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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RESOURCE DEPENDENCE IN AN AMATEUR SPORT ORGANIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE ALBERTA GYMNASTICS FEDERATION

by

© DICKSON WOOD

A THESIS
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Resource Dependence in an Amateur Sport Organization: A Case Study of the Alberta Gymnastics Federation submitted by Dickson Wood in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the operations of a volunteer-directed amateur sport organization in terms of a theoretical framework based on a contemporary organizational model known as resource dependence theory. A case study approach was applied using the Alberta Gymnastics Federation (A.G.F.) as the focus. The organization was analyzed with respect to three central constructs of resource dependence theory, namely:

1. The premise that coalitions of interest groups influence the organization's decision-making processes and, that they derive their influence from the ability to cope with environmental conditions that are perceived as being important by the organization.

2. The premise that conditions within the organizational environment, as interpreted by organizational members, are key determinants of the activities of an organization.

3. The premise that organizations not only respond to conditions within their environment but also endeavor to alter or control those conditions.

Data were obtained from two sources. A total of twenty three focused interviews were conducted. Eighteen of the subjects were either current or past members of the organization and had been involved in its central operations. Five of the subjects were representatives of other agencies with which the focal organization interacted. The data obtained from the interviews were supplemented by data acquired through a review of organizational records and

documents. The cumulative data was examined through a process of latent content analysis.

The results of the study generally support all three of the central premises. Three distinct coalitions were observed to be operating within the A.G.F. and evidence was found that supported the assertion that coalitions derive their influence from the ability to cope with conditions external to the organization. The impact of the enacted environment was also observed and evidence was provided of interpretive errors relative to both the composition of the environment and the nature of specific inter-organizational relationships. As assessment of managerial coping strategies indicated that the strategies employed, as well as those that were not employed, were consistent with what resource dependence theory would predict.

The findings of this study indicate that the resource dependence model is a useful analytical tool for examining the operations of amateur sport organizations. In that respect the author proposed that future research be undertaken to more rigorously test specific theoretical constructs within the resource dependence model and to establish its generalizability within the setting of amateur sport organizations.

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Several people have made significant contributions to this project and to each of them I am deeply grateful.

Without the continued support and patience of the members of my committee this project would never have been completed. My advisor, Dr. Gerry Glassford, has provided me with tremendous flexibility and latitude to pursue my interest in this area of research. Dr. Trevor Slack has offered encouragement with respect not only to this project but in many other academic and professional development opportunities as well. Professor Bob Hinings has, when the going was difficult, supplied the inspiration for me to continue. His ability to succinctly transform that which is complex and incomprehensible into that which is straightforward and lucid has been a major factor in my completing this project. To each of these gentlemen I am extremely indebted.

I am appreciative also of the support provided by the members of the Alberta Gymnastics Federation. While the commitment of each person involved only one interview, the trust that the A.G.F. placed in me by allowing such extensive scrutiny of their operations contributed greatly to the value of the study.

It would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the unqualified encouragement from my parents, Gary and Bett, who have offered both moral and financial support throughout my years at university. The acquisition of both my undergraduate and graduate degrees can be attributed, in a large part, to the confidence that my parents afforded me. To them I am profoundly grateful.

Finally, I must express my most sincere appreciation to my wife, Verna, whose love, commitment and sheer hard work have made it possible for me to complete this task.

Thank you one and all!

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CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A. INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that voluntary sport organizations play a vital role in the delivery of amateur sport in Canada. Government documents such as the Campagnola White Paper on Amateur Sport (1979) and the Alberta Provincial Sport Policy (1983) both identify voluntary groups as the driving force behind Canadian amateur sport. Several researchers (Bratton, 1971; Gruneau and Hollands, 1979; and Slack, 1981, 1983) have also alluded to the importance of these organizations. In fact, voluntary organizations are such a pervasive aspect of the amateur sport scene in Canada that the delivery of sport programs by any other means is almost inconceivable.

Every level of the delivery system operates under the auspices of volunteer organizations. From the local community league through to the national and even the international level, sport programs are developed and organized by volunteer groups. Groups at the community or 'grass roots' level are often quite informal, perhaps consisting of a few interested parents of young participants. However, beyond that level the organizations that 'govern' sport at the municipal, provincial and national levels tend to be constituted and operated in a progressively more formal manner.

This has not always been the case. In the not too distant past virtually all amateur sport was organized around "kitchen tables" throughout the nation (The Federal Task Force Report on Sport for Canadians, 1969). Such is no

longer the situation. The administration and delivery of amateur sport in Canada, and more specifically in the Province of Alberta, has in recent years been experiencing a rapid evolution. Many specific factors have been identified as having contributed to this development, but for the most part they all relate to four general trends : increased leisure time; increased disposable income; a heightened awareness of the benefits of physical fitness; and an increasingly diverse number of opportunities for participation in sport (Alberta Sport Development Policy, 1983). Concomitant with these trends we have witnessed the emergence of recreation oriented professions and a heightened involvement in recreation and sport on the part of government agencies. The result is that during the past two decades the entire character of amateur sport has changed. Participation is on the increase both in terms of numbers and the amount of time individuals spend on an activity. Participants are more knowledgeable and have higher expectations for the quality of their experience. Professionals in the field are demanding more and better support for their activities.

In an effort to cope with these trends amateur sport organizations have generally become increasingly rational in terms of both their structure and function (Slack, 1983). The increasing use of professional staff, for example, has led to the implementation of clearly specified and detailed methods and procedures. Also, elaborate differentiation of tasks can often be observed. For instance, education committees are established to deal with the training of coaches and officials while fund raising committees attempt to cope with the problems encountered as a consequence of scarce financial resources, and membership committees work to increase participation at all levels. The localization of decision making authority (centralization) into the hands of

executive members or directors is another consequence of the changing nature of amateur sport organizations.

This process of rationalization is often aided and abetted by government agencies and the private sector who have begun to acknowledge the benefits that physical activity offers in terms of the general health and well-being of the public, not to mention the political profile and public awareness that can be achieved through sport. In an effort to meet their own objectives government agencies and corporate sponsors have co-opted sport and recreation organizations. Such co-optation usually takes the form of financial contributions which are contingent on the organization meeting certain criteria. In the case of public sector contributions, the criteria usually entails the implementation of and/or adherence to designated 'legitimate' practices. For example, merely to establish its eligibility for government funding an Alberta sport association must meet the following criteria:

i. Incorporation under the Societies Act or under a Special Act of Legislature.

ii. Inclusion of a stated object in its constitution, such as, "To foster the growth and development of (the sport) throughout the Province of Alberta."

iii. A minimum of 100 individual members or 5 member clubs with a minumum total of 100 members.

iv. Demonstration through its constitution that it has a minimum of 3 regions or zones and that there is provision for representation from each region or zone on the Board of Directors.

v. The actual provision of services in a minimum of three regions or zones.

vi. The communication, at least three times annually, with its membership on items of information which are specific to its activities.

vii. The generation of 'significant' funds through its own efforts.

(Source: Alberta Act of Legislature #AR 235-75 as revised in 1986)

If indeed a sport association meets these eligibility criteria and subsequently applies for financial assistance, the level of funding provided (if any) will be determined through an even more elaborate set of criteria.

When private sector organizations are involved the extent of the demands placed on the sport association will vary with the magnitude of the contribution. However, the expectations of a company are seldom any less exacting than those of government agencies. They too are concerned with the legitimate expenditure of their money and, moreover, they want to ensure a positive public perception of the relationship between the sport and their corporate image. Depending upon the level of their involvement a corporate sponsor can often demand a great deal in terms of how the sport organization handles its affairs. An example of such influence occured within the Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union (C.I.A.U.) in 1981 and 1982. During that period the C.I.A.U. was negotiating with a national television broadcaster to televise their national hockey finals. The broadcasting company would agree to provide coverage only if two conditions were met. First, the C.I.A.U. was required to reduce the final from a 'best of three games' series to a single game played on a Sunday afternoon. Second, the C.I.A.U. was required to establish a three year commitment to a specific site for the final so that the broadcaster was assured of low cost access to the site.

After a great deal of deliberation the C.I.A.U. agreed to the conditions even though they were going to compromise other aspects of their operations. The benefits of potential sponsorships and a heightened profile were seen to outweigh negative considerations.

In order to secure contributions from either the public or private sectors, sport associations must conform to the expectations of the agency in question. The only significant difference between the public and private scenarios is that the private sector contributions usually involve negotiation of the conditions while the public sector generally has an established set of non-negotiable criteria.

A related factor, which contributes to the demands imposed upon sport associations is the monopoly position that sport associations hold with respect to each of their particular sports. By recognizing a single organization for any given sport, governments selectively ascribe to that organization a significant amount of authority and legitimacy. National sport governing bodies also recognize only a single association per province for any given sport and as such contribute to this legitimation. The result is that sport associations are often viewed by the general public as psuedo-government agencies and are expected to carry out their activities in a manner similar to the way in which governments are expected to perform (i.e., responsively and responsibly).

What is important to recognize is that the demands and expectations that arise from the general public, the participant groups, the funding agencies and the private sector are seldom unreasonable. However, it can not be denied that as participation increases, as more agencies become involved and as more

resources are required, the level of complexity with the administration of amateur sport increases. It is this increasing complexity that is changing the manner in which amateur sport is being delivered in Canada. The image of amateur sport being organized by volunteers sitting around kitchen tables is swiftly being eclipsed by a professionalized approach to the delivery of programs and services. In many instances sport bodies are becoming full fledged social service agencies and their success, if not their survival, has become contingent upon their ability to implement corporate practices in their operations. As such the operational component of amateur sport organizations has become a dominant factor for their executive members. Volunteers can no longer concern themselves only with activity oriented functions such as scheduling, coaching and officiating. They must also cope with financial accountability, legal problems, public relations and other managerial issues inherent in any business operation.

It is the author's interest in the evolving role of sport organizations that has led to this study. The changing nature of these organizations is accompanied by numerous difficulties. Criticism and anger are often directed toward the individuals, groups and agencies that are involved. The volunteer directors become frustrated with what they perceive as government 'red tape'; government agencies experience difficulties in scrutinizing the expenditure of money that they have provided to the organizations and; participants complain that too much money is being spent on administration. If we are to come to terms with these types of problems and foster effective cooperation among the various partners in amateur sport it is necessary to develop a better understanding of how amateur sport organizations operate within this increasingly rational environment.

What is apparent is that the evolving character of amateur sport associations is forcing them to deal with managerial issues that are common to most organizations. In fact, closer scrutiny of the changes taking place reveals that, from an analytical perspective, sport associations can no longer be considered as simple, voluntary organizations. Rather, they are involved in a variety of complex interactive relationships: governments provide funding in return for services offered to the public; members provide both financial and human resources in exchange for opportunities to participate; corporations make contributions in order to create exposure for themselves or their product and; salaries are paid to professionals in return for the expertise required to operate and administer their programs. Indeed amateur sport organizations have grown far beyond being isolated groups that exist only for the intrinsic benefits gained by their members.

In recognizing that sport associations are engaged in a variety of interorganizational relationships, it becomes evident that the field of organizational theory will be useful in developing a better understanding of sport organizations. While the study of organizations has, over the years, created a wealth of ideas and information, the research that has focused on exchange relationships has some obvious appeal in this respect. One theory in particular that is intuitively relevant is known as 'resource dependence'. The organizational model depicted by resource dependence holds as its basic premise the notion that exchange relationships are the primary determinants of organizational activity.

The proponents of resource dependence suggest that three primary factors contribute to the importance of exchange relationships. First, that the attitudes and interests of people (coalitions) within an organization affect both its internal and external activities. Second, that it is not actually the organizations environment but rather the perceptions of environmental conditions that determine its activities. Third, that organizational activities are further affected by the nature of each of their exchange relationships (i.e., balanced vs asymmetrical).

If amateur sport organizations are as dependent upon resources from other agencies as they appear to be then it seems appropriate to examine them in terms of the constructs provided by resource dependence theory. In applying resource dependence to the operation of sport associations it should be possible to identify phenomena that are common to other organizations. The result should be a better understanding of how sport associations function.

B. THE PROBLEM

The theme of this paper arose initially from the dispensation of the notion that sport associations are merely isolated, self-serving groups and that they are, in some way, different than other social organizations. By recognizing the increasing complexity of volunteer sport associations and by viewing them from the same perspective that we view other social institutions we can develop a meaningful body of research that will help us to better understand the structure and function of these organizations.

The primary objective of this study was to provide support for the premise that the functions and activities of volunteer amateur sport organizations are directly affected by the constraints inherent in 'exchange' relationships. For the purpose of this study the focus was on the exchange of resources between organizations; in particular the concept of 'resource dependence' provided the key theoretical constructs. The following questions were addressed:

1. How does the concept of 'coalitions of interest groups' explain activities and behavior within the amateur sport organization setting?
2. In what respect is the 'enacted' or perceived environment a determining factor in the organizational activities of amateur sport associations?
3. What affect, if any, does asymmetrical interdependence have on the organizational activities of amateur sport associations?

In addressing these three questions the author expected to establish the extent to which the resource dependence model of organizational theory could be used to explain the activities of amateur sport associations. More specifically it was anticipated that some aspects of resource dependence would have greater relevance than others. The intent was to determine which components of the theory were most applicable. Furthermore, the author will endeavor to explain why some elements of the theory have more value than others.

It is anticipated that the application of organizational theory to the analysis of an amateur sport association will provide greater insight into how these organizations function. While the intent of the study is to examine the

value of a specific theory it is hoped that it will, as consequence, provide support for the continued use of organizational theory in the research of amateur sport organizations.

C. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

It would be difficult to dispute the fact that amatuer sport organizations are the driving force behind the delivery of amateur sport in Canada. However, in recent years these organizations have undergone a distinct change in their method of operation. Where they were once considered volunteer organizations in which the members performed virtually all of the duties, amateur sport associations have evolved into 'volunteer-directed' organizations in which volunteer members merely direct the work of paid employees. This emerging status as service delivery organizations presents some very difficult operational problems. In order to cope with those problems it is essential that a new perception of the nature and character of these organizations be developed.

In addressing the changing nature of amateur sport organizations the author examined research from four specific areas: (1) voluntary organizations; (2) amatuer sport organizations; (3) sociology of sport; and (4) organizational theory (specifically the area of exchange relationships). Several conclusions can be drawn from this review, perhaps the most conspicuous of which is the dogmatic nature of research on volunteers and amateur sport organizations. Several authors have alluded to the fact that the majority of these studies have been very limited in their scope (Ross, 1978; Beamish, 1983; and Slack, 1983).

One of the essential criticisms has been that the studies have tended to be very descriptive and are often prime examples of abstracted empiricism (Beamish, 1983). A serious limitation of much of the research in these two areas is the lack of any substantive theory. Researchers have repeatedly failed to either develop new theory or to incorporate theory drawn from other areas. As a consequence both fields of study have been left wanting in terms of a theoretical base. The descriptive studies have not been moving the research area forward. Several authors have indicated that if progress is to be made, there is a need to draw from other academic disciplines in order to establish a theoretical base. Jack Ross (1978) in his examination of research on voluntary organizations, stated that:

> By ignoring the contributions of anthropologists, philosophers, political scientists, economists, and religious scholars we have lost touch with the contextual issues which might have helped to control bias and particularism. The matter has been made worse within sociology by treating voluntary associations as a separate topic or simply as a dependent variable in community participation studies, while not placing the topic in the context of general organizational research (p. 20).

Indeed, it is essential that we borrow, interpret, apply and evaluate a variety of theoretical constructs that have been developed in other areas of inquiry. Volunteer organizations, and more specifically amateur sport organizations, can not be treated as isolated entities which possess an entirely unique set of characteristics. Rather we must analyze them in terms of the characteristics they exhibit; characteristics which may well be common to various types of organizations.

There have been a few authors who have recognized the need for a theoretical approach to the study of amateur sport and have incorporated social and organizational theory into their work. Research on the sociology of sport

has been most effective in this respect. Authors such as Beamish (1983), Kidd (1980) and Hollands and Gruneau (1979) have each examined amateur sport in relation to established social theory. They, and others like them, have endeavored to do more than simply describe the various phenomena. They have utilized social theory to begin to explain those phenomena. For example, Beamish (1983) examined organizational characteristics of amateur sport organizations in terms of research from areas such as feminism (i.e., gender inequality) and power (i.e., the distribution thereof). In doing so, these authors have utilized knowledge generated in other fields to broaden the scope of understanding in their own.

Not many authors, however, have taken a similar approach to the study of sport associations as organizations. Slack (1983) is one of the very few who have actually succeeded in the application of such theory. One of the areas of inquiry from which Slack borrowed was that of organizational theory and, in terms of analyzing amateur sport associations, that body of research appears to have a great deal of relevance. In his study Slack examined the acquisition and distribution of power within amateur sport associations. While this represented only a portion of the study it helped to establish that the application of organizational theory to amateur sport is essential to the advancement of research in the field. The creation of a sound theoretical base is the initial step in the long process of establishing a reliable body of knowledge and the field of organizational theory is ripe with information to draw upon.

Two things will be achieved in developing a theoretical foundation. First, it will help to encourage people to shed some obsolete conceptions of amateur sport organizations and begin to look at them as the complex and dynamic

entities that they are. This is not only important to academic research but also to the practitioners in the field. Most people who are intimately involved in the sport delivery system are aware of the difficulties that the changing role of amateur sport is creating but they are unable to understand the factors that precipitate the problems. They do not recognize some of the implications of the changes and, perhaps most importantly, the lack of understanding results in not knowing how best to solve the problems. Second, the development of a theoretical base will provide a direction and perhaps some impetus for future research. This is of importance in an academic sense since progess can seldom be made without a foundation in theory. It is essential that a broad theory base be established before it is possible to begin more rigorous analysis of those theories.

As Cook and Campbell (1979) have suggested, the research process is best described in terms of an inverted parabola (U). Beginning at the top left arm with the development of very general theories the research process then moves downward with progressively more specific and exacting studies until enough evidence has been established to substantiate various constructs of the theory. At that point the process then moves up the right arm applying the theory to an increasingly broad range of conditions in an effort to establish the generalizability and robustness of the theory. Using this analogy the study of amatuer sport organizations is just beginning the journey down the left side of the parabola and many studies will be required before we can confidently stake any claims of truly understanding these organizations. This is not to suggest that this study does not hold value in its own right; only that there is a great deal of work that can and ,hopefully, will be done.

By analyzing an amateur sport organization the author's primary concern is to provide explanations for various organizational activities and behaviors. In doing so, however, it is expected that the author will be able to assess the value of each theoretical construct as an analytical tool and thereby determine the usefulness of the total theory in the amateur sport setting.

D. LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

This study was limited by several factors including financial constraints, the absence of various documents, the method employed in collecting primary data and the period of time over which the study was conducted. The author's limited financial resources presented the most serious limitation for this study in that the research was restricted to the Province of Alberta. Even though it would have been desirable to have interviewed subjects from organizations in other provinces and at the National Sport Administration Centre, it was simply not possible to do so due to the costs inherent in such travel.

The author's inability to secure some documents was also problematic. As is often the case with volunteer organizations, many of the documents that one might expect to find were either never retained or have been misplaced. Only since the organization established an office and hired some staff about six years ago have the records been retained reliably. Consequently, this study's investigation has been limited to those relatively recent issues for which the author could obtain valid and reliable background information from the available documents.

The primary data for this study was acquired through an interview process and, as such, there are certain weaknesses that must be acknowledged. These concerns are addressed in Chapter Three - Methodology. However, it should be mentioned here that the author was initially concerned with the fact that his personal involvement with the organization being studied could prove to be a limitation if the interview subjects were not open and honest in their responses to questions. It can be stated with confidence that this was not the case. In fact, without exception, the interview subjects were more frank in their discussion than the author had ever experienced them to be in any other circumstance. For example, when discussing the issue of coalitions the interview subjects were surprisingly candid in their remarks about the behavior of other individuals. Statements and observations were made that had never been raised during A.G.F. meetings or informal discussions.

The final limitation was the time frame in which this study was conducted. Most studies of this ilk are performed over a period of several months. Unfortunately, due to a number of personal considerations the work on this study was interrupted for two fairly lengthy periods. The result being that the study has actually extended over a two and a half-year period. This has created some difficulties in that the area of study has advanced in some respects and there is a risk that some of the research upon which this study is based could be considered somewhat dated. The redeeming aspect of this limitation is that the author has endeavored to rework the affected sections in order to bring the study into line with current research. Accordingly, this may actually prove to be more of a benefit than a limitation.

A number of confining factors have been imposed on this study for a variety of reasons. The most significant delimitation was the use of only one focal organization. The justification in this restriction lies in the belief that examination of more than one focal organization could result in such a profusion of data that effective analysis would require a significantly more extensive study and a much greater commitment of time than was available to the author. There is no question that the inclusion of more sample organizations would provide both a greater richness and more reliability. Nevertheless, the author is confident that the use of one organization is sufficient to meet the objectives of the study.

Another delimiting factor was the method of selecting interview subjects from the various agencies with which the focal organization interacted. It was decided that only those agency representatives that actually interacted directly with the focal organization would be included in the interviews. Although it is quite likely, in certain instances, that additional information might be obtained from persons of higher authority within the agencies, it is the actual representatives that play the key role in establishing or maintaining the interorganizational relationship. This position is consistent with resource dependence theory in that it is not the actual intentions or attitudes but the perception thereof that is at issue. In other words, the members of the focal organization will interpret an agency's expectations based on the representative's depiction, regardless of how accurate that depiction actually is.

Finally, the author acknowledges that established deadlines for completion of this project precluded the collection of all the available data since deadlines were not extended merely to facilitate the inclusion of one or two

extra interviews. If individuals were not available within the specified time frame they were simply not interviewed. This is not seen as being overly problematic since a total of twenty-three intensive interviews were conducted of a possible twenty seven (85%).

E. DEFINITIONS

Organizational Environment

In organizational terms the 'environment' is divided into the general environment and the specific environment. The general environment consists of the broad social factors such as the legal system, the political climate and the current economic conditions. The specific environment is comprised of those entities with which the organization directly interacts such as companies, government agencies and parent organizations (Miles, 1980; Daft, 1983). For the purpose of this study the term 'environment' refers to the organization's specific environment.

Focal Organization

The focal organization will consist only of individuals who have been or are currently considered to be central members.

Central Member

Any individual who has been actively involved in the operations of the focal organization either as a director, an administrator, a programmer or as a professional employee (i.e. technical or executive director).

Membership

Refers to those individuals who are generally regarded as participants in the focal organization's programs but are not actively involved in its operations. The 'membership' is regarded as the client group of the focal organization.

Associated Agency

Any organization, group or individual with whom the focal organization interacts either formally or informally. (Note: In the context of this study 'associated' does not necessarily infere formal affiliation).

Coalitions

Two or more individuals within an organization who share common perceptions of organizational objectives and/or who share common interests in specific aspects of the organization's activities.

Enacted Environment

The perception of the environmental conditions held by members of the organization. The enacted environment may or may not be an accurate representation of the actual conditions.

Asymmetrical Interdependence

The degree to which one organization is more dependent upon another organization for the resource flow between them.

Bargaining Position

Arising from asymmetrical interdependence, an organization's 'bargaining position' is its strength relative to another organization in terms of the

demands or controls that may be imposed upon one organization by the other.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. VOLUNTARY AMATEUR SPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Considering that volunteerism is commonly acknowledged as being an integral component of Canadian and American society there exists a markedly thin body of research on voluntary organizations when compared to other sociological phenomena. While there has been a great deal of work done on volunteers and volunteerism with respect to socio-political and socio-economic issues, very little attention has been directed toward the operational elements of voluntary or non-profit organizations. This relative paucity of research is even more pronounced in the specific area of amateur sport organizations. In fact, if research on volunteerism in general is considered thin, then one must refer to research on volunteer amateur sport organizations as, at best, meager. While there has been some work done on typological assessments of amateur sport associations (Jacoby, 1965; Bratton, 1970) they are relatively limited in their scope. Research on cross-cultural participation rates in sport associations is equally sparse. Slack (1983:8) indicates that the only comparative data available on the extent of voluntary activity in sport comes from the 1981 Statistics Canada Survey. Most research to date has confined its focus to the biographic and demographic characteristics of central members (eg. Meisel and Lemiex, 1972; Slack, 1979; Theberge, 1980).

Although these studies have yielded some interesting information many of them represent prime examples of what Mills (1959) refered to as abstracted empiricism: i.e.,

> (They) fail to address the intersection of personal biography with the history of social structure; they are easily run by technicians; they are perfect projects for those who have been subsumed by the bureaucratic ethos and the liberal practicality that Mills (1959) described... (Beamish, 1983:5)

The major factor that has given rise to the abstracted empiricism is that the authors of these studies have been trapped, as have researchers of volunteerism in general, by the assumption that volunteerism in some way makes voluntary organizations unique. It is the "romantic notions about participatory democracy" (p. 20) that have precluded the examination of voluntary organizations within the context of general organizational research (Ross, 1978). This has led researchers to ignore some particularly relevant bodies of sociological research.

Several sport sociologists have endeavored to bridge the gap between the descriptive and the explanatory through their analysis of biographic and demographic data. Authors including Beamish (1978) and Hollands and Gruneau (1979) have utilized classic social theory to evaluate and interpret their findings. A significant degree of attention has been afforded, in these studies, to the relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and participation rates (Beamish, 1983) and some valuable results have been produced which, when analyzed, suggests that amateur sport organizations do not necessarily exhibit all of the positive characteristics often assumed to be inherent in volunteer organizations. For example Beamish (1983) indicates that, regardless of which SES indicator or combination of indicators are utilized,

the results show that executive members of amateur sport associations are predominately of upper SES, a result that is supported by several other studies (Bratton, 1971; Hollands and Gruneau, 1979; Slack, 1979). Similarly, the results of such studies indicate that there exists great disparity in participation rates between genders. As is the case in other sectors of society, women are under represented in amateur sport associations, particularly in the executive capacities (Slack, 1979; Hollands and Gruneau, 1979; Theberge, 1980). In general the results of these studies infer that volunteer amateur sport organizations reinforce rather than transcend social stratification; that they limit, rather than offer access to 'sport for all'.

Another area where authors have made valuable use of established social theory involves the relationship between sport and the state. Bruce Kidd (1979) and Richard Gruneau (1979) both drew extensively from other social research. Kidd, for example, discussed sport in terms of its potential for "symbolic representation of the nation community" (p.5) and how the commercialization of sport has unwittingly contributed to the disintegration of Canadian culture.

Recently Slack (1983) has ventured into the realm of 'why' sport organizations operate the way they do. He addressed the process of bureaucratization, the internal inequities and the acquisition of power in a case study of a specific organization. His analysis utilized concepts drawn from both classical social theory and contemporary organizational analysis, and was predicated on his observation that:

> Only by adopting those types of theoretical bases for our work, and building on what has been done in such fields as organizational sociology, sociology of occupations, industrial sociology and so on, will we move from the static descriptive type of studies that we have seen in the past to studies that explain the role of voluntary sport organizations in a more socially meaningful manner (1983:15-16).

Several of the constructs used by Slack are cornerstones in the field of organizational theory and their inclusion in such a study represents a significant re-evaluation of former trends in research on volunteer amateur sport organizations. This new direction would have researchers look at amateur sport organizations as entities which possess characteristics of their own quite independent of, but often arising from, the characteristics of their individual members. In moving beyond the examination of personal traits of organizational members it becomes possible to address the interactive structures and processess that link the individuals in a functional manner.

It is only through that type of approach that this field of study will move away from the merely descriptive and become increasingly explanatory. There are two basic methods that can be employed in this respect. One method is to create and test entirely new theories to explain the complexities of amateur sport organizations. The other approach is to borrow theories that have been developed by organizational researchers and apply the concepts to the specific setting of amateur sport organizations. It is the latter method that this study has adopted through the application of theory developed by organizational sociologists.

B. ENVIRONMENT AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL DETERMINANT

The pervasiveness of organizations in our society has precipitated a vast amount of academic inquiry into how they operate and how people function within them. The wide variety of organizations and their multifaceted nature has given rise to a tremendously diverse body of research. Organizational size, organizational goals, stage of development, product recipients, structural configuration and decision making processes are but a few of the organizational elements that have provided a focus for researchers (Miles, 1980). While there is a broad range of topic areas within the study of organizations, there is a central theme that is inherent in most contemporary research; that of the 'open system' model of organizations.

The open system model presents organizations as dynamic units that possess variable and permeable boundaries and that are actively engaged in adaptive and interactive processes (Emery and Trist, 1971; Katz and Kahn, 1971; Child, 1972; Jurkovitch, 1974; Weick, 1979). Further, the open system conceptualization suggests that an organization's environment possesses several variable components; it may be simple or complex, static or dynamic and it may be comprised of any combination of distinct or interconnected elements. The implication of the open system perspective is that the environment presents the organization with varying degrees of uncertainty and that the effectiveness of management strategies is dependent upon the ability to understand and appreciate environmental conditions (Miles, 1980). Most recently, open-system theorists have been looking at organizations as being capable of not only responding and adapting to environmental conditions but

also of being able to interact proactively thereby altering, or even controlling, environmental conditions.

Many theorists (Jacobs, 1974; White, 1974; Aldrich, 1976; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) have suggested that the environment is more than just an influencial factor; they emphasize that it is a key determinant of organizational activities. From this premise a number of authors have initiated work at the theoretical level and have cumulatively developed a comprehensive set of hypotheses relating to the effect of the environment on organizational activities. There is difficulty, however, in analyzing the impact of environmental factors on organizational functions in a controlled setting in that the environment tends to be even more complex than the organization itself. Numerous authors have expended a great deal of effort in an attempt to come to terms with this complexity. One obvious difficulty lies in the identification of what constitutes the environment. However, general consensus has been established in several respects. To begin with, two levels of environment have been identified. The general environment includes the broad spectrum of societal factors such as political, legal, economic, demographic, technological, cultural and ecological conditions. This portion of the environment obviously influences an organization but such influence is generally very subtle and indirect. The 'specific environment' on the other hand has a very direct and immediate impact upon organization activities. The specific environment includes relationships with suppliers, buyers, parent organizations, competitors, government regulatory agencies and the like.

However, knowing what the environment consists of is not enough to fully understand the potential impact it may have on the organization. It is also

necessary to understand the nature of the environment. To achieve insight into the nature of the environment several authors have identified a variety of environmental elements. One of the more useful frameworks for helping to visualize the nature of environments was presented by Robert Duncan (1972). Duncan superimposed the dimensions of environmental complexity and environmental change to indicate the level of 'environmental uncertainty' that will exist. An environment that is both simple and stable will present a low level of uncertainty while an environment that is both complex and unstable will present a very high level of uncertainty. Other authors have provided more elaborate conceptualizations of these environmental conditions but the basic premise seldom varies greatly from Duncan's model (Child, 1972; Jurkovich, 1974; Darran, Miles and Snow, 1978).

Having arrived at a degree of consensus with respect to the environment some researchers have proceeded to investigate the impact of environmental factors on organizations. The work in this area can be divided into two general areas: i) Contingency Models and, ii) Process Models. It must be acknowledged that this separation is somewhat arbitrary and that the areas are certainly not mutually exclusive. There is, in fact, a great deal of commonality between them and they should be seen as complimentary perspectives. The distinction between the areas lies primarily in the difference in their intent. The contingency approach suggests that appropriate environment-structure matches can be determined, if not implemented, through careful analysis of the environment and the concomitant 'decision making state' of the organization. Process models, on the other hand, are concerned with how and why an organization goes about making adjustments to its environment.

Process models suggest that the organization can, and often does, have the ability to shape its environment to some extent; that managerial decisions are not restricted to internal structures and functions but can include highly proactive interactions with the environment. One such model was developed by John Child (1972). He proposed that organization structure and function arises from the specific actions and policies of organization decision makers. Child suggested that a political process is at work in the sense that organization decision makers define their environment through the choices they make with respect to their 'organizational domain'. This model is aligned closely to the strategic contingency theory presented by Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck and Pennings (1971). Although the strategic contingency model was developed in an effort to explain intra-organization power, it inherently acknowledges the significance of the organization's environment.

Of all the open system models and theories the one that places the greatest significance on the organizational environment is commonly referred to as Resource Dependence. Several authors including Emerson, 1962; Blau, 1964; Yuchtman and Seashore, 1967; and Pfeffer and Salancik,1978 have extended the concept of environmental influence to that of environmental control. That is, they suggest that environmental conditions actually dictate the activities of an organization in many circumstances. This view places a great deal of importance on the environment as a determinant of organizational activities. The resource dependence perspective asserts that organizations are comprised of coalitions of interest groups which endeavor to impart their beliefs and priorities upon the organization as a whole. It is through coalitions that organizational perceptions of environmental conditions are established. Further, those coalitions that are viewed as being most able to cope with critical

environmental conditions will garner the greatest control of organizational activities. It is in this respect that the environment is regarded as a major determinant of organizational behavior.

C. RESOURCE DEPENDENCE

To suggest that the 'resource dependence' model is a clearly articulated and well defined theory would be to overstate the case. It is more appropriate to look at resource dependence as a conceptual tool which can be applied to a variety of organizational issues. In this sense it is more a 'perspective' than a theory. As mentioned previously, resource dependence is a critical element of the strategic contingency model of intra-organizational power (Emerson, 1962; Blau, 1964; Hickson et. al., 1971). Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) however, were among the first to fully acknowledge the potential influence that an environment can exert. Their interest was prompted by a desire to establish "an improved conceptual framework for the description and assessment of organizational effectiveness" (1967: 891). In their endeavors to define organizational effectiveness they arrived at what has become the central theme of the resource dependence model. Their conclusion was that an organization's success is a function of its 'bargaining position' relative to its environment. This sentiment was echoed several years later by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) when they stated that the "key to organizational survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources" (p. 2). A clearly stated premise of Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) work is that survival is the dominant issue for any

organization and that survival is contingent on the organization's ability to maintain its flow of resources.

In a case analysis of a specific social service organization Aldrich (1976) utilized several resource oriented concepts to explain organizational activities. He identifies 'uncertainty' as the key dimension of resource dependence in that organizations attempt to minimize uncertainty by routinizing and standardizing their operations which gives rise to differentiation and specialization "within the organizational population" (p. 421). This, Aldrich asserts, limits the possibility of any single organization achieving self-sufficiency. Inter-organizational coordination is the factor that Aldrich focuses on in his effort to quantify the interactive character of his chosen organizational set. In order to accomplish this task he reduces the concept of coordination to four dimensions; formalization, intensity, reciprocity and standardization. Unfortunately, his analysis lacks clarity in that intra- and inter-organizational phenomena are not adequately distinguished. This can be attributed to a great degree to the lack of a well defined theoretical framework.

Benson (1978) approached the issue of environmental influences from the perspective that inter-organizational networks are 'political economies'. He suggested that two "related but partially autonomous" analytical levels exist (p. 72). One level involves the patterns of interaction related to the performance of 'core functions' (i.e., the achievement of organizational objectives). However, a deeper level of analysis is focused on the process(es) of resource acquisition. The fundamental argument asserted by Benson is that "interactions at the service delivery level are ultimately dependent on resource acquisition" (p. 72).

That is, that the fulfillment of organizational objectives are contingent on the ability of the organization to obtain necessary resources from it's environment.

In an effort to establish a sound theoretical base for the empirical analysis of organizational environments Aldrich, Benson and other writers have identified several specific constructs which are based on the interactions between a focal organization and entities within its environment. Like Yuchtman and Seashore, and Pfeffer and Salancik, the central premise of their approach is that survival is the primary objective of any organization and that all organizational activities and behaviors can be attributed to the need for acquiring scarce resources which are essential for survival. This conceptualization includes intangible factors such as authority and social legitimacy as resources which must be acquired or maintained by most organizations. Because this approach is based on the interactions between organizations, the theory also asserts that the actual environment does not determine organizational behavior but rather that it is how members of an organization perceive the environment that is important. Since it is perceptions that are actually acted upon (whether they are accurate or not), it is the 'enacted environment' that becomes the determining factor (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) elaboration of resource dependency is, perhaps, the most well developed and clearly defined conceptualization to date. They have compiled and integrated the many related concepts thereby providing a concrete theoretical paradigm from which empirical investigation is possible. They have articulated several basic principles which provide a context for analyzing and understanding inter-organization activities. Using Pfeffer and Salancik as a base and incorporating concepts that pervade the

writings of other researchers, a set of constructs can be identified that represent the central themes of resource dependence.

1. Coalitions

The first underlying premise of the resource dependence model is the perception of organizations as 'coalitions of interest groups'. Organizations are commonly seen to be made up of individuals who are striving to achieve an agreed upon objective(s). However, experience has inevitably demonstrated to most people that such is not necessarily the case. In virtually any organization it is possible to identify groups or individuals who's beliefs about the organization's function are at odds with each other. As Pfeffer and Salancik indicate:

> Some organizational theorists have the idea that everyone who participates in an organization must agree to cooperate in the pursuit of the same goals. This is clearly not the case. Organizational participants may come into the coalition when there is some advantage to be gained and leave when there is no longer any perceived advantage. The gains and costs are defined in terms of the individual participants or groups, not in terms agreed upon by all or promulgated by the organization's management (1978:26).

Even if strong consensus exists with respect to an organization's goals, there will be a variety of opinions as to the best means by which to achieve those goals. If matters are complicated by a lack of goal consensus then the differences and potential conflicts increase dramatically. To make matters worse there are usually a number of 'self-interests' that come into play. The fallout is that groups (or coalitions) within an organization regularly confront and compete with each other for the organization's finite resources in an effort to achieve the outcomes they perceive as being desirable for the organization and/or themselves.

2. Interpreting the Environment

Coalitions are important to the resource dependence model in the sense that groups within an organization inevitably interpret events and issues from their particular perspective. This has significant implications for the organization's responsiveness to environmental factors. The resource dependence model places great emphasis on how the environment is 'enacted' (interpreted). Elements and conditions within an organization's environment will have varying degrees and types of impact upon the organization's operations. The inherent difficulty for members of the organization is to accurately select those environmental characteristics that will impact upon them and to determine the extent and nature of the impact. Failure to correctly predict or attend to the critical environmental factors or conversely to attend to inconsequential factors will lead to organizational difficulties. There are two sources of failure in this respect. The first lies in the fact that the desires or needs of certain coalitions may not be compatible with the overall welfare of the organization. The second is that the available information with respect to the environment may be either inaccurate or incomplete.

By way of example, Peters and Waterman (1982) in their book *In Search of Excellence* frequently refer to the failure of many companies to recognize the importance of customer service. They refer on several occasions to the Frito-Lay company's 'nearly fanatical' commitment to frequent and courteous customer service. The result being that Frito-Lay consistently maintained a large lead in market share that other companies could not seem to erode regardless of the amount or type of promotion they engaged in. Proponents of resource dependence would concur with Peters and Waterman's statement that

the other companies were not paying enough attention to the factors that mattered. More importantly, however, the resource dependence model would suggest that the success that Frito-Lay experienced was due to the perception that everyone in the company possessed with respect to their service orientation. Everyone, from the upper management through to the individual drivers, recognized the value of the service component. Consequently, seldom would anyone consider doing anything that might compromise that service.

Peters and Waterman also gave examples of companies that had endeavored to institute a service oriented attitude. Failure arose, inevitably, from a lack of consensus among various units within the organizations. No matter how much the management emphasized the service component, other areas within the organization maintained different ideas. In particular the marketing groups and the research and development groups tended to hold different opinions. These examples serve to illustrate the importance of interpreting the environment. It is not the environment itself that the organization responds to. Rather it is the perception the organizational members have of the environment, i.e. the *enacted environment*, that is acted upon. Obviously if the enacted environment differs greatly from reality the organization will have difficulty in successfully managing environmental conditions.

3. Managing The Environment

A final premise upon which the resource dependence model is based involves the type of relationships that exist between the organization and other entities in it's environment. The issue of concern is that of dependence and what constitutes dependence. According to many authors writing from a variety

of perspectives (Duncan, 1972; White, 1974; Aldrich, 1976; Benson, 1978), dependence arises from asymmetrical patterns of exchange. Asymmetrical interdependence occurs when one of the exchange partners is more dependent upon the relationship than is the other. The degree of dependence for a given organization is a function of both the relative magnitude of the exchange and the criticality of the resource being acquired. The implication is that when a specific resource is essential to an organization it is imperative that the organization maintains the availability of that resource. If its availability is perceived to be in jeopardy the organization must take corrective action.

When faced with problematic environmental conditions the organization is forced to respond. Child (1973) refers to this process as 'strategic choice'. A survey of authors including Thompson, Aldrich, Benson, Yuchtman and Seashore, and Pfeffer and Salancik indicates a strong consensus with respect to how an organization copes with its environment. Coping strategies can be categorized into two general types; passive and active. Passive strategies include those activities where the organization accepts the environmental conditions as they are and invokes intra-organizational adjustments to deal with them. These adaptive responses include outright compliance to demands, the establishment of 'buffering' controls and, the diversification of the organizational domain. It is the active coping strategies, however, that most characterize the resource dependence perspective. The idea that organizations actually endeavor to shape their environment is what sets resource dependence apart from other open system approaches. According to resource dependence there are several active strategies that are employed by organizations in order to create a more desirable environment.

Absorption

A major strategy in response to problems associated with interdependence is to absorb the problematic agency. In the private sector this is generally seen in the form of mergers or takeovers and, contrary to common opinion, mergers tend to occur in order to manage interdependence, not for purposes of organizational growth (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). In the public or non-profit sectors absorption usually takes the form of amalgamations and requires either the mutual consent of the organizations or its imposition by a superordinate authority.

Cooptation

When total absorption of a portion of the environment is not feasible the organization is forced to modify relationships in order to influence environmental factors. Interlocking directorates, joint ventures, normative constraints on members' activities and formation of collective structures are examples of cooptation. Examples of cooptation are abundent in the non-profit sector. Arts groups are particularly adept at targeting corporations as sponsors and proceeding to entice senior officials from the corporation onto their own Board of Directors.

Manipulation

When problematic interdependence arises from situations which are beyond the means of the organization to cope with directly, the organization will often appeal to larger social powers for support. Two primary methods may be employed to this end. First, attempts can be made to have laws and regulations altered to suit the organization's needs. Lobbying elected officials is the most common example of manipulation. Second, efforts to achieve social legitimacy

may be embarked upon. A good example of an attempt to establish social legitimacy is provided by the accounting profession. In recent years two new accounting associations have been created and are challenging the Institute of Chartered Accountants for the right to perform certain functions. A major part of their campaign has involved high profile advertising aimed at creating a positive public image.

Executive Succession

Elimination and subsequent replacement of key members enables organizations to become aligned with their environment. The selection of new executives will reflect which portions of the environment are perceived to be most important to the survival of the organization. If an organization finds that its key members are not able to adequately cope with critical elements of the environment it will be forced to replace those individuals with people who possess the necessary skills.

Structural Modification

The final active response that an organization may undertake is to redefine its operational framework. This process generally involves structural adjustments that enable the organization to more effectively attend to important environmental conditions. A good example is provided by the computer revolution and the impact it has had on post-secondary institutions. In the past research and education with respect to computers was shared between several organizational units (i.e. engineering departments, mathematics departments and business departments). With the explosion of information in that field most universities, colleges and technical institutes have established single

departments (e.g., computing science) to deal with the subject area in a more effective and comprehensive manner.

An analysis of these five coping strategies reveals that they each represent different levels of sophistication with respect to an organization's ability to deal with environmental conditions. Absorption is clearly the most sophisticated and aggressive strategy and is employed by organizations which, due to their authority and resources, are able to exert a great degree of control over the environment. Cooptation is somewhat less sophisticated but still requires the organization to have significant influence over the environment. When an organization possesses little, if any, influence the best it can hope to achieve is a manipulation of environmental conditions. If an organization lacks sufficient authority and/or resources to utilize absorption, cooptation or manipulation it may endeavor to redefine its operational domain. This can be achieved through either replacement or realignment of key organizational members or through the restructuring of the operational components.

In review, the resource dependence model is based on the notion that an organizations external environment is the primary determinant of its activities. The environment provides all of the resources, whether they be human, financial, material or informational, that an organization requires for survival. The environment also consumes the products of the organizations effort, not to mention the by-products and waste materials that may result from the production of the primary output. The organization can find itself in a vulnerable position if it becomes overly dependent upon other organizations for resources that are essential to its survival. Moreover, any uncertainty with respect to those interdependent relationships will increase that vulnerability.

The actual environment, however, is not in itself the only source of difficulty. The resource dependence model emphasizes the importance of the 'enacted' environment and the premise that decisions and actions are based on people's perceptions of environmental conditions which are not necessarily accurate. Consequently, organizations are faced with a hydratic problem. First, they must make every effort to ensure that they have interpreted the environment as accurately as possible. Second, they must be able to select and implement appropriate coping strategies. The potential exists for an organization to err on either or both levels.

D. SUMMARY

It has been shown that the research on voluntary organizations and sport organizations in particular has been less than extensive and that what has been done has often been very descriptive but not overly explanatory. In contrast, the body of research on organizations is almost overwhelming in its scope and magnitude.

It is hoped that this study will provide a degree of understanding of amateur sport groups by applying some of the concepts developed in organization theory. Within the vast realm of organization theory a specific model, resource dependence, has been identified and described. The central premise of the resource dependence model is that survival is the dominant organizational consideration. Three basic premises have been established that

will facilitate the evaluation of organizations from the resource dependence perspective:

1. Organizations as coalitions;
2. Environments as enacted; and
3. Asymmetrical inter-dependence as the determinant of coping strategies.

Resource dependence suggests that an organization can undertake a variety of strategies to cope with its environment. In order to be effective an organization must be able to manage its environmental relationships in such a way as to ensure a consistent and adequate flow of resources.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

A. SELECTION OF THE FOCAL ORGANIZATION

The initial conceptualization of this study arose from the author's involvement with, and interest in, the functioning of provincial level amateur sport organizations. This interest, together with an exposure to the field of organization theory, ultimately resulted in the formulation of a study that would combine the two areas. As such, it is acknowledged that the type of organization to be examined had been presupposed and no serious consideration has ever been given to utilizing anything other than a provincial level association. It is important to note, however, that criteria for selecting the type of organization included the following and none of them precluded the use of a provincial association:

i. that it be a volunteer-directed organization;

ii. that the sport organization be established at the provincial, national and international levels; and

iii. that the sport organization hold and/or be included in major competitions such as World Championships, the Pan-American Games and the Olympics.

Therefore, the author makes no apology for having predetermined the type of organization to be examined. In fact, the use of a provincial association offers many logistical advantages and, in addition, maintains an element of

consistency with other related studies (Slack, 1983 and Cunningham 1986, in particular).

The selection of the organization to be examined involved, first, the establishment of criteria on which the selection would be based. Two general areas were identified in this respect. The first and foremost area of concern was that of organizational characteristics. It was essential, for the purposes of this study, that the organization chosen possessed several features. Included in these were magnitude, complexity and history. Since many of the issues in question are a function of the size of an organization it was necessary that the sample unit chosen be of sufficient magnitude to ensure that the phenomena were actually present or, if they were not present, to ensure that their absence was not attributable to a lack of size. In assessing magnitude it was important to note that more than the size of the membership was considered. Magnitude also refers to such factors as the number of programs and services that are offered, the size of the budget and the geographic distribution of the membership. In this respect a minimum of 50 teams or clubs with a total of at least 5000 participants was required. Further, there must be member teams or clubs in a minimum of 15 municipalities within the Province. Finally, the organization chosen would be required to have a minimum annual budget of a quarter of a million dollars.

As Interdependence is often associated with complex environments and the concomitant structures, the organization studied also had to possess a high degree of complexity. Complexity can be assessed by examining selected certain aspects of the organization such as the diversity of the programs offered,

gender divisions, the number of events or disciplines etc.) and the variety of non-activity oriented services provided by or undertaken by the organization (i.e., fund raising, political lobbying, etc.). It was decided that the organization selected should provide programs for both sexes and at least two each of age group divisions and events or disciplines. To examine the dimension of complexity associated with non-central functions, it was considered important that the organization studied be engaged in a minimum of three non-activity centered functions.

The final characteristic that was considered in the selection process was the history of the organization. Many of the concepts presented in resource dependence theory are evolutionary in nature and may not be evident in an organization that has existed for only a short time. Therefore, to be of value to this study, the organization chosen had to have a history that spanned a minimum of 10 years and preferably 15 or more years.

Concerns with respect to executing the study comprise the second area of consideration. Most important in this respect was the issue of accessability. Perhaps the most crucial element in conducting this study was the opportunity for the researcher to fully examine and therefore to be in a position to disclose the operational activities of the organization. Failure to do so would seriously restrict the value of the study. It was essential that key individuals be available for interviews and that records and documents had been retained and could be examined. A related factor was that of familiarity with the organization on the part of the researcher. Although not essential, it was considered to be advantageous if the author had a previous knowledge of the organization

and/or the sport itself. Such a familiarity could assist in the formulation of interview questions and in the analysis of the data.

A final consideration involved the logistics of carrying out the study. The concern in this respect was the author's proximity to the 'core' of the organization. An inherent characteristic of any provincial sport association is that its key individuals are usually dispersed throughout the province. Often, however, there are several key people located in one city, particularly if the organization has a central office. If an organization was selected for the research which had the advantage of proximity the time and cost involved in collecting data could be kept to a minimum.

Having established the criteria, several provincial sport associations in Alberta were assessed for their suitability. Based on this analysis seven associations were considered acceptable. Three of the seven, however, had been utilized in at least one previous study. As such, these three were eliminated on the grounds that the key individuals might not respond favourably to another demand on their personal time which, in turn, could negatively affect the ability of the researcher to collect data. Of the four remaining associations the Alberta Soccer Association (A.S.A.) was initially judged to be the most desirable. However, prior to embarking upon the data collection the author was offered and accepted employment with the Alberta Gymnastics Federation (A.G.F.). After having spent a year with the A.G.F. (during which time this project was on hold) it became apparent that the author's intimate involvement with the A.G.F. offered some significant advantages in terms of data collection. Following some deliberation it was decided that the A.G.F. should be utilized

since it met all of the criteria, would provide excellent access to interview subjects and documents and would be logistically advantageous for the author.

The A.G.F. is one of the largest sport associations in the province with approximately 20,000 participants in more than 130 clubs. A diverse number and range of programs are provided by the Federation including, among others, leadership courses, fund raising projects, achievement awards and competitions. The A.G.F.'s annual budget has been growing rapidly and currently exceeds a half a million dollars. In terms of complexity the A.G.F. is comprised of three distinct and semi-autonomous disciplines; the women's program, the men's program and the acro-sport program. Each of these groups is divided into several skill and/or age categories for the purposes of competition. Finally, the Federation has a relatively long history. It was originally incorporated in 1971 with less than ten member clubs. Since that time it has experienced consistent growth.

B. DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

As indicated in Chapter One, the intent of this study was to determine the extent to which resource dependence theory was relevant to, and helped to explain, the function and operation of amateur sport organizations. The object was not to quantify the frequency, intensity or magnitude of occurrences or the effects of theoretical constructs, but only to determine the value of those constructs as interpretive tools for the analysis of an amateur sport organization. The qualitative nature of this study was something of a departure from the dominant approach taken to the study of volunteer sport groups in that it was

theoretically based and embodied an attempt to examine observable phenomena in terms of that theory.

Having determined that the purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical foundation it was necessary to establish the best means by which to attain it. There are three general methodological approaches to social research; the experiment, the survey and the case study. The experiment and the survey are both designed to provide dependable, quantifiable results that can be used to advance or disprove a particular hypothesis(es). The case study, by contrast, provides a wide spectrum of data that enables the researcher to understand the essence of the subject being examined. The case study provides depth of understanding and tremendous detail. Unfortunately, the case study approach sacrifices the dependability and generalizability that are the respective strengths of the experiment and survey methods. Never-the-less, the case study approach was considered to be the most appropriate for a study that is intended to establish a theoretical foundation.

The selection of the case study approach is supported by the work of Brinberg and McGrath (1982). In an effort to come to terms with various concepts of validity in research Brinberg and McGrath indicate that there are three approaches to research and that all three approaches have the same three components: a substantive domain; a theoretical domain; and a methodological domain. The distinction between the three approaches lies in the way in which the three domains are combined. In this respect the Brinberg and McGrath model helps to explain the three classical approaches to social research. In particular the case study is explained by the Brinberg and McGrath model as the combination of the theoretical domain and the substantive domain

which establishes a structure into which the methodological domain must subsequently be incorporated. That is precisely the path that this study has taken.

As in all research there has been a degree of compromise that arises from the selection of a particular methodology. The case study approach sacrifices both the assurance of significantly accurate results that experimental designs provide and the representativeness that is established by survey designs. However, the case study provides a depth of understanding and degree substance that can not be achieved by any other means.

The case study approach to sociological research involves either current or historical perspectives or both. In this instance it was necessary to consider both aspects in order to reduce the impact of limited longitudinal data. Since it is the perceptions of individuals that are of interest in studies of this nature, primary sources of data tended to be used exclusively. The only type of secondary source information which was utilized in the study were the results of previous studies involving the same organizations. Since no such study has ever used the Alberta Gymnastics Federation as a subject no secondary sources were considered for data collection. An argument could be made that any documentation should be considered a secondary source since written work inevitably involves interpretation of actual events. In the context of this study, however, the perceptions themselves are of as much interest as the actual events. Therefore the documentation were considered a primary source. In this light the documents provided the majority of the historical data and contributed to an interpretation of the data obtained in the interviews with

respect to current issues. The interviews provided the most substantial portion of current data but they augmented some of the historical data as well.

A focused interview format was utilized as it appeared to be the most appropriate given the objectives of this study. As indicated by Slack (1983), there are several advantages in using the focused interview format for a study such as this. The subjects are a known quantity and as such are likely to accurately represent the sample group which is of interest to the researcher; the data obtained is generally extensive since there are no restrictions or limitations as to what is discussed and ambiguity with respect to either the questions or responses can be avoided because of the direct interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Babbie, 1979). The use of the focused interview technique required that specific topics be identified and incorporated into the format of the interview by 'mapping' the topics onto the theoretical constructs under examination. For example, with regard to the concept that organizations attempt to alter their environment it was essential to initiate discussion on a specific topic such as the Alberta Gymnastics Federation's efforts to lobby the provincial government with respect to lottery disbursements. The following process was implemented in order to develop a valid interview format:

1. general headings were established based on the theoretical constructs;
2. A.G.F. documents were examined to develop background knowledge;
3. questions were written under each heading that addressed specific issues;
4. a pilot set of interviews was conducted; and
5. the interview format and questions were revised accordingly.

For a complete list of the interview questions, refer to Appendix 'A' and Appendix 'B'. It is important to note that the questions were designed to stimulate discussion and that the intent was not to restrict the interviews to the specific questions noted but to generate thoughts and impressions that would help the author to develop a clear picture of the interviewees' attitudes towards and perceptions of the Alberta Gymnastics Federation.

In formulating the interview questions for A.G.F. members four general categories were established. The first category addressed biographical information which was required to determine the extent to which each subject had been involved with A.G.F. activities. In this sense the 'biographical' data was restricted to details of individuals' participation in the A.G.F. Standard biographical information such as age, gender, and socio-economic status were not deemed to be particularly relevant to this study and, therefore, were not included in the interview format.

The second category of questions addressed the concept of 'coalitions' within the organization. The concept of coalitions is one of the fundamental premises of resource dependence theory. Evidence of the existence of coalitions and their impact upon the A.G.F. was considered to be crucial to a full examination of the theory. It was also essential that evidence be sought which might indicate a link between environmental conditions and the ability of specific coalitions to cope with them. Lack of such evidence would bring into question the relevance of resource dependence in the amateur sport setting. An effort was made to acquire information on four specific issues with respect to coalitions:

1. What coalitions exist within the A.G.F. and which, if any, are dominant?

2. What are the environmental factors, if any, that provide the dominant coalitions with their control?
3. What demands do specific coalitions impose, or attempt to impose, upon the A.G.F.?
4. To which coalition(s), if any, does each interview subject belong?

Each interview subject was presented with a description of coalitions and in some cases, where the subject did not seem to understand the description, the researcher also provided examples of coalitions from other types of organizational settings. The author would not proceed with the questions in this section unless he was confident that the subject understood the concept of coalitions.

The third category of questions dealt with the interpretation of the environment. Two primary issues were of concern each of which contained specific sub-issues:

1. How did the organization come to know its environment?
   - What impact did the coalitions have on the process of interpretation?
   - From what sources did individuals acquire information about the environment?
2. What was the enacted environment and how accurately was it perceived relative to actual conditions?
   - What was the environment perceived to be comprised of?
   - What was the nature of each relationship within the enacted environment?

The first issue was important in that resource dependence suggests that coalitions contribute significantly to the establishment of the enacted environment. If this holds true, it should be possible to identify linkages between the coalitions and the A.G.F.'s enacted environment. The second issue was of interest because resource dependence theory presents the enacted environment as the determinant of organizational activity; that is, it represents the link to the managerial strategies employed by the organization.

The final category addressed the A.G.F.'s efforts to "manage its environment". Two approaches were taken in developing questions for this section:

1. Some examples of major actions taken by the A.G.F. in the recent past were identified and the subjects were asked for their interpretation of what precipitated the action and why the particular action was chosen. For example, the implementation of the A.G.F.'s zone structure was presented as a specific action that was taken a few years ago. The subjects, most of whom were involved in that decision, were asked why the move was made. The intent was to determine what factors precipitated the action and whether or not the A.G.F. members' interpretations of the conditions were correct.

2. A selection of hypothetical situations were presented and the interview subjects were asked how they thought the A.G.F. would respond to those situations. Though hypothetical, the situations were all very potential such as the possibility of liability insurance becoming unavailable. The intent here was to determine what types of coping

strategies might be considered by the central members when faced with critical issues.

In order to assess the accuracy of the subjects perceptions it was also necessary to establish, as clearly as possible, a true representation of the environment. To achieve this the author interviewed five representatives from organizations that comprise part of the A.G.F.'s environment. The interview questions developed for the representatives of other agencies were divided into two general categories. The first category again was devoted to biographic information specific to the representatives' involvement with the A.G.F. The second category was designed to provide information with respect to the true nature of the relationship between the A.G.F. and the agency in question. A major factor in that relationship was the representatives' perception of the relationship. The information acquired through these interviews, together with the review of organizational documents, provided the author with substantial information regarding the actual environmental conditions.

Pilot interviews for the central members were conducted using three individuals who, although quite involved with the A.G.F., did not meet the minimum criteria for subject selection established for the study. It was felt that these individuals possesed sufficient background to provide adequate feedback for the author to determine whether or not any revisions of the instrument were required. In addition, there were several advantages to using subjects who were members of the focal organization. First, the 'pilot' subjects were not aware that they were not actually part of the study. As such it was felt that they approached the interview more seriously than might have been the case if they had known the situation to be otherwise. Another factor was that the subject

matter of many of the questions was organizationally specific. Thus the responses provided by the pilot group were more indicative of what could be expected from the actual subjects than responses from members of another organization would have been. Also, the use of a pilot group consisting of A.G.F. members provided the author with some additional insight into important issues prior to the commencement of the actual interviews.

The process of gathering data necessitated a significant amount of cooperation on the part of the focal organization in that members were asked to spend time in interviews, to assist in the accumulation of documents and to permit extensive scrutiny of their organization's operation. Data collection itself entailed the following steps:

Step 1 : An examination of the documents obtained from the focal organization.

Step 2 : The conducting of interviews with key individuals of the focal organization.

Step 3 : The conducting of interviews with key individuals of agencies with which the focal organization interacts.

Step 4 : A tabulation and analysis of the interview data.

Step 5 : A combining of the data from the documents for support and clarification with the data obtained from the interviews.

It should be noted that the interview questions for Step 3 were designed for flexibility so that each interview would correspond to the degree and type of interaction that occurred between the Alberta Gymnastics Federation and specific agencies. That is, the interviews for the related agencies were tailored

somewhat to elicit information as to the type of relationship that existed between the organizations. For example, the A.G.F.'s relationship with a member club was quite different from its relationship with the Alberta Recreation and Parks Department.

C. SELECTION OF INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

1. The Focal Organization

The definition of the focal organization employed in this study was the primary delimiting factor in the selection of interview subjects. (see definitions in Chapter One). By considering that the organizations consisted only of functional members the number of potential subjects was greatly restricted. The intent was to obtain permission to interview individuals who are or were involved directly with the functions and operations of the Alberta Gymnastics Federation over a protracted period of time and whose perceptions were a consequence of personal experience with the organization. The following were used in determining the desirability of potential interview subjects:

1. the number of years of functional involvement with the Alberta Gymnastics Federation (a minimum of two years as a committee member or member of the Board of Directors); or
2. the number of years as an executive member (a minimum of one year was desirable).

A question could be raised with respect to the sufficiency of the minimum periods utilized here. However, these relatively short periods are justified on

two fronts. First, it is important to reiterate that one of the central premises being examined is based upon the perceptions of organizational members. As such, the length of time that a member has been involved is analytically irrelevant; if someone is involved in determining the actions and activities of the organization their perceptions are a major factor regardless of how or over what period they have been formulated. In implementing the minimum time frames the author has simply endeavored to preclude the possibility of interviewing individuals whose only source of information was the opinion or perceptions of others.

The second and rather subjective point is that the author's experience indicates that people seldom begin to make active contributions to a board or committee until their second or third year of involvement. Casual observation suggests that, particularly during their first year of involvement, people tend to follow the general consensus of the group and seldom even voice their own opinions. In that respect first year members of a board or committee are unlikely to influence the group significantly.

Although these criteria provided a guide as to who were and who were not desirable subjects the author was required to use some discretion in deciding who the actual sample group included. Specifically the author eliminated two potential subjects who met the criteria but whose personal histories raised questions about the reliability of their responses. In both cases the individuals had reputations for saying whatever they think will benefit them the most. They had, on several occasions, given conflicting accounts of a situation to different people and their comments are no longer considered trustworthy by people within the A.G.F. The author did not want the research to

be compromised by such behavior and consequently did not interview these subjects. A total of eighteen members of the A.G.F. were interviewed which included:

- the current President
- a former President
- the current Vice-President
- seven members of current and past Boards of Directors who were also coaches
- six members of current and past Boards of Directors who were also judges
- two members of current and past Boards of Directors who were also club administrators.

2. Other Agencies

Having interviewed the members of the focal organization it was relatively easy to determine which representatives from the various associated organizations were most appropriate to interview. Those representatives who had direct interaction with the Alberta Gymnastics Federation were of principal interest. Although their position within their own organization was of some significance, the most important element was their perception regarding the relationship between their organization and the Alberta Gymnastics Federation. A representative's approach to the Alberta Gymnastics Federation was dependent upon their perception of their own organization's intentions. In turn the Alberta Gymnastics Federation's approach to the relationship was predicated upon their experience with the representative rather than the actual intentions of the other agency. Specifically, the 'enacted environment' was the subject of interest. For this reason no effort was made to interview additional individuals in an associated organization on the basis of the criterion that they

were 'a higher authority'. If an individual had not been directly involved with the Alberta Gymnastics Federation on behalf of their organization they were not considered as a subject within this study. A total of five individuals representing associated agencies were interviewed. Two representatives from the Alberta Recreation and Parks Department were interviewed. Both individuals had, at different times, been assigned as the A.G.F.'s primary contact with the Department. One individual from the Alberta Sport Council was interviewed. This person had been the A.G.F.'s primary contact at the Sport Council since its inception. Two representatives of member clubs were also interviewed, one of whom is a long standing president of one of the larger clubs. The other is a program director at a different club.

D. DATA ANALYSIS

A process of latent content analysis was used for the interpretation of data. The use of latent content analysis, as opposed to manifest content analysis, enabled the researcher to extract the full meaning or intent of a passage or phrase rather than to attempt to quantify specific, pre-determined words or statements (Slack, 1983). Having accumulated all the data it was extensively evaluated in order to extract relevant information and record it according to the theoretical construct to which it applied.

This evaluation included the careful review of the interview tapes and notes taken during interviews, the tabulation of answers given to specific questions and the comparison of interview data to information contained in various A.G.F. documents. The review of the interview tapes and notes enabled

the author to assess the responses in a comprehensive manner thereby providing a high level of understanding. The tabulation of specific answers allowed for the development of graphs and tables that helped to reveal the pervasiveness of certain perceptions. The review of documents assisted the author in establishing the actual environmental conditions and in substantiating or disproving comments made by interview subjects. This process was aided by the structure of the interview which, for the most part, ensured that questions were grouped according to the three general constructs in question. Thus, a file was developed for each construct which ultimately contained all of the data that was pertinent to the specific construct. The author was then able to write the results of each aspect of the study without the fear of overlooking a significant piece of evidence.

E. ACQUISITION OF DOCUMENTS

Approval from the executive of the Alberta Gymnastics Federation to utilize their organization as the focus of this study ensured that there would be no difficulties regarding the perusal of records or documents. The Alberta Gymnastics Federation executive was given the assurance that specific details would be treated confidentially and that names of individuals would be kept anonymous. It was assumed that any existing Alberta Gymnastics Federation documents have been made available upon request.

The documents that provided the most useful information included:

1. Minutes of Annual General Meetings, Executive Meetings, and Board

of Directors Meetings of the A.G.F. dating from 1980 through to the present;

2. The Constitution and By-Laws of the Alberta Gymnastics Federation;
3. Written correspondence among executive members and/or employees;
4. Written correspondence between executive members or employees and representatives of other organizations;
5. Internal Alberta Gymnastics Federation reports; and
6. The annual Alberta Gymnastics Federation financial statements.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. INTRODUCTION

The results of this study have been presented and discussed in four sections. The first section addresses the issue of coalitions within the organization, their prevalence and their impact upon the decisions and actions within the organization. The second section deals with the concept of environmental interpretation; how the organizational members came to know their environment and whether or not their interpretations were accurate. In the third section the strategies employed, as well as those strategies that were not employed, by the organization to manage its environment are discussed. The final section will examine the findings as they relate to the linkages between the three central constructs.

B. COALITIONS OF INTEREST

One of the central themes of resource dependence theory is that individuals within organizations tend to form alliances with others who hold attitudes or interests similar to their own. These coalitions are generally based on functional characteristics of the organization. Research and development units of corporations are frequently cited as prime examples of coalitions (Simpson and Gully, 1962; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Miles, 1980; Daft, 1983). These units are isolated from other organizational units because of their distinct role. They are not directly involved in the input-output process of an

organization and this feature sets them apart from the more pragmatic units. Because of their unique orientation they are often forced into a competitive struggle for organizational resources. According to resource dependence theory a coalition's access to resources is contingent upon its ability to cope with important environmental conditions and that coalitions endeavor to influence the organization's interpretation of those conditions so as to establish greater control.

The portion of each interview that dealt with the concept of coalitions was intended to provide information regarding the existence of coalitions and the relative influence that specific coalitions might hold within the A.G.F. Contrary to the rational model of organizations, the resource dependence perspective suggests that not all people within an organization are necessarily working toward the same goals and objectives. Rather, groups and individuals tend to have interests that may be inconsistent not only with each other but with the organization as a whole (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). The important implication is that those 'coalitions' within an organization that possess the ability to cope with essential and/or uncertain environmental conditions will garner the greatest control over organizational activities. The importance of a coalition can be enhanced when it is able to influence the enacted environment, a feature which will be addressed in the section on interpretation of environmental conditions.

1. Identifying The Coalitions

Having provided a brief explanation of what coalitions are and how they function the author asked each subject several questions regarding coalitions within the A.G.F. The subjects were first asked to identify any specific groups

they felt might fit the description of coalitions. When a subject identified any such group they were then asked to indicate what interests or attitudes were characteristic of the group and whether or not the group imposed any specific demands on the A.G.F. The final few questions attempted to draw out the subjects' perception of the nature of the coalition (i.e., how dominant was it? had it a generally positive or negative influence on the A.G.F. and why?). The responses provided by interview subjects were combined with information drawn from other sources such as meeting minutes, reports and financial data.

Three perceived coalitions were identified quite clearly through the interview process; the elite coaches, the women's judges and the office staff. Two other groups, the 'Calgary Clubs' and the Technical Committees were less frequently identified (refer to Figure 1). It should be noted that three of the subjects were unable to identify any coalitions. This raises the question as to whether they honestly believed that there were no coalitions or if, perhaps, they did not understand the concept. If the latter is correct in all three cases then the sample group for this question should actually be reduced from 18 to 15 as indicated by the dotted line on Figure 1. Following the interviews the author examined a variety of documents in an effort to verify the findings from the interviews. The results of this analysis would suggest that there were only three identifiable and ongoing coalitions within the A.G.F. that possess significant influence within the organization. Of the three, the most dominant appears to have been the coaches of high performance athletes.

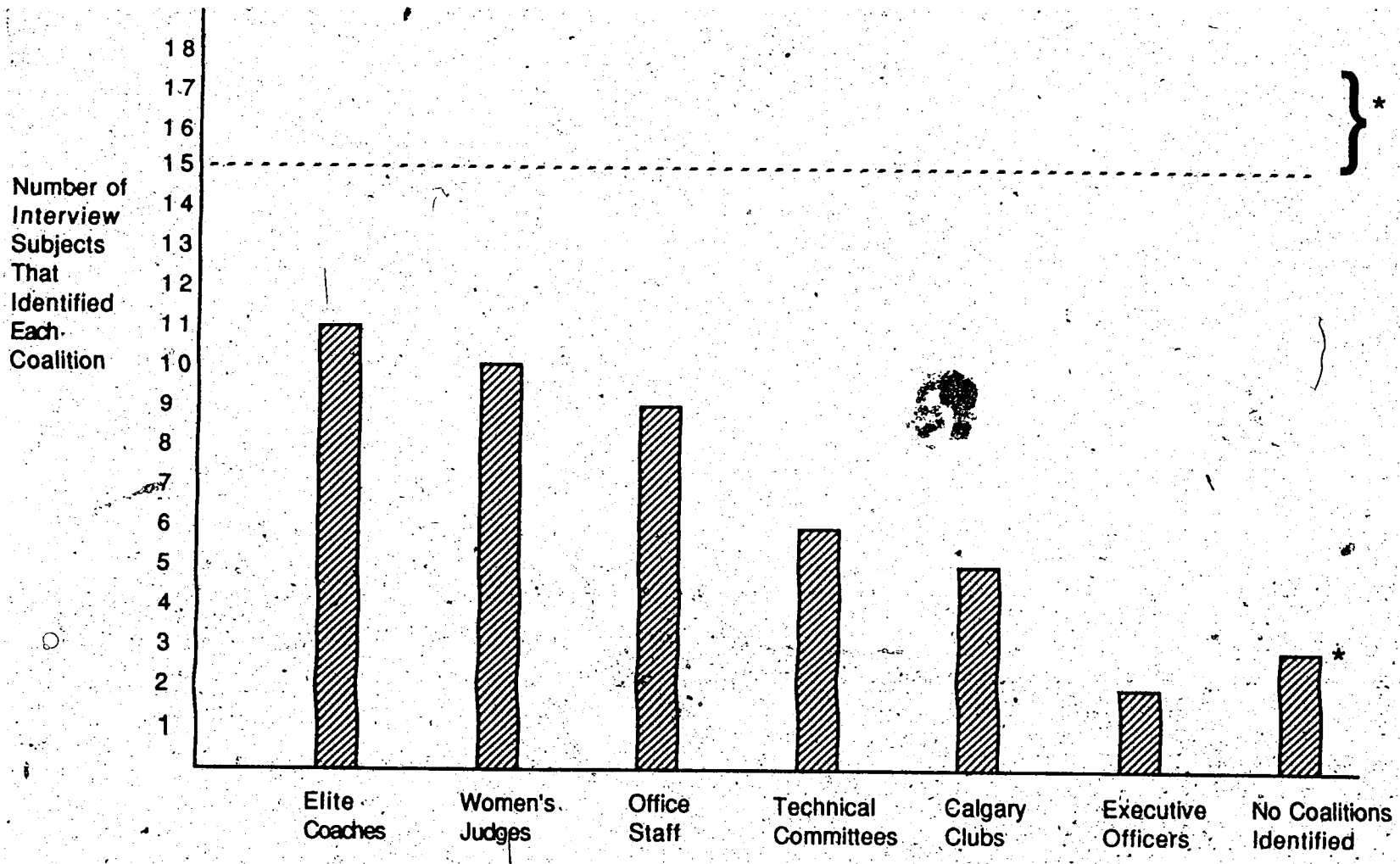

Figure1: Coalitions of the A.G.F. Identified During Interviews

Of the fifteen subjects that identified coalitions, eleven indicated that the elite coaches were such a group and seven of the subjects stated that they were the most dominant group in the A.G.F. In many respects it was difficult to conceive of these individuals as a coalition in that they were overtly in competition with one another, albeit through their athletes. Moreover the competitive relationship was often expressed in highly antagonistic behavior. Nevertheless, these coaches were primarily concerned with the attendance and performance of their athletes at major competitions such as Western Canadian and National Championships. As such they had, on many occasions, exerted great pressure as a group on the various elected Technical Committees to make decisions that were in their own or their athletes' best interests. Moreover, there have been instances in which the coaches have actually circumvented the Technical Committees to achieve their desired objectives. For example, in 1985 the Board of Directors, in response to demands from several clubs, directed the women's program to hold open trials for selection to major competitions and to require that all athletes attend the trials in order to be selected. Upon hearing of this decision several of the elite coaches met with the Women's Technical Committee and voiced their disapproval. Some of the coaches contacted members of the Board directly to express their concern. The result was that the decision was reversed at the subsequent Board meeting, much to the dismay of the clubs that had initiated the move. While the specifics of each of the groups' arguments are too lengthy to detail here, the author believes that both sides of the issue were equally valid. However, it was the wishes of the coaches that prevailed.

In another instance, the Board decided that individuals acting as team managers for major competitions should be chosen from smaller clubs which had athletes approaching the provincially competitive level. The rationale was twofold.

1) To provide those coaches with valuable experience that would help them improve their programs thereby broadening the competitive base throughout the province, and 2) to ensure that managers acted as managers and not as coaches. The elite coaches, however, saw that this would reduce their opportunities for travelling with teams. Previously team managers were generally selected from among those coaches who had athletes on the team but who had not been selected as the official team coach. In this case the coaches position was very weak compared to the Board of Directors and consequently they applied rather coercive tactics to the Technical Committees to obtain the managerial positions. By the time the Board met again it was after the fact and there was nothing that could be done; the Board members were clearly displeased with the Technical Committees but the coaches had successfully circumvented the constitutionally established decision-making process.

It is not the intent here to pass judgement on the actions of the coaches. In most cases they simply had the best interests of their athletes at heart. However, it is quite apparent that no other group within the A.G.F. has the same ability to influence actions and decisions that affect the Federation as a whole. In that sense the high performance coaches represent an almost archetypical coalition. They are a group of otherwise unrelated members of an organization whose interests, while not in conflict with the organization, are not necessarily

the predominant concern of the organization as a whole. Yet they are extremely effective in influencing the decisions made within the A.G.F.

A second group that appeared to fit within the concept of coalitions was a group of several of the judges in the women's program. Ten of the subjects interviewed felt that there were a number of women's judges who tended to isolate themselves as a unit. It is important to emphasize that these individuals were only a sub-set of the entire women's judging corps, but that they constituted a coalition that has had a very definite impact upon the A.G.F. It became apparent from the interviews that this influence was quite negative in that the attitudes and interests of this group were often in conflict with, not only the A.G.F.'s interests, but also with the interests of their judging colleagues. A frequent comment arising from the interviews was that these judges have "misplaced priorities"; that "they are not concerned with what they can offer to gymnastics but only what gymnastics (i.e., the A.G.F.) should do for them".

Nonetheless, they have been very successful in imposing their demands upon the Federation. Minutes of a 1984 Board meeting reveal that in one instance they threatened to quit judging if they did not receive a significant increase in the 'honourarium' they were paid. The A.G.F. Board of Directors met their demands out of fear that the group would convince other judges to join them in a mass resignation. Further, they have convinced the A.G.F. to pay many of the expenses incurred in their training as well as other items such as meal allowances. While under most conditions these items were legitimate, a review of expense claims submitted by these individuals over the course of several years indicated that they frequently tried to claim for unsubstantiated

at competitions where food was provided for the judges by the host club. This behavior was frustrating to the A.G.F. Directors and staff, but it appeared to be particularly annoying to the other women's judges. Three of the interview subjects were judges in the women's program and each of them identified this coalition as one which has had a particularly negative influence on the A.G.F. as a whole.

The third coalition that was identified was the administrative component of the A.G.F. (i.e., the office staff). The interview data provided a moderately strong indication that the paid staff had a significant influence upon the activities of the A.G.F. This perception was supported by substantial evidence from other sources. What is perhaps most interesting is that the influence was seen as quite negative until recently when both the level of expertise and the number of staff members was increased. Comments from the interview subjects reflected that the office staff of earlier years was quite ineffective for three reasons. There was insufficient staff, they were not adequately skilled and they were involved in other capacities with the A.G.F. (i.e., as judges or coaches) which led to various difficulties, particularly with respect to conflict of interest situations. This position was supported by a review of documents such as planning reports, grant submissions and financial reports. Grant submissions, in particular, were enlightening. More often than not they were completed improperly and inaccurately and seldom reflected the true activities of the A.G.F. The financial records were equally inadequate and beared no relation to the actual operations of the Federation. How budgets and financial statements were actually created remains unclear. A good example arises from the A.G.F.'s annual purchase of leotards and singlets for the athletes chosen to represent

$1000.00 annually and, according to people who have been associated with the A.G.F. for many years, had always been paid for by the Federation. However, no where in past budgets or financial statements was there any indication of this expense. The ineffectiveness of the early office staff is further supported by comments from representatives of the funding agencies that were interviewed. The representatives indicated that it was particularly difficult to obtain any information from the A.G.F. office and when they did get any they were often very skeptical of its validity.

What was important about the apparent disarray was that it enabled the staff members to control the input and output of both information and resources. Evidence of such behavior is provided by grant submissions that were prepared during that period. Many of those submissions over emphasized the importance of items that were of interest to the staff in their non-employee roles. Further support is provided by examining the number of Board and Committee meetings that took place during those years. It becomes quite evident that the complaints about decisions being made by staff rather than the elected officials were well founded. Records indicate that during 1984 only two meetings of A.G.F. Directors were held and that both were full Board meetings. There is no record of Executive or other committee meetings during that period. Given the nature of the A.G.F.'s activities it is highly unlikely that those two meetings alone could have provided sufficient opportunity for the Directors to fulfill their directive functions adequately. While the minutes do reveal that the Board discussed and made decisions regarding several issues there are many other issues for which there was no record of discussion. For example, during neither meeting was there any discussion regarding a major fund raising program that the

that period indicate that this project took place yet there is no indication that the Board discussed it in any respect other than in the financial statements after the fact.

In 1985/86 the Board of Directors moved to address the staffing problem by replacing the existing staff with two professional employees (an Executive Director and a Technical Coordinator) and two part-time administrative assistants. Since then there has been a distinct shift in the perception of the staff's influence to being very positive in nature. Comments from the interview subjects and the agency representatives both indicate that the office now operates in a much more efficient, legitimate and pro-active manner. This shift is of great relevance in a later section which addresses environmental management. The important point, however, is that the office staff continues to influence the A.G.F. Directors. In fact, that is their function in many respects. As professionals the Executive Director and Technical Coordinator are expected to advise the Board on operational issues. As such the staff members can deliberately or unwittingly bias any presentation of the 'facts' according to their own interests or perceptions.

The other two groups that received moderate support from interview subjects as being coalitions were discounted following examination of records and documents. There was no evidence in any records to indicate that the Calgary clubs have worked or banded together to influence the A.G.F. in any way. By contrast, however, there are numerous examples of the Calgary clubs working in opposition to each other. As such the suggestion that clubs in Calgary represent a coalition is most likely attributable to

1980 and 1987 indicate that Calgary clubs have, historically, made up at least twenty percent and as much as thirty-two percent of the total A.G.F. membership. Therefore, any bias toward the Calgary region can reasonably be attributed to the extensive activity therein.

Six of the interview subjects identified the Technical Committees as coalitions and based on some of their comments it [illegible] appeared that they were correct (particularly with respect to the Women's [illegible]ical Committee). Those interview subjects that identified the Technical [illegible]mittees as coalitions focused their attention on the Women's Committee but generally felt that the other two committees were very similar in nature. Each subject referred to the extraordinarily long period (12 to 15 years each) that two of the members had served on the Women's committee. They felt that these individuals had dominated the committee and used their position to impose their own ideas on the A.G.F.

While records and discussions with the individuals in question bear out that they were on the Committee for that long it does not appear that they could be considered a coalition. There is little evidence that they ever even agreed with each other on key issues. Minutes of Board meetings in particular reflect that they were often at odds with each other rather than presenting the united front that would be expected from a coalition. The other two technical committees were discounted as coalitions for the simple reason that the members of the committees changed far too frequently for any collective behavior to be substantiated.

In review then, the A.G.F. appeared to have three distinct coalitions operating within its organization; the high performance coaches, a group of women's judges, and the office staff. Evidence exists that all three coalitions successfully influenced the decisions and activities of the A.G.F. In addition, as resource dependence predicts, the coalitions were functionally based and reflected the need of each of the sub-units to have access to A.G.F. resources. The high performance coaches provide an excellent example of a coalition that congeals only in special circumstances and is otherwise unobservable (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978:25-27).

2. The External Sources of Control

In terms of the resource dependence model the paramount issue with regard to coalitions is that their influence on organizational activities is derived from their ability to cope with critical environmental conditions. Therefore, in order to fully support the concept of coalitions it is necessary to determine if, in fact, the influence that the three coalitions possessed arose from their ability to manage particular environmental elements. Interview subjects were asked if they could specify the reason(s) that the coalitions they had identified were able to influence the A.G.F.

With respect to the elite coaches the responses indicated that it was the coaches' expertise that provided them with their influence. These elite coaches were viewed as being essential to the development of the athletes who would compete at the national and, perhaps, the international levels. Consequently, they were expected to know (and generally they did know) what would be best for the development of athletes. Since one of the A.G.F.'s outputs, perhaps the most visible one, was the development of elite athletes it follows that those

individuals who were responsible for that output would enjoy a significant amount of control over the Federation's activities and resources. The A.G.F.'s competitive orientation was borne out by a simple review of financial statements which revealed that between 1981 and 1986 funds expended on provincial elite athletes ranged from a low of 62% to a high of 81% of total program expenses. The competitive athletes were unquestionably a very high priority. It seems inevitable that the coaches of high performance athletes would be given a great deal of latitude within the Federation and that attention would be accorded their opinions, requests or even demands.

Several of the interview subjects also expressed the perception that the successful performance of the athletes was "essential to the Governments' continued funding of the A.G.F.". The belief that Government funding would be discontinued if the A.G.F. did not produce top calibre athletes suggested an interesting extension to the elite coaches ability to manage the environment. Not only were they perceived to produce the athletes but in doing so were seen to be ensuring the financial well-being of the Federation.

A final factor that could have contributed to the elite coaches' influence was the fact that they frequently represented the A.G.F. on national committees. Consequently, they were able to influence decisions and obtain information that was often vital to others in the Province. Just how significant this factor actually was could not be determined. The comments from only a few interview subjects provided the only evidence that the coaches derived some influence from those involvements. Nothing in the review of documents provided substantiation for this claim. Nevertheless, information is considered to be a valuable resource by many authors (Katz and Kahn, 1971; White, 1974; Aldrich, 1976; Pfeffer and

Salancik, 1978) and it seems likely that in the case of the elite coaches it had an impact to some degree.

As Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) indicate the acquisition and control of information provides the holder of that information with two important elements. First, an impression of authority is created that enables the individual to influence the opinions of others. Second, an individual that possesses exclusive information is able to selectively release it. That is, they may chose what portions of the information, if any, are to be offered to others as well as chosing who it will be made available to. In this respect the elite coaches were able to use their positions on C.G.F. committees to enhance their influence within the A.G.F.

The influence that the sub-group of women's judges possessed would also appear to arise from the development of elite athletes but it occurred in a somewhat different manner. It appeared that the judges influence arose out of such paradoxical situations that, at times, the concept of the enacted environment seems to give way to outright imagination.

The first paradox arose out of the method in which athletes are selected to provincial teams. While it would seem logical when selecting athletes to use a variety of criteria such as performances at training camps, previous meets and trials, together with evaluations of physical health and mental preparedness, this was not the case. It appeared from this study that the only determining factors ever used in the women's program for team selection were the results of trial competitions. As such, the selection of teams has been left in the hands of the judges. The paradox was that the coaches, who viewed themselves as the

experts, eagerly deferred the ultimate evaluation of their athletes to the judges. They readily acknowledged that they do so to avoid the criticism of parents whose youngster's fail to make the team. They claimed that the objectivity of the judges ensured impartial decisions but, paradoxically, they condemned the judges for favoring athletes from their own club. Coaches will complain bitterly about their athletes failing to make a team due to judges' biases, but are unwilling to take more control of the selection process. They would rather have the wrong athletes chosen 'objectively' than face the potential criticism arising from a partially subjective process. In essence then the judges acquire some of their influence more by def[illegible]y recognized element of authority or expertise. This is not to suggest that the judges are not quite skilled in their capacity as judges, only that the process allows very little room for subjective analysis of the athletes' capabilities. In fact, when it is reduced to the lowest common denominator the environmental condition that the judges are able to manage is the wrath of disgruntled parents. Coaches, who have to deal with parents on a daily basis candidly admit that they are not willing, as one coach indicated, "to put my neck, and perhaps my job, on the line just to select a team".

The second paradox was that judges were seen to influence an athletes' results. A comment that the author heard on several occasions was that "we've got to make sure that our judges are on-side; they've got to be part of the Alberta team". In other words, the expectation exists that judges will actually favor certain athletes. Such a premise undermines the concept of impartiality and suggests that the judges garner some of their influence through improprietary means. Whether or not this is the case, they are seen to make an important contribution toward the success of Alberta athletes.

The third group, the A.G.F.'s office staff, appeared to be an influential coalition within the Federation. Even in the past, when the office staff appears to have been held in virtual contempt by almost every key member of the Federation, the staff members had a significant impact upon decisions and activities. The office staff have always been viewed as the individuals who managed the vital relationships with funding agencies and who responded to the daily demands of the Federation's clients (clubs, coaches and judges). However, just what environmental conditions were being managed by the staff of earlier years is difficult to determine since none of the interview subjects seemed to view them as being particularly knowledgeable or effective. The one comment that arose frequently was that the volunteers simply didn't have the time to commit to the preparation of submissions but that it was essential to meet the funding agencies' deadlines. In that respect the office staff was, perhaps, simply managing the temporal constraints imposed by those agencies. It was quite evident, however, that recent changes in the staff situation have been very positive. The apparent reason for this was that the members perceived that the office was performing more functions in a more effective manner than in the past; which by all indications, was quite accurate. Extensive planning and budgeting processes were instituted that involve significant input from the volunteer directors. Procedural and policy issues were reported upon by the staff with decisions being made by the directors on a timely basis. Information received by the office was quickly being disseminated to the relevant individuals. Communication with member clubs occurred frequently and information provided by the A.G.F. was accurate and current.

It is quite obvious, though, that the more functions the staff performed the more influence they had on the organization as a whole. As the scope and

magnitude of those duties increased the volunteer officers became more and more removed and less familiar with the daily functions and thereby more dependent upon the office staff. The President's actions were particularly indicative of this [illegible] on staff. Most formal correspondence from funding agencies was mail[illegible]ctly to the President. However, the President seldom took action on the information himself; he merely passed it on to the appropriate staff member for them to act upon accordingly. This phenomenon [illegible] a major potential drawback in that staff members could quite conceivab[illegible]her control over the vast majority of the organization's activities if they so desired and if a relatively weak Board of Directors was elected at some point in the future.

What is important to recognize is that, in terms of resource dependence, the improvements in the A.G.F.'s internal operations were precipitated by external factors. The legitimate planning and budgeting processes were being demanded by funding agencies, and better policies, procedures and communications were being demanded by the general membership. Consequently, the influence enjoyed by the office staff arose from their ability to cope with external conditions.

Indeed, as the A.G.F. continues to grow the influence of the office personnel will increase as well. If the importance of producing competitive athletes remains high or even increases so too will the ability of elite coaches and judges to affect A.G.F. activities. As Jacobs (1974) outlined:

> ...power within organizations is based on role incumbents' ability to control dependencies which the organization finds most problematic. For example, Perrow found that if a hospital experienced its greatest difficulty acquiring capital, its board of directors would dominate. If, on the other hand, the major problem was technological, professions specializing in knowledge would

> control the organization, and finally, if the organization had difficulty coordinating its various complex parts, administrators would monopolize power (p. 49).

In summary, it has been suggested that three coalitions were operating within the A.G.F. that were able to influence decisions regarding the allocation of resources and the activities of the organization. There was also evidence within the A.G.F. to suggest that the influence of the coalitions arose from their ability to cope with specific environmental conditions. The coaches and judges through the development of elite athletes, and the office staff through their intimate knowledge of the A.G.F.'s activities and their ability to satisfy the criteria and demands imposed upon the A.G.F. by other organizations and the membership. The question that needs to be addressed now is whether or not those environmental conditions really were key issues for the A.G.F. Was the enacted environment an accurate representation of the actual environment?

C. INTERPRETATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

One of the fundamental principles of the resource dependence model is that decisions and actions taken by an organization are precipitated by the enacted environment which may or may not be an accurate reflection of the real environment. The inherent danger for an organization lies in the fact that the inaccurate interpretation of environmental conditions may jeopardize the ability to implement effective strategies for coping with the environment. As Ranson et al.(1980) have indicated, this presents a difficult paradox for organizations in that they are externally controlled but the external conditions are internally generated (enacted).

This paradox gives rise to two primary issues that must be considered when analyzing a specific organization from a resource dependence perspective. First, it is important to establish what characteristics and components the members of the organization perceive the environment to consist of and whether or not there is a consensus among the members with respect to the components of the environment. Second, and of equal importance, is to determine what the members perceive the nature of each environmental relationship to be. Of course, the underlying concern is just how accurate the enacted environment actually is.

1. The Actual Environment

In order to arrive at any valid conclusions it was necessary to determine, as accurately as possible, what the A.G.F.'s environmental conditions actually were thereby providing criteria with which to compare the responses of the interview subjects. It was the researcher's familiarity with the A.G.F. that lead to the identification of the numerous other organizations and agencies with which the A.G.F. interacted and, further, to the assessment of the nature and, consequently, the essentiality of each relationship. This assessment of the environment provided a basis for evaluating the perceptions of the interviewees. There remains the possibility that the researcher's own enacted environment might not be entirely accurate and the data must be interpreted with this limitation in mind. The assessment has been based upon a cumulative analysis of the interviewees' responses combined with the examination of documents and financial data, and the author's intimate knowledge of the Federation's activities. At the time of writing the researcher had spent more than a year in the employ of the A.G.F. during which time he had been involved

with every aspect of its operations. In addition the researcher had worked with numerous other sport associations on a consulting basis. As such, the perceptions presented are not based upon the observation of a single organization. Rather they are reflective of observations of many groups and organizations over an extended period of several years. Therefore, it seems safe to assume that even if this assessment is not entirely accurate it is more accurate than that provided through a single individual member's perceptions.

The Alberta Gymnastics Federation had a diverse and complex set of inter-organizational relationships. The Federation had regular dealings with approximately twenty organizations and periodic dealings with another ten or fifteen. In addition there were more than one hundred and thirty clubs that comprised the membership of the A.G.F. The organizations with which the A.G.F. dealt regularly included the government funding agencies (Alberta Recreation and Parks and The Alberta Sport Council), the Canadian Gymnastics Federation, other provincial gymnastics federations and several companies with which the A.G.F. does business. The more sporadic relationships included, among others, universities and colleges, various municipalities and other government agencies such as Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the Alberta Gaming Commission and the Alberta Department of Education. The types of relationships varied dramatically and virtually every level of interdependence was represented. In an effort to come to terms with the nature of each relationship, each was assessed based on the frequency, criticality and the magnitude of the interactions from the A.G.F.'s perspective. The results, indicated in Table 1, were obtained by reviewing the following:

ORGANIZATION/AGENCY	FREQUENCY	CRITICALITY	MAGNITUDE	LEVEL OF INTERDEPENDENCE
Alberta Sport Council	High	Moderate	High	High
Alberta Gaming Commission	High	High	High	High
Canadian Gymnastics Fed.	High	Moderate	High	High
A.G.F. Member Clubs	High	High	High	High
Dept. of Recreation & Parks Government of Alberta	High	Moderate	High	High
Universities and Colleges	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Gymnastics Associations from other Provinces	Low	Low	Low	Low
Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs	Low	Low	Low	Low
Independent Companies/ Suppliers	Low	Low	Low	Low
Regional & Municipal Recreatio Boards/Councils	Low	Low	Low	Low
Media Organizations	Low	Low	Low	Low
Other Alberta Sport Assoc.'s	Low	Low	Low	Low
Coaching Assoc. of Canada	Low	Low	Low	Low
Alberta Dept. of Education	Low	Low	Low	Low

TABLE 1: Assessment of the Actual Nature of Each of the A.G.F.'s Interorganizational Relationships

i. Frequency

- The number of interactions during a one year period including letters, phone calls, reports and meetings.

ii. Criticality

- Whether or not a relationship involved an exchange of resources.
- If so, were the resources acquired by the A.G.F. available from other sources (i.e., substitutability).

iii. Magnitude

- If indeed, resources were exchanged how large a portion of A.G.F. total resource base did it account for. For example, in the case of financial contributions, how big a percentage of A.G.F.'s budget did it comprise.

It should be noted that the author did not evaluate this data in terms of absolute values but rather assessed it in a comparative manner.

The organizations upon which the A.G.F. was asymmetrically dependent included the Alberta Sport Council (ASC) and the Alberta Gaming Commission. Both organizations represented significant souces of funding for the Federation. In return for their support the A.G.F. offered very little to either of these organizations other than the opportunity to fulfill each of their mandates. Thus, the A.G.F. was quite distinctly dependent upon the Alberta Sport Council and, in an indirect sense, was dependent upon the Alberta Gaming Commission. Although the ASC would suggest that they also provide other non-fiscal resources, the claim does not hold up under scrutiny. For example, the ASC maintains that it provides marketing support for amateur sport. But, in reality, the ASC markets only the ASC and even then the financial return has yet to

cover the costs of their 'Marketing Division'. The Alberta Gaming Commission, on the other hand, did not acutally provide the A.G.F. with funding. Rather, it provided the A.G.F. with approval to carry out fund raising activities which are based upon gambling or gaming. In this respect the Alberta Gaming Commission provided what Aldrich (1976) referred to as institutionalized legitimacy.

The only organization that appeard to be asymmetrically dependent upon the A.G.F. (and other Provincial Gymnastics Federations) was the Canadian Gymnastics Federation (C.G.F.). The A.G.F. provided money and human resources to the C.G.F. In exchange the C.G.F. offered a variety of programs and services. In reality virtually all of those programs and services could be provided by other agencies or by the A.G.F. itself. The one benefit that the C.G.F. offered the A.G.F. was the essential element of legitimacy. Because the C.G.F. recognized only one gymnastics organization in each province, the A.G.F. automatically assumed a position of authority and control. The legitimacy that the C.G.F. ascribed to the A.G.F. differs from that which the Gaming Commission provides in that it is functionally specific. That is, the C.G.F. recognized the A.G.F. as the sole agency for the provision of gymnastics programs and services in Alberta, while the Gaming Commission provided approval to any organization that operated on a non-profit basis. The legitimacy obtained from the C.G.F. was central to the A.G.F.'s long term stability. Were the C.G.F. to recognize other organizations within the province the A.G.F.'s control would have been severely eroded and would have ultimately brought about the demise of the A.G.F.

Legitimacy is regarded as a resource within the resource dependence model in that it is a conferred status and is, therefore, controlled by those outside the organization. Its importance is attributed to the fact that:

> ... organizations are only components of a larger social system and depend upon that system's support for their continued existence, organizational goals and activities must be legitimate or of worth to that larger social system (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978: 193).

Indeed the A.G.F. required the support of both the Gaming Commission (in order to access or realize the funds from casinos, raffles and other controlled games of chance) and the C.G.F. (for the absolute authority it provided with respect to gymnastics within the Province).

The Alberta Recreation and Parks Department also provided legitimation to the A.G.F. and the consequences of losing the Department's support, though remote, would have been severely detrimental to the A.G.F. To begin with, prevailing conditions provided what Benson (1978) described as "interorganizational equilibrium" which arises from domain and ideological consensus, positive evaluations, and work coordination between organizations. A loss of support from either the C.G.F. or the Department would have reflected a negative shift in one or more of those conditions and in itself would have created turmoil for the A.G.F. Moreover, the control afforded to the A.G.F. by the Department and the C.G.F. provided the A.G.F. with its strong bargaining position relative to other agencies. Removal of that legitimacy would have weaked the A.G.F.'s bargaining position and would thereby have subjected it to more turbulent environmental conditions. Other organizations might have begun to challenge the A.G.F.'s authority, member clubs may have choosen to disassociate themselves and the public may have become less supportive. In

addition, Alberta Recreation and Parks also provided the A.G.F. with a substantial financial contribution which the Federation would have been hard put to replace if it was to be withdrawn.

On the surface, then, the A.G.F. appeared to be highly dependent upon the Department. However, there was evidence to suggest that the relationship was actually quite balanced. When one considers that there were approximately 20,000 participants involved in programs through A.G.F. affiliated cl[illegible]ment's contribution amounts to less than two dollars per capita. [illegible].F. has provided Alberta Recreation and Parks with extensive [illegible]overnment initiatives. In 1978, 1986 and 1987, for [illegible] co-ordinated coaching exchange programs that have [illegible] Provincial Governments trade agreements with Japan and [illegible]doing so the Department was able to utilize an established network of knowledgeable individuals thereby minimizing their own costs for those projects. Needless to say, the A.G.F. accrued some benefit from such involvement but the value was very limited relative to the A.G.F.'s commitment. Similarly, the A.G.F. selected and trained athletes to represent the Province at events such as the Canada and Western Canada Games. Again, the A.G.F. derived a measure of benefit but, overall, the various Games were more of a hindrance than they were of value. They did not coincide with regular training schedules and they generally represented a relatively low level of competition. Commenting on the most recent Canada Games one of the A.G.F.'s prominent coaches stated candidly that "The (Canada) Games are a total waste of the A.G.F.'s (expletive deleted) time".

The A.G.F., then, provided a valuable delivery mechanism which enabled the Department to fulfill its mandate of providing recreational opportunities for the people of Alberta. In addition, the Department often imposed politically motivated projects upon the A.G.F. which the Federation was able to carry out on behalf of the Department. In this respect the Alberta Recreation and Parks Department received tremendous benefit in return for their investment.

The remainder of the A.G.F.'s organizational relationships appeared to be fairly symmetrical (balanced) interdependencies. The relationship between the A.G.F. and its member clubs, while it varied from club to club, was generally quite balanced. The A.G.F. provided a variety of benefits to the clubs including leadership development, competitive opportunities, achievement award programs, fund raising opportunities, liability insurance and many others. In return the clubs contributed money, human resources and the use of facilities for A.G.F. events. Perhaps the most important element in the relationship between the A.G.F. and the clubs was that of service delivery. The A.G.F.'s primary function was to provide its member clubs with a variety of operational and technical services. The clubs were unquestionably the A.G.F.'s 'client group'.

The many other organizations with which the A.G.F. interacted tended to involve peripheral activities for both organizations. For example, the Federation dealt regularly with some municipalities in arranging for coaching clinics. While such activities were desirable for both organizations, neither the A.G.F. nor the municipality were dependent on that interaction. As such, each situation was generally balanced in terms of the interdependence.

Thus, it can be stated with reasonable assurance that the A.G.F. had intense interdependent relationships with five types of organizations. Three of those relationships were distinctly asymmetrical with the Federation maintaining a dependent position in two circumstances (Alberta Sport Council and Alberta Gaming Commission) and a benefactor position in the other (C.G.F.). The other two relationships (Alberta Recreation and Parks and the A.G.F. member clubs) were essentially symmetrical. The many other relationships tended to be peripheral to the function and survival of both the A.G.F. and the other organizations.

The foregoing description of the environmental conditions that actually confronted the A.G.F. represents the author's best effort to assess the environment utilizing several sources of information. However, what was important to the A.G.F.'s operations was the enacted environment that arose from the composite perceptions of the Federation's central members. It is important to remember that perceptions vary between individuals depending upon their personal experiences, values and interests. Furthermore, the enacted environments of each coalition influenced the A.G.F.'s enacted environment. It is worthy to note that if Table 1 were to be re-created for each of the coalitions' enacted environments the resulting tables would likely vary in several respects from Table 1 itself.

2. The Enacted Environment

As suggested earlier there are two levels involved in the interpretation of environmental conditions; the composition of the environment and the nature of each relationship within the environment. To determine the enacted environment (i.e., what the environment was perceived to consist of) the

interview subjects were asked questions relating to three specific areas: (1) the Federation's mandate, goals and objectives; (2) the Federation's client group; and (3) the other organizations or agencies with which the A.G.F. interacted. Comparing the responses of interview subjects to the author's evaluation of environmental conditions indicated that only about one-half of the Federation's central members had accurate perceptions of what the environment actually consisted of. The only area in which the subjects displayed an accurate perception was with respect to the mandate, goals and objectives. The responses to those questions were consistently that the mandate was to "promote the development of the sport at all levels". The goals and objectives included, almost unanimously, the fostering of mass participation and the training of competitive athletes. Those statements were very much in line with the purpose and objectives of the Federation as stated in its Constitution.

The responses to the other two areas in question were far from being accurate. There was clearly a prevailing perception that the A.G.F.'s primary client group consisted of the 'individual participant', which was not the case. The A.G.F. did not provide services to the 20,000 gymnasts, coaches and judges throughout the province. Only in a few special circumstances such as sending provincial teams to competitions and offering leadership clinics did the A.G.F. deal directly with individuals. For the most part, the A.G.F.'s clients were its member clubs. It was the clubs who, in turn, provided services to the individuals. Yet even those interview subjects who recognized the clubs as recipients of A.G.F. services viewed them merely as secondary clients. This presented a dual problem for the Federation. First, since the central members did not acknowledge the client relationship with the clubs they were unlikely to be dedicating sufficient resources to maintain a positive relationship. Second,

the belief that the primary client group consisted of the individual participants could potentially have led to total disfunctionalism; it would not be possible for a provincial sport organization to directly serve thousands of individuals who were widely dispersed throughout the province and who possessed a diverse number of unique needs. Any dedicated effort to do so would have proven disastrous.

This perceptual problem likely arose from the fact that most of the people involved had come to the A.G.F. through clubs whose client groups were the individual gymnasts. In fact, many of the central members were either coaches, club executives or parents who actually dealt with the athletes on a daily basis. Consequently they had difficulty in adjusting their focus to the broader provincial perspective. As Benson (1978) suggests, the enacted environment is affected not only by the values and interests of the organizational members but also by their previous personal experiences.

While the prevailing perception regarding the A.G.F.'s client group was not accurate it was, perhaps, the least problematic of two alternatives. If the coalitions of high performance coaches and/or the women's judges were to have had greater influence it is quite likely their attitudes and perceptions would have resulted in a shift in the A.G.F.'s emphasis. Those two coalitions, particularly the coaches, clearly viewed the elite athlete as the Federation's primary focus. This is not to say that the high performance coaches did not recognize the importance of the broad base of recreational gymnasts. However, the importance they placed in recreational programs rested not in their intrinsic value but in the revenue that they generated which supported the competitive programs. In this respect it was reasonable to presume that

increased influence on the part of the high performance coaches and women's judges would have resulted in a reduction in services to recreational clubs. Although such a shift would not be expressed overtly, it would undoubtedly be reflected in the distribution of resources with recreational clubs and programs receiving a smaller proportion.

Conversely, a greater influence on the part of the A.G.F.'s office staff would likely have resulted in a reduction of the resources provided to the competitive programs. In fact, an example of this took place recently when the two professional staff members convinced the Board of Directors to have competitive athletes pay for their own meal expenses on trips to Western Canadian and National Championships. This was a significant departure from previous years when all expenses were paid by the A.G.F. The result was a saving of almost $6,000. As the A.G.F. was in a deficit budget situation at that point it can not be suggested that the money was then available for any other specific program. But, it is significant that the competitive program was targeted for the cutback rather than any of the A.G.F.'s recreational components.

More perceptual difficulties were evidenced by the inability of most of the subjects to identify other organizations with which the A.G.F. interacted. When asked to do so, only four of the subjects were able to identify five or more organizations (refer to Figure 2). Only half of the subjects identified all three organizations that the A.G.F. dealt with most frequently (the Alberta Sport Council; the C.G.F.; and Alberta Recreation and Parks). If nothing else, those three agencies were the most prominent that the A.G.F. interacted with, yet half of the subjects were unable to identify them.

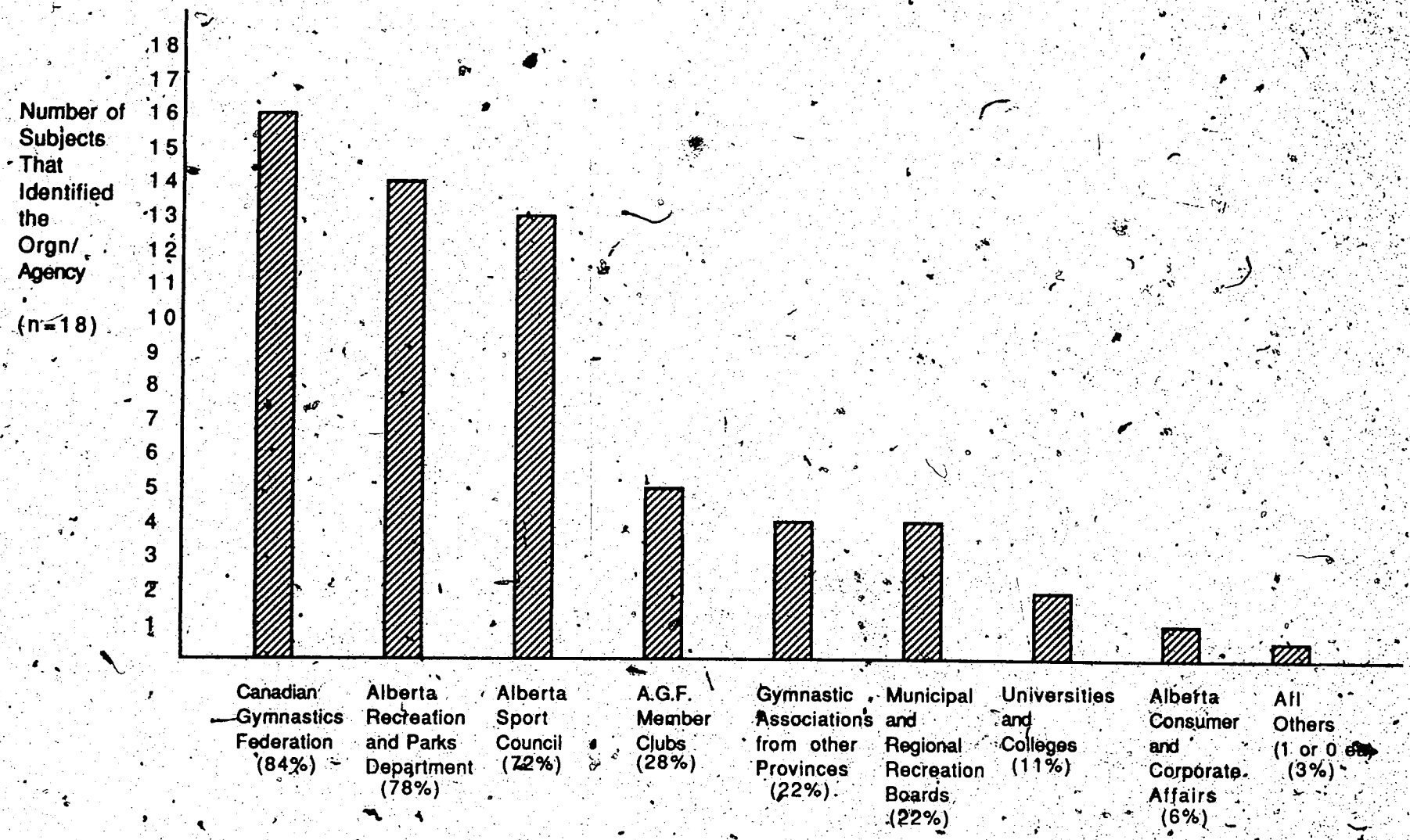

Figure 2: Number of Interview Subjects That Identified Each Organization With Which the A.G.F. Interacts

The most common perceptual error in this regard appeared to be that the Alberta Sport Council and the Alberta Recreation and Parks Department were frequently described as a single entity (The Government). This was readily explained by the fact that the Alberta Sport Council is a Crown Corporation and that the two agencies worked closely together in many respects. Nevertheless, they were distinct and autonomous organizations that dealt with the A.G.F. independently.

Only five of the subjects named member clubs as among those organizations with which the A.G.F. interacted. This was, perhaps, reflective of the general failure to recognize the clubs as the client group. However, it may also be attributable to a difficulty that people had in distinguishing the A.G.F. from the member clubs. In a philosophical sense, as one person put it "the member clubs are the A.G.F.". But in a functional respect that was not the case; the A.G.F. was distinct from its clubs.

All but one of the subjects failed to identify the Alberta Gaming Commission as an interacting agency. This was likely due to the fact that the central members seldom, if ever, actually dealt with the Commission. Communication between the Federation and the Commission was almost exclusively handled by the office staff so the members were likely to be unaware of the extent of the interaction.

The one agency that faired well in terms of being identified was the C.G.F. All but two of the subjects named the C.G.F. among their list of organizations that the A.G.F. dealt with. This relatively high level of recognition

can likely be attributed to two factors. First, the C.G.F. was seen as being the "parent" organization and the actions of the C.G.F. had a direct impact upon both the technical and administrative components of the sport. Second, the C.G.F. was highly visible in that its logo was on manuals, booklets, achievement badges and a host of other items that were seen daily by individuals involved in gymnastics.

Overall, however, the central members' interpretaion of the A.G.F.'s environmental composition was quite weak. The lack of understanding occurred on two levels: that of incompleteness and that of inaccuracy. The fact that most subjects could not identify more than four organizations indicated that they are not familiar with many of the activities with which the A.G.F. was involved. Inaccurate assessments such as the inability to distinguish between the Alberta Sport Council and the Department of Recreation and Parks suggestd that there was a lack of understanding of the role that each agency played vis a vis the A.G.F. The essential problem that this presented was that the Federation could not possibly implement proactive strategies to manage the environment if there is a significantly inaccurate enacted environment. This was, in fact, confirmed in the subsequent section dealing with coping strategies.

As was the case with the interpretations of the A.G.F.'s client group, the perceptions held by the individual coalitions as to which organizations were contiguous to the A.G.F. varied from both the composite perceptions of the central members and the actual conditions. Again the high performance coaches provided the most graphic illustrations of the discrepancies between enacted environments.

The focus of the coaches' interest was, quite naturally, on the technical aspects of the sport. Since their interpretation of what constitutes the A.G.F.'s environment was predicated on their own experiences they tended to be most familiar with those organizations that are technically oriented. As such they viewed the C.G.F. and gymnastics associations in other provinces as being vital to the A.G.F.'s operations. While this perception was accurate in reference to the high performance element of the A.G.F.'s programs, it was not accurate relative to the balance of the Federation's activities.

It is also important to note that perceptions are affected by individuals' experiences outside the organization (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). A good example arose from the coaches' work at their own clubs. One of the primary duties of the coaches within their clubs involved the procurement of gymnastics equipment. In that respect the coaches interacted regularly with equipment manufacturers. This interaction at the club level was frequently expressed as constituting a relationship between the A.G.F. and the manufacturer. However, the A.G.F. itself did not purchase equipment and the Federation's efforts to establish other types of relationships such as sponsorships and advertising contracts were not successful. The manufacturers clearly did not view the A.G.F. as a client and therefore, focused their attention on the clubs. Nevertheless, the high performance coaches frequently indicated a need for the A.G.F. to foster positive relationships with manufacturers. This need, however, did not arise from the A.G.F. itself but rather from the clubs.

This, again, raises the issue of what defines the A.G.F. and where the organizational boundaries were established. In a functional sense the interaction with equipment manufacturers occurred outside the A.G.F. The club

coaches, however, indicated that a formalized relationship between the A.G.F. and a manufacturer could lead to benefits at the club level. Unfortunately, the manufacturers did not perceive there to be any advantage for them to enter into such an arrangement. In that instance the clubs viewed themselves as 'being the A.G.F.' and wanted the A.G.F. to act on their behalf. The manufacturers, on the other hand, did not recognize that relationship and prefer to deal with clubs individually.

Perceptual differences such as this were evident in several other instances. Tables 2, 3, and 4 are replications of Table 1 with specific reference to each of the A.G.F.'s coalitions. Comparing the tables reveals the perceptual differences that exist between the coalitions and helps to illustrate the areas that may have given rise to opposing attitudes. It can be seen that the high performance coaches and the women's judges held reasonably similar interpretations but that they were both quite different from those of the office staff.

For example, both the coaches' and the judges' perceptions of the A.G.F.'s interaction with the Alberta Gaming Commission would suggested that the Federation had very little involvement with that agency. Conversely, the office staff's perception indicated a very high degree of interaction. The important implication of this observation is either that one of the interpretations was totally inaccurate or both perceptions were partially inaccurate. Similarly, the coaches' and judges' perceptions of the relationship with the Alberta Recreation and Parks Department differed from that held by the office staff. Again the concern must be raised as to the organization's effectiveness when

ORGANIZATION/AGENCY	FREQUENCY	CRITICALITY	MAGNITUDE	LEVEL OF INTERDEPENDENCE
Alberta Sport Council	High	High	High	High
Alberta Gaming Commission	Low	Low	Low	Low
Canadian Gymnastics Fed.	High	High	High	High
A.G.F. Member Clubs	High	Low	Low	Low
Dept. of Recreation & Parks. Government of Alberta	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Universities and Colleges	Low	Low	Low	Low
Gymnastics Associations from other Provinces	High	High	High	High
Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs	Low	Low	Low	Low
Independent Companies/ Suppliers	Low	Low	Low	Low
Regional & Municipal Recreation Boards/Councils	Low	Low	Low	Low
Media Organizations	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Other Alberta Sport Assoc.'s	Low	Low	Low	Low
Coaching Assoc. of Canada	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Alberta Dept. of Education	Low	Low	Low	Low

TABLE 2: The Perceived Nature of the A.G.F.'s Interorganizational Relationships as Interpreted by the Coalition of High Performance Coaches.

ORGANIZATION/AGENCY	FREQUENCY	CRITICALITY	MAGNITUDE	LEVEL OF INTERDEPENDENCE
Alberta Sport Council	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Alberta Gaming Commission	Low	Low	Low	Low
Canadian Gymnastics Fed.	High	High	High	High
A.G.F. Member Clubs	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Dept. of Recreation & Parks Government of Alberta	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Universities and Colleges	Low	Low	Low	Low
Gymnastics Associations from other Provinces	High	High	High	High
Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs	Low	Low	Low	Low
Independent Companies/ Suppliers	Low	Low	Low	Low
Regional & Municipal Recreation Boards/Councils	Low	Low	Low	Low
Media Organizations	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Other Alberta Sport Assoc.'s	Low	Low	Low	Low
Coaching Assoc. of Canada	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Alberta Dept. of Education	Low	Low	Low	Low

TABLE 3: The Perceived Nature of the A.G.F.'s Interorganizational Relationships as Interpreted by the Coalition of Judges.

ORGANIZATION/AGENCY	FREQUENCY	CRITICALITY	MAGNITUDE	LEVEL OF INTERDEPENDENCE
Alberta Sport Council	High	Moderate	High	High
Alberta Gaming Commission	High	High	High	High
Canadian Gymnastics Fed.	High	Moderate	High	High
A.G.F. Member Clubs	High	High	High	High
Dept. of Recreation & Parks Goverment of Alberta	High	High	High	High
Universities and Colleges	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Gymnastics Associations from other Provinces	Low	Low	Low	Low
Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs	Low	Low	Low	Low
Independent Companies/ Suppliers	Low	Low	Low	Low
Regional & Municipal Recreation Boards/Councils	Low	Low	Low	Low
Media Organizations	Low	Low	Low	Low
Other Alberta Sport Assoc.'s	Low	Low	Low	Low
Coaching Assoc. of Canada	Low	Low	Low	Low
Alberta Dept. of Education	Low	Low	Low	Low

TABLE 4: The Perceived Nature of the A.G.F.'s Interorganizational Relationships as Interpreted by the Coalition of Office Staff.

important elements of its central membership hold inaccurate perceptions of environmental conditions.

The second level of environmental interpretation, the perception of the nature of each relationship, appeared to be somewhat more accurate, although it was certainly far from being a true picture. Each interview subject was asked questions devised to address their perceptions of the A.G.F.'s environmental conditions (i.e. the essentiality and uncertainty inherent in the environment). Among other questions they were asked what they thought was exchanged between the A.G.F. and each of the other organizations; which organization they believed benefitted the most in each relationship; whether or not a significant change was likely to occur in any of the relationships, and; how they thought the A.G.F. would be affected by any significant change in each relationship. In terms of the criticality of each relationship, most subjects acknowledged the importance of Alberta Recreation and Parks, the Sport Council and the Canadian Gymnastics Federation. Interestingly, several of those individuals who had failed earlier to distinguish between Recreation and Parks and the Sport Council seemed to realize that there was at least some difference between them as far as the acquisition of funding was concerned. Also on the positive side, there was an accurate awareness of the financial contributions provided by both the Sport Council and Recreation and Parks. Further, very few subjects could pinpoint tangible benefits that the A.G.F. received from the Canadian Gymnastics Federation while several (11 of the 16 that identified the C.G.F. initially) stated emphatically that the A.G.F. received no benefit from the C.G.F. On the negative side, only four of the interviewees recognized the credibility and authority that those three agencies ascribe to the A.G.F. simply through their exclusive recognition of the Federation.

When asked what the A.G.F. provided to organizations such as Recreation and Parks and the Alberta Sport Council in return for their contributions, the first response was often a rather bewildered "I never really thought of it that way; but now that you mention it...". It was quite obvious that most of the subjects had never really considered that the A.G.F. actually provided those agencies with some benefit. Having been prompted in that respect the subjects inevitably indicated that the A.G.F. represented a service delivery system that could not be provided by those agencies through any other feasible means. In fact, when a subsequent question was posed with respect to which agency benefits the most in each bilateral relationship there was a very strong consensus among the subjects. Twelve of the fourteen subjects that initially identified Alberta Recreation and Parks agreed that the Department was getting far more than its money's worth from the A.G.F. The long term members, in particular, were able to cite numerous examples of projects and programs being imposed upon the A.G.F. such as a fitness program that comprised part of the Provinces 75th anniversary celebrations; participation in a variety of 'Games' events; and, several sport/culture/trade exchanges. Indeed, this was the one area where the central members appeared to have an accurate interpretation. Perhaps the personal contributions that several of the central members made gave them some insight into the value of the work that the A.G.F. performed on behalf of the Department.

Virtually all the subjects indicated that the A.G.F. was definitely benefitting the most in its relationship with the Alberta Sport Council. There was a clear recognition of the financial contribution that the Sport Council made and people were well aware that the loss of that revenue would have had a

significant impact upon the Federation. If anything, the subjects' responses indicated that they placed a little too much importance on the Alberta Sport Council as a funding source. They failed to realize that the Alberta Sport Council's contribution was oriented to the enrichment of programs. That is, it does not fund the basic operational components to any great degree and therefore the removal of the Alberta Sport Council support would not have substantially affected the A.G.F.'s primary activities.

The nature of the relationship between the A.G.F. and the Alberta Sport Council offered an excellent illustration of the different perspectives from which coalitions view the same environmental component and thereby formulate different perceptions. The A.G.F.'s office staff recognized the fact that the loss of the Sport Council's funding would not seriously affect the A.G.F.'s primary operation. In fact, there was a genuine concern expressed that the Sport Council's funding often hampered the provision of the basic services and programs. While the Sport Council provided money for the actual programs there was no provision for the administrative support of the programs. Consequently, every new program for which money was acquired resulted in additional workload for existing staff. Increased work on enrichment programs resulted in less time being available to perform the functions associated with the primary operations.

In response to this dilemna the staff had taken two specific types of action. First, they had endeavored to create an awareness of the situation within the A.G.F.: that the availability of money should not be the only criteria for operating a program. In this sense they were clearly attempting to mold the A.G.F.'s enacted environment. Second, they had lobbied the Alberta Sport

Council to change its policy regarding the provision of funds for administrative support.

In contrast to the staff, the high performance coaches and the judges viewed the Sport Council grant programs as the means by which to achieve many of their objectives. They were well aware that there were often thousands of dollars available, particularly for programs in the high performance area. Since they were not involved in the daily operation of the A.G.F. office they saw no barriers to applying for the money and implementing new programs.

The conflicting perceptions with respect to the Sport Council's funding resulted in a degree of polarization among the A.G.F.'s central members. One line of reasoning tended to support the acquisition of grant money regardless of the implications that were involved; that it was irresponsible to let funding opportunities go unsolicited. Conversely, there was a pragmatic understanding that money should be applied for only if the programs were consistent with the A.G.F.'s established priorities and if there were sufficient human resources to conduct the programs without sacrificing other A.G.F. commitments. When specific situations arose the A.G.F. staff and the high performance coaches frequently vied for the support of the central members, each attempting to achieve what they perceived as being the best for the A.G.F.

With respect to the level of uncertainty that existed in each relationship the subjects again appeared to have an accurate perception. In fact, not one subject indicated that any of the important interorganizational relationships could be considered unstable and only two subjects suggested that any of the relationships were anything less than co-operative.

In general, then, the central members appeared to possess a reasonably accurate perception of the nature of the interorganizational relationships. What was evident though was the unnecessarily subservient attitude that prevailed with regard to Alberta Recreation and Parks in particular. The members seemed to be unaware that they enjoyed a relatively strong bargaining position relative to the Department and they need not have felt that they must fulfill every request or demand that emanated from the Department. The perception seemed to be that the Federation was simply being given financial support and was providing nothing in return. As such the A.G.F. may not, in the past, have taken advantage of the somewhat stronger position that it enjoyed in terms of dealing with Alberta Recreation and Parks.

In summarizing this section, it appeared that a fairly even split existed between individuals that possessed moderately accurate perceptions of the A.G.F.'s environmental conditions and those who had seriously distorted perceptions. A review of the interview data clearly indicated that the majority of accurate responses were consistently provided by the same sub-set of interview subjects and that the remaining subjects seldom provided accurate responses. What is interesting is to relate the enacted environment back to the coalitions that were identified. Evidence has been provided that supports the notion of coalitions as an important factor in the formulation of the organization's enacted environment and that individual coalitions often struggle to establish a dominant position for their perspective within the organization. The impact of the coaches of high performance athletes was evidenced by the overemphasis that was placed on meeting the demands of Alberta Recreation and Parks and the Alberta Sport Council. A frequent comment from the central members was that

"the A.G.F. had better start producing athletes or the 'Government' will quit funding us". In fact, there had never been any indication from either the Department or the Sport Council that funding was in any way contingent on the production of athletes. Neither did the interviews that were conducted with representatives of those agencies reveal any requirement that funding might be tied to athlete performance. It appeared, then, that the elite coaches and judges had been quite successful in affecting the enacted environment. The implication, according to resource dependence theory is that the Federation's effectiveness in managing the environment would be hampered by those people who had formulated inaccurate perceptions of the environment. The coping strategies employed by the A.G.F. should have reflected the enacted environment. If, in fact, this was the case it should be possible to identify specific managerial strategies and linked them to the perceptions of environmental conditions. Those linkages will be expanded upon in Section E of this chapter.

D. MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENT

The final principle of the resource dependence model to be addressed in this study was that of environmental management. As indicated in Chapter Two, an organization's dependence upon other organizations for essential resources often necessitates the implementation of coping strategies. The more critical and/or the greater the magnitude of the interaction the more asymmetical a relationship becomes and the more important it is for a dependent organization to implement strategies which will provide a measure of control over their own existence thereby reducing the level of uncertainty. There are

two general categories of coping strategies. One category includes those strategies (such as absorption, cooptation and manipulation) which endeavor to influence the environmental conditions external to the organization. The other strategies include internal adaptations such as executive succession, structural changes and compliance.

In an effort to address these managerial strategies the interview subjects were presented with several problematic situations that the A.G.F. had encountered in the past. The subjects were then asked to explain what was done to resolve the problem and why the particular course of action was chosen. A subsequent set of questions presented hypothetical situations that could potentially arise in the future. The subjects were asked what type of action the A.G.F. would be likely to take in such situations.

The responses provided by the subjects together with information drawn from A.G.F. records was used to determine how the Federation managed various environmental conditions. An attempt was made to identify examples of each of the four strategy categories and explain why, in terms of resource dependence, specific strategies were employed.

1. Absorption

The use of absorption to control environmental conditions is the most overt and aggressive managerial strategy and is generally employed only when an organization possesses substantial authority and financial resources (Benson, 1978; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). While the A.G.F. enjoyed a high level of authority within its specific sport its authority did not extend beyond very distinct boundaries. Further, the A.G.F. had very limited financial resources. It

was not expected, therefore, that there would be much evidence of absorption strategies being implemented by the A.G.F. and that any such efforts would be restricted to situations within the sport itself.

These assumptions proved to be true. There was no evidence to suggest that the A.G.F. had ever actually employed absorption strategies. However, there was evidence of discussions having taken place with regard to implementing absorption techniques but that a lack of resources had prevented any such action. That is, the elected Directors had, in the past, believed that they possessed adequate authority to engage in absorption strategies but had failed to do so because of financial constraints. The best example, perhaps, was with respect to the incorporation of Rhythmic Gymnastics into the A.G.F. In Alberta there existed an association for Rhythmic Gymnastics that was totally autonomous from the A.G.F. The reasons for this separation were diverse, convoluted and involved several historical issues at both the national and provincial level. Minutes of various A.G.F. meetings over the course of several years indicated that there had been an interest in drawing the Rhythmic Gymnastics Association (R.G.A.) "under the A.G.F. umbrella". The A.G.F. would have benefited in several respects by such a move but, while people continued to express a desire and willingness to undertake an action to amalgamate the R.G.A. into the A.G.F., no action was ever actually taken. It appeared that the lack of initiative was resource related. The absorption of the R.G.A. would have been a difficult and time consuming process and the Federation had not, until relatively recently, possessed the resources to hire professional employees that could undertake such tasks. It appeared quite likely that this issue would be dealt with more aggressively in the future.

Discussion had also taken place on the current issue of liability insurance. The potential crisis that the A.G.F. faced with respect to large increases of insurance premiums had sparked extensive deliberations. One of the solutions that was discussed was the implementation of a self-insurance plan. This concept was ultimately rejected on the grounds that the Directors did not believe it was within the scope of the Federation's mandate to engage in such an undertaking and they also recognized that the A.G.F. lacked the financial means to protect itself adequately. Thus the rationale for not pursuing this approach, in fact, supports the premise that authority and adequate resources are prerequisites for the use of absorption strategies.

2. Cooptation

When complete control of important environmental conditions is not possible organizations frequently attempt to enhance their influence through cooptation. As mentioned in Chapter Two there are several forms of cooptive strategies including, among others, interlocking directorates, joint ventures and normative constraints on members. A number of instances can be identified where cooptive approaches were engaged in by the A.G.F.

There were some very obvious examples of the A.G.F. establishing interlocking directorates. For example, the A.G.F.'s president had, for several years, been the Vice-President of the C.G.F. This ensured that the A.G.F. had a direct link to the Executive Committee at the C.G.F. and could thereby influence their actions and decisions on behalf of the A.G.F. Moreover, the same individual was for several years the president of one of the A.G.F.'s member clubs. Consequently, that club enjoyed the same type of influence within the

A.G.F. that the A.G.F. had within the C.G.F. In fact, that particular situation afforded the club itself a reasonable amount of influence at the C.G.F. level.

There was also evidence of normative constraints being imposed upon members. A good example has been alluded to earlier in this study. The A.G.F. had always made a strong effort to send their judges to major national competitions and endeavored to instill in them a sense of provincial responsibility. The assumption which precipitated this action was that Alberta judges would treat Alberta athletes more favorably than would judges from other provinces. The comment was often heard that it was important to include the judges as part of the team. The coalition of women's judges had utilized this attitude to further their position within the Federation. By enhancing their importance vis a vis the success of high performance athletes they were able to increase the proportion of resources that the A.G.F. allocated to judging in the women's program. In particular the A.G.F. raised the pay for the judges and committed substantially more money to sending developing judges to major competitions.

Examples of joint ventures was also quite evident. One excellent example was the coaching exchange programs that the A.G.F. conducted in cooperation with the Provincial Government. While these projects were often seen as impositions upon the A.G.F. they were also recognized as prime opportunities for the A.G.F. to interact directly with senior government officials. The same was true for events such as Canada, Western Canada and Alberta Games. Other examples of joint ventures included the A.G.F.'s efforts to secure national and regional training centres within the Province. The A.G.F.'s involvement in those projects arose entirely from the interests of the high

performance coaches. The National Tumbling Training Centre was already located in Calgary and an attempt was made to acquire a Men's Regional Centre as well. By having these centres in Alberta, the A.G.F. was able to gain access to some financial resources through the C.G.F. But, most important to the coaches, was the fact that the A.G.F. was able to use the facilities to retain its top athletes and to entice athletes away from other provinces.

3. Manipulation

There are two primary types of manipulative strategies; efforts to change laws or regulations and efforts to achieve social legitimacy. This appeared to be the one area where the A.G.F. was void of examples. There was no evidence uncovered of the A.G.F. attempting to influence legislators in order to alter environmental conditions. In one instance the A.G.F. was asked to join other provincial sport associations in a lobbying effort but essentially ignored the request. Whether the failure to participate was a deliberate decision or not was difficult to determine, but it would appear that the Federation did not place much value on this type of activity. This observation would support Aldrich's (1976) contention that manipulation is not applicable in the social service setting. He indicates that these types of strategies are generally associated with the acquisition of authority and that social service agencies achieve their authority "by virtue of legislative mandates and bureaucratic directives from super-ordinate authority" (1976:446). As such, there is not a perceived need for organizations in the social service sector to employ these types of strategies.

4. Executive Succession

There were some very definite examples of executive succession within the A.G.F. The most obvious use of executive succession involved the recent

bolstering of the office staff. Until 1985 the A.G.F. office had been staffed solely by clerical personnel. During the final few years of that situation (1981 - 1985) the A.G.F. had grown substantially in every respect. The membership had increased from twenty-eight clubs to ninety-four clubs with total participants increasing from 3,800 to over 10,000. The Federation's budget had increased proportionally from about $125,000 to slightly over $300,000. In addition there had been several developments in terms of the funding agencies involved in amateur sport and a concomitant change in funding criteria and systems of accountability. The office staff did not have the training or experience to deal with all of these changes and the work was far too onerous for volunteers to perfrom. In order to cope with the increasing demands the Board of Directors decided to hire a completely new staff that would have the expertise to deal with the Federation's expansion.

It is interesting to note that the process of selecting the new staff involved some intense interaction within the Federation. The coalition of high performance coaches together with some other technically oriented individuals applied tremendous pressure to hire people who possessed strong knowledge and experience in gymnastics. Minutes of several meetings reflected that the Board of Directors struggled with the issue for several months before deciding that a technical background, while desirable, would not be a major criteria in selecting staff. While the coaches coalition was not successful in this instance, the fact that they were able to protract the discussion on the issue provided an indication of the influence they held within the A.G.F.

A second, less apparent, example of executive succession was the election of officers, particularly to the positions of President and Women's

Technical Chairperson. These two positions were undeniably the most influencial positions on the Board of Directors and while the elections for the remaining Board positions were virtually ignored, those two positions were generally hotly contested. The individuals who are elected are seen as being the most capable of dealing with what the majority of the membership believed to be the most serious issues. The democratic system seemed to be effective in the case of the President which was probably because most people have an accurate perception of what roles and responsibilities a President must fulfill. The Presidents over the past several years had been prominent and very capable businessmen. That, however, was far from the case for the Women's Technical Chairperson. During the past few years the issues within the women's program had often divided the membership and resulted in people with opposing attitudes running for election. Unfortunately, the general membership did not have an accurate perception of what conditions the elected individual would have to attend to and as such the quality of the 'decisions' was considered suspect in several instances.

A good illustration arose from an election that took place in 1985. The two individuals who stood for election represented a clear contrast. One was from a large city club with a sound technical background in gymnastics. The other was from a small rural club and indicated that the focus of the women's committee needed to shift away from the elite athlete and concentrate more on the smaller clubs. This met with the approval of the smaller clubs who held the majority of votes. Unfortunately, when that individual assumed office his lack of technical expertise became problematic in the decision-making process. This situation prompted a strong backlash from the high performance coaches who had supported the other candidate. During the subsequent year they took every

opportunity to discredit the elected individual and drew attention to any error that the Committee made or were perceived to have made. Their approach produced substantial conflict within the Federation but ultimately resulted in a constitutional change that prevented the situation from occurring in the future.

5. Structural Change

There was some evidence to suggest that the A.G.F. had altered its structure on at least two occasions. In one instance several years ago the Federation created a zone structure within the Province that provided each geographic region with representation on the Board of Directors. When questioned about the rationale for this move only eleven of the eighteen subjects indicated that they had been involved in that decision. However, ten of the eleven indicated that the structure was adopted in order to establish better communication within the Province. Only one person indicated that, in reality, the A.G.F. had simply been responding to a requirement of the Alberta Recreation and Parks Department. That one subject did qualify his statement, however, by stating that the Board had already been considering a change of that type and that the Department merely provided some additional impetus. It appeared, then, that the implementation of the zone structure represented a combination of both structural change and compliance. The A.G.F. knew in advance that improved communication would be desirable but it was the demand from the Department that actually precipitated the action.

Another example of structural change occurred more recently. In early 1986 the A.G.F. formally established an Executive Committee which was intended to enable the Federation to deal more effectively with all aspects of their operations. The addition of professional employees to cope with the

increasingly complex and demanding environment forced the Directors, in turn, to devise a more streamlined and efficient decision-making process. The employees could not carry out their functions effectively without regular direction from the elected officials. Therefore, the Board of Directors empowered a small group of executive members to meet and make decisions on their behalf.

In summary, then, there were a variety of examples of the A.G.F. implementing strategies to cope with factors within its enacted environment. The use of interlocking directorates to influence the activities of the C.G.F., the imposition of normative constraints on judges and the joint ventures with the Provincial Government all support the resource dependence model. So too does the A.G.F.'s limited use of executive succession. The hiring of professional staff was directly related to increasingly complex and demanding environmental conditions. Even the election of an individual who was ill-equipped to carry out the duties of a technical chairperson clearly supports the important role that the enacted environment plays. The majority of clubs held an inaccurate perception of the role of the committee chairperson and consequently elected a person who's skills did not match the job. There were also several examples that illustrated the role that coalitions often play in determining the strategies to be employed.

The fact that no examples of absorption were actually identified actually supports the resource dependence model as well. The A.G.F. did not possess wide ranging authority and had limited resources. Therefore, any significant evidence of absorption strategies would have been contrary to resource dependence. The A.G.F.'s rejection of absorption as an appropriate strategy for

coping with the insurance situation, in fact, gave credence to the resource dependence perspective. It was rejected for precisely the reasons that would be predicted; lack of authority and resources.

The inability to identify any examples of manipulation was the one area that failed to provide support for resource dependence in the amateur sport setting. However, this should not be construed as a contradiction of the theory. Rather, it would appear that this particular type of coping strategy is simply not relevant to social service agencies.

E. THE LINKAGES BETWEEN COALITIONS, THE ENACTED ENVIRONMENT AND MANAGERIAL STRATEGIES

The previous three sections have examined the central constructs of resource dependence theory as they pertain to the Alberta Gymnastics Federation. In doing so an effort has been made to illustrate the connections between the constructs. However, the examination of each construct in isolation precludes the thorough assessment of the inter-connectedness relative to each coalition. One of the most important elements of the resource dependence model is that the constructs are inter-related and it is essential that the connections between them be addressed. To that end this section will review the findings as they relate to each of the A.G.F.'s dominant coalitions.

1. The High Performance Coaches

The resource dependence model suggests that different groups within an organization hold different beliefs, values and interests and will endeavor to

influence organizational activities by affecting the organization's enacted environment. In this study the A.G.F.'s high performance coaches provided the best example of that process. To begin with the high performance coaches had a very distinct interest within the A.G.F. Their personal success was tied directly to the performance of their competitive athletes, particularly at major competitions such as Western Canadian and National Championships.

Their success as coaches was dependent to a great degree upon resources that were potentially available from or through the A.G.F. Consequently, in order to maximize their access to resources the coaches attempted to influence the A.G.F.'s enacted environment. They did so by elevating the importance of competitive success. For example, the coaches fostered the notion that continued government funding was contingent upon the A.G.F. producing successful athletes. In doing so the coaches accomplished two things. First, they heightened the A.G.F.'s sensitivity toward the importance of government funding and, second, they increased their influence within the A.G.F. by suggesting that they possessed the ability to ensure continued government support. Similarly the coaches emphasis on competitive athletes was seen in the A.G.F.'s relationship with the C.G.F. The importance placed on competitive success inherently increased the need to ensure that the A.G.F. obtained valuable information from the C.G.F. and that decisions and actions of the C.G.F. were in line with the best interests of the A.G.F. The C.G.F., therefore, became another important environmental factor for the A.G.F. to attend to; a factor that the coaches were seen as being most able to deal with.

The influence of the high performance coaches and their emphasis on competitive athletes was, in turn, translated into the management strategies that

the A.G.F. employed. Perhaps the best example was provided by the cooptation that the A.G.F. attempted to establish with the C.G.F. Ongoing efforts were made by the A.G.F. to place people, particularly high performance coaches, on C.G.F. committees. These deliberate moves to establish so-called interlocking-directorates, provided the A.G.F. with the means by which to exert some control over what was perceived to be an important component of its environment.

Similarly, the joint ventures that the A.G.F. engaged in with government agencies were clear attempts to manage the environment. The A.G.F.'s participation in Canada Games and Western Canada Games, however, offered an example of the unintended consequences that inaccurate perceptions of environmental conditions may cause. The coaches, in using the potential of funding cutbacks to strengthen their position, served to enhance the A.G.F.'s perceived importance of the government agencies. Consequently, when asked by the government to participate in the Games, the A.G.F. readily and willingly agreed. While there were many benefits to participation in the Games there was a distinctly negative aspect for the high performance coaches in that the Games inevitably interrupted the training cycles of the provinces top athletes and could thereby have hampered their performance at important meets such as national championships. In fact, if the elite coaches had their way, the A.G.F. would not send its best athletes to the Games events. In that respect, the coaches' efforts to influence the A.G.F.'s perception of environmental conditions resulted in some less than desirable circumstances for the coaches and their athletes.

2. Judges In the Women's Program

In themselves the small group of women's judges did not provide any significant support for the resource dependence model as a whole. While the judges clearly obtained their influence from their contribution to the training and selection of competitive athletes, there were few examples to suggest that they actually attempted to affect the A.G.F.'s enacted environment. In turn, there was no evidence of the judges influencing the Federation's managerial strategies other than the A.G.F.'s outright compliance with their demands. The explanation for this lack of evidence probably lies in the fact that those particular judges were not concerned with the goals, objectives and operations of the A.G.F. Their only interest was in the personal benefit they could derive from the Federation. Furthermore, the judges in question represented only a small portion of the judging ranks and their influence was likely limited by the fact that the balance of the women's judges did not share their values.

3. The A.G.F. Employees

The connections between coalitions, the enacted environment and the managerial strategies was much more in evidence in the case of the A.G.F.'s employees. The employees clearly obtained their influence from their intimiate involvement with A.G.F. operations and their ability to manage the temporal constraints imposed upon the A.G.F. from various sources. The staff utilized that influence in its efforts to affect the enacted environment. A good example was provided by the general perception that the A.G.F.'s client group was comprised of the thousands of gymnasts throughout the province. Both the former and the present staff members had endeavored to focus the A.G.F.'s attention on its member clubs as opposed to the individual gymnasts. In doing so they had

consciously been attempting to reformulate the A.G.F.'s enacted environment to bring it in line with their perceptions of the A.G.F.'s mandate.

Similarly, the office staff placed significant emphasis on adhering to regulations and performing organizational duties on a timely basis. While the volunteer directors acknowledged the importance of meeting deadlines and requirements they seldom had the time or made the effort to do so unless encouraged and/or assisted by a staff member. It was precisely that relationship which led the A.G.F. to engage in a process of executive succession. The A.G.F. directors, in recognizing the need to manage the temporal constraints, also recognized that the former staff was inadequate in terms of both size and skill level to fulfill the A.G.F.'s commitments. In order to rectify the situation they replaced the former staff with an expanded and more skilled staff. As Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) indicate, the selection of administrators is directly related to the organization's environmental context. "Those in power should tend to select individuals who are capable of coping with the critical problems facing the organization" (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978: 236).

In summary, the A.G.F. provided evidence for the inter-connectedness of the three central constructs of resource dependence theory. Two of the three coalitions served to illustrate the attempts to affect the A.G.F.'s enacted environment and the managerial strategies do reflect the dominant perceptions of environmental conditions.

F. REVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The data collected was intended to provide insight into the functions and activities of the A.G.F. with respect to the three central constructs of resource dependence theory. In general, it would appear that there was sufficient evidence to support all three constructs and the linkages between them. Three coalitions were identified and their influence on organizational activities was related to their ability to cope with environmental conditions. Further, the coalitions were all structurally based as is the norm according to resource dependence. In addition, it has been established that the coalitions had an effective impact on the interpretation of environmental conditions by the A.G.F.'s central members. The enacted environment clearly reflected the orientations of the dominant coalitions. It was also shown that the A.G.F. has reacted to the enacted environment in its implementation of coping strategies. While the enacted environment was in some respects accurate, it was very inaccurate in others. The A.G.F. consequently provided examples of situations where attending to the wrong conditions led to the implementation of inappropriate coping strategies.

The findings failed to support only one specific aspect of resource dependence. The use of manipulation to effect changes in legislation or social legitimation did not appear to have relevance to the A.G.F. and this may well hold true for the amateur sport setting in general. This is certainly not an indication that manipulation is not a valid component of resource dependence, only that its application is likely restricted to private sector and social activist organizations.

By all indications, the resource dependence perspective of organizational behavior provided a useful method to explain the activities and actions of the Alberta Gymnastics Federation. The findings are highly consistent with what would be predicted by the constructs of the theory. The results indicated quite clearly that the A.G.F.'s operations were, in many respects, generated by the external environment.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

This study was precipitated by a desire to better understand the workings of volunteer directed amateur sport organizations. The author's interest in and experience with this type of organization led initially to the intuitive assessment that, to date, very little work has been done which addresses their internal functioning. A subsequent review of relevant literature provided support for that perception. The majority of previous work has tended toward the descriptive and has failed to either build upon or contribute to any theoretical framework. Consequently, a serious void exists in the area of study. The lack of attention afforded to the operational aspect of amateur sport organizations is likely attributable to the relatively recent emergence of rationalism within them. In the past their voluntary nature was of interest primarily to sociologists who were interested in who joined and why they joined. More recently, sociologists have begun to examine amateur sport within broader social contexts utilizing theory from other fields. A similar approach is needed with respect to the operational aspect of amateur sport organizations. Faced with increasingly complex responsibilities and functions sport organizations are assuming distinct corporate traits and characteristics. A need now exists to investigate the operational nature of these organizations in order to develop an understanding of how they function and why.

The first step in this process is to establish a theoretical basis from which to build. In that respect, attention has been turned to the field of organizational theory. The application of contemporary organizational theory to the study of amateur sport organizations is seen as an opportunity to utilize existing knowledge in developing the necessary theoretical foundation. A specific conceptual model known as resource dependence was selected on the basis of its apparent relevance to this type of organization. Based upon the writings of several researchers the author identified a set of constructs which could be examined through the observation of a variety of manifest behaviors and activities. Three primary constructs were identified: 1) coalitions; 2) the enacted environment; and 3) strategies for managing the environment. A case study approach was then embarked upon in an effort to establish the exent of explanatory value provided by the theory and its central constructs.

A single amateur sport association was examined in a very exhaustive manner. Key individuals within the organization were extensively interviewed and numerous documents were accessed including meeting minutes, financial records, correspondence, membership records and various reports. The information derived from all sources was then assessed utilizing latent content analysis in an effort to identify evidence of the three constructs. The purpose of the study was to determine the value of resource dependence theory as an analytical tool for the examination of amateur sport organizations.

1. The Theoretical Framework

The open system concept of organizations is the fundamental premise upon which the resource dependence model is based. The importance of an organizations external environment on its internal functions is emphasized by

resource dependence in that the need to acquire and maintain resources is viewed as the primary determinant of organizational activity. The internal distribution of resources is seen as being dependent upon the ability of coalitions within the organization to control uncertainty and to garner support for their position by influencing the organizations enacted environment. The enacted environment reflects the cumulative interpretations of environmental conditions by members of the organization. It is the enacted environment, regardless of its accuracy, that determines the managerial strategies that are employed by the organization. The strategies employed by the organization will depend upon the perceived nature of the interdependence and the organization's 'bargaining position' relative to other organizations. As such the environment affects the organization's activities in two respects. First, the level of uncertainty within the environment influences the effectiveness of the organization's interpretive processes. Second, the level of asymmetry in interorganizational relationships dictates coping strategies that may be employed in order to maintain resource flow.

2. Methodology

A review of organizational literature relating to exchange and resource relationships enabled the author to identify three general themes or constructs that characterize the resource dependence perspective. A battery of interview questions was then developed that addressed the various elements of each construct. The interviews were designed to encourage progression in discussion as follows:

1. Coalitions
   - Are there examples of coalitions within the organization being studied?

- If so, from what source(s) do they derive their influence?

2. Interpretation of Environmental Conditions
   - What do members perceive the environment to be comprised of?
   - What do the members perceive the organization's 'bargaining position' to be relative to other organizations?
3. Managerial Strategies
   - What impact does the enacted environment have upon the choice of strategies?
   - What impact does the 'bargaining position' have on the choice of strategies?

A specific provincial amateur sport was selected and several of its key members were chosen for the interview process. A focused interview format enabled the author to draw comprehensive information from each of the subjects. The data from the interviews was then combined with that acquired from organizational documents. Together the two sources of data afforded the author a depth of understanding that could not have been achieved through other means. While the results were not dealt with in a qualitative manner they were carefully scrutinized to establish common or pervasive attitudes and perceptions.

3. Findings

The results of this study, in general, provide substantial support for the resource dependence model as an interpretive and explanatory instrument. In particular the following are the most significant assessments:

1. There were three distinct coalitions within the A.G.F. that had an observable impact upon the activities of the organization.

2. The coalitions derived at least some of their influence from their ability to control important environmental conditions.
3. The coalitions used their influence to gain access to organizational resources.
4. The enacted environment of the A.G.F.'s central members did not accurately reflect the actual environment.
5. Each coalition possessed a distinct enacted environment.
6. That managerial strategies were directly related to the enacted environment of the coalition that was able to garner the greatest influence with respect to the issue in question.

B. CONCLUSIONS

The results and discussion of this study have focused on observed phenomena within the Alberta Gymnastics Federation. The examination of data has provided insight into manifestations, or lack thereof, of the constructs of resource dependence theory and in doing so has generated support for the theory as an analytical tool. While the case study approach is not a research method that ensures the generalizability of results, the findings of this study do allow for some speculation as to their usefulness in understanding other amateur sport organizations.

1. Coalitions

It would appear that the concept of coalitions bears relevance to amateur sport organizations. As the theory predicts they tend to be structurally based and they derive their influence from an ability to cope with important

environmental conditions. This is an important phenomenon for people and agencies working within the amateur sport delivery system to be aware of. Recognition of the role that coalitions play may assist the various actors to better predict the outcome of actions they take and better avoid the unintended consequences of their actions.

The Alberta Sport Council's apparent emphasis on high performance athlete development provides a good illustration. A sport organization that perceives a major funding agency to be strongly encouraging the development of elite athletes will very likely, in turn, place significant emphasis on it themselves. A result of that orientation will be that the elite coaches will be provided with a large measure of influence with respect to organizational functions and will often be given the ultimate say on issues that affect the athletes. With increased resources provided for athlete development the Sport Council (and the Provincial Government) anticipate a significant improvement in Alberta's overall results at events such as Canada Games. Unfortunately, high performance coaches tend not to place great value on Canada Games; they are more concerned with their own national and regional championships. Even though the elected directors of the sport organization may want to send the best possible athletes to Games events, the coaches may not believe it is in the best interest of the athletes' overall development. Consequently, the coaches (who have acquired their influence from the Sport Council's emphasis) choose to keep the Provinces best athletes at home in order that they maintain their training schedules for the 'really important meets'.

The Sport Council needs to recognize that by emphasizing the high performance athletes they provide the coaches with significant influence but

that the coaches may not have the same competitive priorities as the Sport Council or the Provincial Government. Furthermore, the Sport Council's attempt to impress the importance of the Canada Games upon the sport organization's directors will have little effect if the coaches have become established as a powerful coalition, thanks to the Sport Council itself.

The implication is that all parties involved must be cognizant of how decisions are arrived at; that actions taken by the organization will be determined more by the influence enjoyed by various coalitions than the formal authority structure.

2. The Enacted Environment

The concept of the enacted environment is perhaps the most important issue for the actors in the sport delivery system to be aware of. Those agencies that have a vested interest in the activities and success of amateur sport organization must acknowledge the impact that uncertainty and complexity have upon the organization's ability to interpret the environmental conditions. Government funding agencies, in particular, must recognize that difficulties in interpreting the environment may well lead to the implementation of inappropriate and/or undesirable managerial strategies.

In order to reduce the incidence of unsatisfactory decisions and unintended consequences the funding agencies must endeavor to minimize uncertainty and complexity. They must establish and clearly articulate their level of commitment and their expectations with respect to each individual organization. They must recognize that general policies and guidelines applied to all sports are insuficient to ensure that each sport organization will accurately

interpret the agencies' desires. It is essential that funding agencies make every effort to reduce the opportunity for misinterpretation.

It should be noted that the Alberta Recreation and Parks Department has taken some steps in that direction through the creation of a policy on amateur sport. Unfortunately, there are two limitations to the policy. First, the policy is very general and lacks the specificity required to ensure clarity and consistency of interpretation. Second, it fails to acknowledge the political realities associated with public sector institutions; that the desire of politicians to be re-elected often precludes the implementation of sound policies.

The members of sport organizations themselves must also be aware that the enacted environment presents a problem if it is insufficiently accurate. In that sense it is incumbent upon the central members to move beyond passive interpretive processes and begin to engage in active assessment activities. They must solicit information from other agencies and promote extensive dialogue with those that are important to their maintenance. They can not rely upon the limited information routinely provided by other agencies as the only basis upon which to formulate their perceptions. Amateur sport organizations need to take a more proactive approach in determining the nature of their environments and interorganizational relationships.

Most importantly, perhaps, people within the amateur sport community must acknowledge the importance of coalitions as major determinants of organizational activity. They must accept that the decision-making process is not necessarily rational; that different groups will possess different, but perhaps equally legitimate, perceptions of environmental conditions and the desired

organizational outcomes. Further, that the perceptions of the dominant coalitions will have the greatest impact upon the activities that the organization engages in.

3. Managerial Strategies

Five types of strategies for dealing with environmental conditions were examined of which four appear to be relevant to the amateur sport setting. The absence of any evidence of the fifth strategy (manipulation) is likely a result of not needing to utilize that type of strategy rather than being unable to. The implication here is that strategies to alter the environmental conditions are an option for amateur sport associations. Sport groups do not need to rely exclusively upon methods such as adaptation and avoidance to maintain their resource flow. Rather, they can engage in more assertive activities such as absorption and cooptation. Of course, the prerequisite for the successful implementation of such strategies lies in the members' accurate assessment of their bargaining position relative to other organizations.

This holds some important implications for other partners in the sport delivery system as well. For example, if sport associations begin to take a more active approach to controlling environmental conditions they are likely to realize that their bargaining position vis a vis some government agencies is much stronger than they thought. A consequence may well be that sport associations become more demanding of those agencies and/or they may be less receptive to the demands imposed by the agency. In that event the funding agencies may need to reassess their position relative to those sport organizations.

In that respect the funding agencies must recognize that a given sport organization does not possess a single set of goals and objectives. Regardless of what may be formally described in a constitution or similar documents, there will always exist a number of factions or coalitions that hold differing opinions regarding organizational outcomes or, at the very least, the means by which to achieve them. As such the strategies employed by an organization will reflect the perceptions of that coalition(s) which is most influential in a given circumstance. For example, if an expectation of a funding agency is contrary to the attitudes or priorities of the dominant coalition(s) there is great potential for the organization to engage in avoidance or manipulative strategies. Conversely, if the funding agency's expectations conform to the desires of the dominant coalition(s) it would be reasonable to anticipate the implementation of compliant strategies.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

Inherent in the theoretical and qualitative approach of this study are two unavoidable weaknesses in the results; the lack of dependability and a low level of generalizability. What this study has done is to indicate that the resource dependence model is worth pursuing as an analytical tool. It is evident, however, that further research is necessary to provide more dependable and generalizable data.

One direction that would be desirable for future research would be the rigorous examination of specific constructs. For example, the concept of the enacted environment could be addressed in a more exacting manner. The

quantitative analysis of both actual and enacted environmental conditions is possible and would allow for a dependable assessment of the discrepancy between them. Similarly, there would be value in examining the enacted environments of specific coalitions and analyzing them in a comparative manner. While this study recognized the importance of differing perceptions from coalitions it did not thoroughly assess each coalition individually. Such an examination could in itself be very enlightening.

A second approach may be to utilize a different methodological process in order to establish generalizability. A survey approach would enable a researcher to assess one (or more) of the theoretical constructs utilizing a number of different organizations. For example, the prevalence and impact of coalitions could be examined across several sport associations. The results would help to establish whether or not coalitions are, indeed, structure based and from where their influence is derived.

A third possibility for research would be to examine the types of managerial strategies employed by a variety of sport organizations. An extensive study could provide valuable insight with respect to two areas. First, it could indicate whether or not the resource dependence perspective is correct in emphasizing the external environment as a determinant of organizational activites. Second, it could indicate patterns of strategy implementation relative to other organizational characteristics such as size, differentiation and numbers of staff.

Beyond those general recommendations there are some specific issues that have arisen from this study. The questions arising from these issues may in

themselves provide a focus for future study. At the very least they should be recognized and addressed by researchers pursuing this area of study.

The most pressing issue that has been identified is the need for a more exhaustive analysis of the differences between private or public sector organizations as opposed to non-profit or volunteer sector organizations. Most research in the area of resource dependence has addressed the former and there are some distinct differences between the functional processes of those organizations and those in the non-profit/volunteer sector. For example, decision-making within volunteer groups generally follows a democratic process while in private or public sector organizations decisions follow a hierarchical, authoritarian process. This difference may have significant implications with respect to the importance and roles of coalitions within volunteer-directed organizations. Perhaps coalitions are less likely to be established if members believe they can influence decisions through the democratic process; perhaps the frequent turnover of decision-makers via the election process and the resulting discontinuity of values and beliefs inhibits coalition building. The way in which dissention is treated is also different within a democratic organization than it is in a situation of hierarchical authority. In a democratic environment people tend to be more willing to voice their opinion. This too may reduce the propensity to establish coalitions. Since coalitions are a fundamental aspect of the resource dependence model these are important questions for future studies to address.

A second issue that is worthy of further examination is related to the definitions of volunteer and non-profit organizations. It became apparent during the course of this study that the issue of volunteerism in particular needs to be

reassessed as it pertains to amateur sport organizations. The A.G.F.'s elected boards and committees are comprised to a great degree by full time paid employees of A.G.F. member clubs (i.e., coaches and club administrators). Judges and course conductors are paid for their services on an hourly basis, even though these payments are refered to as honourariums. The majority of the functions being performed by the A.G.F. are carried out exclusively by the paid office staff. It seems logical to conclude then, that while the A.G.F. is certainly a non-profit organization the volunteer component is very limited. This would suggest that future research should de-emphasize the perception of sport associations as volunteer organizations.

The third recommendation arises from the 'organizational form' of volunteer and non-profit organizations. This study acknowledged the need to establish identifiable organizational boundaries for the purpose of conducting the study. It is difficult, however, to maintain these boundaries when the members' involvements frequently span those boundaries. This study used the notion of the 'client group' to determine the focal organization's boundaries but future researchers may wish to consider a less rigid definition.

A final important issue arises from the application of the theory itself. Reference has been made on several occasions to the cooptive strategies entered into by the A.G.F. It became apparent, however, that the concept of cooptation requires some elaboration and clarification. In particular, a distinction should be drawn between cooptive strategies initiated by the focal organization and those that are initiated by an external organization. A problem exists in that, while cooptive strategies initiated by the focal organization are clearly pro-active, those initiated externally tend to exhibit elements of

compliance. This is an important consideration when examining the level of asymmetrical inter-dependence between organizations and is necessary for more definitive applications of resource dependence theory.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR A.G.F. MEMBERS

I. BIOGRAPHICAL

1. How many years have you been involved with gymnastics as a sport or recreational activity?

2. How many years have you been involved with the A.G.F.?

3. How many years have you been involved with the actual function and operation of the A.G.F. and in what capacities?

4. How intimate is your knowledge and understanding of A.G.F. activities and operations? (very, somewhat, moderate, scale of 1 - 10)

II. COALITIONS - A brief explanation of this concept was provided prior to asking the questions.

1. Are you aware of any groups (either formal or informal) within the A.G.F. that have specific interests? If so, can you identify them and indicate what their specific interests or views are?

2. For each of the interest groups identified can you indicate the types of demands that they each impose upon the A.G.F.? (i.e., do they place demands on resources or do they try to impart an 'ideology' on the A.G.F.)

3. Can you identify one or two of these interest groups as being more dominant than the others? If so, why?

4. Do you feel that you belong to any of the interest groups you have identified? If not, do you feel that your beliefs are at least closely aligned with one of the groups?

5. Do you personally feel that any of the groups exert particularly positive influences?

6. Do you personally feel that any of the groups exert particularly negative influences?

III. INTERPRETATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

1. What do you see as the A.G.F.'s mandate?

2. What do you think are the A.G.F.'s primary goals and objectives as an organization?

3. What do you think the A.G.F.'s primary goals should be?

4. Who do you see as the A.G.F.'s client group?

5. What other organizations or agencies does the A.G.F. interact or work with?

Each of questions 6 - 13 will be asked with respect to the agencies with which A.G.F. interacts. (i.e., Alberta Recreation and Parks; Alberta Sport Council; Canadian Gymnastics Federation; individual clubs; etc.)

6. How essential is it to the A.G.F. that the relationship with _____ be maintained? Why?

7. What does _____ provide to the A.G.F.?

8. What does the A.G.F. provide to the _____?

9. Which organization do you think benefits most from the relationship, the A.G.F. or _____? Why?

10. Do you think that the current relationship is likely to continue for the short term? What about the long term?

11. How would the A.G.F. respond if the resources provided by _____ were to be withdrawn?

12. Have you personally had any interaction with representatives from _____? If so, that type of interaction and with who? If not, how have you learned about the nature of the A.G.F.'s relationship with _____?

13. How would you categorize the nature of the relationship (cooperative, mutually tolerant, antagonistic)?

IV. MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

Questions 1 - 4 deal with specific actions that have been taken by the A.G.F. in the past. The interviewee will be asked for their interpretation of why the action was taken.

1. A few years ago the A.G.F. implemented a 'zone' concept in its organizational structure. Why do you think this was done?

2. The A.G.F. recently hired two professional staff members. Why do you think this was done?

3. A couple of years ago when the Alberta Sport Council came into being it provided all three A.G.F. disciplines with a substantial amount of 'enrichment' funding. However, last year and again this year the Sport Council refused to continue much of the funding to the Acro-Sport discipline. The A.G.F. wrote letters and made special requests to the Sport Council, but to no avail. Why did the A.G.F. not take any more drastic action in this respect?

4. Approximately three years ago the Provincial Government was evaluating the policy regarding the disposal of lottery dollars. A need for lobbying the government on this issue was publicized by Sport Alberta at that time. What action, if any, did the A.G.F. take in that regard and why?

5. How would the A.G.F. respond if the Alberta Recreation and Parks grant became contingent upon performance of Alberta athletes at the national level?

6. What would the A.G.F. do if liability insurance was to become unavailable or prohibitively expensive?

7. How would the A.G.F. respond if a large proportion of the recreation clubs that are currently affiliated with the A.G.F. dropped their memberships?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER AGENCIES

I. BIOGRAPHICAL

1. How long have you been (or were you) with _____?
   (the agency or organization)

2. How long have you been (or were you) the liason person for the A.G.F. on behalf of _____?

3. How many other sport organizations did you deal with directly during the period that you were the A.G.F.'s liason?

4. On average, how much time per month do you (or did you) spend on business that was related to the A.G.F.?

5. What does your role as a representative to the A.G.F. entail and are you happy with the role?

II. NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH A.G.F.

1. How familiar are (or were) you with the activities and operations of the A.G.F.?

2. What type of relationship do (did) you personally have with the representatives of the A.G.F.? For example, do (did) you simply convey information and policies from your organization to the A.G.F., or do (did) you, perhaps, endeavor to provide leadership to the A.G.F. in its operations?

3. Would you say that your relationship with the A.G.F. is (was) co-operative?

4. What resources does _____ provide to the A.G.F.?

5. What does the A.G.F. provide to _____, if anything?

6. How important are the resources provided by _____ _____ to the viability of the A.G.F.?

7. How stable is the relationship between the A.G.F. and _____ _____ over the short term? The long term?

8. Has there ever been a threat to the relationship in the past?