that have been presented, initial reactions of stakeholders were often stated as more severely negative than most individuals' current state of mind. Bill explained his initial reaction by sharing that, "The Long-Term Player Development...well, it was a large pill to swallow at first." Expressing concerns and apprehension about LTPD was evident throughout the interviews as previously discussed, but many participants also stated the positive impact the changes had on the game after describing their initial reactions. The age-appropriate changes made to focus on skill development and create a better learning environment were often areas of positive support noted by participants. One parent, Ross, described how the game has changed to aid in the development of a greater number of players, "It did make sense to develop the kids to learn to pass and play the game strategically versus just utilizing one skillful, not even skillful, one physically stronger kid to make plays happen." Max felt the game now had the chance to give equal opportunity to all players: "you get all of the kids wanting to be involved, where the old ways sometimes if kids couldn't do things they were embarrassed that they couldn't do it so they just wouldn't do it, they wouldn't volunteer." Even the elimination of scores and standings was mentioned as something that could be positive to deter parents from being overly competitive and to remove pressure from youth players to win.

If they're playing and they don't keep score some of the advantages are there's not as much pressure on the kids. If they're kids that have good coaching and they've been taught some new moves and they want to try it and they lose the ball and a goal's caused they might be afraid to try that move again. But, if there's not really keeping score then they'll try it again until they might master it, which is where you get that player development. They're more willing to take risks as a player. (Drew)

While a few stakeholders simply had positive feedback, a number of individuals continued to specifically state their dislike of the changes while also supporting the positive impact the changes had on the game. The simultaneous occurrence of both positive and negative feelings suggests the existence of ambivalence by some stakeholders. Responses such as the following by parent and coach, Lee, demonstrate this concept: "I don't agree necessarily with everything that they think but I agree that the kids need to be more comfortable with the ball than they do need to worry about the winning." Specifically, coaches appeared to put a positive spin on the changes even if they personally did not support the changes. Some felt the changes were positive to the game, but even those who stated negative views tended to put forth a positive attitude to players and parents. For example, one coach expressed this role to keep the game positive:

I don't try to feed into the negative, even though I don't personally like it because I was never used to those kind of rules with the changes but yeah, ... I try to keep it positive trying to deter them from spoiling the game because it only takes one

person to start talking negative and it just trickles down and you get followers.

(Henry)

Therefore, there were a number of positive responses and approaches to the change amongst the resistance.

**Youth responses.** When asked about the response of youth players to the new rules, some parents and coaches felt children did not seem to notice the differences as Max noted, “some kids, like I said, want to know that I kicked in seven goals tonight or whatever and that kid knows how many goals that they scored but the vast majority of kids don’t even pay attention or care.” Some players were reported to express dislike for the new rules, as Jen describes her daughter’s response to the change: “She was really upset but it didn’t change her commitment to the game, she still went to every practice and every game.” Regardless of the youth participant opinions reported, players were said to still enjoy the sport of soccer. Liz said, “they love playing so it wouldn’t matter to them whether everybody had to play with pink balls or what, they would still be out there playing.” The consensus among study participants was that adult stakeholders had more of an aversion to the changes than youth players and this was viewed as a major hurdle of the changes.

They were trying to smooth it over with the parents because that was the biggest one, to get them to buy in, because the kids are going to want to play no matter what it is, but it’s the parents who are going to be more resistant. (Lee)

### **Implementation Moderating Factors**

**Constraining the change.** The capacity of local soccer clubs to implement the change was mentioned as a factor that could impact the successful transition to the new

model. Specifically, participants discussed the financial resources required to re-size fields and purchase new goal posts, as well as the difference between clubs with a volunteer base versus those with paid staff. The extra work required to educate themselves on the changes, organize new schedules, as well as physically modifying fields was a challenge for clubs when they were already putting a lot of time in to work on regular tasks. Cliff said, “you know you put a lot of time in but you can only put so much time in too.”

Interview participants reported some inconsistencies and confusion when it came to the implementation of the new playing rules. Differences were noted between clubs in Ontario when it came to festivals or tournaments, league play, field sizing, and officiating. When teams went to different locations for games they found there was variation in rulings on the modified officiating calls and some areas still had regular sized fields but were playing with the new rules of fewer players per side.

It was very confusing at tournaments because the different youth associations had different rules or different size fields anyways. Like we went to a tournament where every single field was a different size, it’s almost like they were using [Canadian Football League] football fields as soccer pitches and it was just crazy.

We had fields that were all over the place and these kids were just tired. (Ross) Stakeholders were unsure why these discrepancies were occurring. Ross expressed this confusion saying, “there were inconsistencies, which surprised me. I didn’t know why that was. Rules are rules, so why can’t you follow the rules if somebody had published rules?” The suggested phase-in period (e.g., 2012 or 2013) versus the mandatory deadline (2014) was mentioned as a possibility for the field differences in particular, because only

some clubs had implemented the changes early. Furthermore, the rules of the game did not appear to be clearly orchestrated or communicated when it came to officiating matches.

there were little things that were different and that the coach would just throw his arms up and say which rule are you using today? Then the ref would let us know but I don't know if that was just interpretation of the rules. (Liz)

**Aiding the change.** Gradually phasing-in the rules by starting at one specific age group and adding in the new youngest age group each year was a suggestion often made by participants. The thought behind this suggestion was that youth participants entering the game would start with the new rules and view them as natural in soccer. Whereas, older kids were used to the previous structure of a soccer game and league and the change was very abrupt for them.

The kids that had one more year before they went from the kick-ins to the throw-ins, they should have considered just leaving them play the way they have grown up to play and maybe just phased it in as the new kids were starting. (Liz)

A gradual phase-in was reportedly done by the OSA at the highest elite levels (provincial championships) and was something stakeholders thought would have made the process easier at all levels.

Using a phase-in approach was seen as a helpful way to implement the change as well to make the process more successful. The abrupt change from the previous structure to the new structure was reported to be difficult for clubs to handle if they waited until the mandatory change deadline.

The resources have been out there, the education has been out there, it's just been a case of do people want to take the education and read the resources and do things ahead of time or have they just waited until its become mandatory lets say to implement things. Definitely a phase in approach would be the best advice to anybody out there so that things don't come as a shock to people. (Travis)

One organization in this study implemented the changes the year before the mandatory deadline, while 2014 was the first year for the changes in the other organization studied.

Additional factors that were identified as suggestions for improvement during the implementation period included the addition of resources, following best practices, providing support earlier in the implementation, and sending more direct communication to community stakeholders. Members of the OSA felt that the size of membership in Ontario limited their abilities to aid in the change due to financial and logistical constraints. Education and communication were discussed as pillars for the OSA during the implementation process but it was difficult for the association to reach local stakeholders such as parents and coaches. Many individuals felt communication about the change was minimal and an area that could have been improved. A few participants suggested e-mails as a way to provide more direct communication, as the OSA relied on a long chain of communication to reach members at the local stakeholder level. Coaching development was also mentioned as a way to make the changes more impactful for players, as much of the soccer experience relies on the ability of the coach.

### **Completing the Change**

After the completion of the 2014 season, both local soccer clubs in this study had not completely transitioned to the LTPD model developed by the OSA. Both clubs felt

they were following the guidelines fairly closely but acknowledged they had taken steps that were different than the OSA's full policies. For example, one association modified the guidelines to attempt a type of phase-in approach for older children in the system.

The initial thought there with the eleven and twelves was that these kids have been in that system since six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Every year there's a trophy for the top two teams and all of a sudden you get to eleven and the kids are getting older, and twelve, and now there's not. So, it seemed a little harsh that they're used to that system, so we thought we would at least go on that [way] for a while anyway just to do that. (Cliff)

Although the phase-in was meant to ease the transition, this approach also created a discrepancy between the leagues, as a number of stakeholders explained how travel players of an older age did not keep score while younger players in house league did. This modified implementation was in place for house league teams but travel teams were required to follow the rules of the travel league.

The other organization in this study suggested the size of their organization as a reason for not fully implementing the change. The format of the house league divisions for this league required a number of age groups to play together to form enough teams. Based on the age groups that were combined, a full field was still used and scores were kept for intermediate level age groups (i.e., under twelve, under eleven). Only travel teams at this age level played on a mid-sized field and eliminated scores or standings. In addition, this association also opted to keep throw-ins instead of the new kick-ins rule for players.

## **Discussion**

### **Deinstitutionalization**

The change within this research was a calculated decision chosen to strategically enhance the sport of soccer within Ontario, starting the process that Oliver (1992) labeled as deinstitutionalization. The initiation of this change was based on a number of pressures that can be compared to Cunningham's (2002) deinstitutionalization pressures of political, functional, and social.

When Canadian Sport for Life designed the LTAD model it was aiming to improve both elite competition and athlete retention in Canadian sport. The new model was created to increase effectiveness of sport offerings, demonstrating that previous practices were not as successful as desired and therefore pressuring functional change (Oliver, 1992). From this initiation, Canada Soccer followed these developmental stages and also looked to increase effectiveness specifically within soccer and adapted a similar change to improve the functionality of its programs. The OSA then designed guidelines that fit the pressures to improve elite athlete development and player retention as well. All organizations were working towards the same objective and new information encouraged them to implement changes that were more effective for their organizations (Oliver, 1992).

From the perspective of local soccer clubs in this change process, external political pressures as defined by Oliver (1992) came from the OSA and national organizations onto stakeholders at this level. Local level soccer clubs are affiliated with OSA for its various member benefits and the new changes were mandated based on their dependency with the organization, so practices were enforced based on this external

relationship (Alexander, Thibault, & Frisby, 2008; Babiak, 2007; Cunningham 2002; Oliver, 1992). The political pressure therefore moved down from the CSA onto the OSA and down to local level soccer clubs.

Additionally, the values involved in the pursuit of player retention from Canadian Sport for Life in this change can be rooted within social pressures for change (Clemens & Douglas, 2005; Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992; Parkhe, 2003; Scott, 2008). The goal behind this aspect of the change was to improve physical activity in Canadians by encouraging participants to continue to be active for life (Canadian Sport for Life, 2011). Thus, it was no longer seen as socially acceptable to offer a model of sport delivery that did not aim to involve a broad population of participants. There was indication from stakeholders that the change may have been justified on different levels in order to appeal to a greater number of individuals, not just the small selection of elite level athletes.

### **Creating a New Template**

The deinstitutionalization of previous practices and the pressures that led to change influenced how a new organizational template was created. In Cunningham's (2002) terms, the OSA used a population ecology perspective by obtaining information from other countries to determine successful design alternatives to organized sport structures. The new template was then created based on best practices, research in Ontario, and an advisory board of experts.

### **Communicating to Stakeholders**

Based on the findings from this study, I propose that the communication stage be added to Cunningham's (2002) existing model to convey the importance of this step in the change process (see Figure 2). Richardson and Denton (1996) stress the importance of

communication in the change process and suggest that failed methods of communication lead to unsuccessful change. A number of sources of communication were used to inform and educate stakeholders of the change occurring within soccer. Meetings with OSA representatives, OSA website information, local soccer club information, league meetings, and informal communication were sources identified by study participants. Communication came directly from the OSA to the twenty-one districts across Ontario who were expected to pass on the details of the change to its members. From there, local soccer clubs often communicated the changes directly to coaches and conveners who were expected to pass the information on to parents and players.

Due to the voluntary nature of sporting organizations, information was distributed on a number of different levels based on the limited resources of clubs and the difficulty of relaying of information through multiple levels of stakeholders. Volunteers at different levels helped convey the change guidelines and information often came indirectly from sources other than the OSA. Informal communication is cautioned within the literature because it is not as effective at conveying the desired communication to stakeholders as formal sources (Richardson & Denton, 1996; van Vuuren & Elving, 2008). When change is communicated through informal discussion there is the possibility for negative influences versus the positive message organizations are trying to convey during change (Richardson & Denton, 1996). The varied use of communication sources meant that some groups of individuals in the study received very different messages about the change than others. Subsequently, each individual and organization may have interpreted and implemented the change differently based on factors that were influencing their perceptions such as personal investment in the organization, the alignment of values with

change, and trust of organizational leaders (Amis et al., 2002; Amis et al., 2004a; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Coaches were largely responsible for informing their teams of the change, using whatever information or methods they personally viewed as being best. The variability of information in the studied change was quite broad based on the number of different sources identified, which is a practical aspect for future organizations to consider when educating and communicating the theoretical and procedural differences that come with change.

More specifically, a number of suggestions for communication during the change process can be derived from this research. As participants demonstrated the importance of the coach in conveying the message about the change to youth participants and parents, organizations should acknowledge this role and use extra time and resources to educate coaches on the theory and best practices associated with the change. Organizations should also make an effort to understand the informal communication that is being circulated to understand how stakeholders are viewing the change. Participants wished for more direct communication from the local soccer club itself rather than through informal hearsay. Several participants suggested a direct e-mail would be convenient and informative, which is something easy for organizations to execute in order to produce a consistent explanation about the reasons behind the change and the new template.

### **Acceptance or Rejection of Template**

Stakeholder responses to the change came in three forms: acceptance, ambivalence, or rejection (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Some OSA members and parents demonstrated complete acceptance of the new changes, whereas some other

parents represented the opposite end of the spectrum and completely disagreed with all elements of the changes. The most common reaction from stakeholders appeared to be ambivalence, whereby individuals supported the change in some instances while expressing their rejection in others, demonstrating the existence of both positive and negative reactions within the same individuals (Piderit, 2000; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). Commonly, participants stated their dislike of the change while discussing positive implications of the change for youth participants in the game.

Torres and Hager (2007) argue that de-emphasizing competition in youth sports does not obtain the end goal of creating a youth-friendly program and many participants felt that not keeping scores and standings did not benefit youth participants in soccer. There was much scepticism reported with regards to the changes in soccer, as identified in previous modified sport programs as well (Chalip & Green, 1998; Green, 1997). Various stakeholders reported positive aspects of the changes such as age-appropriate sizing, skill development, and a learning environment. However, much like Chalip and Green's (1998) findings, many participants felt the value of competition was lacking without scorekeeping. The institutionalized structure of traditional sport delivery is highly embedded in North American culture and was likely to have influenced the difficulty individuals had accepting the radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Change requires learning new behaviours and interpreting situations in new ways (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996), something that is challenging for sport organizations to encourage. Some individuals felt they were not even informed of the philosophy or reasoning behind the change and could not fully understand the change other than from their own assumptions.

An interesting finding within this study was the reported perceptions of youth participants to the new changes. While some parents expressed their child's dislike to the new practices, all study participants felt that children still enjoyed the game of soccer regardless of the modifications. It was suggested that parents were more upset about the changes than the youth participants who were actually the ones participating in the sport.

Decision making about change is more likely to be effective when organizations can create social learning and adapt to the environment based on strategic decisions, rather than pressures (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). The inability of local soccer clubs and community level stakeholders to be involved in the decision making process about the change created resistance at this level, demonstrating the importance of incorporating stakeholders in the change process to encourage acceptance (Amis et al., 2004a).

Cunningham's (2002) model indicates that a specific level of commitment is required for a change to occur. However, the change examined within this study did not appear to require competitive or reformative commitment, as the pressures and structures of the OSA made the change mandatory for hundreds of soccer organizations across the province and thousands of players and parents. There was discussion within one organization of a complete rejection of the new change to maintain the current organizational structure. The possibility of rejection of the change suggests that organizations may not always complete the transition to a new organizational template. Amis et al. (2004a) found similar possibilities in change with the reorientation to a new template by some organizations but reversal back to an initial template by others. Cunningham's (2002) model can therefore be altered to show the possibility of

acceptance or rejection in the change process and consideration of this has been added to the modified version of the model presented in Figure 2.

Local soccer club board members reflected on the effect changes had on enrolment in the association. It was suggested that registration numbers did not drop and therefore the change was not discouraging participation. However, it may be premature to make this assumption and numbers may not provide a clear depiction on the success of the change. Future research should examine how changes can be evaluated to be successful once a new template has been reached. What defines success and how changes such as these are evaluated goes much deeper than numerical representation, providing the possibility for future exploration.

### **Rate Moderating Factors**

Forms of inertia, entropy, and ambivalence were all present during this change but it is difficult to assess the level at which they impacted the rate of the change. Based on the findings of this study and previous research (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012), ambivalence has been added to Cunningham's (2002) model as a third "change rate moderating factor." While the influence of these responses in relation to speed cannot be directly measured within this study, it is evident that these responses acted as moderating factors during the change. Organizations facing a great deal of resistance from board members were said to be slower in initiating the change than organizations that supported the philosophy of the new practices. Cunningham (2002) makes a logical inclusion of these change rate moderating factors within his model and future research is needed to examine the level to which these factors influence the rate of change.

## **Implementation Moderating Factors**

The implementation of organizational change at the community sport level varies from public or private sector changes because of the different advantages and challenges each type of organization faces (Sharpe, 2006). Moderating factors identified by Cunningham (2002) that can influence the implementation stage of change include capacity for action, resource dependence, power dependency, and available alternatives but each component may manifest itself differently between sectors or organizations.

Organizational capacity is a factor that is known to influence the change process and the effectiveness of community sport organizations (e.g., Amis et al., 2004a; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006). In this study, volunteer board members agreed that creating time to implement change is challenging for community sport clubs when volunteers are busy spending their time on day-to-day and operational procedures during the busy playing season (Casey et al., 2012). OSA staff members found that organizations with full-time staff had an easier time implementing changes than smaller organizations solely run by volunteers. One small organization in the study did not adapt the mandated changes for intermediate level players in house league, stating organizational size as a constraint to this implementation. The extent of local soccer clubs' financial resources, volunteer values, and planning were other capacity issues that were discussed by participants (Misener & Doherty, 2009). The local soccer organizations within this study did not have difficulty procuring the financial resources required to implement the physical field changes required but it was mentioned as a constraint for other soccer organizations. Both local soccer club members and OSA representatives wished there were more resources available to help implement the change, something that may be

challenging to acquire, but warrants consideration for future changes in the non-profit sector. A high degree of organizational capacity is needed for organizations to complete the implementation of a change; a fact governing organizations should consider and strategically plan for when mandating radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

As with pressure to change, resource dependence influenced local soccer clubs' decisions to implement the change, as Cunningham (2002) suggests. Local soccer clubs identified the structure and formalization of procedures as reasons for being affiliated with the OSA, leading to acceptance of the mandated change process. One organization suggested that it considered breaking its affiliation with the OSA to avoid the changes but ultimately decided it did not have the means to supply its own insurance coverage, referee clinics, and coaching resources to the same ability as the OSA offers. With this realization, it is suggested that there were available alternatives to organizations during the change process, but ultimately making modifications was seen as the most successful choice of template for the organizations studied (Cunningham, 2002).

Even within the same sector, change can be experienced differently within different organizations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The organizations in this single study could not be all-inclusive of the possibilities moderating the implementation of change and future research should seek to identify additional moderating factors that can occur during implementation. Further examination can explore the possibility of additional modifiers or sector specific modifiers that may provide greater insights into possible moderating factors.

## **A New Template**

For the change process to be complete an organization must undergo a transition to a new template. However, the final template may vary from the originally desired structure. Cunningham's (2002) model demonstrates how the change process can be moderated and impacted along the way (i.e., inertia, entropy, capacity, resource dependence) but ultimately a shift to *the* new template must occur for change to be complete. However, organizations in this study implemented a modified version of the mandated change, completing the shift to *a* new template. Thus, the possibility exists for full implementation of the originally planned change or an augmented version.

## **Model Effectiveness**

Based on the findings of this research, Cunningham's (2002) Integrative Model of Organizational Change provided an appropriate theoretical background for identifying the processes of change. He accurately identifies a number of factors that influence an organization's shift from one template to another such as deinstitutionalization, inertia, entropy, capacity for action, and resource dependence. A new change model is suggested based on the findings of this research and consultation with supporting literature (see Figure 2). The modifications are suggested to build theoretical understanding of the change process and outline further descriptors that can influence change.

## **Practical Implications**

The following guidelines are recommendations for practitioners when implementing an organization change:

1. Use tools to communicate directly with stakeholders. Sending a direct e-mail to members is an easy and frequently mentioned method. Other forms of paper and online communication may help as well.
2. Understand the importance of the role of coaching staff in implementing change. Individuals at this level will be guiding and informing many players and parents through the change so extra education and information is beneficial for these individuals.
3. Provide clear guidelines on exactly how rules and policies are changing. Allow broad access to an outline of these changes to help avoid inconsistencies.
4. Explain to stakeholders why changes are taking place. Understanding the philosophy helps individuals learn about the change.
5. Make an effort to understand the informal communication that is circulating about the change. Understanding the 'grapevine' discussions will help address issues and concerns more accurately.
6. Consider mandating a gradual phase-in of the changes. Allowing stakeholders to adjust to small changes over time is easier than one large change.
7. Consider ways in which assistance can be provided to organizations to help ensure there is sufficient capacity to implement change. Financial resources, planning guidelines, educational tools, and providing assistance early in the change process are some applicable examples.
8. Conduct an evaluation of the changes after implementation. Feedback can help improve sport delivery based on stakeholder suggestions and identify strengths or areas for improvement.

## **Limitations**

Multiple organizations, including a provincial governing body, were examined to increase the generalizability of the research but a delimitation of this study is the use of two community soccer clubs in Ontario, both of which were relatively small in size. In addition, guidelines were designed to collect a variety of perspectives on the change but there is no way to determine if all diverse perspectives were considered. Therefore, this research may not be generalizable to other contexts.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to examine the success factors and constraints that exist in the implementation and continuance of a youth sport league that was experiencing change. The various stakeholders and organizations involved in this study provide a multi-perspective view of the change to a soccer program across Ontario. There were positive aspects identified about the structure of the change but many stakeholders struggled with acceptance of the shift from traditional soccer practices. The responses and constraints faced by the organizations in this study demonstrate the need for further research on change at the community sport level.

The contributions of this research add to the literature on change through an extension of Cunningham's (2002) Integrative Model of Organization Change. I believe that the proposed model more accurately depicts the possibilities that can occur during a radical change process. The creation of a new template and the communication of change to stakeholders are key steps that impacted the studied change. The communication chain from the OSA to its local stakeholders of parents and coaches was very indirect and relied heavily on informal communication. Considerations such as these would be helpful

for future organizational change researchers to include in order to understand the change process more thoroughly. Future research should examine the importance of these added steps in the change model and assess the applicability of the model to other change contexts.

In addition, this specific change experience helps provide insight into the change process as experienced by community level sport organizations. Past research (e.g., Casey et al., 2012; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006) has examined the challenges community level organizations face in acquiring and mobilizing the resources to deliver quality programs to participants. Chalip and Green (1998) and Green (1997) have demonstrated the additional challenges modified sport programs face in providing a program that satisfies participants. The current research demonstrates the specific challenges community sport organizations can face in the implementation of a modified sport program and adds to the understanding of change at this level.

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## EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Types of Organizational Change**

Change can involve the implementation of new practices within a current organizational design, or change can be more extreme and influence a complete shift in organizational practices. A change that occurs within the existing organizational template is referred to as convergent change, whereas change that causes a move to a new template is labeled as radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Convergent change makes modifications within the existing organization (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Conversely, radical change is a shift in core values and a change of the culture within an organization (Cunningham, 2002). Radical change represents a complete change from the way things are done to a new organizational template, while convergent change is the adjustment of existing practices (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002; Cunningham, 2002; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995). The current study deals with radical change because there is a transformation of current practices; a completely new approach to the design of a soccer league being implemented.

To better understand the concept, some examples of radical change include operating under new values, offering very different products or services, or changing organizational structures (Amis et al., 2002). For instance, the federal government of Canada initiated radical change in National Sport Organizations (NSOs) by providing resources to transform these organizations from largely volunteer run endeavours to more professionalized organizations (Amis et al., 2002). The transition from one organizational structure to another was a radical change. Radical change can occur based on the

dynamics within the organization, the context, and the structures of a particular organization or field.

Radical change has been found to occur in a nonlinear manner, which makes the process challenging to predict and implement (Amis et al., 2004b; Brock, 2006). Elements of change that occur in a linear fashion and with little resistance tend to occur in areas that have little impact on organizational operations, such as the implementation of evaluation procedures for NSOs (Amis et al., 2004b). Changes to areas such as the decision making structure, are more central to the organization and harder to implement in a linear way due to resistance, cultural gaps, and introduction practices (Amis et al., 2004b). When change is not aligned with current culture, it is challenging to implement change without resistance. The way in which new practices are introduced may create a need for withdrawal and reintroduction based on any negative stakeholder reactions (Amis et al., 2004b). It is highly unlikely that any type of radical change will occur in a completely linear manner, making each change different based on the interactions that occur (Amis et al., 2004b). Leaders, therefore, need to be prepared to deal with inevitable deviations from change plans (Amis et al., 2004a).

In order to successfully implement radical change, Amis, Slack and Hinings (2004b) found that starting with changes in high impact areas helps orientate new operations and creates symbolic proof that change is intended to be long-term. Since high impact elements are tightly linked with organizational values, changing these components can have a large impact on the transition to a new design (Kikulis et al., 1995). For example, a change in the decision-making structure would signal a radical change because decision-making is central to an organization (Kikulis et al., 1995). Changing the

actual values or culture within an organization may also be required in an organizational change, another central area that should be pursued early on in the change process (Smith, 2004).

Austin (1997) examined a historic and more socially ground-breaking example of controversial change than most change research addresses, but the same action learning framework can demonstrate how change needs to be monitored and thoughtfully applied based on current social norms and values. Specifically, Austin demonstrated how a triple-loop learning approach to change can be effective in instances of controversial change. Such an approach requires implementers of change to understand the traditions that surround or are within a given setting as well as how tradition influences action (Austin, 1997). By being aware of social norms in existence, the individual implementing change in this scenario understood that change would require a shift in the organization as well as society as a whole, so he framed the change in a socially desirable way and took carefully planned steps to avoid resistance.

Chalip and Scott (2005) found that traditions, uncertainty, member identity, and competition acted as social forces influencing the ability of a youth sport league to address conflict and implement change. The consequences of these influences for community swim clubs was discussed when stated that, “planning was reactive rather than proactive. The league responded to crises, but was unable to generate any form of strategic planning” (p. 56). In this particular situation, it was difficult to develop a planned approach to issues when each board member held different views of conflicts in question. While formal planning and rules can be beneficial in the change process as

exhibited by Austin (1997), Chalip and Scott (2005) highlighted some of the complexities of achieving successful change amongst social norms and current structures.

To help illustrate the complexities of radical change, Cunningham (2002) suggested a model for organizational change that included factors influencing the process and success of change from one template to another. His model will be discussed next to frame the radical change process and its elements.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Integrative Model of Organizational Change**

Developed by Cunningham (2002), the Integrative Model of Organizational Change (see Figure 1) looks at several theoretical change perspectives in order to ensure each element of the change process is examined. Institutional theory provides the basis of the theoretical background for the model, but the incorporation of additional theories of population ecology, strategic choice, and resource dependence helps provide a holistic view of radical change (Cunningham, 2002).

### **Institutionalism**

Within Cunningham's (2002) model, the entire change takes place in an institutional environment. The institutional environment therefore influences the organization by exerting pressures to follow particular practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Stevens & Slack, 1998). Institutional theory is most often used to explain how organizations are similar and how stability prevails within a field (Washington & Patterson, 2011). Institutionalism establishes norms and rules within environments to guide behaviour and socially acceptable practices (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Organizations use their institutional environment to provide clues to

behaviours that are labelled as appropriate and practiced within the environment (Washington & Patterson, 2011; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). For example, during the growth and development of female hockey organizations, the female hockey program within the western Canadian province of this research context was expected to adapt the same organizational structure of male hockey organizations with little choice in the decision, as it was expected of the new organization to do what was viewed as legitimate (Stevens & Slack, 1998). As practices and norms are continually used and reinforced, these behaviours and attitudes become more strongly institutionalized and viewed as viable (Washington & Patterson, 2011). By adapting the same structure as male organizations, the female hockey organization reinforced the institutionalized structure.

As Washington and Patterson (2011) framed it, institutionalism is a social construct that is used to gain legitimacy. Institutionalized processes can occur within smaller group settings, organizational levels, or an organizational field (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). For example, Chalip and Scott (2005) found that values were institutionalized within individual sport clubs which made changes even more challenging for the governing league, as clubs had their own loyalties and traditions to uphold, making the interests of the league difficult to discuss with so many different views to consider. Ultimately, change occurs as a cognitive process and is influenced by the broad institutional environment, with many actors playing a role in the formation of traditional behaviours and thoughts (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013).

Institutionalism creates environments that are predictable and stable but in doing this, ultimately constrains the process of organizational change (Oliver, 1992; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Problems with institutionalized traditions arise when “it

prevents an administration from reworking procedures that are functioning poorly under changed conditions” (Chalip & Scott, 2005, p. 56). In the context of sport, this stable structure is likely to be a challenge to shift or break because of the strong ties sport has within North American culture (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). For example, the competitive nature of sport was shown in research on community swim clubs. When different clubs came up with new strategies in a local league, whether the changes were made for the purposes of winning or not, other clubs automatically accused others of altering practices for the purpose of gaining a competitive advantage (Chalip & Scott, 2005). The tradition of competition in sport was inherently assumed to be at play. In another example, a university athletic department decided not to drop its football program, despite its poor performance and financial burden, for fear of losing legitimacy without the traditional sports program (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Without a football program, there was concern that the athletic department would no longer be viewed as legitimate because football is often a pillar of traditional university level athletics.

The traditions and inherent culture of institutionalized practices can also be used as a way to leverage change efforts. Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) examined readiness for change and how institutional processes shaped cognitive readiness for change, or lack thereof. Within a school district setting, supporters of change used institutionalized factors to support the change process and those opposing change used it to maintain current practices (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013). Therefore, it is likely that institutionalized practices work to prevent change, unless these norms and traditions are shifted in a way

that is seen as beneficial to stakeholders. The deinstitutionalization of practices is discussed in a subsequent section.

### **Population Ecology**

The perspective of population ecology focuses on the concept of competition between organizations for scarce resources (Cunningham, 2002). Within the context of Ontario soccer associations, competition can occur between soccer and other organized sport offerings. The new long-term changes in place are designed to help retain soccer participants and compete with other countries in regards to skill development (Ontario Soccer Association, 2014b). The theory of population ecology postulates that change occurs by selection, with successful choices and norms surviving while unsuccessful organizational adaptations become extinct (Cunningham, 2002). The developments implemented by the Ontario Soccer Association have been previously shown to be best practices worldwide and therefore appear to be one of the most successful organizational strategies. The previous success of the practices elsewhere influenced the choice of a new organizational template, showing the representation of population ecology within Cunningham's (2002) model. It is assumed that unfavourable organizational templates will erode and leave only successful options available for a final organizational template. Based on this assumption, the previous organizational practices in Ontario soccer can be viewed by the organization as an approach that was no longer seen as efficient or desirable, bringing about a new template. Conducting this research on the change process undertaken by Ontario soccer associations may prove useful for additional sporting organizations who consider modifying traditional approaches to player development, something population ecology would suggest has a likely potential of occurring.

## **Strategic Choice**

The theoretical perspective of strategic choice focuses on power within organizations and postulates that decision-making is largely based on the choices of key organizational members (Cunningham, 2002; Stevens & Slack, 1998). For example, in community sporting associations the powerful leadership could come from the president of the club or some high level board members. The degree of choice available in organizations can be constrained by the internal organizational structure as well as the external environment (Stevens & Slack, 1998). However, this theory of change focuses more on the differences that can occur based on individual choices within organizations, rather than a dependency on the external environment to pressure or shape change (Stevens & Slack, 1998).

## **Organizational Template**

The current design or structure of an organization tends to be influenced by institutionalized practices within an organization's field, which makes organizations similar to each other (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The values, beliefs, and ideas common within an organizational field all contribute to the prevailing structure or template in place (Brock, 2006; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Based on institutional assumptions, the structures that are in place are often viewed as the proper way of doing things (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). In developed fields, such as government or accounting, established practices are clear and pressures to conform to a specific organizational template are high (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). In other fields, there may be more of a variety of desirable templates, but ones with demonstrated success will be the most prominent ones. In Cunningham's (2002) model, the current template of an

organization undergoes shifts to develop a new organization template based on the processes involved in radical organizational change. The transformation from one template to another and how it occurs is one of the primary focuses of this study.

### **Deinstitutionalization**

Within the change process, institutionalized practices are discontinued and a process that Oliver (1992) labelled as deinstitutionalization occurs. Deinstitutionalization can be a calculated response to internal or external events, or it can occur as a result of changes which an organization has little control over (Oliver, 1992). Oliver (1992) defined the gradual deterioration of an institutional practice as dissipation, often occurring when something is used less and less within an organization and slowly becomes irrelevant to the everyday functioning of an organization. In this case, practices are deinstitutionalized over time, but in radical change deinstitutionalization is facilitated by a calculated plan to implement new or different practices. The process of deinstitutionalization can therefore be a conscious or unconscious organizational practice, which suggests change can be strategic or environmentally influenced (Oliver, 1992). Oliver (1992) argued that there are certain internal and external conditions in which organizational change is more likely to occur, such as pressures for change or support of new organizational methods. Each of these factors will be discussed further, but ultimately the idea of deinstitutionalization is that current practices are challenged in some way to influence a shift towards new or different practices (Oliver, 1992).

Even when undergoing the same change, organizations may experience the process differently based on a variety of starting points and influential factors that can occur throughout the change period, exemplifying how the features of institutionalized

practices can occur within each different organization (Kikulis et al., 1995). For example, 36 National Sport Organizations (NSOs) all underwent the same change to become more professionalized in archetype, but all started from different stages and ended with different archetypes and developments within the individual organizations (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004a; a et al., 1995). The process of deinstitutionalization therefore differs even within the same sector.

Change requires a breakdown of old beliefs and practices in order to form new ones (Kikulis et al., 1995). Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) postulated that being knowledgeable of institutionalized practices is an important factor when looking for change. Organizational members have a choice of how to respond to change, which is influenced by past experiences and learning (Kikulis et al., 1995; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Stakeholders may believe there is a need for change, yet still be unsupportive of the implementation of change (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) suggested highlighting the similarities of new practices to old ones as the best way to create deinstitutionalization that appeals to stakeholders. Understanding institutionalized practices can help organizations build upon current ideas and practices to create readiness for change that is consistent with organizational views (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013). Chalip and Scott (2005) found that change requires the identification of traditions that are inhibiting necessary initiatives and finding a way to redesign those specific traditions in a way that is accepted by stakeholders. New organizational practices must then be incorporated into the organization's culture and institutionalized to replace old ways of operating or thinking (Amis et al., 2004a).

Within Cunningham's (2002) model of organizational change, three specific pressures that contribute to deinstitutionalization are identified, including political, functional and social pressures. Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) also support the idea that a combination of these pressures can lead to change occurring. The impetus for change, therefore, may be based on pressures other than poor organizational performance (Amis et al., 2002).

**Political pressures.** Political pressures can occur within an organization as well as external to an organization (Amis et al., 2002; Bloyce, Smith, Mead, & Morris, 2008; Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Internal pressures can arise when there are issues with organizational performance or when members' ideas conflict with the current practices (Oliver, 1992). For example, when not-for-profit organizations solicit donations they may notice that current practices are no longer reaching the performance level desired, creating a performance based need for change (Oliver, 1992). Internal pressures such as these are said to question the value of practices and the unity of members (Oliver, 1992). As performance issues mount, the potential for internal conflict increases and institutionalized practices break down what is acceptable and legitimate, leading to pressure for some type of organizational change (Oliver, 1992). Pressures may occur naturally over time or when positions of power are taken over by a new individual (Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011).

Externally, political pressures tend to occur based on dependencies with other organizations (Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Practices enforced by these external relationships influence dependent organizations. When changes occur within this relationship, cause for change is created because organizational influences

have changed (Bloyce et al., 2008; Oliver, 1992). For example, government support is a reality of many businesses and organizations, especially in the non-profit sector, which can influence the guidelines an organization must follow to receive funding (Bloyce et al., 2008; Oliver, 1992). Canadian NSOs demonstrate this concept, as they are dependent on government support and have been pressured in the past to adopt more professional structures, even though the values of some NSOs still reflect more voluntary based operations (Amis et al., 2002). If an organization becomes more or less dependent on any government support, the organization will likely see some type of change to reflect this change in dependency (Oliver, 1992). As another example, alumni and donors are often contributors to university athletic departments and tend to have influence within departments because of this financial contribution (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). These examples help illustrate how political pressures have the ability to shift and change organizations based on the desired preferences of those in power who are applying pressure for change (Amis et al., 2004a).

**Functional pressures.** Technical or functional pressures that occur can bring into question the validity of organizational practices (Oliver, 1992). Functional pressures often occur when there is a change in rewards associated with activities, when social and economic successes conflict, or when an organizational goal becomes more specific (Oliver, 1992). Externally, changes in competition or the emergence of new information can create functional pressures to increase efficiency or effectiveness (Brock, 2006; Oliver, 1992). More broadly, functional pressures tend to cause organizations to become more specific in their practices and causes deinstitutionalization of current norms or informal rules (Oliver, 1992). Practices that provide the most concrete and measurable

success rates will displace less specific and casual practices that previously existed (Oliver, 1992). Functional pressures can often lead to innovation when old practices are discredited or when new competitors enter the market (Oliver, 1992). For example, new computer designed programs take away some of the manual labour and time required of previously human labour tasks (Brock, 2006). Functional pressures influence an organization's desire to provide the best product or service possible and this desire can lead to change occurring.

**Social pressures.** Along with the functional and political pressures that can lead to change, there are elements of social pressures, which can influence deinstitutionalization of organizations (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Social pressures can determine whether an organization is in agreement upon institutionalized practices and whether or not traditional methods are actively or passively abandoned (Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Fragmentation occurs when there is not a consensus between organizational members and different perspectives are taken on the need for change (O'Brien & Slack, 1999; Oliver, 1992). Situations of social pressure and fragmentation often arise when there is high turnover, leadership changes, or workforce diversity (O'Brien & Slack, 1999; Oliver, 1992). A weak organizational culture and socialization can also lead to fragmentation of practices and low support for traditional culture and rules (Oliver, 1992). Without a heavy emphasis on the practices followed within an organization, new members will feel less inclined to follow traditional practices and the culture will start to erode (O'Brien & Slack, 1999; Oliver, 1992). New organizational partnerships, mergers, and relationships can also create social change within organizations, as new cultures and perspectives are brought into the organization

that may differ from traditional practices (O'Brien & Slack, 1999; Oliver, 1992). Social pressures can also come from employees, as those with positive attitudes or dispositions promote behaviour that supports organizational morale throughout changes, whereas employees with more negative personalities exhibit unsupportive behaviours (Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008; Oreg, 2006). Therefore, these employees are not only providing pressure against the change process, but also influencing others in the environment to resist change as well (Oreg, 2006). In addition, some long-term employees may find it difficult to move away from traditional practices and embrace change (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Employee and stakeholder views can therefore influence the change process and pressure outcomes.

Outside pressures from society can also lead to deinstitutionalization of practices that are no longer seen as socially acceptable, such as practices that are no longer deemed environmentally safe (Oliver, 1992). Along with these social influences towards change, deinstitutionalization can occur when an organization's structure shifts or changes, altering the social environment (Oliver, 1992). For example, geographical dispersion can cause institutionalized practices to fade as locations expand further and further away from the original location and its traditional culture (Oliver, 1992).

As demonstrated, the three types of pressures outlined by Cunningham (2002) can be manifested in a variety of ways within organizations and influence the institutionalization of practices. Many different pressures can occur internally and externally to an organization and each of these interacts to create more push to change, especially within a competitive marketplace (Casey, Payne & Eime, 2012; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Oliver, 1992). The stronger the forces and pressures on an organization,

the more likely change will occur to reflect powerful pressures (Amis et al., 2002). When pressures are removed, it is likely that organizations will revert back to structures or operations that most accurately reflect the values within an organization (Amis et al., 2002). Coercive pressures may be effective at initiating the change process, but it is challenging to accomplish any full transition through radical change without the support of organization members (Amis et al., 2002; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Decision making about change is more likely to be effective when organizations can create social learning and adapt to the environment based on strategic decisions, rather than pressures (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Without efforts to form some type of collective vision, whether it involves cooperation within organizations, partners, or organizational fields, conflict and crisis may prevail over successful change (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Pressures often occur in the beginning of change to initiate the process, but other forces must occur to complete the change process successfully, which leads to the next stage of Cunningham's (2002) model.

### **Moderating Factors**

In addition to pressures that influence change, there are competing forces within an institution that can impede or enhance the change process (Oliver, 1992). Cunningham (2002) labelled inertia and entropy as moderating factors that have opposing effects on the rate of change within organizations (Oliver, 1992).

**Inertia.** Factors that can inhibit the change process are described as inertia (Oliver, 1992). Inertia can be manifested in a variety of ways to impede organizational change. Traditions and values are embedded within an organization, which tend to support the maintenance of current practices and challenge the need for change (Amis et

al., 2002; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Fear of change, whether it is based on a logistical, financial, or knowledge standpoint, delays the rate of deinstitutionalization (Oliver, 1992). Amis and colleagues (2002) suggested that resistance to change often occurs due to the personal investment individuals have in an organization. For example, in one instance, parents of a university football team attended a game with a chant created in order to express dissatisfaction with a coaching decision made by an athletic department, clearly showing a public display of their resistance to the change (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Resistance is also most likely to occur when change is being implemented in areas central to organizations, such as decision making structures or processes (Amis et al., 2004b). When individuals in power do not support change, resistance is likely to be high in an organization (Amis et al., 2004a). Since these individuals have a powerful influence on organizational members and maintain a large amount of control within organizations, their desires are more likely to impact resistance if change is viewed as undesirable to them. Power is also likely to create resistance if it is concentrated within a limited number of individuals in an organization, slowing the rate of change because fewer individuals are involved in making change decisions and gaining support (Amis et al., 2004a). Whether the process is inhibited by values, fear, personal investment, or individuals in power, inertia is likely to occur at some point throughout the change process due to the frame breaking nature of radical change.

**Entropy.** Conversely, factors that increase the speed or aid in the process of change are viewed as entropy (Oliver, 1992). When change is supported within an organization, it is more likely that the process will occur at a quick pace (Amis et al.,

2004a). For example, Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) found the change process was motivated in a school district by using different types of logical, emotional, and legitimacy reasoning to appeal to stakeholders and encourage members to formulate positive ideas about the change. Entropy is based on the idea that erosion and deinstitutionalization are natural processes over time and that change occurs based on modifications that continue to escalate over time (Oliver, 1992). In other words, change is a natural process that is inherent in all organizations over time so there should be no reason to resist gradual shifts. The idea of natural entropy is most likely to be true for factors that are considered marginal or of little importance to organizations' overall goals and structures, concepts which can be characterized more easily by rapid change than factors of higher importance (Amis et al., 2004b).

While inertia is typically associated with resistance and delays, Amis and colleagues (2004b) found that rapid change is not particularly successful either. The authors predicted that rapid initial change would help overcome resistance to change, but results showed that slow organizational change was actually more successful in meeting the end goal of a new archetype. Others support the concept of gradual change, as it allows the organization, as well as society, a chance to slowly accept change (Amis et al., 2004a; Austin, 1997). However, attempting to regulate inertia may not prove effective either (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). In an English rugby setting, rules were implemented to slow the change of teams from amateur to professional status, yet some teams rushed to gain a competitive advantage by professionalizing before the rule suggested, showing the effect entropy can have (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). It must be noted that participants in this particular situation pointed out that the changes made at a rapid pace were not based on a

large amount of information or research, but were reactions to keep up with competing teams (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Mandating slow change may not be the answer, but having leadership that proceeds at a pace that allows stakeholders to become comfortable with the change does appear to provide successful transitions (Amis et al., 2004a). As it is seen, pace can work to inhibit or help the change process, with both inertia and entropy playing important roles. While this relationship with pace still needs to be further examined within the literature, it points to the potential importance of pace, especially in relation to how change can be pressured upon an organization in a resource dependency initiated situation (Amis et al., 2004b).

The resistance involved with highly important structures and practices highlights the care and considerations that must be taken throughout the entirety of the change process (Amis et al., 2004b; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Avey and colleagues (2008) state that employee resistance is one of the most prominent forms of resistance for organizations attempting change. When change requires a shift in power, there may even be resistance from members currently in control (Amis et al., 2004a). Even when change is necessary, stakeholders should be convinced of the benefits change can have for their individual interests to ensure resistance is minimized for change to be possible at the most beneficial time (Amis et al., 2004a). The involvement of inertia and entropy reflects the importance of the implementation process in change and helps identify why high impact changes that are not carefully considered can require modification or reintroduction that slow the rate of change or hinder success (Amis et al., 2004b).

Ambivalence has also been explored throughout the change process and can contribute to the moderating factors outlined by Cunningham (2002). Ambivalence is a

concept that is identified as a form of uncertainty occurring in cognitive, emotional, and intentional forms (Piderit, 2000; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). In cognitive ambivalence, employees may believe some changes are good but others are not; they are unsure of their overall thoughts on the change (Piderit, 2000; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). Similarly, in emotional ambivalence, positive and negative emotions about the change occur, whereas intentional ambivalence is when behaviour reflects different actions than declared thoughts (Piderit, 2000; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). In other words, ambivalence is the occurrence of both positive and negative thoughts, feelings, and actions that have the potential to lead to entropy or inertia. Individuals in control, perceived organizational support, and previous negative experiences are factors that influence ambivalence in stakeholders (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). However, these influences can be monitored by communication, participation, pace, and acknowledgement to determine if ambivalence will result in inertia or entropy in the change process (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). Ambivalence therefore adds the possibility for both inertia and entropy to occur from the same individuals in different situations of change (Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012). Moderating factors would be based on how the stakeholders respond to each occurrence of change, whether it is positively or negatively, because both aspects are present for the individual. It is suggested by Welty Peachy and Bruening (2012) that ambivalence should be added to theoretical models on change, indicating that it may be another class of moderation to consider within Cunningham's (2002) model. Adding the dimension of ambivalence can help conceptualize more accurate predictions of change behaviour (Piderit, 2000).

Therefore, in the present study, the potential occurrence of ambivalence by stakeholders will be investigated.

The ease or struggle with which radical change is implemented therefore reflects moderating factors that can occur throughout the process. Moderating factors play an important role in change for leaders in organizations, as these individuals should have the ability to moderate change with different timing and pacing of the process in order to create the best acceptance and implementation of change (Amis et al., 2004a). Overall, the rate of change is influenced by the prominence of both inertia and entropy within an organization and how each moderating factor is manipulated (Oliver, 1992).

### **Value Commitments**

Within Cunningham's (2002) model, different types of commitment to values influence the perspective of change held by stakeholders, a concept originally developed by Greenwood and Hinings (1996). Without commitment to change from various stakeholders, change would not be possible (Amis et al., 2004a). The values of organizational members must coincide with the proposed changes, or change will have limited chance for success because of resistance (Amis et al., 2002; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). The more consistent values are with the proposed changes, the greater the commitment to any radical change (Amis et al., 2002). The values and inclination to change are linked to two different types of commitment, including competitive commitment and reformative commitment (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). When some organizational members support the traditional organizational template and others prefer an alternative template, competitive commitment occurs (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Organizational members may resist commitment to change because they feel it supports

the interest of other groups or individuals over themselves (Amis et al., 2004a).

Conversely, the strongest type of commitment for change is reformative commitment, as this states that all organizational members reject the current template and favour a new alternative (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). For example, in the transition to an executive office design archetype, some NSOs were excited to receive funding to make the transition that they had been ready to pursue for quite some time (Amis et al., 2004a).

Greenwood and Hinings (1996) proposed that change is not possible without one of these values commitments within an organization. Thus, Cunningham (2002) identified the need for competitive or reformative commitment in the change process. Without congruent values to proposed changes, the commitment of organizations to change will be limited and changes will only occur on a superficial basis, not enough to support a true shift to a new template (Amis et al., 2002; Amis et al., 2004a). For example, NSOs that did not support mandated structural changes saw very little change in day-to-day practices, with changes only occurring in areas that were necessary to outwardly appear different in order to receive funding (Amis et al., 2002). As possible pressures mount within an organization, the more likely it is that organizational members will move to a competitive or reformative commitment and enable the change process to move forward (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The interaction between the organization, the environment, and values are therefore shown through this process (Amis et al., 2002).

When stakeholders are dissatisfied with how their current needs are met within an organization, they are more likely to support change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). A shift in commitment to values can allow a new organizational template to become possible, allowing the deinstitutionalization of old values to occur (Brock, 2006). Ultimately, if

stakeholders believe a shift in organizational template will benefit their needs and that support of a radical reconfiguration is the best way to satisfy issues, then change will be more likely to succeed. If organizational members are dissatisfied but still committed to the current practices, then it is unlikely that a new organizational template will be embraced (Greenwood & Hingings, 1996). Emphasizing the purpose of the change, rather than the process needed to achieve change has been suggested as a way to prepare organizations for change and encourage greater commitment (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013).

Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) argued that rational logic can only influence individuals to an extent and that an emotional connection must be made with individuals to create a positive response to change. Further, the establishment of trust has been shown to be a factor that influences the adoption of initial changes and subsequently larger changes when strong relationships between different groups develop (Amis et al., 2004b; Oreg, 2006). When trust is present, organizational members often believe in leaders to guide them through the change process (Amis et al., 2004a). Measures can be taken in order to ensure stakeholders maintain trust in the organization throughout changes (Amis et al., 2004a). For example, one NSO implemented a committee to vote on decisions within the organization to ensure the voices of each group were being addressed to lead to support of organizational trust (Amis et al., 2004a). In sum, organizations should attempt to receive support from all stakeholders by considering their interests in the design, implementation, and ongoing management of a new organizational template (Amis et al., 2004a; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2012).

## **Late Stage Moderating Factors**

When radical change occurs, an old organizational template that is no longer deemed successful changes or shifts to a new template (Brock, 2006; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Factors identified by Cunningham (2002) that influence the final stages of a transition to a new template are capacity for action, resource dependence, power dependence, and an available alternative.

**Capacity for action.** Radical change can only occur when an organization has a capacity for action. Essentially, capacity for action refers to the ability of an organization to manage and carry out the change process from one template to another (Amis et al., 2004a; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Not surprisingly, when capacity for action is low there is a lower likelihood of change occurring. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) identified three factors that determine the capacity for action of an organization: (a) understanding of the proposed organizational design, (b) the skills to function under the new template, and (c) the ability to manage the transition to the new template. Put differently, the ability to implement a new template involves not only the possession of the necessary skills, but also the ability to put these components into action (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Furthermore, there has to be a desire to change and some force backing this motivation in order for any radical outcomes to occur (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Even if an organization and its individuals understand the goal of change, how each stakeholder perceives the path to achieving change impacts the capacity or readiness for change (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013). In fact, employees with positive attitudes towards change can help facilitate organizational change, whereas negative mannered employees can hinder change (Avey et al., 2008).

Capacity for action has the ability to moderate the rate of change as well, since better skills and understanding will lead to faster change and limited abilities will slow the process (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Organizations with heavily institutionalized practices may find it difficult to have a high capacity for action, as the routine and similar nature of organizational practices can limit any development of diversity or change supporting skills (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) postulate that leaders will likely need to deemphasize differences to achieve change goals. By using existing language and building on existing meanings within an organization, the change may more readily occur (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013).

Casey et al. (2012) developed a model of organizational change that incorporated capacity and capacity building in the process of change. In their study, they found that organizational processes, organizational resources, and systems and control were three categories that influenced an organization's capacity for change. Communication during implementation, proper funding, the efforts of staff and volunteers, the leveraging of relationships and networks, and formalization of structures were all elements that contributed to the successful implementation of new health promotion initiatives and strategies (Casey et al., 2012). Furthermore, larger organizations were found to have greater capacity in these areas and were more likely to achieve change through the use of formalized structures and procedures. For example, having existing relationships and networks to draw from allowed for greater capacity for action and easier implementation for organizations, whereas smaller organizations with fewer relationships had more limited possibilities for action (Casey et al., 2012).

Specifically within non-profit organizations, the implementation of organizational change can be challenging due to their reliance on volunteers over paid staff (Amis et al., 2004a; Casey et al., 2012). Difficulty focusing on change and complying with prescribed changes can occur because volunteers are already busy giving their time to help run day-to-day organizational operations in addition to their lives outside of the organization (Casey et al., 2012). Further, motivating volunteers to support change can be challenging because these individuals are contributing their time to help organizations in a capacity that is desirable to them (Amis et al., 2004a). In order to combat these potential challenges, suggested procedural enhancements in a sport setting are identifying goals, measuring and evaluating with regards to goals, involving third parties not associated with any sport club, formalized processes, communication procedures, and ongoing information collection about parent and player preferences (Chalip & Scott, 2005). Sport organizations could create a greater capacity for action in change situations by considering at least some of these research results to enhance the ability of the organization to successfully implement change.

The capacity of organizations to successfully complete radical change also depends on the abilities of top leadership members and the skills these individuals have to aid in the process (Amis et al., 2004a; Gilley, Gilley, & McMillan, 2009; Leiter & Harvie, 1998; Smith, 2004). Leaders must have the behavioural and technical capabilities to both support change amongst organizational members and actually implement change procedures (Amis et al., 2004a). Leaders who have the ability to cope with uncertainty and address unforeseen issues that arise have technical skills that can allow changes to continue to build and evolve without crisis (Amis et al., 2004a). Organizational members

may need to be educated and coached throughout the process of change by leaders (Amis et al., 2004a; Gilley et al., 2009). Actions to build capacity and positively enhance change implementation include communication, empowerment, and planning (Casey et al., 2012; Gilley, et al., 2009; Leiter & Harvie, 1998).

**Resource dependence.** Resource dependence is included as an influential factor in the model because change decisions are guided based on the environment that organizations depend on (Cunningham, 2002). The dependencies that are present influence decisions made by organizations and also determine power dependencies for organizations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). For example, during the professionalization of an English rugby union, teams had limited financial resources and had to depend on strategic planning and adaptation in order to survive during the turbulent transition (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). When changes started to occur that were not traditional in the field, fear and lack of information started to limit the alternatives organizations felt they had (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). When organizations rely upon outside factors to achieve success, a type of dependence develops that can influence the ability for change. For example, many community sport organizations depend on partnerships with organizations such as schools, public recreation departments, governments, and other non-profits in order to gain access to playing fields, funding, and other resources (Misener & Doherty, 2012; Thibault & Harvey, 1997). Additionally, Amis et al. (2002) found that Canadian NSOs were organizations small in size and low in income, which created a greater dependence on supporting resources for organizational existence. Pressures based on resource dependency can therefore influence the alternatives chosen by organizations.

Periods of high uncertainty, such as during the change process, are likely to induce more resource dependency as organizations look to others to help provide solutions to change (O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Problems arise with resource dependence because of the control organizations with power have over dependent organizations. For instance, there can be a concern that supporting organizations do not fully understand the goals or purpose of the organizations that are dependent on their resources (Amis et al., 2004a). Despite the possibility of these noted issues, organizations supplying resources have the ability to help supporting organizations throughout the change experience. The knowledge of supporting organizations can often be helpful to under-resourced organizations and, with the use of frequent communication, the occurrence of problems can be minimized (Amis et al., 2004a).

**Power dependency.** The level of power individuals and groups have on or within an organization can dictate the amount of influence these actors will have in the change process (Amis et al., 2004a; Casey et al., 2012; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Substantial power and influence can actually block change within an organization, as those in power can maintain the current template regardless of values held by those with little power (Amis et al., 2002; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Welty Peachy & Bruening, 2011). Power concentrated within a small number of individuals makes it easier for change to be prevented if these individuals do not support a new template (Amis et al., 2004a). Power can even be manipulated as a tool to gain support by groups who hold the same views for the direction of change as held by those in power (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Radical change, as a consequence, is more likely to occur when it is supported by powerful groups and

individuals, whereas a lack of support slows any change (Amis et al., 2002; Amis et al., 2004a; Austin, 1997; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). For example, the power wielded by the Canadian federal government through control of funding allowed them to force the implementation of a more professional organizational archetype in NSOs, even though the change clashed with NSO values (Amis et al., 2002). Not surprisingly, the NSOs that supported the change encountered fewer problems than organizations forced into the change (Amis et al., 2004a). In contrast to forceful power, leadership can also be used as a way to unite different organizational groups in the change process and minimize conflict (Amis et al., 2004a). Having dispersed power throughout an organization is the best way to achieve and maintain change because there is more likely to be unified support of the change (Amis et al., 2004a).

**Available alternative.** The availability of alternatives refers to the number of new organizational templates that could be considered by an organization for the possibility of change (Cunningham, 2002). New organizational forms that have been deemed unsuccessful are eliminated and only the most favourable forms remain as alternatives, as a population ecology perspective would predict (Cunningham, 2002). In other words, previously unsuccessful changes in organizations will be ruled out as options for change, while successful or new approaches will remain possibilities for an organization to move towards. O'Brien and Slack (2004) found that coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures greatly influenced the alternatives available to English rugby clubs. Throughout the change process, clubs were dealing with a high level of uncertainty, since rugby had previously been an amateur sport that was now becoming professionalized, and in this environment clubs easily gave in to pressures of conforming to successful tactics for

change. For example, when one team found success in hiring a professional to run the organization, other teams followed suit because it appeared to be the most effective alternative (O'Brien & Slack, 2004).

Additionally, the strategic choice perspective influences the possibility of an organization's alternatives (Cunningham, 2002). Individuals with the most power and legitimacy, typically high ranking individuals, make choices to implement changes and influence which alternatives are chosen for an organization (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). For example, the board members of youth sport organizations make decisions on procedures, events, and sport offerings based on their vision for the organization. Whether influence for change comes from the environment or the organization, recognition of the organization's strategy must occur and a suitable alternative template must be available for change to be possible (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

### **New Organizational Template**

Organizational change is a process that can be influenced by a number of factors. Each change situation can be considered somewhat unique and the extent to which various factors play roles in the change process is potentially variable within each industry, environment, and individual organization (Cunningham, 2002).

Intraorganizational dynamics is one factor that can help explain why each individual organization reacts differently during the change process even when similar pressures or environments are present (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Other factors also play a role in moderating the change process and warrant further attention by researchers in the sport setting.

With change comes learning, as new structures, behaviours, and practices require new thought processes and the development of new organizational ways (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Despite the challenges that may occur throughout the change process, Amis and colleagues (2002) found that organizations enter a period of stability following the completion of change, whereas organizations that resist change experience continued turbulence. While many change processes require adaptation and adjustments along the way, organizations with members who resist change are likely to spend a large amount of time on conflict management and experience many disputes (Amis et al., 2004a). Organizations with this type of experience are unlikely to reach the final new template goal, whereas organizations that do transition to a new template tend to have qualities that support change such as stable management or employee trust (Amis et al., 2004a).

### **Organizational Change Complexities**

Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) express the difficulties involved in change that often cannot be translated into simple models by saying “the difficulties associated with accomplishing change point to the inherent complexities involved in bringing about large-scale transformations” (p. 70). For example, distinguishing between new behaviours, intentional change actions, and existing culture and structures can be challenging when all elements are occurring within an organization during a period of change (Smith, 2004). Due to these complexities of change, large scale change that challenges social norms will likely require multiple steps (Austin, 1997). Although the model by Cunningham (2002) is meant to frame the change elements known to be involved in radical change, this research will examine the intricacies of change in a

specific sporting environment. Further, the views of multiple stakeholders will be examined to understand how change occurs from multiple perspectives.

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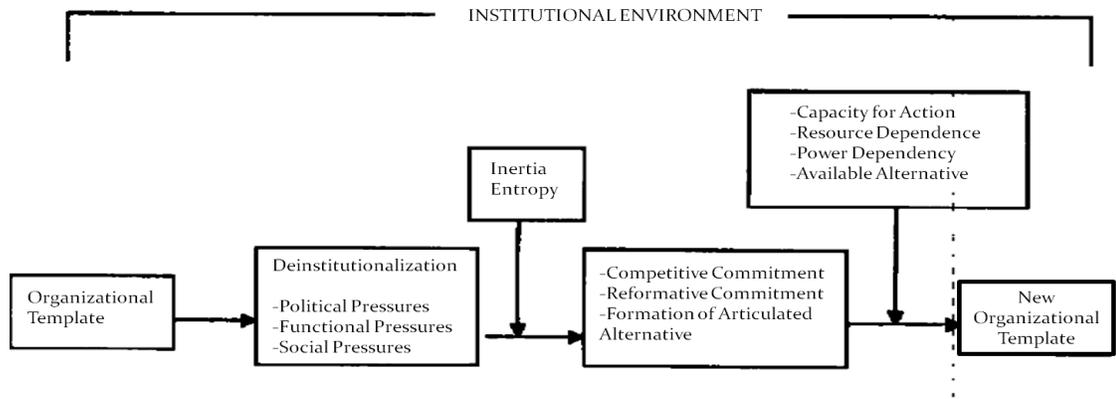
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## TABLES

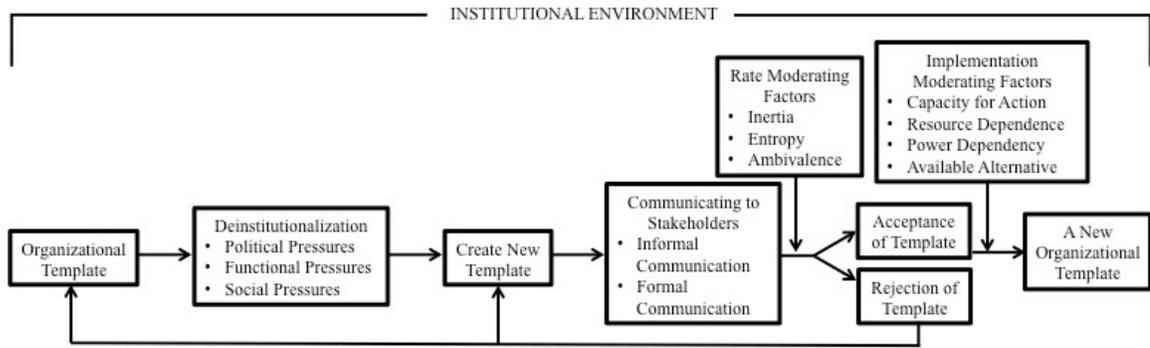
Table 1. Study Participant Summary

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Association</b>
Cliff	Male	Board Member	Local Club #1
Phil	Male	Board Member	Local Club #1
Max	Male	Coach/Parent	Local Club #1
Jane	Female	Parent	Local Club #1
Ross	Male	Parent	Local Club #1
Bill	Male	Board Member	Local Club #1
Henry	Male	Coach/Parent	Local Club #1
Liz	Female	Parent	Local Club #1
Tim	Male	Coach/Parent	Local Club #1
Ben	Male	Coach	Local Club #2
Justin	Male	Board Member	Local Club #2
Jen	Female	Parent	Local Club #2
Ted	Male	Parent	Local Club #2
Drew	Male	Board Member	Local Club #2
Jim	Male	OSA	OSA
Lee	Male	Coach/Parent	Local Club #2
Travis	Male	OSA	OSA
Jacob	Male	OSA	OSA
Albert	Male	Parent	Local Club #2
Ken	Male	OSA	OSA

## FIGURES



*Figure 1.* An integrative model of organizational change. (Cunningham, 2002, p.283).  
Theoretical framework for radical change.



*Figure 2.* A modified representation of Cunningham's (2002) integrative model of organizational change.

## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A** **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

Topic: Soccer Experience

Planned Questions:

- Tell me about your past experiences with soccer (e.g. player, coach, etc.).
- Tell me about your experience with (*insert youth soccer association*). What has it been like?

Probe: How has your recent experience differed from past years or experiences?

Probe: Can you explain any positive experiences that have occurred this summer?

Probe: Can you explain any negative/challenging experiences you faced?

- What could have made your experience better?

Topic: Child's Perception

Planned Questions:

- Can you describe any difference in your child's play with the new rules?
- How did you and your child discuss the different rules?
- What has your child told you about the different rules?

Topic: Expectations

Planned Questions:

- Has this season gone as you expected? Why or why not?
- Can you explain why or why not you see the changes as beneficial to youth soccer?

Topic: Change

Planned Questions:

- What was it like adapting to the changes?
- Probe: How about for your child?
- Can you describe any resistance you have experienced with the change?
- Can you explain why you view the change as something positive or negative?
- How has the association supported parents throughout the changing rules?
- Probe: How about players?
- How does the change relate to your values as a parent?

## **Appendix B**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COACHES**

Topic: Soccer Experience

Planned Questions:

- Tell me about your past experiences with soccer (e.g. player, coach, etc.).
- Tell me about your experience with (*insert youth soccer association*). What has it been like?

Probe: How has your recent experience differed from past years or experiences?

Probe: Can you explain any positive experiences that have occurred this summer?

Probe: Can you explain any negative/challenging experiences you faced?

- What could have made your experience better?

Topic: Child's Perception

Planned Questions:

- Can you describe any difference in each child's play with the new rules?
- How did you discuss the different rules with your team?
- What have children told you about the different rules?

Topic: Parents' Perceptions

Planned Questions:

- How have parents reacted to the changes?
  - How have parents acted differently based on the changes in comparison to earlier years?
- Probe: Can you give some examples of the differences you have seen in parents?

Topic: Expectations

Planned Questions:

- Has this season gone as you expected? Why or why not?
- How have the changes affected your coaching experience?
- Can you explain any pressure you have experienced to meet others' expectations?
- How have the changes affected your goals as a coach?

Topic: Change

Planned Questions:

- What was it like adapting to the changes?
- Probe: How about for the players?
- How have you changed your coaching strategies or approaches with the new rules?
- How have you experienced any resistance to the change?
- How do you view the changes as something positive or negative to youth soccer?
- How has the association supported coaches throughout the changing rules?
- Probe: How about players?
- Can you describe any confusion you have experienced surrounding the new practices?
- How does the change relate to your values as a coach?

**Appendix C**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BOARD MEMBERS**

Topic: Soccer Experience

Planned Questions:

- Tell me about your past experiences with soccer (e.g. player, coach, etc.).
- Tell me about your experience with (*insert youth soccer association*). What has it been like?

Probe: How has your recent experience differed from past years or experiences?

Probe: Can you explain any positive experiences that have occurred this summer?

Probe: Can you explain any negative/challenging experiences you faced?

- What could have made your experience better?

Topic: Child's Perception

Planned Questions:

- Can you describe any difference in children's play with the new rules?
- How have children reacted to the different rules?

Topic: Parent's Perception

Planned Questions:

- How have parents reacted to the changes?
  - How have parents acted differently based on the changes in comparison to earlier years?
- Probe: Can you give some examples of the differences you have seen in parents?

Topic: Organization

Planned Questions:

- How did the association prepare for the mandated changes?
- How did you discuss the different rules with coaches?
- Probe: What about with other members? (e.g. players, officials)
- How has the board eased the transition for players?

Probe: For coaches?

- What is your view on the new practices?
- How does the board support the implementation of the new rules?
- How have the changes affected your goals as an organization?

Topic: Change

Planned Questions:

- Can you describe any resistance you have experienced to the change?
- What is something that has helped the change occur?
- What has hindered the implementation of the changes?
- Can you describe any media attention the association has experienced due to the changes?
- How does the change relate to your values as an association?

## **Appendix D**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ONTARIO SOCCER ASSOCIATION MEMBERS**

Topic: Role

-What is your position at the Ontario Soccer Association?

Probe: What does this entail?

-Tell me about your past experiences with soccer (e.g. player, coach, etc.).

-Tell me about your experience with the Long-Term player Development plan.

-What capacity did you have in the design or implementation of this new plan?

Probe: How has your organization changed as a result of this plan?

Probe: Can you explain any positive experiences that have occurred with this policy?

Probe: Can you explain any negative/challenging experiences you faced?

-What could have made your experience better?

Topic: Perception

Planned Questions:

-Can you describe any difference in children's play with the new rules?

-How have children reacted to the different rules?

-How have parents reacted to the changes?

Topic: Organization

Planned Questions:

-How were the new policies and rules designed?

-Why did OSA feel a new plan was necessary?

-How did the association prepare for the mandated changes?

-How did you discuss the different rules with organizations?

-How has the association eased the transition for stakeholders?

-What is your view on the new practices?

-Explain how people support or reject the new rules.

Probe: What about within the Ontario Soccer Association?

-How have the changes affected your values as an organization?

Topic: Change

Planned Questions:

-Can you describe any resistance you have experienced to the change?

-What is something that has helped the change occur?

-What has hindered the implementation of the changes?

-Can you describe any media attention the association has experienced due to the changes?

Probe: What was involved in this content?

-How does the change relate to your values as an association?

## **Appendix E**

### **RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND**

To remain transparent about my role as a researcher in this study, it is important for me to note my previous involvement with soccer. As a child, I started playing soccer at the age of four and I have continued to play recreationally each summer since then. In the past I have also had the opportunity to coach a youth house league team for one summer. While I have a history with soccer, my involvement with the sport has always been at a recreational level. Hockey was always my true athletic passion growing up and I have been much more involved with this sport over the years. Therefore, I have an interest in the sport of soccer but feel my involvement has not been to a degree that has created a high level of emotional connection to the game, especially in comparison to other sports. My interest in the modification of sport led me to this project and was the reason I chose to conduct this research. I feel my previous involvement with soccer helped me understand some of the changes and rule modifications that arouse. To be clear, I would like to state that I view the recent changes in soccer as beneficial to the sport. As the research is an analysis of the change process, I do not anticipate that my view on the rules or any previous soccer participation impacted the outcomes of the study.

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