

# Modifying Tradition: Examining Organizational Change in Youth Sport

Julie Legg, Ryan Snelgrove, and Laura Wood

University of Windsor

The purpose of this study was to examine the process of change at the level of youth sport by identifying the impetus for change, responses to change by stakeholders, and factors that constrained or aided the change process. Theoretically, this study builds upon an existing integrative change model. The context of this research is two youth soccer associations in Ontario, Canada, undergoing a long-term structural redesign mandated by the provincial soccer association. Stakeholders from local soccer clubs, as well as the Ontario Soccer Association ( $N = 20$ ), identified key factors influencing the implementation and success of change. Pressures to change and individual efforts made by board members, coaches, and parents were noted as aiding the change process. Limited collaboration with stakeholders, poor communication, misunderstandings of the change, and constrained organizational capacity negatively affected the change process.

**Keywords:** change, community sport, sport participation, youth sport

Pressures exist, both internally and externally, for sport organizations to remain effective in a competitive marketplace (Amis, Slack, & Hinings 2004a). Managing change is, therefore, a predominant element in the overall management of sport (Cunningham, 2002). As such, the study of organizational change has become increasingly important to the sport industry, as changes are occurring based on new innovations, strategies, and commercialization in sport (Caza, 2000). Within the context of the youth sport sector specifically, changes are occurring based on a growing concern that current structures and programs do not facilitate the achievement of desirable objectives, such as providing sport for all or developing elite athletes (Skille & Waddington, 2006; Torres & Hager, 2007). Traditional North American sport structures have been criticized for focusing heavily on winning and adult goals, rather than having the goals of youth participants in mind, such as fun and skill improvement (Green, 1997; Torres & Hager, 2007). Furthermore, overorganization, adult control, injury or abuse, and professionalization are some of the problems associated with the traditional North American design of youth sport leagues (Green 1997; Torres & Hager, 2007). One of the major challenges in managing these potential issues is that the structure and policies of traditional sport organizations are largely formed by volunteer committee members, with each individual having opinions or motives that may not

consider the best interests of all youth participants and may not be consistent with overall organizational values (Chalip & Scott, 2005).

Organizations representing various sports have chosen to respond to these types of challenges in different ways, most of which have involved minimal action. In order for sport to be appealing to a broader range of youth participants than is being targeted with current structures, change in program design may be beneficial (Green, 1997; Hill & Green, 2008; Skille & Waddington, 2006). This study focuses on the efforts of one particular organized sport currently going through a change process, specifically youth soccer in Ontario, Canada. To address some of the issues with current sport practices, the Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) strategy of the Ontario Soccer Association (OSA) aims to create a soccer environment that focuses on skill development that is appropriate for each individual age group (Ontario Soccer Association, 2014b). The plan aims to increase player enjoyment, decision making, skill development opportunities, and age-appropriate playing environments (Ontario Soccer Association, 2014a). Changes include the removal of standings and scorekeeping, smaller playing fields, fewer players per game, and travel and playing time restrictions. The OSA made these policy changes, in the form of new structures and rules, mandatory for all Ontario soccer programs starting in 2014 for players under the age of 12.

The modification of a sport league involves appealing to multiple stakeholder groups (e.g., participants, parents, coaches, and league board members) and managing their concerns. With such a variety of perspectives involved, it

---

The authors are with Department of Kinesiology, University of Windsor, Windsor, ON, Canada. Address author correspondence to Ryan Snelgrove at [ryansnel@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ryansnel@uwindsor.ca).

can be challenging for change to occur, even when there is evidence that change is necessary for an organization (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Change also can have unintended consequences in organizations when plans are not fully monitored or thoughtfully implemented, leading to potentially undesirable states instead of positive outcomes (Bloyce, Smith, Mead, & Morris, 2008). The process of change, therefore, requires an understanding of the factors that can contribute to a successful transition (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine change within the context of Ontario youth soccer associations. Specifically, we examine the success factors and constraints that exist in the implementation and continuance of a youth sport league experiencing change. Past research on change in sport has primarily focused on elite-level organizations, such as professional teams or national governing bodies (e.g., Austin, 1997; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995b; Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings 1995a; O'Brien & Slack, 2004; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). However, limited attention has been given to organizational change at the youth sport level. The youth sport context is important because it is typically the context in which many individuals first experience sport as a precursor to elite sport involvement or lifelong participation.

Our focus on organizational change within the youth sport setting provides depth to the knowledge of change in sport based on the different stakeholders, pressures, sources of funding, and management structures that exist at this level. Theoretically, this study builds upon the integrative model of organizational change proposed by Cunningham (2002). Further examination of this model may provide insights to previously unconsidered factors. In the subsequent sections of this paper, descriptions of the grounding theoretical framework, the research method employed, findings, and contributions to theory and practice are provided.

## Theoretical Framework

Change can involve the implementation of new practices within a current organizational design, or it can be more extreme and influence a complete shift in organizational practices. A change that occurs within the existing organizational template is referred to as *convergent change*, whereas change that causes a move to a new template is called *radical change* (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The current study deals with radical change because there was a completely new approach to the design of a soccer league being implemented. To help illustrate the complexities of radical change, Cunningham (2002) suggested an organizational change model that included factors influencing the process and success of change from one template to another. The Integrative Model of Organizational Change (see Cunningham, 2002) considers institutional theory, population ecology, strategic choice, and resource dependence as theoretical change perspectives to ensure a holistic view of radical change.

## Organizational Template

The current design or structure of an organization tends to be influenced by institutionalized practices within an organization's field, which makes organizations similar (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Washington & Patterson, 2011). The values, beliefs, and ideas common within an organizational field all contribute to the structure or template in place (Brock, 2006; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). In the Cunningham (2002) model, the current template of an organization undergoes shifts to develop a new organizational template based on the processes involved in radical organizational change.

## Deinstitutionalization

The process of deinstitutionalization can be a conscious or unconscious organizational practice, which suggests that change can be strategic or environmentally influenced (Oliver, 1992). In radical change, deinstitutionalization is facilitated by a calculated plan to implement new or different practices. Organizations may experience the same change differently based on a variety of starting points and influential factors that can occur throughout the change period, exemplifying how the features of institutionalized practices can occur within each different organization (Kikulis et al., 1995a). Organizational members have a choice of how to respond to pressures for change, which is influenced by past experiences and learning (Kikulis et al., 1995a; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Understanding institutionalized practices can help organizations build upon current ideas and practices to create a readiness for change that is consistent with organizational views (Amis & Aïssaoui, 2013). Within the Cunningham (2002) model of organizational change, political, functional, and social pressures contribute to the deinstitutionalization process. Amis and Aïssaoui (2013) also supported the idea that a combination of these pressures can lead to change occurring.

**Political pressures.** Political pressures can occur within an organization as well as outside the organization (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2002; Bloyce et al., 2008; Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Internal pressures can arise when there are issues with organizational performance (Cunningham, 2009) or when members' ideas conflict with the current practices (Oliver, 1992). Externally, political pressures tend to be based on dependencies with other organizations (Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Practices enforced by these external relationships influence dependent organizations. When changes occur within this relationship, cause for change is created because organizational influences have changed (Bloyce et al., 2008; Oliver, 1992).

**Functional pressures.** Technical or functional pressures can bring into question the validity of organizational practices (Oliver, 1992). Functional pressures often occur when there is a change in rewards

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

**Social pressures.** Social pressures can also contribute to deinstitutionalization (Cunningham, 2002; Oliver, 1992). Social pressure can determine whether an organization is in agreement with institutionalized practices and whether traditional methods are actively or passively abandoned (Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Outside pressures from society also can lead to deinstitutionalization of practices that are no longer seen as socially acceptable, such as practices that are not environmentally safe (Cunningham, 2009). Along with these social influences toward change, deinstitutionalization can occur when an organization's structure shifts, altering the social environment (Oliver, 1992).

Pressures can occur internally and externally to an organization to create a push for change, especially within a competitive marketplace (Casey, Payne & Eime, 2012; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Although coercive pressures may be effective at initiating the change process, it is challenging to accomplish any full transition through radical change without the support of organization members (Amis et al., 2002; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011).

## Moderating Factors

In addition to pressures that influence change, there are competing forces within an institution that can impede or enhance the change process (Oliver, 1992). Cunningham (2002) labeled inertia and entropy as moderating factors that have opposing effects on the rate of change within organizations (Oliver, 1992). Factors that can inhibit the change process are described as inertia (Oliver, 1992). Traditional practices, fear of change, and personal investment are several ways that inertia can be manifested to slow organizational change (Amis et al., 2002; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Oliver, 1992; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Resistance is also most likely to occur when change is being implemented in areas central to organizations, such as decision-making structures or processes (Amis, Slack, & Hinings, 2004b). When individuals in power do not support change, resistance is likely to be great in an organization (Amis et al., 2004a). Regardless of the source of resistance, inertia is likely to occur at some point throughout the change process due to the frame-breaking nature of radical change. Conversely, factors that increase the speed or aid in the process of change are viewed as entropy (Oliver, 1992). When change is supported within an organization, it is more likely

that the process will occur at a quick pace (Amis et al., 2004a; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010).

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

## Value Commitments

Within the Cunningham (2002) model, different types of commitment to values influence the perspective of change held by stakeholders, a concept originally developed by Greenwood and Hinings (1996). The values and inclination to change are linked to two types of commitment: competitive commitment and reformative commitment (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). When some organizational members support the traditional organizational template and others prefer an alternative template, competitive commitment occurs (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Conversely, the strongest type of commitment for change is reformative commitment, where all organizational members reject the current template and favor a new alternative (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Without congruent values to proposed changes, the commitment of organizations to change will be limited, and changes will occur on only a superficial basis and will not be enough to support a true shift to a new template (Amis et al., 2002; Amis et al., 2004a).

## Late-Stage Moderating Factors

Factors identified by Cunningham (2002) that influence the final stages of a transition to a new template are capacity for action, resource dependence, power dependence, and an available alternative.

**Capacity for action.** Essentially, *capacity for action* refers to the ability of an organization to manage and carry out the change process from one template to another (Amis et al., 2004a; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Casey et al. (2012) found that organizational processes, organizational resources, and systems and control were three categories that influenced an organization's capacity for change. Communication during implementation, proper funding, the efforts of staff and volunteers, the leveraging of relationships and networks, and the formalization of structures were all elements that contributed to the successful implementation of new health promotion initiatives and strategies (Casey et



al., 2012). Specifically within nonprofit organizations, the implementation of organizational change can be challenging due to reliance on volunteers over paid staff (Amis et al., 2004a; Casey et al., 2012). Difficulty focusing on change and complying with prescribed changes can occur because volunteers are already busy giving their time to help run day-to-day organizational operations in addition to their lives outside the organization (Casey et al., 2012).

**Resource dependence.** *Resource dependence* is included as an influential factor in the model because change decisions are guided based on the environment on which organizations depend (Cunningham, 2002; Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). The dependencies present for organizations influence decision making and also determine which influences can exert power on organizations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Periods of high uncertainty, such as during the change process, are likely to induce more resource dependency, as organizations look to others to help provide solutions to change (O'Brien & Slack, 2004).

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

**Available alternative.** *Availability of alternatives* refers to the number of new organizational templates that could be considered by an organization for the possibility of change (Cunningham, 2002). New organizational forms that have been deemed unsuccessful are eliminated, and only the most favorable forms remain as alternatives, as a population ecology perspective would predict (Cunningham, 2002).

## New Organizational Template

When radical change occurs, an old organizational template that is no longer deemed successful changes to a new template (Brock, 2006; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Thus, the implementation of the change is complete when a transition to a new template has been made. Although the long-term success of the change and the post hoc evaluation of the new template are important, they are not typically a part of investigations involving the change implementation process (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010).

## Research Questions

Guided by the theoretical framework employed in this study, organizational change within the context of Ontario youth soccer associations was examined using the following research questions:

1. What pressures led to the initiation of the change process?
2. What were the responses of various stakeholders to the planned change?
3. What factors affected stakeholders' acceptance or rejection of the planned change?
4. What factors affected the transition to a new organizational template?

## Method

A case study approach was employed to investigate organizational change in the OSA. Following guidelines for the effective use of the case study method in management research outlined by Cepeda and Martin (2005), the Cunningham (2002) integrated model of organizational change was used as a theoretical basis for the research and helped inform the interview questions and analysis. Furthermore, the appropriateness of the model in understanding organization change in this specific sporting environment will be assessed, and any additional factors that explain the change process will be added to the model given the findings (Cepeda & Martin, 2005). A qualitative case study approach was selected for its ability to facilitate the generation of a detailed description and deep analysis of one particular situation from the perspective of multiple participants (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Although this method has been frequently used in studies of change in sport organizations (e.g., Amis et al., 2004a; Caza, 2000; Cunningham, 2009; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011), other approaches also may be instrumental in future research (e.g., quantitative or mixed methods).

## Participants

The study participants consisted of individuals from one of four groups: coaches, parents, and board members associated with one of two youth soccer clubs in Ontario, Canada, and staff members at the governing body, the OSA. All participants were over 18 years old. Involving each of these stakeholders allowed a more comprehensive view of change than one perspective could provide. Local club members were involved with the organization of the association (i.e., board members) or directly involved with teams for boys or girls under 12 years old (i.e., coaches and parents) that have adapted new playing guidelines mandated by the OSA. A total of 16 representatives from local soccer organizations were involved, with each respective group represented at each organization. In addition, 4 individuals from the managerial staff at the OSA participated in this study. Thus,

a total of 20 individuals participated in semistructured interviews. Pseudonyms are used throughout the article.

## Recruitment

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

## Data Collection

Semistructured interviews were conducted with 20 participants. A semistructured approach ensured that all key topics were covered with each participant consistent with the theoretical framework employed, but also allowed the exploration of new topics or concepts germane to the process of change. Employing an interview guide also helped the researcher focus on the participants' responses rather than continually thinking about the next question that could be asked (Charmaz, 2006). Participants were asked about their personal experience with the change, as well as information pertaining to the soccer organization, the youth athletes, and some of their expectations of the rules. Participants were recruited and interviews were conducted until it was concluded that theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) had been reached and further interviews were not likely to result in additional insights; in this case, many of the same experiences were described by participants, and a wide range of experiences had been collected. Interviews were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim. Once interviews were transcribed, participants were contacted through their previously obtained e-mail addresses and sent their full interview document to review if they desired. No changes were requested.

## Data Analysis

Transcripts were initially coded according to themes found in the Cunningham (2002) theoretical framework of change. Any passages of text not related to the theoretical framework but applicable to the change process were coded inductively (e.g., the communication process). The purpose of coding data initially in relation to the theoretical framework was to facilitate a direct comparison of the present findings with previous research and build theory. That is not to say that the researcher was not open to alternative conceptual descriptions where appropriate. Scholars who wish to see more theoretical development and less nuanced findings in qualitative work have advocated for the use of an approach that

relates qualitative findings directly to previous research (Prus, 1996). Thus, the approach to data analysis followed in that tradition. Following the initial coding of data, they were subsequently coded inductively. The purpose of coding the data inductively within one of the broader categories found in the model was to potentially derive new insights or concepts.

## Trustworthiness

To ensure that rigor was maintained throughout the qualitative data process, the concept of trustworthiness was followed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986). Specifically, Lincoln and Guba described trustworthiness in terms of four concepts: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. *Credibility* involves having findings that accurately reflect the concept being measured. In this study, credibility was obtained by having a substantial number of detailed interviews and verifying transcripts with participants. *Transferability* was addressed by interviewing a variety of stakeholders at multiple organizations and leagues to allow the research to be applicable to multiple contexts. Furthermore, an adequate description of the potential contextual nuances of soccer in Ontario was identified, where applicable, to allow the reader to make comparisons to other sport contexts. *Dependability* is relatable to the concept of reliability, which involves having consistent results using the same method. Dependability was managed by asking about different stages of the change process to ensure that members were relaying their true thoughts and beliefs about the process as it happened, not just their current feelings. *Confirmability* is the extent to which results are those of the participants, not the researcher. This concept was followed by frequently representing data directly through participant quotations over summary statements. This approach allows the reader to assess the reasonableness of the analysis and derived concepts.

## Findings

### The Need for Change

Developing an understanding of the impetus for the change first involves a focus on the OSA, the governing body for soccer within the province of Ontario. Interviews with employees of the OSA all suggested that the changes started to arise with the introduction of policies and philosophies from national bodies. Specifically, the Canadian Soccer Association designed goals for LTPD, as published in the document *Wellness to World Cup* in conjunction with Canadian Sport for Life's Long-Term Athlete Development model. The Canadian Sport for Life initiative aims to improve elite-level athletics in Canada, as well as encourage more Canadians to be active for life (Canadian Sport for Life, 2011).

The LTPD plan implemented by the OSA is very similar to the LTPD plan outlined by Canada Soccer,

including complementary resources, structures, and objectives (Canada Soccer, 2014). As the national and provincial plans intended, study participants felt that both retention and elite development were goals of the new changes. A community soccer board member suggested that the different values and justifications were to appeal to different levels of soccer participation:

Originally, it was basically at the World Cup level for the men. Canada sucks, so we have to come up with some better players. Well, then they quickly backtracked and realized that was pretty self-centered to do that and they said, well we've got to cut back on these parents being really really supercompetitive and the coaches being supercompetitive with the younger kids. That's what kills the kids; they don't want to come back anymore. (Ben, Coach)

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

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

The goals of the implemented change outlined by the OSA itself were to provide a fun environment, to encourage trial and error, to provide an age-appropriate learning environment, and to educate coaches (Ontario Soccer Association, 2015). These goals were to be achieved by changing the rules of play for youth soccer participants under the age of 12, including the elimination of scoring in games, travel restrictions, and fewer participants on the field at one time, all of which became mandatory for the summer of 2014.

Within the development of the change and its implementation, OSA representatives stated a number of purposes to support the theory behind the change. A fun, youth-friendly approach to soccer was described as a main reason to make modifications; this idea was based on youth survey results from across Ontario, as well as other supporting countries such as the United Kingdom, Brazil, and Australia. An OSA staff member, Jim, explained this by stating, "This is what the kids want, because we want to build an environment the kids want to be in; this is why they play sports, they don't play sports for the same reason that adults think they play sport." OSA members believed that the modifications created an environment that was more suitable to youth needs. Additional

rationales for the change included player retention, skill development, improved elite results, deemphasis on competition, and time and travel management strategies to limit player injury or burnout.

## Communicating the Need for Change

To convey the new LTPD goals to members, the main source of communication used by the OSA was the 21 district representatives across Ontario. In turn, these representatives were expected to communicate information about the change to their local clubs. In addition to this line of communication, the OSA created positions for technical advisors to assist in the dispersal of information. These individuals were responsible for holding information sessions across the province and aiding various organizational members through the change process. Additional forms of communication cited by study participants to inform local soccer clubs included the OSA website, paper resources such as pamphlets, and travel league meetings. The OSA representatives in this study mentioned coaching courses specific to LTPD stages, special LTPD community champions, and multi-day workshops geared toward the changes, but very few local association representatives in the study mentioned knowing about these new LTPD offerings.

Stakeholders at the two local soccer clubs examined within this study provided responses as to why soccer was changing in Ontario which were similar to the ideas presented during interviews with OSA employees and in publicly available OSA literature. For instance, Phil explained the fun and youth-centered approach by stating, "The idea, hopefully, is that if you get young children involved in sports and make it fun for them off the bat, they're going to play sports throughout their life more and be more physically active, and all the benefits that arrive from that." In addition, the change objective of improvement in elite competition was mentioned by Phil: "The idea behind this Long-Term Player Development was to find the better players and develop them to be more competitive down the road." Other information included knowledge on creating more opportunities for skill development.

In addition to member clubs being informed of the required changes, coaches and parents also needed to become aware of the new rules. Parents frequently stated that they found out about the LTPD changes through the coaching staff. Other less frequently relied upon sources included the local soccer club, league conveners, OSA resources, and peer communication. OSA members, as well as a few local soccer club board members, mentioned media attention with regard to the change, but parent and coach stakeholders did not notice this form of communication when asked. Although one individual sought out an OSA session and signed up for e-mail notifications, several individuals said that they were never informed of the changes. For example, Henry, a coach and parent, said, "I wasn't really formally told why they were changing the rules. I was just like really, okay, well . . ."



Informal communication was more evident at this level than the club level. As Henry explained, “it was mostly through the grapevine, usually at the soccer field either parents or other coaching staff or convenor mentioning a few things.” Individuals at this level also stated similar ideas about the change, but several of these philosophies were based on their own interpretation of information that was not necessarily obtained directly from the official sources or literature. Many participants stated the goals of focusing on fun, deemphasizing competition, skill development, and having age-appropriate environments.

## Responding to the Change

**Organizational responses.** OSA members spoke very positively of the change, although they were open to talking about resistance to the change and the issues that occurred during the change process. Conversely, parents, coaches, and local club board members reported a variety of emotions and opinions about the LTPD.

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

There was some thought that for our serious competitive teams, you have to [stay with the OSA because] the only serious competitive league is through the OSA and its various affiliates. [However], there was some thought we should just have our house league nonsanctioned with the OSA and just try to procure insurance from somebody and then get our referees insured through the same group and set up a nonsanctioned OSA league, but it has its drawbacks too. (Phil, club board member)

Phil further described some of the concern with regard to the changes and issues that it may create for the organization: “With the LTPD, we were really worried about what it was going to do to our program, in that a lot of us of the old school at first didn’t think that the ideas of no scores and no standings was a positive move.” Ultimately, both local soccer clubs implemented the changes as they saw fit and attempted to make the new rules successful. Issues were certainly discussed with interview participants at this level, but there was also positive feedback about the new plan. Cliff, another club board member, provided some positive observations, stating,

“With the drills, one thing is that the kids are getting more learning, more skills, more touches on the ball.” Other positive responses included reflection on player retention throughout the change, as board members were happy to see that the changes did not affect registration numbers.

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

**Parent responses.** As anticipated, there was a great deal of resistance from stakeholders. Study participants discussed different sources of resistance occurring throughout the change process for all stakeholder groups, including the OSA itself. The fact that “people do not like change” was repeatedly stated, and participants gave many examples of the opinions they had themselves, as well as what was discussed by others. For example, when asked about how he felt when he heard about the new changes, Tim said, “Very unhappy. Like I said, it’s soccer—it’s part of the game. I think we’re kind of coddling kids too much.” Much of the resistance to change appeared to be around the discontinuation of scores and standings. Describing the typical lack of positive responses from various stakeholders, Drew, a local soccer club board member, said, “most of the ones I got were kind of griping or the sarcastic comments about ‘oh, we’re not keeping score, we don’t want to hurt kids’ feelings’ and you know, ‘wouldn’t want them to have to be competitive.’”

Many parents saw minimal benefit to abolishing scores and standings, with some specifically stating that they viewed it as taking away from the value of the game. Jen, a parent, was just one of many stakeholders to state an opinion along the following lines: “that’s what the world is, there are winners and losers in everything in life.” Similarly, another parent, Ted, said, “Well, you’re not teaching them. You have to build the winning into them.” A large number of individuals were said to still be keeping their own informal scores, including board members, parents, coaches, and players. When speaking about youth players, Liz said, “Oh, they totally kept score. They knew exactly who scored what goal and in what order.”

Despite the negative responses that have been presented, the initial reactions of parents were often stated as more severely negative than most individuals’ current state of mind. Bill explained his initial reaction by sharing

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

While a few stakeholders had just positive feedback, a number of individuals continued to specifically state their dislike of the changes, while also supporting the positive impact that the changes had on the game. The simultaneous occurrence of both positive and negative feelings suggests the existence of ambivalence by some stakeholders. Responses such as the following by parent and coach, Lee, demonstrate this concept: “I don’t agree necessarily with everything that they think, but I agree that the kids need to be more comfortable with the ball than they do need to worry about the winning.” Specifically, coaches appeared to put a positive spin on changes even if they personally did not support them. Some felt that the changes were positive to the game, but even those who stated negative views tended to put forward a positive attitude to players and parents. For example, one coach expressed this role to keep the game positive: “I don’t try to feed into the negative, even though I don’t personally like it because I was never used to those kind of rules with the changes . . . I try to keep it positive, trying to deter them from spoiling the game.” (Henry). Therefore, there were a number of positive responses and approaches to the change among the resistance.

### Implementation Moderating Factors

**Constraining the change.** The capacity of local soccer clubs to implement the change was mentioned as a factor that could affect the successful transition to the new model. Specifically, participants discussed the financial resources required to resize fields and purchase new goalposts, as well as the difference between clubs with a volunteer base versus those with paid staff. The extra work required to educate themselves on the changes, organize new schedules, and physically modify fields was a challenge for clubs when they were already investing

considerable time in working on regular tasks. Cliff said, “you know, you put a lot of time in, but you can only put so much time in too.”

Interview participants reported some inconsistencies and confusion when it came to the implementation of the new playing rules. Differences were noted between clubs in Ontario when it came to festivals or tournaments, league play, field sizing, and officiating. When teams went to different locations for games, they found that there was variation in rulings on the modified officiating calls, and some areas still had regular-sized fields but were playing with the new rules of fewer players per side. Stakeholders were unsure why these discrepancies were occurring. Ross expressed this confusion, saying, “there were inconsistencies, which surprised me. I didn’t know why that was. Rules are rules, so why can’t you follow the rules if somebody had published rules?” The suggested phase-in period (e.g., 2012 or 2013) versus the mandatory deadline (2014) was mentioned as a possibility for the field differences, especially because only some clubs had implemented the changes early. Furthermore, the rules of the game did not appear to be clearly orchestrated or communicated when it came to officiating matches:

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

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

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

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

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

The resources have been out there; the education has been out there; it’s just been a case of, do people want to take the education and read the resources



and do things ahead of time, or have they just waited until it's become mandatory, let's say, to implement things. Definitely, a phase-in approach would be the best advice to anybody out there so that things don't come as a shock to people. (Travis, OSA)

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

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

### Completing the Change

After the completion of the 2014 season, both local soccer clubs in this study had not completely transitioned to the LTPD model developed by the OSA. Both clubs felt that they were following the guidelines fairly closely, but they acknowledged that they had taken steps that differed from the OSA's full policies. For example, one association modified the guidelines to attempt a type of phase-in approach for older children in the system. Although the phase-in was meant to ease the transition, this approach also created a discrepancy among the leagues, as a number of stakeholders explained how travel players of an older age did not keep score, while younger players in the house league did. This modified implementation was in place for house league teams but travel teams were required to follow the rules of the travel league.

The other organization in this study suggested the size of their organization as a reason for not fully implementing the change. The format of the house league divisions for this league required a number of age groups to play together in order to be able to form enough teams. Based on the age groups that were combined, a full field was still used and scores were kept for intermediate-level age groups (i.e., under 12, under 11). Only travel teams at this age level played on a mid-sized field and eliminated scores or standings. In addition, this association also opted to keep throw-ins instead of the new kick-in rule for players.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the success factors and constraints that exist in the implementation and continuance of a youth sport league that was experiencing change. The findings will be discussed in connection with the Cunningham (2002) model to highlight potential contributions to the literature.

### Deinstitutionalization

The change within this research was a calculated decision made to strategically enhance the sport of soccer within Ontario, starting the process that Oliver (1992) labeled as "deinstitutionalization." The initiation of this change was based on a number of pressures similar to the deinstitutionalization pressures of political, functional, and social described by Cunningham (2002). When Canadian Sport for Life designed the LTAD model, it was aiming to improve both elite competition and athlete retention in Canadian sport. The new model was created to increase the effectiveness of sport offerings, demonstrating that previous practices were not as successful as desired and therefore pressuring functional change (Oliver, 1992). From this initiation, Canada Soccer followed these developmental stages and also looked to increase effectiveness specifically within soccer and adapted a similar change to improve the functionality of its programs. The OSA then designed guidelines that suited the pressures to improve elite athlete development and player retention as well. All organizations were working toward the same objective, and new information encouraged them to implement changes that were more effective for their organizations (Oliver, 1992). From the perspective of local soccer clubs in this change process, external political pressures (Oliver, 1992) came from the OSA and national organizations and were put onto stakeholders at this level. Local soccer clubs are affiliated with OSA for its various member benefits, and the new changes were mandated based on their dependency with the organization, so practices were enforced based on this external relationship (Alexander, Thibault, & Frisby, 2008).

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

### Creating a New Template

The deinstitutionalization of previous practices and the pressures that led to change influenced how a new

organizational template was created. According to Cunningham (2002), the OSA used a population ecology perspective by obtaining information from other countries to determine successful design alternatives to organized sport structures. The new template was then created based on best practices, research in Ontario, and an advisory board of experts.

### Communicating to Stakeholders

Based on the findings from this study, it is proposed that the communication stage be added to the existing Cunningham (2002) model to convey the importance of this step in the change process. The importance of communication in the change process has been well established, and research has suggested that failed methods of communication lead to unsuccessful change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010). Due to the voluntary nature of youth sport organizations, information was distributed on a number of different levels based on the limited resources of clubs and the difficulty of relaying information through multiple levels. Volunteers at different levels helped convey the change guidelines, and information often came indirectly from sources other than the OSA. Informal communication is cautioned within the literature because it is less effective at conveying the desired communication to stakeholders than are formal sources (Richardson & Denton, 1996; van Vuuren & Elving, 2008). When change is communicated through informal discussion, there is the possibility for negative influences, as opposed to the positive message that organizations are trying to convey as change happens (Richardson & Denton, 1996). The varied use of communication sources meant that some groups of individuals in the study received very different messages about the change than others (Danylchuk, Snelgrove, & Wood, 2015). Subsequently, each individual and organization may have interpreted and implemented the change differently based on factors that were influencing their perceptions, such as personal investment in the organization, the alignment of values with change, and trust of organizational leaders (Amis et al., 2002; Amis et al., 2004a; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Coaches were largely responsible for informing their teams of the change, using whatever information or methods they personally viewed as being best.

### Acceptance or Rejection of the Template

Stakeholder responses to the change came in one of three forms: acceptance, ambivalence, or rejection (Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2011). Some OSA members and parents demonstrated complete acceptance of the new changes, whereas some parents represented the opposite end of the spectrum, completely disagreeing with all elements of the changes. The most common reaction from stakeholders appeared to be ambivalence, whereby individuals supported the change in some instances while expressing their rejection in others,

demonstrating the existence of both positive and negative reactions within the same individuals (Piderit, 2000; Welty Peachey & Bruening, 2012). Commonly, participants stated their dislike of the change while discussing positive implications of the change for youth participants in the game.

There was much skepticism reported with regard to the changes in soccer (Chalip & Green, 1998; Green, 1997). Various stakeholders reported positive aspects of the changes, such as age-appropriate sizing, skill development, and a learning environment. However, much like the Chalip and Green (1998) findings, many participants felt that the value of competition was lacking without scorekeeping. The institutionalized structure of traditional sport delivery is highly embedded in North American culture and was likely to have influenced the difficulty that individuals had accepting the radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Change requires learning new behaviors and interpreting situations in new ways (Austin, 1997; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), something that is challenging for sport organizations to encourage.

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

### Rate-Moderating Factors

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

## Implementation Moderating Factors

Moderating factors identified by Cunningham (2002) that can influence the implementation stage of change include capacity for action, resource dependence, power dependency, and available alternatives. The influence that each component has on the change process may vary based on sector or organization type (Sharpe, 2006). Organizational capacity is a factor that is known to influence the change process and the effectiveness of youth sport organizations (e.g., Amis et al., 2004a; Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006). In this study, volunteer board members agreed that finding the necessary time to implement change is challenging for sport clubs when volunteers are spending all their time on day-to-day and operational procedures during the busy playing season (Casey et al., 2012). OSA staff members found that organizations with full-time staff had an easier time implementing changes than smaller organizations run solely by volunteers. One organization in the study did not adapt the mandated changes for intermediate-level players in the house league, stating organizational size as a constraint to this implementation.

The extent of local soccer clubs' financial resources, volunteer values, and planning were other capacity issues that participants discussed (Misener & Doherty, 2009). Although the local soccer organizations within this study did not have difficulty procuring the financial resources required to implement the physical field changes required, it was mentioned as a constraint for other soccer organizations. Both local soccer club members and OSA representatives wished that there were more resources available to help implement the change—something that may be challenging to acquire but warrants consideration for future changes in the nonprofit sector.

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

## A New Template

For the change process to be complete, an organization must undergo a transition to a new template. However, the final template may vary from the originally desired structure. The Cunningham (2002) model demonstrates how the change process can be moderated and affected along the way (i.e., inertia, entropy, capacity, and resource

dependence), but ultimately, a shift to the new template must occur for change to be complete. However, organizations in this study implemented a modified version of the mandated change, completing the shift to some kind of new template. Thus, the possibility exists for full implementation of the originally planned change or an altered version.

In sum, pressures to change and individual efforts made by board members, coaches, and parents were noted as aiding the change process. Limited collaboration with stakeholders, poor communication, misunderstandings of the change, and constrained organizational capacity negatively affected the change process.

## Managerial Implications

In addition to the theoretical contributions of this study, several implications for practice can be drawn from the findings. First, the range of information in the studied change was quite broad based on the number of different sources identified, leading to misunderstandings and confused stakeholders. Thus, organizations need to strategically control the flow of information and seek to be the dominant voice when educating and communicating about the theoretical justifications for change and the new procedures to be followed (Danylchuk et al., 2015). Second, decision making about change is more likely to be effective when organizations can create social learning and adapt to the environment based on strategic decisions rather than pressure (Austin, 1997; O'Brien & Slack, 2004). Third, the inability of local soccer clubs and community-level stakeholders to be involved in the decision-making process about the change created resistance, demonstrating the importance of incorporating stakeholders in the change process to encourage acceptance (Amis et al., 2004a). Fourth, a high degree of organizational capacity is needed in order for sport organizations to complete the implementation of a change—a fact that governing organizations should consider and strategically plan for when mandating radical change.

## Limitations

Multiple organizations, including a provincial governing body, were examined to increase the generalizability of the research. However, only two community soccer clubs in Ontario were the focus of this particular study, making it unclear if additional insights or factors affecting the change process would have been uncovered if more locations had been studied. Furthermore, an exhaustive list of factors that moderate the implementation of change may not have been developed, necessitating future research to identify additional moderating factors. Further examination also can explore the possibility of sector specific modifiers. Finally, a qualitative research design was employed to develop a deep understanding of the change process from the perspectives of the stakeholders



involved. However, future studies may consider employing a large-scale survey design to capture the perspectives of a larger number of individuals.

## Conclusion

The contributions of this research add to the literature on change in sport organizations through an extension of the integrative model of organizational change developed by Cunningham (2002). The communication of change to stakeholders, the potential responses to the planned change, and the creation of a new template are key additions to the model. These findings also reinforce the importance of controlling the flow of information, educating stakeholders, collaborating with stakeholders, and considering organizational capacity when implementing successful change in sport organizations.

## References

- Alexander, T., Thibault, L., & Frisby, W. (2008). Avoiding separation: Sport partner perspectives on a long-term inter-organizational relationship. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 3, 263–280. doi:10.1504/IJSM.2008.017192
- Amis, J.M., & Aïssaoui, R. (2013). Readiness for change: An institutional perspective. *Journal of Change Management*, 13, 69–95. doi:10.1080/14697017.2013.768435
- Amis, J., Slack, T., & Hinings, C.R. (2002). Values and organizational change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 38(4), 436–465. doi:10.1177/002188602237791
- Amis, J., Slack, T., & Hinings, C.R. (2004a). Strategic change and the role of interests, power, and organizational capacity. *Journal of Sport Management*, 18, 158–198.
- Amis, J., Slack, T., & Hinings, C.R. (2004b). The pace, sequence, and linearity of radical change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47, 15–39. doi:10.2307/20159558
- Austin, J.R. (1997). A method for facilitating controversial social change in organizations: Branch Rickey and the Brooklyn Dodgers. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 33(1), 101–118. doi:10.1177/0021886397331008
- Bloyce, D., Smith, A., Mead, R., & Morris, J. (2008). “Playing the game (plan)”: A figural analysis of organizational change in sports development in England. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 8, 359–378. doi:10.1080/16184740802461637
- Brock, D.M. (2006). The changing professional organization: A review of competing archetypes. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 8, 157–174. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2370.2006.00126.x
- Canada Soccer. (2014). Canada Soccer Pathway. Retrieved from <http://www.canadasoccer.com/canada-soccer-pathway-ltpd--s16879>
- Canadian Sport for Life. (2011). Learn about Canadian Sport for Life. Retrieved from <http://canadiansportforlife.ca/learn-about-sport-life>
- Casey, M.M., Payne, W.R., & Eime, R.M. (2012). Organisational readiness and capacity building strategies of sporting organisations to promote health. *Sport Management Review*, 15, 109–124. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2011.01.001
- Caza, A. (2000). Context receptivity: Innovation in an amateur sport organization. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14, 227–242.
- Cepeda, G., & Martin, D. (2005). A review of case studies publishing in Management Decision 2003–2004. *Management Decision*, 43, 851–876. doi:10.1108/00251740510603600
- Chalip, L., & Green, C. (1998). Establishing and maintaining a modified youth sport program: Lesson’s from Hotelling’s Location Game. *Journal of Sport Management*, 15, 326–342.
- Chalip, L., & Scott, E.P. (2005). Centrifugal social forces in a youth sport league. *Sport Management Review*, 8, 43–67. doi:10.1016/S1441-3523(05)70032-2
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Clemens, B.W., & Douglas, T.J. (2005). Understanding strategic responses to institutional pressures. *Journal of Business Research*, 58, 1205–1213. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2004.04.002
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Cunningham, G.B. (2002). Removing the blinders: Toward an integrative model of organizational change in sport and physical activity. *Quest*, 54, 276–291. doi:10.1080/00336297.2002.10491779
- Cunningham, G.B. (2009). Understanding the diversity-related change process: A field study. *Journal of Sport Management*, 23, 407–428.
- Danylchuk, K., Snelgrove, R., & Wood, L. (2015). Managing women’s participation in golf: A case study of organizational change. *Leisure/Loisir*, 39, 61–80.
- Eisenhardt, K.M., & Graebner, M.E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50, 25–32. doi:10.5465/AMJ.2007.24160888
- Green, C. (1997). Action research in youth soccer: Assessing the acceptability of an alternative program. *Journal of Sport Management*, 11, 29–44.
- Greenwood, R., & Hinings, C.R. (1996). Understanding radical organizational change: Bringing together the old and the new institutionalism. *Academy of Management Review*, 21, 1022–1054.
- Hill, B., & Green, C.B. (2008). Give the bench the boot! Using manning theory to design youth-sport programs. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22, 184–204.
- Kikulis, L.M., Slack, T., & Hinings, C.R. (1995a). Sector-specific patterns of organizational design change. *Journal of Management Studies*, 32, 67–100. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6486.1995.tb00646.x
- Kikulis, L.M., Slack, T., & Hinings, C.R. (1995b). Toward an understanding of the role of agency and choice in the changing structure of Canada’s National Sport Organizations. *Journal of Sport Management*, 9, 135–152.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, 30, 15–25.

- Misener, K., & Doherty, A. (2009). A case study of organizational capacity in nonprofit community sport. *Journal of Sport Management*, 23, 457–482.
- O'Brien, D., & Slack, T. (2004). The emergence of a professional logic in English Rugby Union: The role of isomorphic and diffusion processes. *Journal of Sport Management*, 18, 13–39.
- Oliver, C. (1992). The antecedents of deinstitutionalization. *Organization Studies*, 13, 563–588. doi:10.1177/017084069201300403
- Ontario Soccer Association. (2014a). How soccer in Ontario is changing. Retrieved from <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/images/publications/2015/player/grassroots/How-Soccer-Is-Changing-In-Ontario.pdf>
- Ontario Soccer Association. (2014b). LTPD frequently asked questions. Retrieved from <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/Portals/11/LTPD/LTPD%20Frequently%20Asked%20questionsAug7.pdf>
- Ontario Soccer Association. (2015). What is grassroots soccer. Retrieved from <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/Portals/438/Documents/Player/LTPD/what%20is%20grassroots%20soccer.pdf>
- Parkhe, A. (2003). Institutional environments, institutional change, and international alliances. *Journal of International Management*, 9, 305–316. doi:10.1016/S1075-4253(03)00038-3
- Piderit, S.K. (2000). Rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence: A multidimensional view of attitudes toward an organizational change. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 783–794.
- Prus, R. (1996). *Symbolic interaction and ethnographic research*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Richardson, P., & Denton, D.K. (1996). Communicating change. *Human Resource Management*, 35, 203–216. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-050X(199622)35:2<203::AID-HRM4>3.0.CO;2-1
- Scott, W.R. (2008). Approaching adulthood: The maturing of institutional theory. *Theory and Society*, 37, 427–442. doi:10.1007/s11186-008-9067-z
- Sharpe, E.K. (2006). Resources at the grassroots of recreation: Organizational capacity and quality of experience in a community sport organization. *Leisure Sciences*, 28, 385–402. doi:10.1080/01490400600745894
- Skille, E., & Waddington, I. (2006). Alternative sport programmes and social inclusion in Norway. *European Physical Education Review*, 12, 251–271. doi:10.1177/1356336X060069273
- Torres, C.R., & Hager, P.F. (2007). De-emphasizing competition in organized youth sport: Misdirected reforms and misled children. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 34, 194–210. doi:10.1080/00948705.2007.9714721
- van Vuuren, M., & Elving, W.J.L. (2008). Communication, sensemaking, and change as a cord of three strands. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 13(3), 349–359. doi:10.1108/13563280810893706
- Washington, M., & Patterson, K.D.W. (2011). Hostile takeover or joint venture: Connections between institutional theory and sport management research. *Sport Management Review*, 14, 1–12. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2010.06.003
- Welty Peachey, J., & Bruening, J. (2011). An examination of environmental forces driving Change and stakeholder responses in a Football Championship Subdivision athletic department. *Sport Management Review*, 14, 202–219. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2010.09.002
- Welty Peachey, J., & Bruening, J. (2012). Investigating ambivalence towards organizational change in a Football Championship Subdivision intercollegiate athletic department. *Sport Management Review*, 15, 171–186. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2011.05.001
- Whelan-Berry, K.S., & Somerville, K.A. (2010). Linking change drivers and the organizational change process: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Change Management*, 10, 175–193. doi:10.1080/14697011003795651