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**An investigation of change in the dominant logic of an organisational
field: The case of senior English rugby union**

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ABSTRACT

In 1995, the International Rugby Football Board (IRFB) decided to open the formerly amateur game of rugby union to professionalism. This thesis focused on the impact this decision had on the organisational field of senior English rugby union. When the game was declared “open,” the amateur ethos was still heavily institutionalised in the English game. Therefore, amateur values and norms helped establish a mutually constructed world view, or dominant logic, that served to shape the repertoire of strategies chosen by organisational decision-makers. Focusing on the years between 1995 and 1999, the study examined a particularly turbulent period in the English game, as constituents attempted to manage the milieu of pressures caused by the field’s shifting dominant logic.

The professionalisation of senior English rugby union provided an excellent context to investigate the process by which the heavily institutionalised dominant logic of an organisational field changes. To accomplish this aim, primary data were gathered through 43 semi-structured interviews with key field-level actors. Secondary data were collected from sources such as the clubs’ and Rugby Football Union’s (RFU) historical documents and promotional material; media releases and Internet websites; newspapers, on-line newspapers, dedicated rugby publications, and broadcast media; and finally, archival material from the RFU Museum at Twickenham in London. Underpinned by the basic tenets of institutional theory, content analysis of these primary and secondary data allowed for a thick description of the change process to emerge.

Structured in three main sections, the first part of this thesis showed that change in the field’s dominant logic involved profound shifts in its communities of actors, exchange processes, interorganisational linkages, and regulatory structures. In addition, extending current institutional accounts of change in organisational fields, it was also found that change in the dominant forms of capital at stake in the field provided another major indicator of a shift in dominant logic. The emergence of the new professional logic created unprecedented uncertainty, but simultaneously, led to increasing homogeneity in the organisational practices of actors throughout the field. This pattern of organisational change, known as institutional isomorphism, resulted when actors’ individual efforts to deal rationally with the uncertainty and constraint inherent to the new professional logic, led to similarities in their structure, strategy, culture, and output.

In the second part of this study, the mechanisms of institutional isomorphism – coercive, normative and mimetic pressures, were shown to be instrumental in facilitating the diffusion of the field’s new professional logic. The initial pattern of diffusion was status-driven, where decision-makers mimicked the strategies implemented by high status competitors. Continued uncertainty rapidly led to a “bandwagon” of strategy diffusion, where clubs, fearing lost legitimacy, mimicked competitors’ strategies in a poorly researched and ad hoc manner. This period of uncertainty was characterised by intense competitive pressures and, despite tighter system coupling, a marked reticence among organisations to exchange vital strategic information. As failing organisations were selected out, coercive isomorphic pressures applied by the field’s new regulatory structures rose in salience. As a result, actors finally began sharing information of a strategic nature. This increase in the field’s multiplexity of ties indicated that the social learning of adaptive responses was taking place. This was seen as a more productive means of strategy diffusion than the status-driven and bandwagon processes that had

earlier taken precedence. It was concluded that the social learning of adaptive responses was integral to the burgeoning maturity of the field. Actors came to agree upon a common purpose – the production of a strong *league* of clubs, as opposed to the existence of a *handful* of successful clubs.

The third section of the thesis was a case study analysis of one English Premiership rugby union club's strategic response to institutional pressures for professionalisation. Utilising and extending Oliver's (1991) typology of strategic responses to institutional processes, the argument that organisations automatically conform to pressures in their institutional environment was analysed. It was demonstrated that organisational compliance with institutional pressures was by no means automatic. Rather, the organisation's strategic responses were revealed as the products of a protracted political debate among influential stakeholders that evolved over time. It was shown that organisations' strategic responses to institutional pressures might more accurately be viewed as taking place at multiple organisational levels. It was thus suggested that these responses could be viewed as the products of an amalgam of different responses at various organisational levels.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Until recently, rugby union football was one of the few international sports that strictly adhered to the ideals of amateurism. The roots of the game's amateur principles can be traced back to 1886, when its governing body in England, the Rugby Football Union (RFU), enacted legislation that forbade payment of any kind to players for loss of earnings incurred through playing the game. The International Rugby Football Board (IRFB), also established in 1886, similarly ruled that the principles of amateur competition were to be applied worldwide. Despite four counties in the north of England breaking away in 1895 to create the professional code of rugby league, this amateur ideal remained central to the sport and, by the early 1900s, came to dominate how it was played and organised throughout the world.

As rugby union grew in popularity, the amateur ethos became further entrenched. One striking manifestation of this was the way in which, throughout most of the game's 150 years of existence, its administration and organisation at all levels relied heavily on volunteerism. This meant that clubs, and the games they were involved in, were organised by volunteers who were usually ex-players and were often alumni of England's public school system, in which the game had originated. Thus, competitive rugby union, even at senior levels, was organised predominately through informal networks of rugby union "old boys." In this way, rugby union clubs became social institutions in which generations of members often maintained a lifelong involvement out of an intrinsic love for the game and the camaraderie that its amateur values fostered. Swanton (1999) discussed the overriding prevalence of the amateur ethos, and alluded to the informal practices that characterised rugby union in this era. He pointed out that, for the players and administrators,

amateurism was their religion the 'rugger' world of those days was essentially friendly, hospitable, if too hearty for some. The players, high and low, trained on their grounds once during the week and most had their fill of beer on Saturday evenings (Swanton, 1999, p.40).

Along similar lines, Malin (1997, p. 11) explained that in the amateur era, most rugby union clubs were "friendly institutions" that would treat visitors like "guests at a large, slightly chaotic party." This conviviality associated with the game was one way in which

the institutionalised nature of the amateur ethos became manifest in underpinning its culture.

Informality also characterised the actual arrangement of fixtures. As clubs were “staffed” exclusively by volunteers in key administrative and technical roles, their duties were performed after work or in their spare time. In other words, not only were the players amateur, but the entire administrative structure of the English game was founded upon the related concept of volunteerism. Thus, most games were organised in a relatively unstructured way among mutual social contacts or acquaintances at clubs. As recently as 1985, the RFU had no formally organised national league structure. Wyatt (1995, p. 175) pointed out that, “there were no leagues at all. Various newspapers tried promoting their own, but these were half-baked and essentially meaningless.” Although discussion on a national league was initiated in the winter of 1984/85, and finally introduced by the RFU in the season of 1986/87ⁱ, the “old ways” lived on, in that clubs continued to schedule “friendlies” against old rivals for no other reason than to indulge in the traditions of camaraderie and friendly competition. This constant interaction allowed clubs to observe the structures and modes of operation of their counterparts. As players, managers and supporters observed and enacted the rituals, routines and structures of rugby union in this era, their constant reproduction served to further reinforce the amateur values and norms upon which they were founded. This process whereby a social practice, or way of operating, such as amateurism, becomes unquestionably accepted and taken-for-granted within an organisational context, is known as institutionalisation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1992).

In the 1970’s and 1980’s, as international fixtures were televised more regularly, especially the annual Five Nations Championships, public interest in the game grew. Thus, by 1986/87, the RFU’s remit included liaising between its national team and member clubs, satisfying and coordinating a growing fan base, and correspondingly, managing a burgeoning commercial interest from sponsors and the mass media. This conglomeration of key suppliers, resource and product consumers, competitors, and regulatory agencies constituted an “organisational field” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Clearly, while the boundaries of the organisational field of elite English rugby union gradually expanded throughout the twentieth century and was increasingly exposed to

commercial pressures, the game in England continued to be founded upon staunchly amateur values.

However, by late 1987, in other parts of the world, the hegemony of amateurism as the game's dominant principle for organising became increasingly under threat. In that year, the introduction of a quadrennial Rugby World Cup had led to increasing competitiveness and global exposure for the game, not to mention increasing interest from sponsors. This inaugural World Cup marked the beginning of the most tumultuous period in the game's history. By the next World Cup tournament in 1991, worldwide interest in the game had continued to grow, so too had demands on the time of elite players and coaches. It became increasingly difficult for those involved at this level to sustain employment away from the game, let alone to build careers. However, the English RFU and the other "Home Union" governing bodies in Ireland, Scotland, and to a lesser extent, Wales, remained steadfastly committed to amateurism. As a consequence, many of the top players in these countries became part of the "talent drain" from rugby union and accepted lucrative offers to play the professional code of rugby league (Thwaites & Carruthers, 1998). Many others accepted "under-the-table" payments from clubs that were willing to flout official IRFB policy, a practice that was common in Italy, France, Wales, and South Africa (Wyatt, 1995; FitzSimons, 1996).

This era of "shamateurism", as it came to be known, indicated that, particularly among the game's elite players, an ideological shift towards a more ambivalent attitude regarding professionalism was evolving. However, in England, amateurism and its attendant structures and ways of operating remained deeply ingrained. As a consequence, the notion of professional rugby union remained anathema to the majority of the English game's administrators and many of its players. Therefore, despite a noticeable shift in other parts of the world, English rugby union stayed closely allied to the values of amateurism. As Wyatt (1995, p, 17) suggested, "our thinking was cocooned by our culture and understanding of the game's potential, or lack of it We were, at least in England, happy in the tradition of the game."

However, by 1995, gaps between the attitudes of the leading players and the RFU with respect to the laws prohibiting professionalism began to show evidence of widening. In a nationally televised interview, Will Carling, then captain of the English national

team, suggested that, “everyone seems to do well out of rugby except the players. If the game were run properly, as a professional game, you would not need 57 old farts running it” (FitzSimons, 1996, p. 44). Clearly, Carling’s comments indicated the growing frustration among England’s leading players at the intransigence of the RFU with respect to the issue of player remuneration. The increasing amounts of time required of the senior players to compete at the highest level, and the vast sums of money made by the RFU from high profile matches, caused the gulf between players and administrators to widen. This frustration among England’s leading players was compounded by the knowledge that, despite the IRFB’s professed amateur stance, certain Southern Hemisphere governing bodies were paying their national team players sizeable fees that were thinly disguised as trust funds (FitzSimons, 1996). In addition, it was an “open secret” that some of the leading Italian, French, and Welsh clubs had long been willing to pay generous “expenses” for the services of talented players. However, far from accepting Carling’s public criticism, the RFU fired him as national team captain. This move epitomised the RFU’s obstinacy at that time on the subject of professionalism. Clearly, differences in the values between those organising the English game, the RFU, and those playing it at the highest level, that is, players from the country’s leading clubs, were gradually becoming incompatible with each other. However, management in the overwhelming majority of senior clubs believed the sanctity of amateurism would prevail. Accordingly, they continued to operate with volunteer-based administrative structures. This meant that, as was the norm in the amateur era, little or no attention was paid to long-term organisational objectives and business planning, much less to what was unfolding in the Southern Hemisphere.

At this time in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, the fear of losing leading players was exacerbated by what became known as the “rugby war” (FitzSimons, 1996). In the rival code of professional rugby league, media conglomerate, News Corporation, attempted to take over the worldwide organisation of the code with the introduction of a “Super League.” Shortly afterwards, a consortium of Australian businessmen, backed by media mogul, Kerry Packer, formed the World Rugby Corporation (WRC), and attempted to sign over 500 of the world’s leading players to a new global professional rugby union competition. As a result, elite players were in high

demand. This happened without the sanction of rugby union's national governing bodies, and in spite of the IRFB's continued adherence to an officially amateur game. Therefore, in the lead-up to and during the 1995 World Cup, the world's best rugby union players were courted by both Super League clubs and the rebel WRC, both of which grew increasingly desperate and offered players unprecedented sums of money to join their respective organisations.

As publicity surrounding News Corporation's Super League grew, and news of Packer's WRC plans filtered through to the Southern Hemisphere rugby union "establishment," an alliance was formed between the South African, New Zealand, and Australian Rugby Unions (SANZAR). In Johannesburg on June 23, just before the 1995 Rugby World Cup final, SANZAR announced that it had also signed a deal with News Corporation, worth an unprecedented US \$555 million, to produce a professional rugby union product. Importantly, despite the IRFB's continued adherence to the principles of amateurism, the newly formed Players' Association in Australia brokered a deal with the Australian Rugby Union (ARU) that ensured players 95% of the ARU's share of the News Corporation television revenue. This opened the way for players in South Africa and New Zealand to negotiate similar deals with their respective national governing bodies. These agreements provided a clear demonstration of the incongruence of amateurism in the organisation of modern, top-level rugby union. As a consequence, with the players' guarantee of financial reward for their involvement in the game, the SANZAR Unions effectively endorsed professional rugby union.

As IRFB founding members, and between them, having won all three Rugby World Cups to that time, the Southern Hemisphere unions were powerful forces in the world game. Thus, in the wake of the SANZAR-News Corporation deal, and as the extent of the WRC's clandestine negotiations with players from other countries became public knowledge, the IRFB succumbed to these accumulated pressures and opened the way to professionalism. On August 25 1995, it held an interim meeting in Paris that led directly to the announcement that the amateur principles upon which the game had been founded, were to be repealed. In what became known as the Paris Declaration, the IRFB stated that participation in the game of rugby union football should be bound by the principles of an

“open game,” in which players could receive financial remuneration for playing (RFU Commission Report, 1995).

This announcement was greeted with astonishment in England. As described earlier, the extent to which amateurism was ingrained in English rugby union had largely insulated it from the growing professional pressures in many other parts of the world. Thus, for the English game to adapt to the demands of professionalism, manifold changes at multiple levels had to take place. Inevitably, change on such a large scale created widespread pressures and great uncertainty. How these pressures and uncertainty became manifest, and how the significant actors in English rugby union responded to and attempted to manage this milieu, caused prolonged and acrimonious debate about how the game should be organised in England. Therefore, the professionalisation of English rugby union provided an extremely interesting research site for the study of organisational change in a sport setting, and as such, provided the context for this research. The theoretical perspective of institutional theory was used to carry out the investigation. The next section discusses the particular utility of institutional theory to this study, and introduces some of its more salient concepts that were used throughout this research.

The institutional perspective

The usefulness of modern institutional approaches to comprehending the organisation-environment relationship was first suggested by Meyer and Rowan (1977), who examined how the institutional environment impacted on the structure of individual organisations. An organisation’s institutional environment refers to the “understandings and expectations of appropriate organisational forms and behaviour that are shared by members of society” (Tolbert, 1985, p. 349). Institutional theorists such as Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and Tolbert and Zucker (1983) argued that decision makers in organisations changed organisational structures in order to conform to the expectations of their institutional environment. In this way, “an organisation demonstrates that it is acting on a collectively valued purpose in a proper and adequate manner” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 349).

Therefore, traditional institutional approaches primarily focused upon the individual organisation, addressing factors that pertained to issues of influence, coalitions

and competing values, and power and informal structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). More recently, institutional research has centred not so much upon individual organisations, but more on groups of organisations in industrial sectors and in organisational fields. An organisational field refers to the conglomeration of key suppliers, resource and product consumers, product or service competitors, regulatory agencies, and the general public – actors that, in the aggregate, constitute a particular sphere of institutional life (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 1991; Hoffman, 1999). Such research has emphasised, “the embeddedness of organisational fields and the centrality of classification, routines, scripts and schema” (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, p. 3). By shifting the research lens to the level of the organisational field, theorists have focused upon linkages among actors and the influence of coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures on a focal organisation, or population of organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1991; Oliver, 1991, 1992, 1997; Scott, Mendel & Pollack, 1996; Kraatz & Zajak, 1996; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Hoffman, 1999).

Further, due to its incorporation of network, cultural, and historical elements, research at the level of the organisational field provides “a fruitful context for tracing and interpreting the nature and process of change in institutional practices” (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay and King, 1991, p. 333). Thus, institutional theorists do not see organisational action as a choice from a boundless assembly of potentialities determined by purely internal ordering. Rather, it is viewed more as a selection from a narrowly defined set of legitimate alternatives, as determined by the collection of actors that constitute the firm’s organisational field (Hoffman, 1999). The manner of this influence is displayed in the field’s institutions, particularly the widely-held values, rules, norms and beliefs that inform reality for the focal organisation(s), and clarify “what is and what is not, what can be acted upon and what cannot” (Hoffman, 1999, p.352).

When values and norms, such as amateurism, are spread ubiquitously across an organisational field, they help determine the way in which managers conceptualise their operation (Oakes, Townley & Cooper, 1998). Over time, a mutually constructed world view emerges among actors in the field, and serves to shape the repertoire of strategies chosen by decision makers (Huff, 1982). This commonality among actors in a field

regarding the ways in which they perceive their business was described by Bettis and Prahalad (1986) as a “dominant logic.” They argued that a dominant logic represents actors’ shared ideas and beliefs in an organisational field and “provides a repertoire of tools that top managers use to identify, define, and make strategic decisions” (Bettis & Prahalad, 1986, p. 490).

Clearly, in the organisational field of elite English rugby union, prior to the Paris Declaration, its dominant logic was underpinned by a staunchly held amateur ethos. Using the research lens of institutional theory, this study investigated how change to this amateur status quo unfolded in the subsequent four-and-a-half-year period following the Paris Declaration, from June 1995, through to December 1999. Therefore the basic tenets of institutional theory were used to examine the change process in what Pettigrew (1987, p. 655) referred to as a “substantially temporal and contextual manner.” With this in mind, the next section presents a brief explanation of how this thesis was structured, and elaborates on the relevant aims of each of its chapters.

Research aims and thesis structure

This research shows that processes of large scale and rapid organisational change do not always conform to the clear, linear processual models suggested by theorists such as Greiner (1967; 1972) or Kotter (1994). Therefore, following this introductory chapter, the next three chapters will form the central part of the thesis in three discrete though interrelated investigations. Finally, the overall findings of the thesis will then be discussed in a fifth and concluding chapter.

In Chapter II, the nature of the historical, social, economic, political, and competitive environment in which this organisational field operated is established. The period studied – from June 1995 through to December 1999, was characterised by unprecedented environmental uncertainty and very public and acrimonious debate between powerful actors with disparate interests. The fundamental shift in the field’s dominant logic prompted by the Paris Declaration required the delegitimisation of deeply institutionalised amateur values and structures. Therefore, the process by which this most fundamental of changes to the field’s operational practices took place, formed the focus of the chapter. As a field’s dominant logic and the values underpinning it are intangible, the aspects that were manifestations of the new logic, such as modifications to

organisational structures and behaviours, were used to establish the extent of change across the field. Thus, Chapter II is primarily focused on the pressures that led to organisational change, and the processes that became manifest when the dominant logic of senior English rugby union subsequently changed from one underpinned by amateur values, to those of professionalism.

The focus of Chapter III is also on the environmental turbulence that characterised senior English rugby union in the four-year period following the Paris Declaration. However, where Chapter II examined the broader process of change and explored manifestations of the field's new professional logic, in Chapter III this focus was narrowed to examine how the emerging professional logic led to isomorphic pressures in the field. The process of isomorphism refers to constraining forces that influence units in an organisational field to resemble others that face similar environmental conditions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Of particular interest in this chapter were the coercive, normative, and mimetic mechanisms by which this process of homogenisation took place. By examining how these isomorphic processes became manifest, a deeper understanding of how a professional logic diffused throughout senior English rugby union was developed. This chapter also provided the basis for a discussion of the factors that were significant in contributing to the maturity of this field. However, the central research focus of Chapter III was on the isomorphic processes that led to the diffusion of a new dominant logic throughout the field.

Where Chapter II focused on explicating the overall change in the field's dominant logic, and Chapter III centred on an examination of the isomorphic processes by which this logic diffused throughout the field, Chapter IV narrowed the focus even further by investigating how these pressures impacted upon strategic decision-making in one particular organisation in the field. Thus, Chapter IV is a fine-grained case study analysis of an individual club's strategic response to a change in the dominant logic of the field within which it was embedded. By utilising a case study approach, the content and process of change was highlighted by investigating the differential strategic responses of one senior English rugby union club to radical changes in its institutional environment. In particular, the role of agency and interests in responding to institutional pressures for conformity is analysed.

Thus, succeeding Chapter I (Introduction), Chapters II, III and IV progressively narrow the focus of research. This gradual “zooming” of the research lens allowed the dynamics of change to be revealed at the organisational field-level, through to interorganisational processes, and finally, at the level of the individual organisation. Last, these chapters are linked together in a fifth and concluding chapter. Here, the implications of the findings outlined in Chapters II, III and IV have been analysed as to their impact on furthering our understanding of the overall change process. As a result, possible directions for further study are then discussed.

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CHAPTER II – ANALYSING CHANGE IN AN ORGANISATIONAL FIELD: THE EMERGENCE OF PROFESSIONALISM IN SENIOR ENGLISH RUGBY UNION

As discussed in Chapter I, the repeal of the laws banning professionalism in rugby union came as a huge shock to most involved in the English game. Indeed, Malin (1997, p. 9) noted that, “in the cradle of the game in England, the birth pangs of the new professional age were very painful indeed.” Therefore, although the RFU accepted the IRFB’s Paris Declaration, it immediately imposed a moratorium on changes to the regulations regarding professionalism until the end of the 1995/96 English season. This meant that all clubs in England were expected to continue operating as they had before the Paris Declaration, thus retaining completely amateur arrangements. Immediately following the imposition of the moratorium, in September 1995, the RFU formed an internal committee called the Rugby Union Commission. This seven-member body conducted a review of the regulations, rules, and structures that were to be applied to the game in England as a result of the Paris Declaration. The Commission upheld the RFU’s moratorium and ruled that the era of openly professional rugby union in England was not to commence until May 6, 1996 (Malin, 1997).

In addition, although the Rugby Union Commission recognised the apparent inevitability of professional rugby union in England, it recommended that, following the moratorium, the decision to continue operation on an amateur basis, or to pursue a more aggressive refocusing towards accommodating professional status, should be left with individual clubs. Therefore, in accepting the Commission’s recommendations, the RFU effectively gave clubs the “right to decide” their own destinies with respect to professionalism (RFU Commission Report, 1995). In so doing, it purposely avoided mandating the revolutionary philosophical, structural and strategic change that clubs would have to undertake in order to accommodate professional players. Thus, the RFU recognised the rights of clubs that wished to maintain their amateur status, but also gave official approval to those clubs that wanted to turn professional after May 6, 1996. An inherent aspect of this “right to decide” was that the game should remain “seamless,” whereby all clubs in the country should have the opportunity to work their way through the various regional and national divisions to the pinnacle of the English game, Division I.

Despite the RFU's recommendation for a moratorium on any changes to the amateur status quo for a term of one year following the Paris Declaration, a number of senior clubs chose to immediately professionalise their operations. While the majority of clubs initially observed the moratorium, they found that they were being left behind by the first-mover clubs that had defied the RFU's directives and began signing players on lucrative, multi-year contracts. Significantly, at no point did the RFU impose sanctions on the clubs in breach of its moratorium, nor did it offer advice or strategic guidelines to clubs on how to proceed with professionalisation. In light of this inconsistency and lack of direction from the RFU, a number of clubs mimicked the organisation of professional soccer clubs and sought out major sponsors and benefactors to finance their transformation. A contentious aspect of this process was that these formerly amateur, volunteer-led sport organisations attempted the transformation into professionally-led business entities by replacing their members with shareholders and/or boards of directors. As a result, the professionalisation of senior English rugby union resulted in an explosion of new actors such as professional administrators, sponsors, benefactors, and crucially, pay television, entering the field.

In the amateur era, clubs were established and operated by volunteers as leisure pass-times for the enjoyment of members. Consequently, the values underpinning the field's organisational structures and behaviours were of a staunchly amateur nature. This meant that amateur values and norms were spread ubiquitously across the field, and helped determine the way in which volunteers conceptualised their operations. Such a mutually constructed world view (Huff, 1982) represents actors' shared ideas and beliefs, and was described by Bettis and Prahalad (1986) as a "dominant logic." Therefore, the number of teams a club could field, the enjoyment and camaraderie of its members, and the number of players who achieved representative selection, were all matters of club pride and success and were representative of a fundamentally amateur dominant logic. Following the Paris Declaration however, intrinsic notions of enjoyment and camaraderie became secondary in importance to winning games and the resultant revenue thus generated. Indeed, national team honours became a liability for the clubs that paid the contracts of the players selected. Such a change in actors' commonly held values indicated that a direct consequence of the Paris Declaration was a shift in the field's

dominant logic from one based upon an amateur ethos, to one founded upon professional and business-based values. This shift required the delegitimisation of amateur values that formed the cornerstone of the field's organisational activities for over 150 years.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter was to explore how this process unfolded between the years from 1995 to 1999. The next section presents the relevant theoretical issues and concepts that underpinned the interpretation of data. This is followed by a section that explains the method used to collect and analyse these data, which is then succeeded by a section discussing the results of their analysis. Finally, the last section offers some brief concluding comments on the findings of the chapter.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As explained in Chapter I, institutional research at the level of the organisational field incorporates network, cultural, and historical elements, and provides the context for understanding the character and course of change in institutional practices (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay and King, 1991). From this perspective, organisational action is determined by the widely-held values, rules, norms and beliefs, or as Ranson, Hinings, and Greenwood (1980) referred to them, "interpretive schemes," that inform reality for the actors constituting an organisational field (Hoffman, 1999). In this way, interpretive schemes determine constituents' cognitive perceptions of work, worth and legitimacy, and as a consequence, profoundly influence the structure of a field by legitimating certain resources.

The structuring of organisational fields based on access to certain resources indicates the link between the cognitive and structural characteristics of a field. Ruef and Scott (1998, p. 879) pointed out that, "cognitive elements are more basic to the operation of social systems and provide frameworks on which normative and regulative systems are constructed." Ruef and Scott's discussion here relates to what Scott (1995) called the regulative, normative and cognitive pillars of organisational life. Fligstein (1992) suggested these pillars structure how important issues are perceived and appropriate actions are developed.

Regulative (or legal) aspects of institutions direct perspectives on appropriate organisational behaviour by coercion or threat of sanctions from state or governing bodies (Hoffman, 1999). Normative (or social) aspects of institutions are generally

exhibited in the forms of taken-for-granted operating procedures and standards. Their capacity to guide organisational action and beliefs stems from social obligation that is often based upon moral or ethical considerations, or upon training or educational expectations.

Cognitive (or cultural) aspects of institutions become manifest as symbols that include cultural rules and frameworks, as well as words, signs, and gestures. These cognitive aspects steer actors' perceptions of the nature of reality, and form the scaffold upon which meaning is developed (Hoffman, 1999). Zucker (1983) suggested that actors will often abide by cognitive aspects such as beliefs and values without conscious thought. Perhaps because of their unquestioned and taken-for-granted qualities, the values and beliefs underpinning the cognitive aspects of institutions are the most entrenched and therefore, the most resistant to change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Hoffman, 1999).

This would suggest that it is the cognitive aspects of organisations that need to be addressed by actors who have a vested interest in influencing a field's institutional order. In line with this view, Alvesson (1991) suggested that organisational actors, particularly those in dominant coalitions, use their resources to actively target certain cognitive aspects of organisational life in order to exploit and subordinate them to their own intentions. In particular, he pointed out that the symbolic constructions of organisations such as rites, rules, rituals, ceremonies, myths, language, and corporate architecture, could all be the subject of this "purposive rational action." O'Brien and Slack (1999) noted the key role that the manipulation of particular organisational symbols plays when dominant coalitions seek to delegitimise certain institutionalised values. Bourdieu (1977) referred to this process of shaping values and constituting interests as "symbolic violence," which, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) pointed out, usually takes the form of a radical reconfiguration of organisational and positional identities, vocabularies, and values. For example, Oakes, Townley and Cooper (1998) described an attempt to increase legitimacy through a process of business planning as an act of symbolic violence. They suggested that through a process of naming, categorising, and regularising, business planning replaced one set of meanings that was defined by the producers within the field, with another set of values defined in reference to the field's external market (Oakes et al., 1998).

Interestingly, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggested that symbolic violence is often exercised upon social agents *with* their complicity. This would suggest that the reduced privilege inherent in symbolically violent activity must be forfeited in *exchange* for some form of perceived return. In their work on the influence of professional and volunteer members in Canadian national sport organisations, Auld and Godbey (1998) noted that volunteers forfeited decision-making privileges in exchange for having their needs met “vicariously,” through an alternate reward source. They pointed out that this alternate reward source - successful performances by athletes, provided a sense of pride, esteem and status for volunteer members. As they stated, “perhaps these are the resources that are exchanged for influence in decision-making” (Auld & Godbey, 1998, p. 35). Although Auld and Godbey’s observations are helpful in identifying this “exchange process,” it would appear that the intrinsic “rewards” of pride, esteem, and status, are likely to be founded upon the same values that motivated actors’ involvement in the first place. Thus, although the means of achieving the reward may have changed, the cognitive motivations and values underpinning their actual pursuit, did not. This supports the contentions of DiMaggio and Powell (1991), and Hoffman (1999), who suggested that although the regulative and normative aspects of institutions may be altered, it is the cognitive values and belief structures underpinning them, such as in the case of this study, those tied to the amateur ethos, that are the most resistant to change.

Thus, the contentions of Ruef and Scott (1998) and Hoffman (1999), that regulative and normative pillars are founded upon the cognitive elements of organisations, echo Ranson et al.’s (1980) point that interpretive schemes form the basis of organisations’ respective orientations and strategic purposes. Specifically, Ranson et al. (1980, p. 5) suggested that interpretive schemes, “refer to the indispensable cognitive schema that map our experience of the world, identifying its constituents and relevances and how we are to know and understand them.” The values and interests underpinning organisations’ interpretive schemes across an organisational field thus define the various types of capital that are at stake in that field (Bourdieu, 1985). Consequently, different forms of capital, be they symbolic, cultural, social, or economic, tend to impose their own logic on different fields, and thus have a profound influence on how fields are structured (Oakes et al., 1998).

Logics and organisational fields

The notion of an organisational field having its own logic or “way of doing things” is related to Prahalad and Bettis’ (1986) contention that a field may have a *dominant* logic. They suggested that a field’s dominant logic is the prime determinant of how managers conceptualise their business and make critical resource allocations decisions. As a consequence, the dominant logic of an organisational field highlights the important criteria for legitimacy that ultimately coordinates the field’s organisational activities. Thus, organisational outcomes, such as strategic reorientation, or the restructuring of connective ties among actors, that are not explicitly accounted for by market forces, can be more effectively explained by analysing the dominant logic of an organisational field (Powell, 1991). Scott et al. (1996) pointed out that the notion of a dominant logic suggests that actors in a field are coordinated by a set of common ideas and beliefs that set the tone for the field. This implies a commonality among organisations within the field regarding how they perceive means of appropriate action and effectiveness. Therefore, of particular interest for this research are the multiple types of actors making up the field, and their underlying values, beliefs, exchange processes and governance structures that go towards creating the field’s dominant logic (Scott et al., 1996). Also of interest here are the questions of how and why the dominant logic of a field changes.

Huff’s (1982) observation that firms “borrow” experiences and replicate the strategies of industrial partners that they view as successful, provides a useful lead here. She suggested that these “borrowed” experiences and strategies lead to a “mutually constructed world view” among organisations engaged in the same industry, as reflected in the degree of homogeneity of strategies implemented by industrial actors. Thus, in the perceptions of organisational decision-makers across the industry, certain strategic activities achieved a heightened level of legitimacy. Prahalad and Bettis (1986) pointed out that, by definition, for a logic to be *dominant*, it must be shared throughout the field, although there may still be subtle differences in how strategic decision-makers perceive and act upon it in different parts of that field. This has implications for organisational success, because as they noted, “strategic actions at one end of the vertical chain may not

work at all at the other end of the vertical chain because of differences in the shared dominant logic at each end” (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986, p. 104).

This homogeneity of beliefs among organisations operating in the same sector was identified by Abrahamson and Fombrun (1994, p. 729) as a “macroculture.” They pointed out that, “insularity and sluggishness result because a homogeneity of beliefs within an interorganisational macroculture encourages member firms’ managers to interpret environments in similar ways, to identify similar issues as strategic, and so to adopt similar competitive positions.” Abrahamson and Fombrun went on to suggest that, although certain belief systems may be accepted as legitimate and diffused widely across an organisational field, these widely shared beliefs may not always be the most effective if conditions change. This led them to state that, “not only does the homogeneity of beliefs within an interorganisational macroculture inhibit adaptation by organisational members to changing environments, but it also inhibits how quickly and completely they diffuse” (Abrahamson & Fombrun, 1994, p. 729). Similarly, Bettis and Prahalad (1995) pointed out that sometimes a dominant logic may put constraints on an organisation’s learning ability, particularly when that logic has been in place over a long period. Ultimately, before any significant strategic learning can occur, the old logic must be “unlearned” by the organisation. Thus, Bettis and Prahalad (1995, p. 10) noted that, “in this sense, there is an unlearning (or forgetting) curve, just as there is a learning curve.”

When a strong “old” logic inhibits the ability of an organisation to adapt to new institutional contingencies, Oliver (1992) referred to this as organisational inertia. This is where institutionalised values and operations tend to cause resistance to fundamental change, hence increasing predictability and stability within individual organisations. The distribution of personnel, materials, wealth, information and skill is manipulated by organisational power holders to facilitate and reinforce their particular values and interests (Ranson et al., 1980). In times of stability, through transaction processes and other interorganisational linkages, these values and structures are continually reinforced, and mitigate change by acting as inertial forces (Zucker, 1983; Oliver, 1992). However, in periods of environmental uncertainty, inertial values and structures may fragment and become deinstitutionalised (Oliver, 1992). Alternatively, sudden and disruptive events may abruptly end what has become locked in by the momentum of institutional inertia

(Hoffman, 1999). As a consequence, the entropy resulting from newly legitimated values, processes, structures and competencies may lead, for example, to significant changes in resource availability (Ranson et al., 1980; Oliver, 1992). This can then undermine the bases of dominant coalitions and permit the creation of new power dependencies (Ranson et al., 1980). Hence, actors whose privilege and position may be threatened by these new power dependencies, may be unwilling to change, and may be caught in what Clark and Soulsby (1995) referred to as organisational transience, where inertial pressures impede constituents' acceptance of the legitimacy of new arrangements.

Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller (1996) addressed how new power dependencies can be diffused and legitimated throughout an organisational field. They theorised that managers in a field transfer and affirm mental models of legitimacy through the day-to-day processes of transaction. They suggested that, "because of both indirect and direct imitative tendencies over time, the mental models of competing strategists become similar, thereby creating 'group level' beliefs about the marketplace" (Porac et al., 1996, p. 400). These researchers also identified "socially shared beliefs" (Porac et al. 1996, p. 400) as a crucial linking mechanism to define the relevant set of rivals and guide strategic choices about how to compete within a field. Similarly, O'Neill, Poudier and Buccholtz (1998, p. 104) pointed out that "a firm's set of competitors and suppliers is its closest source of ideas."

Thus, organisations composing a field, both generate and are subject to, inherent institutional pressures and prescriptions that define field-level perceptions of legitimacy (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). In this way, organisations in a field collectively exert profound influence on field-level perceptions of legitimate organisational practice (Kraatz & Zajac, 1996; Oliver, 1991, 1997; Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1995). Thus, as changes occur in the institutional rules that define legitimacy in a field, organisations will often reply by voluntarily enacting the advocated changes, or by giving the semblance of having enacted changes in order to appear legitimate (Oakes et al., 1998; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Ultimately, these field-level perceptions, mutually constructed world views, macrocultures, and socially shared, group-level beliefs, are in essence, descriptors of a field's dominant logic. This raises the question that, if certain values and ways of

operating are institutionalised within an organisational field, how does the field actually change?

Change in organisational fields

In addition to changing logics, Prahalad and Bettis (1986), Bettis and Prahalad (1995), and Scott et al. (1996) demonstrated that there are a number of other signposts to indicate that change is taking place in an organisational field. These indicators include: changes in the number and nature of actors in the field; changes in the field's exchange processes and interorganisational linkages; and changes in the field's regulatory structures. Extending Prahalad and Bettis (1986), Bettis and Prahalad (1995), and Scott et al.'s (1996) work, and following the leads of Bourdieu (1985; 1990), and Oakes et al. (1998), this research demonstrates that changes in the forms of capital at stake in a field can also be indicative of a fundamental change in logics.

Changes in actors: The first indicator of shifting logics in an organisational field refers to changes in the numbers and characteristics of the actors operating within it. In particular, Bettis and Prahalad (1995) noted that a field's dominant logic is stored via shared schema and the cognitive maps or mindsets of actors, and that these maps or mindsets were the products of actors' past experiences. They referred to actors' belief structures and cognitive frames of reference as being crucial reflections of a field's dominant logic. Scott et al. (1996) echoed this when they suggested that actors were the carriers of logics and thus, logics could be inferred from their characteristics. By the term "characteristics," Prahalad and Bettis (1986), Bettis and Prahalad (1995), and Scott et al. (1996) were referring to the values and belief structures that actors developed as a result of their previous organisational experiences. Thus, according to this view, actors' previous experiences, in effect, act as guides to their future strategic behaviour. Indeed, Scott et al. (1996) suggested that in order to facilitate direct measures of changes in dominant logic, a link between actors and their belief systems could be inferred.

Scott et al. (1996) further posited that, when actors enter an organisational field, they are more likely to follow the field's predominant logic at the time of their entrance. In relation to this research, changes in the environment of English rugby union led to the field's boundaries becoming significantly more permeable with an unprecedented rate of entrance of new actors to the field. Following Scott et al.'s (1996) argument, when these

new actors come from a different background to the established actors, and carry disparate values to those that have been previously institutionalised, then the potential for change to the dominant logic of the field is created. By extension, if these actors come from backgrounds that collectively espouse similar values, and if these values prove to be more strongly held than the field's incumbent ones, then the rate and direction of change to that field's dominant logic should be proportional to the rate of influx of the new actors. In this way, it would be expected that a similarity of opinions about agendas precedes a similarity of opinions about the requisite actions to take in response to that agenda (O'Neill et al., 1998). Greenwood and Hinings (1996) alluded to this dynamic when they commented that permeable boundaries enable radical change in a field because of the availability of new actors with new solutions to organisational problems. Further, Scott (1991) pointed out that individual strategic action is only possible within the range of available options defined by the organisational field, but as the field's actors and power dependencies change, so to does the range of strategic options. However, changes in actors and power relations in a field may also lead to changes in exchange processes and the number and strength of interorganisational linkages among these actors (Stern, 1979).

Changes in exchange processes and interorganisational linkages: The level of interorganisational linkages in a field refers primarily to the related concepts of system coupling and multiplexity of ties. System coupling refers to the degree of connectedness between organisational units in a field. The degree to which events in one part of the system are felt by other parts determines whether the coupling is loose or tight (Stern, 1979). Greenwood and Hinings (1996, p. 14) added that tight coupling "refers to the existence of mechanisms for dissemination and the monitoring of compliance combined with a focused and consistent set of expectations." In addition to the extent of system coupling, Stern (1979, p. 245) suggested that linkages among organisations are characterised by the number and amount of material, referred to as the "multiplexity of ties," that connects organisational units. Thus, the relationship between social actors in an organisational field can be represented by the set of ties among these actors. Once this pattern of ties is recognised, the diffusion of change within that population can be identified. Stern went on to state that, by analysing and describing the structures and

processes that sustain these linkages, “power relationships, resource mobilisation, and coalition formation may be examined” (Stern, 1979, p. 242). Moreover, Baum and Oliver (1991) pointed out the utility of institutional linkages in conferring social support on an organisation for the rationality underpinning organisational changes, thus enhancing the ability of the organisation to achieve enduring change.

Therefore, the structure of an organisational field’s institutional environment, wherein changes in its dominant logic are likely to originate (Scott et al., 1996), can be characterised by the level of system coupling and multiplexity of ties among organisations, combined with the extent of the field’s sectoral permeability (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). These characteristics are prone to change over time in the process of “structuration” (Giddens, 1979; Stern, 1979; Scott et al., 1996). Structuration pertains to temporal changes in the number and types of actors, the multiplexity of ties among these actors, the boundaries that delimit the organisational field in which they operate, and finally, the dominant logic underpinning their actions (Giddens, 1979; Stern, 1979; Scott et al., 1996). Thus, in the process of structuration, when a field becomes more permeable and new entrants with their associated values, interactions, and affiliations become more numerous, the existing dominant logic will become more susceptible to change (Scott et al., 1996).

As discussed earlier, as existing logics become disputed and undermined by the values and agency of new actors, criteria of effectiveness will be subject to change, as will the perceptions of actors regarding the appropriate means of achieving these new criteria. Hoffman (1999) pointed out that in such periods of widespread change, institutional actors can be both strategic and opportunistic, attempting to take advantage of the uncertainty in the institutional order they wish to change. Bettis and Prahalad (1995) argued that new competitors in an industry often displace experienced incumbents because the organisational structure and systems of the field are tightly coupled to and embody parts of its dominant logic. They suggested that, “new entrants do not have the problem of having to run down an unlearning curve in order to run up a learning curve” (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995, p. 10). Thus, the new entrants to the field effectively start with a “clean sheet.” In this way, the structuration of a field may have a destabilising influence on the pre-existent logic, particularly when there is a simultaneous tightening in the

field's level of system coupling and an increase in its multiplexity of ties. Ultimately, this may result in the pre-existent logic being delegitimated, and ultimately supplanted by a new one (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986; Bettis & Prahalad, 1995; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

In their work on the evolution of a field of medical care organisations, Scott et al. (1996) empirically examined this dynamic. They showed how, over time, new entrants to a field resulted in increased role specialisation and structural complexity. Ultimately, this resulted in a fragmentation of professional interests, and the emergence of new associations that reflected new agendas. Explaining how these actions then led to change in the field's dominant logic, Scott et al. (1996, p. 20) pointed out that, "the force of logics within a field may change as the numbers of certain actors changes, or as they undergo different types of training, or as they create new forms of collective association." By referring to "new forms of collective association," Scott and his colleagues made the point that change in a field's dominant logic is not an apolitical process. Stern (1979, p. 246), addressed the political motives for coalition building among organisational units in a field when he suggested that, "the units with some degree of dominance, or those seeking to increase their discretion by gaining dominance, may try to gain control of the rule-making process or administration." Stern's (1979) discussion of rule-making processes highlights the crucial role of regulatory structures in organisational fields.

Changes in regulatory structures: The regulatory structures of an organisational field form the defining element of its institutional environment. Scott et al. (1996) suggested that changes in a field's regulatory structures may emanate from three possible sources. First, they pointed out that formal legal structures and informal systems of normative control may change. Second, the reciprocal and interactive developmental process whereby legal constructs are defined and redefined over time, may go through various stages of fluidity dependent upon actors' interpretations of significant events. And last, if the institutional logics that legitimate certain governance mechanisms or coalitions of power change, then regulatory structures are prone to change accordingly (Scott et al., 1996).

Indeed, Benson (1975) discussed the political nature of coalition building in organisational life. In particular, he referred to organisations as participants in a political

economy, or interorganisational network. Benson suggested that interorganisational networks have an “internal polity” (p. 232), and that money and authority are two basic resources that are central to power constructions in this polity. He pointed out that organisational decision-makers are directed towards the procurement and preservation of a secure and adequate supply of these resources. Thus, when organisations’ respective claims to a supply of resources in a field are threatened by the activities of other organisations, pressure will be exerted upon the errant organisations to cease the practices deemed to be disruptive (Benson, 1975; Kondra & Hinings, 1998). Clearly, the more consensus among organisations in a field regarding the legitimacy of particular values or practices, the stronger will be the political and coercive pressure exerted upon errant agencies to conform. In this way, coalitions of actors with vested interests, governments, regulatory agencies, and accreditation bodies enforce various degrees of coercive isomorphism on industries (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1987; Kondra & Hinings, 1998). As Kondra and Hinings (1998, p. 747) explained, “such coercive practices are often undertaken in order to constrain possible organisational outcomes.” Thus, the formation of various coalitions in an organisational field, and the possibility of change to the field’s regulatory structures, are generally founded upon the protection of vested interests by actors. These vested interests relate to the needs of actors constituting these coalitions to acquire and defend an adequate supply of resources, primarily money and power.

Changes in forms of capital: Bourdieu (1985; 1990; 1996) and Oakes et al. (1998), extend traditional institutional arguments by highlighting the interdependence between forms of capital, be they cultural, social, economic, or otherwise, and the structure of organisational fields. In any given field, actors occupying the available positions compete for access or control of certain interests or resources, referred to as capital, which are specific to the field in question (Johnson, 1993). Therefore, it would appear that awareness of how the dominant forms of capital at stake in a field impact the respective roles played by agency, politics, and vested interests, has utility for understanding how the interplay between these factors affects change in the dominant logic of an organisational field.

Interestingly, Bourdieu (1990) described organisational fields as networks of social relations with structured systems of social positions within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over resources, stakes and access. This expands conventional institutional approaches in that the fluidity of social structuring processes within fields is emphasised. Bourdieu contended that organisational fields are always in flux, and the positioning of actors within them are “positions of possibility,” that reflect relations of power based on access or control of certain forms of capital. Thus, from this perspective, field formation is not a static process, as new forms of debate emanate and create the possibility for change. These new forms of debate, as was the case in English rugby union, often emerge in the wake of a triggering event that may cause a reconfiguration of field membership and/or interaction patterns (Hoffman, 1999). In a similar vein, Brint and Karabel (1991, p. 355) described fields as “arenas of power relations,” where multiple field constituents compete over the definition of issues and the form of institutions that will guide organisational behaviour.

Related to this notion of fluctuating hierarchical positions in fields based on power and access to resources, is the contention that fields are defined by the different forms of capital at stake within them (Bourdieu, 1990; Oakes et al., 1998). This capital may be cultural, symbolic, social, or economic (Bourdieu, 1990, 1996; Oakes et al., 1998). Interestingly, Oakes et al. (1998) suggested that capital is field-specific, that is, different forms of capital dominate and legitimate different fields, thus structuring the possible strategies, structures, and relationships available to actors in a particular field. In their research into change in an organisational field of historical and cultural sites, Oakes et al. (1998) examined the interdependent nature of the relationship between the field’s actors, structure, and capital. They pointed out that, “if historians occupy a dominant position, capital will be cultural, as interpreted through professional values; if business communities dominate the field, economic capital (eg. tourism or employment) would be more central” (Oakes et al., 1998, p. 261 - parentheses in original). In the case of senior English rugby union, if amateur players and volunteer administrators occupy dominant positions, it would be expected that capital will be cultural and social, as interpreted through amateur values and intrinsic motivations for involvement in the game. If

professionals dominate the field, economic capital is likely to be central, as entrepreneurs seek returns on their investments.

Bourdieu (1985) viewed forms of capital and the structure of a field as interdependent. He suggested that actors are arranged in fields according to the overall quantity and relative composition of capital available to them. Thus, organisations' positioning in a field's hierarchical structure is dependent upon their ability to secure stable access to this capital (Bourdieu, 1985). By extension, Oakes et al. (1998) highlighted the crucial role played by the vocabulary associated with capital in organisations' efforts to secure this access. In their study, they pointed out that as the capital at stake in the field shifted from cultural to economic in nature, the language of business planning played a pedagogical role, as field members learned to associate legitimacy with the explicit controls and goals inherent in business planning verbiage. Thus, constituents were able to secure resources, which equated to power and superior hierarchical field positioning, through mastery of the language and behaviours related to the economic capital at stake in the field. In this sense, the internally related concepts of field and capital reflect and serve to further institutionalise the underlying values and prevailing concepts of legitimate work and worth in a field (Bourdieu, 1985; Oakes et al., 1998).

Therefore, following the leads of Prahalad and Bettis (1986), Bettis and Prahalad (1995), Scott et al. (1996), Bourdieu (1985), and Oakes et al. (1998), this research examined the process by which change in the dominant logic of the organisational field of senior English rugby union was effected. This was accomplished by studying concomitant temporal changes in certain indicators of changing logics. Specifically, changes in the actors composing the field, its exchange processes, governance structures, and the forms of capital at stake, were used as signposts of the field's changing logics. The methods by which such analyses were carried out are reported in the ensuing section. Following this, a discussion of the results of the study is presented.

METHOD

This section addresses the methodological issues faced in designing this research, and the factors that presented challenges as the research progressed. Therefore, the

rationale underlying the choice of research method, the time period under investigation, the indicators of changing logics used in the study, and methods of data collection and analyses, are discussed. In this discussion, *method*, refers to the “articulated, theoretically informed approach to the production of data” (Ellen, 1984, p. 9).

Choice of research method

This research centred on the pursuance of the factors underlying the process of change in the dominant logic of an organisational field. It incorporated a complex analysis of the field’s historical, social, cultural, competitive, and economic contexts, and importantly, the values and actions of significant actors within the field. Consequently, a quantitative approach seemed inappropriate. The in-depth analysis afforded by qualitative research appeared far more likely to explain such complexity, as it allowed for “thick descriptions” (Scott et al., 1996, p. 15) and interpretations of actors’ responses to changing field-level dynamics. In addition, a qualitative method allowed a degree of flexibility that permitted emerging data to be incorporated into the analysis. The flexibility afforded by a qualitative approach meant that emerging events, and the values underpinning actors’ responses to them, could be incorporated into the analysis. Thus, a “continuing dialogue” (Hargreaves, 1986) could be forged between theory and emerging data.

Time period of study

Though the historical context for this research formed part of this chapter, the investigation primarily focused on the period from June 1995, when the SANZAR-News Corporation deal was announced, and the subsequent four-and-a-half years until December 1999. This period incorporated the first three full seasons of professional English rugby union - 1995/96, 1996/97, and 1998/99, plus half of the 1999/00 season. In practical terms, this time period was selected because it coincided with the researcher’s commencement of graduate study. However, serendipitously, it also coincided with the professionalisation of the senior English game. Over this period, the dominant logic underpinning the structures and operating processes of this organisational field changed dramatically. This was evidenced by concomitant change in certain field-level characteristics, which were seen as indicators of change in the field’s dominant logic.

Indicators of changing logics

In order to get at the heart of this process of changing (Pettigrew, 1987), specific aspects of this organisational field were used to analyse its shifting dominant logic. In particular, this study followed the leads of Prahalad and Bettis (1986), Bettis and Prahalad (1995), and Scott et al. (1996), who used certain indicators or “signposts” of changing logics. As explained in the Theoretical Background, these indicators included changes in: the number and nature of actors operating in the field; exchange processes and interorganisational linkages; mechanisms of governance; and the dominant forms of capital at stake in the field. Each of these indicators are now discussed in more detail.

Changes in actors: To gather data on changes in the number and nature of actors operating in the field of senior English rugby union, data were collected that focused on the entrance to the field of new actors such as benefactors, sponsors, broadcast identities, and professional managers. In addition, the length of time significant individual actors had been in their current positions, and also, what their previous experience was before their involvement in rugby union, was one focus of data collection. For example, whether actors had specialist training and/or experience in a specialist field, had particular relevance for their values and belief systems, which as Scott et al. (1996) pointed out, can act as a guide to future strategic behaviour.

Changes in exchange processes and interorganisational linkages: This aspect of change in the logic underpinning senior English rugby union was analysed by collecting data on changes in the level of system coupling and multiplexity of ties in the field. Therefore, data pertaining to the implementation of new organisational strategies and structures; the formation of new coalitions of actors; the level of political activity of new and incumbent actors; and the amount and types of information being exchanged among actors in the field, were collected. For example, data that indicated the formation of new forms of collective associations were gathered to examine how this behaviour impacted on system coupling and information flows among actors in the field.

Changes in regulatory structures: Building on the data referred to above, to analyse changes in the field’s regulatory structures, information was collected that indicated changes in formal and informal normative control mechanisms; shifts in decision-making from volunteers to professionals; and the emergence of new coalitions of actors capable

of exerting coercive pressures on the field. In addition, shifts in the rules, values and norms that reflected changes to the amateur ethos and associated organisational structures that enforced and reflected this ethos, were observed and investigated. For example, data that indicated shifts in the influence of the field's traditional voluntary, committee-based regulatory body, the RFU, showed the extent and direction of changes in the balance of power in the field following the Paris Declaration.

Changes in the forms of capital: The last indicator or signpost of a change in the field's dominant logic was derived by collecting data on shifts in its dominant forms of capital at stake. Thus, data were collected that indicated what resources were most highly sought after by actors, and how the field's significant rites and rituals changed with the onset of professionalism. Although these factors reflected changes in normative expectations, they also indicated the types of behaviours that were rewarded, and importantly, the forms of capital they were rewarded with. For example, how actors in the amateur era perceived the selection of players for national team honours, as opposed to actors' perceptions in the professional era, was one area that indicated how the relative importance of social and cultural forms of capital changed in the two eras.

Thus, by adopting a research method that comprised semi-structured interviews and detailed field notes, changes in the number and characteristics of actors, their exchange processes and interorganisational linkages, regulatory structures, and dominant forms of capital at stake, were drawn out. How data were collected and analysed, and used to inform theoretical discussion on the overall change in the field's dominant logic, are now discussed.

Data collection and analyses

In order to empirically analyse these "signposts," primary and secondary sources of qualitative data were collected and analysed according to a coding scheme generated before fieldwork commenced. Miles and Huberman (1994; p. 56) suggested that codes are "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study." These codes or category labels usually take the form of themes that are created prior to fieldwork, thus forcing the analyst to tie research questions or conceptual interests directly to the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) further

noted that the clustering of condensed and coded “chunks” of information is a good device for supporting ongoing analysis, and ultimately, for drawing research conclusions.

Therefore, a coding scheme was generated prior to fieldwork according to the following themes: shifts in the number and nature of actors in the field; changes in the linkages and patterns of interaction between these actors; changes in field-level regulatory structures; and changes in the dominant forms of capital at stake in the field. Subsequently, primary and secondary data were coded for analysis according to the preceding themes. Although this coding scheme was generated *a priori* to fieldwork, it is important to note that new themes emerged while data were being collected (for example, the use of acts of symbolic violence and the increased use of business planning verbiage by dominant coalitions). Therefore, as these new themes emerged, new codes were added to the original scheme, thus, facilitating the “continuing dialogue” (Hargreaves, 1986) between theory and emerging data.

Initially, secondary sources of data were collected. This process was ongoing throughout the course of the study. Secondary data were collected from sources such as the clubs’ and RFU’s official and historical documents; past and present club literature including game day programmes and promotional material; clubs’ and the RFU’s media releases and Internet websites; popular press articles including newspapers, on-line newspapers, dedicated rugby publications, and broadcast media; and finally, archival material from the RFU Museum at Twickenham in London. Also helpful were books by Wyatt (1995), FitzSimons (1996), Barnes (1997), and Malin (1997). Each publication was written on the subject of rugby union’s transition into professionalism, with Barnes’ and Malins’ work in particular, focusing specifically on the professionalisation of English rugby union. Data collected from these sources and those mentioned earlier, helped to contextualise historical changes to the field, while also providing insight into current and emerging issues. These data were scrutinised for words, phrases, and incidents that indicated how the actors, values, structures, strategies, and processes that were important to English rugby union in the amateur era changed with the onset of professionalism. Thus, content analysis of these data, according to the themes discussed, revealed, for example, the number and background of new actors entering the field. Further, information pertaining to the entrance of new actors such as professionals, benefactors,

sponsors, and broadcast identities, and the formation of new organisational collectivities, was used to indicate the extent to which linkages between these actors grew in strength and number. Therefore, these data helped reveal the nature of structuration processes (Scott et al., 1996) that took place in the field.

The primary data for this investigation were gathered from 43 semi-structured interviews, of 60 to 120 minutes duration. Interviewees included clubs' chief executives, general managers, commercial directors, and leading players and coaches. During the course of this research, the number of clubs involved in Divisions I and II fluctuated between 24 and 28 clubs. Secondary, and later, primary data were gathered from a sample of nine of these clubs. These nine clubs were selected due to the significant actors that held prominent positions within them, and who were integral actors in key events that profoundly influenced the course of the professionalisation process. For example, many interviewees were selected due to the fact that they were central to the formation of various collectivities that emerged following professionalisation. This allowed information to be gathered on both the individual clubs they were affiliated with, and also the coalitions they were central to forming.

In addition, to get a clearer picture of the extent of diffusion of professional values and operating procedures, measures were taken to ensure that interviewees were selected from clubs in both Divisions I and II. Thus, representatives from five Division I clubs, three Division II clubs, and one club that was promoted from Division II to I during the period of investigation, were included in the sample. In the early stages of data collection, a "gatekeeper," who was formerly a senior member of the RFU, indicated individuals who would be knowledgeable on the issues mentioned previously. After interviewing these individuals, a "snowball sampling" technique (Oakes et al., 1998) was employed whereby previous respondents suggested further productive lines of enquiry, leading to additional respondents.

However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) noted, notwithstanding the importance of gatekeepers in the research process, they may attempt to control the findings of the investigation by guiding the researcher in certain directions. To overcome this potential bias in the data, certain respondents were approached purely through analysis of secondary data, and were selected based upon the alternative viewpoints they

could offer on important events. For example, within the RFU, with the onset of professionalism, there was vehement and protracted debate between factions that were for and against ceding control of the professional game to the senior clubs. It was seen as crucial to gather data from respondents who represented both sides of this extremely sensitive issue.

Therefore, as well as conducting interviews with significant actors from the senior clubs, seven executives from the RFU including former and present secretaries, presidents, and chief executives, were also included in the interview sample. All of the interviewees from the RFU had been responsible for negotiating contracts with major sponsors and broadcasters, which provided useful data concerning the entrance to the field of these important new actors, shifts in the forms of capital sought after by actors, and the subsequent influence this had on the field's exchange processes and regulatory functions. Data gathered from a leading player agent, who was also a former national team player, were also seen as useful in that they added to the information already gathered concerning the changes in exchange processes in the field.

Interview questions took the form of a set schedule of questions. As interviews were semi-structured however, these questions were not necessarily asked in a rigidly prescribed order. Questions centred around the codes discussed previously and illuminated the characteristics, values, and vested interests of the actors making up the field. In addition, attention was devoted to changes in structure and strategy, and increased interorganisational linkages that were suggestive of additional lines of communication. Consistent with the iterative process of interview questioning, the schedule of questions was altered according to emerging issues, for example, the increased influence of the language of business planning in the day-to-day operations of both the RFU and clubs. In most cases, interviews were, with permission, recorded using a dictaphone, and later transcribed for analysis.

One interview was not recorded at the respondent's request due to an impending legal action and concerns over the confidentiality of the issues that were discussed. In this case, and in instances where informal discussions with club representatives were carried out, thorough field notes were made as soon as possible after the interview or discussion, and were subsequently analysed and coded in the same manner as the other transcribed

interviews. In all cases, interviewees were assured of their confidentiality. Therefore, where interviewees are quoted in the ensuing Results and Discussion section, they are not identified by name, but rather by their position, be it a club chief executive, coach, player, general manager, commercial director, or alternatively, an RFU executive. However, where significant actors were quoted in the public domain, that is, in the mass media, they are identified by name and the quote is referenced accordingly.

As will be explained more thoroughly in the Results and Discussion section, a key element of the increase in interorganisational linkages in English rugby union has been the evolution of new organisational collectivities. Representatives from these organisations were included in the interview sample as each collectivity is made up of both club and RFU representatives. Thus, many of the clubs' chief executives and senior management, and the RFU representatives included in the interview sample, were also members of the collectivities referred to above. These respondents informed the study in several ways, but particularly as to how the field's interorganisational linkages, exchange processes, and regulatory structures changed in the wake of professionalism.

Thus, primary data, as with the secondary archival data, were scanned and categorised according to the codes decided upon *a priori* to fieldwork. For example, particular phrases, incidents, or words that were seen as indicative of professional values or perhaps inertial tendencies, were categorised as such. There was also an effort to be conscious of emerging ideas and themes in order to avoid being constrained to utilising solely the existing theoretical concepts. Thus, as with all qualitative research, the analysis was an iterative process, constantly moving back and forth between theory and data. This "open coding" process allowed for "patterns and processes, commonalities and differences" to emerge (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 9), and also facilitated the identification of particular themes and interconnections, which are presented in the ensuing Results and Discussion section.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation have been presented and discussed, as far as possible, in a chronological manner. The signposts of changing field-level logics outlined in the Theoretical Background and Methods sections guide the discussion. Thus, the discussion moves through the conditions that created pressures for the onset of change;

the entrance of new actors to the field; the formation of new collectivities; shifts in exchange relations; shifts in interorganisational linkages and the capital at stake in the field; the factors that were significant in overcoming inertial pressures; and finally, the role of institutional pressures in legitimising the field's new dominant logic. However, it should be noted that, although this discussion is presented chronologically under discrete sub-headings, many of the inherent pressures and processes occurred simultaneously, thus demonstrating the inherently messy nature of field-level organisational change.

The onset of change

At the time of the Paris Declaration, the RFU was the absolute power in English rugby union, and had an almost omnipresence throughout all levels of the game. One interviewee, a former national team player, explained how in the amateur era, the RFU ruled "with an iron fist." This high level of influence was instituted in the administrative structure of the RFU by way of its 57-member Executive Committee, commonly referred to as "the Executive." The Executive was structured such that volunteer members were elected from each English county, which in some cases included hundreds of rugby union clubs. Thus, volunteer administrators were elected onto the Executive from not only the clubs involved in Divisions I and II, but also the RFU's other 2000 affiliated clubs, universities, military, and school rugby union organisations.

Therefore, the most powerful actors in the English game - the individuals on the Executive - were volunteers from amateur, volunteer-led organisations. This process of structuring, where organisational members, such as those on the Executive, attempt to secure their "provinces of meaning" (Ranson et al., 1980), involves the generation and constant recreation of purposes, definitions, and meanings. Thus, for the RFU and the clubs it regulated, the cognitive schema (Ranson, et al., 1980; Bourdieu, 1985) of these volunteers underpinned staunchly amateur interpretive schemes. As Oakes et al. (1998) pointed out, interpretive schemes define the different forms of capital at stake in a field which then in turn, impose their own logic on that field. Therefore, the structuring of the RFU Executive Committee, the most powerful regulatory force in the field at the time of the Paris Declaration, further entrenched a dominant logic founded upon amateur values. An incident that reflected the heavily institutionalised nature of amateurism, and indeed, the RFU's intransigence on the issue of player remuneration, occurred in early 1995.

Responding to media criticism for the firing of England captain Will Carling for his “57 old farts” comment, Dennis Easby, the RFU President at that time declared, “we believe we are running a sport as a recreation for players to play in their spare time. I think money is a corrosive influence” (FitzSimons, 1996, p. 44).

Carling’s sacking and Easby’s widely quoted comments were a high profile endorsement of the legitimacy of amateurism in English rugby union. Therefore, it was not surprising that when SANZAR announced its US\$555 million deal with News Corporation only a few months later in June 1995, the management of the RFU and most senior English clubs failed to grasp the deal’s significance. Indeed, far from acknowledging the inevitability of professionalism, Dudley Wood, the RFU Secretary at the time stated that, “if the Southern Hemisphere countries want to go pro, that’s their business. But I cannot see any other country, including England, agreeing to follow them We want the top players fairly treated - and they will be. But I cannot see any way the game will go pro” (FitzSimons, 1996, p. 44). Management in most senior English clubs followed the lead of their governing body and dismissed the SANZAR-News Corporation deal as an aberration in the amateur status quo. A general manager of a Division I club stated that,

I don’t think that [this club], and I’m sure we were typical of many clubs, really perceived what impact it would have on the future. I really don’t think we took any notice of it and thought it through. It seemed to be a case of them and us. I’m sure there was no thought as to its potential future impact.

Superficially, the lack of foresight displayed by Wood and Easby in not recognising the inevitability of professionalism would appear somewhat myopic. However, both men were, and remain, widely respected administrators in the British sporting landscape. More accurately, their intransigence on the issue illustrated the *extent* to which the amateur ethos was institutionalised in English rugby union. Indeed, Roger Easby’s assertion that they were running a recreational game to be played in the “spare time” of participants, was an accurate description of the participation habits of the majority of players in the English game - those outside the top senior clubs. Clearly, the habit, history, and tradition that institutionalised the amateur ethos in English rugby union was extensive. The resultant difficulty the RFU had in recognising the growing pressures

for professionalism illustrated Bettis and Prahalad's (1995) contention that, the longer a dominant logic has been in place, in this case over 150 years, the more difficult becomes its displacement. Indeed, one of the RFU's most senior elected officials of the day described how in the amateur era,

particularly in England, there was a real distaste and dislike of anything professional. There was a real sort of bastion or enclave here where nobody would face the facts It was all very cosy - a case of, let's not change anything, let's not change anything, I like my committee.

The "cosyness" that the interviewee referred to here may in part be attributed to the "insularity and sluggishness" that Abrahamson and Fombrun (1994, p. 729) suggested can result when a field's widely shared beliefs, or "macroculture," is so entrenched that actors become unable to perceive the need for change, even when environmental conditions shift. Moreover, Bettis and Prahalad (1995) pointed out the inherent difficulty in organisations' efforts to "unlearn" dominant logics that have been in place over long periods. Significantly, the individuals on the Executive had a vested interest in maintaining the amateur status quo, as election to the Executive Committee carried with it substantial privilege and kudos. In contrast, the prospect of professionalism represented uncertainty and the threat of "outsiders," - new actors usurping their authority, privilege and position in the RFU power structure. Clearly, the institutionalised nature of the "old" logic with its amateur values, operations and structures, caused a fundamental resistance to change. This type of resistance, as Oliver (1992) suggested, becomes manifest as organisational inertia.

Indeed, by unilaterally imposing a one-year moratorium on any change to the rules involving amateurism only one day after the Paris Declaration on August 27 1995, the RFU effectively attempted to *legislate* organisational inertia. Ostensibly, the moratorium was designed to allow the senior clubs time to formulate their respective responses to the open game declaration. More to the point, the RFU hoped to give itself a one-year buffer with which to develop its own strategic plan for the tumultuous changes it was faced with. Thus, after being vociferous proponents of the amateur game for over 150 years, the RFU attempted to postpone change for one more year, and lead the field on a gradual transition into the professional era. However, as Greenwood and Hinings

(1996) argued, when a highly institutionalised field that has successfully withstood or postponed change, such as that of English rugby union, begins to alter, the ensuing transition will likely be of a revolutionary rather than an incremental nature.

Accordingly, the RFU's attempt to decrease the uncertainty in the field by delaying the onset of professionalism with the moratorium led only to panic and confusion, rather than any "cooling off" period. Moreover, the unilateral nature of the RFU's decision, without consultation with any of the Division I and II clubs that it primarily pertained to, illustrated Ranson et al.'s (1980) suggestion that organisational power holders, in this case, the RFU, distribute resources such as personnel, wealth, information and skill, in order to reinforce their own particular values and vested interests. Therefore, although at the time of the Paris Declaration the most important actors in the field in terms of power and decision-making remained those on the RFU Executive Committee, revolutionary change to this status quo became possible. The IRFB's decision to repeal the laws on professionalism, combined with the RFU's imposition of a moratorium on change, created unprecedented uncertainty in the English game. What added to this uncertainty, was the immediate possibility of new actors entering the field.

The entrance of powerful new actors to the field

Sir John Hall was the first, and ultimately, one of the most influential new actors to come into English rugby union following the Paris Declaration. Among other business interests, Hall was the owner of Newcastle United Sporting Club, which included professional soccer, basketball, motor sport, and ice hockey teams. Only ten days after the Paris Declaration, on September 5th, 1995, Hall announced his purchase of Newcastle Gosforth Rugby Club. He immediately restructured the club and installed himself as chief executive. He then proceeded to rename the club "Newcastle Falcons," and added it to Newcastle United Sporting Club. Hall brought to the field the values and ethos with which he had achieved success in his business life and other professional sporting enterprises. As he stated,

Look at soccer. That's changed because 10 new chairmen have come in and run the clubs as businesses. I can see the major rugby clubs becoming limited companies so outside people can invest in them. They're not going to invest a million pounds in a club if the

members are running it. They can no longer have drinks committees and bar committees and the like. They'll have to generate profits to plough back into the club. Look at the money that's needed for these stadiums. They're a joke (Hay, 1995, p.2).

Hall's reference to the imminent demise of the committee-based system that had characterised the field's organisational and regulatory structures in the amateur era, was an ominous warning to the senior clubs and the RFU. Moreover, his emphasis upon profit and financial issues reflected the bottom-line corporate values he brought to the field, and served as a portent of the future deinstitutionalisation of the field's underpinning amateur ethos. At this point however, the field was entering a period of competing logics, where the institutionalised nature of the amateur ethos and the legitimacy of its related social and cultural capital, symbolised by the RFU's moratorium on change, appeared increasingly threatened in a climate of heightened uncertainty. As Berger and Luckman (1967) argued however, the institutionalised nature of organisational life is not an atemporal concept. Something is only taken for granted "until further notice" (Berger & Luckman, 1967, p. 44).

Therefore, the professional logic that was emerging and had earlier found voice with Will Carling, the deposed national team captain, gained increasing legitimacy with Hall's involvement in Newcastle. This was further hastened on September 21, 1995, when Hall flouted the RFU's moratorium and signed Rob Andrew, the England fly half, and a number of other high profile players to lucrative, multi-year contracts. Former England representative and television commentator, Jamie Salmon, referred to this as, "the seminal moment in the game's recent history At that precise moment [the RFU] lost control and market forces have been running wild ever since" (Gallagher, 1998, p. 2). Therefore, the RFU's mute response to this act of unbridled professionalism, particularly when compared to its imperious sacking of Carling only months earlier for his comments denigrating the RFU's amateur structures, heightened uncertainty as it sent conflicting signals to the field. Clearly, Newcastle was in breach of the moratorium. However, its conspicuous challenge to the RFU's regulatory power went apparently unpunished, thus generating another potent symbol of the arrival of a powerful new actor to the field, and the emergence of a new, professionally-oriented logic.

The inability of the RFU's unwieldy volunteer, committee-based structure to cope with policing its own moratorium soon became apparent. Clearly, the main catalyst for the RFU's apparent "loss of control" was the influence of Hall. In the words of a senior RFU official and one of its chief architects, the moratorium,

was supposed to do what it didn't do. That is, to slow the whole process down. I don't think we envisaged the number of owner, non-rugby participating parties, the Sir John Halls etc coming into the game On reflection, the moratorium should've been possibly longer, or it should've had more muscle in terms of being able to police it.

In the amateur era, the RFU carried out its regulatory function primarily through numerous committees and "gentlemen's agreements." However, only weeks after the Paris Declaration, the illegitimacy of the RFU's loosely coupled committee-based regulatory processes and structures was already obvious. The RFU's impotence to enforce its own moratorium on change illustrated Stern's (1979, p. 244) contention that the "formal rules of interaction provide a basis for dominance by administrative units and other units that control the mechanisms for changing rules." Clearly, by October 1995, the RFU's inadequacy to control the "formal rules of interaction" hastened the uncertainty that was beginning to emerge in clubs across the field. Highlighting the impact of Hall's entrance to the field, and his influence on "the mechanisms for changing rules," Tony Hallett, Dudley Wood's successor as RFU Secretary, stated that,

In establishing the moratorium . . . we had the support of the National Clubs Association. That though, was pre-Newcastle . . . I don't think anyone is totally surprised by Newcastle's activities, bearing in mind the money behind them Trading has begun in the market place and some clubs - let's face it, I'm really referring to our top dozen clubs or so - are very nervous about that. I have sympathy with that view though the purpose of the moratorium was to create breathing space and keep a ring around player movement. That hasn't been possible, so it's necessary to permit a chink in the curtain, a diminution of what was agreed previously (Mason, 1995, p.2).

Thus, rather than enforcing its own mandate, the RFU bowed to the pressures created by Sir John Hall, and officially granted clubs permission to offer contracts to players which, by then, had already been happening anyway. This backdown by the RFU was a tacit recognition of the entrance of a powerful new actor to the field, and in Stern's

(1979) terms, showed how this new entrant had influenced the “formal rules of interaction.” Consequently, the RFU’s decision to allow a “chink in the curtain” of their regulatory power sent a powerful signal to the rest of the field. As high-impact systems (Kanter, 1985; Greenwood & Hinings, 1988; Hinings & Greenwood, 1988), decision-making and authority structures establish standards for behaviour and interactions, and determine whose interests matter (Bartunek, 1984; Kanter, 1985; Kikulis et al., 1995). Clearly, this public recognition of the interests of the field’s powerful new actor, Sir John Hall, and the apparent exoneration of behaviour that included outright defiance of the RFU’s regulatory authority, highlighted the obvious potential for further diminution of the RFU’s power. Crucially, this provided legitimacy for the field’s emerging professional logic and, as a consequence, hastened the delegitimisation of amateurism and its related logic.

Indeed, Newcastle’s action was an important catalyst that increased the permeability of the field’s boundaries. In the absence of any RFU sanctions imposed on Newcastle for breaching the moratorium, some clubs recognised the necessity for change and approached, or were approached by, entrepreneurs who saw in rugby union an investment - an opportunity to enter a burgeoning professional sport at the “ground level.” These new actors came from corporate-based backgrounds that included merchant banking, property development, and commodity and metal trading. Permeable boundaries enable radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Thus, as the new actors entered the field, they brought with them the corporate, profit-driven values and interpretive schemes germane to their business lives. These new actors therefore, made possible wholesale radical change where clubs could “bust loose” (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996) from their existing amateur-based orientations in order to become professional entities. However, as Scott et al. (1996, p. 9) suggested, “environmental turbulence is reflected in a changing cast of actors and associated roles and beliefs.” Accordingly, as Sir John Hall’s actions, and the apparent impotence of the formerly omnipresent RFU, served to increase the permeability of the field’s boundaries, the entrance of new actors with their corporate-based value structures increased environmental uncertainty throughout the field.

The financial support of the field’s new actors enabled early-mover clubs to “cherry-pick” the best players from clubs across the country, and indeed, the world.

Therefore, as in the business community, success became closely allied to financial indicators that allowed the purchase of valuable resources, in this case, quality players and coaches. This further increased uncertainty in the field, particularly among the clubs that had initially decided to observe the RFU's moratorium. As one club's managing director stated,

the cat was thrown among the pigeons big time by Newcastle . . . Newcastle really went in boots'n'all with John Hall's money, which other clubs generally couldn't match. But they set the yardstick and standard for payments by virtue of the fact that they were paying Rob Andrew and co. enormous sums of money. By then the yardstick was set and other clubs just had to meet it, or just accept the consequences and remain amateur, and still be there at their own level wherever that happened to be.

These comments illustrate the unprecedented "knock-on" effects that Hall's signing of Rob Andrew had on the field. Prior to the Paris Declaration, though it was not unusual for senior clubs to organise full-time jobs for players, the centrality of amateurism to the field's organisational practices meant that participants' involvement in the game was for largely intrinsic notions of camaraderie and the pure enjoyment of the physical challenge it posed. This emphasis on cultural capital meant that player movement between clubs did little more than induce accusations of disloyalty against the recruited player. However, the "yardstick" that the interviewee referred to above is significant because it demonstrated the emergence of a new corporate-based logic and its emphasis upon economic capital. These effects demonstrate Stern's (1979) concept of system coupling - the degree of connectedness between organisational units in a field. Therefore, at this early stage in the professional era, system coupling in the field was already showing evidence of tightening. Specifically, Hall's signing of Andrew set the comparative monetary value of senior players throughout the field. Indeed, Hall's subsequent challenge to the RFU's regulatory power by signing players to professional contracts caused panic in other clubs to "catch up." This had the effect of increasing the permeability of the field's boundaries as ambitious clubs sought out their own financial benefactors or major sponsors.

Subsequently, the corporate values of the field's new actors, by way of the tighter coupling between the senior clubs, rapidly gained legitimacy. The social and cultural

capital that was so intrinsic to success in the amateur era was clearly no longer legitimate. In its place, the new professional logic emphasised the development of strategies by clubs to increase economic capital for the employment of professional players, coaches and administrators. Thus, in the lead-up to and during the 1996-97 season, these competitive pressures fuelled an “arms race” among clubs to employ the best players and coaches, without which, clubs risked losing their place in the senior ranks of the English game. However, the social capital attached to the prestige of a place in Division I was no longer the prime motivator for clubs that it was in the amateur era. Rather, interviewees overwhelmingly reported that organisational survival was at stake, as Division I competition meant increased visibility and therefore, increased access to valuable sponsorship revenues. In turn, the additional economic capital could then complete the cycle and be reinvested to attract still better players and coaches.

This need for innovative strategies to increase economic capital further increased the permeability of the field. In light of the lack of direction from the RFU regarding how clubs should actually go about professionalisation, and given the fact that, prior to professionalism, most clubs had been administered by volunteers in their spare time, most actors were unsure of the way forward and looked within and beyond the boundaries of the field for ideas. This accelerated the process of structuration (Giddens, 1979; Scott et al., 1996) that was evolving, as club executives recruited increasing numbers of specialists from domains such as management, finance, accounting, marketing, law, sport science, and health and safety. As Scott et al. (1996) suggested, in processes of structuration, when existing logics become disputed and undermined, criteria of effectiveness, and the means by which these new criteria are achieved, will be subject to change. Thus, as the first entrepreneurs restructured their clubs as public limited companies (plcs), the “bottom-line” corporate values of their specialists came to underpin the new concepts of work and worth in the field.

These underlying values and interests, in this case, ones founded upon professional values, characterise the desired ends or preferences upon which organisations’ interpretive schemes are founded (Ranson et al., 1980). In the same vein, Bourdieu (1985) observed that the values and interests, such as amateurism or professionalism, that underpin these interpretive schemes across an organisational field,

define the different forms of capital at stake in that field. Thus, values and interpretive schemes become manifest through behaviour, and over time, form individual cognitive structures and become part of actors' socially reinforced view of the world (Porac et al., 1989). Therefore, this connection between actors' interpretation of field-level pressures for professionalisation, their subsequent strategic responses, and the formation of a resultant logic founded upon the two of these, clarifies the interdependence between cognitive and strategic characteristics of organisational fields. In this way, the structuration of the field of English rugby union reflected the observations of Bourdieu (1985) and Oakes et al. (1998). These researchers contended that the predominant form of capital at stake in a field, in this case, economic, shapes the possible strategies, structures, and relationships available to actors, thus imposing its own logic on the field.

Accordingly, the significant financial resources that the field's new entrepreneurs had injected into their recently professionalised clubs further increased the importance of economic capital in the field. The considerable investments made by the entrepreneurs also meant that they expected appropriate levels of control over their respective vested interests. However, the Rugby Union Commission, the seven-member body formed by the RFU immediately following the Paris Declaration to establish guidelines for the open era, was convened with no representation from, or consultation with, the senior clubs, to which their recommendations were to be most applicable. In addition, the RFU subsequently rejected the Division I clubs' call for one of their own representatives to be added to the Commission.

The formation of new collectivities of organisations

The RFU's apparent snub of the clubs' requests for a stronger voice in deciding their own destinies in the open era prompted a restructuring of the relationships between key actors in the field. When the RFU's Commission was convened in September 1996, the Division I clubs issued a vote of no confidence in it and set up their own working parties to examine contracts, registration, the domestic league, a mooted European competition, marketing, and the question of increased representation on the RFU Executive Committee. Several researchers, for example, Stern (1979), Baum and Oliver (1991), and Kraatz (1998), have discussed the enhanced stability and significant survival advantages that increased interorganisational linkages confer on organisations during

periods of increased competition. Therefore, by setting up their own working parties with clearly stated agendas, the Division I clubs increased the amount of ties and material connecting them, thus further tightening the level of system coupling, and increasing the multiplexity of ties in the field.

As more entrepreneurs entered the field, they sought to decrease the uncertainty surrounding their considerable vested interests by further increasing the formal linkages between the Division I clubs. On November 7 1995, to further increase control over their own destinies in the new era, the increase in interorganisational linkages was formalised when the Division I clubs announced the formation of a collectivity called English First Division Rugby (EFDR). Organisations engage in political activity and coalition building of this type, as Stern (1979) and Scott et al. (1996) contended, in order to increase their dominance and control of rule-making processes or administration. This was indeed the case here as the EFDR announcement came one day *before* the Rugby Union Commission presented its proposals. In addition, given that Division I clubs were the primary providers of players for the English national teams, and the RFU used international competition as its main source of revenue generation, EFDR announced that it was seeking grants of £1 million per club from the RFU, and that primacy of player contracts in the professional era would be with the clubs, not the national teams. Shortly after, the clubs in Division II also combined to form a separate organisation, English Second Division Rugby (ESDR), and also made demands of the RFU. When resources such as money and power are key to organisational survival, Benson (1975) pointed out that decision-makers in organisations will engage in political activity such as that outlined above in order to secure access to these valuable resources. Accordingly, on February 12 1996, EFDR and ESDR clubs resigned from the National Clubs Association, to which clubs in Divisions I through to IV belonged in the amateur era, and subsequently combined to form a new coalition, English Professional Rugby Union Clubs Limited (EPRUC). At this time also, as top players in the Southern Hemisphere had done, professional players in England formed a players' association called the Professional Rugbyplayers' Association (PRA).

As EPRUC increasingly challenged the RFU's authority, the resultant pressures caused the RFU's committee-based structure to break into two distinct factions, both of

which were intent on safeguarding their own vested interests. The minority faction sought to cooperate with the professional clubs, and allow them to run the elite, professional end of the game. The other faction was staunchly opposed to ceding any regulatory power whatsoever to the professional clubs, and sought to maintain the RFU's control in all areas of the game. As a consequence, the RFU became besieged by internal discord. This discord led to what was, according to one senior RFU executive, "the single biggest mistake we made." In failing to sign their own national squad to long-term professional contracts, individuals on the RFU believed, perhaps naively, that the honour for players to represent their country would transcend even contractual obligations to clubs. This was a good example of the vast difference in values between the field's established actors on the RFU Executive, and its new entrants in the form of EPRUC. In contracting the country's leading players, the clubs' entrepreneurs had become their primary employers, and, with the formation of EPRUC, had a strong and collective voice with which to confront and defy if necessary, the RFU. Thus, EPRUC demanded that players should no longer be obligated to play for England if it disrupted their club schedule, and, on April 11 1996, threatened to form a professional breakaway league of their own if their demands were not met. The players meanwhile, who had become bargaining chips in the middle of a rapidly escalating power struggle, sought to safeguard their right to represent their country without being sacked by their primary employers - the clubs.

This struggle for power, reported widely as the "club versus country debate," led to critical changes to the field's political economy and ultimately, to its regulatory structures. The two basic resources that Benson (1975) suggested are central to the internal polity of any interorganisational relationship are money and authority. Clearly, the club versus country debate was founded upon a struggle for these precious resources. Both EPRUC and the RFU manoeuvred in attempts to increase their political power and access to both money and authority, using the players as the key bargaining chips. Indeed, by forming contractual agreements with the players *before* the RFU, the clubs positioned themselves such that the RFU no longer had automatic access to what was formerly their prized asset - the national team. As one senior RFU administrator explained,

That's why I think EFDR especially, gained such ascendancy and became a voice that *had* to be listened to. That was the biggest chip that was missed because it gave EFDR an unequal handle on the bargaining levers at that time. They had the players, they had them contracted, they had guys with a lot of money, and they were doing a lot of talking and very little listening, and they really didn't want to know too much about the RFU.

As mentioned earlier, the RFU's cumbersome committee-based structure was composed in large part by volunteer administrators from amateur clubs below the top divisions, to whom the cultural capital of the amateur era remained embedded in their respective interpretive schema. This led to a gross imbalance of power where the executives from professional clubs formed the overwhelming *minority* of RFU Executive Committee members. However, by virtue of the fact that they had possession of the field's prized assets, the players on the national teams, their coercive power enabled the advancement of a professional agenda. This resulted in an escalation of infighting and personality clashes within the RFU. Simultaneously, it was growing larger "at an exponential rate," as one of the most senior RFU executives of the day described it. He explained how, prior to professionalism, there had been only 4 full-time administrators employed by the RFU. Only a few months into the professional era however, that figure had ballooned to over 180 full-time employees. Reflecting the turbulence of the change in the field's logic, and referring to the uncertainty that accompanied the RFU's unprecedented and somewhat chaotic growth at the time, the same executive pointed out that,

within two weeks of the new Secretary joining, the shit hit the fan. We went professional Therein arose all the difficulties that followed. The seed was sown during that time. People emerged with hidden agendas and once there were all these hidden agendas around, other people sort of fuelled those, and there were various sorts of quangoes and things like that it grew like topsy. So from there being a secretary, administrative secretary, a chief executive who wasn't around, and a chap called director of support services; there were four directorates that grew and each of those four directorates rapidly had about five people. So . . . one thing led to another, until we had 180 employees and the people bill hit the roof. Really, the RFU couldn't afford that.

The relationship between shifts in exchange relations and capital

The financial pressures caused by the RFU's seemingly uncontrolled growth, in addition to those stemming from EPRUC's demands, further accentuated the deep divisions within its Executive Committee. Indeed, the RFU's urgency for economic capital brought into sharp relief the illegitimacy of cultural capital in the new era. Cultural capital is reinforced by an organisation's ability to define its organisational purpose internally (Oakes et al., 1998). Clearly, this became increasingly difficult for the RFU - a direct consequence of the growth in power of the field's new actors that was based on their contractual arrangements with the leading players. In this way, contracting the field's senior players was an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977) because it denied the RFU access to its national teams, which were its major asset in the amateur era. Thus, as the RFU's primary source of income had traditionally come from gate receipts and television revenue from international matches, particularly the annual Five Nations Championships, its access to the national squad was imperative for its own survival as a regulatory power in the English game.

The reliance of the RFU on the Five Nations Championships for revenue was reflected in how past television contracts had been structured. There had been little attention paid to the televising of club matches. Instead, the majority of televised rugby union was of the Five Nations Championships and of intermittent test matches with touring international teams. Therefore, as the French had always negotiated their own television deals due to differences in language, the RFU had traditionally shared its television revenues with Wales, Scotland and Ireland, referred to collectively as the Home Unions.

However, in early 1996, the resource pressure applied on the RFU by EPRUC placed even greater emphasis on the impending renegotiation of television contracts. The former BBC contract, worth £27 million, was to expire in March 1997. Thus, when the RFU went into negotiations for the new television rights on April 8 1996, in light of their economic problems and EPRUC's demands for £1 million per club, there was intense pressure for it to secure a far more lucrative television contract. A senior RFU executive explained that,

when it went professional there was immediately a pressure brought on the RFU by EFDR especially, Second Division clubs less so, but they were all for take, take, take. That is why the Sky deal was so important. We bloody well needed £87 million to feed the thirsty greed of the clubs.

Clearly, by securing access to the players, EPRUC placed itself in a position of power relative to the RFU. Views on power, as Oakes et al. (1998) noted, focus on its role in constituting interests and shaping values. Accordingly, EPRUC's power that derived from its access to crucial resources allowed it to exert coercive pressures on the RFU. These pressures effected a reconfiguration of the RFU's positional and organisational identity in the field. As a consequence, the RFU ceased its longstanding relationship with the widely accessible terrestrial television broadcaster, the BBC, and sought higher offers from further afield. Subsequently, on April 27 1996, the RFU announced a five-year, £87.5 million deal unilaterally negotiated with the satellite broadcaster, British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB), a part of the News Corporation "empire." This represented a major change in exchange relations between the RFU, its senior clubs, international partners, sponsors, and, by virtue of its choice of broadcast media, the general public. The BSkyB deal included all of England's international and representative matches at Twickenham, and, for the first time, included weekly broadcasts of Division I games.

The pressure exerted on the RFU by EPRUC's demands forced it to focus on business planning and the immediate need for economic capital. This prompted its decision to depart from accepted practice with its key exchange partners. As Oakes et al. (1998) observed, business planning has significant implications for the capital of a field in that what is valued shifts, and accordingly, positional and organisational identity are also likely to change. They argued that, "economic capital becomes more important, and cultural capital remains valuable to the extent that it can be transformed into economic capital" (Oakes et al., 1998, p. 271). Thus, although the economic value of the Five Nations Championships had always been crucial to the RFU, the additional cultural capital of participating in one of the world's oldest international sporting events had always been of equal importance. The field's shift in dominant logic however, prompted

the elevation of economic capital over that of cultural in that the RFU decided to forego a longstanding tradition and break its television partnership with the Home Unions.

In retaliation for the RFU's decision to seek unilateral television rights, on July 13 1996, the Home Unions and France expelled England from the Five Nations Championships, thus marginalising England in terms of Northern Hemisphere international rugby union. Therefore, the RFU's altered exchange relations with key constituents not only entangled it in its own internal debate and an ongoing struggle for power with EPRUC, but it also embroiled it in yet another struggle for power and resources, primarily money, with its international partners. In addition, England's expulsion from the Five Nations tournament placed the RFU under threat of legal action from national team sponsors if they were not able to first, negotiate England's readmission to the Five Nations tournament; and, second, guarantee the appearance of the top players.

This left the RFU vulnerable when it came to negotiating with EPRUC for the release of players for internationals. In particular, as the major partner in EPRUC, EFDR used this coercive pressure and, on August 29 1996, increased its original demand of £1 million grants for each Division I club to £1.5 million per club for the five year duration of the BSkyB television contract. In addition, EFDR demanded changes to the competitive and financial structure of the game in England, and repeated its threat that, should these demands not be met by the RFU, it would form a professional breakaway league of its own. Again, this symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977) signified the increased power of the field's new actors, and the shift in the capital at stake in the field from cultural to economic. This was a clear indication of the field's shifting dominant logic from one predicated upon amateurism to the new one founded upon professional values.

Eventually, on September 4 1996, England were accepted back into the Five Nations Championships after agreeing to contribute £25 million to a "pot" with the other Home Unions over the five-year duration of the BSkyB contract. A crucial part of the accord stipulated that the RFU provide assurances not to negotiate separately again when the BSkyB contract ended in June 2002. However, although England was readmitted back into the Five Nations, the RFU's relations with these crucial exchange partners were significantly altered. Nonetheless, the decision to elevate economic capital over that of

cultural allowed the RFU to fulfil EPRUC's demands of £1.5m to each of the Division I clubs over the period of the BSkyB deal. By November 27 1996, this paved the way for the "club versus country" debate to reach a tenuous resolution in the form of an accord that became known as the Leicester Agreement. This was a tri-partite agreement between EPRUC, the RFU and the PRA, whereby it was agreed that players could be released from club responsibilities and "loaned" to the RFU for a restricted period each season to play in representative matches.

Out of these agreements, yet another collectivity was formed in the shape of England Rugby Partnership (ERP), a coalition formed between the RFU, EFDR, and ESDR, whose mandate was to oversee the administration of Divisions I and II. The structure of ERP gave EFDR four shares, and the RFU and ESDR two shares each respectively. Clearly, this symbolised a shift in the balance of power in senior English rugby union as the entrepreneurs providing the financial backing for the leading Division I clubs sought to safeguard their investments by securing the majority share in the field's primary decision-making mechanism. This left the Division II clubs not only struggling to remain financially solvent, but it also marginalised them by emasculating their power to influence field-level decisions that could potentially impact their own survival. Similarly, the clubs in the largely amateur leagues below Division II, which formed the overwhelming majority of the RFU Executive Board, were also rendered virtually powerless by the structure of ERP.

The emergence of a new regulatory power

Therefore, ERP, and by proxy, EFDR, became the main regulatory power with respect to senior rugby union in England, while the RFU maintained responsibility for development, rules, and policy for the English game as a whole. By codifying in social structures the field's power constructions and operating logic, Scott et al. (1996) pointed out that governance structures are not exogenously imposed on a field, but often develop from within to form an integral part of its institutional environment. Thus, in Scott and his colleague's terms, the formation and structuring of ERP codified the diminution of the RFU's regulatory power, and formalised the rise to prominence of the field's new entrepreneurial actors. Significantly, one of ERP's first actions was to sever ties with Courage Brewers, the sponsors of England's 100-plus divisions and leagues since their

inception in 1987. Subsequently, on April 17 1997, ERP announced a three-year, £12 million sponsorship package with insurers Allied Dunbar for Divisions I and II only. This provided a potent symbol to the field, in that, for the first time, the senior divisions were actually differentiated from the amateur leagues below them. This was another key change in exchange relations that displayed the corporate values of the entrepreneurs constituting EFDR. In addition, by financially rewarding the senior professional clubs, this highlighted the importance of economic capital over that of cultural, and in so doing, provided another signal of the legitimacy of the field's new professional operating logic.

However, by the end of the first season of the open era (1996-97), despite compliance with institutional pressures for professionalisation, the promise of annual funds from the RFU and Allied Dunbar, and the dramatic increase in interorganisational linkages throughout the field, one club had gone into receivership, two clubs had been forced to sell their grounds in order to pay off debts, and no club had as much as broken even. By the end of the second professional season, 1997/98, despite attendance figures across the league increasing by 22% on the previous season (Gallagher, 1998), the financial crisis in the game had worsened. Gallagher (1998) estimated the collective operating loss among the 12 Premiership First Division clubs for the 1997/98 season was between £20-24 million. Further, another three clubs had gone into receivership in addition to the one the previous season, and still no club had broken even. Of the four clubs that went into receivership, three had been forced to sell their grounds in order to pay debts. The basic tenets of institutional theory would suggest that clubs' enhanced legitimacy through compliance with institutional norms *should* have transpired into increased access to resources. However, the financial plight of clubs throughout the field revealed that the resource pressures inherent to the act of restructuring to accommodate professionals clearly threatened organisational survival. Therefore, professionalisation became a symbolic act for clubs - a statement of intention whereby dominant coalitions pronounced to stakeholders their ambition to maintain competitiveness in the new era.

Alvesson (1991) contended that organisational actors, particularly those in dominant coalitions, actively exploit and subordinate certain symbolic aspects of organisational life to their own intentions. For example, in the Premiership, although the support of clubs' traditional memberships remained financially crucial, in all of the clubs

that took part in the study, the act of restructuring reduced members' decision-making power. Predictably therefore, in a practical sense, professionalisation was fraught with difficulty. For members of rugby union clubs, particularly in England, membership carried with it social cache and emotional attachments that often went back several generations. As a result, the abrupt changes that professionalisation demanded in this most traditional of arenas, were extremely traumatic. In many clubs, members became *season ticket holders*, and lost the privilege and power, particularly in terms of decision-making, that traditionally accompanied membership. One general manager described how,

it's a funny thing, we've still got a "Members" Committee here and they discuss the whole thing, but they haven't got any real power anymore. They can organise social events or whatever, keep old players in touch with the club, organise coaches for away trips There are lots of other small committees around without any power, people like to be part of committees. But to be called a "Members" Committee, it's kind of a misnomer I guess because we're a limited company now. So they're not really *members* anymore. The only real structure is shareholders The *members* now are essentially season ticket holders. I'm sure they prefer to be called members rather than season ticket holders, and for the moment, we're happy to go along with that, but that may change in the future.

Thus, professionalisation carried with it a reduction, and in some cases, a complete loss, of privilege and decision-making power for club members throughout the field. However, the mostly unanimous votes *for* professionalisation by members of senior clubs attested to the fact that, albeit reluctantly, they recognised and rejected the alternative. An ex-member, now a season ticket holder, at one club lamented, "well what choice did we have? It's either this or we'll end up down at the bottom of Division II, or worse." From this, it would appear that members were willing to forfeit control of their clubs in exchange for maintaining competitiveness. Several researchers (Macintosh, 1986; Molm, 1987; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; Auld & Godbey, 1998) have made similar observations of formerly volunteer sport organisations that underwent professionalisation. Thus, although clubs' regulative and normative aspects, "the products of human design, [and] the outcomes of purposive action by instrumentally oriented individuals" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, p. 8), had been altered by new dominant coalitions, the continued involvement of former volunteer members suggested an

enduring cognitive support for “their” clubs. Indeed, Hoffman (1999) pointed out that, of the “three pillars” of institutions, the cognitive aspects are the most entrenched and resistant to change. Thus, in order to successfully overcome these lingering inertial pressures, managers had to devise clear objectives of the change process that targeted this cognitive pillar. In the clubs that were more successful in adapting to the new era, business planning played a central role in communicating these objectives to constituents, and indeed, in generating the necessary normative acceptance for the organisational change inherent to them.

The central role of business planning in overcoming inertial pressures

Although the members of senior clubs recognised the utilitarian necessity for change, predictably, many remained emotionally attached to what became romantic memories of “the good old days” of amateurism, and their traditional bases of power. This organisational transience (Clark & Soulsby, 1995) meant that, to variable degrees, clubs across the field were somewhat delayed in their transformative processes by the values, knowledge, and experiences of their amateur pasts. However, as mimetic pressures in the field dictated that entrepreneurs restructured power relationships in clubs so as to centralise their own authority and control, memberships were forced to “toe-the-line”, and were left with little realistic voice in the running of “their” clubs.

This symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977) left the members of professionalised clubs in little doubt as to the financially driven objectives of their new administrations. Bourdieu (1977, p. 196) referred to symbolic violence as the “gentle, hidden form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible.” Further, Oakes et al. (1998, p. 271) pointed out that acts of symbolic violence involving changes in privileged political position and capital, are often misrecognised because they appear to be “purely technical exercises.” Therefore, the new dominant coalitions of Premiership clubs restructured their clubs into small business entities, “technically,” so they would win more games. Clearly, the resultant normative and regulative changes to clubs meant decreased privilege for members. However, by actively targeting the key remaining cognitive link to supporters, that is *winning* and its associated cultural capital, dominant coalitions sought to decrease lingering inertial pressures by fostering members’ enthusiasm for change. As one chief executive suggested, “winning hides a multitude of sins.” However, the real meaning of

winning and *success* for clubs' dominant coalitions changed significantly with the advent of professionalism. For them, winning was no longer important for its own intrinsic value, as it remained for the majority of supporters, but was more crucial due to the revenue it generated. As one club's commercial manager stated,

success here would be full commercial facilities, hospitality full, every game fully sponsored, and with there being an active black market for tickets to come to our games You always know you have success if touts are outside trying to sell tickets. So you know, strategically, that's where we want to be, and we have a 3-5 year plan to take us there.

This overwhelming requirement for change supports the contention of Oakes et al. (1998) that when economic capital becomes more important in a field formerly dominated by cultural capital, the latter only remains valued to the extent that it can be turned into economic capital. Therefore, although former members' nostalgia for amateurism represented cognitive inertial forces, such a sharpening in the clarity of organisational objectives, as Oliver (1992) noted, tends to accelerate the deinstitutionalisation of prevailing organisational practices. Thus, while the cognitive inertial forces in the field did indeed mitigate change, the entropy created by the increasing normative, mimetic and coercive pressures for professionalisation across the field hastened the delegitimation of amateurism.

Clearly, such fundamental change in the criteria for effectiveness in a field is necessarily accompanied by simultaneous change in the underlying values of the actors operating within it (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986; Scott et al., 1996). Through the structuring of ERP, EFDR ultimately gained control of what Stern (1979, p. 244) referred to as "the formal rules of interaction." Concomitantly, the strategies employed by the field's proactive new entrants that were predicated upon financial control gained legitimacy as the accepted mode of reducing environmental uncertainty. These crucial changes to the field's regulatory and normative characteristics accelerated clubs' unlearning curves (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995) and their deinstitutionalisation (Oliver, 1992) of the former amateur-based dominant logic of the field.

One of the prime methods by which clubs' dominant coalitions convinced members to accept the reduced privilege and power inherent to professionalisation, was by way of an educative process that focused stakeholders' attention on the realities of

business planning. Executives from every club taking part in the study pointed to the increased role of business planning in their day-to-day operations since the onset of professionalism. Oakes et al. (1998; p.258) referred to business planning as a form of pedagogy that “not only announces that change is coming, but it is through the activity of business planning that change actually occurs.” They further explained that business planning reconstructs what it is that is being produced, and importantly, for whom.

Therefore, the vocabulary of business planning articulates new contingencies that necessitate the learning and enactment of associated strategic responses. In this way, the verbiage of business planning ultimately defines the value of existing and new products (Oakes et al., 1998). Indeed, one chief executive admitted that in 1998, his club had started a women’s rugby section, not to further the game to a new demographic, but because “the addition to the club of a women’s section will improve our chance of lottery funding when the time comes.” Moreover, as the capital at stake in the field shifted from being cultural and social to economic in nature, the vocabulary of business planning resulted in the renaming of clubs’ key constituents. Increasingly, interviewees referred to the Premiership as a “market” or “industry;” clubs as “companies;” players as “employees;” games as “shop fronts;” fans as “clients” or “customers;” club members as “season ticket holders;” and the game of rugby union as a “business.” One general manager of a club that, after the Paris Declaration, became 90% owned by an electronics multinational, stated that,

We’re as much an event management company as we are a rugby company. And I would say that on balance, we’re as much a rugby company as we are a corporate hospitality company when you take out the 80 minutes on a Saturday afternoon where you have no control over what your shop window is all about, the same business principles apply as if I’m running a business that makes nuts and bolts. I’ve got staff to look after, I’ve got my product to market, I’ve got to make sure my people turn up on time, and where’s my customer base? You know, the same business principles apply. We have customers, we have a retailing arm, we have catering, we have personnel issues, and we have contractors and suppliers.

Indeed, the monetary value attached to the leading players and clubs was a good indicator of the free-market values that underpinned the field’s new professional dominant logic. Without exception, all of the entrepreneurs who entered the field came

from backgrounds in the corporate world where the language of business planning was the accepted *modus operandi*. It was natural therefore, that they carried this same *modus operandi* into the management of professional rugby union. One of the more high profile entrepreneurs, Andrew Brownsword, a greeting cards magnate, bought a 75% stake in Bath Rugby Club, one of the country's most prestigious and successful clubs in the amateur era. Barnes (1997, pp.64-65) described the change in values in this most traditional of clubs:

In possession of 75% of the club, Brownsword had huge control over Bath. He also implemented his own management structure to ensure that business was managed 'in the style the investor wanted' . . . [Brownsword] added, 'The aim is to make the business profitable, so that it can be floated and the equity within the business can be shared.' . . . Brownsword was in total command. He spoke without passion but with heavily commercial overtones: 'The club will be thoroughly organised as befits the era of professionalism, an era which, I believe, makes immense demands on every club to behave in a financially responsible and sound manner. Those who fail to do so run the grave risk of imperiling the entire future of their club, and professionalism may well see many casualties. It is not the intention of anyone at this famous club that any such scenario be allowed to ensue.' It was official: Bath was, at last, a business. It was inevitable, but it was also sad. A little magic had died - and ticket prices exploded. Bath were a bottom-line brand; and the accountants were at the gates.

The role of institutional pressures in legitimising a new dominant logic

The case of Bath was typical of the clubs that chose to professionalise. As Sir John Hall had predicted, it became widely accepted legitimate practice that professionalisation required a club to become a limited company, which entailed the traditional club membership forfeiting the majority share of their club to the control of an entrepreneur. Equally true however, was Andrew Brownsword's prediction that professionalisation would imperil the future of many clubs. As described earlier, professionalisation did indeed result in several "casualties." In attempting to reduce this uncertainty, the entrepreneurs developed and formalised strong interorganisational linkages with their Premiership counterparts. The development of these additional mechanisms for disseminating the new professional logic, with its distinct set of related corporate expectations, allowed actors to monitor the compliance of other actors to the

new logic. Thus, the increase in political activity and coalition building in the field indicated new lines of communication, wherein the new corporate-based logic could be more efficiently disseminated.

This increase in the mechanisms for communication and dissemination in the field clearly indicates a growth in its multiplexity of ties and a further tightening in its system coupling (Fligstein, 1991; Kikulis et al., 1995; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Where there are clear mechanisms for dissemination, normative, mimetic, and coercive institutional pressures for conformity are high (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Moreover, as Baum and Oliver (1991) pointed out, institutional linkages can alter the ability of organisations to accomplish major changes by conferring on them social support for the rationality underpinning the changes. Predictably therefore, by the beginning of the third professional season, 1998/99, all of the Premiership's leading clubs had voted to become plcs, and 15 clubs had individual major shareholders. Therefore, the development of institutional linkages, as Baum and Oliver (1991) pointed out, can alter the underlying dynamics of field-level change. Clearly, the pace of change throughout the field was no longer of the incremental type that had characterised the amateur era.

This study further supports Baum and Oliver's (1991) contentions in that the pedagogic effects of business planning, and the increased institutional linkages they necessitated, did indeed garner approbation and social support for professionalisation from clubs' respective institutional environments. Kraatz (1998) made the point that consortia, such as those formed by the Premiership clubs, facilitate communication by establishing personal relationships between organisational leaders that offer opportunities for regular, informal interaction. He contended that these stronger ties are particularly valuable in promoting adaptation because they create high-capacity information links and engender a motivation for information sharing.

However, despite the increased institutional linkages that resulted in this social support and approbation from their institutional environments, the management of all clubs in the Premiership still found it difficult to secure adequate resources for survival. Significantly, in February 1999, frustrated by the lack of return on his £9 million investment in the club, Sir John Hall withdrew his financial support of Newcastle. Shortly after, in March 1999, Ashley Levett, the benefactor of Richmond who had

invested £6 million in the 134-year-old club over three years, also withdrew his support of the club, as did Frank Warren at Bedford. By the end of the 1998-99 season, which saw a 15% drop in attendance to Premiership matches (Ackford, 1999), the now 14 clubs in the Premiership had suffered a cumulative loss for the season of £16 million (Trelford, 1999). This resulted in a further three Premiership clubs going into receivership, bringing the total number of “casualties” of the professional era to seven.

Predictably, with the now tight coupling and increased multiplexity of ties in the field, these events had significant “knock on” effects. The first was on March 30 1999, when EFDR proposed the capping of players’ wages for the next season in an effort to alleviate financial pressure on clubs. Although the proposals were eventually accepted, the free-market, survival-of-the-fittest values of some of the game’s entrepreneurs again came to the fore. The owner of Northampton Saints, Keith Barwell, opposed capping and labelled the proposal a “charter for cheats.” He stated that, “sport is not about pulling the sick up, it’s a winner-take-all situation. I have always said there is only room for about six or eight professional clubs” (Bills, 1999). Further, on May 8 1999, in order to make the game more financially viable, EFDR seized the opportunity to buy out and close down Richmond, which, following the withdrawal of Levett, had become bankrupt. However, rather than outright closure, Richmond agreed to amalgamate with two other debt-ridden clubs, London Irish and London Scottish. In such periods of environmental turbulence, Hoffman (1999) made the point that institutional entrepreneurs can be both strategic and opportunistic, and may attempt to take advantage of an uncertain institutional order that they wish to change. Accordingly, Howard Thomas, acting chief executive of EFDR, justified the action by pointing out that, “we want to run a league with financial integrity. It’s a bad image if clubs get into such trouble” (Cleary, 1999).

Such acts of symbolic violence often take the form of reconfiguring positional and organisational identities (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As a consequence of EFDR’s action therefore, the targeted clubs ceased to exist as unitary actors in the field. A senior official from one of the clubs concerned, graphically described EFDR’s action as “infanticide.” Further, Fran Cotton, a leading RFU official, stated that, “to buy such a famous old club so they can close it down is unthinkable. It goes against every spirit and value that rugby stands for and makes a mockery of the sport. It’s all about money,

money, money” (Jackson, 1999). Thus, EFDR’s action struck at the heart of the game’s altruistic, amateur culture, and typified the difference in values between the club’s professional entrepreneurs and the game’s traditionalists. Thus, as values and belief structures form the cognitive elements upon which a field’s normative and regulative systems are constructed (Ruef & Scott, 1998; Hoffman, 1999), and are the most entrenched and resistant to change (Zucker, 1983), the fact that the RFU was unable to stop the “infanticide” of its member clubs provided a potent symbol to the field. Indeed, this brought into sharp relief the illegitimacy of the former amateur institutional order.

The dramatic actions taken by EFDR were motivated by its objective to run a competition with “financial integrity,” which symbolised the shift capital from social and cultural to that of economic. In drastically altering exchange relations throughout the field, it also highlighted the “focused and consistent set of expectations” that Greenwood and Hinings (1996, p. 14) contended was a central aspect of tight coupling in a field. Further, the financial plight of clubs throughout the Premiership supported the suggestions of Oakes et al. (1998) and DiMaggio and Powell (1991), in that, although the changes advocated by the field’s new institutional rules and logic were technically inefficient, in order to appear legitimate, clubs were still willing to enact them. Therefore, from an organisational survival perspective, the results of this study provide support for the suggestions of Tolbert and Zucker (1983) and Greenwood and Hinings (1996), who pointed out that technical performance requirements are more prescient than institutional pressures in the early development of an organisational field. However, as elite English rugby union is clearly not a new organisational field, the data presented here would suggest that resource pressures and technical performance requirements may also take precedence over institutional expectations in *established* fields when they undergo radical change, particularly when that change is related to a change in the field’s dominant logic.

Therefore, the establishment of new coalitions and interorganisational linkages among the field’s entrepreneurial new actors resulted in their ascension to the most powerful regulatory position in the field. As a consequence, the decrease in power of the RFU’s Executive Committee, meant that the amateur logic that distinguished senior rugby union in England from other national and international sports became weaker, and increasingly subordinated to corporate, professional logics. This lends further weight to

Scott and his colleagues' (1996) notion that processes of structuration and de-structuration may take place simultaneously at different levels of a field. Indeed, with the increased permeability of the field's boundaries and the subsequent entrance of powerful new actors, the existing amateur-based dominant logic of the field was subordinated to the professional logic of the new actors. Consequently, the field's established actors and their amateur agenda were delegitimated and subsumed into the new dominant logic. Indeed, the formation and structure of ERP symbolised the RFU's loss of coherence (Scott et al., 1996) as a unitary actor in the field. This was graphically exemplified initially, by its impotence to enforce its moratorium on change, and later, by its inability to maintain existing exchange relations with traditional partners, or even to save some of its oldest members from organisational mortality. Moreover, the RFU's absorption into the new professional order through contracting and alliance connections with the field's powerful new actors was the codification in social structures (Scott et al., 1996) of English rugby union's new power construction, and its distinctly *professional* dominant logic.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrated that shifts in the dominant logic of senior English rugby union were particularly hastened by changes to the field's communities of actors. The distinctly professional values that these powerful new actors brought to the field, and the logic they engendered, were proven to be a more suitable fit with the exigencies of the post-Paris Declaration rugby environment. As a consequence, these values superseded the formerly dominant amateur ethos and its related logic. Predictably however, inertial pressures resisting change became manifest, primarily in the form of constituents' cognitive attachments to the field's former amateur logic and its related cultural capital, particularly the volunteer decision-making it inhered. However, it was found that the clubs that successfully overcame this inertia and adapted to the emerging professional logic used the language of business planning as a tool to formulate and communicate clear objectives for the change process to constituents. This was seen as central to generating organisational members' cognitive and normative acceptance of the professional logic and the changes to core organisational aspects such as decision-making that it demanded.

This shift in the values underpinning the field's organisational activities caused a concomitant change in the exchange relations between actors as the centrality of economic capital was elevated over that of cultural. This resulted in the field's new entrants, who had made considerable financial investments in the game, taking measures to protect their vested interests by forming coalitions. These coalitions increased the level of interorganisational linkages throughout the field, and subsequently redefined the field's boundaries as they negotiated a separation of the professional clubs of Divisions I and II from the amateur ones in the leagues below. By redefining the field's boundaries, in spite of opposition from the game's existing national governing body, the RFU, the new collectivities in the form of ERP, and in particular, EFDR, emerged as powerful new regulatory forces in the game. Therefore, the field's new professional logic became manifest in the form of profound changes in the number and nature of actors composing the field; massive shifts in the exchange relations among actors; changes in the field's interorganisational linkages; wholesale shifts in the capital at stake in the field; and ultimately, radical change to the field's regulatory structures.

To extend the findings of this study, further research is needed to investigate the isomorphic processes involved in shifting field-level logics, and the nature of the relationship between changing logics and the maturity of organisational fields. In particular, more study of the role played by coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphic pressures in processes of diffusion would lead to a greater understanding of how these mechanisms contribute to overall processes of change. Therefore, these two areas of study, the role of isomorphic pressures in processes of diffusion, and the relationship between shifting field-level logics and maturation processes in organisational fields, are the foci of the next chapter, and it is to there that attention is now turned.

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CHAPTER III: ISOMORPHIC PROCESSES IN THE DIFFUSION OF A NEW DOMINANT LOGIC: THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF SENIOR ENGLISH RUGBY UNION

In the previous chapter, it was shown how the dominant logic underpinning the organisational field of senior English rugby union changed from one predicated upon a staunchly amateur ethos, to one underpinned by corporate and commercially oriented values. This chapter is also centred on the environmental turbulence that characterised this process. In particular, the institutional processes and pressures inherent to this turbulent period following the Paris Declaration are explored.

As outlined in Chapter II, the lack of sanctions imposed by the RFU on the clubs and individuals in breach of its moratorium served to heighten uncertainty in the field. This resulted in the implementation of hastily conceived plans by clubs' dominant coalitions to "catch up" with the clubs that had professionalised first. Consequently, clubs across the field raced to outbid each other and sign high profile players and coaches. This "arms race" dramatically altered the institutional environment of senior English rugby union. The institutional environment encompasses social forces such as norms, standards, and expectations common to all the relevant stakeholders of a focal organisation or population of organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). A number of theorists have suggested that organisations' institutional environments have a particularly cogent influence on their strategic, structural and normative characteristics (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; DiMaggio, 1988; Dacin, 1997). Pressures from the institutional environment may become manifest in the form of "taken for granted beliefs and widely promulgated rules that serve as templates for organising" (Scott, 1987, p. 507).

Therefore, in an effort to maintain legitimacy, organisations adhere to, or give the appearance of adhering to, institutional expectations of appropriate organisational forms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Indeed, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that dominant coalitions pursue legitimacy in this way to enhance access to valuable resources, and to increase their chances of organisational survival. Further, they pointed out that this drive for legitimacy results in pressures for organisations to become isomorphic with their environment. This process of isomorphism involves mimetic, normative and coercive mechanisms, and refers to "the constraining process that forces

one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149).

This chapter is focused on isomorphic processes and their role in the diffusion of senior English rugby union’s new professional logic. Of particular interest are the coercive, normative, and mimetic mechanisms by which the process of isomorphism took place. This analysis also facilitates an understanding of how isomorphic pressures influence the process of maturation in organisational fields. The theoretical framework supporting this study will be outlined in the next section. Following this, the methods employed in carrying out the investigation will be outlined. Next, a Results and Discussion section will present the findings of the study, and finally, the chapter will close with some brief concluding comments.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Institutional theory has primarily focused on a movement towards, and the preservation of, homogeneous, or isomorphic institutional environments. A seminal work in organisation theory that has led discourse in this area has been DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) essay on institutional isomorphism. In this work, DiMaggio and Powell discussed how, at the population level, organisations modify their features in the direction of increasing their compatibility with environmental characteristics. To establish the theoretical underpinnings of this chapter, the following theoretical discussion outlines the basic tenets of DiMaggio and Powell’s thesis, and will also draw on some of the other work that it has inspired.

Isomorphic processes

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified two types of isomorphism: competitive, and institutional. Competitive isomorphism involves pressures towards homogeneity stemming from market competition, as described by population ecologists such as Hannan and Freeman (1977) and Aldrich (1979). Institutional isomorphism, the focus of DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) work, also involves competition, but is more focused on competition for political and institutional legitimacy, and securing market position. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three mechanisms - coercive, normative, and mimetic processes, by which institutional isomorphism takes place.

Coercive isomorphism stems from both formal and informal pressures that are imposed on dependent organisations by those institutions that they rely on for valuable resources or legitimacy. Therefore, this concept has close ties to the resource dependence model, where organisations are viewed as constrained in their activities by those organisations on which they depend for resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Hence, in this view, powerful organisations legitimate certain organisational structures and subsequently impose coercive pressure on network peers to conform. In addition, the cultural expectations of the society within which organisations function may also produce pressures that result in coercive isomorphism. Interestingly, DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 150) noted that coercive pressures are not always explicit, and may take quite subtle forms that may be felt “as force, as persuasion, or as invitations to join in collusion.”

The second isomorphic mechanism suggested by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is mimetic. This results when environmental uncertainty drives organisations to mimic the actions of peers that are perceived to be legitimate or successful. The institutional environment of senior English rugby union, following the Paris Declaration, was characterised by uncertainty. Therefore, this mechanism is particularly pertinent for this research and will be discussed in more detail later in the Theoretical Background.

A third source of isomorphic change is normative. This type of change comes primarily from professionalisation, as organisational members struggle to define the conditions and methods of their work, or as DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 152) suggested, “to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy.” They contended that normative isomorphism involves two aspects. The first pertains to similarities in the formal education and training of specialists in a particular sector, which leads to legitimation of the cognitive bases of organisational norms that stem from this education and training. The second means of encouraging normative isomorphism relates to the elaboration of professional networks that connect organisations and facilitate the diffusion of normative rules about legitimate organisational and professional behaviour.

Therefore, coercive, mimetic, and normative processes, over time, produce isomorphism which acts as a “constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio &

Powell, 1983, p. 149). However, DiMaggio and Powell pointed out that these three mechanisms are not necessarily empirically distinct, but could operate simultaneously with indeterminate effects. For example, the networks and interorganisational linkages that form as a product of normative influences may have “inbuilt” coercive pressures. Therefore, organisations may be subject to various forms of institutional pressures for conformity at any given time. Indeed, when actors in a field have been subject to strong and prolonged pressures for conformity, Kondra and Hinings (1998) noted that, if conditions change, actors may not appreciate the need for change, even in the face of imminent threats. They referred to this condition as “paradigm stasis.” Furthering this emphasis upon compliance with institutional pressures, Zucker (1983, p. 5) posited that, “institutionalisation is rooted in conformity,” while DiMaggio (1988) argued that institutional theory tends to “defocalise” interests in the interpretation of human behaviour. He added that, rather than presuming the general utilitarian view that actors attempt to pursue their interests, institutional arguments stress norms and taken-for-granted assumptions, and contingencies such as behavioural constraints or cognitive limitations.

Therefore, institutional theory has traditionally directed attention to isomorphism and organisations’ conformity to the social processes that lie beyond their boundaries. These processes operate through the actors composing the firm’s organisational field, and are proposed to shape firms’ actions through a narrowly defined set of legitimate options (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1995; Hoffman, 1999). Therefore, institutional theorists have tended to focus upon the permanence of organisational arrangements and the inertial forces that they produce (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). As a consequence, decision-making processes in organisational fields were given little if any attention. Rather, they were perceived as rationally constructed around an environment that constrained organisations’ ability to change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Thus, change was perceived in a convergent manner, where the constant reproduction of existing norms and modes of thought about appropriate organisational forms reinforced isomorphic processes and further entrenched these ways of operating.

A multi-faceted approach to change in organisational fields

More recently, theorists have argued that not all organisational fields, or the enabling and constraining forces inherent to them, are homogenous (Scott, 1995; Scott et al., 1996; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Oliver (1988) pointed out that isomorphic forces in fields may operate with varying degrees of effect on different organisational attributes. In an empirical test of institutional pressures and isomorphic change on a population of 36 national-level sport organisations, Slack and Hinings (1994) found support for Oliver's contention. Indeed, while they found that the organisations in their study exhibited considerable structural compliance with institutional demands, they also found evidence of resistance. In particular, they suggested that conformity with certain institutional pressures would have directly confronted the values that were central to the members of these organisations. Resistance became manifest by a lack of significant change in those organisational aspects, such as volunteer control of decision-making, that embodied the core values of the organisations being studied. Therefore, Slack and Hinings (1994) concluded that, while isomorphic processes resulted in general structural conformity, certain core structural elements did not change as much as others, which was seen as demonstrative of resistance to institutional pressures.

This presents a less deterministic understanding of change in organisational fields, and indeed, raises the notion that change can be conceived of in a more multi-faceted manner. Furthering this line of enquiry, Scott and his colleagues (1996), proposed that fields are composed of multiple types of actors, exchange processes, governance structures, and beliefs and logics of action. As was demonstrated in Chapter II, the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1985; 1990) and Oakes et al. (1998), suggests that analysing changes in the forms of capital at stake in a field also has utility for understanding overall processes of change. In addition, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (1995) pointed out that fields evolve over time and therefore vary in their maturity. This conception of organisational fields facilitates a multi-faceted approach to researching the changes within and between each of the proposed dimensions. In addition, by adding a temporal dimension to analysis, this approach also highlights the consideration of structuration processes in fields (Giddens, 1979; Scott et al., 1996). The term structuration refers to the degree of change over time in an organisational field, particularly shifts in exchange

relations; regulatory and organisational structures; logics of action; and field composition (Giddens, 1979; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1994; Scott et al., 1996). Particularly important for this research, the temporal dimension of structuration allows for analysis of the maturity of a field over time. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that a field's maturity is indicated by the extent to which actors achieve a mutual understanding that they are involved in a common endeavour.

This multi-dimensional approach to change in organisational fields takes a more inclusive view than more traditional institutional arguments because it addresses the reality of actors' purposive, interest-driven behaviour. For example, Scott (1987, p. 508) suggested that "institutional theory reminds us that interests are institutionally defined and shaped [and] Institutional frameworks define the ends and shape the means by which interests are determined and pursued." Extending this line of thought, Kondra and Hinings (1998) pointed out that traditional institutional analyses have ignored organisational diversity and how organisations change, and suggested that little research attention has been paid to the forces that actually change institutional environments. Indeed, Powell (1991) made the point that institutional theory has generally been silent on why institutional norms change. More generally, while Stern (1979) noted the significance of describing the results of change, he also cited the importance of considering the actual dynamics through which change takes place. An inherent aspect of this dynamic process of change in institutional norms is the existence and function of interorganisational social structures (Kraatz, 1998). These structures, or networks, affect organisations' capacities for adapting core features in processes of change, and will now be examined in more detail.

Interorganisational linkages

Kraatz (1998) pointed out that little is known about if, why, and how social structures such as networks affect organisations' efforts to transform themselves when faced with environmental changes that threaten survival. However, Baum and Oliver (1991) showed how organisations with stronger institutional linkages exhibited a significant survival advantage that increased with the intensity of competition. By the term "institutional linkage," Baum and Oliver (1991, p. 187) referred to "a direct and regularised relationship between an organisation and an institution in the organisation's

environment.” They defined institutions as government or community constituents in the organisation’s environment that possess either community-wide and uncontested social acceptance, or legislative and administrative authority in the organisation’s domain.

The work of Baum and Oliver (1991) demonstrated that institutional linkages bestow a variety of survival advantages on organisations such as increased stability, social approbation, enhanced legitimacy, access to resources, and invulnerability to questioning. Interorganisational linkages and networks serve as mechanisms for the diffusion of information and innovative practices (Haunschild, 1993), thus reaffirming patterns of interdependence, cooperation, and competition in a field (Abrahamson & Fombrun, 1994). Indeed, Haunschild (1993) pointed out that interorganisational networks function as important conduits of normative information about business practices. She proposed that interlocks among organisations may result in firms enacting the same strategies or innovations as their interlocked partners.

Interorganisational linkages among exchange partners, as Abrahamson and Fombrun (1994) pointed out, are also associated with an increasing homogeneity of beliefs among actors about the business they are involved in. Dacin (1997) noted that political pressures also come from connections among organisations, as well as institutional pressures arising from broadly-based sociocultural norms and dependencies. She called for a more complete view of organisational action that included “reinforcing the notion that organisations are inextricably embedded in a dynamic system of interrelated, economic, institutional and ecological processes” (Dacin, 1997, p. 47).

An integral component of interorganisational linkages as mechanisms of diffusion is the degree of system coupling and multiplexity of ties in a field (Stern, 1979; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Abrahamson & Fombrun, 1994; Scott et al., 1996). The degree of system coupling refers to the “nature of connectedness between actors in a network” (Stern, 1979, p. 245). Therefore, in tightly coupled fields, events in one part of the field are felt to a large degree by actors in other parts (Weick, 1976). Multiplexity of ties refers to the nature and number of linkages that connect actors in a network or field (Stern, 1979). Where multiplexity of ties are high, regular and numerous formalised linkages among actors will result in high levels of resources being exchanged (Stern, 1979). These resources can be tangible and may include finance, personnel, and

technology, or they may be more intangible in nature and include normative resources such as knowledge and information (Beamish, 1985; Miner, Amburgey, & Stearns, 1990). With high multiplexity of ties, Stern (1979) proposed that stability in the focal network is enhanced. In a similar vein, Miner et al. (1990) proposed that interorganisational linkages, due to the potential they hold for altering dependency relationships, can act as buffers that reduce the risk of failure after organisational transformations, particularly when transformation is attempted in an uncertain institutional environment. It is this area of uncertainty in institutional environments, that discussion will now focus on.

Isomorphic processes and uncertain institutional environments

Uncertainty is particularly common in the interorganisational arena, "inasmuch as the environment is made up of less than fully informed organisations that are making strategic choices in light of the strategic choices of other uninformed organisations" (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989, p. 454). High levels of uncertainty, as Haveman (1993) pointed out, combined with exposure to the strategies and behaviours of organisational peers, leads to mimesis - the concept of change through imitation. Indeed, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that mimetic isomorphism is one of the processes through which, in an effort to enhance legitimacy in conditions of uncertainty, organisations change to become more similar to other organisations in their environment that are perceived of as successful. Therefore, as posited by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Haveman (1993), mimetic isomorphism is more likely to occur when organisations are faced with uncertainty. As a consequence, dominant coalitions economise on search costs (Cyert & March, 1963), and imitate the actions of other organisations. In so doing, Meyer, Scott, and Deal (1983) suggested that organisations substitute institutional rules for technical rules, and may find themselves pursuing poorly researched strategic options that do little to enhance efficiency. Significantly, with respect to such mimetic behaviour, Haveman (1993) made the point that there has been little theoretical analysis to determine which social actors will actually be imitated. In this respect, as will be explained, the work of Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989), Leblebici, Salancik, Copay and King (1991), Haunschild (1993), and Kraatz (1998), is helpful.

Investigating mimetic processes within organisational fields, Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) and Haunschild (1993) found evidence to support DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) contention that, when faced with uncertainty, strategic decision-makers mimic the behaviour of other actors in their environment. However, both studies concluded that social networks are important in determining which actors will be imitated. Specifically, these researchers suggested that strategic decision-makers are more likely to imitate the behaviour of actors within their network whom they know and trust. More generally, Kraatz (1998) also analysed the strength of network ties among organisations and the affect these ties had on their transformation efforts when confronted by environmental change. He suggested that the stronger and more numerous an organisation's ties to other organisations in its network, the broader will be its awareness of environmental trends. Therefore, Kraatz proposed that the strength and number of interorganisational ties will expose focal organisation(s) to the various adaptive responses being employed elsewhere in their environment, and as a result, will prompt particular types of diffusion processes.

Processes of diffusion

Kraatz (1998) suggested that the exposure of dominant coalitions in a network or field to the strategies of particular competitive peers, could in turn prompt three types of diffusion processes: bandwagon, status-driven, and the social learning of adaptive responses. Interestingly, while Kraatz did not propose any hierarchical or temporal ordering of these mimetic behaviours, he did explain the dynamic conditions under which they take place. According to the bandwagon view, in periods of high uncertainty in an organisational field, a growing number of adopters of an innovation or strategy, a "bandwagon," may drive other organisations to adopt the same change in a relatively indiscriminate and haphazard manner (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993; Abrahamson, 1996; Kraatz, 1998). Thus, bandwagons are diffusion processes whereby organisations adopt an innovation, "not because of their individual assessments of the innovation's efficiency or returns, but because of a bandwagon pressure caused by the sheer number of organisations that have already adopted this innovation" (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993, p. 488). Similarly, Haveman (1993, p. 595) noted that isomorphism resulting from mimetic organisational change has frequently been thought of as a "contagion process,"

where fashionable innovations are spread from one organisation to another. Institutional bandwagon pressures, as Abrahamson and Rosenkopf (1993) argued, occur because non-adopters fear the lost legitimacy from appearing different to many adopters. Therefore, competitive bandwagon pressures arise because non-adopters fear below-average performance if many competitors profit from adoption. In this way, rather than mitigating the uncertainty of environmental change, a growing number of adopters may actually contribute to heightened fears of lost legitimacy and/or competitiveness, hence further increasing environmental uncertainty (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993; Kraatz, 1998).

Imitation resulting from status-driven processes occurs when organisations attempt to increase legitimacy by mimicking the adaptive changes undertaken by particularly large or prominent organisations in their field or network (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). According to this view, competitive boundaries and scanning are narrowly focused on the actions employed by high profile organisations in the same category as the focal organisation(s) (Porac & Thomas, 1990). Interestingly, while Scott (1992) argued that organisations will attend carefully to the actions of their size peers, Haveman (1993) suggested that it is more likely to be larger organisations that serve as role models for other organisations in their population. She concluded that, under conditions of competition, ambiguity, costly search, and environmental variability, dominant coalitions will imitate the strategic behaviour of organisations that are perceived to be large and successful.

Alternatively, Leblebici et al. (1991) suggested that actors at the periphery of a field, for whom experimentation is less costly, may be the source of new and successful practices. They contended that, when these activities are mimicked by competitors, particularly a field's more powerful actors, they receive a degree of legitimacy, and subsequently can lead change in a field. However, when the more prominent organisations do not adopt the new values and practices, or under conditions of only moderate or low levels of diffusion, organisations will tend to be more sceptical and, therefore, hesitant to conform (Leblebici et al., 1991). This raises Galaskiewicz and Wasserman's (1989, p. 455) notion that organisations enhance legitimacy by mimicking successful organisations and, in so doing, accrue an external "referent prestige." Significantly, both bandwagon and status-driven mimetic processes impart little practical

information from early to later adopters, other than the knowledge that they have adopted (Kraatz, 1998).

The third type of imitation process discussed by Kraatz (1998) was social learning. In this process, organisations not only observe the adaptive responses and attributes of network or field partners, but they also “vicariously evaluate the outcomes peers have obtained, and benefit from the lessons they have learned as a result of their earlier adoption decisions” (Kraatz, 1998, p. 625). Therefore, from this perspective, organisations are extremely discriminatory in their decisions to mimic the adaptations of other organisations in their network. It follows that such educated and considered decisions should check any “faddish” (Kraatz, 1998), or “fashionable” (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993; Abrahamson, 1996) diffusion of adaptive responses. Given this, the social learning of adaptive responses would appear to be a more efficient means of strategy diffusion than bandwagon or status-driven responses.

Both bandwagon and status-driven mimetic processes thrive under conditions where firms lack channels for sharing rich or reliable information, and where they are reluctant to share such information in the first place (Kraatz, 1998). Specifically, Kraatz (1998) argued that strong ties developed through means such as consortia might be particularly valuable in promoting the social learning of adaptive responses because they create high-capacity information links among organisations. These high-capacity information links, or effectively what Stern (1979) referred to as multiplexity of ties, serve to “engender a motivation for information sharing, thus mitigating uncertainty and allowing a focal organisation to vicariously benefit from the insights and experience of its peers” (Kraatz, 1998, p. 638).

The work conducted by Kraatz (1998) on isomorphic processes, and in particular, his discussion of the social learning of adaptive responses, suggests that not all mimetic behaviour is inefficient. However, this does not address the point made by O’Neill, Poudier and Buccholtz (1998), that more research attention is needed to address the question of why organisations adopt and persist with strategies that are clearly *inefficient*. The discussion of organisational diversity and change by Kondra and Hinings (1998) goes a considerable way to addressing these concerns. They suggested that, for reasons of risk aversion, an organisation’s dominant coalition may have a self-interest in

constraining their organisation's performance by conforming to institutional norms. From this perspective, individuals in dominant coalitions closely mimic industry norms of legitimate, though potentially inefficient strategies. Therefore, mimetic behaviour can be self-serving for dominant coalitions because, "if all organisations 'play by the rules' everyone gets to keep their jobs, thereby providing a strong incentive not to question institutional norms and simply take them for granted, [thus] further entrenching an institutional environment" (Kondra & Hinings, 1998, p. 749).

Therefore, this research will examine the role of isomorphic processes in facilitating the diffusion of a new professional logic in the organisational field of senior English rugby union. By focusing on the particular mechanisms by which the process of isomorphism took place, the factors that enabled or constrained diffusion of the new logic will be better understood. In addition, the foregoing analysis will then allow for an understanding to be developed of how isomorphic pressures influence the process of maturation in organisational fields, and also, of the pressures that caused organisations to adopt and persist with inefficient, rather than efficient strategies. The next section will report on the methods by which this study was conducted. This will then be followed by a discussion of the results of the investigation and some concluding comments.

METHOD

The methodological issues faced in carrying out this research were essentially the same as those faced in Chapter II. Therefore, the rationale underlying the choice of method, research procedures and their ensuing application, and the time period under investigation, are similar. The main factor that differentiated the methods used for this study was the use of additional codes or labels in analysing the data. The use of these labels follows the advice of Miles and Huberman (1994), who suggested that, by this coding process, meaning can be assigned to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during an investigation. They also noted the particular utility of clustering coded blocks of information as a means of facilitating ongoing analyses, and eventually, leading the researcher to informed conclusions. The particular codes or themes used for this study will now be discussed, and will be followed by an explanation of the methods used for data collection and analyses.

Codes used for categorising data

In order to examine how isomorphic processes influenced the diffusion of a professional logic in senior English rugby union, certain aspects of this environmental context provided evidence upon which theoretical arguments were developed. These aspects formed the basis for codes or themes in which data, after being analysed for content, were categorised. These themes included: indicators of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphic processes; evidence of changes in interorganisational linkages, especially shifts in the field's system coupling and multiplexity of ties; and last, evidence of particular processes of diffusion taking place.

Indicators of isomorphic processes: Isomorphic processes consist of coercive, normative, and mimetic mechanisms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Although each mechanism involves a separate process, two or all of them could operate simultaneously, and their effects may not always be clearly distinguishable (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Mizruchi & Fein, 1999). Notwithstanding this caveat, from a methodological standpoint, it is still possible to identify evidence of these processes taking place, even if they occur simultaneously.

Therefore, coercive isomorphism was identified when evidence was found of particularly powerful actors, or coalitions of actors, exerting pressure on other constituents to adopt certain practices. Evidence of mimetic isomorphism involved behaviour where particular organisational practices were imitated by other field-level constituents. Normative isomorphism was evidenced by the professionalisation of key areas of the field's work practices such as technical and administrative functions, where actors aspired to "define the conditions and methods of their work so as to establish a common philosophy and legitimate their professional autonomy" (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988, p. 563).

Evidence of changes in interorganisational linkages: Interorganisational linkages were analysed for shifts in the level of system coupling, and also changes in the field's multiplexity of ties. System coupling refers to the degree of connectedness among units in a field (Stern, 1979). Therefore, evidence indicative of a tightening in the field's level of system coupling included, for example, situations where groups of actors formed coalitions in support of some common cause. A field's multiplexity of ties refers to the

type, number and duration of linkages that bind actors, and the amount of resources exchanged among them. Evidence of an increase in the multiplexity of ties was indicated, for example, by instances of formalised linkages such as contractual alliances being established among formerly disparate actors. Linkages may also be informal in nature, and may involve casual meetings between colleagues in different organisations who meet to exchange views on common issues. Therefore, it was not only exchanges of material resources, such as money, that were observed, but exchanges of intangible resources such as information or expertise were also seen as evidence of shifts in the field's multiplexity of ties.

Processes of diffusion: In analysing the data for processes of diffusion, this study followed the lead of Kraatz (1998), who identified three types of adaptive behaviour: bandwagon, status-driven, and the social learning of adaptive responses. Data that indicated bandwagon processes included situations where the widespread, haphazard and indiscriminate adoption of a new organisational practice was in evidence (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993; Abrahamson, 1996; Kraatz, 1998). Data indicating status-driven adaptive behaviour was identified by evidence of professional organisational practices being adopted by later-adopters due to particularly prominent organisations already having adopted the practices in question. In addition, as Kraatz (1998) noted, bandwagon and status-driven behaviours are characterised by little or no exchanges of information among adopting organisations. Therefore, where evidence was found that exchanges of information did in fact take place among actors regarding the adoption of professional practices, this was categorised as the social learning of adaptive responses.

Data collection and analyses

For Chapter II, a coding scheme was generated prior to fieldwork according to the following themes: shifts in the communities of actors in the field; changes in exchange processes and interorganisational linkages; changes in field-level regulatory structures; and finally, changes in the forms of capital at stake in the field. For Chapter III, the three additional themes described above were created. Following the contentions of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), all three of these categories were also seen as indicative of increases in the field's level of maturity. In addition, analysis of changes in these categories over

the time period of the study allowed observations to be made regarding the dominant types of isomorphic processes taking place in the field at particular times.

Although the original coding scheme for Chapter II was generated *a priori* to fieldwork, the categories explained above emerged while data were being gathered, which facilitated a “continuing dialogue” (Hargreaves, 1986) between theory and emerging data. Therefore, the codes used for this study emerged from the data, and were developed as fieldwork progressed. In this way, emerging ideas, themes, and issues were integrated into the study in order to avoid constraint to the existing theoretical concepts. For example, it was only during the process of data collection that a recognition developed of the crucial role that the mass media played in diffusing the field’s new logic. The flexibility afforded by qualitative research generally, and interview techniques specifically, allowed this important aspect to be incorporated into interviews with subsequent respondents.

Therefore, there was a conscious effort to maintain the iterative character of the research by constantly moving back and forth between theory and emerging data. Initially, secondary data were collected, and continued to be gathered throughout the course of the study. These data came from the sources listed in Chapter II, and aided in the development of avenues of investigation by providing useful background information on emerging events that partly guided which respondents were subsequently interviewed for primary data. Secondary data were also important because they illuminated some of the taken-for-granted assumptions which actors brought with them to the field. The process of gathering primary data for this investigation was also described in Chapter II, and therefore, is not repeated here.

Both the primary interview and secondary archival data were initially scanned and categorised according to the codes described in Chapter II. For Chapter III, these data were again scrutinised for particular content such as words, phrases, and incidents that allowed its further classification into the three categories explained in this section. Thus, content analysis of both secondary and primary data, according to the themes discussed, informed, for example, how the formation of new collectivities of actors impacted the level of system coupling in the field.

This was one way that the iterative character of the research process was maintained. Indeed, this “open coding” process (Miles and Huberman, 1994) facilitated a constant interplay between theory and emerging themes and issues within the data. The emergence of these themes provided the basis for analysis, and the development of a theoretical discussion to explain the role that isomorphic processes played in the diffusion of the field’s new professional logic. This discussion, and the pertinent theoretical issues thus raised, are presented in the ensuing Results and Discussion section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to dissect and explain the results of this investigation, the ensuing discussion has been presented chronologically. Therefore, as far as possible, the significant events in the professionalisation of senior English rugby union that resulted in isomorphic processes and hence, influenced the diffusion of the field’s new logic, have been presented in the order that they occurred.

Environmental uncertainty increases

The US\$555m television deal between SANZAR and News Corporation in June 1995, accelerated the pressures for professionalism that already existed throughout most of the rugby playing world (FitzSimons, 1996). However, as outlined in Chapter II, due to a heavily institutionalised amateur ethos, this was clearly not the case in England. When the IRFB opened the game to professionalism two months after the SANZAR-News Corporation deal, the reaction in England was one of profound shock. Indeed, one interviewee, a senior RFU representative at the time, described how, “we were in a fools’ paradise before professionalism came along we went into professionalism with not a clue about what it meant in financial terms.” Another interviewee, a managing director of a Division II club, discussed his club’s complete unpreparedness for professionalism, and suggested that the Paris Declaration hit his club “like a steamroller.” For the RFU, the unknown prospect of professionalism represented a latent threat to its regulatory power, and the privileged position of those who sat on its Executive Committee. When actors have a vested interest in maintaining a status quo, they will often use their resources to resist pressures for change (Leblebici et al., 1991). Therefore, the lack of preparation for professionalism in England led to the RFU’s decision to use legal coercion to unilaterally

impose a one-year moratorium on any changes to the rules regarding amateurism. This meant that clubs and players were to abide by the rules prohibiting professionalism until at least May 6, 1996.

Regularised organisational behaviours, such as those exhibited by the RFU in its attempt to effectively legislate organisational inertia, are the products of ideas, values, and beliefs that originate in the institutional environment of an organisational field (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Indeed, this type of organisational resistance to change derives from the normative embeddedness of organisations within their institutional environment (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Clearly, as exemplified by first, the incredulity with which the Paris Declaration was received by actors in England, and second, by the RFU's subsequent attempt to coerce actors' conformity to amateur norms, the institutional environment of the field at this time was characterised by predominately amateur beliefs and values. Thus, as the maturity of an organisational field is characterised by actors agreeing on a common purpose (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995), it could be argued that the organisational field of senior English rugby union, prior to the Paris Declaration, was already in a mature state. Clearly, the field's administrators were to that time united in their acceptance of organisational behaviours and structures that were underpinned by a staunchly amateur ethos.

Therefore, as the field's incumbent actors were caught unaware by the Paris Declaration, and were committed to their existing amateur operating logic, there was initially an acceptance of the RFU's moratorium on change. However, actors operating outside the field read the implications of the open game declaration quite differently. One of these external actors, property tycoon, Sir John Hall, owner of Newcastle's professional soccer, basketball, ice hockey, and motor racing teams, entered the field on September 5 1995. Hall purchased Newcastle-Gosforth Rugby Club, making it the first privately owned rugby union club in England. Prior to Hall's purchase of Newcastle-Gosforth, the club had operated on the periphery of the field, consistently placing in the lower half of Division II.

Actors operating at the periphery of a field, as Leblebici et al. (1991) contended, are often the source of such radical new practices. Indeed, Hall's purchase of a rugby union club was unprecedented in the English game, as was his subsequent dismissal of its

entire voluntary, committee-based administrative structure. Following this mass dismissal, he restructured the club in a manner that mirrored the structure of his professional soccer club, Newcastle United. Therefore, the club became a public limited company (plc) with a new name, Newcastle Falcons, with Hall installed as chief executive to oversee a new professional management structure. In complete control of the club, Hall then further defied the RFU's moratorium and signed the incumbent England captain, Rob Andrew, to a £750,000, five-year contract. Subsequently, Hall and Andrew then used lucrative, multi-year contracts, to recruit several of Andrew's former teammates from the London-based club, Wasps, and a number of international players from other senior clubs. These signings, and the outright defiance of the RFU's moratorium, sent a signal to the field that a new competitive benchmark had been set, and a powerful new actor had entered the field. In so doing, Hall's actions represented a clear threat to the legitimacy of the RFU's moratorium, and indeed, the amateur norms and values that underpinned it.

At the time of the Paris Declaration, the institutional environment of senior English rugby union had been dominated by amateur values and structures for over a century. Clubs in the top four divisions belonged to a national alliance called the National Clubs Association (NCA). However, the NCA were given only two positions on the RFU Executive Committee, which, at that time, had 57 positions in total. Therefore, the environmental demands of the amateur era meant that the linkages both among England's top clubs, and with their governing body, were relatively loose. Further, procedures for meetings and communication between these actors were predominately informal and somewhat infrequent. Clearly, in the amateur era, the field was loosely coupled and exhibited low multiplexity of ties. Having operated in this manner since the mid-nineteenth century, initial resistance in the field to the emerging professional pressures was a product of paradigm stasis. That is, the field's loose coupling and low multiplexity of ties meant that most clubs did not immediately see the need to match Newcastle's expensive benchmark, nor, given their volunteer, committee-based structures, could they have practically done so.

However, the RFU's subsequent inability to coerce Newcastle into conformity with the moratorium increased environmental turbulence and uncertainty in the field.

Administrators in a few of the clubs that lost players to Newcastle realised that, in order to retain their better technical staff, they would have to find the financial resources to ward off further predatory advances from Hall. However, the paradigm stasis after over a century of conformity to institutionalised amateur norms meant that clubs were bound by non-profit and cumbersome committee-based organisational structures. As a consequence, they were simply not structurally or strategically equipped to deal with the financial demands posed by Hall's "cherry picking" of their now valuable assets - their players. One chief executive explained that,

we weren't prepared to suddenly pay players. We never did in the amateur days. We hardly even paid them legitimate expenses. Even the international players never even got expenses for training or whatever So that did surprise us that it happened overnight and you're suddenly left with no protection for your players. And all the work you've done to build up your club over a century was suddenly exposed because the administrators of the game hadn't planned or thought it through.

Competitive pressures and isomorphic processes

With the relatively low level of interorganisational linkages in the field at the time of Hall's entrance, exchanges of strategic information among clubs were equally low. Therefore, most interviewees revealed that, following the Paris Declaration, their primary sources of information on Newcastle's activities were newspapers and television. Indeed, Hall's entry into the field, and his controversial restructuring of Newcastle, received widespread media attention in England. The mass media is a crucial agent in the diffusion of strategic innovations, and, as Hirsch (1972, p. 643) suggested, should be viewed in its "gatekeeping role as a primary institutional regulator of innovation."

Therefore, the management of some of the more traditionally high profile clubs soon realised that, given Hall's widely-publicised recruitment activities, their competitive futures would depend on their abilities to procure large amounts of revenue in an extremely short time. Though still competing in Division II, Newcastle's restructuring and recruitment of high standard players came to be viewed as essential for success in the new era. Indeed, intensified competition, particularly for resources, encourages dominant actors to adopt practices that are successful at the periphery of the field (Leblebici et al., 1991). Therefore, the decision by some clubs such as Bath and Northampton to mimic the

activities of a periphery player like Newcastle, became a pragmatic one. In this sense, mimetic behaviour by an organisation may actually be efficient in that it minimises the risk of poor performance in comparison to other organisations in the field (Kondra & Hinings, 1998). This pragmatism was typical of managers from the early-mover clubs. The chief executive of one of the first clubs to restructure after Newcastle explained that, “clubs started offering people contracts and so other clubs had to respond to that. They could’ve just sat back and not done anything, but they’d have ended up with no players at the end of the year.”

These competitive pressures prompted actors to span their boundaries in order to find ways to decrease the uncertainty over their competitive futures. This boundary spanning was augmented in November 1995, by the formation of two new collectivities of actors - English First Division Rugby (EFDR), and English Second Division Rugby (ESDR). Networks of interorganisational interaction, particularly of the type mentioned above that involve director interlocks, serve as conduits through which beliefs among actors are shared, and serve to solidify and sustain the institutional logic they engender (Oliver, 1990; 1992; Abrahamson & Fombrun, 1994). Indeed, the collectivities formed among Division I and II clubs both increased and formalised interorganisational linkages, thus tightening system coupling in the field. As EFDR and ESDR united to lobby the RFU for greater influence in how the professional game in England evolved, this led to more frequent interaction among actors. As a result, the “inbuilt” coercive isomorphism that is a feature of such interorganisational relations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), served as a mechanism for the spread of the field’s new, professional managerial logic, and further deinstitutionalised (Oliver, 1992) its former amateur one.

This growth in the field’s interorganisational linkages was aided by increased media interest in professional rugby union. Thus, by February of 1996, reacting to Newcastle’s heightened status that followed its restructuring and intense media attention, like Bath and Northampton before them, clubs such as Leicester, Saracens, and Richmond, also flouted the RFU’s moratorium and restructured as plcs. These traditionally successful clubs were eager to secure their respective places in the upper echelons of the emerging professional hierarchy, and therefore, mimicked Newcastle in their quest to compete in the increasingly aggressive player transfer market. Hence, these

competitive pressures, and the clubs' responses to them, legitimated the Newcastle-style corporate restructuring. This type of status-driven strategy diffusion was described by Abrahamson and Fombrun (1994) as a trickle-down fashion process. They suggested that the managers of higher reputation organisations, such as those mentioned above, will adopt certain "fashionable" strategies, in this case, corporate restructuring, in order to distinguish their organisations from lower reputation organisations. Therefore, in order to differentiate their clubs and cement their privileged position in the new professional hierarchy, these early-mover clubs saw restructuring along the lines of Newcastle as a pragmatic, though essential, decision. Indeed, as Kondra and Hinings (1998, p. 745) pointed out, "to have substantially different performance, it is necessary to have a substantially different organisation."

In each of the clubs mentioned above, except Leicester, which had enough members to buy shares and finance the transition, change was facilitated by the investment of high profile businessmen such as greeting cards magnate, Andrew Brownsword at Bath; newspaper millionaire, Keith Barwell at Northampton; property developer and Chrysalis chairman, Nigel Wray at Saracens; and metals and commodity trader, Ashley Levett at Richmond. In the entrepreneurial mold of Hall, and, sensing an opportunity to make money from a burgeoning professional sport, these investors became their respective clubs' major shareholders and brought with them the corporate values that had garnered them success in their business lives. Accordingly, their motivations for involvement in the game were largely profit-oriented, which was at odds with the traditional, intrinsically-motivated, amateur culture of the game. Therefore, with the mix of amateur and professional values, the field entered a period of competing logics, where senior clubs and the RFU struggled to come to grips with the new era. Referring to the values of the field's new entrants, one senior executive from the RFU explained that, "you've got cut-throat businessmen who haven't played the game. They're businessmen first and foremost by a million miles, and I think the ethos of rugby football will be pushed sideways."

Indeed, within the RFU, as became the case in several senior clubs throughout the country, change was mitigated by a power struggle between various factions intent on promoting their own respective amateur and professional agenda. As a consequence,

throughout the field the traditional amateur ethos of the game was indeed “pushed sideways.” With respect to the RFU, the infighting this caused was one of the factors responsible for its inability to enforce the moratorium on change. However, its subsequent lack of communication with the clubs as to how to proceed with professionalisation, was also due to an acute lack of experience and expertise in administering a professional sport.

Therefore, in the absence of strategic directives from the RFU, the status-driven diffusion of Newcastle-style restructuring initiatives accelerated throughout the field. Due to intense competitive pressures, this diffusion was characterised by only minor exchanges of information among actors, particularly practical information pertaining to the dynamics of professionalising formerly amateur, volunteer-led organisations. As one of the most senior RFU officials at the time explained, “I don’t know that the strategy at RFU level comprehended what it is like to be a professional club. Certainly, when I was at the RFU, my concerns were more about keeping the game together and letting the clubs survive on their own resources.” Therefore, with a lack of direction from the RFU, normative pressures rose in the field as volunteer actors searched for solutions to problems they had never encountered in the amateur era. When asked whether administrators at the RFU, as a consequence of their distinct lack of experience in administering a professional sport, also followed the lead of the early mover clubs by attempting Newcastle-style restructuring, the same executive continued,

well I did, and I was one of the ones in charge of the whole thing. And I should think that quite a lot of football came into professional rugby in the first place. Newcastle and many others said, ‘well this is the real world, and this is how it’s done and this is how we need to measure ourselves.’

The rise of isomorphic pressures

In contracting some of the country’s highest profile players, Newcastle had secured access to resources that would clearly make a positive impact on their immediate organisational performance. When an organisation deviates from institutional norms, as Newcastle clearly had, and where the potential for high performance is observed, Kondra and Hinings (1998) pointed out that coercive pressures from the field may come into play to bring the organisation back into line with institutional norms. However, on the

contrary, as noted by the RFU executive above, Newcastle and the early-mover clubs' restructuring and much-publicised expenditure on players became the legitimate criteria by which actors were to "measure themselves."

Therefore, even the field's primary regulatory power, the RFU, perceived the practices implemented by the early-mover clubs to be the "real world" of professional sport. This meant that coercive pressures by the RFU opposing the clubs' activities waned. In such periods when a new level of performance is perceived by other organisations as something to be sought after, Kondra and Hinings (1998) pointed out that mimetic forces become pivotal. In addition, by recruiting professional administrators and modeling themselves on professional soccer, normative pressures for change in the field also intensified. This created uncertainty for the clubs that were bound by paradigm stasis, as they were staffed by volunteers who administered their clubs outside of normal working hours in their spare time. When faced with such uncertainty, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that organisations may imitate the adaptive changes made by particularly large or prominent organisations in their field. Therefore, as Newcastle's actions had prompted status-driven mimetic responses from a few of the field's most respected and traditionally successful clubs, in the lead-up to the first professional season, the practice of clubs restructuring and recruiting professionals in both technical and administrative domains became widely legitimated. As a consequence, the institutional environment of senior English rugby union changed dramatically. The former amateur operating logic was "pushed sideways" by isomorphic pressures as clubs began to adopt the emerging corporate-driven, professional logic.

Therefore, the clubs that were initially gripped by paradigm stasis lost many of their key players and coaching staff to Newcastle and the early-mover clubs. Consequently, in the months preceding the first professional season, 1996/97, there was a sense of crisis in these clubs to increase financial reserves in order to restructure and stem the losses of key personnel. One former national team player, now a player agent, described the pressures in the field at the time. As he stated,

when it came down to it, there'd been a year of rumour, gossip and uncertainty, and all the contracts were to officially begin on May 6th, 1996. What had happened by then though was that everyone had been convinced by everyone else that if you had a good young lad in

the second team, someone from the next town was going to come along and sign him. So they got everything that was in the club, bolted it down, painted it in club colours, and paid it a salary.

The obvious panic in the field implied by the interviewee above highlights the fact that, despite the increase in interorganisational linkages throughout the field, there was still little accurate or practical information of a strategic nature being exchanged among clubs. Indeed, the heightened panic and misinformation in the field demonstrated that crucially, the amount of accrued knowledge being exchanged among clubs lagged behind the development of interorganisational linkages and system coupling. Therefore, while Newcastle's actions initially prompted status-driven mimetic responses from a few ambitious clubs, when these clubs then went about "poaching" players from clubs yet to professionalise, an environment of widespread uncertainty, and indeed, alarm in the later-moving clubs, flourished. During such periods of performance crisis, Oliver (1992) argued that political pressures for change arise as shared interpretations about appropriate organisational behaviours fragment. With high environmental turbulence, as more organisations adopt certain strategies, institutional pressures increase for others to follow (Huff, 1982; Porac et al., 1989).

The professional bandwagon

By the beginning of the 1996/97 season, isomorphic pressures to professionalise, combined with an increasingly competitive task environment, resulted in what Abrahamson and Rosenkopf (1993) referred to as a "bandwagon effect." With a growing number of clubs adopting the professional logic and undertaking corporate restructuring, pressure increased for other clubs to also adopt these changes. Consequently, these later-moving clubs mimicked the early-mover clubs and undertook professionalisation in an extremely *ad hoc* and haphazard manner. As Kraatz (1998) suggested, both status-driven and bandwagon imitative processes thrive under conditions where there are inadequate channels for sharing information, and where there is a reluctance among firms to do so in the first place. However, with the formation of EFDR and ESDR, there were indeed adequate *numbers* of interorganisational linkages established to facilitate exchanges of information among actors in the field. Nonetheless, in Kraatz's (1998) terms, owing to the competitive pressures for clubs to secure key technical personnel, there was a clear

reluctance to share vital strategic information, which negatively impacted the *strength* of these ties.

Thus, driven by fears of lost status, the early moving clubs attempted to enact the emerging professional logic by simply mimicking the soccer-based strategies and structures of Newcastle. A bandwagon of later moving clubs, in the absence of any meaningful strategic information from the RFU or counterparts in other clubs, mimicked both Newcastle and the early moving clubs. Significantly, interviewees reported that this mimetic behaviour occurred, not as a result of any research into the technical advantages associated with the structures and processes used in professional soccer, but more out of a fear that other clubs would successfully do so. This fear of obsolescence illustrates the contention of O'Neill et al. (1998, p. 103), that, "as more firms adopt innovations, pressure increases for other firms to adopt them."

The collective pressure that was imposed on those senior clubs that remained amateur to adopt the professional logic and its related restructuring initiatives, illustrates the coercive isomorphism that DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested stems from tighter network relations. Indeed, the remaining amateur clubs' actions were constrained by the activities of their now professional counterparts because, collectively, the professionalised clubs represented a powerful interorganisational unit. The clubs that remained amateur, therefore, felt coercive pressure to also adopt the new logic and restructure in order to maintain competitiveness and their chances of survival in the new era. Illustrating this, several executives suggested that conformity to the growing pressures for professionalisation was imperative because, as one of them stated, further delay would have meant, "being left behind the money clubs." Therefore, as clubs haphazardly mimicked the strategies and structures of other clubs, the "socially-shared beliefs" (Porac, et al., 1989), or dominant logic (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986), in the field about the emerging "marketplace" of professional rugby union, dictated that immediate professionalisation was essential for organisational survival.

Therefore, although the viability of professional rugby union in England was unknown, many club administrations embarked on hastily conceived and poorly researched programmes of professionalisation. Crucially however, Newcastle Falcons had direct linkages to professional soccer through Sir John Hall's ownership of

Newcastle United Football Club. Consequently, it was not only organisational structures that were transferred to rugby union, but Hall also mimicked professional soccer in terms of squad size and player remuneration. Therefore, in imitating the precedent set by Newcastle, clubs employed exceedingly large squads of professional players, some of whom were on salaries comparable in value to Premier League soccer players. For example, at Newcastle, Viaga Tuigimala became the first rugby union player to sign a one million pound contract. The chief executive of another club revealed that by the middle of the 1996/97 season, his club had 85 contracted players on its books. This frenetic level of recruitment heightened resource pressures in the field. Crucially however, by way of the unprecedented influx of foreign players to the English game, it also accentuated normative isomorphic pressures. Many of the players recruited by clubs such as Newcastle and the early-mover clubs were from countries such as France, Italy, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia where, prior to the Paris Declaration, “shamateur” operating practices in elite level rugby union were common. What was crucial to accelerating this normative isomorphism was the European Court of Justice’s ruling in *Belgian Football Association v. Bosman* (1996) (commonly referred to as “the Bosman case”).

Although the Bosman case arose from the world of professional soccer, it was soon recognised that the principles established in the case would apply to any sport which constituted an ‘economic activity’ – and that certainly included professional rugby union. The Bosman case had two crucial outcomes – (i) it was deemed illegal to place restrictions on the number of players from EU countries who could play for a particular club; and, (ii) it was similarly illegal to charge a ‘transfer fee’ for players who were out of contract. Over the period of time that this research was carried out, legal experts gradually realised that the significance of *Bosman* was far greater than first realised. *Bosman* rendered unlawful any practice that compromised an out-of-contract player’s freedom to move from one club in the European Union (EU) to another, or which resulted in an EU national from one member state being treated differently to one from a different member state.

This had a profound effect on clubs’ recruitment practices in that many players who were ostensibly from countries such as South Africa, New Zealand and Australia,

suddenly appeared as citizens of EU countries, claiming citizenship through ancestry. Thus, although the RFU had imposed restrictions on the number of non-EU players representing individual clubs in any given match, the Bosman case created a loophole that clubs exploited in order to increase their stocks of elite technical personnel. Ultimately, the collective normative impact of this strategic non-compliance (Oliver, 1991) by clubs was significant. A myriad of players born in non-EU countries, but who could claim EU citizenship, added to those who were recruited from countries such as France and Italy. These players brought to the field professional expectations and values that were nurtured in their respective country's "shamateur" operational structures during the amateur era.

Clearly, the resource pressure on clubs to sustain this level of expenditure on exceedingly large squads of high profile players was enormous. However, as Kraatz (1998) suggested, when imitative processes are status-driven and/or of a bandwagon nature, as was the case in professional English rugby union, later adopting organisations get little practical information from early adopters, other than the knowledge that they have adopted. Supporting Kraatz' contention, given the lack of meaningful exchanges of strategic information among clubs, later moving clubs had little option but to attempt to match these contracts if they hoped to attract and retain technical staff and thus, maintain legitimacy. Indeed, Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) argued that organisations sometimes conform to the field's rules and requirements, not necessarily for reasons of efficiency, but more, as was the case here, out of a need to enhance legitimacy.

Thus, rather than mitigating the uncertainty created by environmental change, a growing number of organisations that adopt some change or innovation, in this case, corporate restructuring and the professional logic that underpinned it, can actually increase the fears of lost legitimacy and competitiveness in the field (Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993). Nevertheless, in the unknown territory of professional rugby union, where attendance figures prior to professionalism had been at best, barely adequate, isomorphic pressures persisted, and clubs continued to restructure in attempts to match the expensive benchmark set by the first few high profile signings. Indeed, isomorphic

pressures were increased in April 1997, when the RFU signed a five-year, £87.5m deal with satellite television broadcaster, British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB).

The impact of added network resources on isomorphic processes

Crucially, the clubs negotiated with the RFU to receive £22.5m of the total television revenue, with Division I clubs receiving £500,000 more per club than the Division II clubs over the five years of the deal. In his analysis of the development of an interorganisational network in North American collegiate sports, Stern (1979) noted that the substantial revenue available from television provided a strong financial linkage among network members. He also pointed out how the financial incentive provided by television revenue represented both an increase in the multiplexity of ties and a new system resource. However, in senior English rugby union, while the B Sky B revenue did indeed add a new system resource to the field, it failed to increase exchanges of information-based normative resources in the field's multiplexity of ties. Rather, it simply added to competitive pressures for Division II clubs to get into Division I, and for Division I clubs to hold their privileged positions in order to benefit from the additional revenue on offer.

This further amplified the mimetic pressures in the field to join the professional "bandwagon," and, as a consequence, hastened change in the field's institutional norms. Increasingly, in their quest for Division I status, clubs restructured in the manner legitimated by the early-mover clubs, and in so doing, spent far more money than they received. When there is little variation in form within an organisational field, equally, there will be relatively little variation in organisational performance (Kondra & Hinings, 1998). Accordingly, by the end of the professional era's first season, even with the additional television revenue, not one club had made a profit. Indeed, most reported operating losses in excess of £1.5m (Cleary, 1997a).

One of the field's more prominent, London-based clubs, Saracens, revealed an operating loss of £2.23m for the year ended April 1997 (Cleary, 1997a). Its chief executive, Mike Smith, stated that, "We're all bleeding at the moment The loss is very high and very worrying. We knew it would be tough, but not quite this tough"(Cleary, 1997a, p.1). The fact that senior clubs were hemorrhaging money at alarming rates highlighted the fact that the milieu of isomorphic and competitive

pressures was increasingly driving clubs into debt. Therefore, although clearly inefficient, in the interests of appearing legitimate, clubs continued to conform to isomorphic and competitive pressures for professionalisation. This highlights Kondra and Hinings (1998) point that risk-averse managers may take the “safe” route and closely mimic industry norms, even when, as in this case, those industry norms are in a state of flux. Therefore, despite compliance with these isomorphic pressures for conformity, intense resource pressures prevented clubs from generating profits. As one club’s general manager pointed out,

in hindsight, it could’ve been worked out on the back of a cigarette packet - the economics of rugby. Yes, we were going to get TV money and maybe a few more sponsors, but even with that, to make the figures stack up we needed about 10,000 more people to come through the gate per week than actually did. The economics of it all were totally out of sync.

The clubs referred to above were by no means isolated cases. All of the executives interviewed admitted that their clubs’ respective tracks into professionalisation were characterised by a distinct lack of financial control. Equally, they were united in pointing out the lack of useful normative information exchanged among organisational actors during professionalisation. They also noted the *ad hoc* manner with which they undertook transition, and the extent to which they based their actions on those of competitors, which ultimately, were also of an *ad hoc* nature, and were themselves based upon the initiatives of counterparts at other clubs. The commercial director from a Division I club highlighted the lack of planning at his club during the first professional season. As he stated, “Don’t talk to me about 5-year business plans, we didn’t even have a 5-minute plan at [this club]. There was no time. We just had to do whatever we saw everyone else doing.”

In this way, the bandwagon diffusing the professional logic in English rugby union was a case of what O’Neill et al. (1998, p. 101) referred to as, “the blind leading the blind.” As Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) pointed out, uncertain environments are characterised by such behaviour, where less than fully informed organisations economise on search costs and make strategic decisions in light of the strategic decisions of other uninformed organisations. Clearly, what had started as status-driven mimetic processes when a few clubs imitated the actions of Newcastle, had developed into a

bandwagon of isomorphic responses across the rest of the league. The fears of lost legitimacy heightened competitive pressures for later moving clubs to also adopt the soccer-based characteristics of Newcastle and the early-mover clubs, which added to isomorphic pressures in the field.

Indeed, as particular organisational behaviours become “fashionable,” certain institutional stakeholders begin to *expect* managers to adopt these behaviours (Abrahamson, 1996). For example, interviewees who were members of clubs, predictably wanted their clubs to remain among the country’s elite. Therefore, when the first clubs professionalised and started signing high profile players, many of these constituents expected their respective clubs to also professionalise and secure their own high quality technical resourcesⁱⁱ. In this way, organisations are more likely to gain access to resources and survive if they obtain legitimacy, social support, and approbation from constituents in their institutional environment (Baum & Oliver, 1991; Dacin, 1997). Ultimately therefore, organisations’ life chances should be significantly improved by such organisational displays of compliance to the norms and social expectations of their institutional environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Baum & Oliver, 1991). Hence, the growing bandwagon, where clubs restructured as small businesses and employed large squads of full-time professionals, was driven by their pursuit of the resources that legitimacy *should* have conferred on them.

However, although elite level English soccer and rugby union are now both professional sports, the contextual demands and institutional environments of each are quite different. In England, soccer is actually far more popular than rugby union. In addition, as it is somewhat less physically demanding than the rugby codes, soccer governing bodies are able to schedule a greater amount of games in a larger number of competitions, which, in turn, increases revenue to the respective clubs involved. Further, with the huge popularity of soccer in England and Europe, larger squad sizes are sustainable, as are the high salaries of many of the leading players. However, while these may be suitable to the institutional environment of professional soccer, Kondra and Hinings (1998) conjectured that institutional structures and processes may be idiosyncratic to the organisational field within which they evolve. Thus, with quite different contextual and institutional demands, it was inevitable that unchecked mimetic

behaviour of the practices of professional soccer by professional rugby union clubs would prove problematic.

By the end of the 1996/97 season, all but a few of the 24 senior clubs had employed full squads of professional players and large support staffs, and 15 of these clubs were controlled by individual major shareholders. Therefore, with the heavy investment that professionalisation required, clubs' respective dominant coalitions had considerable vested interests in making their professional regimes profitable. These vested interests heightened coercive pressures for conformity to professional values and structures, as did the ongoing struggle for power between the clubs and the RFU. Indeed, this power struggle with the RFU united clubs and cemented the interorganisational linkages created by the formation of EFDR, ESDR, and EPRUC. However, unprecedented resource pressures in the field continued to limit actors' willingness to exchange vital strategic information. In such periods of low information, organisations are more likely to imitate the behaviour of actors in their network whom they know and trust (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989; Haunschild, 1993). However, with competitive pressures high, and new dominant coalitions in place throughout the field, the informal social linkages that formerly characterised relations and fostered levels of trust among actors were greatly reduced. Therefore, while system coupling had continued to grow tighter in the field, and the number of financial linkages among clubs had clearly grown, with heightened competitive pressures, the exchange of normative information-based resources in the multiplexity of ties still lagged behind.

Hence, by the beginning of the second professional season, 1997/98, in which Divisions I and II became distinct from the largely amateur leagues below, the financial plight of clubs throughout what was now "the Premiership", led dominant coalitions to look further afield for solutions to pressing financial problems. Nigel Wray, the entrepreneurial owner of the London-based club, Saracens, highlighted the difficulty facing clubs in the professional era when he stated that,

we can't go on losing money like this. Yes, I'm losing money, and yes, I'm not happy about it. If I'd have known what the costs were going to be, then maybe I wouldn't have come in. But I'm not going to walk away now (Cleary, 1997b, p. 1).

Firms with a higher reputation in an organisational field, as Abrahamson and Fombrun (1994) pointed out, will adopt new practices in order to distinguish themselves from those organisations of lower reputation. However, the lower reputation organisations will then make this innovation "fashionable" by adopting it *en masse* in order to appear more like the higher reputation organisations. In much the same way, as the early-mover clubs adopted corporate structures in their quest for high status, a bandwagon of clubs then mimicked the early movers. However, as O'Neill et al. (1998) conjectured, as diffusion of a particular practice continues, returns to it begin to atrophy. Importantly, Abrahamson (1996) contended that the resultant organisational homogeneity increases pressure on the higher reputation firms to again adopt new innovations in order to redistinguish themselves from the lower reputation organisations. In professional English rugby union, new institutional norms had resulted in the same Newcastle-style, soccer-based professional structures and processes being mimicked throughout the field. Hence, in order to redistinguish themselves from the field, and to maximise competitive advantage and minimise heavy losses, clubs such as Saracens sought new innovations.

Isomorphic effects and the social learning of adaptive responses

As mentioned earlier, the intense competition for resources among clubs limited increases in the field's multiplexity of ties. Therefore, exchanges of information-based normative resources were low. As a consequence, Saracens increased their recruitment of specialists from other professional sports such as soccer and rugby league. When organisational performance is constrained by institutional norms, Kondra and Hinings (1998) noted that organisations that deviate from those norms, as Saracens did by increasing administrative specialisation, may achieve divergent outcomes from those that conform. In late 1997, one of the specialists recruited by Wray, Peter Deakin, had formerly worked for one of the country's leading professional rugby league clubs, Bradford Bulls. Deakin, a marketing specialist, had spent five years in the United States as the general manager of an American football franchise before arriving in Bradford. In his time at Bradford, he had been credited with increasing the club's attendance threefold from 5,000 to over 15,000, while the commercial yield of the club showed a 500% increase (Cleary, 1997c). Deakin summed up his task at Saracens simply. As he stated,

I'm there to put bums on seats The extra spectators at Bradford were a new audience. If they had been rugby league fans they'd have been there anyway. It's the same with union. The crowds are small. You have to give them another reason to come. The potential is enormous (Cleary, 1997c, p. 1).

After encouraging Saracens' management to enter into a ground-sharing arrangement with the Nationwide Division One soccer club, Watford, which had a 22,000-seat stadium, Deakin introduced the innovative community-based strategies which had garnered him marketing success at Bradford. One such strategy, called the "cash-back scheme," involved the club giving blocks of tickets for home games to 147 local schools, junior clubs, and other North London-based organisations. These organisations then sold the tickets at face value and kept half of the revenue generated, returning the other half to Saracens. In the period from December 1997 to May 1998 alone, the club made £85,000 from the cash-back scheme (Malin, 1998a). Deakin also introduced a scheme in North London schools where the children of parents who became club members gained free entrance to home games. Coupled with these schemes that emphasised linkages with the local community, was the introduction of merchandising initiatives; the establishment of a club shop for merchandise and ticket sales; the provision of corporate hospitality facilities; new family and corporate membership offers; and the general repackaging of the "game day experience" complete with cheerleaders, music, a club mascot, and improved refreshment facilities. These marketing innovations increased Saracens' attendance figures by 176.6% in the 1997/98 season (Cleary, 1998). Deakin's initiatives were innovative in the English game because rugby union's traditional support base had predominately been white males in England's middle- and upper socioeconomic classes (Mintel, 1997). Conversely, the success of Saracens' initiatives was founded upon the recruitment of new segments to the game, in particular, families, females, corporate executives, and the "general sports fan".

As Saracen's success was well documented in the national press, the mass media again played a crucial gatekeeping role (Hirsch, 1972) in the diffusion of these strategic innovations. This had an important normative and mimetic effect on the field, in that another bandwagon of mimetic responses ensued, as clubs throughout the Premiership began to recruit more professionals to fill administrative roles, particularly those related

to financial control and marketing. The chief executive of one club explained Deakin's dramatic impact on the field. As he stated,

when Saracens brought Peter Deakin down here from rugby league, and he had spent some time in America, the ideas that he brought with him weren't new in terms of they hadn't been used elsewhere in the world, but they hadn't been used in rugby. They were new to rugby so they've made a difference, and we've piggybacked on that.

As well as mimicking Saracens' specialisation, particularly of marketing roles, clubs throughout the Premiership also mimicked their cash-back and schools schemes, merchandising, corporate hospitality provision, family and corporate membership offers, and game day promotions. As a result, clubs across the field began marketing to more inclusive, less traditional market segments, which legitimated the targeting of families, corporate bodies, and the ubiquitous "sports fan". In addition, normative isomorphic processes were accelerated when several clubs followed Saracens' example of entering into ground-share arrangements with professional soccer clubs. Further, in one case, two London-based Premiership competitors entered into such an arrangement with an English Super League rugby league club.

Hence, during the 1997/98 season, in the search for solutions to crippling financial problems, the management of Premiership clubs utilised formal and informal linkages with professional soccer clubs, and to a lesser extent, Premiership competitors. Such linkages among actors in a network represent conduits through which beliefs and ideas are shared (Oliver, 1990; Abrahamson & Fombrun, 1994). The linkages between rugby union and soccer clubs took the form of interlocks between boards of directors, and crucially, informal exchanges of strategic information between managers in the two sports. As one Division II club's general manager explained,

Yeah, I had meetings with the local soccer manager here . . . you know, there were no other sports that we could borrow from except soccer. So clubs that didn't plan, they borrowed from other experiences, and soccer was the only model we had.

The creation of these linkages increased the permeability of the field's boundaries, and significantly, represented tentative attempts at the social learning of adaptive responses. Therefore, some clubs not only copied the innovations of network peers, but began to exchange practical information with them on the adaptive behaviours

in question. The social learning of adaptive responses, as Kraatz (1998) noted, suggests that a focal organisation not only observes the adaptive responses and attributes of network peers, but also vicariously benefits from their experience. Thus, the focal organisation, according to this perspective, will be more discriminate in its adoption decisions, adopting only when adoption appears feasible in light of the other contingencies it faces (Kraatz, 1998). A general manager of a Premiership Division II club explained why his club co-opted the chairman of their city's Premier League soccer club onto their board of directors. As he explained,

he didn't know anything about rugby, he couldn't *spell* rugby. But he knew the business of soccer inside out. And we also looked upon it as well, what do soccer clubs do? How much do they pay? What do they provide?

As discussed earlier, the contextual and institutional demands of professional soccer and rugby union are quite dissimilar. Nonetheless, for reasons of risk aversion and legitimacy, the club referred to above implemented many of the strategic and structural suggestions made by the Premier League soccer club's chairman. However, despite these clear attempts to vicariously learn and benefit from the experience of this executive, the rugby club in question went into receivership following the 1997/98 season. Indeed, as Dacin (1997) and O'Neill et al. (1998) pointed out, the diffusion of an innovation or change is not necessarily a prerequisite for its success.

Nevertheless, this expansion in interorganisational linkages among, first, Premiership clubs and their counterparts in professional soccer and rugby league; and second, among competing Premiership clubs, clearly added to the permeability and overall structuration of the field. Processes of structuration in an organisational field lead to coercive pressures and shifts in the interaction patterns among firms, which changes the structure of interorganisational relationships (Giddens, 1979; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Accordingly, with the division of television and sponsorship revenues among Premiership clubs, actors had become more economically interdependent, particularly those that had entered into ground-sharing arrangements. As a result of this interdependence, the level of system coupling in the field was further tightened. However, perhaps the most crucial aspect of this structuration and increase in interorganisational linkages was a growth in the number and duration of the field's

multiplexity of ties, particularly those related to exchanges of information-based normative resources. This signaled a vital change in the field's institutional environment that increased the possibility of the social learning of adaptive responses.

The combination of increased linkages throughout the field, the spread of the innovative new marketing strategies described above, and a successful British Lionsⁱⁱⁱ tour of South Africa in the summer of 1997, increased average attendance across the Premiership by 22% in the 1997/98 season (Malin, 1998b). However, throughout this season, primarily due to players' persistently high wages, and despite the normative influence of specialists from other professional sports and domains, clubs continued to hemorrhage money at alarming rates. This notwithstanding, clubs continued to offer players unsustainable wages in order to at least *appear* legitimate. This was designed to attract leading technical staff, and thus enhance clubs' competitiveness in the Premiership and ultimately, increase access to resources in the form of television revenue, sponsorship and fans.

When managerial techniques or strategies diffuse throughout an organisational field, and competitive pressures are high for a return on these practices, Abrahamson (1996) suggested that frustration and despair across individuals in a collectivity can loosen normal institutional constraints on behaviour. Abrahamson (1996, p. 272) went on to note that such loosening in regularised practice leaves organisations vulnerable to unrealistic hopes that "quasi-magical solutions" will relieve their sources of frustration. In this vein, as Premiership clubs strove for a "seat at the table" of the new professional game, their former frugality and conservatism of the amateur era gave way to exorbitant spending on players in the hope of improved performance increasing their access to the resources mentioned earlier. One general manager, whose Premiership Division II club at the end of the second professional season was in receivership, £2.3m in debt, and forced to sell their ground to developers to pay off these debts, explained that,

it wasn't complicated what went wrong with us. Large amounts of money were being paid out in players' and staff wages, and no money was coming in through the gate And the reasons for that are understandable, you know - the *quest* - getting back into the First Division. The quest to get back into the First Division was paramount in people's minds - If we got back into the First Division, the sponsorship would increase, TV money would increase, and

we'd be safe because supporters want First Division rugby, they want the best players, they want the big-name players. They wanted the best players that the club could afford, or, as it turned out, could *not* afford.

Thus, despite increased interorganisational linkages and exchanges of normative-based information throughout the field, during the 1997/98 season, Premiership Division I clubs alone made a collective loss of between £20 and £24m (Gallagher, 1998). Importantly, with spiraling personnel and operating costs, the RFU were not immune from these heavy losses, and suffered a cumulative loss of £10m in the first two professional seasons (Ackford, 1998). The clubs laid part of the blame for their heavy losses on what they perceived as the RFU's ineptitude as a governing body, and its inability to reach consensus with them on how to organise the professional game. However, as the RFU had negotiated the television contract with BSkyB, the clubs were dependent on it for that financial network resource. In turn, the RFU were dependent on the clubs, particularly EFDR, for the availability of players to the national squad. Thus, while both the clubs and the RFU attempted to maintain loose coupling and autonomy from each other, their interdependence meant that they were inexorably tightly coupled, which simultaneously reduced their autonomy and increased coercive pressures on each other. The inherently contradictory nature of such interdependence in network relationships was described by Stern (1979, p. 259) as "a function of attempts by members to manage interdependence by maintaining discretion." In English Premiership rugby union, this contradictory, though interdependent relationship was inherently conflictual. As one club's general manager lamented, "the RFU couldn't organise a piss-up in a brewery." In a more specific way, the commercial manager of a Premiership Division I club highlighted the power struggle between the clubs and the RFU as a significant factor that constrained the field's overall transition into the professional era. As he stated,

one of the biggest problems I have, one of the biggest things holding us back, is all the squabbling, and the fact that we don't all appear to pull in the same direction. I mean we've been brilliant at bad press. We've got a great product here, and we don't have the problem of football-style idiots wanting to get in your face because you don't support their team . . . we should have sponsors falling over

themselves to sponsor the league, and sponsor the major clubs to add credibility.

This organisational turmoil in the field was accentuated when, one week before the commencement of the 1998/99 season, the RFU had still not released a fixture list for the season. One club acutely affected by the RFU's scheduling problems was London-based Richmond. Richmond had closely mimicked the strategic initiatives of Saracens, including spending £100,000 on a move into partnership with the Thames Valley-based soccer club, Reading. This gave Richmond access to Reading's 25,000-seat Majedski Stadium, and more importantly, the population of the Thames Valley. However, as Tony Hallett, the former RFU secretary who subsequently became Richmond's chief executive explained, "it is little short of a nightmare for us. We've got sponsors, box-holders, and everyone at the trough, but with nothing to drink. We're trying to sell ourselves to Thames Valley with nothing to sell" (Slot, 1998, p. 1).

Through the interlock of ERP, the RFU had an isomorphic mechanism to observe and learn the clubs' more professional practices and structures. Director interlocks function as important conduits of normative information about business practices (Haunschild, 1993). Consequently, like the clubs had before it, the RFU further specialised its administrative functions by recruiting a chief executive. Indeed, as Oliver (1992) pointed out, the recruitment of a new leader with alternate beliefs to organisational incumbents, is one indicator of mounting pressure for change. As a result, in October 1998, the RFU appointed a salaried chief executive - the first in its history. Significantly, the individual recruited for the post, Francis Baron, was, like Peter Deakin at Saracens, a marketing specialist.

Interorganisational linkages and isomorphic processes

Given the tighter coupling throughout the field that existed by this time, the heavy losses suffered by clubs in the first two professional seasons led to catastrophic affects for some of the Premiership's smaller clubs, many of which teetered on the edge of financial ruin. By the summer of 1998, two Premiership Division II clubs, Coventry and Moseley, had both gone into receivership with debts in excess of £2m (Gallagher, 1998). Crucially however, one of the oldest and traditionally most successful clubs in England, the 110-year-old Bristol, also went into receivership when local millionaire, Arthur Holmes,

withdrew his support of the club. His frustration at the exorbitant expense of running a professional rugby union club, as earlier shared by Nigel Wray of Saracens, led to his decision to put the club into receivership. Over the first two professional seasons, Holmes had become increasingly alarmed at the lack of return on his estimated £2m investment in the club. As he stated,

I've got a nasty feeling that there will be a domino effect. Bristol is the first major club to go and I think others will follow. There's no money to be made in professional rugby and once some of the owners realise that, they'll be gone like greased lightning. The biggest mistake they made was to compare rugby with soccer. There isn't a mass support for rugby and yet the wages paid by a lot of clubs are ridiculous. It's a joke (Jackson, 1998, p. 72).

The interlocked nature of organisations in their institutional context means that inherent pressures and prescriptions apply to all of the relevant classes of organisations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). In this respect, given the closer interorganisational linkages and tighter coupling in the field, Holmes' warning of a "domino effect" was ominous. Initially however, relatively little attention was paid to his comments regarding the mistake of comparing professional rugby union to soccer, particularly in terms of expenditure on players' wages. Rather, more credence was given to his comments regarding the lack of money to be made from professional rugby union. Thus, rather than addressing players' inflated wages, interviewees reported the importance their clubs placed on enhancing relationships with sponsors. The general manager of a Premiership Division II club explained how his club's sponsorship strategy changed in the third year of the professional era. As he explained,

well, I think the strategy now is that we're sick and tired of getting the small businesses putting a half-page ad in the programme every year. Our retention is very good in terms of small-time sponsors. But now we need some big fish. And so our strategy now is very much to get onto some major sponsorship. . . . We play at the highest level of any sporting club - football or whatever - in the area. So we're the premier club in the area, and our commercial position should be commensurate with that, but it's not at the moment.

Thus, in addition to the immediate revenue that linkages with higher profile sponsors would provide clubs, managers also focused on the favourable image and competitive advantage that such associations would create. Indeed, Miner et al. (1990)

suggested that increasing interorganisational linkages in this way plays an important role in buffering organisations from environmental disturbances. They pointed out that, particularly after organisational transformation, these linkages act as “transformational shields,” in that they supply resources such as money, people, and information (Miner et al., 1990, p. 690). However, such resources are not transacted in an interorganisational relationship without the expectation of a return on investment. Therefore, as DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested, tighter interorganisational linkages and dependency relationships may lead to coercive pressures being exerted on dependent organisations, in this case, Premiership clubs.

Indeed, in exchange for sponsorship revenue, a number of corporate sponsors imposed certain expectations on clubs pertaining to image and performance. For example, one Premiership Division I club was involved in a sponsorship agreement that stipulated that funds would only be payable if, by season’s end, it had successfully maintained its Division I status. Similar agreements were common between clubs and sponsors throughout the field. However, in order for a club to maintain this level of performance, it had to pay the contracts of sufficiently skillful technical staff, which created the need for specialists to generate the necessary revenue to do so. In this way, the increased interorganisational linkages from sponsorship activity increased both coercive and normative pressures in the field. However, by conforming to the pressures created by these expectations of performance and structure, clubs increased their chances of receiving the scarce financial resources they needed for survival.

Further, interviewees pointed to the success of diversification strategies undertaken by some of the more prestigious clubs such as NEC Harlequins and Bath. In the summer of 1998, these clubs started utilising their respective stadia facilities to diversify into businesses such as corporate hospitality, catering, and conference management. Interestingly, Francis Baron at the RFU launched similar programmes in addition to aggressive merchandising and marketing initiatives. He also diversified the RFU’s operations by taking the unprecedented step of leasing the national stadium at Twickenham for concerts by performers such as Pavarotti and Celine Dion. However, even the widespread focus on increasing linkages with organisational peers and sponsors,

and the mimicry of diversification strategies throughout the field, proved insufficient to stem the heavy losses experienced by clubs.

The “domino effect”

By January of 1999, another three clubs, Orrell, Rotherham, and West Hartlepool had gone into administration. Moreover, with attendance figures down by an average of 15% across the Premiership, many other clubs such as London Scottish, Bedford, Sale, and London Irish were also in grave financial difficulty (Ackford, 1999a). Holmes’ predicted “domino effect,” where entrepreneurs would withdraw their support of clubs once they realised that there was little if any money to be made from professional rugby union, appeared to be happening. Further, in February 1999, Ashley Levett, who had lost £6m over the three years of his involvement with Richmond (Cleary, 1999), withdrew all but 25% of his investment in the company. Subsequently, burdened by heavy debt, Richmond also went into administration. Crucially, within one week of Levett withdrawing his support of Richmond, after investing a reputed £9m in Newcastle Falcons, Sir John Hall sold his shares in the company “for a nominal sum” (Wildman, 1999). Added to this, in May 1999, another high profile entrepreneur, Frank Warren, withdrew his financial support of Bedford, thus ending his three-year involvement in the club. With tighter coupling and increased interorganisational linkages between club owners, particularly at EFDR level, Holmes’ predicted “domino effect,” had clearly materialised.

Organisations in fields are inextricably embedded in a dynamic system of interrelated economic, institutional, and ecological processes (Dacin, 1997). Therefore, the exit of some of the game’s highest profile actors, and crucially, the financial resources they brought to the field, prompted widespread rationalisation of staff and wages across the Premiership. Clearly, the institutional environment of senior English rugby union had changed yet again, and became characterised by pressures for universal rationalisation of spending on technical staff. Ultimately, this led to an excess of players on the transfer market and a downward pressure on players’ wages. Indeed, the financial difficulties of

Bristol, Moseley and Coventry alone, resulted in the redundancies of 62 professional players (Gallagher, 1998). Subsequently, dominant actors such as Leicester, Bath and Saracens cut squad sizes down to an average of 24 players, and slashed players' wages by as much as 20% (Squires, 1999). With smaller squads to administer, administration staffs across the league were also dramatically reduced. Significantly, in early 1999, the RFU's chief executive, Francis Baron, also streamlined the RFU's cumbersome committee-based structure from 56 committees down to four, making 30 staff members redundant in the process. It appeared that actors across the field were finally developing a consensus on what constituted rational and sustainable expenditure.

The emergence of a "collective vision"

With sustained financial crises across the field, consensus rose among managers that the unprecedented number of clubs falling into receivership would discourage new investors. Indeed, as Haveman (1993) noted, the presence of successful incumbents in a market will legitimate that market and make it more attractive to potential investors. Therefore, in March 1999, in a move designed to rationalise clubs' spending, EFDR introduced regulated programmes of rationalisation in an effort to bolster the game's financial viability. This came in the form of an announcement that a salary cap would be placed on players' wages, with sanctions such as fines to be imposed on those clubs in breach of it. The chief executive of EFDR, Howard Thomas, explained that,

There was no collective vision earlier We spent too much as an industry on players. We overcooked it. We acknowledge that, but the harsh decisions we have taken to impose a £1.8m squad wage cap, reducing to £1.5m in year two, will bring the cost base down. We're committed to ploughing 30% of revenue into improving stadia and developing players. We've agreed to centralise areas such as ticket sales and marketing These measures will enable owners to invest even more money long term (Ackford, 1999, p. 12s).

More controversially, in May 1999, in an attempt to reduce the Premiership's First Division from 14 clubs to 12, EFDR forced the merger of the financially crippled clubs, Richmond, London Scottish and London Irish. Defending EFDR's action, its chairman Tom Walkinshaw stated that, "these regulations are meant to be punitive. We must at all costs keep the financial integrity of the Premiership" (Gallagher & Cleary, 1999, p. 1).

Such structural shifts in an organisational field that lead to a tighter system coupling and increased multiplexity of ties, as Oliver (1990) suggested, lead to cohesion, hegemony, mutual reinforcement, and high integration among actors in that field. The sharp increase in the use of coercive pressures by EFDR supported Oliver's contention, in that these actions were motivated by a "collective vision." Thus, the crucial increase in exchanges of information-based normative resources prompted a collective concern in the field about securing the Premiership's long-term financial viability. Inherent in this key expansion in the field's multiplexity of ties was a new willingness among clubs to share vital strategic information, and the corporate interlocks of EFDR and ESDR finally fulfilled their potential to facilitate these types of normative transfers.

Researchers such as Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) and Haunschild (1993), suggested that decision-makers are more likely to copy the actions of network partners whom they know and trust. However, these theorists failed to note the temporal dimension involved in developing this knowledge and trust when a field has undergone unprecedented change. When English rugby union went professional, there was an initial normative effect when many of the field's volunteer administrators were replaced with full-time professionals. However, further normative isomorphic influence was impeded because it took two seasons and sustained financial crises for the knowledge and trust referred to by Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) and Haunschild (1993) to develop. The chief executive of one club explained how, by 1998/99, his process of selecting appropriate strategies to "borrow" differed to the two seasons that preceded it. As he explained,

we do our research now. And certainly, [the club's commercial manager] goes all over the place talking to different commercial managers at clubs such as Saracens. And yes, we have mimicked, copied a lot of their schemes, particularly like the schools project - free tickets for kids whose parents join. Lots of things like that - family memberships.

Implicit here is a significant increase in the dialogue between clubs. Clearly, when commercial managers "go all over the place" talking to Premiership colleagues, there is an implied level of cooperation among the parties involved. As Kraatz (1998) argued, status-driven and bandwagon imitation processes thrive under conditions of low information, while equally, they are mitigated by stable social relationships such as that

facilitated by consortia. Thus, the willingness of innovative clubs such as Saracens to participate in and foster these interorganisational linkages was crucial. This cooperation indicates that the type of mimetic behaviours taking place by the third season of the professional era were no longer the status-driven and bandwagon processes that dominated the first and most of the second season. Rather, when managers went “all over the place” to exchange strategic ideas with competitors in their institutional environment, this signified a crucial increase in the informational ties binding network partners to each other. This increase in the field’s multiplexity of ties and the opportunities for regular, informal interaction facilitated the development of personal relationships and trust between managers. These exchanges of normative information, and the vicarious learning that they engendered, indicate that by the third season of professionalism, mimetic isomorphic processes throughout the field were characterised by the social learning of adaptive responses.

This increase in the productive use of interorganisational linkages by dominant coalitions was facilitated by the recognition by clubs that they were involved in a collective mission. That is, managers finally recognised that the production of a financially viable and sustainable professional sport depended upon having a strong *league* of clubs, rather than one or two clubs that dominated the field. One interviewee, a Division I club’s chief executive and also an EFDR director, highlighted this fact. By implication, he also noted the normative role that Saracens’ marketing executive, Peter Deakin, played in facilitating this realisation. As he pointed out,

One of the major truisms is that it is absolutely vital in the development of us as a professional sporting industry to say that we need 11 or 12 other clubs to be strong. There’s no point in [this club] being the top dog in a very weak league And that’s the line that Saracens took in that they were prepared to share their knowledge, because if Saracens were going to be strong, they needed the other clubs to be strong also.

Therefore, the intense financial crises through the first two professional seasons, and the subsequent exit of key actors and crucial network resources, led to a recognition by dominant coalitions of the importance of producing a financially viable professional sport. By the 1998/99 season, mimetic processes and the adoption of a professional logic “at all costs” gave way to coercive and normative processes that encouraged

rationalisation and consolidation. A crucial aspect of these isomorphic processes was that the amount of strategic intelligence connecting clubs increased, and an acceptance by actors that they were involved in a common enterprise developed. Significantly, this further increased the field's multiplexity of ties, particularly the exchange of crucial knowledge- and information-based normative resources. DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and later, Scott (1995), pointed out that the maturity of an organisational field involves a process whereby actors become aware that they are inextricably linked in the pursuit of a common endeavour. This type of awareness by the significant actors in the field of senior English rugby union indicated that isomorphic processes played an integral role in the field's maturity, particularly in terms of the normative isomorphism that produced the development of texture in the multiplexity of ties. That is, while the formal interorganisational linkages that were established early in the field's transition did indeed tighten system coupling, it was the later development of more informal social networks that facilitated meaningful exchanges of information-based resources. This, in turn, enabled the social learning of adaptive responses, and the ultimate growth in the maturity of the field.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter focused on the isomorphic mechanisms by which a professional dominant logic diffused throughout the organisational field of senior English rugby union. In particular, analysis focused on the role and nature of mimetic, normative and coercive processes in diffusing the new logic, and how these subsequently influenced the maturity of the field. Throughout the course of the investigation, interorganisational linkages grew in strength and number. In the first, and throughout most of the second professional season, linkages were formal in nature, and involved little of the informal social interaction that fosters the knowledge and trust that researchers such as Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) and Haunschild (1993) suggested are crucial to the development of social networks.

In addition, high turnover of dominant coalitions throughout the field inhibited the development of social network linkages. Therefore, in the first two professional seasons, managers' primary means of learning the innovations of competitors was through the mass media. As a result, managers got little practical normative information from

network partners about the innovations they adopted, other than the bare knowledge that they had in fact adopted. While the establishment of formalised interorganisational linkages facilitated exchanges of financial network resources, due to intense competitive pressures, exchanges of vital information-based normative resources were limited. Diffusion of the new logic in this period was therefore of an *ad hoc* nature and the mimetic processes involved resembled what O'Neill et al. (1998) referred to as "the blind leading the blind." Therefore, support was found for Kraatz's (1998) contention that, in periods of low information, bandwagon and status-driven mimetic behaviours are more predominant than socially learned adaptive behaviours.

By the third professional season however, the field showed clear signs of maturity. This was demonstrated by the recognition among actors, particularly those clubs constituting EFDR, that they were involved with network partners in a common enterprise - the production of a financially viable *league* of professional rugby union clubs. The role of interorganisational linkages and coercive processes among clubs, sponsors, the RFU, EFDR and ESDR, were integral in facilitating the social learning of adaptive responses, and ultimately, growth in the field's maturity. Crucially, it was found that the development of informal interpersonal networks of actors, what Kraatz (1998) referred to as "high-capacity information links," were central in facilitating information exchanges and the social learning of adaptive responses. Supporting the findings of Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) and Haunschild (1993), these social networks ultimately allowed actors to develop a mutual understanding that, primarily for their own organisational survival, they *had* to exchange information and learn to work together. This highlights an important extension to these theorists' work. The results of this study suggest that when a deeply institutionalised dominant logic changes, unless explicit field-level efforts are devoted to fostering some degree of collective vision, interorganisational conflict and prolonged crises may result. Indeed, it may be that conflict and crises are crucial antecedents to the development of the informal linkages by which actors exchange practical information of a normative type, and by which they ultimately generate this collective vision and agree upon a common enterprise. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) noted that the maturity of an organisational field is indicated when such mutual awareness develops among actors in a field. It may be at this point that the old logic has

been completely unlearned (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995), or deinstitutionalised (Oliver, 1992), and the new logic has become, in effect, a *dominant* logic.

Scott (1995) suggested that organisational fields evolve through a life cycle that includes processes of emergence, persistence, and dissolution. This research has shown that processes of maturation in organisational fields may not always take place in this unilinear fashion. Indeed, this field emerged and persisted in a mature state for over a century before an external event, the Paris Declaration, jolted it back to the emergent stage, which was characterised by technical and competitive performance pressures. As a field grows in maturity, Tolbert and Zucker (1983) pointed out that the importance of technical performance requirements give way to salient institutional pressures. Accordingly, in senior English rugby union, isomorphic processes resulted in shared expectations of appropriate organisational behaviour emerging and becoming institutionalised throughout the field. Technical performance pressures espousing unrestrained and indeed, destructive, competition in the first two years, gave way in the third to institutional pressures that promoted a consolidation of the game's infrastructure and future development.

Given the scope of the present chapter, it was not possible to analyse in-depth how the institutional pressures caused by the diffusion of the field's new professional logic affected individual clubs. Nor was it possible to study in any real depth the strategic responses of an individual club to these mounting pressures. Thus, Chapter IV will be a case study analysis of a club that struggled for survival in the new era. In so doing, the institutional and competitive pressures the club was exposed to, and importantly, how its dominant coalition responded to these, will be explored.

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CHAPTER IV - STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF STRATEGIC CHANGE IN A RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL CLUB

In Chapter II, it was demonstrated that the dominant logic of the organisational field of senior English rugby union dramatically changed following the IRFB's Paris Declaration in September 1995. Chapter III narrowed the focus by examining isomorphic processes in the diffusion of this logic among the organisations constituting the field. To concentrate the focus even further, Chapter IV identifies the factors that influenced how one senior club strategically responded to institutional processes caused by the onset of professionalism. Specifically, the work of Oliver (1991) has been utilised as the basis for a case study to show how one club responded to institutional pressures for change. This chapter also builds on the study by O'Brien and Slack (1999) that investigated the process of deinstitutionalisation in the professionalisation of a formerly amateur rugby union club. In particular, it will be discerned if, and how, the process of deinstitutionalisation impacted the strategic responses of the focal club.

For over a century, like all English rugby union clubs, the club that forms the focus of this study was founded upon strictly amateur values, with volunteers fulfilling all of its administrative and technical roles. Predictably, over such a long period, these amateur values and ways of operating became heavily entrenched and taken-for-granted. When values, such as amateurism, and their related operating procedures are validated through the force of habit, history, and tradition, they become unquestioningly accepted and thereby, institutionalised (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1992). One aspect of this institutionalisation was the evolution of volunteer, committee-based decision-making structures in clubs, which came to embody the game's amateur ethos. In the focal club in this study, the pinnacle of its committee structure prior to professionalisation was a 24-member management committee, annually elected from the club's 600 volunteer members. The management committee met monthly, and was the forum at which all of the club's major strategic decisions were made. Numerous sub-committees reported to the management committee on aspects such as team selection, social functions, fundraising, accounts and finance, ground maintenance, food and beverage roles, membership, junior development, and all of the other aspects of club life. Therefore, members' centrality to the functioning of the club meant that they felt a keen

sense of “ownership”, and were deeply attached to its amateur values and operating procedures.

Of course, this was also the case in the organisational field in which the club was embedded. As was explained in the previous chapters, the depth to which the amateur ethos was institutionalised in English rugby union resulted in a degree of insulation from the growing ambivalence to professionalism in other parts of the world. Thus, when the collectivity of South African, New Zealand, and Australian Rugby Unions (SANZAR) signed a \$US555m deal with News Corporation in June 1995, and the SANZAR Unions subsequently endorsed professionalism for their respective players, initially, it made little impact on the game in England. Indeed, the deal and its ramifications were summarily dismissed as an irrelevance by the RFU and many English rugby union officials (Malin, 1997). This meant that the Paris Declaration was quite unexpected to most administrators in English rugby union clubs, as was the RFU’s subsequent acceptance of this initiative.

As a result, the Paris Declaration caused unprecedented turmoil in the institutional environment of senior English rugby union. The institutional environment encompasses social forces such as norms, standards, and expectations common to all of an organisation’s relevant constituents (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Pressures from the institutional environment influence managers to incorporate institutionally favoured characteristics in the hope that their organisation will be judged as appropriate and legitimate, hence improving their access to valuable resources. In senior English rugby union, following the Paris Declaration, institutional pressures were such that, for clubs to maintain legitimacy, they had to professionalise in order to gain access to financial resources. These financial resources in turn allowed the procurement of vital technical resources, that is, high quality players and coaches.

Indeed, how clubs strategically responded to the institutional pressures in their field, and went about securing the resources just mentioned, was crucial to their organisational survival in the new era. As clubs increasingly chose to acquiesce to the field’s emerging professional logic, they were confronted with more than simply paying players. There were other, more complex factors to be dealt with in the professionalisation of formerly amateur, volunteer-led organisations. Indeed, with long histories of organisation and competition founded upon amateur values and volunteer

decision-making, many clubs had parochial support communities that went back several generations. The support community of the club in this study, and the administrative structures it engendered, had never dealt with change of the magnitude required for professionalisation. Volunteers had carried out their administrative and technical functions with relative autonomy for generations. This meant that, due to the unknown prospect that professionalism represented, some organisational actors had a vested interest in resisting institutional pressures for professionalisation.

In recent years, researchers have highlighted the role of agency in responding to institutional pressures (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988; Oliver, 1991; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Greenwood & Hinings, 1993, 1996; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). For example, Oliver (1991) pointed out that, while approaches suggesting passive conformity to institutional pressures are intuitively appealing, they neglect complex organisational issues and processes. She suggested that the traditional institutional view ignores the role of “interest-seeking active organisational behaviour” (Oliver, 1991, p. 146). To this end, she proposed that organisational behaviours may vary in response to institutional pressures from passive conformity or acquiescence, to compromise, avoidance, defiance, or finally, proactive manipulation. Thus, what Oliver offered was a typology of strategic responses and the predicted conditions under which organisations may resist institutionalisation.

Within the sport management literature, and indeed, in the broader field of management and organisation studies, empirical studies have neglected how resistance to institutional pressures becomes manifest in cases of strategic change. Thus, using a case study approach, this chapter will provide an empirical analysis of the roles of active agency and choice in the strategic behaviours employed by an English Premiership rugby union club in response to the institutional forces acting upon it. Such an empirical investigation of differential strategic responses to institutional pressures affords an opportunity to examine and extend some of the theoretical ideas put forward by Oliver (1991), thus offering a new direction to the literature on strategy in sport organisations. The literature underpinning this research will be explored in the next section, and will lead to a discussion of the methods employed in carrying out the investigation. Following

this, the findings of the study will be presented. The paper is then finished with some brief concluding comments.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The institutional environment encompasses social forces such as norms, standards, and expectations common to all of an organisation's relevant constituents (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). These constituents include interest groups, regulatory bodies, suppliers, state and professional associations, customers, and the general public (Oliver, 1991, 1997; Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1995; Hoffman, 1999). Institutional constituents create rules, routines, and expectations that over time, come to define legitimacy in that particular institutional environment (Scott, 1987). A number of theorists have suggested that pressures from the institutional environment have a particularly cogent influence on an organisation's strategic, structural and normative characteristics (Selznick, 1957; Berger & Luckman, 1967; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; DiMaggio, 1988; Dacin, 1997). According to Scott (1987, p. 507), institutional pressures may become manifest in the form of "taken for granted beliefs and widely promulgated rules that serve as templates for organising." Indeed, Dacin (1997, p. 46) pointed out that these include those "arising from broadly based sociocultural norms as well as pressures from connections among organisations, such as dependency and political pressures." Thus, institutional influences direct managers to incorporate institutionally favoured normative characteristics in the hope that their organisation will be judged as appropriate and legitimate, hence improving access to valuable resources (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Dacin, 1997).

A basic tenet of institutional theory is that this quest for legitimacy underpins the process of institutional isomorphism, where organisations are pressured to increase their probability of survival by conforming to institutionally prescribed expectations of appropriate organisational arrangements (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Zucker, 1987). As explained in Chapter III, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that institutional isomorphism consists of coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures that result in organisations becoming increasingly homogenous in structure and strategy. Thus, decision-makers structure organisational arrangements and behaviours so that they become isomorphic with those in the wider institutional environment. By

demonstrating conformity to the pressures of the institutional environment, the organisation increases its legitimacy and thus, helps to secure access to the resources it needs to function (Hinings & Greenwood, 1988).

However, some theorists have criticised the institutional perspective for its assumption of organisational passivity (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988; Oliver, 1991; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). These researchers proposed that the perception of institutionalisation as a subtle, long-term phenomenon wherein organisations automatically conform to societal expectations is simplistic. Indeed, Greenwood and Hinings (1996, p. 4), suggested that institutional theory is, “silent on why some organisations adopt radical change whilst others do not, despite experiencing the same institutional pressures.” Rather than perceiving of organisations as passive receptors of changing institutional pressures, these researchers have highlighted the role of agency in organisations’ strategic responses to these pressures. Indeed, transformation processes in general, regardless of their impetus, are the result of decisions made by people, not clandestine, mysterious mechanisms (Schreyogg, 1980). Empirically demonstrating this, Kikulis et al. (1995) showed how the strategic responses of a group of organisations to institutional pressures for change differed according to how members of individual organisations interpreted and enacted these pressures. Therefore, as well as interorganisational pressures, *intraorganisational* pressures, organisational power structures, and the aspirations of key actors are also important considerations in discussing organisations’ strategic responses to institutional processes (Oliver, 1991, 1992; Kikulis et al., 1995; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996; Hoffman, 1999).

Interestingly, Goodrick and Salancik (1996) argued that the essential premise of the institutional perspective should not be discounted, and that actors do indeed, at times, act without choice or forethought due to completely taken-for-granted institutionalised practices. However, they proposed that such conditions of complete and uncontested institutionalisation are rare, and that in most cases, interests act in tandem with the constraint provided by existing institutions in the selection of organisational practices. Therefore, when the institutional environment enters periods of uncertainty, and hence, is

insufficient for constraining choices, interests become significant in filling this role. As they suggested,

institutions exist as the context within which interests operate, and organisational interests will be reflected in practices most when the institutions guiding those practices are most uncertain.

Organisational interests thus interact with institutional uncertainty to produce variations in practice (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996, p. 5).

Clearly, from this perspective, conformity or resistance to pressures in the institutional environment is a product of strategic choices that are significantly impacted by the vested interests of actors (Child, 1972). Therefore, the organisation will conform if compliance “confers legitimacy that is valued relative to the resources associated with contrary alternatives” (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996, p. 3). In this view, as Kondra and Hinings (1998) pointed out, rather than being “blinded” by institutional pressures for conformity, the level of organisational compliance or resistance employed is a purely pragmatic decision made for functional reasons. In a similar vein, rather than universal conformity, Oliver (1991) offered a typology of strategic responses in which organisations might engage as a result of institutional pressures toward homogeneity. These alternative strategies ranged from passive conformity, to compromise, avoidance, defiance, and finally, proactive manipulation. Oliver (1991) also hypothesised that certain institutional antecedent factors could be used to predict the occurrence of the proposed alternative strategies, and the degree of organisational conformity or resistance to institutional pressures. These factors included: the *cause* of the institutional pressures for conformity; the *constituents* affected by these pressures; the actual *content* of the pressures; the inherent institutional *control* mechanisms; and finally, the environmental *context* within which the pressures become manifest.

Oliver’s (1991) approach is particularly appropriate for this study because, as was discussed earlier, the institutional environment of senior English rugby union became increasingly turbulent following the Paris Declaration. Thus, by analysing salient features of the pressures themselves, a deeper understanding of the rationale underpinning the focal organisation’s strategic response to them can be developed. Each of the proposed institutional antecedents offered by Oliver (1991), and the related strategic responses, are discussed in more detail below.

Institutional antecedents to strategic responses

Cause: The first of Oliver's (1991) predictors addressed the underlying rationale, expectations, or intended objectives of the institutional pressures for conformity. Oliver suggested that the factors leading external actors to exert pressures for conformity are essentially founded upon the pursuit of social and/or economic fitness. Thus, the lower the degree of social legitimacy or economic gain forecast to be attainable from conformity to institutional pressures, the greater the likelihood of organisational resistance to them. For example, as discussed in Chapter II, when the RFU attempted to constrain the activities of senior clubs by imposing a one-year moratorium on change to the amateur status quo, some of the more high profile actors in the field felt that conformity to these pressures would unduly impact their ability to compete in the professional era. Therefore, in the interests of maintaining competitiveness, which would also enhance legitimacy and revenue generation, these clubs defied the RFU's pressures for conformity to amateur operations. Thus, when institutional objectives are perceived by certain actors to be at cross-purposes with their interests, a degree of organisational scepticism about the perceived utility of acquiescent strategic responses may be aroused. This increases the likelihood of resistance to institutional pressures for conformity, and as a consequence, actors may employ strategies and tactics designed to avoid, defy, or manipulate the pressures exerted on them.

However, legitimacy may be perceived by organisational actors to be enhanced by conformity. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that when organisational prestige and resources are used to entice professionals, homogenisation is likely as organisations provide the same benefits and services as their competitors. In this sense, the organisation's decision-makers pragmatically choose (Kondra & Hinings, 1998) to acquiesce to pressures for conformity by employing tactics such as compliance or imitation. Therefore, when organisational actors forecast that succumbing to institutional pressures for conformity will improve social or economic fitness, they are more predisposed to employ acquiescent strategic responses (Oliver, 1991).

Constituents: Institutional constituents can include the state, regulatory bodies, professional associations, interest groups, and the general public (Oliver, 1991; 1997; Kikulis et al, 1995; Hoffman, 1999). As such, these actors may impose a variety of laws,

regulations, and normative expectations on the individual organisation that effectively define its social reality (Scott, 1987). For example, in senior English rugby union, institutional constituents include regulatory bodies such as the International Rugby Football Board (IRFB), the RFU, English First Division Rugby (EFDR), English Second Division Rugby (ESDR), and England Rugby Partnership (ERP). In this context, institutional constituents also include interest groups formed by benefactors/owners, clubs, and fans; professional associations such as the Professional Rugbyplayers Association (PRA); and finally, clubs' members/shareholders/season ticket holders, sponsors, broadcast and media bodies, and the general public.

Clearly, with various institutional constituents, organisations confront pressures from multiple and sometimes conflicting sources. Oliver (1991, p. 162) referred to this situation as multiplicity, "the degree of multiple, conflicting, constituent expectations exerted on an organisation." As the values, structures and operating procedures in organisations become institutionalised, periods of change are inclined to meet with various degrees of organisational resistance or inertia (Bartunek, 1984; Oliver, 1992). Indeed, as Kondra and Hinings (1998) noted, when actors in a field have been subjected to strong and prolonged pressures for conformity, when conditions change, these actors may be incapable of perceiving the need for change, even in the face of imminent threats. They referred to this condition as "paradigm stasis." Resistance to pressures for change may be more proactive however, and can become manifest when constituents with an economic, social or emotional stake in maintaining a status quo seek to protect their vested interests by attempting to manipulate the pressures exerted on them (Haveman, 1993). For example, if conflicting institutional pressures arise simultaneously from constituents both external and internal to the organisation, the resultant strategic response may involve tactics that balance these interests in some form of compromise strategy.

Another limitation on the likelihood of organisational conformity to the expectations of institutional constituents, is the degree to which the organisation is dependent on these constituents for valued resources and/or approval (Oliver, 1991). When external dependence on the constituents exerting pressure is low, the probability of resistance to these pressures increases. For example, in Chapters II and III, it was discussed how Sir John Hall financed the professionalisation of Newcastle Falcons in

spite of institutional pressures exerted by the RFU to maintain amateur operations. As the club was not solely dependent on the RFU for financial resources, it was able to openly defy the governing body's moratorium on change with tactics that dismissed, challenged and attacked the credibility of its amateur stance.

In such processes of radical organisational change, as organisations confront multiple pressures from constituents with disparate vested interests, the collective normative order of the institutional environment may become fragmented (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In addition, as Greenwood and Hinings (1993) suggested, institutional pressures may provide inconsistent cues to the organisation when they originate from various sources. They contended that this lack of clarity and focus could lead to "idiosyncratic interpretation," where the organisation either deliberately attempts to avoid conformity, or unwittingly interprets the institutional cues wrongly (Greenwood & Hinings, 1993; p.12). In her empirical account of philosophical and structural change in a religious order, Bartunek (1984) proposed that when institutional pressures are exerted from multiple sources, change is affected through a dialectical process among constituents. She suggested that change is mediated in this dialectical process by the emotional reactions of organisational members. Her contention was that old and new ways of understanding interact, finally resulting in a synthesis of interests. In Oliver's (1991) terms, it would be expected that in such situations, compromise strategies would prevail with tactics that balance or pacify the concerns of institutional constituents.

Content: Oliver (1991) posited that two dimensions of the content of institutional pressures for conformity are key to predicting the likelihood of organisational resistance and the use of alternative strategies. The first is related to the consistency of organisational goals with institutional pressures; and the second pertains to the degree of discretionary constraint that compliance imposes on the organisation.

Organisations are more likely to resist institutional pressures if conformity carries with it requirements or norms that are inconsistent with organisational goals. Therefore, when consistency between conformity and organisational goals is low, defiance and manipulation strategies are predicted to be most common. When there is moderate consistency, organisations will be more willing to employ compromise and avoidance strategies; and finally, only when contextual pressures or expectations are

accordant with internal organisational goals, are acquiescent strategies more probable. In Chapter III for example, it was demonstrated that as attendance figures fell throughout the English Rugby Union Premiership in the 1998/99 season, pressures grew for clubs to supplement attendance revenue with diversification into areas such as corporate hospitality and merchandising. As these pressures were consistent with clubs' organisational goals to enhance economic performance, most acquiesced and diversified their activities.

Significantly, Thibault, Slack and Hinings (1991) demonstrated that, even within organisations, differential levels of conformity to institutional pressures are possible. These researchers studied volunteer-led national sporting organisations that were subjected to institutional pressures for increased bureaucratic control in their respective organisations. Interestingly, they suggested that organisations responded by increasing bureaucratic control differentially across organisational systems. Specifically, they found that, despite pressures being applied to organisations as complete entities, those systems concerned with technical areas showed greater increases in bureaucratic control than administrative systems. Therefore, a commonality between institutional and organisational expectations with respect to technical systems was displayed, thus resulting in the employment of acquiescent strategies. However, with respect to administrative systems, there appeared to be less consistency between institutional and organisational goals, hence, the employment of more resistant strategies. This highlights the role of agency in organisational responses to institutional processes in that decision-makers may pragmatically choose which pressures to respond to, and indeed, which organisational systems to adjust (Oliver, 1991; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996; Kondra & Hinings, 1998).

However, when conformity to institutional pressures precludes or impedes decision-making autonomy within an organisation, Oliver (1991) suggested that the likelihood of resistance to these pressures is heightened. In the same vein, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) pointed out that compliance sometimes involves a loss of organisational freedom, and an admittance of limited autonomy. Organisational decision-making is one of an organisation's high impact systems in that it embodies the organisation's central values (Kanter, 1984). Thus, significant change to a dominant

coalition's decision-making autonomy sends powerful signals to the rest of the organisation. Several researchers have investigated the affect that the employment of professional staff has on decision-making in volunteer-led sporting organisations (Beamish, 1985; Thibault et al., 1991; Kikulis et al., 1995; Auld & Godbey, 1998). Interestingly, Kikulis et al. (1995) found evidence that, despite intense pressure to conform to the expectations of a state body, actors in a group of sport organisations did not uniformly acquiesce to these pressures. Indeed, with the state intent on increasing its influence in the day-to-day running of the focal organisations, some actors maintained organisational discretion by engaging in compromise strategies that placated constituents and accommodated the pressures for conformity. Some other actors were more active in their resistance and disguised their non-conformity by employing avoidance strategies and concealment tactics, what Meyer and Rowan (1977) called "ceremonial conformity." The employment of these alternative strategies allowed the respective dominant coalitions to maintain some level of organisational discretion, while also accommodating, to a lesser degree, the pressures for conformity. Therefore, as Oliver (1991) noted, the level of resistance within an organisation to institutional pressures for conformity will vary in accordance with its associated loss of decision-making autonomy. Alternatively, when compliance to institutional pressures involves little or no constraints on organisational discretion, the employment of acquiescent strategies is likely.

Control: Two singular processes constitute institutional control: legal coercion and voluntary diffusion (Oliver, 1991). Both processes pertain to the mode by which pressures are imposed on organisations, or the mechanisms through which institutional rules are administered (Oliver, 1991; Ingram & Simons, 1995).

When law mandates compliance to institutional pressures, the penalties for non-compliant strategies may be punitive and rigidly enforced, making non-compliance an unlikely option. Thus, when legal coercion is high, acquiescent strategies will best advance organisational interests. When sanctions for nonconformity are more modest, organisations will be more inclined to seek concessions on the extent and/or temporal scale of compliance. In Chapters II and III for example, it was demonstrated that the RFU failed to impose punitive sanctions on clubs that chose to breach its one-year

moratorium on change to the rules involving professionalism. Therefore, with clear performance benefits and no discernible punitive consequences from non-compliance to the RFU's moratorium, several clubs employed defiant strategies and a professional logic began to diffuse throughout the field.

Theorists have argued that an increase in the voluntary diffusion of norms or practices in an organisational field reflects their increasing legitimacy and acceptance (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Oliver, 1991; Ingram & Simons, 1995; Scott, Mendel & Pollack, 1996). Underlying this point, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) put forward the notion of mimetic isomorphism, which occurs when conditions of uncertainty lead organisations to copy the actions of other organisations perceived to be successful. Indeed, O'Neill, Poudel and Buccholtz (1998, p. 104) pointed out that "a firm's set of competitors and suppliers is its closest source of ideas." By reproducing institutional norms, organisations seek to gain legitimacy and secure access to resources, thus increasing their probability of survival (Greenwood & Hinings, 1993; Dacin, 1997). Therefore, when the degree of voluntary diffusion of an organisational practice in an institutional environment is high, organisations will be likely to acquiesce to pressures to adopt these practices. Conversely, under conditions of only moderate or low levels of diffusion, organisations will tend to be more sceptical and therefore, hesitant to conform, particularly when values and practices have not been institutionally validated through extensive mimicry (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay & King, 1991; Haveman, 1993).

Context: The last of Oliver's (1991) predictors of organisations' strategic responses to institutional processes, pertains to the environmental context within which pressures are exerted. She hypothesised that two significant contextual dimensions affect organisations' conformity or resistance to institutional demands. The first is environmental uncertainty, and the second is the level of interconnectedness between organisations in an institutional environment.

Clearly, institutional environments are not always unitary or coherent, and are often characterised by uncertainty (Oliver, 1991; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996; Oakes, Townley & Cooper, 1998). White (1992) suggested that "institutional war" is waged among field-level constituents where politics, agency relationships, and vested interests

determine the formation of the institutions that guide organisational behaviour (Hoffman, 1999). Moreover, Goodrick and Salancik (1996) suggested that there may be gradations in institutionalisation in different environments where institutional beliefs and standards range from wholly accepted and uncontested, to highly contested and uncertain. Therefore, a range of particular strategies may be legitimate within a particular institutional context, depending upon the level of institutional uncertainty. For example, Oliver (1997) found that under conditions of high regulatory stringency, that is, where pressures from the institutional environment were particularly powerful, organisations enhanced profitability by employing acquiescent strategies and tactics such as imitation and compliance. She also noted that in periods of high competition, task environment pressures may take precedence over institutional pressures. In a similar vein, Scott (1991, p. 170) argued that organisational action is not influenced by institutional forces alone, but by a variety of market-led and other exogenous forces that, “compete for the loyalties of any organisation.” By extension, Dacin (1997) suggested that institutional forces might actually accelerate any economic processes that may have been occurring.

In addition to the level of environmental uncertainty, Oliver (1991) also contended that strategic activity is affected by the level of interconnectedness between organisations in an institutional context. For example, it was demonstrated in Chapter III that, as interorganisational linkages increased in strength and number in the Premiership, dominant coalitions attempted to reduce uncertainty and establish legitimacy by mimicking the strategies of clubs that were perceived of as prominent or successful. Therefore, with more interorganisational linkages and high diffusion of corporate restructuring, this became the legitimate strategic response to environmental uncertainty in the field. As Dacin (1997; p. 48) noted, “organisations within the same population facing the same set of environmental constraints will tend to be isomorphic to one another and to their environment because they face similar conditions.” Therefore, when environmental uncertainty is high, managers are likely to reduce uncertainty by acquiescing to institutional pressures for conformity. However, Oliver (1991) pointed out that in unstable environments, compromise and avoidance strategies are also probable as organisations, still seeking to reduce uncertainty, attempt to buffer themselves from the vulnerabilities of working in an unpredictable environment. Miner, Amburgey and

Stearns (1990) proposed that one way organisations strategically respond to environmental uncertainty is to create “resource buffers” through the establishment of interorganisational linkages. They contended that these linkages, particularly in periods of significant organisational change, provide crucial resources that create a “transformational shield,” thus reducing the risk of organisational failure.

In addition to Miner et al.’s (1990) notion of interorganisational linkages as resource buffers, theorists have cited the interconnectedness of institutional environments as facilitating the voluntary diffusion of norms, values and collective information (Stern, 1979; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1991; Scott, et al, 1996; Abrahamson, 1996; Abrahamson & Rosenkopf, 1993; Kraatz, 1998). The degree of connectedness among organisational units in a field has been described as “system coupling” (Stern, 1979), where the extent to which events in one part of a system are felt in other parts indicates whether coupling is loose or tight. Further, Stern contended that linkages among organisations are characterised by their multiplexity of ties, that is, the number and amount of material connecting organisational units. Thus, the level of interconnectedness in an institutional environment can be represented by the set of ties among actors. It was demonstrated in Chapter III that, as the field became more tightly coupled and the multiplexity of ties increased, so too did the influence of institutional pressures on individual organisations. Thus, once the pattern of ties in a field is recognised, diffusion processes and organisations’ strategic responses to the pressures created, can be more readily identified (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

Indeed, as Oliver (1991) pointed out, in highly fragmented, loosely coupled institutional environments, the likelihood of resistance to institutional pressures for conformity increases. In his study of the diffusion of organisational practices in the Californian public school system, Rowan (1982) provided empirical evidence that supports this assertion. As he stated,

the basic idea is that innovative administrative services tend to diffuse widely and be retained for long periods in domains with balanced institutional systems, whereas in domains characterised by imbalance, diffusion is less widespread and retention more precarious (Rowan, 1982; p. 260).

Therefore, it would seem that the lower the degree of interconnectedness in an institutional environment, the lower the likelihood of acquiescent strategies being employed in response to institutional pressures for conformity (Oliver, 1991; Haunschild, 1993; Haveman, 1993). Indeed, with a heterogeneous distribution of loosely coupled actors possessing disparate values and interests, the possibility of organisational defiance to institutional pressures is heightened, as is the likelihood of increasingly resistant strategies and tactics. Conversely, with high organisational interconnectedness, pressures for organisational conformity increase (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1991; Haveman, 1993; Ingram & Simons, 1995). However, high interdependence among organisational units may also require coordination and negotiation on the conditions and extent of exchange (Ingram & Simons, 1995). When this negotiation involves a loss of discretionary power, the utility of compromise and avoidance strategies will increase as decision-makers attempt to decouple intraorganisational processes from the influence of external relationships.

Therefore, in tightly coupled institutional environments, acquiescent strategies will be more evident as attentiveness to the strategies of other organisations allows a focal organisation a benchmark against which to measure performance. Researchers such as Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) and Haunschild (1993) are among those who have noted the influence of ties among organisational peers in diffusing institutional norms and standards. Indeed, Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989; p. 456) suggested that those actors, “who have direct and indirect ties to peers in other organisations are able to learn about the newest innovations . . . [and] are more likely to mimic those whom they know and trust.” Therefore, it would be expected that when an organisation has sufficient formal and informal ties with network peers, its managers would be more attentive to the practices of those organisations, making the engagement of acquiescent strategies more probable.

The central message of Oliver’s (1991) work is that organisational responses to institutional processes cannot be theoretically predefined as either passive or active, conforming or resistant. She called for a less deterministic approach that focused on the predictive characteristics of the pressures being exerted. Thus, the implication of Oliver’s contentions are that conformity to institutional processes is neither inevitable or

necessarily essential to organisational survival. Moreover, as institutional environments are not always uniformly coherent or certain, the pressures inherent to them may be prone to shift (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). In these periods, when prevailing institutional standards are uncertain and hence, insufficient for constraining choices, Goodrick and Salancik (1996) suggested that organisational vested interests may frame strategic choices. Indeed, as Kondra and Hinings (1998) concluded, through the exercise of active agency, organisations that undertake alternative strategies are often the ones that lead change in a field as they become high achievers and are subsequently widely mimicked.

Explicit in the work of Oliver (1991), Goodrick and Salancik (1996), and Kondra and Hinings (1998), is the fact that habitually followed and taken-for-granted norms do indeed impact strategic decisions in organisations. However, as uncertainty is common in institutional environments, decision-makers also make rational, pragmatic decisions based upon organisational interests to either accept or resist institutional pressure for conformity. Therefore, what is *implicit* in this perspective is that strategic responses to diverse institutional pressures are less likely to be singular isolated decisions, but will more often involve a crucial temporal dimension that operates through different organisational levels. One way of uncovering how this process becomes manifest in an empirical setting is to examine one organisation's strategic responses to the institutional processes taking place in its field. Indeed, Dacin (1997) suggested the utility of such research. She argued that, "local level analyses offer fine-grained insights not available at the population level and allow for a potential examination of the extent to which institutional and competitive forces drive selection at multiple levels of analysis" (Dacin, 1997, p. 51). Therefore, the results of a "fine-grained analysis" of the institutional factors that influenced the extent to which a senior English rugby union club conformed to, or resisted institutional pressures, will be presented in the Results and Discussion section. Preceding this however, a section outlining the methods employed in this study will be presented.

METHOD

A case study analysis was conducted of the strategic responses of a senior English rugby union club to the turmoil in its institutional environment. Case study analyses are useful in developing a more fine-grained understanding of the change process that is not

available at the population-level (Dacin, 1997). The term “case study” refers to a situation where,

the researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon (“the case”) bounded by time and activity (a program, event, process, institution, or social group) and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Creswell, 1994, p. 12 – parentheses in original).

The club chosen as the focus of this case study, Maclean Rugby Union Football Club^{xx} (RUFC), was founded on the principles of amateurism in 1885. This meant that when the IRFB declared the game “open” in August 1995, Maclean RUFC had 111-years of organisation, competition, and culture based upon amateur values. As a consequence, Maclean RUFC’s 600 members formed an extremely parochial community. Indeed, a number of its members had been associated with the club for over 50 years. In this community, the values of amateurism were heavily institutionalised through not only the club’s playing history, but also its rites, rituals, myths and culture.

Maclean RUFC was competing in Division II of the English national league at the time of the Paris Declaration, and professionalised somewhat later than many of its competitors. This was seen as suggestive of some level of intraorganisational debate concerning the appropriate strategic response to the Paris Declaration. Therefore, the embeddedness of the club in its institutional environment, and the suggestion of extensive intraorganisational dynamics in formulating a strategic response to the field’s new dominant logic, made Maclean RUFC an extremely appropriate research site for a study of a sport organisation’s strategic responses to institutional processes.

Of course, these institutional processes were instigated by the SANZAR-News Corporation television rights deal in June 1995, which then led to the IRFB’s open game declaration. Following this, the RFU granted English clubs “the right to decide” how, or indeed if, they wished to respond to the demands of professionalism (RFU Commission Report, 1995). Therefore, this study focuses on the period from June 1995 through to October 1999, when the most recent change in ownership of Maclean RUFC took place. This period was also chosen because it encompassed the first three professional seasons in England, during which several coalitions of influential actors emerged to positions of power in the club. In the Results and Discussion section, two of the more significant

interest groups that emerged are referred to respectively as “the coalition,” and “the consortium.” In addition, to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms are used throughout the study where it was necessary to refer to companies and significant individual actors. Similarly, where quotes were taken from Maclean’s local newspapers, these references do not appear in the reference list, but are footnoted and are available upon request.

Data collection

As with Chapters II and III, this study employed a process approach that, as Scott (1995, p. 65) pointed out, addresses the question, “*How* did the observed effects happen?” (emphasis in original). Therefore, starting with the assumption that “effects follow causes in temporal succession” (Scott, 1995, p. 65), the process of changing (Pettigrew, 1987) in Maclean RUFC was uncovered by focusing on strategic issues related to club ownership and decision-making structures. As all of the club’s strategic activities stemmed from these structures, they were seen as the most cogent representation of its strategic responses to institutional contingencies. In addition, this approach facilitated analysis of how political processes and power struggles over vested interests impacted the club’s strategic activity. Significantly, Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood (1980) pointed out the processual manner in which these organisational structures affect strategic decision-making. As they stated,

groups struggle to constitute structures in order that they become constituting. The operation of the power system is closely related here to strategic decision-making (Child, 1972) and thus, to the clashes of interest and value which are intrinsic to purposive activity; power is conceived processually: issues are raised, information is called upon, and decisions are made about roles, rules, and authority relations” (Ranson et al., 1980, p. 8).

To investigate how this process unfolded in Maclean RUFC, primary and secondary sources of data were collected. This use of multiple sources of data increased the reliability and validity of the method chosen, and allowed for the development of “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 1994, p. 92). Primary data came from 23 semi-structured interviews conducted over a three-year period from November 1996, to December 1999. Interviews were carried out with individuals who represented the respective professional and volunteer/amateur interests inherent in the club’s institutional

environment. These included chief executives and senior professional administrators; board members; a former club president; former and current management committee members; health and safety representatives; sponsors; and technical staff such as a director of rugby, team managers, and senior players. In addition, former and current volunteers on sub-committees were interviewed in order to formulate a clearer picture of how, and indeed if, these constituents contributed to the strategic behaviours employed by the club. Therefore, both professional and voluntary staff members were represented, as were individuals from the administrative, managerial, and technical sub-units of Maclean RUFC and the companies with which it formed partnerships.

Interview questions were guided by Oliver's (1991) typology of strategic responses to institutional pressures. Thus, in order to uncover the level of conformity or resistance of Maclean RUFC to forces in its institutional environment, it was necessary to first focus questions on the antecedent conditions that Oliver (1991) proposed precipitate potential alternative responses. Therefore, questions centred around five key areas: (i) why the club was being pressured to conform to institutional rules or expectations (cause); (ii) who was exerting institutional pressures on the club (constituents); (iii) to what norms or requirements was the club being pressured to conform (content); (iv) how or by what means were the pressures being exerted (control); and, (v) what was the environmental context within which the institutional pressures were imposed (context). Interviewees' answers to these questions provided thick descriptions (Scott et al., 1996) of the institutional factors that led to various strategic behaviours. This allowed a natural progression into questions pertaining to the strategic responses themselves, and the level of resistance to institutional processes they involved. The majority of interviews were conducted in a private boardroom within the club, while others were conducted in the interviewees' places of work, all of which were office-type settings. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. To aid in the process of data analysis, each interview was, with permission, tape-recorded and then fully transcribed.

Collection of secondary data was also ongoing throughout the time period of the investigation. These data consisted of press coverage from local and national newspapers; the club's Internet website; past and present game day programs; and informal discussions with club members and officials.

Data analysis

Primary and secondary data were scanned and categorised according to codes developed prior to fieldwork. The use of these codes or themes in the analysis of data “form the basis for the emerging story to be told by the qualitative researcher” (Creswell, 1994, p. 154). Various researchers have contended that this process of segmenting information (Tesch, 1990), or generating categories, themes, or patterns (Marshall & Rossman, 1989), allows the researcher to add structure and meaning to previously unstructured raw data (Creswell, 1994). Yin (1994) suggested that this coding process has particular utility for data analysis in case study research, where actual results in the emerging data are compared with patterns predicted from theory or the literature. In this study, codes were developed based on Oliver’s (1991) typology of strategic responses to institutional processes. Importantly, as described earlier, Oliver hypothesised that there were five broad institutional factors that acted as antecedents to certain strategic responses. She also suggested two predictive dimensions for each, as shown in Table 1. In light of these institutional antecedents and their related predictive factors, the strategic responses proposed by Oliver varied in active organisational resistance from passive conformity, through to compromise, avoidance, defiance and finally, the most active form of resistance to institutional pressures, proactive manipulation.

Thus, the analysis of data was multi-layered. First, it was analysed in terms of identifying words, phrases, incidents, or clusters of information that indicated broad changes in the strategic behaviours employed by the club. Second, data were analysed and coded according to Oliver’s (1991) institutional antecedents to strategic responses that were described in the Theoretical Background and are listed in Table 1. These factors were seen as precipitating the employment of particular strategic behaviours. They dealt with the cause, constituents, content, control and context of the institutional pressures being exerted. Following the suggestions of Creswell (1994), this information was then further broken down into minor themes based on the predictive dimensions of each institutional factor, each of which is also listed in Table 1. The data were then scanned for information on strategic behaviours that enabled categorisation of them as acquiescent, compromise, avoidance, defiance, or manipulative strategic responses. Finally, these data were then further coded according to each of the tactics that Oliver (1991) suggested

were inherent to each strategic behaviour. For example, if a particular incident was identified as being representative of manipulative strategies, it was categorised as such, and then further classified as co-optation, influence, or controlling tactics.

Therefore, both primary and secondary data were scanned and categorised according to codes developed *a priori* to fieldwork. Particular incidents, phrases, or words that were seen as suggestive of, for example, environmental uncertainty, were coded as such. As can be observed from Table 1, these data were then further analysed in order to more accurately classify them into a predictive dimension - in this case, either environmental uncertainty or interconnectedness. Although these themes were developed before commencing fieldwork, there was also an effort to be aware of emerging issues, and to maintain the iterative character of the research by constantly moving between emerging data and theory. This method of analysis allowed certain themes to emerge as more dominant than others. The emergence of these themes and interconnections then provided the basis for the development of a theoretical argument to explain this sport organisation's strategic responses to unprecedented institutional processes. By constructing the case study in this way, and extending the temporal dimension of analysis from June 1995, to October 1999, it was possible to address the concerns of Pettigrew, Ferlie, and McKee (1992), who called for more holistic and dynamic analyses of *changing* rather than merely describing isolated episodes of change. The results of this case study, and a discussion of the pertinent theoretical issues thus raised, is presented in the ensuing Results and Discussion section.

Institutional Factor	Predictive Dimension
<i>Cause</i> : Why is the organisation being pressured to conform to institutional rules or expectations?	i. Legitimacy or social fitness ii. Efficiency or economic fitness
<i>Constituents</i> : Who is exerting institutional pressure on the organisation?	i. A multiplicity of constituents ii. Constituents the organisation is dependent on for resources
<i>Content</i> : To what norms or requirements is the organisation being pressured to conform?	i. Norms or requirements consistent with organisational goals ii. Norms or requirements that impose discretionary constraints on the organisation
<i>Control</i> : How or by what means are the institutional pressures being exerted?	i. Legal coercion or enforcement ii. Voluntary diffusion of norms
<i>Context</i> : What is the environmental context within which institutional pressures are being exerted?	i. Environmental uncertainty ii. Environmental interconnectedness

Table 1: Institutional antecedents of strategic responses and their relevant predictive dimensions (Adapted from Oliver, 1991, p. 160).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The focal organisation for this study was Maclean Rugby Union Football Club (RUFC), which was known to its supporters as “the Kings.” Utilising the theoretical insights offered by Oliver (1991), analysis of the process by which Maclean RUFC selected strategic responses, and the extent to which these responses complied with or resisted institutional pressures for conformity, will be presented and discussed in a chronological manner.

The decision to professionalise

As has been discussed previously, in June 1995, when the SANZAR-News Corporation television rights deal was announced, the amateur ethos was heavily institutionalised in English rugby union. This meant that the institutional context within which Maclean RUFC was embedded, was extremely stable. Therefore, the game’s administrators in England dismissed the deal as little more an aberration to the amateur

status quo. However, three members of the Maclean RUFC management committee perceived that the effects of the SANZAR-News Corporation deal could, in time, result in the professionalisation of the world game. These members were all successful local professionals and had all been former players for the club, with one also being a former referee of international standard. As a result, they were well respected for their knowledge of the game and dedication to the club, as exemplified by their continual re-election to positions of responsibility on the club's management committee. Indeed, one member of this small coalition was the management committee chairman, another was responsible for Maclean RUFC's financial management, and the last was in charge of the club's legal responsibilities. The coalition believed that professional rugby union in England would bring with it increased demands for financial efficiency and accountability, and that if Maclean RUFC were to meet these, major structural changes to the club would be necessary. Consequently, these three members began private discussion on a plan to rationalise the club's unwieldy committee structures, with a view to the club eventually turning professional. However, given the stability of the institutional context within which the club was embedded, they knew that sudden or overly ambitious attempts at change would meet with strong resistance. Therefore, in order to make the changes they desired, the coalition embarked a strategy that one of its members referred to as "change by stealth." This involved a carefully planned agenda of proposals that were introduced to the rest of the management committee in a piecemeal fashion. As one of the coalition members explained,

we had it in our minds what we wanted to do. We were trying to bring along acceptance of streamlining from *within* the committee. But we would just put one contentious issue on the table at a time, as opposed to hitting them with it all at once . . . It wasn't easy because people who'd been doing a job for 20 years or whatever and had always done it that way were feeling pushed out. But really, what they were doing all that time, just wasn't the way forward anymore.

The coalition employed "stealth" tactics because it was attempting to alter one of the most deeply institutionalised aspects of the club, and felt that any overt attempts at radical change would have been strongly opposed. Moreover, at this time, institutional control in the form of legal coercion (Oliver, 1991) remained strong as the RFU still imposed sanctions on clubs and individual players found guilty of breaching its amateur

codes of conduct. Further, as with all clubs in the amateur era, the volunteer committees that the coalition sought to alter were a manifestation of rugby union's amateur culture, and had formed the cornerstone of Maclean RUFC's organisational activities for over a century. Therefore, the inertial pressures for their retention were particularly strong, as evidenced by the difficulty reported in generating acceptance for change. However, as Oliver (1991) pointed out, the definitions and criteria of acceptable performance in institutional environments are often open to strategic reinterpretation and manipulation. Indeed, by surreptitiously attempting to effect change in this politic fashion, the coalition was striving to reshape the values and the expectations of their immediate institutional environment by employing what Oliver (1991, p. 157) referred to as "influence tactics." She contended that, as a form of manipulation, these tactics are intended to actively change the content of institutional expectations, and indeed, the sources that seek to express or enforce them. In this case, by attempting to streamline the club's committee structures with a view to employing professional players, the coalition sought to alter the amateur content of members' normative expectations, and thus, to manipulate the structures that represented them.

Significantly, opposition to the coalition's initiatives became manifest in an extremely fundamental way. With the stability of the club's institutional context, committee members' normative expectations of how a rugby union club should be organised, that is, with decentralised decision-making by committees, had to that point never been questioned. Therefore, the difficulty the coalition experienced in gaining support for their initiatives was not so much a result of any organised opposition, but was more due to actors' unconscious adherence to institutionalised amateur processes and values. This most fundamental form of conformity to institutional processes was referred to by Oliver (1991, p. 152) as "habit," which she described as "unconscious or blind adherence to preconscious or taken-for-granted rules or values." Indeed, in the amateur era, clubs habitually conformed to institutionalised amateur values and operations to enhance legitimacy and efficiency, the institutional predictive factor that Oliver (1991) referred to as "cause." Therefore, even in the face of increasing uncertainty in the club's institutional context, the coalition had difficulty in convincing fellow decision-makers at Maclean RUFC of the need for change. Notwithstanding impending threats to legitimacy

and efficiency, the deeply entrenched nature of the amateur ethos caused inertial pressures that mired the club in what Kondra and Hinings (1998) referred to as “paradigm stasis.” Thus, despite the political attempts by a faction within the management committee to influence strategic change in response to processes unfolding in their institutional environment, the task of slowing the momentum built up by over a century of institutionalised amateur operations proved extremely difficult.

Indeed, further demonstrating the stability and certainty of the club’s institutional context, one of its leading officials explained how committee members were stunned when the IRFB made the Paris Declaration in August 1995, and were equally shocked when the RFU subsequently accepted it. He suggested that,

nobody was prepared for the decision to be taken like that by the RFU. We thought [professionalism] would be introduced at some point over a longer period of time, but to suddenly make a decision . . . and say to the clubs, ‘OK, you’re professional next season,’ it took everybody back. I don’t think anybody was ready for it.

However, the Paris Declaration vindicated the views of the club’s three-man coalition for change, and provided them with the impetus they needed to accelerate their activities. As a consequence, they were able to more openly discuss the possibility of the club’s eventual professionalisation. Crucially, Sir John Hall’s swift and controversial entry to the field as the new owner of Newcastle-Gosforth RUFC, and the subsequent entrance of four other businessmen as the benefactors of senior clubs, created a sense of crisis across the field, and indeed, within Maclean RUFC. Upon securing sufficient financial backing to professionalise, these five clubs openly defied the RFU’s one-year moratorium on change and went about the business of contracting England’s leading players.

These players were “poached” from clubs like Maclean RUFC that, due to paradigm stasis, were slower to read the potential for fundamental changes to their institutional environment. Therefore, not only had the context of Maclean’s institutional expectations been abruptly thrown into uncertainty, but the causal factors of the club’s conformity to amateur values, that is, to maintain legitimacy and efficiency, were now open to question. In addition, with the RFU’s inability to coerce the professionalised clubs to conform to its moratorium on change, the field’s traditional mechanisms of institutional control were also suddenly open to contestation. When institutionalised

values, such as amateurism, become challenged in this way, Goodrick and Salancik (1996) suggested that the question of why organisations respond differentially to institutional pressures becomes pertinent. Specifically, they suggested that the interests and agency of actors provides a potential explanation. Moreover, a number of theorists have argued that the uncertainty that stems from such incomplete institutionalisation creates discretion about possible strategic responses to the pressures created, and that actors use this opportunity to pursue their interests (Powell, 1985; 1991; Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988; DiMaggio, 1988; Scott, 1991; Oliver, 1991; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996; Hoffman, 1999). Indeed, after losing a number of promising players to the professionalised clubs, Maclean's management committee soon accepted the coalition's argument that difficult strategic decisions would have to be made if the club was to survive in the country's top divisions. Therefore, at this early stage in the professional era, the interests of "agency infused actors" (Hoffman, 1999) were starting to influence Maclean's strategic response to changes in its institutional environment. A senior member on the club's management committee, who described himself as a traditionally staunch supporter of amateurism, outlined some of the pressures facing Maclean RUFC. As he stated,

we used to be one of the top clubs in the land, and we weren't one of the first to embrace professionalism so we lost good players. It was obvious we had to do something. We either became a junior club, or we tried to stay at the senior level.

Therefore, the decision of whether Maclean RUFC should attempt to "stay at the senior level," was one of huge significance as it pitched the club's firm supporters of amateurism against those willing to embrace professionalism. Indeed, despite pressures for professionalisation and the realisation by many that change was increasingly likely, there was still vociferous support for amateurism within the club. These inertial pressures illustrated the suggestion made by Ranson, et al. (1980), that the meanings and values, such as amateurism, that shape organisational structuring can as often be the source of cleavage as of consensus. Moreover, the fact that these inertial pressures were opposed to the forces of entropy demonstrated that the club was confronting multiple conflicting pressures, and the collective normative order of its institutional environment was no longer unitary or coherent (Oliver, 1991; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). Indeed, at this

time in October 1995, despite the increasing pressures for professionalisation, the RFU's attempt at coercive isomorphism in the form of the moratorium on change was, officially at least, still in force. When institutional control mechanisms are uncertain and hence, insufficient for constraining strategic choices in this way, Goodrick and Salancik (1996) suggested that the resulting discretion can result in individual interests framing strategic choices.

Therefore, by March of 1996, with competitive professional pressures and uncertainty rising in the field, the coalition's intensive lobbying of other management committee members had created a receptivity to the idea that if Maclean was to stay among the country's elite clubs, it would eventually have to employ professional players. By starting to question the continued legitimacy of amateurism, Maclean RUFC's management committee had taken a significant first step towards acquiescing to the growing field-level institutional pressures for professionalisation. However, professionalisation involved far more than a decision to pay players. It also involved organisational restructuring and strategic planning regarding how the club would raise the necessary financial resources. Underpinning these issues however, was the task of delegitimising amateurism and galvanising support from the management committee and club members for change. A major source of organisational resistance to change, as Greenwood and Hinings (1996) pointed out, derives from the normative embeddedness of an organisation within its institutional context. However, as the RFU had failed to sanction clubs that defied its one-year moratorium on professionalisation, its legitimacy as an effective mechanism of institutional control had been called into question. The resultant multiplicity of pressures (Oliver, 1991) led to increasing uncertainty in the field's institutional environment. Therefore, the embeddedness of Maclean RUFC in its institutional context prior to the Paris Declaration was fragmented by the events that followed it. Indeed, the uncertainty regarding prevailing institutional expectations created the powerful pressures that are necessary to bring about change in conditions of momentum and inertia.

What added to the normative fragmentation (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Oliver, 1992) and uncertainty that these pressures produced, was the fact that, as the RFU had struggled to maintain legitimacy in the new era, it had failed to state clear objectives or to

recommend strategic guidelines for clubs regarding professionalisation. Therefore, clubs used the discretion that resulted from this institutional uncertainty to, as Goodrick and Salancik (1996, p. 5) described, “pursue their particularistic and strategic interests.” Indeed, the first clubs that chose to professionalise followed the interests of dominant actors, and funded transition with the backing of wealthy benefactors. As uncertainty is a potent force that encourages imitation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), coalition members from Maclean RUFC mounted a search for their own benefactor or major sponsor to finance the club’s transition. As one coalition member explained, “we just started scratching about and uncovering every possible stone to see if there was a benefactor under one of them.”

Significantly, this search for a benefactor was carried out *before* the coalition had formally approached the management committee for a vote on professionalisation. This was a strategic decision by the coalition because it involved controlling information in order to eventually decrease the multiplicity of pressures exerted by constituents. As Sampler and Short (1998) argued, in attempts to adapt to environmental change, failure to manage information and information-related resources can produce undesirable side-effects among organisational sub-units and individuals. Thus, by employing what Oliver (1991) referred to as “influence tactics,” the coalition hoped to create a cogent scheme for the club’s professionalisation and in so doing, delegitimize its institutionalised amateur beliefs. However, the search for a benefactor initially yielded little result until ironically, in May 1996, one actually approached the club. One coalition member was contacted by David Hole^{xx}, a sports promoter and part-owner of a European cable television channel, Continental Television (CTV)^{xx}. Hole proposed to the coalition that CTV would finance Maclean RUFC’s professionalisation by effectively buying the club. In return, the club’s management committee would be replaced by a CTV-appointed board of directors. All of these negotiations were carried out in secrecy between CTV and the coalition, who were keen to formulate the outline of a deal before presenting it to the rest of the management committee, and eventually, the membership. As one coalition member explained,

[we] kept it to ourselves before really even putting anything on the table with the committee. Otherwise of course, it would’ve gotten out into the press and everybody would start theorising about it. We wanted to get everything in place as much as possible before then

going to the management committee for a decision - to get a 'Yes, this is the way forward.' Then, once we got the right decision from the management committee, we could then go to the members to get their vote . . . Then we could actually sign the deal and away we go. So that's how we did it.

With intense competition for technical and financial resources, that is, players and coaches of a high standard and the money with which to pay them, environmental turbulence in the field continued to grow. Indeed, with widespread publicity given to the recruitment of international players by competitors, the legitimacy of amateurism became increasingly uncertain. Therefore, as Maclean RUFC's constituents debated the amateurism versus professionalism issue, the forces of inertia and entropy emanated from disparate sources of the club's institutional environment. Indeed, entropic forces were heightened with the continued loss of key players to professional clubs, and members exerted pressure on the management committee to take measures to stem these losses. Clearly, the opportunity presented by CTV would alleviate this pressure. However, simultaneously, a coterie of committee members was resistant to "selling out" to a benefactor who could possibly impose discretionary constraints on the club's volunteer control. When institutional environments enter such periods of flux, organisations often encounter multiple conflicting pressures that make unilateral conformity difficult because the satisfaction of one constituent often requires the demands of another to be ignored or defied (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Oliver, 1991). Moreover, the conditions that CTV attached to the proposed deal involved a distinct loss of autonomy for the club's traditional, committee-based dominant coalition. When the content of institutional pressures imposes discretionary constraints on an organisation in this way, Oliver (1991) hypothesised that the likely organisational response will be one of resistance.

Predictably therefore, the coalition representing Maclean RUFC refused Hole's original proposal, knowing that anything less than a 50-50 arrangement between the club and CTV would be difficult to get approved by the management committee. As one coalition member suggested, "turkeys aren't going to vote for Christmas!" However, the cause of the pressures to professionalise remained clear - Maclean's continued legitimacy in the new era depended on finding sufficient financial resources to pay professional players. This milieu of resource and institutional pressures gave CTV capacious

bargaining power when actors resumed negotiations in June 1996. Indeed, this enabled CTV to exert coercive pressure on the coalition representing Maclean to negotiate a deal significantly weighted in its favour. The Maclean coalition were keen to seek a compromise deal with CTV which would allow them access to resources, but also leave some modicum of organisational discretion. Alternatively, CTV, and Hole in particular, were eager to secure “ground level” involvement in a burgeoning professional sport. However, as with CTV’s other sporting commitments, the interest shown in Maclean was strictly commercial and profit-oriented. Thus, CTV approached the deal with a view to securing its involvement, but not ceding financial control of the operation. The inherently contradictory nature of such interdependence in organisational relationships was described by Stern (1979, p. 259) as “a function of attempts by members to manage interdependence by maintaining discretion.”

Therefore, after two-and-a-half months of clandestine negotiation, a deal was negotiated under similar guidelines to the original proposal, whereby the Maclean RUFC management committee would be replaced by a board of directors. However, supporting Oliver’s (1991) contention that organisations may use co-optation tactics to lessen institutional opposition, in the renegotiated deal, a new company called Maclean Rugby was to be formed as a 50-50 partnership between Maclean RUFC and CTV. The board of the new company would consist of three representatives from CTV, and three elected members of Maclean RUFC, one of whom would have chairmanship of the board. However, a newly appointed chief executive, who would be one of CTV’s three board members, would have the deciding vote in the case of split decisions. In return, CTV would contribute between £300,000 and £400,000 per year over five years to finance the club’s professionalisation. Although under the terms of the agreement the new company would be a 50-50 partnership, as CTV held the casting vote in board decisions, it was clearly the dominant partner. These controlling tactics employed by CTV, or the “specific efforts to establish power and dominance over constituents” (Oliver, 1991, p. 158), were to prove crucial in the long-term.

By July of 1996, with the outline agreed, the coalition presented the proposed deal to the management committee. With task environment pressures high and the beginning of the season just over a month away, levels of uncertainty within Maclean RUFC were

unprecedented. In addition, the proposal's inherent loss of privilege for committee members again raised inertial pressures that had to be overcome before it could be approved and presented to the membership. One committee member described the ramifications of the decision before them. As he stated,

one of the things we had to do was vote ourselves out of office. I mean, that's what the choice was. There was no way we could embrace this professional era, go into a 50-50 partnership with [CTV], and still retain our management committee and the structures underneath it. So the big decision we had before us before we went to the membership was that we had to be prepared to vote ourselves out of office. To lose our status if that's what you want to call it, to lose our titles if that's what you were worried about. A lot of people were reluctant to do that. People who had given a lot of service to the club in whatever capacity had to give up their honorary titles, and that's a hard thing to give up. And I wouldn't say they did it happily, but we did vote unanimously to do it.

Clearly, members of the management committee were unwilling to forfeit their positions of status and privilege. However, the strength of increasing institutional pressures for adoption of the field's emerging professional logic prompted their decision to agree to the proposed deal. By agreeing to the terms of the partnership, Maclean RUFC was depending heavily on the financial support of CTV to enable it to maintain legitimacy in the new era. When dependence is high on a constituent imposing institutional pressures in this way, Oliver (1991) hypothesised that acquiescent strategies are a likely option. Accordingly, the management committee agreed that if the membership approved the proposed partnership, it would cede 50% control of the club to CTV. However, by only agreeing to forfeit 50% of the club's decision-making power, many of the directors on the management committee believed that they could co-opt rather than conform completely to the pressures for professionalisation. In this way, they believed they could balance the expectations of the club's multiple constituents by keeping its volunteer committee structure intact, while also accepting the financial support of CTV. However, as one interviewee graphically described, in reality, it was a decision that left no middle-ground. As he stated,

I didn't think this talk of us compromising and being 'semi-professional' had much chance. If someone pays you to drive a car, they'll tell you exactly how they want you to drive it And besides, if we were to only pay a few players, we would still have

had to have found that money somewhere, and it would still have meant we weren't amateur anymore. If you only have sex a few times you're not a 'semi-virgin' are you?

Following the management committee vote, a special general meeting was organised at which the proposal was presented to the membership. Of the club's 600 members, 400 attended the meeting, which interviewees described as an excellent attendance. Directors of the club presented what they saw as the positive and negative aspects of the partnership and importantly, Hole gave what was described as "an extremely persuasive" argument for the partnership. By the meeting's conclusion, all but one of the 400 members in attendance had voted in favour of the deal. This almost unanimous vote for restructuring was somewhat surprising given the vociferous elements of the membership that had earlier opposed professionalisation. However, the explanation for their placation lies in the fact that other senior clubs were restructuring and signing high profile players on an almost daily basis. Shortly after the membership vote, the chairman of Maclean RUFC's supporters' committee alluded to the milieu of institutional and task environment pressures that impacted on the members' decision. As he explained,

the RFU said we had the 'right to decide' if we wanted to go professional, but they didn't give us the right to decide at all. Not at all. They *forced* us to go professional. We saw straight away that clubs with the money in the bank like Newcastle and Richmond had already gone professional, already let money take over, and were already recruiting players. And I think it's taken us four months to catch up on their head start.

Indeed, with the RFU's inability to enforce its moratorium, the field's traditional mechanism of institutional control, legal coercion, was effectively delegitimated. Moreover, as alluded to by the interviewee above, when strategies are enacted by powerful or high profile actors in a field, and become legitimated through intensive mimicry and diffusion, isomorphic pressures rise in salience for the adoption of these particular strategies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hinings & Greenwood, 1988; Leblebici et al., 1991; Oliver, 1991; Slack & Hinings, 1994). In addition, as Oliver (1992) noted, pressures that threaten the legitimacy or survival of an organisation cast doubt on the validity of organisational practices, such as amateurism, that have traditionally served the organisation's interests effectively. In this way, the new organisational arrangement of

senior clubs as professional operations became widely legitimated in the field, a fact that Hole highlighted in his presentation. Indeed, as Dacin (1997, p. 74) noted, “entrepreneurs and founders expend a great deal of effort in making the future seem plausible in order to establish their organisations as legitimate sub-units in the larger social system.” Thus, the combination of an uncertain institutional context, and the persuasive vision of the future provided by Hole, convinced members that the possibility of decreased organisational discretion was a small price to pay if it meant forestalling performance crisis and “catching up with the money clubs.” As a consequence, members came to accept that senior rugby union clubs could no longer rely on amateur players and volunteer administrators to be competitive in the new era.

The political nature of strategic response

Therefore, although there was initial opposition, acquiescence to the institutional pressures for professionalisation became a pragmatic choice for the membership of Maclean RUFC. In the context of institutional uncertainty, professionalisation became the most likely option for maintaining the club’s legitimacy and position in the national game. Organisations that comply with institutional pressures for pragmatic reasons, as noted by Kondra and Hinings (1998), demonstrate their responsiveness to the environment and, as a consequence, may lower their risk of organisational mortality. However, the membership’s pragmatism was in large part the manufactured product of agency by the three-man coalition for change, as their lobbying of influential members created an overall receptivity to the possibility of change, and specifically, the changes entailed in the partnership with CTV. This political manoeuvring created a receptive platform for Hole to take advantage of and cement acceptance of the new arrangement. In this way, as Hoffman (1999) noted, institutional entrepreneurs can be both strategic and opportunistic in taking advantage of uncertainty in the institutional order that they seek to alter. Hoffman (1999, p. 366) further contended that, “entrepreneurs cannot construct the institutional order, but they can influence its ultimate design through participation in the institutional negotiation process.” Therefore, following the membership vote in favour of the partnership, the process of restructuring to create the new company, Maclean Rugby, began almost immediately. A senior management committee member explained the initial impact of professionalisation on the club. As he stated,

I think when the “old” club members saw the opportunity with [CTV], I think it’s fair to say that they didn’t really realise what they were letting themselves in for What we all found out very quickly though, was that the commitment to professionalism meant a great deal more than any of us realised. The changes that had to be brought about were far more considerable than anybody really envisaged. Not just on the playing side, but in the whole infrastructure of the club. It moved from a small venture run by volunteers to a small business scenario run by professionals. So it’s been fairly traumatic for everybody really.

Therefore, the imposition of discretionary constraints on the “old” club was part of the content of the institutional pressures for professionalisation, and proved extremely difficult for volunteers to accept. Indeed, as Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) noted, compliance with institutional pressures often involves an admittance of limited autonomy and a loss of organisational freedom. Added to this, to enhance communication between Maclean RUFC members and its three directors on the partnership board, the streamlining of the club’s committee structures that the coalition had tried to achieve months earlier, was carried out. This meant that the Maclean RUFC management committee, which formerly consisted of 24 members, was streamlined to only six. In addition, when CTV employed professional administrators and support staff, it made most of the Maclean RUFC sub-committees obsolete.

When professionals are employed by a formerly volunteer organisation, Thibault, et al. (1991, p. 94) argued that because of their training, they “pose a challenge to the indispensable nature of the volunteer in running some of the central tasks of the organisation.” In the same way, Maclean RUFC volunteers, whose roles were formerly at the core of the club’s function, found these roles were quickly filled by CTV-employed professionals. As a result, interviewees reported that many members, particularly those who had formerly held prominent positions on committees, felt disenfranchised by the partnership when their input was no longer required, and in many cases, was actively discouraged. Such an erosion of decision-making power for volunteer administrators has been highlighted as problematic in several investigations of formerly volunteer sport organisations that have professionalised (Beamish, 1985; Thibault, et al. 1991; Amis, Slack & Berrett, 1995; Auld & Godbey, 1998; O’Brien & Slack, 1999). Similarly here, the erosion of organisational discretion resulted in the emergence of inertial forces.

Indeed, as the harsh realities of professionalism became apparent to Maclean RUFC members, the consternation that members felt before the vote on restructuring, began to resurface.

When formerly volunteer organisations professionalise in an attempt to achieve the highest possible standards, as Maclean RUFC had, Auld and Godbey (1998) argued that volunteers sometimes shift too much responsibility to paid staff, and subsequently, find themselves excluded from activity. This exclusion may then lead to frustration and apathy as volunteers struggle to regain lost power. Clearly, the basis of CTV's power was its material resources, specifically, money. However, determinants of power, as Beamish (1985) argued, may also include normative resources such as control of information, media, and communication networks. In this study, a number of Maclean RUFC directors, who felt their interests in the club were marginalised by the new regime, related sensitive club information to local reporters. These attacking tactics (Oliver, 1991) resulted in several damning articles appearing in Maclean's regional newspapers. The articles regarded issues such as the club being served writs over non-payment of bills to local merchants^{iv}, disclosure of Hole's past legal problems relating to company ownership^v, chronically late payment of wages to administrative and technical staff^{vi}, and CTV's "secret talks" to build a leisure complex on the club's home ground^{vii}.

Prior to these articles, despite disaffection among some club members, the euphoria of Maclean Rugby's unprecedented level of on-field success meant that the professional values espoused by CTV were gaining legitimacy and increasingly deinstitutionalising the club's former amateur ethos. The attack on the public perception of the professional regime was carried out by actors who had a vested interest in reinstating volunteer decision-making, and in undermining the legitimacy of the partnership. These attacking tactics (Oliver, 1991) were aimed at assaulting and denouncing the emergent professional values and the constituents that expressed them. In response to these attacks on their credibility and legitimacy, in December 1996, Maclean Rugby's new chief executive took the unprecedented step of banning one local reporter from entering the ground. However, as the reporter was a long-serving member of the club, the public condemnation of the ban resulted in it being overturned. Still, the imposition of the ban illustrated Bartunek's (1984) notion that organisation leaders often

attempt to regulate the nature of change taking place in their organisation by increasing political control over which actors get “heard,” and which do not. She pointed out that leaders shape the possibility and course of change by legitimising or not the expression of particular perspectives. However, as the chief executive was very publicly forced to back down, it appeared that the committee members’ defiance of professional institutional pressures had indeed wounded CTV’s legitimacy.

With heavy expenditure on technical and support staff, and mounting infrastructure costs, by February of 1997, CTV had invested more than double the first year’s promised £400,000. Thus, Hole put forward a motion that he should replace the chairman of the board of directors who was from the amateur club, and should also be given the casting vote in board decisions. Hole was forthright in explaining the reasoning behind his actions. As he explained, “I want to keep a closer eye on my money All the detrimental publicity will stop and there’ll be no more leaks to the press for starters”^{viii}. Predictably, with the casting vote at that time resting with the CTV-employed chief executive, Hole’s proposals were passed. Tellingly, in rationalising the move, CTV’s group solicitor explained that, “the structure of the partnership was drawn up specifically to allow Mr. [Hole] to take an active interest”. Therefore, it became apparent that CTV had anticipated resistance from the former regime and had strategically structured the partnership so as to manipulate this resistance if and when it materialised. This graphically illustrates DiMaggio and Powell’s (1991, p. 8) contention that the regulative and normative aspects of institutions are “the products of human design, the outcomes of purposive rational action by instrumentally orientated individuals.” Therefore, Hole’s “active interest,” or what Oliver (1991, p. 158) referred to as controlling tactics, enabled him to establish power and dominance over the sources of institutional resistance.

Indeed, Hole extended this dominance in May 1997, when he proposed to the board that CTV would only continue its higher than agreed level of investment in Maclean Rugby if its stake in the club was increased from 50% to 90%. This would reduce the stake of Maclean RUFC to only 10%. Given CTV’s control of the decision-making process at board level, the proposal was passed by the board of directors. However, in a letter to the membership, one of Maclean RUFC’s directors, a member of

the original coalition of three, explained why they had not resisted Hole's proposal. He stated that,

we feel that the interests of the 'members club' are more particularly concerned with the quality of rugby being played and the success of the team on the pitch. [CTV's] involvement provides the opportunity for our ambitions to be realised and for the highest levels to be achieved^{ix}.

Clearly, both Maclean RUFC and CTV aspired to Division I status, and both saw continued investment in technical staff and club infrastructure as crucial to achieving this. For the members' club, Division I status was sought for the same reasons as in the amateur era - for social cache and prestige. Thus, with the amendment approved, CTV continued its high level of investment in the club and the drive for promotion continued. Unquestionably, CTV's motivation for promotion to Division I was profit-oriented, as it was thought promotion would lead to increased revenue from attendance, sponsorship, and television. Thus, the restructured arrangement was seen by CTV as crucial to centralising decision-making with professional staff in order to maximise returns on its considerable investment. Therefore, while the dominant coalitions of Maclean RUFC and CTV sought returns of different capital, the prime organisational goal of both remained promotion to Division I.

With this level of consistency in organisational goals, Oliver (1991) contended that the employment of acquiescent strategies in response to institutional pressures is likely. Thus, although its organisational discretion was to be even further eroded, the directors from the members' club complied with Hole's proposal. Interestingly however, with regard to the content of institutional pressures, Oliver (1991) also hypothesised that resistance is likely when conformity imposes a high degree of discretionary constraints on an organisation. Therefore, by acquiescing to pressures that greatly impinged on members' decision-making ability, it would be logical to assume that the goal of promotion to Division I superseded the members' desire for organisational autonomy. Significantly however, the directors from the members club that approved the restructured arrangement were the same coalition members that had initially devised the partnership with CTV. Since their election to the board, resistance to the increasing level of involvement of CTV had grown, and certain sections of the membership were

vehemently opposed to ceding more control to professional staff. Thus, while surrendering even more power to CTV was seen by the club's directors as the necessary price to achieve promotion, it was seen as extremely unpalatable to many members. This led to smaller than expected attendance figures at Maclean Rugby's home games, as disenfranchised members were left with little other forms of resistance.

Therefore, by the end of the 1996/97 season, the average weekly attendance of only 2,300 people per game was insufficient to support the players' wage bill of £1.3m. As a consequence, Maclean Rugby returned an overall loss in excess of £500,000 on the season^x. Notwithstanding unprecedented success in technical performance, the following season, 1997/98, proved even more financially difficult for Maclean Rugby as it returned a deficit of £1.8m^{xi}. Despite the club's success, the average weekly attendance in 1997/98 was still only 2,400 people^{xii}, far short of the club's projected figure of between 5-6000. This increase of merely 4.35% on the previous season, when compared to the Premiership's overall increase in attendance of 22% (Malin, 1998), highlighted the fact that Maclean Rugby was simply not attracting enough paying customers. Indeed, it became clear that the manipulation strategies employed by CTV, and the defiant response by disenfranchised constituents, had resulted in a crucial institutional consequence. As one ex-management committee member explained,

when all people read in the local papers is that [CTV] are riding roughshod over members' interests, not paying local suppliers, and generally doing whatever they bloody well please, well of course they're going to get very apathetic and just stay away in droves.

Therefore, although it was in control of only 10% of the partnership, as the prime consumer of Maclean Rugby's products, the membership was an important institutional constituent for the club. As a community-based club, the general public of Maclean and its surrounding region, a population of approximately 120,000 people, also formed an important constituency of Maclean Rugby's institutional environment. Indeed, Hoffman (1999) pointed out the significance of the general public in an organisation's institutional environment. Thus, as a result of the negative publicity surrounding CTV's involvement in the club, individual members and potential supporters made a pragmatic choice to dismiss the pressures exerted by the professional regime. Certainly, by "staying away in droves," the collective impact of this action was a defiance of CTV's controlling tactics.

One member of the club's professional staff, who was forced to resign due to non-payment of wages, pointed out that the professional regime failed to recognise the importance of gaining the support and social approbation of its key institutional constituents. She explained that,

at the end of the day, there is nobody bigger than the club. You have to remember that support. You can put in as much money as you want, but if you don't have the support of the fans and the money coming in through the gate, then eventually, you run out of money and you don't *have* a club. It surprised me that they [CTV] never seemed to quite grasp that.

Indeed, far from acquiescing to the interests of institutional constituents, in May 1998, CTV avoided these pressures and instead, coerced Maclean Borough Council to approve plans to build corporate hospitality facilities at the club. As discussed in Chapter III, various Premiership clubs had started supplementing income from conventional gate receipts with corporate hospitality initiatives. With increasing interorganisational linkages and a tightening of system coupling in the field, CTV attempted to mimic these strategies. Indeed, by increasing revenue from corporate hospitality, CTV sought to reduce the extent to which it relied on gate receipts for income, thus buffering itself from the membership's desire for increased control. The employment of such buffering tactics, as Oliver (1991, p. 155) suggested, "may serve the organisation's interests, especially in terms of maintaining autonomy, minimising external intervention, and maximising efficiency." In addition, the creation of the institutional linkages that buffering entails provides a recently transformed organisation, such as Maclean Rugby, with a "transformational shield," that insulates it against the probability of failure (Miner, et al., 1990).

Therefore, in order to further improve the club's technical performance in the 1998/99 season, it was imperative for CTV, as the major partner, to secure more reliable access to financial resources. Indeed, as CTV had invested heavily in players who were thought capable of performing at this higher level, strategically, corporate hospitality was seen as a crucial "transformational shield." Therefore, Hole made demands on the local borough council to approve building plans in order that the club could generate revenue from corporate hospitality initiatives. He warned that if approval was not forthcoming within an eight-week period, he would move the club to another town. As he stated,

the simple fact is that we cannot survive in [Maclean] unless we are able to improve our revenue by increasing the capacity of the ground and building hospitality units. [CTV] has already put £2.5m into the club. That has gone, and we shall never see that again It is time for the council to show us that they really want us to stay in [Maclean]^{xiii}.

Though building plans were approved in the specified 8-week period, Hole continued to pressure club members, and also Maclean's business community and general public to show more support for the club, or risk losing it to another town. With the antagonistic relationship he had developed with the Maclean press, his demands received widespread coverage. By June 1998, this led to Maclean RUFC's three directors on the board, two of whom were from the original coalition of three, and all of whom had earlier supported Hole's motion to increase CTV's stake in the club, resigning their positions. The directors cited their frustration at being pressured by members to increase their influence in decision-making while being virtually powerless to do so given CTV's 90% stake in the club. As one director explained,

we had members making demands on us to stand up for them. But really, with only 10% of the say in what went on, we were really just making up the numbers on that board. I didn't agree with what they were doing to the club either, but he who pays the piper calls the tune.

Another director, who was also Maclean RUFC president, a position of considerable status in the amateur era, chose to resign his club presidency in addition to his directorship. He explained that, "in all honesty, I'm not even sure what the president's role is under the new set-up, and it could be that it will be decided not to have one"^{xiv}. Clearly, Maclean RUFC's loss of discretion in decision-making led to confusion over institutionalised roles, and a general apathy among members. Indeed, when volunteers perceive their role as merely approving decisions made by others, Auld and Godbey (1998) pointed out that they are likely to become apathetic about their involvement. This role ambiguity and lack of enthusiasm was indicative of the increasingly antithetical relationship between the professional leadership of Maclean Rugby and its institutional constituents, particularly the membership of Maclean RUFC. These poor relationships in the club's institutional environment, precluded it from benefiting from the increased consumer demand and better access to financial and human resources that accrue from

healthy institutional relations (Oliver, 1997). This helps to explain the difficulty that constituents had in proffering social support and approbation on the professional club. Indeed, this lack of support by the members' signalled an increasing resistance to institutional pressures that Oliver (1991) predicted is likely when the content of those pressures includes a reduction in decision-making autonomy.

Compounding the problems Maclean Rugby had in establishing institutional support, in July 1998, it was revealed that Hole had grave legal problems that had resulted in authorities freezing his assets in the United Kingdom. In a hastily convened press conference, Hole discounted the story and reiterated his intention to move the club if local support did not improve. As he stated,

let me spell it out. There is no financial crisis at [Maclean]. Where is all this bullshit coming from? I don't want to move, but the more I think about it, it seems to be the only way we can compete with the big clubs in Division One^{xv}.

Despite his initial denials, Hole was indeed the defendant in two long-running, high profile cases, and his assets, including CTV and Maclean Rugby, were indefinitely frozen. This meant that, with the 1998/99 season about to commence, potential sponsors and business clients were hesitant to associate their respective corporate images with Maclean Rugby. Therefore, with its legitimacy and transformational shield severely depleted, each month when the club had to meet its £150,000 wage bill, the continued poor levels of attendance meant that it was unable to do so. This crisis led to further coalition building among Maclean's institutional constituents. Naturally, one of the obvious constituents acutely affected by the continued late- or non-payment of monthly wages was the club's players. This resulted in collective industrial action in September 1998, when, with the support of the Professional Rugbyplayers' Association (PRA), players threatened strike action unless they were paid by September 14. Such concerns over occupational standards and basic operating procedures constitute the general "rules-of-thumb" that are the normative aspects of institutions (Hoffman, 1999). By threatening industrial action against Maclean Rugby, its players struck at the core of the club's normative pillar. The normative and regulative aspects of institutions are the products of human design (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), and as such, can lead to active agency and contestation (Hirsch, 1997). In this process of contestation, Hole negotiated with the

players and the PRA for an extension to September 21. However, when questioned on the club's, and in particular, his legal problems publicly, Hole obfuscated and responded by renewing his vehement denunciation of Maclean's local businesses for their lack of support. As he stated,

when I came to [Maclean], the agreement was that I would put in £300,000 a year. I have so far put in ten times that amount. Well that's it. Why am I the only one bailing out [Maclean]? Where are the local business people? We haven't even got a shirt sponsor. Why has no local company come forward to put their name on our shirts? It makes me sick^{xvi}.

Though Hole eventually paid the technical staff their September wages, many became frustrated at the ongoing pay disputes that resurfaced every month. Several players, therefore, accepted offers from Premiership competitors. In addition, two administrative staff, and crucially, the club's high profile director of rugby, resigned their positions in November. In this context of increasing uncertainty, CTV were perceived by constituents as continually failing to deliver the financial resources on which Maclean Rugby depended, and indeed, on which the partnership was founded. Predictably, in line with Oliver's (1991) assertions, this depleted its ability to exert coercive pressure on constituents. One local reporter, who was also a member of the club, published an article in which he mounted a scathing attack on the professional leadership of Maclean Rugby. As he stated,

all we have heard for the past year is comments like, "support us, or we are going elsewhere", "[Maclean] doesn't want top class rugby" and "why won't the businesses of the town help us out?" All these threats are doing is alienating the potential support in this town. The sooner someone realises the people coming through the gate - and those considering it - are friends of the club and not just cash cows, the sooner gates will pick up People only have so much disposable income, and they are not inclined to give it to people who then slag them off^{xvii}.

Therefore, throughout 1998, the relationship between Maclean RUFC and CTV grew increasingly acrimonious. The membership had originally acquiesced to CTV's pressure for more control in the expectation that by doing so, the club's legitimacy and access to resources would be enhanced. However, as CTV increasingly failed to provide these resources, its ability to impose coercive pressure on the membership decreased

accordingly. The continued lack of support shown by constituents and indeed, the caustic tone of postings on the club's Internet website and local newspaper articles, suggested that members' defiance to the pressures exerted by CTV had grown more extreme. No longer were constituents simply dismissing the controlling tactics employed by CTV, but they began to openly challenge them. Challenging tactics are a more active form of resistance to institutional pressures because, as Oliver (1991, p. 156) pointed out, they require an organisation to "go on the offensive in defiance of these pressures and may indeed make a virtue of their insurrection." Therefore, in October 1998, a consortium of members and local business people, who were disgusted at the plight of the club and the prospect of Hole moving it out of Maclean, mounted a community-based campaign to buy CTV's 90% stake. The consortium aimed to oust CTV from Maclean and highlighted that by doing so, Maclean Rugby would "become a club again," and be returned to the control of its members. However, until one of the two legal cases pending against Hole was resolved, CTV could not dispose of any of its assets. As a result, the campaign faltered and constituents again became increasingly apathetic. By December, with staff wages consistently late or unpaid, Maclean Rugby's chief executive, whose credentials were unquestioned as a highly respected former England and British Lions coach, also tendered his resignation due to uncertainty over his wages. He pointed out that Maclean Rugby was "a world away from you'd expect a professional club to be." Therefore, with key staff members leaving, and volunteers disenchanted and unwilling to work with the professional administration, the club degenerated deeper and deeper into crisis.

When one of the cases pending against Hole was finally resolved in mid-January 1999, the court ruled for the plaintiff and ordered Hole to pay £8m. As a consequence, divestiture of the ongoing expense of Maclean Rugby became a priority for CTV. Hole approached the consortium that had organised the campaign in October and offered it CTV's 90% stake in the club for the sum of £1, provided the consortium took responsibility for the club's debts that totaled £500,000. Three consortium members offered to contribute £250,000, and approached local businesses to raise the other £250,000. However, with the club's poor public image and equally poor performance in technical terms in the 1998/99 season, it received an indifferent response and the plan was again aborted. Importantly however, the consortium used its £250,000 to start a

"development fund," which was used for the upkeep of basic club infrastructure.

Therefore, constituents' dependency for resources shifted away from CTV, and towards the consortium, which further eroded CTV's legitimacy in the partnership arrangement.

The negotiated nature of strategic responses

By April of 1999, with the end of the season imminent, Hole advertised in national newspapers to sell CTV's stake. Consequently, an approach was made by Harold Horsley^{xx} and Michael Groom^{xx}, who represented a London-based company called Waterton Boyd International^{xx} (WBI). However, rather than approaching CTV directly, Horsley made contact with three former members of the amateur club's management committee, who were reportedly disenfranchised by their loss of power and privilege brought about by Hole's professional regime. These individuals subsequently arranged a private meeting for Horsley with Hole. By approaching Hole through former committee members, Horsley was able to convince Hole and CTV that WBI was the membership's preferred buyer, to which CTV was particularly receptive. However, the members who introduced Horsley to Hole kept their activities confidential, and thus, did not inform the membership of the impending change in the club's major partner.

When the sale was completed, Horsley immediately installed himself as chief executive of Maclean Rugby. Subsequently, rather than have members' democratically elect their representatives onto the partnership board of directors, as was the norm, he gave directorships to the three former committee members who had earlier introduced him to Hole. Therefore, without the knowledge of the club's membership, WBI bought CTV's 90% stake for the sum of £1, and completely replaced the leadership of Maclean Rugby. Thus, despite the change in the club's major partner, it appeared that the same manipulative and controlling tactics that had characterised CTV's involvement were to be employed by WBI. Clearly, Horsley and Groom had anticipated potential resistance to the sale and had co-opted individual club members who had a vested interest in seeking the status and prestige of board directorship. This "opportunistic use of institutional links" (Oliver, 1991, p. 157) effectively neutralised institutional opposition from Maclean RUFC. Ultimately however, it did little to enhance the legitimacy of WBI as the club's major partner.

Indeed, the manipulative tactics by which WBI entered the partnership and assumed leadership of the club caused concern among members. One member pointed out that, with WBI's involvement, "the membership was thrown out of the frying pan and into the fire." Subsequently, at the annual Maclean RUFC elections for its management committee, three founding members of the consortium that was formed in October 1998, and initiated the development fund in January 1999, were elected. Several theorists have suggested that the aspirations of key actors can have a potent influence on an organisation's future strategic responses to institutional processes (Schreyogg, 1980; Oliver, 1991; 1992; Kikulis, et al., 1995). Indeed, as Ranson et al. (1980) suggested, certain groups within organisations, such as the consortium, can become powerful because of their ability to control and manipulate scarce resources. By "making a virtue" (Oliver, 1991) of their insurrection of the club's professional leadership, the consortium gained the social support of the membership as their legitimate leaders. Indeed, the election of these individuals, whose militancy and aim of returning the club to members' control was well known, was a clear act of defiance by the club's membership and further highlighted the point made by Ranson et al. (1980, p. 8) that certain groups in organisations "struggle to constitute structures in order that they become constituting."

Clearly, this was another period of widespread change in the club. However, what remained constant was the fact that, even with the change in ownership, staff were still not paid on time, and sometimes, were not paid at all. As was the case when CTV was the major partner, this lack of consistency in the normative expectations between the club's professional leadership and its institutional constituents caused increasing social pressure for change. Indeed, the members that Horsley had co-opted onto the partnership board were ostracised by the membership for what constituents saw as their duplicity in allowing WBI to assume its 90% stake in the partnership. As one member of the consortium suggested, "they were seen as complicit with Horsley and Groom. They were responsible for those guys being here. So it became a case of them and us." Pressure of this kind arises from normative fragmentation, or "changes to the organisation . . . that disaggregate collective norms and values" (Oliver, 1992, p. 575). Therefore, with little agreement on normative expectations between WBI and Maclean RUFC, the relationship rapidly became one of inherent conflict. As a result, in June, and again in July, the

members' management committee unanimously recommended that Horsley sell WBI's share in the club to a consortium member who had offered him £100,000 to do so. Despite having paid only £1 for WBI's 90% stake merely three months earlier, Horsley refused on both occasions. With the 1999/00 season approaching, players became frustrated that the club's new partners had not improved the reliability of their wage situation. As a consequence, in July 1999, five of the club's best players accepted offers to play for other Premiership clubs.

The crisis grew even deeper in mid-August 1999, when, as the minor partner in Maclean Rugby, Maclean RUFC was served notice by Customs and Excise that charges were pending against Michael Groom for smuggling £40m worth of cocaine. As the major shareholder of WBI, Groom was also the major shareholder of Maclean Rugby. The notice stipulated that Maclean RUFC, as the 10% partner of Maclean Rugby, was barred from "disposing of, or diminishing the value of, [Groom's] assets"^{xviii}. Clearly, the revelations regarding the seriousness of the charges against Groom and the notice from Customs and Excise explained why Horsley had repeatedly resisted the pressures placed upon him to sell WBI's 90% stake in the club. However, Groom's legal problems also had a devastating affect on the legitimacy of WBI, and as a consequence, on that of Maclean Rugby. Such institutional forces, as Dacin (1997) pointed out, can sometimes accelerate the effects of other political and economic forces. Indeed, the institutional pressures stemming from Groom's predicament and WBI's further loss of legitimacy, accelerated economic and political forces as potential corporate hospitality and sponsorship arrangements with local businesses were dashed for the forthcoming season. In the month that followed the revelations, what little remaining confidence that existed in the club's professional leadership evaporated, and eight of Maclean Rugby's administrative staff resigned after their demands for payment of wages were not met. Crucially, this left only two full-time professional staff to administer the club. Desperate to limit further damage, in September 1999, Groom moved into Horsley's position as chief executive and convened a meeting with local business people. Groom called the meeting in the hope of dispelling doubt among the Maclean business community and thus, reclaiming lost legitimacy. As one attendee at the meeting described,

he spoke for 55 minutes without notes. It was impressive, but we had heard virtually the same speech from [Harold Horsley] when he arrived. He obviously didn't realise how low confidence in the people running the club among local business people had sunk no-one was rushing forward with cheques at the end of the meeting^{xix}.

Less than a week after this meeting, at which Groom gave undertakings to keep the club in Maclean, he issued an ultimatum to constituents. He stated that if a major sponsor did not come forward, and Maclean Rugby had not sold at least 50% of available advertising and hospitality by the end of the month, he would move the club to Lismore^{xx}, where he also owned a professional soccer club. As he stated,

the question is absolutely clear - does [Maclean] want a professional rugby club or not? Words in reply are irrelevant. Signed commitments - or the lack of them - will answer this question There is keen support for a rugby club in the [Lismore] area. The people there would welcome the team with open arms and chequebooks^{xx}.

Therefore, Groom chose to openly defy the pressures for more control from institutional constituents by aggressively attacking their source. However, as local merchants and members had already been subjected to such coercive tactics by CTV, Groom's threats were summarily dismissed. Moreover, as WBI had consistently failed to financially support the club, constituents had been forced to decrease their dependence on the 90% partner. In turn, some of the club's basic financial commitments, such as the wages of one of its two remaining administrators, were being met from the development fund established earlier by the consortium of members. When the degree of external dependence on pressuring constituents is lessened, Oliver (1991) suggested that the likelihood of organisational resistance to institutional pressures increases. Accordingly, the consortium of members intensified political activity and pressured WBI to forfeit its 90% stake and return decision-making autonomy to the membership.

By the end of September, despite the charges pending against him, Groom had been given permission from Customs and Excise to sell WBI's 90% stake in Maclean Rugby. Rather than carry out his threat to move the club to Lismore, in early October, Groom approached the consortium of local business people that had offered to buy WBI's stake on two previous occasions. However, when he demanded £1.1m, which

included debts of £500,000 that had accumulated since WBI became involved with the club, the offer was rejected. While negotiating with the consortium however, Groom also conducted alternative negotiations. Indeed, two days after his meeting with the Maclean RUFC consortium, on October 5, he announced that he had sold WBI's 90% stake to a Division II club that saw the purchase of Maclean Rugby as a means of securing promotion to Division I. This meant that Maclean Rugby's players and position in Division I would be forfeited to the purchasing club, effectively ending Premiership rugby union in Maclean. Ultimately however, for this to happen, the sale had to be sanctioned by England Rugby Partnership (ERP), which was a coalition of the RFU, English Second Division Rugby (ESDR), and the body that, since professionalisation, had become the primary mechanism of institutional control in Division I, English First Division Rugby (EFDR).

The transaction between WBI and the Division II club threatened the very organisational survival of Maclean RUFC in the Premiership because, without Premiership-standard players, or access to sufficient resources to employ them, the club would lose its fundamental means of production. Such disruptive events obviously have a dramatic impact on the process of change in an organisation (Miller & Friesen, 1980; Hoffman, 1999). This crisis turned many formerly apathetic constituents militant, and further galvanised the resistance of previously fragmented constituents such as club members, local merchants, Maclean Borough Council and significantly, the Maclean general public. Within one day of the announcement, the consortium that had earlier initiated the development fund, mounted a campaign called the "Save the Kings Appeal," which drew 2000 concerned members and citizens to an emergency meeting to decide on ways to stop the proposed sale. One of the consortium members described the urgency of the situation. As he explained,

there was no alternative. We started a development fund 12 months ago, you know, a fighting fund. But it didn't get going with sufficient support, not in the same way it did when [Groom] wanted to sell the club There was a stark reality. You either put your hand in your pocket and support the club or there wouldn't be a club to support!

Thus, the consortium focused on gathering social and financial support while also exerting pressure on ERP to oppose the sale. Although one of the prime aims of the

appeal was to raise financial resources, as Beamish (1985) pointed out, other resources can help determine organisational outcomes in periods of change. Specifically, he noted that material resources such as personnel and equipment, and normative resources such as the media and informal communication networks can also be mobilised to influence processes of change. Indeed, the support of local newspapers, radio, and television stations was integral to publicising the appeal. Maclean residents were petitioned to show support for keeping the club in the town by making donations and bombarding ERP with electronic mail and facsimiles to protest WBI's actions.

This social pressure was particularly effective as, only six months earlier, EFDR, the major shareholder in ERP and the main regulatory body pertaining to the Premiership, had graphically demonstrated its institutional control by coercing the amalgamation of three financially struggling clubs. This action was taken in the interests of preserving the financial integrity of the Premiership. As was outlined in Chapters II and III, EFDR board members had become concerned at the negative publicity caused by the exit from the field of a number of high profile benefactors, and the subsequent bankruptcy of the Premiership clubs they supported. When a field's configuration is altered in this way, the likelihood of a corresponding alteration in its patterns of interaction increases (Brint & Karabel, 1991; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Hoffman, 1999). Indeed, with the wide diffusion of the field's new professional logic, and EFDR's increasing legitimacy as the field's primary regulatory body, the institutional context and mechanisms of control in the Premiership had grown more defined. Of primary concern to EFDR, was ensuring the financial viability of clubs and enhancing the attractiveness of the Premiership to potential investors and sponsors. Therefore, it was unwilling to risk further negative publicity that the "death" of another Premiership club would cause. This highlights the notion that changes in field-level configuration and interaction patterns can prompt parallel shifts in the field's institutions, which are redefined through political negotiation to reflect the new interests (Oliver, 1991; Hoffman, 1999). Thus, on October 7 1999, at an ERP board meeting, it was decided that the proposed sale of Maclean Rugby was "not in the best interests" of the Premiership^{xxi}, and the transaction was therefore declined.

With its first hurdle overcome and the sale blocked, the appeal organisers turned their attention to constructing a plan to oust Groom. Consortium members devised

budgets and business plans based on revenue generated from the appeal, and subsequently, approached ERP to demonstrate the financial viability of their plan to return the club to members' control. Therefore, by establishing institutional relations with key constituents such as supporters and ERP, Maclean RUFC was able to "mobilise cultural support for its goals and activities and to demonstrate its social validity and conformity with institutional rules, norms, and regulations" (Oliver, 1997, p. 100). The plan presented to ERP involved the establishment of a campaign account, into which the money donated by supporters would be used to run the club in the event of wresting control from Groom. Subsequently, members, or shareholders, would vote to elect a new board and hence, the club would be returned to the control of its members.

Eventually, Groom relinquished WBI's stake in the club in exchange for what one club negotiator described as "minimal legal expenses." Groom also took responsibility for Maclean Rugby's debts up to the date of the transfer, which were estimated to be in excess of £500,000^{xxii}. One of the club's chief negotiators explained that, "I believe Mr. [Groom] wanted out and realised that we were his only hope. When he tried to make other deals, he found no-one showed up." The "Save the Kings Appeal" generated over 3,500 donations and a total of £515,000. As a consequence of the widespread social, cultural and financial support it generated, the consortium's plans for restructuring received the approval of ERP. As it had been emphasised that, should the campaign be successful, the club would be returned to the control of its members, in the restructuring that followed, mechanisms were put in place to limit the influence of professional staff in decision-making. One way volunteers can achieve this, as Thibault et al. (1991) suggested, is to centralise decision-making at higher levels of the organisation with a volunteer board of directors. Consequently, the club was returned to volunteer control as 'consortium members' - those who contributed £5000 or more, elected four directors to the new board; while 'supporters' - those who donated less than £5000, elected two. Crucially, an upper limit was put on the number of shares any individual or company could hold, and supporters were given certain rights of veto that included the prevention of the club being moved away from Maclean.

Clearly, the strategic responses of Maclean RUFC to the institutional uncertainty that followed the Paris Declaration, were the product of political negotiations over the

vested interests of various influential actors. The eventual strategic response of the club to the pressures inherent to the field's professional logic, reflected the interests of what emerged as the club's most important constituent - the membership. This supports the contention of theorists who have argued that organisations behave strategically when choosing to comply with institutional demands according to their interests (Oliver, 1991; Goodstein, 1994; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996; Kondra & Hinings, 1998). Indeed, while field-level institutional demands dictated that professionalisation would enhance legitimacy, with a multiplicity of institutional and task environment pressures, conformity to these pressures did not guarantee the elimination of uncertainty. Under such circumstances, as Goodrick and Salancik (1996, p. 25) noted, "norms must develop around the remaining uncertainties and are affected by actors' interests if these interests are consistent with the institutional framework." Therefore, the norms that eventually framed Maclean RUFC's strategic responses to the uncertainties in its institutional environment were founded upon the interests of its members. Indeed, with its institutional context more certain, and new mechanisms of institutional control established, the norms and interests of Maclean RUFC's members were legitimated by ERP as being consistent with the Premiership's new professional institutional framework, and therefore, ultimately secured the club's organisational survival.

CONCLUSIONS

The traditional institutional approach to organisational change has been criticised for its overly deterministic assumptions of organisational passivity, and its failure to address strategic behaviour and active agency in conceptions of institutionalisation (Powell, 1985; Covalleski & Dirsmith, 1988; DiMaggio, 1988; Oliver, 1991; Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). This research was an attempt to empirically address some of these criticisms by not assuming uniformity in the degree of choice in organisational strategic response to institutional constraints. Further, by empirically investigating a sport organisation's strategic responses to institutional processes, some of the theoretical ideas put forward by Oliver (1991) on the subject have been explored and extended.

By agreeing to pay players, the Maclean RUFC management committee clearly displayed some degree of acquiescence to the pressures for professionalisation in its institutional environment. However, what was demonstrated here was that ultimately, the

terms of Maclean's strategic response were the product of a negotiation process that reflected the interests of the club's most important constituency - its membership. The loss and reinstatement of the membership's organisational discretion, perhaps the defining feature of this process, was a necessary "right of passage" that the club had to undergo in order to galvanise social support for the radical change in values that legitimacy demanded in the new era. Simplistically, if the membership had agreed to finance professionalisation when the game first went open, rather than three years later, it would have been spared the trauma of external actors entering the organisation and imposing their discretionary constraints on the club. However, social support for the radical shift in values that such an action required, could only be achieved after the club had undergone these traumatic "rights of passage", where, faced with the stark choice between organisational mortality or shifting values, the latter was chosen.

Indeed, the fact that initially, in theory, members were willing to trade their organisational discretion in return for the resources to pay players, but were then unwilling to do so in practice, suggests that the amateur ethos was never fully deinstitutionalised. Certainly, as a high impact system (Kanter, 1984), decision-making embodied the club's traditional core values. Thus, Maclean RUFC's strategic response to the pressures caused by the field's new logic was ultimately more of a compromise, where professionals were employed, but volunteers remained at the pinnacle of the organisation with complete control over strategic decision-making. Therefore, another aspect given insufficient attention by Oliver's (1991) typology is that strategic responses to institutional processes, due to the inherent influence of vested interests, involve a crucial delegitimising, or deinstitutionalisation process. Clearly, strategic decisions can be made and implemented by agency-infused actors in response to institutional processes. However, as the findings of this study demonstrate, without organisation-wide shifts in the values underpinning these decisions, the lack of social support and approbation from constituents will make the successful implementation and durability of any related strategic response problematic.

Support was found for Oliver's (1991, p. 175) contention that "conformity to institutional processes is neither inevitable nor invariably instrumental in securing longevity." Indeed, initial conformity to the pressures in its institutional environment

actually threatened Maclean RUFC's long-term organisational survival. This acquiescence imposed structural and procedural rigidities that inhibited the club's ability to respond to subsequent contingencies in its immediate institutional environment. Moreover, it was the active agency of "strategic non-compliance" (Oliver, 1991) that eventually mobilised sufficient material and normative resources to secure the club's ultimate organisational survival. Therefore, in addition to providing empirical support for Oliver's (1991) predictive hypotheses, this work has demonstrated that strategic responses to institutional processes should not be viewed as unitary decisions made in isolation by decision-makers in dominant coalitions. Rather, the findings presented in this chapter suggest that strategic responses to institutional pressures involve crucial temporal, political, and processual dimensions, issues not explicitly dealt with by Oliver.

Oliver (1991) took pains to point out that her work was aimed at identifying the range of strategic responses to institutional pressures and the antecedents of these behaviours, rather than the actual consequences of resistant strategies. While this chapter has borne out the accuracy of Oliver's predictive dimensions, particularly with reference to the employment of manipulative strategies to shape the organisation's social perceptions, it has also demonstrated the processual nature by which resistant strategies evolve, an aspect somewhat downplayed by Oliver. Far from being a consequence of resistance, the political to and fro among constituents at multiple organisational levels, who emerged with various vested interests and negotiated over time on the terms of appropriate strategic response, was an integral aspect of the temporal and political dimension involved in the *process* of strategic response to institutional pressures.

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CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the widespread organisational change that took place in senior English rugby union following the International Rugby Football Board's 1995 Paris Declaration. For the clubs that constituted the top English national league divisions and their regulatory body, the Rugby Football Union (RFU), the Paris Declaration overturned more than a century of institutionalised amateur competition. This led to the delegitimation of the field's formerly amateur values and attendant dominant logic, and indeed, its main cultural manifestations in the form of voluntary decision-making and regulatory structures. As a result, the period following the Paris Declaration, from June 1995 through to December 1999, which formed the time frame of this investigation, witnessed unprecedented environmental turbulence. A defining feature of this uncertainty was the struggle between the field's incumbent actors and powerful new entrants, as both sought to protect and promote their respective vested interests. Clearly, this turbulent environment was the product of a clash between the values and logics underpinning the advancement of these vested interests.

Profound shifts in the values and logics underpinning the organisational activities in a field have equally ubiquitous ramifications for change in its other aspects such as its communities of actors, governance structures, exchange processes and the forms of capital at stake (Scott, Mendell & Pollack, 1996; Oakes, Townley & Cooper, 1998). Indeed, the dynamic nature of change at this level revealed the interdependence among the field's institutional logics and those aspects just mentioned. In order to capture this dynamism in the context of shifting logics in the organisational field of senior English rugby union, a complex, multi-level approach to research was required. As a consequence, each chapter of this study was aimed at examining the process and impact of changes to this field's dominant logic at various levels of analysis.

In this concluding chapter, it would be remiss not to discuss how the professionalisation of senior English rugby union has affected the game's overall functioning and development in this country. Therefore, the following section highlights some of the more pressing problems that confront English rugby union as a result of this transition process. A discussion outlining the theoretical conclusions of this research then

follows, explaining the pertinent issues that go some way towards addressing the problems raised in the section that precedes it. Finally, some recommendations for further study are made.

The implications of professionalism for English rugby union

English rugby union's turbulent transition into the professional era has had dramatic effects not only at the senior level, but also upon the national game as a whole. In Chapters II and III, it was explained how the formation of English First Division Rugby (EFDR) and English Second Division Rugby (ESDR) led to the establishment of the Premiership as a distinct professional league, which effectively "ring-fenced" the top two divisions from the largely amateur leagues below. This initiative made English rugby union's "seamless" principle which, prior to professionalism, had always been held sacrosanct, effectively obsolete. The seamless principle referred to the promotion and relegation system, where every club in the country at least had the chance to progress through to Division I. By financially rewarding the professional clubs, particularly those in Division I, a polarity has developed where England's amateur clubs have, in reality, become little more than the suppliers of talent to the professional clubs in the Premiership. With their better players drawn to the professional clubs that can afford to pay their wages, these clubs have little chance of realising Division I or II ambitions. Indeed, even within the Premiership, a polarity has developed between Divisions I and II, as the more promising players from Division II clubs are drawn to the larger Division I clubs, not only by the lucrative contracts on offer, but also to increase their chances of national selection.

This polarisation of the English game has significantly impacted upon its organisation. Throughout the process of data collection, former Rugby Football Union (RFU) administrators and managers, particularly from Division II clubs, expressed dismay at what they saw as the disintegration of the game's intrinsic amateur values, or as one interviewee expressed it, "the selling of rugby's soul." One aspect of this has been that, out of the necessity to generate additional revenue, clubs have increasingly focused attention on new ways to market the game. It became increasingly apparent throughout the investigation that this change in focus quite often came at the expense of junior development. Therefore, where mass participation and attracting people to *play* the game

was emphasised by senior clubs in the amateur era, with professionalism, the emphasis increasingly shifted to attracting people to *watch* the game.

Reason (2000) revealed the extent of the disenfranchisement of those below the game's elite national level. Referring to the RFU's compulsory team insurance figures, he indicated that in 1998 and 1999 alone, a total of 664 teams disappeared from English rugby union, representing a figure of approximately 25,000 players. With the RFU and senior clubs still, at the time of writing, debating the future direction and organisational structure of professional English rugby union, these figures give considerable cause for concern. Further, considering that all players who eventually progress through to the national teams start at the smaller amateur clubs, from a development perspective, these figures cannot be ignored.

It could be that this massive downturn in participation is a temporary phenomenon caused by the speed with which the game has changed. Indeed, most interviewees explained that many mistakes were made when the game first went professional. Perhaps the most common of the mistakes discussed by interviewees was that many incoming professional managers failed to adequately involve volunteer managers, upon whom clubs had been founded, in their respective change initiatives. This caused resentment and the marginalisation of formerly influential constituents. As a result, rather than a smooth passage into the new era, highly emotional and turbulent transitions became the norm in clubs throughout the country. In addition, many of the rites, rituals, and social traditions of the amateur era such as, for example, clubs' annual dinners, and 'old boys' reunions, were seen by incoming professionals as anachronisms of a bygone era. This resulted in the cancellation or scaling down of many of these crucial social aspects of the game's traditional amateur culture.

In the latter stages of data collection, it became clear that managers were beginning to recognise the importance of reinvigorating the interest of constituents who had been left disenfranchised by their respective professional regimes. Indeed, several went out of their way to emphasise that, after learning from earlier mistakes, they had taken measures to reinstate links with the traditions and camaraderie of the amateur era. For example, a Division I club's commercial director explained how, in the process of moving the club twice from its former home in the amateur era, on the second move,

particular attention had been paid to carefully transplanting the club's historical photographs and memorabilia. This was seen as important in maintaining the club's links with its past, and fostering the traditional organisational culture of the club. In addition, players were encouraged to socialise with fans and the general public in the club's bars after home games, which was also seen as an important aspect of fostering a "rugby culture." In another club, perhaps symbolising the priorities of the professional era, the players were also encouraged to mix with fans after games, but were first required to "rub shoulders" with the club's corporate sponsors in their private boxes before retiring to the members' bar.

While these gestures on their own did little to stem the flow of players out of the game, they were seen as small steps towards making rugby union clubs again become positive, vibrant establishments that encouraged lifelong involvement and participation, as many were in the amateur era. Indeed, many interviewees revealed a general recognition of common mistakes made in the professionalisation of senior English rugby union, and those involved in its management made considerable progress toward resolving their differences throughout 1999. However, the fact remains that the current model has not been conducive to grass roots development. Therefore, this research has been timely, in that it has taken a theoretical approach towards addressing what has gone wrong in the transition process, and indeed, what has been productive. The following section, as well as summarising the main findings of this research, explores some of the more pertinent theoretical issues raised by this study, and in so doing, offers the conclusions of this research project.

Research summary and conclusions

This research has shown that, when the dominant logic of a field changes, the radical organisational change that ensues does not take place in the smooth, linear manner suggested by theorists such as Greiner (1967; 1972) or Kotter (1994). While the actual pattern of the change process was not the focus of this research, it is worth noting that the pressures resulting from professionalisation produced extremely turbulent, non-linear, and inherently conflictual change.

In analysing how this process unfolded, the nature of the field's historical, social, economic, political, and competitive environment was established in Chapter II.

Subsequently, the study then focused on the period from June 1995 to December 1999. Utilising the theoretical insights of theorists such as Prahalad and Bettis (1986), Bettis and Prahalad (1995), and Scott et al. (1996), the objective of this chapter was to demonstrate the extent of change in the dominant logic of senior English rugby union throughout this period. Support was found for the contentions of those theorists mentioned above, in that a shift in the field's dominant logic indeed prompted widespread change in its other components, notably, in its communities of actors, exchange processes, forms of capital at stake, and its governance structures.

In particular, significant shifts in the communities of actors composing the field hastened change in other aspects, as powerful new actors with strong ties to business environments brought with them professionally oriented values and logics. In addition, when these actors made significant financial investments in the field, they collectively took measures to protect these economic interests, which prompted coalition building and ultimately, a reconfiguration of the field's regulatory structure. Significantly, this emphasis on economic capital prompted an important shift in actors' exchange relationships, in that strategies and structures were reoriented in order to gain access to this important network resource. Indeed, as the professional era unfolded, actors shifted their former emphasis on intrinsic forms of cultural capital to the pursuance of economic capital. This leads to the first conclusion of this research, that the forms of capital at stake in a field are as sensitive to shifting logics as the other interdependent aspects of organisational fields. Indeed, shifts in capital may even play a leading role in changes to these other aspects. As the most prized forms of capital in the field shifted from more cultural to economic emphases, different forms of professional organisational knowledge and practices became legitimate, while others in turn, such as those related to cultural and social practices, were delegitimated. As a result, the identities of producers, consumers, markets, and products shifted in response to these changes in capital. Therefore, by incorporating the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1985; 1990) and Oakes, Townley and Cooper (1998), this study provided empirical evidence of the relationship between shifting field-level logics and forms of capital, and thus, has offered an important extension to institutional approaches to change at this level of analysis.

The changes mentioned above were prompted by the RFU's failure, despite a clear portent of change in the form of the SANZAR-News Corporation deal, to anticipate the likelihood of the professionalisation of the world game. This resulted in an initial inability to articulate a clear vision of the structure that professional rugby union would take in England. Bound by paradigm stasis, the RFU failed to use existing linkages with governing bodies in other countries to develop this vision. This failure to proactively lead the field in its transition meant that the RFU inadvertently opened the game to market forces in the form of the field's entrepreneurial new entrants. The vast difference in values between the field's new entrants and its incumbent volunteer actors created the foundation for conflict, which ultimately resulted in the negative impacts mentioned in the previous section.

While the RFU welcomed the financial resources that the entrepreneurs represented, it had no clear concept of how to incorporate their obvious desire to have some degree of control in the use of these resources into the field's decision-making apparatus. Therefore, the second conclusion of this research is that dominant logics are susceptible to change, and leaders must be capable of anticipating shifts in their environment and subsequently formulating and articulating a clear vision of appropriate responses to change. This supports the views of Bettis and Prahalad (1995) who suggested that dominant logics need to be viewed as fluid, non-linear, and emergent properties of organisational life. They warned that leaders' failure to recognise this can lead to problems anticipating the environment, and ultimately, to "toxic" side effects (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995, p. 11). Clearly, the problems outlined in the previous section were the manifestation of these toxic side effects. However, the fact that most of the power struggles between obdurate coalitions in the English game appear to be close to resolution, suggests that some degree of "unlearning" of the field's old logic has taken place. Bettis and Prahalad (1995) suggested that this process of unlearning is an essential prerequisite before any significant learning of a new logic can take place.

Clearly, the lack of leadership displayed by the RFU following the Paris Declaration was a product of its inability to unlearn the field's amateur dominant logic. In the absence of clear leadership from the RFU therefore, powerful new entrants led the process of change in the field. In contrast to the RFU, these actors had clearly stated

organisational objectives that were founded upon their professional values. Significantly, the changes they initiated necessitated shifts in the values held by the field's incumbent actors. For the clubs, these shifts were vital if they were to successfully negotiate the transition from amateur sport organisations into what were essentially small business operations. This was an inherently "messy" process, as actors with vastly different backgrounds and interests sought to adapt their organisations to the exigencies of elite rugby union's new professional order. This resulted in isomorphic pressures and a number of "casualties," as clubs that were unable to make the necessary transitions went into receivership and, in some cases, ceased to exist altogether. This process of isomorphic selection again demonstrated Bettis and Prahalad's (1995) notion of the emergent nature of dominant logics, and the ties between organisations as complex adaptive systems and the shifting logics in their institutional environment. Significantly, this research supported their suggestion that, under conditions of shifting logics, some organisations may find it impossible to unlearn old logics and, as a consequence, may fail.

This was particularly highlighted in Chapter III, where the focus shifted to analysing the isomorphic processes by which the professional logic diffused throughout the field. Utilising primarily the work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the role of coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphic processes in diffusing the new logic were investigated. This led to a discussion of how these processes subsequently influenced the maturity of the field. It was found that interorganisational linkages played a crucial part in facilitating isomorphic processes and the field's maturation. As formal linkages increased in strength and number in the first and second professional seasons, system coupling throughout the field tightened as actors became increasingly linked through the formation of new coalitions and contractual alliances. Importantly, this increase in the formal ties binding actors was not initially accompanied by the creation of informal networks, which took much longer to evolve. The establishment of these formal ties between actors created coercive isomorphic pressures for the adoption of the professional logic and its related values and structures, and also served to increase exchanges of financial network resources. However, due to the intensity of competitive pressures, exchanges of normative information-based resources were restricted. Therefore, although

system coupling had tightened, the field's multiplexity of ties lagged behind. With strong coercive pressure on organisations to adopt the structures and processes inherent to the field's new logic, mimetic processes accelerated in an environment of unprecedented uncertainty. This suggests a third conclusion of this study: when competitive pressures rise as a result of shifting logics, the resultant isomorphic processes are characterised by increases in formal interorganisational linkages and coercive and mimetic pressures.

Indeed, in the first two professional seasons, despite the increase in formal linkages among actors, the informal linkages that theorists such as Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) and Haunschild (1993) contended were crucial to the development of social networks and the related exchanges of normative information, failed to develop. This led to status-driven mimetic behaviour as actors imitated the strategies and structures of prominent clubs. With the increase in coercive pressures for professionalisation, and the uncertainty stemming from the RFU's weakened regulatory power, these mimetic processes developed into what Kraatz (1998) termed a "bandwagon" of strategy diffusion. Crucially, this process of diffusion was characterised by a lack of exchanges of normative information-based resources among actors.

By the third professional season, sustained economic crisis throughout the field and the consolidation of EFDR as the primary regulatory power with respect to the Premiership, prompted the development of a shared vision among actors that a successful league of clubs was essential to the financial viability and long-term stability of professional English rugby union. Crucially, this realisation by key actors that they were engaged in a common enterprise led to a willingness among clubs to share strategic information, and facilitated the "high capacity information links" that Kraatz (1998) contended were central to normative processes and the social learning of adaptive responses. Further, drawing on the suggestions of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), this shared vision was seen as indicative of the field's increasing maturity. Therefore, isomorphic processes, by the third professional season, led to the institutionalisation of shared normative expectations of appropriate organisational behaviour, and institutional pressures that promoted cohesion among actors and development of the game's infrastructure. Therefore, the fourth conclusion to be drawn from this work is that there is

a crucial temporal dimension to the emergence of normative isomorphic processes when a field undergoes profound changes to its underpinning dominant logic.

The research focus was further narrowed in Chapter IV, where a choice was made to focus on the strategic responses of a club that came close to joining those that failed in their transition into the professional era. This afforded a chance to build on the findings of Chapter III and highlight the importance of constituents' normative acceptance of transformation (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay & King, 1991). In addition, using the theoretical framework offered by Oliver (1991), this case study centred on a club's strategic responses to the pressures inherent to its institutional environment. Support was found for Oliver's argument that conformity to pressures in an organisation's institutional context does not necessarily take place in an automatic, taken-for-granted manner. Rather, an organisation's degree of conformity or resistance to institutional pressures was shown to be a function of intra- and interorganisational political negotiation among actors who sought to protect their respective vested interests.

While this study provided empirical support for Oliver's (1991) theoretical framework, its particular contribution to the literature on strategy in sport organisations actually extended her important work. Indeed, although Oliver (1991) referred to the political dimension of strategic responses, this study provided empirical evidence of the processual and temporal dimension by which these responses unfold. It showed that an organisation's strategic response to institutional pressures should not be viewed as a unitary decision taken by actors in dominant coalitions. Rather, strategic responses were shown to evolve over time as key actors engaged in political negotiation over the terms of response. This suggests a fifth research conclusion of this investigation, that an organisation's strategic responses to institutional processes should more accurately be viewed as the product of a series of negotiated decisions that evolve temporally, and are founded upon the active agency and choice of the organisation's key actors. Interestingly however, it was also shown that, without organisation-wide shifts in the values underpinning this series of decisions, the success and sustainability of any strategic response is doubtful.

Those clubs that were more successful in negotiating the transition from amateur to professional status developed clear objectives for the change process, and crucially,

secured the normative support of important constituents for this process. Further, these objectives and normative support were established early in their respective transitions. These clubs also proactively encouraged the fostering of informal networks with counterparts at other clubs, thus enhancing the social learning of adaptive responses that was discussed in Chapter III. Conversely, the clubs that failed to adapt to the demands of professionalism were unable to generate the necessary congruence between the changes required and their respective interpretive schemes. In these clubs, and indeed, in the RFU, transformation efforts were constrained by what Clark and Soulsby (1995) referred to as organisational transience. Constituents were, to variable degrees, constrained in their transformative responses by the values, knowledge, and experiences that were the product of their previously institutionalised amateur interpretive schemes.

Indeed, throughout this research project, particularly in Chapter IV, even when dominant actors were in favour of change, transition was extremely problematic without organisation-wide acceptance of the conditions of change. This led to conflict which impaired managers' abilities to foster normative exchanges of information with peers. Thus, in these clubs, responding to isomorphic pressures for professionalisation became a case of what O'Neill, Poudier and Buccholtz (1998) referred to as the "blind leading the blind." While these findings should prove useful to those interested in the roles of isomorphic pressures, values, agency, and choice in processes of organisational change, they also suggest a sixth conclusion of this research. This is, that managers must understand the crucial role of constituents' values in processes of organisational transition. As the results of Chapter IV show, without the normative acceptance stemming from sufficient congruence between constituents' values and organisational strategic behaviour, the eventual success of any related change initiative is extremely problematic. This is particularly relevant not only to the sport environment, but to any organisational context in which norms and interpretive schemes are locked in over time, and therefore, become resistant to change.

This raises two other interrelated issues. It was shown as important to not only determine which actors' values matter most in processes of organisational change (Slack & Hinings, 1994), but also to examine the process by which actors *made* their values matter. It was found that when actors perceived that their interests were compromised by

organisational responses to shifting logics, particularly with respect to decision-making, they engaged in coalition building, political activity, and coercive behaviour to safeguard these interests. This led to the widespread organisational turmoil discussed earlier, and suggests a seventh and final research conclusion: when key actors who are affected by processes of organisational change are not included in decision-making structures, coalition building, and the use of political and coercive pressures will heighten the potential for uncertainty and interorganisational conflict. As the professional era has unfolded, the RFU has been superseded by England First Division Rugby (EFDR) as professional rugby union's primary regulatory power in England. Had the RFU been proactive in leading change in the field, and had it included representatives from the senior clubs in the initial discussions regarding England's response to the Paris Declaration, the uncertainty and conflict that has characterised the professional era in England may not have transpired. Indeed, as is the case in other countries, the national governing body may have maintained its pre-eminent position as the sole regulator of the national game.

Suggestions for further research

As rugby union was one of the last truly international games to repeal its amateur stance, the professionalisation of English rugby union provided a useful opportunity to study radical organisational change in a sport context. However, there are a number of ways in which the findings of this research could be extended. One area in which this study is perhaps lacking is in its temporal scope. With the change process continuing to evolve, revisiting the field at regular intervals would provide longitudinal data that could be used to examine how institutional change evolves over time. For example, various researchers have built up a catalogue of studies on institutional change at various temporal periods in the Canadian amateur sport system (cf. Kikulis, Slack & Hinings, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Macintosh, Bedeck & Franks, 1987; Macintosh & Whitson, 1990; Slack & Hinings, 1987, 1992, 1994). By revisiting the field at regular intervals and collecting data on the continued evolution of professional English rugby union, a similar bank of data and research could be developed on this process of organisational change. The longitudinal design of such research would capture the melange of pressures, shifting values, structures, and patterns of change that are exhibited over time (Miller, 1982;

Pettigrew, 1985, 1990; 1992). For example, it would seem important to establish whether the massive downturn in participation rates in English rugby union is the beginning of a downward spiral, or a brief reaction to mistakes made early in the transition process. Equally, such research could address the effectiveness of measures currently being discussed by English rugby union authorities to arrest this alarming trend.

Another way in which this research was restricted was that data were only collected from the senior end of English rugby union. Earlier, the devastating effect that professionalism has had on development of the game at its grass roots level was discussed. Further research that includes data from regional and junior rugby organisations would shed more light on the institutional causes of the massive nationwide downturn in participation rates. The data from such a study would also further inform this study's assessment of the impact of shifting logics in a field. For practical reasons, it was not feasible to include clubs below Division II in this study. However, data collected from these largely amateur leagues would be useful in examining how the game's shifting values at elite level have diffused down and impacted its organisation at junior level. Given the relative paucity of research into organisational values and change over time, such research would help to fill this gap in the literature.

A third way in which this study was restricted and could therefore, be extended, was that its broader focus on field-level change touched on various issues that, studied in isolation, could provide valuable contributions to the literature. For example, the role of the media in organisational transformation, and in particular, its function as a catalyst for diffusion of the field's professional logic, seems an area that begs for more research. In addition, the issue of organisational leadership in processes of change was one that continually resurfaced throughout the course of the study. Indeed, many of the problems that organisations had in adapting their strategies and structures to the demands of the field's new logic were inherently woven up in leadership issues. Future research in this area would seem helpful in developing a greater understanding of the institutional demands that affect leaders' behaviour, and further, how leaders' themselves influence the trajectory of change initiatives.

Last, another recurrent theme in this study was the political activity and coalition building that actors engaged in when they perceived their interests were compromised by

field-level events. In recent years, the role of interests and agency in institutionalisation and organisational change has received increasing research attention in the wider management and organisation studies literature (cf. Perrow, 1985; Powell, 1985; Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988; DiMaggio, 1988; Oliver, 1991). However, while the study by Kikulis and her colleagues (1995b) on agency and choice in Canadian national sport organisations provides an excellent lead, this area remains distinctly underrepresented in sport management. This seems remiss, given the particular utility of sport settings to studies of this nature. Therefore, in-depth analysis of the political nature of organisational change would shed further light on how political activity, coalition building, and coercive isomorphic pressures impact the overall process of change in sport organisations. Such research would also help extend the findings of Chapter IV in particular, by elaborating the conditions under which organisations resist institutionalisation. Given the paucity of empirical studies utilising institutional theory, this would provide a valuable extension to both the institutional and general organisational change literature.

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ⁱ In the season of 1986/87, the RFU instituted a national divisional league system that was composed of over 100 divisions. The pinnacle of this system was the national league Division I. A promotion/relegation system operated, and, although the subject of ongoing debate, continues to operate presently. In this system, which the RFU referred to as the "seamless principle" (RFU Commission Report, 1995), the club finishing top of its division moves up to replace the club finishing last in the division above. In theory, this ensures that all clubs in the country have the opportunity to work their way up through the various regional leagues to compete at the top national level in Division I.

ⁱⁱ This notwithstanding, there were still members of clubs who were resistant to the changes inherent to professionalisation. This manifestation of organisational inertia, however, will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter V.

ⁱⁱⁱ The British Lions are a touring representative team selected quadrennially from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. In the summer of 1997, the Lions memorably won a three-match series against the then World Cup holders, South Africa.

^{xx} Pseudonyms

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^{iv} Footnotes iii through xxii (excluding xx which indicates a pseudonym), are references taken from newspapers that bear the name of the region in which the focal club for this study was located. Therefore, for reasons of confidentiality, these references do not appear in the list of references, but are available upon request.

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