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**SWP 33/93 AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE
ON STRATEGIC CHANGE**



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Introduction

Over the last 15 years the body of literature and research on strategic change has grown at an explosive rate. The result has been the development of a number of different theories as to how and why strategic change occurs, with little attempt to integrate these apparently disparate points of view.

One of the biggest debates between the proponents of the different schools of thought is the role played by 'choice' in strategic change. The notion of 'strategic choice' is often accredited to John Child (1972), although he was not the first to consider the role of choice in change, for example, Trist et al (1963). Child developed his model of choice as he felt the existing models of strategy development ignored the essentially political process by which power holders decide upon courses of strategic action. The power holders are the people with the power within an organisation to make strategic decisions or 'choices' based on their preferences given their assessment of their organisation's position in terms of its performance, capabilities and environment. The choice of goals or objectives for the organisation is seen to follow on from this evaluation, and to be reflected in the strategic action which is decided upon. Some strategic change theorists reject this point of view (Aldrich, 1979) claiming organisations have little room to manoeuvre in the way suggested by Child due to the large number of prior limits and constraints they are subject to.

Yet many organisations today are claiming success in undertaking strategic change as a result of a conscious decision or 'choice' by senior managers of the need for change - BP, Prudential Assurance, Statoil, Bradford and Bingley Building Society, KPMG (1) to name but a few! How can any of the schools of thought on strategic change continue to argue against the ability of organisations to exercise choice in the face of the growing evidence that organisations are capable of doing so?

One answer is that the opponents of 'choice' in change do have important contributions to make to our overall understanding of the process of strategic change, both within populations of organisations and within individual organisations. This has implications not just for research on the process of change, but also for teachers and practitioners who often operate within the framework of only the 'choice' school of thought.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss some of these implications. The paper will first review the major theoretical schools of thought on change. Second, an integrative perspective will be put forward showing that it is possible, although problematic, to bring together the various schools of thought to account more accurately for the phenomena of strategic change. Finally, the implications of an integrative viewpoint for teachers, practitioners and researchers will be discussed.

1. The case of Prudential Assurance is written up in 'Implementing Strategic Change: A Practical Guide for Business' by Tony Grundy, London: Kogan Page Ltd, 1993. Change at KPMG is documented in a case by Gerry Johnson in 'Exploring Corporate Strategy' Johnson & Scholes, third edition, 1993. The other companies mentioned gave presentations on the success of their change efforts at a one-day conference on "Making it Happen: Managing Change to Implement Strategy" (27 January 1993) organised by the Strategic Planning Society and Kinsley Lord.

Theories on Strategic Change

The theories on strategic change can be placed on a type of continuum with 'deterministic' schools of thought on change at one end and those schools of thought supporting the role of active change agency in change at the other (see Figure 1). The 'deterministic' schools are those that see organisational actors as having little control over the fate of their organisations. Forces other than 'choice' determine the organisation's future. The schools advocating the role of active change agency believe change occurs as a result of decisions taken by organisational decision makers, who therefore play an active role in shaping an organisation's future. The seven major schools of thought can be arranged on this continuum as follows (2):

- Population Ecology or Natural Selection
- Institutionalism
- Resource Dependency
- Contingency Theory
- Life-Cycle School
- Learning School
- Strategic Choice School

Population Ecology

The theories of change proposed by population ecologists are borrowed from biology and based on Darwin's model of natural selection. Organisations are viewed as complex systems severely constrained by external environmental forces that create and institutionalise strong webs of commitment (Aldrich, 1979). They (organisations) are subject to strong *inertial forces*, such as existing structures, practices and procedures, making them inherently inflexible and slow to respond to changes in the environment, seldom engaging in transformation (Hannan & Freeman, 1977 and 1984; Ginsberg and Buchholtz, 1990). From this point of view the environment is seen to be highly deterministic in shaping organisational forms and survival.

Strategic change, or metamorphosis (Aldrich and Auster, 1986), is seen as occurring within organisational populations as the result of variation, selection and retention mechanisms.

'The population perspective explains organizational change by focusing on the distribution of resources in environments and the terms on which they are available. Variation within and between organisations provides the occasion for selection criteria to make their presence felt, and retention mechanisms preserve the selected variations' (Aldrich and Mueller, 1982: 33).

In other words, as new forms of organisations arise in an organisation population, inter-organisational competition for resources creates selection forces which weed out those organisations with forms less fit to compete leaving as survivors those organisations better suited to the current competitive environment.

The concept of inertia is a core tenet of population ecology. Inertial forces can be internal, for example, sunk costs and political coalitions, or external, for example, barriers to entry and exit (Aldrich and Auster, 1986; Hannan & Freeman 1984). It is these inertial forces that make organisations respond relatively slowly to threats and opportunities as they arise in their environment.

2. Whilst there is scope to argue about the order in which the schools have been placed on the continuum, and also whether or not the continuum selected is the right one, this is not the purpose of this paper. This continuum has been selected for its simplicity as an illustrative tool.

The word 'relatively' is key (Hannan & Freeman, 1984). The population ecologists don't claim that organisations can't or don't change, but that inertial forces operate to make their speed of change relative to the environment slow and the organisations, therefore, relatively inert. Thus increasing an organisation's chance of failure due to incompatibility with the existing competitive conditions within its environment. Hannan and Freeman (1984) also suggest that peripheral change is easier than core change and that population ecology theories are probably more appropriately applied to the latter than the former. A position supported by other research work in the field of population ecology (Singh and Lumsden, 1990).

Another final concept important in population ecology is that of 'niche'. A niche is a resource space (Hannan & Freeman, 1977), a confluence of resources, demand and constraints that make both possible and limit the performance of a population of organisations (Zammuto, 1988). Individual organisations will operate as either a specialist or a generalist within a particular niche.

The belief in the existence of strong inertial forces inhibiting core change, and the belief in a selectionist approach as opposed to one of organisational adaptation as the best explanation of change in organisational populations (Hannan and Freeman, 1989), has led population ecologists to concentrate in their research on population dynamics for particular organisational populations: rates of organisational foundings and failures, the effects of population density and niche characteristics, different affects on generalists and specialists and so on. Hannan and Freeman (1989) provide a good summary of this work. It has added greatly to our understanding of the dynamics of strategic change within organisation populations. However, what is going on in individual organisations is largely ignored. The possibility of organisational mortality occurring as a result of, for example, 'accident, incompetence or rational choice' (Betton and Dess, 1985) receives scant consideration.

Institutionalism

Institutionalists emphasise the role played by institutional environments in determining organisational structure and behaviour (Scott, 1983). Institutional environments are defined by Scott as including the rules and belief systems as well as the rational networks that arise in the broader societal context. They are notoriously invasive as the belief systems and rules are not just 'out there' but 'in here' and are carried by all participants - clients, suppliers and so on.

The suggestion is that institutional environments define the type of organisational forms that are considered 'legitimate' by the prevailing belief systems and that organisations will, therefore, adopt these forms to gain social legitimacy and resources and enhance their chances of survival. This theme of organisational tendencies toward obtaining social legitimacy by conformity with institutional 'norms' or belief systems runs throughout the institutional literature (Scott, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1977, 1983, 1988; Oliver 1992; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). It is succinctly summarised by Covalleski and Dirsmith (1988: 563), 'The general theme of the institutional perspective is that an organisation's survival requires it to conform to social norms of acceptable behaviour'.

Like population ecology, supremacy is still attributed to the environment, but the emphasis is on inter-organisational connectedness in the institutional environment rather than inter-organisational competition in the task environment (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1988)

An outcome of the tendency of organisations to conform to institutionally acceptable forms is isomorphism within institutional fields (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Oliver, 1988). An institutional field (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983) is the network of organisations such as suppliers, consumers, producers, regulators involved in the

production of certain services or goods. Examples of fields would include schools and health care organisations.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) cite two types of isomorphism - competitive as addressed by population ecology and institutional. Institutional pressures for isomorphism take into account that organisations compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness. There are three types of isomorphism - *coercive isomorphism* resulting from both direct and indirect pressure exerted on organisations by external constituents such as government bodies in terms of, for example, legislation and regulations; *mimetic pressures* which lead organisations to copy others in their field perceived as more successful or legitimate than themselves; *normative pressures* which stem from professionalisation and have a cognitive base such as formal education, professional networks and norms of behaviour.

These forces lead to the creation of highly stable organisational forms that are difficult to change due to the invasiveness of the isomorphic forces within and outside individual organisations within a field. The emphasis in institutionalisation theory is on the persistence and endurance of organisational behaviours: institutionalism explains 'non-choice' behaviour (Oliver, 1991 and 1992). Organisations are viewed as passively conforming entities (Covaleski and Dirsmith, 1988).

However, Oliver (1992) argues that isomorphic forces such as state and social pressures can be a source of *deinstitutionalisation* as well as stability within populations of organisations. State 'coercion' can lead to change since the state plays a central role and often uses its legislative power to create changes in organisational forms within a field. For example, the UK government legislation to create National Health Service Trusts. Hinings and Greenwood (1988) studied an example of such change within a population of local authority organisations facing strong governmental pressure for major reorganisation. Many of the local authorities did individually succeed in reorganising themselves along the lines required creating change within the overall population of local authority organisations.

Thus, although the institutionalists see the institutional environment as highly deterministic of organisational form and study change primarily within organisation populations, they allow for strategic change to occur within organisation populations via individual organisational change in a way that the population ecologists do not. Further, institutionalists are starting to extend their realm of research to include a consideration of the role of internal organisational dynamics in change, such as organisational power and self-interests and active agency (Oliver, 1991 & 1992; Covaleski and Dirsmith, 1988; Powell, 1985; DiMaggio, 1988).

Resource Dependency Theory

Resource dependency theory still views the environment as deterministic. This is best illustrated by the title of Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) book *'The External Control of Organisations: A Resource Dependence Perspective'*. The basic tenet of resource dependency is that to survive, organisations require resources, which make them dependent on their environment. 'Organisations transact with other others for necessary resources, and control over resources provides others with power over the organisation. Survival of the organisation is partly explained by the ability to cope with environmental contingencies; negotiating exchanges to ensure the continuation of needed resources is the focus of much organisational action' (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Changes in the distribution and control of critical resources induce changes in organisational activity patterns - environments play a significant role in the nature and direction of activity over time (Romanelli and Tushman, 1986).

Organisations are thus constrained by their task or competitive environment as they compete for resources with other organisations, but they are also constrained by their institutional environment since they need to effect resource exchanges with other organisations. However, the emphasis is on the task environment (Oliver, 1991).

Dependence on critical resources creates problematic uncertainty about the resources which organisations attempt to minimise through inter-organisational actions, for example, mergers and joint ventures (Singh, House and Tucker, 1986). Links between organisations are characterised as a set of power relations based on the exchanges of resources (Ulrich and Barney, 1984). Organisations change in order to alter their dependence relations in such a way that they will gain more power over others and reduce their own dependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Resource dependency theory allows for organisations to be able to influence their resource environment and the other organisations they make resource exchanges with (Scott, 1992). 'Resource dependency theory focuses on a wide range of *active choice* behaviours that organisations can exercise to manipulate external dependencies or exert influence over the allocation or source of critical resources' (Oliver, 1991). Organisations can make use of alliances, joint ventures, cartels, etc. to create more stability, certainty and control over their environments and reduce their interdependence on others (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Scott, 1987).

This school of thought, therefore, starts to view organisations as playing an active rather than passive role in strategic change. It introduces consideration of strategic change within individual organisations as a result of decisions taken by organisational actors rather than just as a response to external forces. It is assumed that organisations can act to improve their chances of survival (Scott, 1992). However, there is still a consideration of the deterministic role of the environment. Indeed, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) explicitly set out to address the neglect of the role of the environment by organisation theorists who assume that organisations are 'self-directed, autonomous actors'. They view the role of choice as limited - especially for small organisations.

Contingency Theory

Contingency theorists argue that for organisations to be successful there needs to be a 'fit' between an organisation's structures and various contextual or 'contingency' factors such as environment and technology. Organisations that fit these contextual factors are more likely to have higher performance levels and survival chances (Singh, House & Tucker, 1986). 'The best way to organise depends on the nature of the environment to which the organisation relates' (Scott, 1992).

Woodward (1965) studied manufacturing firms and found a strong relationship between structures and technology in successful firms, thus introducing the notion of contingency theory. Successful organisations had a *fit* between their structure and the technology they were using.

Burns and Stalker (1966) found that structure in successful firms needed to be related to the nature or certainty and predictability of the environment. They coined the term 'mechanistic' organisation for the organisation structure most suited to stable environment and the term 'organic' organisation for the organisation structure most suited to changing environmental conditions. In other words, an organisation's structure needed to fit its environment.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1969) also found that an organisation's structure needed to fit its environment - but in terms of environmental complexity as well as environmental certainty. 'We have found that the state of differentiation in the effective organisations was consistent

with the diversity of the parts of the environment, while the state of integration achieved was consistent with the environmental demand for interdependence.'

Mintzberg (1979) cites four groups of contingency factors - the age and size of the organisation; the technical system in use in its operating core; environmental stability, complexity, diversity and hostility; and some of its power relationships. Other contingency relationships have also been found. Rumelt (1974) found that successful firms needed to match their structure to their strategy. Miller and Friesen (1983) found evidence for the need to change strategy-making processes to match changes in environmental dynamism, hostility and heterogeneity.

Thus contingency theorists would see a need for organisations to undertake changes in their design arrangements whenever contradictions arise between the various contingencies (Greenwood and Hinings, 1988). It is the alignment between these contingencies that determines both organisational survival and performance. For organisations to remain successful they need to maintain an alignment between strategy, structure and environment. Contingency theory does not attempt to explain the phenomena of strategic change as such, it receives consideration by default as part of the analysis as to why some organisations are more successful than others and what organisations need to do to become successful performers.

Life-Cycle School

Life cycle proponents suggest that organisations change over time according to their stage of development or life cycle. Like population ecologists, they borrow their concepts from biology. Kimberly (1980a) was one of the first proponents of the life cycle model. Organisations are perceived by Kimberly as having three main life cycle stages: Creation, Transformation and Decline and Termination. The suggestion is that newer organisations are often entrepreneurial in mode. The mid-life of organisations, as they grow, demands transformation to a more structured hierarchy as they face pressures for rationalisation and institutional conformity and legitimacy as well as increased efficiency. The studies carried out by Kimberly, Miles and Associates (1980) suggest that tension between ideology and efficiency seem to be a common force causing transformation in mid-life.

Greiner (1972) proposes a five stage life-cycle model. As organisations age and grow in size, they are caused to pass through a series of evolutionary and revolutionary stages as a result of passing through an organisational life-cycle. The rate at which they pass through the various stages will depend on the rate of growth of the industry in which they operate. The stages of evolution are interspersed with states of revolution where there are radical changes in management practices (and maybe management), organisation structure, and so on.

Mintzberg (1983 & 1984) proposes a four phase organisational life cycle model of Formation, Development, Maturity and Decline. Transition between phases (and corresponding organisational form) is caused by the changing distribution of power and political coalitions within an organisation.

Quinn & Cameron (1983) have concluded that the major criteria of effectiveness change for organisations as they develop through their life cycles. An organisation must adopt the primary criteria of effectiveness espoused by the dominant constituency to survive. Further, changes in the dominance of various constituencies over different life cycle stages necessitate changes in form and function. Quinn and Cameron also believe that the reaction of an organisation to external environmental turbulence will partly depend on the stage of organisational development.

To a large extent the role played by environmental influences in either constraining or causing strategic change is ignored. The consideration of the role of individuals is limited

to the effect of 'founder imprinting' (Kimberly, 1975, 1979 and 1980b; Boeker, 1988 and 1989) and the role of political coalitions in facilitating changes between phases (Quinn and Cameron 1983; Mintzberg 1983 and 1984). Internal forces are seen as the source of pressure for strategic change.

As organisations grow, the ideologies and forms they were created with lead to inefficiency. The organisations have to undergo transformation as directed by the dominant power group to achieve the desired new level of efficiency. Therefore, in life-cycle theory, organisational transformation as an organisation grows and develops is essential for survival.

Learning School

The learning school concentrates on the role of organisational learning in organisational change. Organisations are viewed as open systems adapting over time as a result of experimentation and learning. This means that organisations are considered to be composed of a number of inter-connected and inter-dependent parts (Nadler, 1980). Changing one part will lead to gradual change in the whole.

Organisational learning is usually believed to occur as a process of individual learning. Organisations are not themselves capable of learning as such (Hedberg, 1981). On the other hand, organisational learning is not the simple sum of individual learning. It is a process of change in behaviours, beliefs, values and other organisational 'knowledge stores' such as systems, structures, procedures, myths and routines (Crossan, Lane and Hildebrand, 1993). Thus, a learning organisation would be one designed to share and capture the learning of its individual members.

Argyris & Schon (1978) were amongst the original proponents of change as a process of learning. They argue that incremental change occurs in organisations via single-loop learning in which feedback on performance leads to adjustments to goals, procedures and so on, but within the existing way of doing things. For major strategic change to occur double-loop learning is required, whereby feedback pushes the organisational actors to think outside the existing way of doing things and formulate new goals, processes, structures.

Double-loop learning will be accompanied by an associated change or re-structuring of the organisational actors' cognitive maps. Double-loop learning can be said to involve unlearning: the old beliefs about the environment and the organisation need to be proved no longer valid or removed for the new way of thinking to be put in place (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Organisations must unlearn old ideas by discovering their inadequacies and then discarding them before they can try new ideas (Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984).

Senge (1990), a more recent supporter of the learning perspective, sees 'systems thinking', a contemplation of the whole rather than any individual part, as central to the concept of a learning organisation.

'At the heart of a learning organisation is a shift of mind - from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world'. (Senge, 1990: 12)

'A learning organisation is a place where people are continually discovering how they create reality. And how they can change it.' (Senge, 1990: 13)

Senge also advocates the use of leverage: by seeing an organisation as a whole it is possible to identify the 'leverage points' that can most easily and effectively be used to trigger change in the rest of the organisation.

Another proponent of the role of learning in strategy formation and strategic change is James Brian Quinn (1980). His work on logical incrementalism suggests that strategy formation is a gradual and incremental process in which the individual organisational members responsible for the strategic direction of their organisation have a clear idea of the direction in which the organisation should develop, but proceed in a step-by-step, experimental way. Such an approach avoids the cost of expensive mistakes, overcomes political obstructions, helps foster commitment to the intended strategic direction gradually, enables the organisation to respond to and allow for a turbulent environment and allows improvement of ideas by incorporating experimentation and learning. Viewed from this point of view, strategy formation is an emergent and evolutionary process in which strategic change occurs gradually (Johnson and Scholes, 1993).

The concept of logical incrementalism does overlap with notions of patterns in strategy formation in which periods of incremental change are interspersed by periods of revolutionary change, as suggested by the life-cycle school (Greiner, 1972; Quinn and Cameron, 1983) and also the strategic choice school (Mintzberg, 1978; Tushman, Newman and Romanelli, 1986) explained next. However, logical incrementalism does not allow for the concept of short, sharp radical change and the emphasis is on the role of individual and group learning in creating organisational change.

The research within this school of thought has done more than offer an explanation as to how and why change occurs in an evolutionary as opposed to revolutionary manner within organisations. Most adherents of the learning school see individual learning, which in turn leads to organisational learning, as fundamental to the process of change in organisations. For strategic change to occur, individuals need to discard their old ways of thinking and behaving and develop new ones which then become embedded into the organisation as new structures, systems, routines and procedures. These assumptions have led researchers to concentrate their efforts on how and why individuals and organisations learn and change and the benefits of experimentation. This school, therefore, also contributes a set of tools and techniques that can be used to help achieve desired / intentional organisational change. For example, Argyris (1985, 1993) and his work on defensive routines.

Strategic Choice School

The strategic choice school as it is described in this paper covers a broad range of theories on strategic change. The underlying feature common to all the theories grouped under this heading is that organisations are seen as possessing considerable self-determination in the design of their form and are, therefore, capable of change, both fundamental and peripheral, in response to environmental change, threats and opportunities or other pressures such as a decline in performance or a shift in the basis of competition.

The development of strategies constrained by, but not determined by, environmental constraints is emphasised (Scott, 1992). Managerial choice plays a role in shaping domains and characteristics of competitive activity (Romanelli and Tushman, 1986). Organisations possess considerable discretion with respect to the design and alteration of their own structures in response to environmental conditions (Oliver, 1988).

Strategic change in an organisation, as a process, starts with the formation of a new strategy for the organisation and only actually occurs if the new strategy gets implemented. The term strategy 'formation' is used rather than formulation as there may be no clear formulation / implementation divide (Mintzberg, 1978). The forces or triggers for change may be internal to the organisation, for example, declining performance and management's aspirations, or external, for example changing technology.

Strategy formation can occur in a number of ways - it can be a political process (Pettigrew, 1973 and 1985); a rational, planned process (Andrews, 1980; Ansoff 1965; Porter 1980); an interpretive or cultural process (Chaffee, 1985; Johnson 1987 & 1988); or a visionary

process (Mintzberg 1990). Underpinning all these processes of strategy formation, although some more than others, is the notion of decision-making and, therefore, choice. However the strategy is formed, the organisational actors are able to exercise self-determination, within certain constraints, in its creation. The constraints are often seen to be cognitive (Simon, 1957 and 1976; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992). Organisational decision makers are viewed as capable of rational thought and behaviour within the constraints of 'bounded rationality'. Decision-making processes, both in terms of the underlying cognitive process and the steps or phases involved, thus receive much attention within this school of thought. For example, studies by Mintzberg, Raisinghani and Theoret (1976), Cray et al. (1991), Lyles and Thomas (1988).

Strategy formation as a cultural process should not be confused with institutionalism. An organisation's culture may be heavily underpinned by professional norms existing externally to the organisation, but will contain elements not related to these norms. For example, which market segments the organisation operates in, whether the organisation views itself as a high margin, low volume producer or a low margin, high volume producer, and so on. Further, whilst all organisations may be subject to what Spender (1989) calls industry 'recipes', they will not all be professional organisations within which certain professional norms prevail.

It would be wrong to assume that the strategic choice school believes that organisations can implement radically new strategies at will. The adherents of this school also believe in the existence of organisational inertia. Ginsberg & Abrahamson (1991) divide inertial forces into 2 types - those preventing the formation of a new perspective on the environment and internal and external inertial constraints creating resistance to change. Miller and Friesen (1984) talk of organisational momentum - organisations 'reinforce or extend their past structures and strategy-making practices, adhering to previous direction of evolution'. Johnson (1987) talks of cultural webs, Bartunek (1984) of interpretive schemes.

Central to the idea of interpretive schemes and cultural webs is the existence of paradigms through which organisational members view and interpret their environment. Again, paradigms must not be confused with institutional norms although they may play a part in the paradigm of certain organisations. It is these paradigms which act to prevent the emergence of a new strategy even in the face of changing environmental conditions by causing organisational members to ignore signals that conflict with the paradigm. This can lead to strategic drift (Johnson, 1987) and periods of incremental or evolutionary change (Tushman, Newman and Romanelli, 1986). Often a crisis is required to force a real appraisal of the environment. Only then will the frame-breaking or revolutionary change (Tushman, Newman and Romanelli, 1986; Miller, 1982; Miller and Friesen, 1980) needed occur, or rather, be attempted. The webs of inter-dependent forces within an organisation may still prevent the radical changes necessary from actually being implemented.

This progression of relatively long periods of evolutionary change and shorter periods of revolutionary change forms patterns in strategy formation processes (Mintzberg, 1978). Further, not all intended strategies become realised strategies, it is possible for emergent strategies to replace them. Thus not all strategic change is intentional or planned - strategic change can be an emergent or evolutionary process.

Within this school, the dynamics added to the process of strategic change by consideration of the task and institutional environments receive scant attention. Change is studied at the level of the individual organisation with a consideration of the role of individual organisational actors in initiating and implementing strategic change. This has led to much research on the role of individual cognition in change (Bartunek, 1984; Huff, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Schwenk, 1988 and 1989; Bartunek and Moch, 1987). Further, the proponents of this school pay considerable attention to the means by which intentional change can be implemented - intervention tactics and techniques for reducing resistance to change (Nutt, 1989; Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979); political games (Kanter, 1983); symbolic behaviour (Johnson, 1990); leadership and change agency (Burns, 1978; Nadler

and Tushman, 1989; Schein, 1985); unfreezing mechanisms (Johnson, 1988); rumour control (Isabella, 1990), new roles, relationships and responsibilities (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990); Structures and Systems (Goodstein and Burke, 1991). The list is considerable!

This school views strategic change as a struggle between those forces preventing change within an organisation and those forces for change with the organisational decision makers acting as mediators. A change agent is seen to be able to 'rough hew' an organisation's future as he / she wills by the use of appropriate tools and techniques to overcome the inertial forces inherent in most organisations.

An Integrative View

It should be evident from the preceding descriptions of the different schools of thought on strategic change that there is scope for integration of the various points of view. Particularly given the different levels at which strategic change is studied - population, organisation and individual. As stated by Fombrun (1988):

'... a revised ecological framework should encompass (1) the voluntaristic transformation of organisations through strategic change and (2) the embeddedness of organisations in higher-order collectives.'

and

'...selection should contend with strategic change ...'

Many theorists have already pointed to the scope for development of integrated models of strategic change in which concepts such as strategic choice and environmental determinacy and inertia can co-exist:

'...we argue that both the business policy/strategy literature and the ecological literature focus on the process of metamorphosis, but at different levels of analysis. Moreover, metamorphosis at the organisational level of analysis is linked to population-level metamorphosis and vice-versa. Based on these assumptions, we suggest that research and writing in both strategy and ecology would benefit from investigations which simultaneously consider both levels of analysis and how these levels are connected.' (Aldrich and Auster, 1986).

'Proponents of environmental primacy from the population ecology, resource dependence and industrial organisation points of view are probably right when they suggest that the environment determines organisational potential, but, their positions should be qualified to account for the unknown role of the strategist in the process of organisation-environment alignment' (Jemison, 1981)

Thus it seems that for real progress to be made in the future, a more integrative viewpoint needs to be taken and a more comprehensive theory of strategic change developed which features both the role of choice and environmental determinacy as it should. This is a view shared by Scott (1992) 'As analysts begin to explore diverse combinations of these varied theoretical strands - institutional, ecological, strategic - then a richer, more subtle, and more fruitful theoretical framework is likely to emerge'.

Indeed, some work has already been done on integrated models. Boeker (1989) contrasted choice and inertial perspectives; Singh et al (1986) and Tucker et al (1988, 1990) have contrasted ecological and institutional perspectives; Ginsberg and Buchholtz (1990) examined the varying effects of natural selection, rational adaptation and institutional theories; Oliver (1988) tested competing predictions of isomorphism as suggested by population ecology, institutionalism and strategic choice; Baum and Oliver (1991)

examined how institutional linkages could act as moderators against ecological predictions of failure as does Zucker (1987).

However, whilst this body work is moving us towards an integration of the various theories, none of the work to date utilises a truly integrated model. Such a model needs to include the notion of inertial forces as proposed by the population ecologists and strategic choice theorists; the concept of environmental competitive and institutional dynamics or isomorphic forces; the idea of accelerators (Johnson, 1968) or forces for change, both internal and external for example, competitive changes, life-cycle pressures, organisation learning and organisational actors aspirations; a rational actor or decision maker participating in the organisation's future direction and, finally, also embody 'interpretive filters' through which the organisational actors are viewing and interpreting the world and their organisation for input to their decision making processes.

To use an analogy, if an organisation is thought of as a car towing a caravan or a trailer of baggage, the caravan represents the inertial forces holding the car back and preventing it moving, let alone changing direction or turning round! The internal inductive forces for change or accelerators are the engine. The car shape has been determined by the isomorphic pressures of society's values and expectations of car design and institutional regulation and legislation. Even the road system has a role to play in terms of the external environmental constraints it places on the car and the car driver. It creates the environment that has to be negotiated by the driver. Yet, there is something missing from this car and, therefore, most of the integrated research done to date. It has no driver. No-one to start it up, no-one to hold the steering wheel, no-one to apply the brake or accelerator, no-one to read the road signs and decide which way to go. Give the car a driver to operate it, and make the windscreen represent an interpretive schema or paradigm through which the driver views the state of the road and reads the road signs, and you have a complete model. What is missing without the car driver is the concept from Child's (1972) theory of choice. The ability of organisational actors to exercise choice and make decisions about their organisation's direction and form based on their evaluation of the environment.

There is a very good reason why a model incorporating all the elements of the car / caravan analogy has not been used in research to date. The research has been based mainly on secondary data sources. It has often not been possible to get inside the organisations and analyse what the organisational actors were doing and the change dynamics occurring within the organisations for the period of the studies.

'empirical, ecological studies tend to rely on data gathered from historical archives over long periods of time. Even if the theory were to accommodate a specific interest in organizational change, internal organizational data may typically be difficult to obtain.' (Singh and Lumsden, 1990)

This illustrates the considerable difficulties that exist in conducting research on strategic change across multiple levels of analysis and starts to explain why so much research concentrates on the study of the tenets of only one school. This is only one of many implications raised by the creation of a fully integrative perspective.

Implications of an Integrative Perspective

Implications for Research

Hannan and Freeman (1989) ask the question '... does most of the observed variability in organisational features reflect changes in existing organisations, whether planned or not, or does it reflect changes in populations, with relatively inert organisations replacing each other?' It seems the real question should be *when* does variability in organisational features reflect changes in existing organisations and when does it reflect changes in populations? Such a question allows for organisational choice and environmental selection to co-exist in

an integrated, holistic theory on strategic change and may lead to work which can also establish why at different times environmental determinism may dominate over choice and vice-versa.

Thus the implication for researchers is that for progress to be made in creating an integrated view of strategic change, and for an answer to the question posed above to be found, research into the process of strategic change needs to become far more ambitious in its objectives. Studies by supporters of the environmental primacy viewpoint need to allow for the study of organisational populations over time with not only consideration of concepts of environmental determinacy and constraints, but also consideration of:

- the interaction of the environmental pressures with pressures for life-cycle development within individual organisations and;
- the existence, or non-existence, of strategic choice processes and attempts at change and experimentation to match environmental contingencies within individual organisations.

This position is partially supported by Singh and Lumsden (1990) who argue that in future the study of organisational populations needs to address foundings, disbandings and change in organisational forms.

Studies by supporters of the role of choice, on the other hand, need to allow for the study of change, both revolutionary and evolutionary, within individual organisations, but within the context of those organisations' life histories and task and institutional environments. Pettigrew and his colleagues at the Centre for Corporate Strategy and Change (CCSC) at Warwick University are some of the few researchers tackling such an agenda based on the belief that studies of change must consider the content, process and context, both inner and outer, of change and their interconnections through time (Pettigrew, 1990). The outer context includes the organisation's political, economic, social and sectoral environment and thus does include consideration of both the task and institutional environment.

However, the CCSC research has not been used to attempt to shed light on the question posed above and does not always take into account the population ecology selectionist perspective and the institutional literature presented in this paper to study the task and institutional environments. The Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) studies explore linkages between an organisation's ability to manage change and its competitive success. The work therefore, quite appropriately, uses competition literature including work within fields such as industrial organisation theory and institutional economics as the basis for developing a framework to study the task and institutional environments of the researched organisations and their impact on the organisations. The 1992 NHS studies by Pettigrew, Ferlie and McKee give pre-eminence to the institutional environment considering the role of state, government and social pressure groups, for example, in change as would be expected with public sector organisations. The task environment receives less attention despite its emergent nature in the NHS. This means that the potential of the CCSC research in terms of what it can add to the selection vs adaptation debate is as yet unexplored.

Research as proposed here will help to aid our understanding of how, when and why over time some organisations are changing, intentionally and unintentionally, and others are failing to adapt appropriately and being replaced. Without such research it will remain difficult to produce a truly integrated model of how and why strategic change occurs.

Implications for Teachers and Practitioners

Many of the books on strategic change, especially those on planned change, (Beckhard and Harris, 1987; Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Carnell, 1991; Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990; Tichy, 1983; Grundy, 1993; Kirkpatrick, 1985; Plant, 1987; Scott and Jaffe, 1990) present a rather biased point of view on the process of change within organisations. Most

of the material is based on the tenets from the strategic choice and learning schools. The impression given to students of change is that change within organisations will occur providing appropriate leadership and change agency tactics are employed in combination with appropriate levers and mechanisms to overcome the internal barriers to change and employee resistance. Whilst there are models developed on the importance of both the internal and external context of change as well as the process and content of the change effort (Pettigrew, 1985), little attention is paid to understanding the context of change.

However, for students and practitioners to become effective managers of change it is essential for them to understand the wider forces constraining change than just those internal to the organisation, also how the individual organisation they are working in will be affected by what is going on around it in its task (competitive) and institutional environment. A common mistake is for managers to underestimate the strength of inertial forces resisting change, to neglect to understand the competitive and institutional isomorphic forces their proposed change may challenge, and to overestimate the effect, perception and understanding within their organisation of the internal and / or external driving forces for change. The result of this can be ineffective leadership and change agent role models and ill-considered, badly applied tools and techniques to achieve change. Such an approach will ultimately lead to failure, and in some cases the 'decline and death' of the organisation.

Students and practitioners need to realise that the population ecologists can be right. Some organisations do fail to change fast enough in relation to their changing environment leading ultimately to the failure of the organisation. Miller (1990) talks of the 'Icarus Paradox' whereby success often leads to failure for successful organisations. It certainly isn't necessary to look far for examples of failed or problematic change processes. Some of the most immediate examples are in the public sector. For example, teachers and parents are apparently at loggerheads with the government over changes to the education system; many of the early attempts at change within the NHS were not very successful (Brown, 1991; Buxton, Packwood and Keen, 1989).

Effective change efforts require a full understanding of all the forces presented in the integrated perspective above. Change agents must understand the strength, depth and source of internal and external inertial forces on their organisation, how the proposed changes will be received given the prevailing competitive and social norms, and how, if at all, the forces for change are perceived within the organisation. Only then will it be possible to adopt an appropriate leadership style for the change, interpret the leverage points for change within the organisation, and put in place effective mechanisms to achieve the desired changes. Without such an understanding the effectiveness of change agents, and accordingly the effectiveness of their recommendations, will be considerably reduced.

Conclusion

The range of theories on the how and why of strategic change have been reviewed. Further, it has been shown that none of the schools of thought on strategic change can be considered to present an holistic view - all are only partial theories in one way or another. What is needed is more work on integrated models of strategic change to put the legitimate role played by choice in strategic change alongside the legitimate ideas on the role played by the environment. More use must be made of such models by teachers, practitioners and researchers.

The analogy above of the car and caravan is a good way to illustrate what is required of an integrated model. It allows for the concept of choice to co-exist with the notion of environmental constraint. For a car towing a caravan must be on a road within a road network which will constrain the choices of its driver as to where the car can go and how fast.

The final word on the debate has to go to Mintzberg (1990):

'Debating whether organisations make choices is about as useful as debating whether people are happy.' 'Let us therefore learn about populations of organisations from the environment school, about the environments of organisations and especially about the different forms these can take. And let us take account of the contexts in which the ideas of this school seem most applicable, asking ourselves what types of organisations seem most constrained and when does strategic change seem most limited - for example, during certain stages of an organisation's life cycle (for example, maturity). But let us not get sidetracked by excessive abstraction, overstatement and unresolvable debate.'

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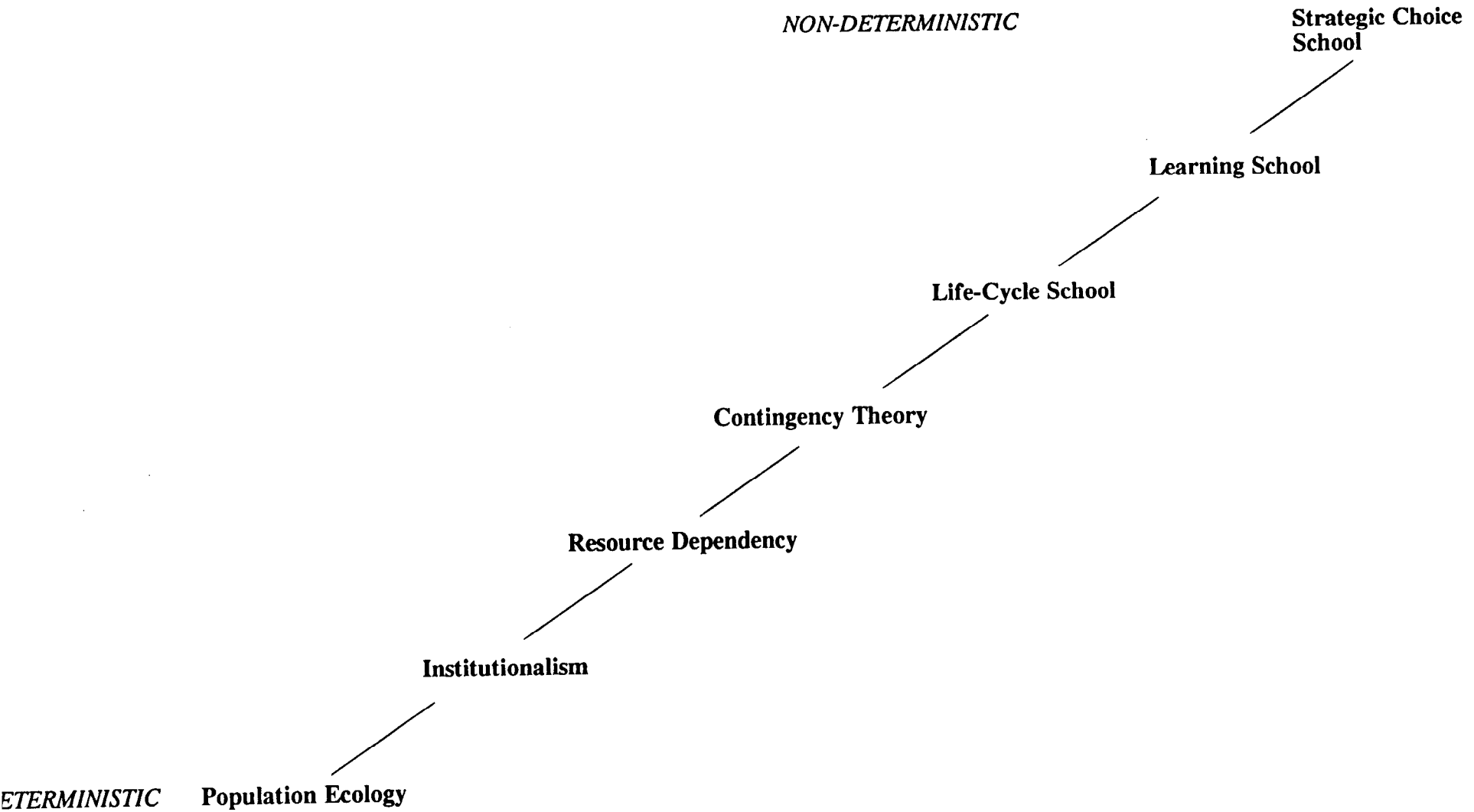
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FIGURE 1
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