

Organizational Culture and Identity: A Case Study from the Australian Football League

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ABSTRACT

This thesis comprises research that was undertaken between January 2000 and December 2004 into the organizational culture and identity of Fremantle Football Club, a professional sporting organization that competes in an elite national football competition, the Australian Football League.

The thesis began with a review of the contemporary literature on the principal topic, organizational culture and identity. The literature was subsequently used to frame and explain the approach taken in the research, which was to explore culture and identity as distinguishable, inter-dependent concepts integral to the functioning of sports organizations. The justification for the need to explore their impact in professional sporting organizations, because of a gap in our knowledge, was also provided.

The research was conducted as a single qualitative case study that enabled an in-depth investigation into how Fremantle Football Club's culture and identity were formed and how they influenced its structure, strategy, behaviour and performance. Significantly, the research covered the entire history of the club since its inception in 1994, revealing three distinct periods in which culture and identity were strongly influenced by the values and beliefs of the club's leaders, particularly the CEOs, as well as board members, senior management and coaches.

The first period comprised a time of self-absorption with an inappropriate culture that saw it in frequent conflict with external stakeholders as on-field success eluded it. Despite establishing a strong and clearly defined identity, FFC's inward looking culture undermined its capacity to fully engage with its heavily regulated environment. Subsequently, the club became dysfunctional as little was provided by way of long term planning and direction.

The second period was epitomised by a club that was heavily fractured by internal disagreements at different levels of its governance that undermined its performance and created a cultural vacuum into which it withdrew. Little progress was made as the club stagnated. Despite consolidating its identity, individualism took precedence over the collective good with scant regard for the direction or well being of the organization.

The club emerged into the third period with new personnel at all levels of its leadership and management adopting a different approach to previous administrations. The club

embarked on a journey of reconciliation with its governing agencies, and adopted an externally engaged perspective that provided the club's stakeholders with a strong sense of its future direction based on consultation and strategic planning.

The results of the research show that organizational culture and identity are dynamic, fluid, systems that respond to the value and beliefs of senior leadership. Importantly for this and other sports organizations, the culture and identity are responsive to short term transformation belying previously held notions of cultural change as a long-term process. This was possible for two reasons. Firstly, because FFC was a small organization in terms of staff numbers, the dissemination of transforming values could be more easily achieved. Secondly, because it was a club with a short history, it was more amenable to transformation, with stakeholders using the dismissal of senior coaches as a catalyst for change.

The results also show that organizational performance will flourish if both of the following two conditions are met. Firstly, culture and identity are fully aligned with each other and the organization's vision, which enables clearly defined and consistent strategies to emerge. Secondly, the aligned culture, identity and vision are consistent with the external environment enabling the club to fully engage with that environment.

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Gervase Alastair Haimes, declare that the PhD thesis entitled “*Organizational Culture and Identity: A Case Study from the Australian Football League*” is no more than 100,000 words exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature:

Date:

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1. INTRODUCTION

He possesses an identity not because he has gone in search of one, but because of his allegiance to a set of assumptions that he regards as objectively true.

Jeffrey Hart, educator (1930-)

This thesis examines organizational culture and identity, and uses them to frame and explain the structure, strategies, behaviour and performance of a professional sporting organization. However, the concepts of organizational culture and identity are frequently misunderstood and interpreted too simplistically. Therefore, before any specific organizational diagnosis can be undertaken it is important to attain a clear and precise picture of just what culture and identity are, how they are formed and how they affect the ways organizations are managed.

However, such an apparently straight forward study is problematic because whilst a significant amount of research has been undertaken into the culture and identity of business organizations, very little diagnosis of the culture and identity of sports organizations has occurred.

1.1. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Organizational culture and identity are important to contemporary organizations because they provide an understanding of how and why an organization does things, the way the people within the organization behave, and the perceptions that are held by stakeholders of the organization. Organizational culture and identity are widely recognised to have significant influences on organizational behaviour (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1985; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Hatch, 1993; Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1985; , 1996; Weick, 1985). They have been identified as means by which an organization's members interpret the way things are done, and what happens in the daily life of an organization. Moreover, they govern individual actions and behaviour, and how individuals are regarded by others, both inside and outside the organization. Organizational culture and identity are comprised of shared values, beliefs and assumptions that influence the attitudes, habits, customs and behaviour of an organization's members and how the organization is regarded internally and externally (Schein, 1985). The examination of an organization's culture and identity enables a better understanding of how groups, or subcultures within them, behave and work

together, and consequently how they are perceived by others. The significance of culture and identity has intensified since the 1980s because they are also the means by which organizations adapt to, or resist changes in, the environment, and either sustain or lose any competitive advantage.

1.2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNDERSTANDING CULTURE AND IDENTITY

This research aims to explore an elite sporting club's organizational culture and identity through a close examination of human interactions within the club and between its core stakeholders. Many of these interactions have not been explored previously within sporting organizations. The research makes a significant contribution within the domain of culture, identity and sporting organizations by:

1. Marrying the concept of identity to culture for the first time in sporting organizations;
2. Adopting and applying Hatch and Schultz's (2002) model of Organizational Identity Dynamics for the first time and for the first time to analyse a sporting organization;
3. Demonstrating how sporting organizations might build strong, adaptable and effective systems, capable of changing to suit the environment and thus be more effective and competitive as a business.

As sporting organizations have become more widely recognised as businesses, so recognition must be given to them as complex organizations relying on effective human interaction. Only by studying these interactions is it possible to understand what differentiates high performance clubs from the poorer performing clubs, and thereby reveal what less competitive clubs can do to improve their performance.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge on organizational theory and organizational culture by extending the theory of organizational culture and identity into sporting organizations.

1.3. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS

The role of organizational culture and identity in sporting organizations and their influence on behaviour and performance has been only of recent interest, and the body of knowledge is therefore limited in scope. Much of the work has focussed on the cultural aspects of organizations and this thesis extends the body of work by including

the concept of identity. Existing knowledge in these areas is contained principally within the work of Colyer (2000), Hinings et al (1996), O'Brien and Slack (1999), Skinner, Stewart and Edwards (1999), Roberts et al (1998), Shilbury and Hamilton (1996), Shilbury and Hooper (1999), Slack (1997), Smith and Shilbury (2004) and Smith and Stewart (1999). These works contend that culture and strategy are two of the core elements of managing sports organizations arguing that culture and strategy do not only influence an organization's conduct and performance, but can also undermine good management practice. Smith and Stewart (1999) and Slack (1997) demonstrate the wide acceptance of the effect of culture and strategy suggesting that organizational culture was a crucial component in sporting organizations because it describes organizational realities that are difficult to define but critical to good management. Organizational culture and identity enable sports organizations to create an organizational environment that attracts the best people and improves performance. Slack concluded that:

A focus on organizational culture provides a different approach to understanding patterns of action in sport organizations. This approach, if combined with traditional macro organizational theory, could provide for richer insights into the organizations we study. An approach that focuses on organizational culture should also have considerable appeal to those of us interested in sport, because the organizations in our field are rife with such characteristics as stories, myths, symbols, and rituals (Slack, 1997:271).

More particularly in recent years attempts have been made to provide an insight to methodologies by which cultural dimensions can be mapped in a sporting organization (A. Smith & Shilbury, 2004).

1.4. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN THE AFL

One study of an AFL club found its culture was clearly identifiable and instrumental in effecting its strategies and day-to-day behaviours (A. Smith & Stewart, 1999). The finding supports anecdotal evidence that football club culture and identities strongly influence the behaviour of club officials and players. The question then raised is what types of culture and identity create winning teams and organizations? Fremantle Football Club (FFC), one of the Western Australian based AFL teams, offers a fascinating case study in this regard. FFC has underperformed since its inclusion in the

AFL in 1995, and rarely met the expectations of the league, the club's supporters and the wider football community. It is postulated that FFC's under performance is a result of poor management decisions as a consequence of muddled strategies. It is also proposed that these muddled strategies, in turn, are a result of a frequently fragmented and occasionally dysfunctional culture and identity.

1.4.1. The Case of The Fremantle Football Club

In organizations where competition and rivalry is endemic, the influence of culture and identity becomes a particularly interesting issue. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of culture and identity, this research investigated the operations of the FFC, a professional sporting organization in the Australian Football League (AFL). This research project could not investigate all sixteen AFL clubs because of the depth of enquiry required. Therefore, the research focuses on a single club, and whilst comparisons of the broad results may be possible with similar organizations and competitions, the findings are specific to FFC.

The initial aim was to determine if Fremantle's underperformance since its inception could be explained by a weak or inappropriate culture and a confused identity. However, this approach begged many other questions, the main one being:

How was Fremantle's organizational culture and identity formed, how did they evolve, and how did they influence its organizational structure, strategies, behaviour and performance?

The question was framed around organizational performance as a whole as distinct from the playing results. Therefore, this research was directed to both on-field and off-field performance. This raises the further question of whether it is possible for a sports organization to perform well off the field even if it was not performing well on the field? A particular point of interest was that although competition was a part of its core business, FFC, like all AFL clubs, operates in a heavily regulated environment with external controls over the way it went about its business of recruiting players and what it paid them.

1.5. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research project is informed by four distinct features of AFL clubs that are generally not present together in other organizations:

-
1. AFL clubs do not seek to put their competitors out of business in the same way as commercial organizations do. They compete at an industry level against other sports, but otherwise they seek to preserve the sporting competition. Their industry environment, in fact provides for them to maintain support for their competitors.
 2. AFL clubs rely heavily on their identity as a means of differentiating their club from the others;
 3. AFL clubs, unlike most commercial operations operate in a heavily regulated environment in which rules are imposed upon them, by their governing body, that are designed to restrict their off-field and on-field competitiveness. Not only do they have to perform within the rules of the game but organizationally, they are regulated by such things as the number of players they can contract, how much they can pay their players, how they recruit their players and how they exchange or trade players;
 4. AFL clubs have various stakeholders from supporters through to sponsors with either a personal or financial interest in club performance. These interests are directed to improving the performance of their club, even though they may have a different focus. Fremantle was no different except that voting rights or participatory roles were not available to its supporters when the club was established in 1994.

Within an environment where the aim of the governing body is to put all clubs on an equal footing, the management of the club's internal organization becomes critical in improving its performance and gaining a competitive edge.

1.5.1. The Research Problem

Fremantle has not achieved the level of performance expected by its core stakeholders, which include the AFL Commission, the Western Australian Football Commission (its effective owner) its supporters and itself. It begs the question as to whether its management practices, or ways of doing things, were appropriate to the regulated environment in which it was operating. Therefore, the research aims to determine how its organizational culture and identity influence its capacity to perform within a regulated environment. The research problem is addressed through the study and application of organizational culture and identity theories to an organizational diagnosis

of the club to explore how its culture and identity are related to its core values, purpose and strategic direction and overall behaviour.

1.5.2. The Research Questions

The research problem was deconstructed to generate questions that would lead to an explanation of what culture and identity are and how they work within sporting organizations, specifically Fremantle. As previously noted, the broad question is:

How was Fremantle’s organizational culture and identity formed, how did they evolve, and how did they influence its organizational strategies, behaviour and performance?

Implicit in this broad question were three specific questions that needed to be answered:

1. *How was Fremantle’s organizational culture and identity formed and who or what contributed to its formation?*
2. *How did Fremantle’s culture and identity evolve as the organization developed and how were they manifested?*
3. *How did the organizational culture, identity and strategy of Fremantle drive its organizational structure, strategies and behaviour and subsequently influence the club’s overall performance?*

The contention is that organizational culture and identity subtly permeates all aspects of the FFC organization, and as such they became embedded within the organizational structure which influenced its behaviour and performance. Central to this contention is that organizational design and structure are derived from the organization’s strategy, which in turn is driven by the club’s organizational culture and identity. Mintzberg (1999) support this contention by describing the six basic parts of an organization’s structure and how it was developed and overseen by “*a strategic apex*”. Quinn (1999:3) likewise suggests that strategy “*marshals and allocates an organization’s resources into a unique and viable posture based on its internal competencies...*” This research project proposes that the operation of an organization’s strategic apex, and its allocation of resources, can only be understood by reference to its underlying culture and identity.

1.5.3. Sample Selection

The population of interest for this research is the sixteen clubs that participate in the AFL competition. The sample selected from this population is a Western Australian

AFL club, Fremantle Football Club Limited. FFC was selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, and fundamentally, FFC was both a new organization and new to the AFL competition in 1995. Secondly, it was accessible to the researcher. Thirdly, the club agreed to participate in the research and finally, it could be accessed within the time and cost constraints of the research.

1.5.4. The Research Analysis

To answer the questions posed in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.6.2, the research explored the relationship between FFC's organizational culture and identity and the way they influenced the club's strategic options and responses to its regulated environment. The problem required analysis of Fremantle's organizational designs, structures and processes since it was through these that strategies are implemented (Mintzberg, 1999). The analysis was framed by a conceptual template adopted by Collins and Porras (Collins & Porras, 1998) research into eighteen visionary companies organizations that enabled an organizational diagnosis to run concurrently with the data collection. Cresswell (1998) and Corley (2004) support this process as a thorough means of analysing the data to help define and focus further lines of enquiry.

1.5.5. The Research Aims and Objectives

The specific tasks that guided the investigation are as follows:

1. *Map Fremantle's organizational culture and identity in the context and environment in which it operated;*
2. *Examine and record how Fremantle's organizational culture and identity evolved and was manifested in its management strategy, internal processes and strategic responses to its context and environment;*
3. *Categorise and distinguish the different stages Fremantle's culture as it evolved and was manifested across its entire history between 1994 and 2004; and,*
4. *Assess Fremantle's organizational performance during the same period and identify the values that underpinned its culture and identity that either enabled, or prevented, appropriate responses to its environment.*

These objectives are significant because there is a lack of substantive research on the influence of organizational culture and identity in sports organizations. It is anticipated

that this research will make substantial and original contributions to management theory and practice by extending our understanding of organizational culture and identity in sporting organizations.

1.5.6. Key Concepts

Several key concepts were identified to provide operational definitions for this research:

1.5.6.1.Sports Organizations

Using general management definitions of organizations from Daft (1998) and Robbins & Barnwell (1998), Slack succinctly define sports organizations as:

...a social entity involved in the sports industry; it is goal directed, with a consciously structured activity system and a relatively identifiable boundary (Slack, 1997:5).

1.5.6.2.Organizational Culture

Schein's analysis for organizational culture forms the basis of the cultural elements of the research which are explained later. It is appropriate to adopt his definition of organizational culture, which is:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1985:12).

1.5.6.3.Subcultures

As the work on organizational culture developed in the 1980s, various eminent researchers investigated its meaning and influence. Arising out of these studies Van Maanen and Barley define subcultures as:

A subset of an organization's members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group within an organization, share a set of problems commonly defined to be the problems of all and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group (J. Van Maanen & Barley, 1985:38).

1.5.6.4.Organizational Identity

As the literature review demonstrates, there is not a clearly accepted operational definition of organizational identity. However, the following conceptualisation provides a context for differentiating identity from culture whilst still recognising their close relationship. It emerged in conversations with Hatch, whose models are intrinsic to the organizational identity elements of this research,

An organization's identity is the aspect of culturally embedded sense making that is self focussed. It defines who we are in relation to the larger social system to which we belong. Although culture provides the system of rules that defines a social system, identity provides the contextual understanding of those rules that govern people's understanding of themselves in relation to the larger social system. (Fiol, Hatch, & Golden-Biddle, 1998:56)

1.5.6.5.Strategy

Strategy is an integral management principle that is addressed from many perspectives (A. D. Brown, 1998; Porter, 1980; Slack, 1997; J. R. Turner, 1999). However, a definition of strategy suitable for organizations generally, and sports organizations in particular, that contributes to a contextual understanding of strategy in the environmental context of an organization is provided by Mintzberg and Quinn (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998:3). They explain that strategy can be considered as “*five Ps*”; a plan; a ploy; a pattern; a position; and a perspective, which are interrelated and provide an understanding of strategy as an eclectic mix of all five:

A strategy is a pattern or plan that integrates an organization's major goals, policies, and action sequences into a cohesive whole. A well formulated strategy helps marshal and allocate an organization's resources into a unique and viable posture based on its relative internal competencies and shortcomings, anticipated changes in the environment and contingent moves by intelligent opponents (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998:3)

1.5.6.6.Environment

A definition for environment in an organizational context is provided from critical research on culture and identity (Hatch, 1997:63). Hatch's perspective on environments is that an organization exists in several environments and that the environment consists

of a number of elements. As a result, an organization has to account for its inter and intra organizational networks, the general environment and the international or global environment. The environment is the space within which an organization (either an entire organization or a sub unit of a larger organization, e.g. the accounts department) performs its functions which, as a result, become embedded within the organization. The environment has been conceptualised as:

...an entity that lies outside the boundaries of an organization. It influences organizational outcomes by imposing constraints and demanding adaptation as the price of survival (Hatch, 1997:63).

1.5.6.7.System

Systems theory is a vast body of knowledge which cannot be explained in a brief paragraph and while not the primary focus of this thesis, it is pivotal to an understanding of organizational interdependencies. A concise conceptualisation of a system is provided by Robbins and Barnwell as:

...a set of interrelated and interdependent parts arranged in a manner that produces a unified whole (1998).

1.5.6.8.Organization Design and Structure

Organizational structures define and allocate responsibilities from which it can be determined who interacts with whom, and who has authority over whom (Schein, 1992; J. R. Turner, 1999). The organizational structure reflects the degree of complexity, formalisation, and centralisation within the organization and its processes (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Slack provides a definition of a sporting organization structure as:

...the manner in which the tasks of a sport organization are broken down and allocated to employees or volunteers, the reporting relationships among these role holders, and the coordinating and controlling mechanisms used within the sport organization. (1997, p. 6:6).

For any AFL club, the structure shapes and defines the hierarchy of roles and tasks, the vertical chain of command and reporting relationships. It also shapes the functional relationships and emphasises the control and coordination of tasks.

1.5.6.9.Performance

Performance also needs to be conceptualised in context of the organization and the means by which performance will be measured. It is suitable to this research that it be conceptualised in the context of a sporting organization. As such, it is an evaluation of how well staff achieve their functional and organizational objectives, or key performance indicators (KPIs). Performance evaluates what staff say they will do and compares it with what they actually achieve (Slack, 1997). Therefore the definition of performance created for this research which recognised performance as a relative measure is:

The degree to which the element of the organization under scrutiny achieves its objectives.

1.6. CONCLUSION

This section identified the nature and purpose of the research and explained how it will make an original and substantial contribution to scholarly knowledge of organizational culture and identity. It also reviewed the key terms and concepts and how they will be used to explore the structure, strategy, behaviours and performance of a sports organization.

This section also examined the conceptual relationships between organizational culture and identity and organizational structure, strategy, behaviour and performance. The relationships were then linked to the organizational environment, noting that an effective organizational culture and identity will fit the context in which they are situated. In the case of the AFL, a successful club is likely to have a widely shared and explicit culture and identity that enables it to gain a competitive edge in a highly regulated environment. However, this begs the question as to what specific assumptions, values and beliefs will give it this competitive edge. This is a crucial issue to address, since culture and identity will be embedded within the club's strategies and revealed in its overall operations.

Finally, it was noted that there is very little evidence of previous research into organizational culture and identity in professional sports organizations in Australia or overseas. Therefore, it was established that this was a subject worthy of investigation.

In the next section a review of the literature relevant to the areas of research identified will be undertaken to provide a review of the overarching theories, concepts and findings that can be used to frame and guide the research project.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

We pass the word around; we ponder how the case is put by different people, we read the poetry; we meditate over the literature; we play the music; we change our minds; we reach an understanding. Society evolves this way, not by shouting each other down, but by the unique capacity of unique, individual human beings to comprehend each other.

Lewis Thomas, author, biologist, physician (1913 - 1993)

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will review the literature on organizational culture, organizational identity and their application to sporting organizations, focussing on the research questions and how to investigate them within a professional sporting organization. The literature will be used to provide a conceptual space in which to situate the research topic.

As a starting point, it is important to note that sporting organizations have recently and increasingly focussed on adapting and responding to their business environment, achieving new levels of professionalism, and building communities for all their stakeholders. This is surprising since sporting organizations are competitive in an organizational sense, as well as in terms of sporting rivalry which requires them to remain adaptable and responsive in both areas to create or maintain a competitive edge. However, the current body of knowledge on the relationship between cultures and identities, and strategy, structure, behaviour and performance of sporting organizations is limited. The literature review begins with an examination of organization theory as the overarching theory within which organization culture and organizational identity theories reside. Once this contextual review is completed, a more detailed assessment of culture and identity will follow. The literature review will finish with a discussion of empirical studies that consider the impact of culture and identity on organizational behaviour and performance.

2.2. ORGANIZATION THEORY

2.2.1. Introduction

The literature review begins with an analysis of the evolution of organizational theory. This approach is taken on the grounds that organization theory is the prime body of knowledge that contextualises the theories on organizational culture and organizational identity. It is also the body of knowledge that provides an appropriate research approach (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Hatch, 1997; Jackson & Morgan, 1978; Lynch &

Dicker, 1998; McKinley, Mone, & Moon, 1999; Mintzberg, 1999; Pfeffer, 1997; Pugh, 1997; R. E. Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Robbins, 1987, , 2001; Schein, 1985). Threading its way through the background of organization theory is a variety of the schools and streams of management thought that frequently illuminate the concepts of culture and identity.

2.2.2. Conceptual Distinctions

Organizational research has two principal perspectives, firstly, organization theory and secondly, organization behaviour. Organizational theory is the major focus here because of its over-arching themes and concepts. Organizational behaviour, on the other hand, focuses on the actions and impact of individuals and groups within an organization (Jackson & Morgan, 1978; Robbins, 2001; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998; Slack, 1997). Organizational culture and identity is more concerned with the impact of actions upon the organization as a whole and like organizational theory therefore takes a macro, or holistic approach that considers the strategy, structure, behaviour and performance of the organization (Daft, 1998; Hatch, 1997; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). In this instance the unit of analysis is the organization.

Organization theory allows for the examination of an entire organization, taking into account its context and operational environment and it was the paradigm within which organizational culture and identity exists. The models of organizational culture and organizational identity adopted for this research combine the paradigms and perspectives from sociology and psychology. The intention here is to discuss their contributions to understanding the concepts considered in this research. Brown (1998:4) pointed out that no field of management inquiry develops “*ex vacuo*”, or from nowhere; they all build on what has gone before. Hence, the field of organizational theory, organizational culture and organizational identity are regarded as evolutionary concepts developed from other foundation theories and principles.

The first thing to be said about organizations is that they are social entities structured consciously as bounded activity systems that unite organizational members operating to achieve common goals and objectives (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Research into organizations can therefore range from the analysis of individuals making up a collective; of the collective itself; and of the organization as a whole. The latter studies focus on an organization and the position it holds in its respective industry or, how it compares to other organizations in a similar position. The organization comprises the

business, its staff and the way it is structured through to how it develops meaningful strategies, structures and behaviours to enhance its performance. Such holistic organizational studies form the basis of organization theory.

2.2.3. Core Features of Organizational Theory

Organization theory is not a unitary paradigm. It is an aggregation of multiple theories and schools of thought that have developed over time (A. D. Brown, 1998; Hatch, 1997; McKinley, Mone, & Moon, 1999). It is grounded in research, from a number of perspectives and accumulated in various theories developed over approximately, the last one hundred years and there are as many definitions as there are theories of organization theory (Daft, 1998; Pugh, 1997; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998):

Daft defines organization theory as:

A way of thinking about organizations through patterns of knowledge, accumulated from theories, concerning the investigation and analysis of organizations (Daft, 1998:20).

Pugh regards it as:

...the body of thinking and writing which addresses itself to the problem of how to organize (1997:xii).

Robbins and Barnwell define it as:

The discipline that studies the structure and design of organizations.
(1998:6).

A synthesis of these statements leads to the following definition:

A discipline founded in a body of thinking and writing, that addresses the design and structure of organizations and their processes, through patterns of knowledge gained from the analysis and investigation of organizations.

Theories do not replace earlier ones but complement and supplement their predecessors in an evolution of theories aggregated in a wide variety of philosophy of how organizations should be managed (Daft, 1998; Hatch, 1997; Jackson & Morgan, 1978; Pfeffer, 1997; Pugh, 1997; R. E. Quinn & Cameron, 1988; Robbins, 1987; M Weber,

1946). The evolution of theories is driven by organizations concerned about how best to enhance their performance.

2.2.4. History of Organization Theory

There is a general vagueness about the exact origins of organization theory. However, it is clear that organizations existed well before research was conducted or theories developed about their operations. Religious organizations, for example, have existed for at least 5000 years and the Egyptians had a high level of understanding organizational concepts whilst constructing pyramids (Jackson & Morgan, 1978). Shafritz and Ott (1996) provide a chronology of organizations ranging from 1491 BC to 1994 AD and credit Smith's (1776) "*division of labour*" economic theory, in a pin manufacturing business, as one of the first recorded studies of organizations and organizational theory. The recording of theories such as Smith's had a fundamental effect on the formation and management of organizations by prompting further studies and theoretical development.

The Industrial Revolution was a catalyst for the further widespread study of organizations, what they represent, and the way they do things (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). The industrialisation of the eighteenth century accelerated the development of organizations because of new organizational groupings required to implement new technology. As organizations developed, so did interest in what could enhance their performance. From this interest emanated a need to research how organizations could best be structured to achieve an optimum relationship between quality, production and profit. Less concern was shown in the behavioural aspects of managing organizations (Daft, 1998; Hatch, 1997; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998).

Various chronologies of the evolution of organization theory agree that most research has occurred since the start of the twentieth century (Hatch, 1997; Lynch & Dicker, 1998; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Robbins and Barnwell (1998) provide a matrix of four theoretical classifications to describe the evolution of organization theory whilst Lynch and Dicker (1998) offer two classifications ("*modernist*" and "*postmodernist*"). The classifications are useful because Robbins and Barnwell (1998) advise that by looking at what has gone before we can make sense of organization theory as it is today and thereby establish a framework for this research.

Hatch (1997) is unequivocal about the different “*perspectives*” of organization theory. Hatch presents a coherent timetable for the development of organization theory with four classifications. The intention is not to detail the perspectives but to provide a brief outline of the development of organization theory and its relevance to this research project.

2.2.4.1.The Classical Perspective (c1900 onwards)

The classical perspective represents the first serious study of organizations, at the start of the twentieth century. It is split into two schools of thought, the “*Scientific*” stream pioneered by Frederick Taylor and the “*Administrative Principles*” stream pioneered by Henri Fayol (Daft, 1998; Hodgetts, 1986; Robbins, 2001).

Taylor (1912) advocated four principles of scientific management believing his approach based on “*initiative and incentive*”, would generate better and bigger results. Taylor’s principles focussed on the management of manual labour saying that managers should gather intellectual knowledge based on their experience; managers should scientifically select and progressively develop workmen based on their limitations and possibilities; managers should then bring together the science and the scientifically selected workmen and there would be an equal division of the actual work between workmen and management.

Fayol, the pioneer of “*Administrative Principles*”, came from a mining engineering background and his principles were based on his experience from turning an ailing company into a successful operation (Hatch, 1997). His principles explored the administrative elements of managing organizations and he believed management functions relied on the personnel that executed them. Fayol (1916) published what he said were the fourteen principles of management, centring on issues such as span of control, management by exception, departmentalisation, unity of command and hierarchy. However, like Taylor, the idea that there was one best way to manage an organization proved to be too idealistic. Notwithstanding the idealism, Fayol’s approach underlies much of what has since been theorised on the social structure of organizations.

As well as Taylor and Fayol, other examples from the classical perspective are Marx, Durkheim and Weber. Marx’s contribution to organization theory was his “*Theory of Capital*” and the belief that control was the essential element of organization theory

(Hatch, 1997). Durkheim made a significant contribution to understanding culture and identity through the concepts of symbols, myths and rituals, which are important to understanding social reality (A. D. Brown, 1998). Weber was widely regarded for examining the structure of organizations and theorising the authority and legitimacy of bureaucracies through his explanation of their functional characteristics (Max Weber, 1924).

Characteristics of the classical perspective were the concepts of organizations as precise, scientific, entities to which adjustments could be made after careful scientific study (Daft, 1998). The driving force of the era was the mechanisation of industry with an emphasis on engineering for complex manufacturing processes driven by the Industrial Revolution (Hatch, 1997). Consequently, organizational studies were usually in the context of economics and engineering.

Consistent with the concept of organizations as precise entities is the notion of organizations as closed systems. Systems theory advocates that closed systems can adjust and change independently of their operating environment and are not open to their environments or their effects (Daft, 1998; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Robbins suggests therefore that they were essentially bureaucratic organizations focussing on mechanical efficiency. Organizations developed with a classical perspective were often described as machine like, reflecting the emphasis of industry at the time (Hatch, 1997). The classical perspective prevailed until the late 1940s and 1950s when economies were devastated after the Second World War.

2.2.4.2.The Modernist Perspective (c1950s onwards)

The modernist perspective counters the closed system approach and recognises that organizations have to operate within their environment and are characterised by a structure organized around conflicting stakeholders that vie for power and control. They are often described as an organism, or living system, that performs functions necessary to their survival. Like the classical perspective, this approach reflects the emphasis of industry at the time (Daft, 1998; Hatch, 1997; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Von Bertalanffy developed his General Systems Theory in 1968 within this perspective. Von Bertalanffy was keen to explain scientific phenomena from their simplest constituent (atoms and molecules), through to their most complex constituents (groups, societies and organizations) (Hatch, 1997). Von Bertalanffy's work emanated from social systems theories of the late 1940s. Similarly, Parsons (1951) developed “*The*

Social System" by applying its principles to social organizations, viewing them as systems that existed within and dependent upon, their own environment (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). The resultant "*Systems Theory*" was part of the fundamental approach to study an organization's culture, identity and strategy, which must fit the environment and it was strongly identified with the modernist perspective.

Systems Theory

Systems theory underpins this research and it is crucial that its role be recognised and understood. Kerzner describes systems theory as an analytical theory of organizations that:

...attempts to solve problems by looking at the total picture rather than through an analysis of the individual components (1998:61).

An open system is a set of interrelated organizational elements where each element affects all of the other elements and each element depends upon the system as a whole, to survive (Cummings, 1980; Daft, 1998; Hatch, 1997; J. P. Lewis, 1998; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998; Roman, 1986; Tuman, 1988). Biological analogies clarify the concept. The human body is a system made up of kidneys, a heart, a liver, skin and other components. All are dependent upon each other but they all rely on the body as a whole to breathe and survive. Hence, systems theory highlights that organizations operate with elements that contribute to their internal and external environments, which influence their behaviour. Amongst these elements are the culture and identity of the organization.

Systems theory also highlights the differentiation and integration of the parts of the organization (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Hence, it recognises the specialisation of departments (differentiation) that must work together (integration), for an organization to be effective. Application of the same principles to an organization clarifies how different departments rely upon each other to function and they all need the organization to survive.

In 1956, Boulding postulated a hierarchy of systems on nine levels, ranging from static structures to transcendental systems (Daft, 1998). On this scale, organizations are rated at number eight, representing complex systems that were open and socio-technical, or made up of people that have to operate in diverse functions with common objectives that cannot operate independently of their environments.

Environments, Environmental Factors and Stakeholders

Organizational systems operate within an organizational environment, which influences the internal processes and outcomes of the organization. The environment helps determine the outcomes since success or failure can depend on factors within it that are outside the direct control of the managers (Cleland, 1999).

The environments within which an organization must operate have two facets:

1. Outside the functional system but internal to the organization; and,
2. The wider general environment outside the scope and influence of the organization.

Within the general organizational environment, several groupings or sub-environments exist that have the potential to influence the organization. They must be identified because they also help identify the stakeholders in the organizations (Cleland, 1999; Kerzner, 1998). Amongst the environments identified are:

- i. The economic and market environments that include the finance markets, trading conditions, product market and competition, labour market, skills base, industry sector culture, shareholders, investment, trade unions and insurance markets;
- ii. A technological environment or knowledge of how to do things; a social environment that includes attitudes, desires, expectations, intelligence, education, beliefs and customs of people in a given group or society eg in a sporting organization they might be the fans, members, supporters and sponsors;
- iii. A political/legal environment consisting of laws, statutes, regulations, government agencies and their actions which affect all enterprises and include professional regulations, standards, health and safety;
- iv. An ethical environment which is closely aligned to values and belief and include sets of generally accepted and practiced standards of personal and professional conduct; and,
- v. A physical environment such as office facilities, training ground as well as the impact of weather and climate.

Such environments are composed of stakeholders who have an interest in that particular environment and knowing stakeholders' interests allows an organization to influence the stakeholders, as well as stakeholders to influence the organization. Managers in business organizations must identify the environments in which the organization

operates and continually attempt to shape those environments to accomplish their organizational roles. However, in sports organizations and the AFL in particular, the broader general environment is imposed upon them, thus restricting their strategic options.

2.2.4.3.The Symbolic-Interpretivist Perspective (c1980s onwards)

The theory most widely recognised with the symbolic-interpretivist perspective is the “*Enactment Theory*” of Weick (1969). Weick says that people looking at organizations create in it what they want to see in it. The central theme is that the staff of an organization brings events and structures into existence, setting them in motion as a part of their everyday activities. Similarly, people acting within organizations produce structures that were not there before they took their action (Weick, 1969). Creating something that you expect to see is known as reification and means that reality is socially constructed. This is fundamental to this research which relies on the proposition that culture and identity are socially constructed as a result of staff consensus about the way things are done. Berger and Luckman (1966), with a similar approach to Weick’s, say that social orders that are created by human interaction and understanding, are developed through shared histories and experiences. Enactment is important to understanding culture because it looks at the material and symbolic actions taken by staff who perform certain actions based on familiarity or previous experience. The familiarity gives them preconceptions about how actions should be performed and what the outcome will be. That is, it supports basic underlying assumptions of having done things a certain way before and that worked so it is the way it should be done.

The symbolic-interpretivist perspective recognises that what we understand about cultures, identities and environments is not always real or tangible. Culture, identity and environments are constructs we create and use to help us make sense of organizations. The symbolic-interpretivist perspective raises our consciousness of the organization to make it seem objective. This means that as we are continually creating and reconstructing it in our own mind. Therefore, we are conscious of it and we change it through the reconstruction process.

From the symbolic-interpretivist’s perspective, organizations are open systems. Therefore, symbolic interpretivism also recognises the role of the interrelated parts of the organization that has to operate within the environment in which it exists. Such organizations have culture as their main interest and regard the organization as a

conglomerate of meanings created by the staff through shared history, experiences and values (Hatch, 1997). They take a semiotic view of their organization from within through its symbols, artifacts, ceremonies and other objective material enabling them explore their culture.

The symbolic-interpretivist perspective is the approach adopted in this research. It is suitable because symbolic interpretivism is socially-constructed, as are culture and identity, and organizations that focus on their culture have a symbolic-interpretivist outlook. It also recognises the open system nature of organizations and the importance of adapting to their environments.

2.2.4.4. The Postmodernist Perspective (c 1990s onwards)

Postmodernists deconstruct elements of organizational structures and use them to create new ones (Hatch, 1997). This means post-modern organizational designs and structures contrast with the functionalist style of the modernist perspective which is grounded in the past. Postmodernists believe that our knowledge of an organization is made up of so many independent elements that it can never possibly form one complete unified organization. Such an approach is consistent with an exploration of organizational culture and identity which focuses on many interdependent variables in an organization. This contrasts with the modernists who believe that you can have one unified organization which can be continually refined only with great difficulty. The aim of the postmodernist approach is to be flexible and adapt to a continually changing and complex environment (Daft, 1998).

Postmodernism shapes current practices and thinking in the field of organization theory. It relies on horizontal relationships and the empowerment and equality of all staff rather than the vertical hierarchical approach of Fayol. In an organizational sense, postmodernists explore organizational set-ups to challenge existing methods to see if cultures, identities, behaviours, and strategies, can be, or need to be, changed to enhance performance. In this sense it has a role in this research by exploring existing set ups to see if and how they may need to change.

2.2.5. Application of Organization Theory to the Research

The exploration of an organization's culture and identity adopted in this research draws upon all four perspectives of organization theory briefly described above. The classical era underpins contemporary theory about organizations and aids in the understanding of

control and power in organizations used to deliver organizational objectives. However, classicists treat organizations as isolated entities that do not interact with their surroundings or their stakeholders. That is not the case with sporting organizations since competition regulators enforce many regulations and influence performance, subject to the influence of many stakeholders. Further, sporting organizations interact with many other external stakeholders such as fans, supporters, sponsors and the local community. Therefore, it is necessary to incorporate the modernist approach, to complement the classicist focus, for its contribution of systems theory. Systems theory advocates the need to look at an organization in the context of its sub-systems within the several organizational environments in which it exists. It is important to make sense of the role, influence and impact that members of those environments have on the well being of an organization and its achievements.

The symbolic-interpretivist approach provides a fundamental approach to understanding the culture and identity of sporting organizations from the data that will be observed. The propensity for people to act in a way that has proven to work for them before and adopt the practice again helps analyse data on an organization's organizational culture and identity. Once analysed it assists in the interpretation and understanding in the organizational context of the staff who construct reality to suit particular roles and positions.

Finally, the postmodernist era provides an insight to the analysis of the organization holistically. It is important that the analysis is of the entire organization and how it performs rather than on the separate performance of individual units. The analysis includes deconstructing what is found to make sense of what it is constructed from and then reconstructing it to suit the particular circumstances that the analysis uncovers.

2.2.6. Summary

This section described the foundation theories that underpin this research. It provided the framework for the research and presented a précis of the history of those theories. It is from this broad theory that organizational culture and identity theories and knowledge, have emanated. Subsequently it was explained how and why these theories are appropriate for an investigation into the organizational culture and identity of a sporting organization. It was explained that theories of organizational culture and identity do not stand in isolation but reside within a framework of broader organizational theories. However, both organizational culture and identity also have

their own specific theoretical sub-sets and the next section will outline the theoretical background to organizational culture.

2.3. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE THEORY

2.3.1. Introduction

This section will introduce the concept of organizational culture and demonstrates the connections that culture has to identity, which is addressed later. Definitions and descriptions of organizational culture are provided from the symbolic-interpretivist approach adopted for this research.

Three relevant symbolic-interpretivists models will be presented, the first to assist in understanding what culture is (Schein, 1992), the second to assist in the interpretation of culture and how it operates within an organization (Hatch, 1997), and the final model to explain how culture and identity interact and rely on each other (Hatch, 2002). Explanations will be provided on the relevance and appropriateness of these models and approaches to this research project.

Organizational culture has been recognised for a number of years by organizational theorists as a means of analysing organizations and their performance (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Hatch, 1993; , 2002; Hofstede, 1980; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Ravasi & Rekom, 2003; Schein, 1985; , 1999; Schultz, Hatch, & Larsen, 2000). Whilst researchers have differed in their research approach, they agree on the importance of understanding the effect and impact of an organization's culture and its links to identity as a means by which an organization can make sense of what is going on within the organization, its employees and stakeholders. This means that organizations have been better able to make sense of how well elements of their organization operate and interact. Organizations now look to their organizational culture to make sense of how things are done and the perceptions about the organization that are generated as a result. The demand for organizations to be adaptable and responsive to change so that they remain competitive in their business environments has intensified this need for organizations to make sense of themselves. Culture and identity are important in this context because they can both facilitate an organization's adaptability and responsiveness to change, but just as importantly they can impede change. Under these conditions, culture and identity can act as a barrier to, rather than a conduit for change.

2.3.2. Culture

The term “*culture*” is an anthropological term accredited to Edward B Tylor who described culture in 1871 as:

...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society (A. D. Brown, 1998:4).

Anthropology defines a culture as being the prevailing values and beliefs common to a group of people. Anthropologists concern themselves with trying to make sense of how individuals and groups of individuals in relation to their setting and the context of that setting (A. D. Brown, 1998). Organizational theorists adapt the anthropological standpoint when interpreting behaviours of individuals grouped by their belonging to an organization. One of the earliest attempts was to recognise the influence that the individuals had on their organizations and what they were doing (M Weber, 1946).

Sociology is also a significant source for culture’s beliefs and Durkheim’s contribution of symbols, myths and rituals as a means of understanding culture from a sociological perspective has already been noted but culture remains of interest to contemporary sociologists. Weber (1978) proposes that cultural mechanisms be used to achieve social order and restraint, not control by direct and forced means. Bourdieu (1977) views symbolic violence as a form of group control through the imposition of culture in a way that the group considers legitimate. In a similar vein, Foucault discusses culture as a means by which power and control is exercised over members of a social organization (Pfeffer, 1995). Another significant contribution is made from sociology noting that culture is ubiquitous and therefore is not extraordinary. Sociologist Raymond Williams is recorded as saying,

Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact (Higgins, 2001:11).

More importantly for the application of culture in an organizational sense, Williams continues,

Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the

pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land (Higgins, 2001:11).

The relevance for organizations is that they are the societies in which we work and express ourselves. Consequently, their efficient and effective operation relies upon us finding common meanings and directions to develop them.

2.3.3. Types of Culture

Culture is a condition which, according to Williams (1995), exists through three forms of values, “*emergent*”, “*dominant*”, and “*residual*”. Williams argues that cultural values have to be interpreted using symbolic meanings of rites, actions, ceremonies and other artifacts (as compared to measurement, for example, of competing values) to understand the many variables that contribute to complex processes in societies as well as historically variable elements of the culture. Emergent, dominant and residual values can co-exist in a culture at any given time, in any given setting.

Williams’s concepts provide a context to understand how a culture operates and how its many variables interact and compete as the society or organization seeks to maintain stability whilst undergoing change. The topic of organizational change and how culture impacts on it is excluded from this particular research. At any given time in an organization, certain cultural values become apparent as change takes place (emergent values) whilst other previously held values become marginal but still hold some meaning (residual values) and other values prevail as the primary means by which things are done (dominant values).

2.3.3.1. Emergent Values

An “*emergent*” value is a new belief and way of doing things within a particular society that differs from existing values and beliefs (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). For example, the sporting world has seen the emergence of professionalism in previously amateur elite sports such as Rugby Union and the public’s acceptance of professionalism represents an emerging value.

Therefore “*emergent*” refers to new meanings, beliefs and values; new ways of doing things; and new relationships formed by members of the society (organizational staff), which are continually changing and reforming. The difficulty interpreting an emergent value is identifying which new values and beliefs are new phases of an existing dominant culture as against those which are alternative and therefore,

emergent. Emergent values are different and to properly identify and understand them, compared to dominant and residual values, they rely on new structures and leaders to facilitate their emergence. Therefore, emergent values are identified by recognising new forms and structures as a way of doing things. Importantly, new structures and emergent values can allow dormant values to become less marginalized, or more accepted. The process of how emergent values become the accepted way of doing things (dominant) is discussed later but it is important to recognize that dominant values must have once been emergent values, but not all emergent values will become dominant. Clearly, though because an emergent culture is relative to dominant and residual cultures, the identification of an emergent culture can only be made in the context of dominant and residual cultures (Higgins, 2001).

2.3.3.2.Dominant Values

Dominant values are those values held by the majority of members of a society or organization (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). They are strongly held values and beliefs which most members believe to be the right way to behave and conduct relationships. Williams says they are held by the majority or because they are held by the ruling classes of the society, which in an organization are the CEOs and senior executives. They become dominant values as a consequence of the executives identifying them as the cause of past successes and because they continue to be relevant and successful within the current organization (Higgins, 2001).

Dominant values of an organization are its core ideology and an indication of how well its values fit its environment. The dominant values represent the beliefs and norms of an organization and they are articulated through its mission statements and objectives, ultimately underpinning an organization's philosophy, core ideology and, typically, its ethical values. Consequently, the organization is identified in a certain way because of its dominant cultural characteristics. If the values suit the environment then a cultural fit exists between the organization, its staff and the environment. If the values manifested in a culture do not suit its environment, then the organization may need to transform its dominant values to ensure its ongoing viability.

2.3.3.3.Residual Values

Residual values are those held from previous experiences that remain, often subconsciously, as a source of behaviour within the current culture (Booth, Colomb, &

Williams, 1995). An example is a new employee's values from his/her previous employment. Residual values are relatively easier to identify because they tend to be related to previous experiences and when an organization becomes something of a cultural void, the members of the organization will fall back to what has worked for them previously (their residual values). Hence, residual values represents the past successes and achievements which are utilised when the dominant values do not work.

Residual values reflect beliefs in a particular way of doing things that are often held for example by new staff with strong beliefs in the culture from which they have come that differ from their new setting, creating a potential for a clash of the cultures, often seen when organizations merge. Residual values also exist within an organization after the environment that made them dominant has been removed, for example, when an organization's leadership changes but the staff retain the values of the old leadership (Higgins, 2001).

2.3.4. Organizational Culture

Brown (1998) says that we should credit thinking of culture in organizational terms to Clifford Geertz. Geertz proposed the semiotic approach that looked at cultures through their symbols and language from within, or from "*the native's point of view*". He is best known for ethnographic studies into native Javanese cultures and subsequent writings about how to meaningfully interpret such cultures (Geertz, 1990). Significantly, for this research, Geertz's approach emphasises the symbolic attachments to artifacts when studying culture and cultural change.

Hatch (1997) notes that Geertz took a symbolic-interpretivist approach where culture starts from an assumption that it is a socially constructed reality. She emphasises the extent to which the concepts and themes in organizational culture are derived from their anthropological cousin. For example, she says, rites, rituals, myths, legends, stories and artifacts are all concepts developed for use in anthropological interpretations of culture. Sinclair (1993) notes that other records of culture's application to organizational thinking by theorists emanated in the 1960s and 1970s through Crozier (1964), Turner (1971), Argyris & Schon (1978) and Pettigrew (1979). Hofstede et al (1990) credits Pettigrew as raising awareness of and being responsible for the term "*Organizational Culture*", entering the academic literature in the 1960s and 1970s. It was the 1980s that saw management scholars adopt the concept of organizational (also known as corporate) culture (Hatch, 1993; Hinings, Thibault, Slack, & Kikulis, 1996). Associated with the

wide adoption of culture was research that suggested a link between an organization's values, culture and the degree of success the organization enjoys (Peters & Waterman, 1982). To some degree, Peters and Waterman's opinions have been contested because of the perceived lack of academic rigour in its methodology (Norburn, Birley, & Dun, 1984).

Hofstede (1980; , 1991) is pre-eminent for his work in the field of organizational culture across national cultures, in particular his study of how IBM operated in different countries. In this work, Hofstede explored how behaviours and strategies were implemented across many national cultures.

Similarly, Schein is pre-eminent in the area of organizational cultural research that looks at implementing strategy in an organization and how that organization imparts its core values and purpose to all parts of the organization. Schein has conducted other extensive research of culture in organizations and articulated how to undertake a diagnosis of culture in an organizational framework (Schein, 1985). Schein's framework grew from a superficial identification of layers of culture by Sathe (1983). Schein also developed a process of organizational intervention to make sense of a culture through diagnosis before attempting to alter behaviour and improve performance (Schein, 1999). Schein's more recent research bemoans how culture has become a fad that is invariably over simplified by observers. His principal accusation is that little attention is paid to proper diagnosis and understanding of corporate culture. He points out that understanding culture is more than merely observing "*the way things are done*", which is far too simplified, to appreciate a culture properly. Schein contends that a superficial observation is often completed by looking at logos or artifacts of an organization and drawing conclusions without any basis in the values and beliefs of that organization. A more in-depth analysis will seek the hidden values and beliefs of individuals that contribute to the organization's culture and why those values and beliefs are held. Hofstede (1998) recognised a similar problem but was more optimistic stating that culture had now escaped the fad status of the 1980s and is now a basic concern for every organization. Both views have merit since organizations recognise culture as a fundamental element of their organization but their analyses have been inadequate. Sinclair (1993) suggests culture was at least used effectively to establish what people believe about how things work and how those beliefs are manifested in physical outcomes and people's behaviour within an organization. Such a description is useful

since it indicates the complexity of the many intangible facets of culture. These include *beliefs* held by individuals, how they *think* things work, *interpreting* their behaviour, *understanding* of physical outcomes like artifacts and what those artifacts *symbolise*.

Contemporary researchers suggest that culture can do more than make a company successful in the short term (Collins & Porras, 1998). Collins and Porras discuss several significant organizational cultural concepts that identify and explain what they term “*visionary*” organizations and the influence those concepts have on the behaviour, values and beliefs of individuals in an organization. Collins and Porras explore how some organizations have prospered over long periods, through multiple product cycles and multiple generations of leaders, whilst other could not sustain their prosperity. They assert that the reason for this is that organizations manage themselves through their organizational culture by imparting, “...*timeless core values and purpose*” across their entire organization. The consideration of culture in terms of timelessness and enduring over long periods of time is an introduction to how culture influences organizational identity. Therefore, it is necessary that the core values and purpose of an organization are explored and understood to see if their behaviours and strategies are appropriate and explain how they perform as an organization.

The core values and purpose of an organization, through its culture, may enable organizations to create an environment and systems that attracts the best people, allowing them all to perform to the best of their abilities. At the same time, if the values are bound up in rigid authority and myopic thinking, it can also produce an organizational culture that impedes good performance. Culture can have the same type of impact on sporting organizations. Indeed, it can be more significant than other commercial organizations because of their reliance on the performance of their human, rather than technical, resources. In sport organizations, the effective deployment of human resources is a critical means of achieving a competitive advantage and success (Pfeffer, 1999; A Smith & Stewart, 1999; Zellars & Fiorito, 1999).

2.3.4.1.Definition

Varied definitions of culture exist and one text cites fourteen definitions reflecting the variety of understanding of culture (A. D. Brown, 1998:7). Schein’s (1992) original organizational culture model is the basis of this research and consequently, it is appropriate to adopt his definition of organizational culture:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1992:12).

2.3.5. Levels of Organizational Culture

Schein's articulation of corporate culture recognises that there are three levels at which to diagnose an organization's culture (Schein, 1992). Schein expresses the levels and explains them by way of a model of organizational culture (Figure 2.1) that shows the three levels of culture that interact within a hierarchy (Schein, 1992). The three levels have been the focus of research into organizational research and they have prevailed across many definitions and concepts of organizational culture in the literature (Sackmann, 1992).

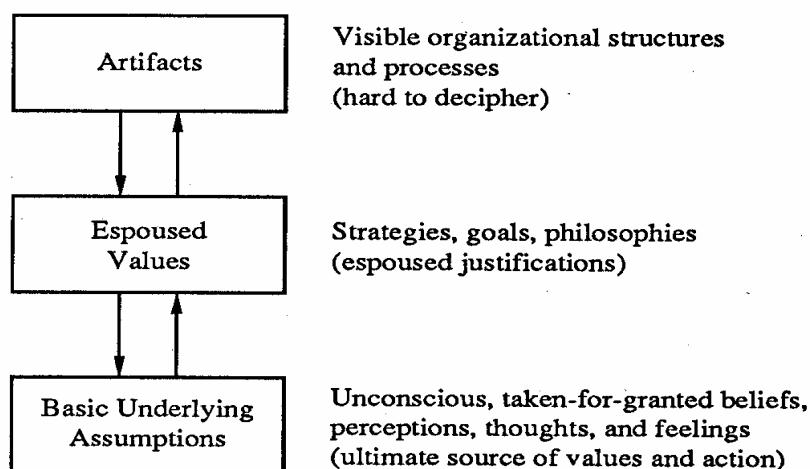


Figure 2.1 - The Three Levels of Culture

(Schein, 1992:17)

2.3.5.1. Artifacts

Artifacts are the surface, layer of an organization's culture that represent the visible manifestations of an organization's culture and are the superficial declaration of that culture. The importance of artifacts is as the tangible elements of an organization's culture. A sporting organization's office layout, jargon, physical environment, clothing, protocols, logos, rituals, ceremonies, myths, stories, and even its playing style, are all artifacts as well as any other visible representations of the organization. Stories are a

particularly powerful tool to make sense of the culture of an organization. Boje (1991) recounts the story of an IBM employee whose job it was to check identification passes, and who refused entry to the CEO because he had an incorrect identification badge. The CEO commended the employee for doing his job properly and went away to collect his proper pass. In this instance the organization clearly valued authority and working in a rule-bound existence. Stories also abound in the descriptions of Hewlett Packard's culture (Collins & Porras, 1998). Hence, artifacts are where the search for FFC's culture begins by observing, identifying and categorising in order to decipher them and thereby help to interpret the culture.

Schein warns that although observation of artifacts is easy, their meanings are often simplified despite being very difficult to decipher. To make sense of, and interpret them properly, time must be spent within the organization. In particular, Schein says it is inadvisable to try and interpret lower layers of a culture from the artifacts alone. The danger of doing so is that the researcher's own paradigms form part of the interpretations made and thereby run the risk of being biased interpretations. We may for example, interpret the people in an office where everyone dressed informally as lazy. This would occur if our own paradigm is that an organization should be formal and informality represented laziness, yet many companies, particularly sports organizations, now operate within such conditions without any hint of laziness.

It is important that artifacts are identified and classified because it assists in the diagnosis of an organization's context and environment that facilitate the mapping of an organization's culture. According to Schein, we can make sense of artifacts more clearly if they are understood and observed in the context of the day-to-day operations of the parts of the organization that generate the artifacts. Schein also warns that identification and classification of artifacts is a major task that creates difficulties because all facets of an organization generate their own artifacts that potentially conflict with each other.

2.3.5.2.Espoused Values

Espoused values are the initial values that a person holds about the way to solve a problem which are put forward by the individual as a solution or strategy to solve an organizational problem (Schein, 1985). An example in a sporting organization might be a coach who advocates punishment of the players for a poor performance. If for the next few occasions that they play they win or perform at a high level, punishment

becomes the coach's preferred method of addressing the problem because it works. The coach then continues to adopt punishment as a standard practice following poor performances because the team plays well following such punishments. The practice of punishing players for performing poorly is the coach's espoused value. When others in the coaching group agree, believing that punishment for a poor performance works, punishment following poor performances becomes a shared value. Continued acceptance over time sees it become an underlying assumption. The process of how an espoused value becomes an underlying assumption is represented as a two-way flow by the arrows in Figure 2.1 - The Three Levels of Culture. Improved performances are required and a punishment regime is put in place as an automatic response without going through any particular process to determine if that is the correct strategy.

The process of recognising a process as an automatic response (not necessarily consciously) is known as "*cognitive transformation*" (A. D. Brown, 1998; Schein, 1992). Cognitive transformation only occurs when the actions taken continue to be successful, thus implying it is the correct action to take in particular circumstances. The cognitive transformation (the recognition of a means by which to solve a particular problem) process can be observed within the group development process of new organizations. During the formation of any social group, the group defines certain issues or problems with which it was confronted and which had to be resolved. One or more individuals generate proposed solutions to the problems. Each of these individuals brings their own solution, which in some way reflects their own personal values about whether the solution was right or wrong and whether or not it would work.

Whilst Schein applied the taxonomy of "*cognitive transformation*" to organizational cultures, the process was described previously in anthropological terms as initially learning the purpose and meaning of what we are doing thereby enabling us to communicate within our society or culture (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). As individuals we test and reflect upon experiences as a result of implementing what we have learned and adapting the way we do things to suit us through modified meanings and communications. This means organizationally, that the staff has known meanings and directions, which they are trained to understand and use. However, they also adopt new meanings and directions to the way they do things as a result of testing the established meanings out and finding more effective meanings and directions by which to do things. In organizations the reflections and modifications are arrived at in the first

stage of a normal group development processes which are important processes in the development of cultures within organizations.

The early stages of group development are characterised by uncertainty and certain individuals prevail who influence the group behaviour, and therefore its culture (Robbins, 2001). These individuals are identified as leaders within the group and their suggestions takes prominence as potential solutions. However, the potential solutions have no validity until the group had accepted them as the solutions required. Therefore the espoused values of an organization are the values that perhaps only one person holds initially, about the way to solve a problem and that person put them forward as a solution or strategy to solve an organizational problem. Certain values do not undergo a cognitive transformation because they do not work, in which case they are summarily dismissed as potential solutions. However, other personal values proposed may not be capable of being tested and measured and the acceptance of these values depends on acceptance by the whole organization. Schein placed an emphasis on what he termed the “*social validation*” of values of this kind.

Social validation is the acceptance of an individual’s personal values by the group because the whole organization experienced their effect and was comfortable with the outcome. In effect social validation helps to facilitate the cognitive transformation process on issues of moral and ethical behaviour of individuals. Values accepted in this way often concern relationships, religion, ethics, aesthetics and serve to guide the staff’s moral and business conduct. They also assist in the training of new recruits as to how they should behave. In time as they prove to be effective, values undergo transformation without any real cognisance of the transformation, into the beliefs and norms of an organization and they are articulated through its mission statements and objectives. They ultimately underpin an organization’s philosophy and ideology and typically the ethical values of an organization. Sinclair (1993) identified that through the social validation process, culture is a primary method of the establishment and management of a company’s ethical position.

The concept of social validation gives an indication how culture can be used as a controlling mechanism for an organization. Those that fit an organization’s adopted position are identified as acceptable and those that do not are either removed, or identified early at the selection stage and rejected. Collins and Porras (1995; , 1996; , 1998) discuss this in the context of “*visionary*” organizations that are cult like or elitist.

People that did not fit were not welcome and those that were accepted embraced the “*cult*” of the organization.

The cognitive transformation and social validation of espoused values are important because they mean the values are seen to work and to be effective. Their successful adoption and effectiveness is what gives them credibility against imposed values that have no record of working or being effective. The danger of imposing values that have not undergone any cognitive transformation is that they remain as espoused values only and in such circumstances they became what people say but not what people do (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

2.3.5.3.Basic Underlying Assumptions

Basic underlying assumptions are the deepest, most ingrained form of culture. Schein (1992) indicates that basic underlying assumptions are what people in an organization make about how they should behave in their internal and external environments. They are based on proven techniques of how tasks should be completed that have worked so well and so often in the past that people no longer even question their appropriateness. In other words, they represent the way things are done in the organization. Schein warns that this level of culture is the most difficult to ascertain because it subtly permeates organizations and is intangible and tacit.

Basic underlying assumptions are the layer of an organization’s culture that fits with Bordieu’s use of sporting games as a social organization analogy (Jenkins, 1992). The basic assumptions equate to Bordieu’s “*Rules of The Game*” where people behave in a particular context without consciously thinking about what they are doing (Bordieu & Passeron, 1977).

Schein (1992) says that basic underlying assumptions can be held so strongly that it becomes inconceivable of undertaking particular actions any other way. However, they can be held so strongly that become a barrier to adjusting a person’s behaviour. For example, in most sporting organizations it is inconceivable that a player would undertake an action during a game for their personal benefit at the expense of the team’s benefit. People that do not act in accord with their organization’s basic assumptions feel uncomfortable taking the action they do and those around them reciprocate the feelings of discomfort. In such a scenario within a sporting organization, an outcome might be to drop, discard or trade the player. In this case the underlying assumption is

that a player does not play for themselves but for the good of the team and sporting organizations have no place for players who put their own interests above those of their team mates.

Common organizational actions inspired by basic assumptions give the staff comfort in its behaviour because actions are proven to be correct and acceptable. That is important because it is the root of the power of culture. Such values are powerful in the psyche of staff and consequently are held to be of great significance when they are adopted. However, their significance to the individual or group can make them an obstacle to change if the staff is loathe to change things that have worked for them in the past. They represent the strength of a culture that inherently also makes culture an obstacle to change.

2.3.6. Application of Schein's Levels of Culture to the Research

Levels of culture are important in sporting organizations because they are organizations steeped in artifacts. However, it is very dangerous to take such manifestations as representations of a strong or appropriate culture for the reasons Schein warned. It is critical to this research that the culture of FFC was explored through its cultural layers to determine the lower levels of espoused values and underlying assumptions. Only by establishing the values and assumptions of the staff, in what is a relatively young organization, can the organization's culture be adequately diagnosed rather than assessed superficially.

As well as determining culture through an organization's artifacts, symbols, values and assumptions, the strength of a culture and its congruence with its environment is also of interest. Two important measures of cultural strength are;

- i. The wide knowledge of stories, myths and legends about an organization; and,
- ii. The dissemination of organizational values across all members of an organization.

Schein (1992) notes the significance of the strength of the culture, confirming that in comparison to a weak one of the same nature it is preferable but he places an equal emphasis on how it fits within the environment as expressed through the espoused values. His principle argument is that if a strong culture is going to produce good outcomes or high levels of performance, it must also be appropriate to its environment if it is to be effective. In other words, a strong culture is not necessarily an appropriate culture.

2.3.7. Cultural Dynamics

Hatch (1993), in an analysis of Schein's (1992) model, suggests that analysing culture relies on identifying the links or processes between artifacts, values and assumptions. However, she also suggests that Schein does not explicitly identify the links, or how to determine what they are. To add to Schein's concept, Hatch (1993) added "symbols" into a model she terms "*The Cultural Dynamics Model*" (Hatch, 1993:660). The origins of the cultural dynamics model, shown in Figure 2.2, lie in anthropology, as do many cultural concepts (A. D. Brown, 1998). The dynamic element is the evolutionary processes that impart culture and change, versus stability, in cultures (Hatch, 1993). In these contexts, Hatch follows the anthropological path in exploring organizational culture.

Schein recognises the existence of cultural dynamics in concepts such as cognitive transformation and social validation and expresses them as beliefs that work so well they become repetitive and thus become assumptions. Hatch's view of cultural dynamics is an extension of Schein's model and revolves around the meaning that artifacts have. Interpretivist cultural theorists (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1992) debate whether there is a difference between artifacts and symbols and note the crucial difference is the association that an artefact has when it is regarded as a symbol. Hence, all artifacts can become symbols but not all symbols (or their meanings) are artifacts. Schein warns of the interpretation of artifacts as symbols when he discusses how artifacts are easily observed but require time to be deciphered and understood. Hatch debates that this is an internal perspective because externally the artefact is open to symbolic interpretation at its first manifestation. Hence, artifacts can be managed, designed, and controlled internally whereas symbols may not and it is this representation, or symbolism, over which the owner of the artefact has no control. For example, the logo of a sporting organization is an example of an artefact, which has a completely different (symbolic) meaning to opposing organizations. The introduction of symbols into the diagnosis of organizational culture allows a symbolic-interpretivist approach to be used in the investigation. The focus of such an investigation is on the relationships, or processes between the constructs and it is Hatch's focus on relationships that makes it a dynamic model since she is concerned with the constantly moving processes of the model, Manifestation, Realisation, Symbolisation and Interpretation. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 2.2

The Cultural Dynamics Model

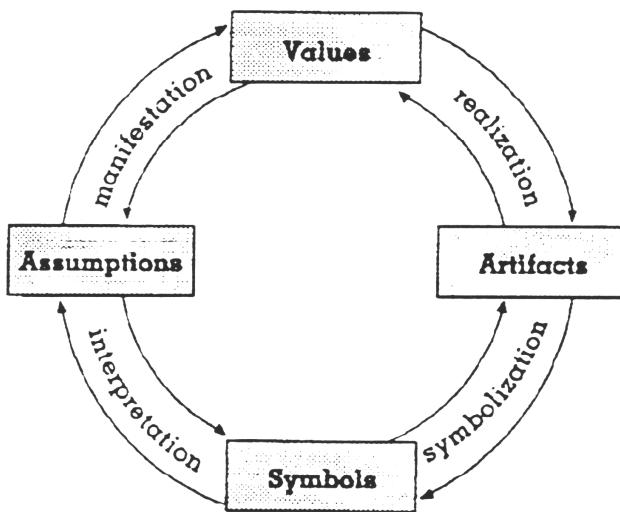


Figure 2.2 - The Cultural Dynamics Model

(Hatch & Schultz, 2002:660)

This is similar to Schein's process of cognitive transformation. This research used Schein's model for the levels of culture whilst remaining cognisant of the constant change that occurs based on Hatch's model.

Hatch advocates treating her model as a dynamic, iterative process, or processes. It is, she says, entered at any point around its circumference at any time. The processes represented by arrows in a clockwise direction are forward looking processes (proactive, prospective) whilst the anti-clockwise arrows represent backward looking processes (retroactive, retrospective). This translates to the upward and downward movement in Schein's model. The processes echo Schein's theory by commencing with the basic underlying assumptions and the process of how they are manifested as values and the remaining processes are then addressed in a clockwise (forward-looking) direction.

2.3.7.1.Manifestation

Manifestation is the process through which a culture reveals itself which maybe through a person's senses or through their perceptions about their existence or behaviours. Therefore, the manifestation process allows basic underlying assumptions to be manifested through the perceptions and behaviours of staff (Hatch, 1993). Hence, the underlying assumptions evolve into espoused values. The significance of manifestation is that it allows intangible assumptions to be translated into recognisable and measurable values. Manifestation occurs proactively, from assumptions into values or

retroactively from values into a revision of previous assumptions, as the two-way arrows indicated. Hatch emphasises that the translation of assumptions into values is not a one to one relationship; one value is not derived from one assumption (Hatch, 1993; Schein, 1992). Rather the translation is an holistic evolution of many values from many assumptions, communicated as the correct way to do things, or as a set of values and behaviours that are sensed or perceived as the way things ought to be.

Proactively, manifestation occurs when basic assumptions of staff are held to the extent that those members hold perceptions that certain things should happen, given a particular set of circumstances. That is, they behave in a way that reflects how they regard the organization and the world (organizational environment) around them. Depending on whether they like or dislike the way they have to behave, they become aware of their own values and the values of their organization. Hence, in a sporting organization proactive manifestation equates to the player understanding that their play on the field is directed to the benefit of the team and a win for the team, not for the benefit of the individual. Weick contributed to the proactive manifestation process with his descriptions of presumed logic, which he described as an expectation of how things will occur (although this was in the context of imposing order on chaos). That is, the expectation of which he talked emanates from, and reflects, the cultural values that the person holds.

Retroactive manifestation addresses the effect that values have on basic assumptions. When the values are in accord with the basic assumptions and the people that hold them feel comfortable with them, there is an alignment (Hatch, 1993). The values in such circumstances serve to reaffirm their behaviour as being correct and the right way to do things. Where there is not an alignment between assumptions and values, the result is likely to be a review of their assumptions since that is what leads to the regard in which the behaviour is held. Schein implies this misalignment saying that values and behaviours should not be imposed when there are no basic assumptions to support them. Imposition of a new value requires the new value to be aligned with existing assumptions for acceptance.

However, the affirmation of values with basic assumptions, about which the holder was not conscious, is where the problem occurs when cultural change was required. Staff may not make sense of why new values do not fit when it is actually because the new

behaviours do not align them with their basic assumptions. The likely outcome is the rejection of the new value.

Understanding and being able to analyse the manifestation process is fundamental to this research because if it can be understood it will show the perceptions, cognitions and emotions of the staff.

2.3.7.2. Realisation

Realisation is the means by which culture becomes tangible (Hatch, 1993). It is a process that turns something imaginary into something real which in organizational culture terms, is to realise someone's expectations by means of an artefact. For example, the expectation of an employee about the corporate citizenship of his/her employer may be reflected through the production of a company mission statement. The realisation process has strong connections with Weick's "*Enactment Theory*".

Proactive realisation in cultural dynamics means to make something real out of the organization's intangible values. Values can be realised in many forms, for example, policies, stories, humour, rites, rituals or physical objects. However, the process occurs only for those values that have expectations that can be satisfied through tangible outcomes such as reports, meetings or social events as well as imports from other cultures. It is not a perfect science and the artifacts realised, represent values and expectations, but they are not unequivocal representations. They remain subject to other organizational influences. In a sporting organization the expectation might be that a certain level of fitness is required. Since this is based on a value of how it ought to be for the playing staff, it might be necessary for players to fill in a daily report (the artefact realised from the expectation and value) of their training activities.

Retroactive realisation is the translation of the tangible elements of a culture back to its originating values. However, the process modifies the original value. Similar to the manifestation process, there has to be an alignment of the artifacts with the values and basic assumptions. Once realised the artefact is assessed to see if it aligns with those values and assumptions. If it does it affirms the values and assumptions. If there is not an alignment, it results in a change to either the values or the artefact. If the artefact is seen to be acceptable (which might take a prolonged period to occur) then the values are addressed to see how they require adjustment to align with the artefact. If the artefact is not acceptable, it is subject to removal or being ignored. A sporting organization's

mascot may suffer such indignation if it did not represent what the fans perceived their club to be and the mascot cannot realise the values of the fans.

2.3.7.3. Symbolisation

Symbolisation is the essential element that distinguishes Hatch's model from Schein's and, said Hatch, is necessary for a symbolic-interpretivist approach to cultural studies. Hatch cites Schein as saying symbols were part of a larger category of artifacts; thus, all symbols were artifacts. Hatch also cites Tompkins (1987) who says that all artifacts have symbolic significance; thus, all artifacts are symbols. On this basis, she says both camps draw the same conclusion that any distinction between artifacts and symbols is not needed. Hatch agrees with Schein that all artifacts can become symbols because by definition a symbol is anything that represents an association with a wider concept or meaning. However, she disagrees that all symbols were artifacts. Symbols are the association that artifacts hold for whoever is observing them. Therefore, they allow different meanings to be derived from them, rather than merely representing something in particular. Symbolisation, she said, is at the core of interpreting culture.

Prospective symbolisation takes an artefact and combines it with a meaning beyond its mere representation. For example, the artifacts of Rolls Royce are a flying lady statue and a double R graphic. These artifacts have a certain size or size ratio, colour and arrangement. However, the symbolisation associated with them depends on the values of the viewer. To one it may symbolise wealth, comfort and luxury and to another it may symbolise capitalism, pretension, brazenness or the bourgeoisie. In this way, symbolisation is described as exploitation of the artifacts through their associations in literal contexts and their wider or "*surplus meaning*" - the difference between the full meaning a symbol has to a particular person or organization and its literal meaning (Ricouer, 1976).

Retrospective symbolisation reflects upon the artifacts. It is the reflection upon the literal meaning of an artefact and how that meaning has been added to. For example, the CEO's Rolls Royce may be perceived by a staff member as means of transport with four wheels, an engine and a body. Retrospective realisation would see the staff member reflect upon the CEO's car in relation to their own car, or and how it compares to the cars of his or her subordinates. That is, time is spent reflecting upon the symbolisation of the car and what it now means in terms of the member's values. It can have the effect of changing the meaning of the artefact from a means of transport to an

unnecessary ostentatious display of wealth. It is important for organizations to recognise how symbols are manipulated by creating and discovering meanings that were not part of the literal meaning of an artefact. That is, how they are socially constructed reality to suit their own values.

2.3.7.4. Interpretation

Hatch describes interpretation as more iterative compared to other cultural dynamics processes. She introduces the hermeneutic perspective whereby interpretation moves back and forth between basic assumptions and symbols. Prospective interpretation looks forward to assumptions and causes them to be revised because of the newly found symbolism, whereas retrospective interpretation sees assumptions change the symbolic meaning.

The hermeneutic perspective is used because of its iterative nature. The hermeneutic school regards interpretation as a hermeneutic circle involving successive revisions of social phenomena interpretations each time more of it is revealed and understood. In turn revisions are made to cultural assumptions through prospective interpretation and changed symbolic representation or understanding through retrospective interpretation.

Interpretation is more than an interpretation of artifacts or logos. Interpretations are ambiguous since members of the same culture can have different interpretations of the same artefact or logo. Interpretation is a group process of the culture in which interpretations are a result of an individual being influenced by other members of the culture. That is, interpretations are not formed in a vacuum but are socially constructed realities, the same as the cultures. Therefore, what interpretation does is to put symbolic interpretation into the context in which it exists and allows new symbols to be accepted based on basic assumptions.

Prospective interpretation affirms and challenges existing assumptions whilst retrospective interpretation reviews and reconstructs symbolic meanings.

2.3.8. Application of Cultural Dynamics to the Research

The cultural dynamics process has been adopted in this research to interpret culture through the four processes described. The manifestation process is adopted to explore how the organization's culture reveals itself. The exploration requires finding out what people sense their roles are, their position within the organization and how they behave. That brings to the fore the basic underlying assumptions they use in their day-to-day

existence within the organization. That is, the underlying assumptions are determined from an exploration of their personal and organizational values and behaviour.

The realisation and symbolisation processes are used to see if the artifacts are consistent with the values and assumptions that the staff holds. In other words, are the members all working in the same direction as each other and their organization, to achieving agreed organizational objectives? This is critical because it assists identification of circumstances when the staff is not aligned with the organization.

The interpretation process is used as an extension of the realisation and symbolisation processes to the whole of the organization. Instead of looking at individuals and their functions independently, the interpretation process looks at them holistically. This determines what the organization's overall impact is and how the organization is regarded in its entirety, both from within and by the outside world.

None of the processes are adopted in isolation. Hatch is keen to emphasise that they are iterative and interactive with each other, the interpretation process more so than the others.

2.3.9. Summary

This section examined the literature on the history of organizational culture research and addressed contemporary work that forms the basis of the research and to which this research will contribute. The literature on culture identified that there was no clear definition of what organizational culture is or how it is represented.

Suitable research models were identified in this section that draw upon the anthropological and sociological foundations of culture and adapt it to an organizational setting. These models were also established as the basis upon which the investigation of culture at FFC will be analysed. Schein's work was identified as the seminal work, which will guide the research taking into account the dynamic symbolism that Hatch advocated should be included in the diagnosis of an organization's culture. Schein's approach relied on the emergence of culture from things such as observable and tangible artifacts through to the way in which the organization espoused itself to determine the values and beliefs held by individuals and groups within the organization. Such an approach will be used to get beyond the surface of FFC's culture to explore the basic underlying values and assumptions held by individuals and groups. This is required because of the ease with which superficial assessments can be misinterpreted. Schein

implored the need to establish what the long-term values and assumptions are to explain a culture and that it is the founders and past members of the organization, with contemporary members, that influenced the developing culture.

The emphasis placed on culture in this section was important because not only does it help make sense of the role of culture in organizations but it is also a fundamental and complementary construct to organizational identity, which is part of the same challenge of understanding how FFC operates. None of the constructs used to make sense of organizational theory or behaviour stand alone. In the case of organizational culture it is posited that if you attempt to study it in isolation, the outcomes are likely to be unreliable and lack critical support. Therefore it is advocated that culture and identity are considered together and the connection between them will be demonstrated in the following section in which the role of organizational identity is addressed.

2.4. ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY THEORY

2.4.1. Introduction

As research into organizational culture matures it questions the ways in which culture develops and affects, or is affected by, other organizational variables. No behavioural or social constructs such as culture, develop in isolation and it is the impact of so many disparate variables that contribute to the complexity of understanding them. One of the constructs that features heavily in the formation of organizational culture is that of organizational identity.

Contemporary writing about organizational culture and identity says that organizational culture and organizational identity are distinct but inseparable (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; A. Brown & Starkey, 2000; Czarniawska, 1997; Czarniawska & Wolff, 1998; Fiol, Hatch, & Golden-Biddle, 1998; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Scott & Lane, 2000; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). If culture helps us make sense of how things are done, then our desire to do things in a particular way reflects how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us which are represented by our identity. How we wish to be perceived individually is a result of our personal values, beliefs and morals, or culture. If our values and beliefs dictate that we behave honourably in our dealings with others, then we would not want to be perceived to be dishonourable in those dealings. This is equally applicable in an organizational sense where a company wishes to be regarded in a particular way or perceived itself as a particular type of organization that reflects the values, beliefs and morals of its stakeholders. The sense we have of ourselves organizationally, and that which other hold of us - how we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us - is our organizational identity which has been asserted to be "*one of the most intriguing and challenging areas of research for organizational scholars*" as well as a "*powerful phenomenon in organizations and in the lives of their members*"(Corley, 2004:1146).

Organizationally, the concept of identity can be adopted as a means by which a company improves its profile and thereby, its particular market share. Consequently, identity has important marketing ramifications. The following section will discuss some of these ramifications and the impact that identity has on marketing and branding of an organization but, it does not seek, nor intend, to be a comprehensive discussion of how identity is used in this way. The focus in this section will be on a description of

how an organization's identity emerges and how organizations can modify that identity, if it defines such a need, to improve its organizational performance.

The approach advocated to investigate organizational identity is consistent with the approach advocated for the investigation of organizational culture. It is an interpretivist approach, founded within the “*symbolic-interpretivist*” method of establishing personal identity based on self-perception and the perceptions of others. Hence, the following section will define identity in an organizational sense from its origins in sociological identity theory. It will then describe a model for understanding organizational identity and how it interacts with organizational culture, bringing the two concepts together to provide a basis for the research into how they both impact on an organization's performance.

2.4.2. Organizational Identity

Albert and Whetten (1985) are credited with the naissance of the “*Organizational Identity*” construct which Whetten says was borne out of necessity to give us an interpretive framework out of which “*to make sense out of our experiences...*” organizationally (Corley, 2004; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). Therefore, like organizational culture, research into organizational identity is relatively recent and interest has been strong since the mid 1990s. Consequently it is an area of research still developing amongst different theories and different methods of analyses, although all are aimed at the same subject (Ravasi & Rekom, 2003). What this means in practical terms of this research is that whilst there is an understanding of the construct, there is not yet a clear operational definition for what is organizational identity. This was evidenced by three conferences between 1994 and 1996 consisting of thirty colleagues of Albert and Whetten with a collective history of doing the primary research in the field of organizational identity in the years since Albert and Whetten's first work. The conferences resulted in the publication in 1998 of the proceedings of the three conferences in which the first eighty pages were devoted to “*What Does Organizational Identity Mean?*”, out of which no clear definition emerged (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998).

2.4.3. What is Organizational Identity

Organizational Identity is a social construct formed through the interaction of organizational members with each other and other organizations and individuals (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Like all social

constructs it gives meaning and reality to something which we wish to make sense of but is not real or tangible. Identity's origins, like culture, are multi-disciplinary in nature and are based in anthropology, sociology and psychology which have all explored individual identity and assisted us to make sense of our social identity. Social identity has been described and accepted as being an understanding of who we are, who other people are and correspondingly, other people's perceptions of themselves and others (Jenkins, 1996; Mead, 1934). Such theory and practice are commonly directed at understanding national, racial and individual identities in terms of the cultural characteristics of the nation, race or person. For such assertions to be made about the identity of individuals, races or organizations, identity clearly has durability as a long term, stable perception or, "*central, distinctive and enduring*" (Albert & Whetten, 1985). It was also described by social scientists as "*a sense of sameness over time*" (Ravasi & Rekom, 2003). Like culture, identity is a paradox for organizations because they remain open to a changing environment to remain competitive, yet their identity has to endure. Corley (2004) suggests the paradox was not such a problem if an organization's identity is thought of as flexible and subject to change, particularly from the influence of its stakeholders.

Organizations are social entities in the lives of many individuals and consequently organizational identity draws from social identity in anthropological, sociological and psychological philosophy, theory and practice. One theorist suggests the anthropological approach to organizational identity is essential for a proper understanding rather than just being one of a number of suitable research methods (Czarniawska, 1997).

As social entities, organizations have identities established by the adoption, reinforcement and rejection of particular organizational characteristics based on the organization's human population that persist over time. This is an extension of individual identity where individually we adopt or reinforce characteristics that we believe are positive about ourselves and how others understand us, whilst we reject those characteristics that we regard as negative. For example, organizationally we may adopt team-based work practices if we perceive our organization is committed to collaborative management techniques. Conversely, we might reject the notion of too much autocracy at board level to avoid the perception by others of an organization that is a singular, go-it-alone operation. That is, an organization establishes its identity

through insiders' self-perception of how it performs (culture) and the way it expresses itself, and is consequently perceived, to outsiders (image). Ensuring the two are congruent is critical. The organization might for example, perceive itself as an organization keen on collaborative management techniques yet, it is perceived by others as a go-it-alone autocratic operation. If the organization discovers that it presents the wrong image to its stakeholders, it can, over time, adjust its identity to ensure it is perceived in the way it wishes to be perceived. Therefore, organizational identity is a long term, stable perception about an organization that establishes particular organizational characteristics that determine not only an organization's understanding of itself and what it says about itself, but also how such statements are received and accepted (or rejected) by its stakeholders (Bechhofer, McCrone, Kiely, & Stewart, 1999).

2.4.4. Comparison, Reflection and Distinction

Since organizational identity helps us to make sense of our own organization and how it is perceived by others, there are two features of it that require careful scrutiny and understanding:

1. How we perceive ourselves; and,
2. How we are perceived by others.

These features require an identity to be established by comparison with, and reflection of, other organizations to offer insights into why our organization is distinctive from or similar to, other organizations that compete in the same market place.

2.4.4.1.Comparison

The idea that the staff has a perception about the organization they work for and that it coincides, or does not coincide, with what the stakeholders saw, is by definition, a comparative judgement. If, for example, the staff considers their organization to be environmentally friendly, what do they mean? In effect, they are attempting a comparison of themselves with a target competitor and the comparison is used as feedback for the organization to help them create their own identity and image. In other words an organization compares itself to its competitors to establish what makes it distinctive from its competitors.

Hence, organizational identity is formed by a process of inter-organizational comparisons over time that cause the organization to reflect upon itself and draw distinctions and similarities between itself and its competitors (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2002).

2.4.4.2.Reflection

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) were first to consider the reflective aspects of organizational identity in their case study of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. They discovered that the Port Authority lacked the respect of the local community, not because of anything that they had done as a port authority, but because the community felt that a problem of homeless people who populated the authority's bus and train stations, was the authority's problem, over which it was not taking any action. This opinion held by a significant stakeholder, the local community, contradicted how the Port Authority projected itself (its image), as a responsible corporate citizen. To preserve what it otherwise thought to be a good image, the Port Authority took action and assisted the homeless people to resolve their problems, thereby reinforcing the authority's image to the community. The authority had reflected upon its image, it did not like what it saw and was thereby motivated to do something about it.

Dutton and Dukerich use the metaphor of the authority holding itself up in a mirror to the community and being disappointed at its reflection. They suggest that organizations can get a better understanding of themselves if they adjust their image as a consequence of holding themselves up to their stakeholders and reflecting upon the stakeholders' perceptions to ensure that the reflection corresponds with their own idea of themselves. Therefore, it is important that what the staff sees as different or distinctive about its organization, is also how others perceive it. The reflective process also embeds the culture within the organization.

2.4.4.3.Distinction

The purpose of the comparative aspects of organizational identity is to establish what is distinctive about a particular organization that differentiates it from its competitors to give the organization a competitive edge through the creation of a distinctive image and identity. However, organizations also want to be seen as belonging to their particular industry, in which case they want their identity to project a sense of integration with,

and similarity to, other organizations in the same industry. However, it was pointed out that there is a distinct lack of empirical research to help us make sense of how differentiation emerges from an organization and what are its implications (Gioia, 1998). It is an area to which this research will contribute.

The concept of using identity to distinguish one organization from another is of particular interest to sporting organizations where participants are not so concerned about outperforming each other to put a competitor out of business. In fact they want their competitors to stay in business for the good of the sporting contest. Hence, there are certain facets about clubs where they seek to be similar to their immediate competitors in the traditional aspects of playing the game and structuring their organization for the benefit of members, but they wish to have distinct differences to capture their share of the supporter and sponsorship market. Therefore it is a critical part of this research to determine how an elite sporting organization defines itself as distinctive or different to its competitors and yet similar to them.

2.4.5. The Relationship between Organizational Culture and Identity

Culture is about the way we do things and identity is about how we perceive or are perceived. Therefore, if things are done in a particular way because of the organization's culture, and the reason they are done in that way is to reinforce or change perceptions about the organization, then clearly there is a relationship between an organization's culture and identity. A model that demonstrates the relationship is the "*Organizational Identity Dynamics Model*", in which it is advocated that whilst culture and identity are distinguishable concepts, they are inseparable in the functioning of an organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2002:991). Culture is the more contextual, tacit and emergent, whereas identity is more textual, explicit and instrumental. In essence identity is a manifestation and artefact of culture.

2.4.6. Organizational Identity Dynamics

Implicit in the model of culture is that culture helps an organization know and make sense of itself - its identity (Schein, 1992). The Organizational Identity Dynamics model extends the implicit concept, making it explicit and advocating the relationship as inseparable (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). The model also analogises the concepts and connections between organizational identity, image and culture in terms of Mead's individual identity concepts and illustrates the role of an organization's beliefs and core

ideology in its identity (Mead, 1934). Organizational beliefs and core ideology are derived from the organization's staff and expressed through espoused values. Consequently, the organization is identified in a certain way because of its cultural characteristics. Strategies by which an organization is identified are derived from group values established because of being successful with similar strategies in the past.

Hatch and Schultz (2002) developed their model of organizational identity to demonstrate how the relationship between culture and identity works. The critical aspect they highlight for organizations, in support of Dutton and Dukerich is that organizations must reflect upon their identity and image that they create in the observer's view. Through reflection the organization can establish, reaffirm, modify or change its image by changing its identity to one through which it would prefer to be perceived. To undertake the necessary modifications, or reinforcement, to its identity the organization needs to change, or reinforce, its culture (its core beliefs and values). Hence, the reflective process embeds identity within culture.

However, the organization needs to be sure that others perceive it as it wishes, i.e. it reflects upon its behaviour and modifies it to behave in a particular way to ensure a congruence of perceptions. Thus an organization adjusts the way it does things (changes its beliefs and values) to adjust perceptions. This process of how and why it does things and how it is perceived is a fluid, ongoing, continuous, reflective process that causes the organization to continually examine its values, beliefs and attitudes. The interdependency between culture and identity is illustrated in Figure 2.3.

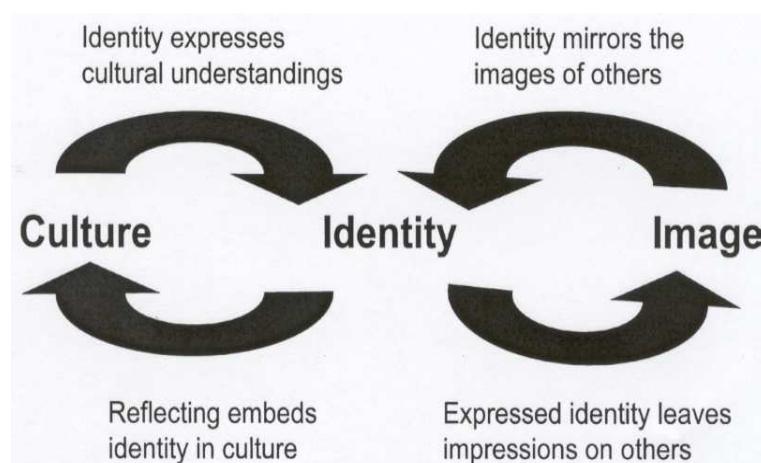


Figure 2.3 - The Relationship of Organizational Culture and Identity

(Hatch & Schultz, 2002:991)

The importance and relevance to sports organizations is that it clarifies what procedures culture and identity drive and why they do things in a certain way - strategy and performance.

2.4.7. The Analogy of Individual Identity to Organizational Identity

Within sociology, it has been established that our identity as individuals enable and express our cultural understanding of ourselves, referred to as "*I*" (Mead, 1934). The image through which we reflect upon our individual culture and identity and through which others perceive us was referred to as "*Me*" (Mead, 1934). Organizationally, it is the "*Me*" that we reflect upon, and which contributes to our understanding of our "*I*". That is we embed within our "*I*" what we wish to change from our reflection of "*Me*". The organizational representation of Mead's anthropological thesis was a continuation of the relationship of culture and identity and is shown in Figure 2.4.

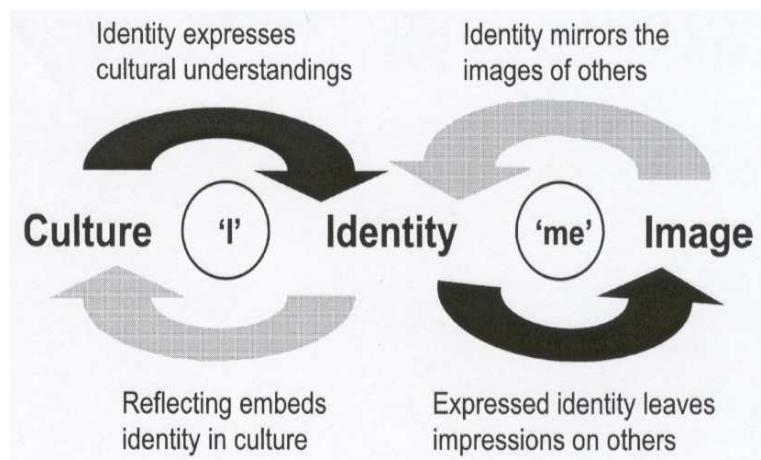


Figure 2.4 - The “I” and “Me” of Organizational Culture and Identity

(Hatch & Schultz, 2002:995)

The model advocates that the identity of an organization is also an expression of the organization's cultural understanding of itself and conversely, we are perceived as being what we are ("*Me*") because of doing things how we think they ought to be done ("*I*"). For example, an organization regarded as confrontational (its organizational "*Me*") can adjust this by reflecting upon the perception through its culture (its organizational "*I*").

2.4.8. Dysfunctional Relationship

The implication of this reflective process and adjustment is that it is controlled and managed because changes are made if things are not being done as the organization requires. If there is insufficient control or management of the organization's culture and

identity, it results in an unbalanced view of the organization's identity. Failure to reflect, or to participate in the whole process indicated in the model, leads to imbalance or dysfunction within the organization. An unbalanced view of identity is considered detrimental since, as with individual identity, it results in tendencies towards narcissism or self-absorption. This is indicated in Figure 2.5. Figure 2.4 indicated a series of paths by which an organization's identity is embedded within culture but the wrong path has the capacity to create serious dysfunction within an organization as Figure 2.5 indicates.

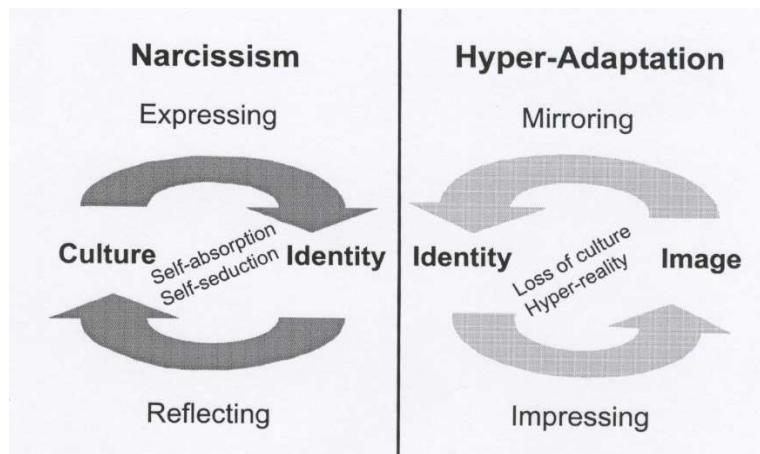


Figure 2.5 - Dysfunctional Culture and Identity

(Hatch & Schultz, 2002:1006)

The dysfunctional problems are created by too much emphasis on either the “*I*” (the left hand side of the model) or “*Me*” (the right hand side of the model) rather than a consideration of the complete entity. Focussing too much on “*I*” (consideration of how we perceive ourselves to the exclusion of how others perceive us) sees the development of narcissistic tendencies. We become so absorbed with ourselves that we become very insular, blaming everyone but ourselves for things going wrong. In turn, this can develop into an “*Us*” and “*Them*” mentality. Equally, too much focus on “*Me*” (consideration of how we are perceived at the expense of how we perceive ourselves) leads to diminution of culture as a result of exerting too much effort on keeping others happy (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). A dysfunctional extension of too much emphasis on “*Me*” or “*I*” is to treat them as separate entities. A lack of acknowledgement of how “*I*” contributes to “*Me*” and vice versa can cause the organization to become disjointed and dysfunctional with a weak and/or inappropriate culture that fails to keep its stakeholders satisfied and lacks the capability to operate in its environment.

According to Hatch and Schulz, it is critical to have a balance between an organization's culture and identity. Moreover, to ensure effective outcomes they must be embedded within strategies that drive the organizational structure and processes to be appropriate for the organizational environment.

2.4.9. Evaluating Organizational Identity

Evaluating an organization's identity is closely linked to its balance with its organizational culture, and emerges in the same way from the same kind of data. This research adopts Hatch and Schultz's model of Organizational Identity Dynamics, which incorporates the concept of culture espoused in Schein's Levels of Culture and Hatch's model of Cultural Dynamics. Consequently the analysis of identity is embedded within the club's cultural formation.

Much of the research to date on organizational identity focuses on research methodologies which reflect the complexity of the topic and the seminal work on organizational identity advocates different approaches depending on the perspective of the research (Ravasi & Rekom, 2003; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). What perspective is adopted revolves around whether one considers identity (and culture) to be measurable. Whetten (1998) contend that an exploratory and interpretive approach work although he advises caution, saying a functionalist approach maybe appropriate. Central to Whetten's position is that at this early stage in the development of the research field, emphasis should be on doing the research to suit the perspective rather than be unrelenting about the approach to be adopted. This research already advocates the symbolic-interpretivist or cognitive perspective, which is consistent with the cultural diagnosis model adopted as well as being consistent with the model adopted for the identity diagnosis. It is also consistent with Whetten's use of the organizational identity construct to make sense of why things are done in a particular way within an organization (Sackmann, 1992).

2.4.10. Summary

Organizational identity, like culture, is a construct we use to make sense of how organizations work. The application of individual identity theory in an organizational context is a recent approach to improving our understanding of how organizations operate. The Hatch and Schulz models adopted in this research advocated that organizations adjusted their identity to ensure they were perceived in the way they

wished through the adjustment of the way they do things - their culture. Hence, organizational identity enables and expresses our cultural understanding of ourselves, that is, we perceive ourselves in a certain way because of the values we hold and the way we do things. Consequently it is important to interpret, concurrently, the roles that culture and identity play, as an underlying fundamental element of each other, in the performance of an organization.

The following section explains the relationship between culture, identity and organizational performance, and how their roles can be examined and interpreted concurrently.

2.5. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, IDENTITY AND PERFORMANCE

2.5.1. Introduction

This section will explain how an analysis of culture and identity address the research questions in this thesis; firstly, how do organizational culture and identity affect organizational structures, strategies, and behaviours and secondly, how they might be manipulated to achieve the most effective and efficient performance that an organization can expect out of the resources at its disposal. The earlier discussion provided general explanations of what organizational culture and identity are, their history, and their evolution. This section will provide an explanation of how the theory presented so far will be operationalised to understand its specific role and purpose within an elite sporting organization.

2.5.2. Organizational Culture, Identity and Strategy

The relationship of organizational culture and identity to strategy is critical because of ever changing competitive challenges (A. D. Brown, 1998). Sports organizations face pressures to perform at a corporate level as well as on the playing field. A culture and identity that are strong and appropriate will ensure the organization is adaptable and responsiveness to change. However, little empirical analysis has been undertaken on the role of organizational culture and identity in sporting organizations and the way in which they influence on and off-field performances. Some valuable research has been conducted on sporting organizations in regulated environments but it focuses on economic structures rather than strategic planning (Dabscheck, 1975; , 1999; Quirk & Fort, 1992; R. Stewart, 1989a; , 1989b).

Organizations adopt new strategies to manage new challenges as they are presented. However, it is difficult to implement new strategies that require the staff to adopt different values, assumptions and/or ways of doing things, if they are too diverse from current strategies because the values and assumptions that they are being asked to change are the products of their past successes (Schein, 1992). Hence, organizational culture and identity are fundamental elements of implementing strategy because they will either assist or impede change. Hinings et al (1996) consider the role of culture in developing strategies within sporting organizations and their work explores the relationship between the organization's culture and its values. They conclude that

culture and values underpin the organization's structure and strategy. They also note that the strategies adopted will determine how an organization performs.

2.5.2.1. Strategy Development and Implementation

Strategy is developed through the organizational structure, processes and behaviours, appropriate for the environment, aimed at improved performance and success (Mintzberg, 1999; J. B. Quinn, 1999; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Smith and Stewart (1999) contend in their model for sport management that culture and strategy are two of the core elements of the process of managing sports organizations. Slack (1997) describes culture as a concept that is widely accepted in sports organizations because it makes sense of organizational realities that are difficult to define and critical to good management. Culture and identity can be used to create an appropriate organizational environment that attracts the right people, enabling them to operate effectively within the organization's strategic framework and objectives.

The resultant environment from the strategy development and implementation process relies on the leaders of the organizations, in part, to establish the values and underlying assumptions for their organization through the social validation process. The social validation process provides the vision and perception of new, or particular strategies, and creates the right internal environment that enables them to be adopted (Collins & Porras, 1998; Schein, 1992). There is some debate as to whether a strategy is developed as a plan, a system of management, or a craft process (A. D. Brown, 1998; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998). Whichever it is, organizational strategy, culture and identity share common elements. They all create a direction and consistent order in organizational life based upon members' experiences. Brown (1998) argues that a strategy, which represents a cultural artefact of the organization, results from the long term plans that senior executives make that meet the challenges of the external environment to achieve organizational objectives. The distinction helps define their relationship to each other and how organizational culture and identity influence strategy development.

A strategy is developed when an organization identifies threats and opportunities to it within its environment and formulates a response to them based upon its strengths and weaknesses. Organizations then implement the strategy through a series of management processes. The influence of organizational culture and identity upon strategy

formulation and implementation is explained by Brown (1998) who puts forward the following propositions:

1. The culture and identity of an organization influences how the organization perceives its environment and the data it gained from it, such as any threats and opportunities as well as its own strengths and weaknesses;
2. The values and assumptions of the organizations act as filters, focussing attention in particular areas and away from others, thereby biasing what strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats upon which the organization focuses;
3. Organizations interpret, and use different methods of interpretation, information gained from its environment in a particular way that suits its own organizational culture and identity. Sporting organizations for example interpreted threats, causes and effects differently to a construction organization;
4. Once an organization interprets data from its environment, it decides how it should respond to that data. This involves moral and ethical issues and how an organization responded on such issues based on its values;
5. An organization's response to certain situations is closely aligned with its past successes. The strategy adopted is a result of previous success from a similar strategy. Equally other strategies maybe ignored because they have failed in the past; and,
6. Subcultures influence the choice of strategy. Often organizations and their subcultures agree on a situation but the subcultures offer different means of resolving it. The different subcultures provide a microanalysis of the macro problem by seeing the problem according to their own organizational subculture. Other issues such as power and influence within the organization also have a role in how particular subcultures are regarded.

At the same time, the development and implementation of strategies determine ultimately how an organization performs since it is the strategy that determines how it responds to its environment. Such relationships have been revealed by many organizational theorists and strategists (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; G. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Mintzberg, 1999; Mintzberg &

Quinn, 1998; Pfeffer, 1995; Porter, 1985; J. B. Quinn, 1999; Robbins, 2001; Robbins & Barnwell, 1998; Schein, 1992; A Smith & Stewart, 1999; M Weber, 1946; Weick, 1985).

2.5.3. Culture, Identity and Performance

Since the earliest work on organizational culture and identity, discussion has revolved around the relationship between culture, identity, and performance (A. D. Brown, 1998; Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Denison, 1990; Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1985; , 1991; G. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Schein, 1992; Weick, 1985). However, for sporting organizations in particular, little rigorous empirical research has been undertaken.

Collins and Porras's study of eighteen "visionary" companies shows how successful businesses developed a culture and identity to fit their environment, which, in turn, kept their core ideologies intact and sustained an ability to adapt to a changing environment (Collins & Porras, 1998). Collins and Porras concluded that companies attain their greatest level of performance and greatest ability to adapt to change when their culture is strongest.

More recently, anecdotal evidence has linked culture and identity of AFL clubs to their on and off-field performance (AAP, 2000; Hird, 2001; Mason, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2001a, , 2001b; Ryan, 2000). The proposition that the culture and identity of sports organizations impacts on performance, concurs with more formal research that contends for an organization to perform effectively, it has to fulfil whatever its environment demands of it (Schein, 1999). This suggests that in heavily regulated environments such as the AFL, a club should not only work within the league regulations, but equally, exploit them as fully as legitimately possible.

Brown (1998) recognises that the concepts of culture, identity and performance are relative and can be interpreted differently, when discussing effective organizational performance and success. The reality is that an organization has many stakeholders interested in its performance and whilst some of them have overlapping interests, each group has its own measure of success. For example, in sporting organizations, a turnover of players and a failure to win matches maybe regarded poorly by the fans whilst the organization may regard it positively as a rebuilding phase for longer-term success. In terms of AFL clubs, established measures of organizational performance

include; financial performance, membership, playing results and attendances (Shilbury, 1994).

2.5.4. Organizational Culture and Identity – Strength and Fit

As the above discussion illustrates, the literature reveals a relationship between culture and identity and strategy, and also a relationship between culture and identity and performance. The evidence suggests that not only do culture and identity have a direct impact on behaviour, but also that the stronger the culture and identity are, the more impact they will have upon an organization's strategy and performance (A. D. Brown, 1998). However, a strong organizational culture must also be appropriate if it is to produce a superior performance. This is epitomised by the culture and identity within Hewlett-Packard and their strength and fit, achieved through doing things '*The HP Way*'.

2.5.4.1. The HP Way

The strength of organizational culture and identity and their capacity to fit the organization's environment is epitomised by Hewlett-Packard that did things "*The HP Way*". The Hewlett-Packard culture was diagnosed by understanding how it was disseminated, reinforced and indoctrinated. Hewlett-Packard is acknowledged as a visionary organization that has endured and prospered through the development of a cult-like, strong and appropriate culture (A. D. Brown, 1998). It has achieved this outcome using several techniques including continually recounting stories about the organization to new and existing members so often that they became folklore; maintaining traditional practices such as coffee breaks signalled in a particular way; worker sponsored plays; and the removal of hierarchical trappings to create an egalitarian workplace. The strength of the Hewlett-Packard culture and identity were increased through all members of the organization who shared the organizational values, represented by all employees having the same terms and conditions of employment.

Hewlett-Packard was concerned that as it grew as an organization this culture may be lost or diluted, meaning that The HP Way would be in conflict with alternative values or subcultures and its ideology weakened. To overcome this and maintain the strength of their culture Hewlett-Packard developed an induction programme through which new members were introduced to The HP Way, company policies and information about Hewlett-Packard's operations. Hewlett-Packard's goals, objectives and shared values

were reinforced, but employees were left to determine the best way that these could be accomplished within their divisional organization. This had the effect of making the divisions responsible for achieving their own targets and ensured that employees responsible for delivering the product had input into the running of the organization.

Organizations with weaker cultures do not actively seek to promote and reinforce their culture, which organizations with strong cultures do. Collins and Porras (1998) suggest that strong cultures have “*cult-like*” characteristics. This includes a fervent belief in the organization’s ideology, indoctrination into the organization’s way of doing things and a tightness of fit between the culture and its members. These three characteristics produced a fourth characteristic; a sense of elitism among the organization’s members. All four characteristics identified personnel that did and did not fit the culture, which in itself sustained the strength of culture.

Similarly, AFL clubs that want to develop suitable strategies must induce a fervent belief in the club’s ideology by indoctrinating the staff into the organization’s preferred way of doing things which must suit the environment. This indoctrination of an ideology suited to the club’s environment helps to develop a tightness of fit between the culture and the staff. Such an approach helps to develop culture and identities that are both strong and appropriate for the club and its environment. This is supported by Collin and Porras’s research that asserted the strength of organizational culture and identity and their fit for the environment in which organizations operate, were important (Collins & Porras, 1998). Schein noted the significance of the strength of the organizational culture, but put equal emphasis on its fit within the environment as expressed through the espoused values (Schein, 1992).

2.5.5. Organizational Cultural Typologies

Any discussion about strength and fit of culture begs the following question. If an organization needs a strong and appropriate culture, what is the type of culture for that organization? Attempts have been made by several scholars to develop cultural typologies that indicate appropriate cultural types to particular types of organizations (Andersen, 2003; Breu, 2001; Deal & Kennedy, 2000b; Hebdon, 1986; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Moore, 2004). Such empirical typologies have been developed from a functionalist approach to culture whilst the interpretive approach has attempted to apply typologies from one piece of research to another (Andersen, 2003). Schein (1999) advocates against such an approach because the typologies ascribed are numerous and

varied reflecting the interpretivist position that each culture is unique to the particular organization studied and cannot be applied to another organization. As more studies are completed, a commensurate increase occurs in typologies since no two cultures investigated at the organizational level will be the same. In the case of FFC study, it is envisaged that the final diagnosis will result in typologies being ascribed to the organization at certain points in its history that reflects the particular culture at the time and whether it was appropriate, or inappropriate, to the club at the time.

2.5.6. Culture, Identity and Change

The preceding discussion immediately begs another question. If strong, appropriate cultures and identities improve performance and an organization is performing below the standard of its competitors, will the underperforming organization need to modify or change its culture and identity to improve its performance? The answer appears to be yes, since changes to culture and identity to improve performance compel the organization to investigate the way they do things and change their behaviours accordingly. Changing behaviours means changing peoples' underlying assumptions and whilst changing assumptions is part of the solution to improving performance they can also be a significant obstacle to change because assumptions also create an unwillingness to violate the cultural norms of such an organization (Schein, 1993a).

The desire to change a sporting organization's culture comes about as result of one of two circumstances:

1. They change strategic policies to change the direction of an organization, or
2. They change personnel to force the change.

The first circumstance is recognition by the organization that things are not being done as the organization and its stakeholders would wish, so it devises new structures and strategies to modify its behaviour and performance – “the way things are done”. The second circumstance, particularly in sport, often occurs because on and/or off-field results do not match stakeholder expectations and change is enforced, often in crisis situations.

In each of the above two circumstances, change is achieved by challenging the basic underlying assumptions of individuals which dictate their behaviour. However, change may be resisted because asking the staff to change behaviours requires a concession that past behaviours have been inappropriate.

In sporting club cultures and identities, change frequently occurs because of a change in leadership and often because results do not match stakeholders' expectations. The new leaders impart their values into their new club and those people that are seen to impede the change (either by obstruction or by refusal to change) may be dispensed with and those that stay have to amend their behaviours. Amended behaviours can become acceptable through the subcultures that operate within the club and so it is important to make sense of a club's subcultures to determine their influence on the culture.

Hatch (1993), Langan-Fox (1997) and Schein (1992; , 1996; , 1999) recognised the difficulties of changing organizational culture and identity because whilst they do not prevent change, their strengths can be a barrier to change. Culture and identity, consistent with their biological and anthropological roots, are living, breathing manifestations of what people in the organization do to get things right and get, or stay, ahead (Deal & Kennedy, 2000a).

2.5.7. Subcultures and Multiple Identities

Subcultures are often created amongst groups with similar task dependencies, objectives, personal interactions and/or a physical closeness that regard them as similar. They operate across horizontal and vertical organizational structures (Hatch, 1993). Subcultures engage members from other subcultures, differentiated by their membership of a particular group.

Subcultures were defined by Van Maanen and Barley as:

"A subset of an organization's members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group within an organization, share a set of problems commonly defined to be the problems of all and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group." (J. Van Maanen & Barley, 1985:38).

Subcultures form because of personal interactions of individuals within an organization that require physical closeness among people who perceive each other as similar (Hatch, 1993). The physical closeness results from staff with similar reporting relationships, shared facilities or task interdependencies which bring staff together as members of different groups, or subcultures, each differentiated by their membership of clearly identifiable groupings. This means that a single staff member may be identified as a member of several subcultures based, for example, on tasks to be executed, reporting

relationship and social groups. Therefore, early investigations of organizational identity focussed on multiple identities. That is, members had identities associated with their subculture, the organization as a whole as well as their own identities and consequently, have more than one identity.

The question of multiple organizational identities has been explored since organizational identity was first considered (Corley, 2004). Corley cites Whetten as explaining that the subject of multiple identities was considered originally as an “*ideographic multiplicity of identities*” (more than one identity held by different groups within a single organization) or as “*a holographic multiplicity*” (more than one identity held by all people within a single organization) (Corley, 2004:1148). Both concepts of multiple identities fit with the concept of subcultures because a single subculture can hold an identity that fits the cultural group (the ideographic multiplicity) whilst the all subcultures can hold values which are the same despite being in different cultural groups (the holographic multiplicity). Therefore, not only must the subcultures be recognised and managed but so too must the multiple identities that also emerge within them.

Whilst, research on organizational culture and identity differentiates between functional groups, organizational units and professional disciplines, one area that is under-researched is the influence of hierarchy (Corley, 2004). Schein provides a basic framework for analysis by his breakdown of organizational culture down into subcultures along hierarchical lines. Subcultures can then have their identity explored at the same time as their impact is assessed. Further, the hierarchy of the organization was recognised as fundamental to the organization’s performance (Mintzberg, 1999).

Schein identifies cultural groups within organizations that function along hierarchical lines, which he terms the “*Three Cultures of Management*”. The three cultures are known as the “*Operators*”, the “*Engineers*” and the “*Executives*” and each has a role in either reinforcing or changing basic underlying assumptions in an organization (Schein, 1996:235). Hence, managing subcultures is critical because they enable change to be effected within an organization by changing assumptions. Hofstede (1998) also emphasises the importance of identification and separation of the subcultures so that top management decisions reflect the requirements of the subcultures to avoid internal conflict. Schein’s hierarchical subcultures, as with Corley’s multiple identities that work at the same hierarchical levels, operate silently within organizations and the

inbuilt conflict between them across organizational boundaries has to be resolved for an organization to become a reliable learning system capable of change. Moreover, Corley (2004) found that the hierarchical subculture levels were also the means through which hierarchical identities were expressed and differentiated. The junior management subculture of “*Operators*” sees identity as a cultural expression, whilst the senior management subculture of “*Executives*” sees identity as a strategic tool. The middle management subculture of “*Engineers*” who act as a bridge, ensure communication between the most senior and junior enabling Hofstede’s (1998) anxieties to be addressed. The cultural differences between Operators, Engineers and Executives are discussed below.

2.5.7.1.Operators

Operators deliver the product or service that fulfils an organization’s fundamental undertaking. This group determines the general interdependencies of parts of an organization and how they function and are usually the targets of plans to improve an organization. “Good” managers are recognised by their ability to manage operators. Schein puts a strong emphasis on the subservient role of operators as a reason for an organization being unable to learn and therefore, unable to change. Schein’s concern is that any innovations and ideas they have are not disseminated to the more senior engineers and executives because the senior groups’ restrict, and fail to interact with, operators. In the context of this research project, the operators are represented by the players, trainers, junior office, administrative and secretarial staff.

2.5.7.2.Engineers

Engineers design the core technology of the organization, for example, software programmers in an information technology organization. Engineers share an occupational culture, which revolves around problem solving and does not require people for their implementation. They may design systems, routines and rules that are mechanistic and undertaken automatically. According to Schein, engineers often thwart upward diffusion of ideas and innovation from operators by placing technical obstacles in their way. The engineers’ equivalent within sporting organizations is the coaching staff. They are responsible for the development of systems and resources, and in the context of FFC, will develop routines to improve players’ strength, speed, skill, decision-making and overall playing ability.

2.5.7.3.Executives

Executives are a cultural grouping that are characterised by their accountability to shareholders and other stakeholders and their ability to make difficult decisions, relying on sometimes imperfect information. They rely on systems, rules and procedures to manage the people in their club, which requires them to abandon any of the problem solving ideas they may have retained from the operators' culture.

In sporting organizations, they are represented by the Boards of Directors, Boards of Management, the CEO and senior management staff.

2.5.8. Summary

This section drew together the critical aspects of the literature that discussed the relationship between organizational culture, identity and performance. Thus far, the focus has been on what culture and identity are and how they could be investigated within the research project. This section suggested that there is a link between culture, identity and strategy and between strategy and performance. It also found that it is important to not only have a strong culture and identity, but also that the culture and identity is appropriate to the organization's context and environment. It was also noted how culture and identity can be an obstacle to change within an organization, and addressed how change can be achieved through the management of subcultures and an organization's multiple identities.

2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a literature review that covers organizational culture and identity and how they are situated within the body of Organization Theory. The review demonstrated that there is now a substantive body of literature on organizational culture and identity but very little in the context of sporting organizations.

The review of literature in the fields of organizational culture and its roots in organization theory and sociology has put forward a background of how organizations derive and develop their culture. This background was explained from the interpretivist's point of view, principally through the work of Schein and Hatch, so that the examination, interpretation and understanding of culture can be extended into the area of professional sporting organizations.

The literature suggested that the relationship between culture and strategy is complex resulting from the interaction of many organizational variables. Specifically, the impact of culture and identity is mediated through strategic responses via organizational processes and structures derived to deal with the environmental forces within which organizations perform. In this way organizational strategies and performance are linked to organizational cultures and identities. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 2.6.

The model shows the role culture and identity might play in influencing sporting organizations' performance in general, and the performance of FFC in particular. This is, in effect, the "*thesis of this thesis*" (Perry, 1994). The model is multi-directional with each variable interacting with both the internal and external organizational environment. This systems theory model also indicates that there is no hierarchy of variables or any particular variable that drives the others. Like Hatch and Schulz's model of Cultural Dynamics, the relationships are multi-faceted and provide for entry at any point in the paths indicated.

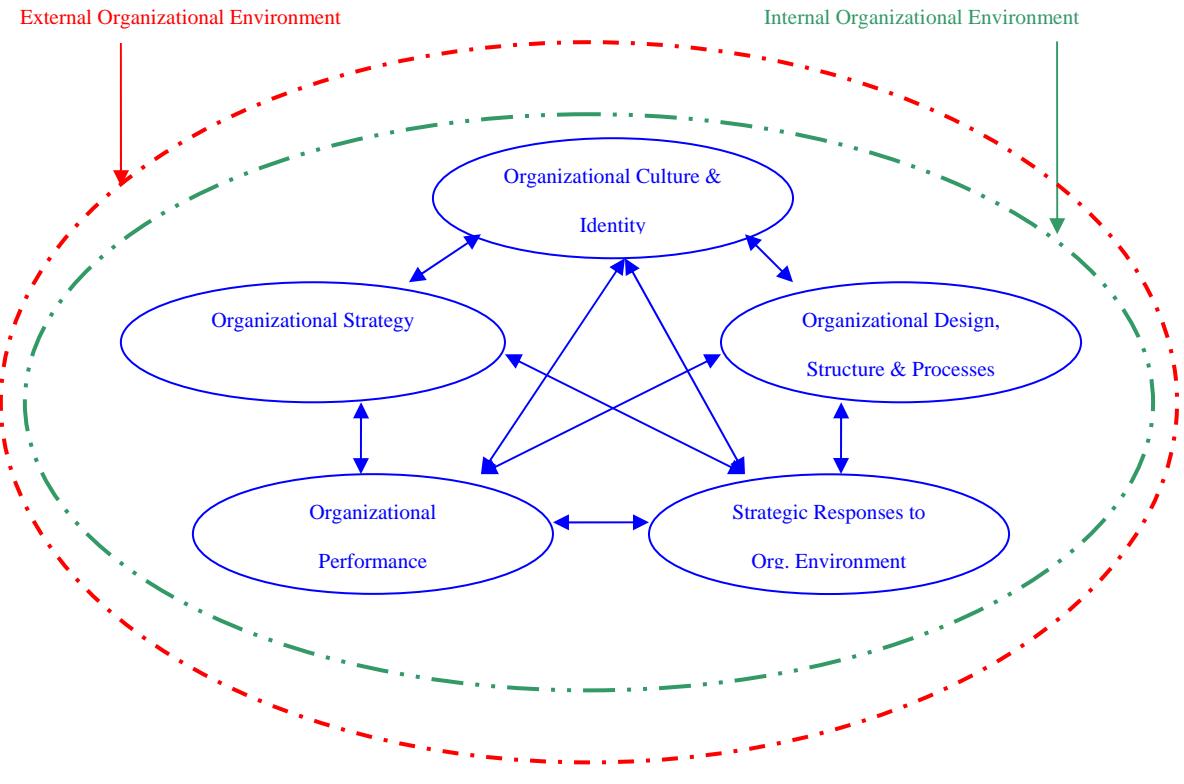


Figure 2.6 - Proposed Organizational Culture / Identity / Performance Framework for AFL Clubs

The literature has immediate applicability to this research since it suggests a direct relationship between organizational culture and identity and the level of performance that a club enjoys. It is anticipated that AFL clubs such as FFC, have shared and explicit cultures and identities embedded within their operating structures and systems that will in turn shape their organizational strategy, behaviour and performance. At the same time, it was recognised that not every culture and identity will necessarily be either strong or appropriate and in these circumstances, it can actually undermine high levels of performance.

In summary, this chapter provided a conceptual framework appropriate for understanding how FFC's culture and identity form, how they evolve and how they affect its behaviour and performance. The following chapter will describe and justify the research methodology adopted for the research project. This will be followed by an explanation of the context and environment within which FFC operates.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.

Albert Einstein, physicist (1879-1955)

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided the framework of the research problem, whilst Chapter 2 reviewed the current literature on organizational culture and identity. Chapter 2 also explained how culture and identity influence organizational behaviours and the operations of sporting organizations in particular. Subsequent to an analysis of the literature, it was decided to utilise Schein's Layers of Culture model and identification of subcultures and Hatch's Cultural Dynamics model as a conceptual framework to investigate FFC. The models enable an interpretivist analysis of the core elements and processes of FFC's culture and identity (Hatch, 1997).

This chapter sets out the research methodology. It begins by describing the interpretivist research methodology used to investigate how culture and identity drive the behaviour and performance of Fremantle Football Club (FFC). Details of the research design will be provided including the data collection process and sources of data from interviews, document analysis, and observations. An explanation of how the data will be categorised, analysed and grouped in their emergent themes will also be provided. This chapter addresses the data evaluation and analysis processes as well as research issues and limitations. It also explains why some quantitative data (e.g. FFC's KPIs) are adopted to measure FFC's performance as the club measured them. This is consistent with Perry (1994) who suggests that whilst a dominant method may suit a research problem, other techniques may also be used. In this case a qualitative approach was the dominant method used to examine FFC's operations and the context in which it operated.

One of the strengths of this research project is that the evaluation of the culture and identity of FFC covers its entire history. The club's short history, since its founding in 1994, meant that all the key staff could be interviewed. As a result the analysis will include its founding culture. By mapping the entire history of the club's culture and identity, it is possible to see how it evolved in response to changes in both its environment and its leadership. To ensure a complete historical perspective of the

mapping of FFC's culture and identity, it was critical to capture all of the relevant data. The completeness of the analysis, subsequently gives validity to the research outcomes.

3.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY

The strategy for this research was embedded in two fundamental research methods. Firstly, this thesis is an exploratory case study. Whilst the case study was not pure ethnography (Yin, 1994), FFC did allow free and wide access to its entire organization for extended periods that permitted the researcher to become a recognised and regular attendee at many of their activities. Secondly, the research was heavily grounded in qualitative methodologies.

3.2.1. The Case Study Method

Yin (1994) advocates case studies as an empirical research strategy that specifically includes contextual conditions necessary and relevant to the phenomenon under study. He notes that to be effective, theoretical prepositions must guide the case study such as this research presents. He also advises that case study definitions are invariably a description of the study topics and he warns that phenomenon and context are sometimes impossible to tell apart. Hartley (1994) agrees that case study phenomena are of interest precisely because they are contextual and data should be collected with the ultimate aim of analysing current behaviours. That is, case studies are pertinent to this research because of their use of data collection and analysis tools such as interviews, observations, and document analysis.

Case studies do not rely on validation in the same way as measurable quantitative studies since they do not claim to be other than a particular set of circumstances, established at a particular point in time, within a particular organization. However, where possible, data gathered from one source are verified through other sources.

Cresswell encapsulated the core elements of a case study as:

...an exploration of a bounded system or a case, over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, rich in context (1998:61).

The study of FFC took place in a bounded system (the FFC organization) over an extended period of eighteen months using multiple sources of in-depth, detailed data, rich in material and context about FFC. Hence, the research was an investigative,

diagnostic examination of the culture, identity, structure, strategies and behaviours of FFC for which case studies are appropriate (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Schein, 1992; Silverman, 1998; John Van Maanen, 1998).

Given that the research took place within an organizational culture and identity framework, it has general applicability to all sporting organizations and the original contribution of this research has potential to be generalised to other AFL clubs and similar sporting leagues. Case study researchers agree that specific case study findings can be generalised to other contexts when large scale organizational processes are being investigated (Corley, 2004; Yin, 1994). Notwithstanding that, the research will also contribute to our understanding of all organizations because the research was a close and detailed examination of FFC, its culture, identity and strategies how they may influence its behaviours and performance.

The reasons for adopting a case study approach to this research project are given below (Yin, 1993):

1. Case studies cover a topic: broadly not narrowly (organizational culture and identity and strategies fall within the body of organization theory or the broad macro approach);
2. Case studies cover contextual conditions as well as the phenomenon of the study (the context, regulated environment and governance of the AFL, club stakeholders, as well as organizational culture and identity within FFC);
3. Case studies rely on multiple triangulated sources of evidence (interview, document analysis, observations, and artifacts); and,
4. Case studies are a benefit when guided by a theoretical preposition (organizational culture and identity drive strategies that influence performance).

These case study ticks are consistent with the focus of this research and the adoption of an organizational theory framework. However, case studies can also take a quantitative approach and some explanation of the suitability of a qualitative approach is required.

3.2.2. Qualitative Research

This research takes place in the natural world, using multiple methods of data collection which are essential characteristics of qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The issues that emerged from the data were fundamentally interpretive. By using a

qualitative case study, matters of relevance and importance emerged about FFC that enabled the researcher to explore the values, meanings, and beliefs that underpinned the club's culture, identity, strategies, structure, behaviours, and environments. Yin (1993) supports the qualitative approach as a means for organizational research, noting that it allows the collection of perceptual and/or attitudinal data which are critical to interpreting phenomena such as culture and identity. This data provide a rich and comprehensive view because they reveal the basic values and beliefs of individuals thus getting to the foundation of culture and identity in FFC.

The qualitative approach is critical in the context of cultural research because concepts can only be established by extended observations of them in the real world (Schein, 1996). Schein's was concerned that researchers moved too quickly towards abstractions of the concepts before reaching a complete understanding of them. He asserts that his own insights have only come about after immersing himself in the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, the research was predominantly qualitative and ethnographic in nature to allay any such concerns

3.2.2.1.Ethnography

This study was framed by an ethnographic analysis, which in an anthropological context has been defined as:

A description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system
(Cresswell, 1998:58)

Specifically, ethnography is recognised more recently as a useful methodology for all cultural studies including those within organizations (Tedlock, 2000). The reasoning for an ethnographic approach to cultural studies is that it enables the study of a small group of subjects in their own environment, in this case, a variety of stakeholders in FFC. However, it is to be used advisedly because such a study of research subjects in their own environment is not possible without becoming a part of that environment and therefore such research is always some form of participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Whilst the impact of becoming part of the environment on which the researcher is reporting cannot be avoided, the researcher must consequently reflect upon the data collected and ensure it is considered in the context of that environment. A scrupulous approach to the data, considered in its environment with appropriate reflection by the researcher for his or her own impact means that the research can look

at a large number of interdependent variables as they interact and ethnography enables the researcher to gain an in-depth, detailed understanding of their circumstances and context. In this way ethnography also enables the researcher to place precise events that the researcher encounters into a meaningful context and transfer the data that results into a written and/or graphical account which in turn enables the reader to fully understand its meaning (Tedlock, 2000).

The results of ethnographic enquiries are descriptive and interpretive because the data are so detailed and describe what is going on, using the descriptions to interpret their significance. The result is a “*thick description*” of the organization and its culture and identity (Geertz, 1990). The detailed data and thick descriptions were derived from the process of collecting, exploring, and categorising data which began with the data collection process sourced through interviews, document analysis, and observations which are described in the next section.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION AND SOURCES

Data collection was dependent to some extent on FFC’s activities, particularly during the non-playing time, or “*off season*”. Ellen (1984) says that any research timetable should have a contingency for lost time because of the uncertainty of personnel and documentation being available. In the case study of FFC, the researcher remained flexible to interview whoever was available when the researcher was available and vice versa. It did mean that the sequence of interviews was dynamic to but repeat interviews were granted in the two cases where it was deemed necessary and otherwise the sequence adopted did not compromise the research

The techniques by which data were collected were determined by the interpretivist case study strategy which relies on interviews, document analysis and observations which are all supported by similar research projects (Corley, 2004; Hinings, Thibault, Slack, & Kikulis, 1996; G. Hofstede, 1998; G. Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Yin, 1999).

Dunphy (1981) lists interviews, document analysis and observations as means by which to determine “*what is going on here?*” describing the process as a diagnostic approach, the same as methods used for cultural research in other organizations (Schein, 1993b).

3.3.1. Interviews

Interviews are used to access the life-worlds of individuals (King, 1994), and to explore organizational situations that explain behaviour within FFC (Hartley, 1994). Therefore, two critical issues had to be addressed:

- i. Who to interview; and,
- ii. How to interview.

3.3.1.1. Who to Interview

Cresswell (1998) suggests interviews are a series of procedural steps, the first of which was to determine who to interview. A judgement was made about whom to interview derived from initial research into the club and its organizational structure. Hartley suggests doing this through initial “*orientation interviews*” which were conducted with the club’s senior executives whilst obtaining their agreement to participate. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling technique (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Sarantakos, 1998). Some iteration of the list occurred since, as with the data collection, issues emerged and interviews then had to be conducted with the relevant organizational member or stakeholder.

The initial sample consisted of respondents who could best provide data concerning FFC’s culture and identity across its history. This meant not only past and present organizational members were interviewed but external stakeholders such as the club’s immediate competition in Perth, its governing bodies locally and nationally as well as other researchers in organizational culture, identity, and sport. Past and present players were included as well as members of the print and electronic media that report and comment upon the competition.

Generally, those that were asked to participate were selected based on their known interactions and dealings with FFC. This meant that they had to have spent an extended time working with, or against, examining the way the club went about its business and established itself initially. Interviews were conducted with the main players in the FFC organization including all CEOs and chairmen/presidents to date, all departmental heads of department, three of their 4 coaches and 4 of their 6 captains as well as CEOs and operational managers of FFC’s primary stakeholders, the AFL and WAFC. Interviewing the founders and leaders of the organization since its inception was important to the research based on Schein’s assertion that that it is the founders and past

leading members of the organization, with contemporary leaders and members, that form and influence the developing culture and identity.

The interviews included members of the Board of Directors at the time of FFC's establishment, subsequent board members, original members of both boards of management of the club and people that replaced them up to and including current members. Original coaching assistants, medical staff, trainers, physicians, and their successors were also interviewed. Further interviews were undertaken with subordinates of all senior organizational members to establish exactly how FFC operated. The interviews were extended to stakeholders of FFC within the Western Australia and interstate, such as the media and supporters were also undertaken. This established the fit of FFC with its environments including that imposed by the AFL. A breakdown of who was interviewed is shown in

Table 3.1.

RESPONDENT & GROUPING	NUMBER INTERVIEWED	RESPONDENT CODE
Fremantle Football Club (Past & Present):		
Executives	10	E
Administrative Staff	14	S
Football Department Staff	13	F
Players	7	P
West Coast Eagles Executives	3	W
Football Mentors	3	M
Other Stakeholders (AFL, WAFC Officials)	5	Sh
Electronic and Print Journalists	6	Me

Table 3.1 - List and Groupings of Respondents

In total, 64 interviews with 61 different respondents were conducted while two potential respondents declined to be interviewed. With a case study such as this, much of the material that was provided through interviews and documentation was of a sensitive nature. That meant that the respondent's answers required coding for anonymity. However, it was recognised that a case study of a single, high profile organization with a relatively short history, in a particular location might enable identification of certain

people, particular situations, or events that occurred. Consequently, potential ethical problems about people being identifiable and all interviewees were addressed by asking participants to signify their consent to the interview, which also indicated the researcher's responsibilities to the interviewee. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix 1.

Each respondent was allocated a code representing their department or organization so that some form of identification could be made when analysing the responses. The number given to them was sequential according to the order in which they were interviewed and bears no relationship to department, seniority or other category. For example, a departmental manager would fall under the category of an "*executive*" and if he/she was the fifth such club executive to be interviewed then he/she received the code of "*E05*". The anonymity was consolidated where necessary by referring to individual respondents in an innocuous manner such as "*a senior executive*" rather than "*the chairman*" or "*the CEO*" to avoid identification through historical facts or incidents to which they were related. However, some of the quotes used and background provided, considered essential to the case study, do make some identification of respondents possible otherwise the narrative becomes too convoluted with references to codes and apparently abstract people or events. Copies of the interviews have been kept in electronic storage for verification. No distinction was made between whether the interviewee was a past or current member of the relevant organization, mainly because they were interviewed for their experiences at either the time that they were employed by, or interacting with the club.

3.3.1.2.How to Interview

The interviews were framed within the researcher's conceptual frame which meant it was a case of probing and prompting the respondents for information during interviews and the responses were interpreted by the researcher (Coopey, Keegan, & Emler, 1998). Consequently, they were semi-structured individual interviews and regularly represented the primary source of data from which many further investigations were initiated.

The semi-structured interviews were all individual and the interview was allowed to follow a variety of paths depending on responses to a series of set questions, which established the respondent's background and role in relation to FFC. The set of questions that were used to frame each interview is included at Appendix 2. In some cases only some of them were used depending upon the path followed in the interview.

All of the interviews were conducted in a location of the respondent's choice for the benefit of their comfort in their surroundings and it was usually within their location of employment.

Important aspects of interviewing were addressed such as ensuring adequate preparation was undertaken for the interviews to cause minimum disruption to the interviewee. These were conventional interviewing preparations and techniques that entailed use of recording equipment, establishing the location of the interviews, consent of the interviewees, punctuality by the researcher, and a protocol for the interviews (Cresswell, 1998). All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview preparation ensured the focus of the interview was on the subject matter and not the conduct of the interview as well as minimising time lost or disruption was caused. The interviews lasted between forty five and sixty minutes although two were extended into second interviews at the request of the researcher and one interviewee was spoken to three times. Proper preparation also increased the opportunity of obtaining the required data, first time. It was important that the interviewees were confident that the interview was a one-off event with the data collected at the first attempt and they would not be continually interrupted for the benefit of the research. Some of these interviews were completed on interstate or international visits and consequently there was no opportunity for a second attempt even if it was desired. Interviews and people used for data collection are not like documentary data or even observed data and cannot be continually revisited for explanation, clarification, or more information (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995).

The success of gaining good data was heavily dependent upon the skills of the researcher. To gain experience for the researcher it proved useful to complete the interviews that were of less significance, so that some practice was gained prior to those interviews likely to provide rich data or were limited for time. The risk of such a strategy is that it is never certain where the best data might emerge. The risk was mitigated by the researcher framing questions that elicited the information required with subsequent probing for further elaboration when required (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). From the researcher's perspective, it appeared that all interviewees were conducive to the interview process and the experience was positive for the researcher and interviewees alike.

3.3.2. Documents and Archival Analysis

Forster (1994), Atkinson and Coffey (1998), Cresswell (1998) and Van Maanen (1998) all stress the importance of document analysis as a basis for interviews to verify other information collected. Documents are part of the culturally standardized discourses within organizations that associate the organization with its value system. Hence, the documents themselves as well as the content of the documents provide an insight and direct connection to the culture and identity of the organization.

Access to FFC's documentation was agreed with the club and was conducted with minimum disturbance to the organization. FFC documents not only provided a source of data in their own right but also help to engage informants and elicit information about issues already identified (Forster, 1994). Importantly, documents are not analysed as stand-alone pieces of information or for portrayals of particular circumstances. They are interpreted with other data in the context of their authorship, readership, rhetoric and other documents. FFC for example, have produced year books written and published by the club, as a journal of each year's activities since their foundation (Fremantle Football Club, 1996a; , 1997; , 1998; , 1999; , 2000; , 2001; , 2002; , 2003a; , 2003b). These are for consumption by supporters and consequently are read in the context of being a form of propaganda. FFC had many such types of documentation that were invaluable as a source, and verification, of data. Even so, documents should be seen as cultural artifacts and social facts because they are used and shared throughout the organization (Atkinson & Coffey, 1998).

The documents were reviewed for their content through a standardised process advocated by Sarantakos (1998). In this process Sarantakos advises the summarising of content to reduce the data so that it can be examined for explanations of its meaning. Once meanings are developed the data can be structured through an ordering of the data into categories or defined criteria. Through such structures it was easier to explore and analyse the data through computer software using QSR N6 which is explained at 3.4.2.

The document analysis was extended to the archival analysis of documents in existence since FFC started their operations. This was found in documents such as strategic plans, annual reports, internal publications, correspondence, books, video footage, media articles, interviews, speeches, handbooks, mission statements, media releases, emails, policies, procedures, minutes of meetings, and various other documents that the club generated. Archived data of FFC were also explored, although this was

surprisingly limited, and mainly consisted of the yearbooks. The analysis included corporate documents such as formal financial statements for corporate regulators as well as databases and statements by the club for the media and supporters. The document analysis also included research on the AFL and its clubs (AFL, 1999b; Carter, 1988, , 1999; G. Lewis, Morkel, Hubbard, Davenport, & Stockport, 1999).

The documentation was quite voluminous and presented difficulty in terms of the time required accessing, analysing, and verifying documents (Forster, 1994). It was difficult and time consuming but useful for interpreting in the context of the organization and other data since many of the documents could not be taken at face value. Document analysis is the least intrusive data collection method of those proposed although it was important not to rely on it because it was easier to obtain (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

3.3.3. Observations

Yin's (1994) viewed observations as an important means of data collection for a case study and it was particularly suitable for FFC because it took place in the real world, in real time and allowed data to be understood in its organizational context (Lee, 1999). Waddington (1994) noted that different research projects require certain levels of observation. There are degrees of participation for the observer based upon the amount of participation in the organization by the researcher (Lee, 1999). This research involved participation through the interviews, observations and document analysis, which was most closely aligned with the role of a "*Complete Observer*":

This researcher remains in the background and watches and listens to (a) what others do, (b) what they say, and (c) the circumstances in which these actions and comments occur. As much as possible, the researcher remains unobtrusive; he or she is unlikely to form friendship ties with organizational members (Lee, 1999:99).

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggest that most observers minimise their effect on the organization they are studying, until they have a basic understanding of how it operates. However, they nearly always influence the setting they are studying. Waddington (1994) explains that he saw this as a compromise to enable researchers to get to "*the heart of human experience*". If the researcher is to become intimate with their subject, there has to be recognition of the role of the researcher in that intimacy. The access provided to the researcher allowed a large amount of data to be collected through

observations, meetings, visits, waiting time and conversations during the time spent in the club environment.

Observations were done openly and the research was explained to the staff to make them aware of what the researcher was doing and why. The amount and timing of observation required was more difficult to determine than interviews. Detailed observations and field notes began once there was an acceptance of the researcher in the organization and familiarity with the internal club environment has been established. This lessened the impact of the researcher on the reactions of those being observed and was less intrusive.

Like other data collection methods, observations required validation and interpretation, in context, to see if they were properly understood (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This meant interpreting them in the context of who was doing what, or what was happening where and why. Certain aspects of undertaking observations had to be resolved, such as the degree to which the researcher was admitted into FFC and the frequency and duration of observations (Lee, 1999). These matters were addressed with the people participating in the observed activities but as it transpired, it was not a significant issue once the staff was aware of the researcher's presence and purpose. The opportunity to observe what was going on was presented whilst waiting to conduct interviews, attendance at meetings and the generally free access provided to the researcher to move about the club's premises. In this research, access was granted by the club but permission for departmental access, or access to sensitive areas, was sought separately and was provided.

Observational data were collected through field notes with detailed descriptions, avoiding tendencies to be judgmental on what was observed. It was undertaken, principally to discover patterns of behaviour and relationships amongst FFC staff to help interpret the human complex interactions that exist in social settings such as sporting clubs, which was fundamental to the purpose for the research. The observations included staff going about their daily activities to see if their actions supported what they said they do, game preparation for office and playing staff, and meetings of internal groups concerned with running the club.

3.3.4. Feedback and Reflection

Two issues that had to be addressed in the data collection process were that the data could be infected by the researcher's own presence and impact the data and findings. It was also true that as the data was collected this influenced the way in which subsequent interviews, documents and observations were regarded.

The researcher's presence and observations were mitigated by the acceptance of the researcher in the organization and familiarity with the internal club environment but it must be acknowledged that to obtain the rich data that research such as this achieved, there will be some influence and affect from the researcher.

The researcher's impact led to reflection upon the data being collected which is recognised in the conceptual template adopted that enabled an organizational diagnosis to run concurrently with the data collection. Cresswell (1998) and Corley (2004) support this process as a thorough means of analysing the data to help define and focus further lines of enquiry

3.4. DATA CATEGORISATION AND ANALYSIS

The data collected through interviews, documents and observations was analysed by first grouping the data into provisional categories that corresponded with the main issues revealed in the literature review. The analytical process through categorisation was iterative and interdependent and they are described here. Additionally, the categories merged and overlapped into significant cultural themes that emerged from the data and are presented as a narrative in chapter 5 (Collins & Porras, 1998). The building of these emergent themes, from interviews, document analysis and observations, supports the interpretive, qualitative case study approach (Corley, 2004).

Whilst the focus was on culture and identity, and their effect on behaviour and performance, it was not immediately known where or how, FFC's culture and identity would manifest themselves. Therefore, the data collection and analysis process focussed on the club's cultural values and behaviours, core ideology and their influence on the performance of the club. The process will confirm, or refute, if the club achieved optimum performances when their culture and identity were most appropriate to the club's context and environment; were most clearly manifested; were cult-like; and at their strongest (Collins & Porras, 1998).

3.4.1. FFC's Cultural Mapping Process

Prior to mapping the culture and identity, categories were established to classify the data and define FFC's organizational structure, from which FFC's core ideology and cultural factors would emerge (Collins & Porras, 1998; Hatch, 1997; Schein, 1992). The categories were based on the work of Collins and Porras (1998) and are listed below:

- i. Extent to which FFC set realistically achievable goals that were immediately understood and embraced;
- ii. Extent to which staff has been indoctrinated with the core ideology;
- iii. Whether there has been continuity of management of the club;
- iv. Extent to which the evolution of the club was purposeful or ad hoc; and,
- v. Degree of self-improvement the club achieved during its history?

3.4.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis was framed by a conceptual template adopted by Collins and Porras (Collins & Porras, 1998) research into eighteen visionary companies organizations. This template allows an organizational diagnosis to run concurrently with the data collection enabling any lines of enquiry or themes that emerged to be pursued immediately. Cresswell (1998) and Corley (2004) supported this process of inductive analysis using a naturalistic enquiry approach as a thorough means of analysing the data to help define and focus further lines of enquiry.

The initial stage was to construct a profile of the FFC organization to understand its core ideology, enabling a comparison to be undertaken between what the club did and if it was consistent with that ideology. The next stage was to evaluate different characteristics that the club exhibited at different times though its history to determine at what periods it exhibited characteristics of a strong culture and identity. The periods were then compared to the periods when it enjoyed peak performance, as evaluated by the KPIs. The expectation was that periods of strong culture and periods of success would coincide, demonstrate the influence of culture on strategies and performance.

FFC's profile was constructed from reading and interpreting the interview transcripts, company documentation and the researcher's own notes to understand and contextualise the content. This enabled the important elements to be highlighted and the volume of data from sixty interviews and numerous documents supplied by the club, the AFL as

well as other organizations and stakeholders to be managed. The process of highlighting data assisted in the categorisation and identification of themes and patterns (Collins & Porras, 1998). The process also raised awareness of the data contents through the themes and patterns that enabled a closer examination for any suppressed meanings that consequently emerged. It was the emergence and identification of those meanings that contributed to understanding the patterns and new knowledge of culture and identity in FFC.

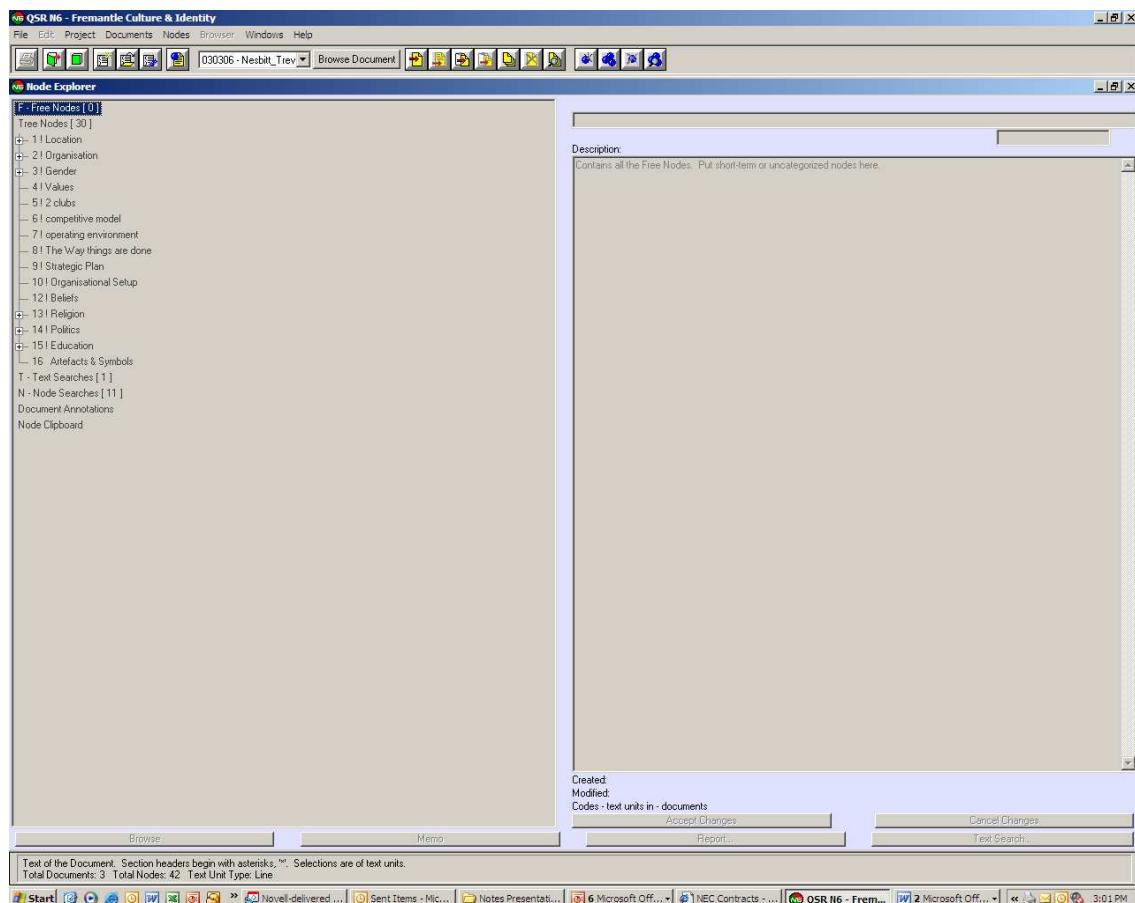


Figure 3.1 - Screen dump from QSR N6 data management software displaying categories tree structure

Development of codes allowed categorisation of the data, described in the cultural mapping process at 3.4.1, to provide an efficient means of traceability and retrieval. The coding and categorisation was developed using QSR N6 data analysis software. This enabled a tree structure of the categories to be developed, shown in Figure 3.1, so that key words, phrases, and paragraphs from transcribed interviews, documents and notes could be represented in one or more of the mapping categories for cross-referencing and retrieval in the diagnosis of FFC's culture and identity and for making sense of the diagnosis.

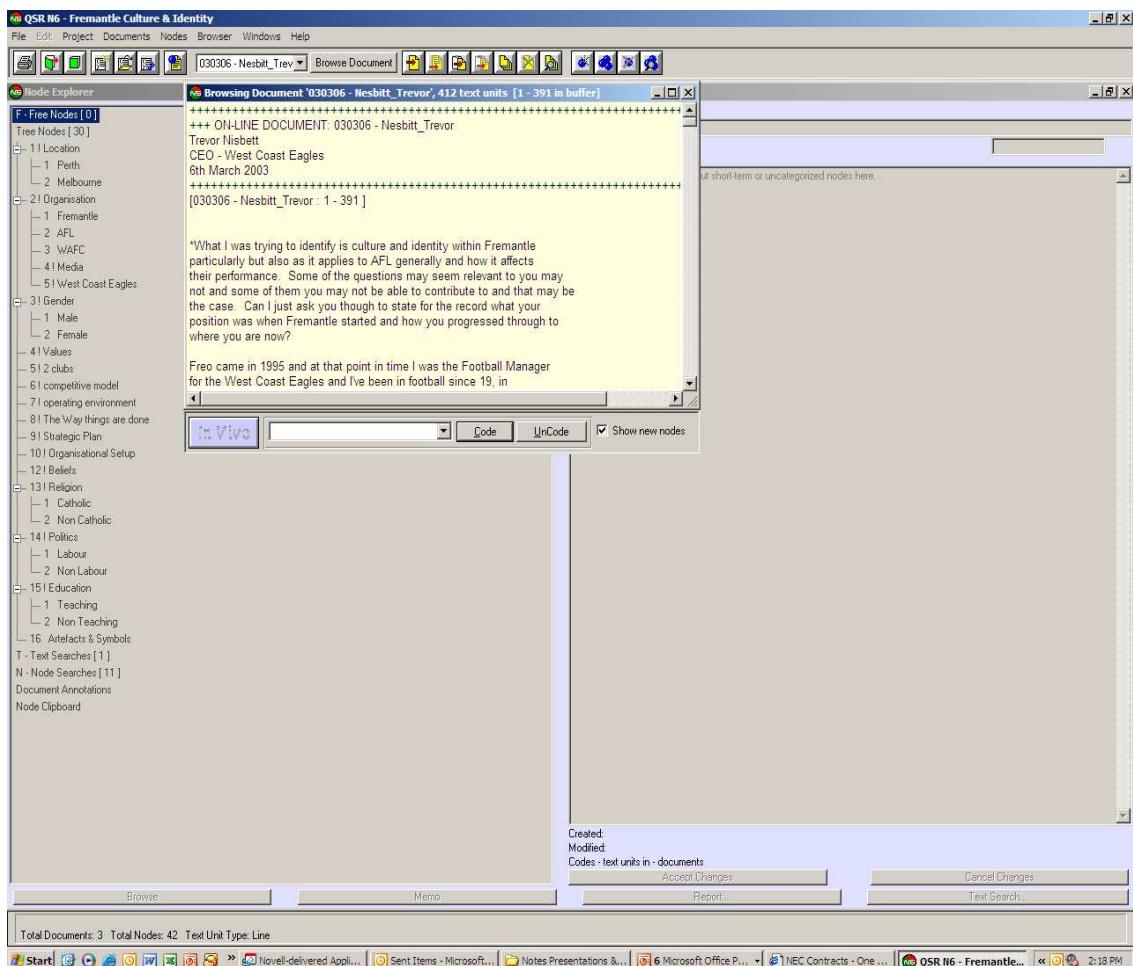


Figure 3.2 - Screen dump from QSR N6 displaying expanded categories tree structure.

Figure 3.1 displays the compressed structure of sixteen categories that ultimately emerged. Figure 3.2 displays the entire expanded tree structure developed as the data were organized, categorised, coded and the diagnosis written, as well as the transcribed text from an interview loaded into the software. From this process, emergent themes were identified and included in an expanded tree structure for retrieval, if required, for examination when answering the research questions. This stage was critical because the researcher's involvement and preconceptions had to be put aside to complete the critical analysis of the emergent themes, what they meant and explore the possible explanations.

The data analysis was conducted iteratively with the data collection. The process of qualitative case studies means that the diagnosis and writing are part of the same process. They were developed in unison and cannot be separated. The conclusions of the research emerged as the iterative process of analysing and writing was undertaken.

3.5. DATA EVALUATION

The testing of data on culture and identity could not be done by analysis of test results that measure the results against hypotheses or correlations of variables (Schein, 1999). The research was fundamentally interpretive and contained many interdependent variables. Solving a research problem of this nature where there were many interdependent, subjective, variables with an interpretive perspective, requires flexibility and should not be constrained by strict hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Flexibility allows issues to emerge for the researcher to explain. Schein (1992) and Sarantakos (1998) advise that research into culture and identity requires relevance and concern of certain situations to understand their meaning rather than testing hypotheses or causal variables.

This evaluation of the data in this research project adopted the interpretivist approach, also called the “*Cognitive Perspective*”, which was consistent with the models used and with the practice of sense making that is inherent in interpretivism (Sackmann, 1992). That is, FFC’s organization is a unique culture and identity, which means it, was inappropriate to adopt an approach using a priori concepts that ignored the context in which the organization operates.

Therefore, rather than measuring variables of culture and identity through hypotheses, they are revealed, observed and described through their manifestations in the context and environment in which they exist (Schein, 1992). This meant evaluating cultural manifestations viewed within their context as FFC staff went about their normal daily activities and duties. These manifestations are used to evaluate culture and identity, as well as their strength and appropriateness. Such an approach requires the evaluation of many, interdependent and subjective variables. Therefore, it was considered appropriate to adopt a qualitative, interpretive approach to the study of FFC’s organizational culture and identity through a case study that accounted for the many subjective and interdependent variables.

3.6. OTHER RESEARCH ISSUES

Having established the appropriate research methodology, the methodology theory had to be put into practice. Amongst the issues to resolve were, gaining access to FFC, the role that the researcher would play within the research and the organization, and how the researcher would avoid introducing his biases into the research.

3.6.1. Access

In determining the use of a qualitative case study, issues emerged of how the researcher would determine FFC's culture, identity, structure, strategies, behaviours, and environments. Clearly, access to the club was required so it could be observed in close proximity to gain a full appreciation of all of these elements. Access for the case study research of FFC was achieved through “*Gatekeepers*” (S. J. Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; John Van Maanen, 1998) and “*key informants*” (Cresswell, 1998). In the case of FFC, three gatekeepers assisted. Van Maanen (1998) warned that professional sports organizations are secretive and very sensitive to outsiders and gaining their trust was of paramount importance. Hence, although data collection was made possible through the gatekeepers and informants, the agreement of the club’s senior executives was sought and obtained for access within the club. The agreement was achieved by convincing the club’s executive that the research and researcher were non-threatening, meant no harm to the organization and that the research had the potential to identify areas of the organization that could be improved because of an external independent analysis. Five meetings were held with two of the club’s chief executive officers to explain the proposed research. In general, the club’s response was very positive about having the research completed and thought that it had something to gain from the research.

3.6.2. Role of the Researcher

Interaction between the researcher and the organization’s staff had the potential to influence the research outcomes. This influence is impossible to avoid since the mere presence of the researcher and his interactions with FFC staff changed the circumstances and context in which activities were completed. However, cognisance of the influence and role of the researcher was accounted for and included within the conclusions.

A significant challenge of the research was to demonstrate that the researcher’s role was to collect data as an observer and not to be influenced by personal opinion that biased the research. However, all research is biased by particular methodologies and there was bias in this research because of a potential conflict between the researcher’s interest as a stakeholder in FFC (member) and his role as a researcher. Therefore, it was important to distinguish that whilst the bias provided incentive for undertaking the research, the execution of the research project was not biased. As an observer, it was recognised that there was a perception that the research results might be seen as biased, or influenced by

a subjective data collection process, and it was important to recognise and account for this perception.

3.6.3. Bias

Bias in research undermines the trust placed in the research's results and conclusions. The validity of interpretive research is questioned by functionalists because it does not rely on the same ontology and epistemology as functionally based research which tends to be restricted to causal relationships of limited particular variables (Corley, 2004). Denzin and Lincoln(1998), Corley(2004) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) addressed the concerns of bias and trust in interpretive research by providing a different set of criteria to consider when evaluating the research and they are displayed in

Table 3.2 (Corley, 2004).

Functional Criteria	Trustworthiness Criteria	Trustworthiness of this Research
Internal Validity	Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extended engagement in the organization;• Triangulation of data types;• Peer group discussion;• Thesis Supervision
External Validity	Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deep investigative and diagnostic examination
Reliability	Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purposive sampling;• Respondent confidentiality;• Audit and peer adoption of data collection and analysis
Objectivity	Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview transcription;• Observation notes• Thesis theoretical & methodological basis of research;• Accurate record keeping.

Based on Corley (2004) and Lincoln & Guba (1985)

Table 3.2 - Techniques for trustworthiness of interpretive research

Table 3.2 shows co-relationships between functional criteria used as a basis for reliability in functional research, with trustworthiness criteria from interpretive research, and demonstrates that interpretive research is as reliable as functional research.

1. Validity sought after in positivist theory, is addressed in interpretive work. Instead of numerical validity, interpretivists establish credibility through corroboration from multiple sources, or triangulation; extended and deep diagnostic engagement at, and examination of, FFC, which tends to remove any superficial understandings; and peer group discussion and supervision that can provided an objective overview.
2. Reliability sought after in positivist theories is replaced by dependability through purposive sampling of interviewees in confidence with peer review of the results.
3. Objectivity is replaced by confirmability and integrity of records and identifying an appropriate methodology. These criteria ensure trustworthiness of the research.

Bias and the objectivity of the data collected are accounted for throughout the analysis by corroboration through separate sources and not until the data are corroborated is it considered credible data. The objectivity is maintained by the completeness of the research that provides a far broader comprehension of “*what was going*” on in FFC. Schein (1996) suggests that as the research progresses, and the issues and understandings emerge, the researcher is able to identify and account for their own expectations, preconceptions, and stereotypes.

3.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

3.7.1. Single Case Study

The research was limited to an analysis of a single case study of one Western Australian AFL club. This meant that the conclusions drawn were specific to FFC and its particular context and environment at the time that the research was conducted. Qualitative research of this nature offers an insight into the world of FFC, which may be generalisable to other sporting organizations in similarly regulated environments. These include the other AFL clubs, The Australian National Basketball League and the National Football League in America. At the same time, any generalisation should be treated with caution.

3.7.2. Contemporary Knowledge

A significant limitation was the current state of knowledge on the subject. Research and writing of the organization of sports generally, and their culture and identity in particular, were relatively new, still evolving and there was limited literature available. This thesis represents an opportunity to contribute to the limited knowledge on this subject.

3.7.3. Time

Time is a limitation on case studies and this research. There was a limit on the overall duration of the project and case study data collection is a time consuming activity. Access times to collect data from FFC were limited and some departments were not available at certain times such as the football department during the playing season and the membership department during the off-season because these were their busiest times. Access was generally confined to the off-season for detailed data collection although some was made available from general staff during the playing season.

3.7.4. Access

Whilst access was agreed with FFC, the degree of access allowed varied according to the availability of personnel although in general the staff were very accommodating to the researcher's requests and nobody within the organization declined to be interviewed although repeat requests were required of some personnel. It had been expected that FFC, regarded as less successful than anticipated may have had reservations about the level of access, or maybe would be defensive about releasing information but this ultimately did not prove to be the case. It was emphasised that the categorisation of the data when they were collected was for management and analysis and that the results, presented in chapter 5, are reported within the significant cultural themes that emerged.

3.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the research methodology that was adopted to investigate the research problem and provided justification for the particular research framework and methodology. The research methodology comprised a qualitative case study inquiry, collecting data through interviews, document analysis, and observations. The latter part of the chapter explained the processes that were used to analyse the data collected. It was emphasised that the data collection, categorisation and analysis techniques were adopted to manage the data and that the categories ultimately within the narrative of

FFC's culture and identity. The data categorisation and analysis enabled a determination of FFC's cultural fit internally and with its environment establishing if there were periods when FFC's culture and identity influenced the club's performance, and to what extent. As well as the framework and methodology, this chapter also explained some of the research issues such as, bias, access, instruments, evaluation, and validation, and the role of the researcher.

In undertaking the research into the organizational culture and identity of FFC, it was necessary to understand the context and environment in which it operates. In any analysis of organizational culture and identity, context reveals the strategies and behaviours that provide the best fit for its environment. Consequently, prior to the results, the next chapter provides a description of FFC's environment and context.

4. FFC'S CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT

Be careful the environment you choose for it will shape you

W. Clement Stone, businessman, philanthropist (1902 - 2002).

4.1. Introduction

One of the central themes running through the literature was that culture and identity must be analysed within their context and environment. This was seen to be a crucial requirement since the design of an appropriate culture and identity is primarily concerned with obtaining the best fit between an organization, its context, and its environment. Therefore, to understand fully the culture and identity of a sporting organization, it is important to describe its organizational context, and the consequent environments, in which it resides.

That context and environment in which FFC operates will be presented in this chapter. Establishing FFC's particular context and environment is a first step in identifying the characteristics of a culture and identity that best fits the heavily regulated, but highly competitive, AFL environment.

4.2. SPORTING CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Research into the management of sporting organizations is a relatively new field of inquiry. During the 1970s, 80s and early 90s, most of the research focussed on the economic and social aspects of sport (Dabscheck, 1975; Gorman & Calhoun, 1994; , 1999; Quirk & Fort, 1992; Yiannakis & Greendorfer, 1992). However, since the mid 1990s attention has turned to the behavioural aspects of sports organizations (Kikulis, Slack, & Hinings, 1995; Parks, Zanger, & Quartermain, 1998; Shilbury & Hamilton, 1996; Skinner, Stewart, & Edwards, 1999; Slack, 1997; A Smith & Stewart, 1999). The analysis of organizational culture in sporting organizations is limited to studies by Hinings et al (1996), Roberts et al (1998), Shilbury and Hamilton (1996), Slack (1997) and Smith and Stewart (1999). A few other studies addressed organizational culture as a phenomenon to be considered, without exploring it any further (Parks, Zanger, & Quartermain, 1998; Shilbury, Quick, & Westerbeek, 1998) or in the context of voluntary and semi-professional sports (Colyer, 2000). In each of these studies, culture was found to be a key factor in shaping the management and operations of sporting organizations. Slack suggested:

A focus on organizational culture provides a different approach to understanding patterns of action in sport organizations. This approach, if combined with traditional macro organizational theory, could provide for richer insights into the organizations we study. An approach that focuses on organizational culture should also have considerable appeal to those of us interested in sport, because the organizations in our field are rife with such characteristics as stories, myths, symbols and rituals (1997:271).

Smith and Stewart (1999) found that the culture of an AFL club was instrumental in affecting the structure and day-to-day behaviours of an organization. Their findings supported anecdotal evidence that football club cultures strongly influence behaviours of club officials and players. However, the question remains as to what types of culture create winning teams and organizations? It is postulated that the answer lies in the management structures and strategies that arise from their cultures and identities.

Sporting organizations operate at several levels, consisting of several disparate subcultures. Unlike other commercial organizations, whose objectives are usually financial, sporting organizations operate with different and sometimes competing objectives. Supporters, for example, desire short-term performance by way of a winning team and are often driven by emotion, whereas the organization works towards long-term financial survival and sustained performance. Whilst such competing objectives have similarities with shareholder desires in a commercial organization, there is a greater personal stake and emotional involvement in sporting organizations, not usually associated with their commercial cousins. Even within a sporting organization, there is potential for a clash of cultures from staff whose focus is on the players and the game rather than the business, or vice versa. A focus on the business is required, because of corporate and financial regulations whilst awareness has to be maintained of behavioural aspects of the sporting team that is part of the organization. This is critical because whilst several measures exist for sporting organization success such as the team's win-loss record, a winning team is fundamental to overall organizational success. Subsequently, even though a sporting organization is a bounded social entity, made up of individuals working towards common goals within a structured activity system, it has to manage stakeholders, who may not be direct employees, that can have a significant impact on its performance. It is the need to make sense of this variety of

environments, and their subcultures, which again justifies the approach of Schein, Hatch, and Schulz as the most appropriate means by which to explore FFC's culture and identity.

4.3. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN AFL CLUBS

The diagnosis of FFC's culture and identity and its environment involves a close examination of its organizational strategies, structure, behaviour, and performance, many of which have not been explored within sporting organizations. Such an examination explores the club to see if it can build a strong adaptable organization that is effective and capable of changing to suit the environment. As AFL clubs have become more widely recognised as businesses, so recognition has been given to them as complex organizations relying on strategies, structure, behaviour, and performance to be competitive and adaptable to change. Only by studying these can we expect to make sense of what differentiates AFL clubs that perform well from those that do not. In this case the context of the FFC organization must necessarily focus on the history of the AFL since it helps explain an entrenched culture of a competition amongst football clubs from the state of Victoria, into which Fremantle entered as part of a national league.

4.4. THE AFL CONTEXT

The Australian Football Commission (AFC) governs the Australian Football League (AFL) competition and imposes the terms and conditions under which the clubs participate (AFL, 1999a). Whilst contemporary business organizations exist in deregulated, highly competitive markets, sports organizations differ because they operate in regulated environments in which an array of rules govern the general behaviour of member clubs.

Despite AFL attempts to provide an equal footing upon which the clubs compete, they perform with varying degrees of success. The equalising strategies that the AFL impose means that the clubs' internal management (and by implication, their culture and identity) can make the difference between success and failure.

4.4.1. Origins of Australian Rules Football (1858 to 1877)

Documenting Australian Rules football has focussed principally on its history and origins (Alomes & Stewart, 1998; Blainey, 1990; Dunn & Main, 1974; Fitzgerald & Spillman, 1988; Hess & Stewart, 1998; Hutchinson, 1984; Sandercock & Turner, 1981;

Bob Stewart, 1983; Walker, 1998). The contemporary interest is reflected in academia, which has looked at Australian Rules football as a part of Australian society and national culture, as well as its commercial role (Carter, 1988; , 1999; Macdonald, 1998; Parkin, Bourke, & Gleeson, 1999; Shilbury, 1994; Shilbury & Hamilton, 1996; A. Smith, 1994; Bob Stewart, 1983). There is a degree of myth and legend about the game and it is useful to review briefly, the history of the game and its origins so that its cultural significance is understood.

On a first casual inspection, Australian Rules football has similarities to Gaelic football to which it has been attributed as having its origins, with the main difference being the shape of the ball. However, there is very little evidence of any influence of the Irish or their game. Indeed the Irish game was codified after the Australian game (Blainey, 1990). More likely, an Irish influence was probably one of a number of influences upon the invention of a game that appears to draw on many backgrounds.

Australian Rules football emerged in the late 1850s, in the then colony of Victoria, because of cricket players that were looking for a means of keeping fit during the winter months. The cricket players wrote a letter to a Melbourne paper, “*Bell’s Sporting Life*” in July 1858, calling for interest from men wishing to participate in a winter sport to keep their fitness up for the cricket season (Sandercock & Turner, 1981). The letter was widely accredited as the acorn from which Australian Rules football grew (Dunn & Main, 1974; Hess & Stewart, 1998; Sandercock & Turner, 1981). One of their first tasks was to set about developing their own game and to codify it, which in its infancy was known as “*Victorian Rules*” or “*Melbourne Rules*” until other colonies objected and it became known as “*Australian Rules*” (Dunn & Main, 1974).

The first Australian Rules football team was The Melbourne Football Club, formed in the winter of 1858, which commissioned some of its members to draw up the rules of the game and they are believed to be the first set of written rules of any football code, anywhere in the world (Hess & Stewart, 1998). The rules were the beginning of what was to become Australia’s premier football league. Wills et al supplied the impetus for the game’s codification and a colleague, H. C. A. Harrison, is reported to have said about Wills:

“*He very sensibly advised us... to work out a game of our own...it was a rather go-as-you-please affair*” (Blainey, 1990).

Other clubs were quickly formed to join Melbourne in competition, Geelong, a port town approximately seventy kilometres to the southwest of Melbourne, was formed in 1859. They were followed by Richmond and South Yarra in 1860, Carlton, Albert Park and Royal Park in 1864, Brunswick and Williamstown in 1865, and University and Warehousemen in 1866 (Dunn & Main, 1974).

4.4.2. From VFA to VFL (1877 to 1897)

Clubs that had formed in the 1860s were more interested in themselves than the welfare and survival of the game (Dunn & Main, 1974; Hess & Stewart, 1998). Thus, the Victorian Football Association was created in 1877 and charged with promoting the game and overcoming the clubs' self-interest. The VFA was comprised of Hotham (North Melbourne), Melbourne, Geelong, Carlton, Albert Park (South Melbourne), St Kilda, Essendon and East Melbourne.

The VFA also helped get the new game going among the other colonies but it took until the 1880s to establish real support in Western Australia (WA). Before then the game was played by troops in WA and a team called the Swans played amongst themselves. The population of WA weighed up all the options of the different codes of football available to it before supporting Australian Rules (Hess & Stewart, 1998). In Queensland, it lost favour to Rugby rather than failed to take hold. Many Queensland clubs were established in the late 1800s and a strong Australian Rules football presence survives in that state. The first game played to "*Australian Rules*" in Brisbane was at Queen's Park but the game declined in interest after the first rugby match was played in 1882 (Reet & Howell, 1992).

The success of the VFA's efforts to promote the game above individual club interests was reflected in attendances during the 1880s. Attendances at games often exceeded 10,000 with one game between South Melbourne and Geelong reputed to have attracted 34,000, which compares favourably to the 1880 FA Cup Final in England which drew a crowd of 6,000 (Blainey, 1990). With a successful competition, strong rivalries developed between clubs with a strong supporter base and those without. In essence, clubs close to the inner city of Melbourne, undergoing the effects of a gold rush, were closer to transport and attracted the bigger crowds. They decided that they were propping up the other clubs and sought to separate from the VFA and form the Victorian Football League (VFL).

4.4.3. From VFL to AFL (1897 to 1990)

Despite its continued progress, the game has continually suffered anxieties about clubs' self-interests versus welfare of the game a number of times in its history. In the 1890s, the game went through a depressed period with falling attendances and inter-club rivalry leading to discontent about why some clubs should support others. This discontent led to the formation of the VFL in 1897 by the inner city clubs of South Melbourne, Collingwood, Essendon, Melbourne, Fitzroy, and Carlton. Geelong also participated being the only club in Geelong and consequently having their own drawing power. These clubs invited St Kilda to join the new VFL alliance (Dunn & Main, 1974).

While the VFL was the dominant competition, a feature of the game during this period was the interstate rivalry (the colonies having become a federation of states in 1901). Victoria and Tasmania had been the first teams to meet in an inter-colonial fixture in front of 10,000 with Victoria winning 7-0 (Sandercock & Turner, 1981). South Australia and Western Australia, as the two next strongest states, also participated in festivals each year to establish state supremacy. Of great joy to the "*Croweaters*" (South Australians) and the "*Sandgropers*" (Western Australians) was beating the "*Vics*" (Victorians).

The VFL was long regarded, as Australia's premier football league, partly because it had the wealth to attract and recruit players from all other states to Victorian clubs. However, the other states, particularly Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania were concerned about the loss of their local talent to Victoria (Barker, 2004). In the late 1980s, the landscape started to change when the VFL opted to become a national competition. In 1986, two interstate clubs formed and joined the VFL, the West Coast Eagles from Western Australia, and the Brisbane Bears from Queensland. South Australia did not include a team and was held back from doing so for a number of years until local inter club rivalry was overcome (Shilbury & Hamilton, 1996). The expanded VFL, as it was known, continued in this form while a national governing body was created and given authority to take over.

4.4.4. The AFL (1990 -)

In 1990, the VFL was formally re-named the AFL, which was comprised of fifteen clubs; Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Fitzroy, Footscray, Geelong, Hawthorn, Melbourne, North Melbourne, Richmond, and St Kilda from Victoria, Sydney (South

Melbourne relocated to Sydney and was renamed the Sydney Swans in 1981) from New South Wales, The West Coast Eagles from Western Australia and the Brisbane Bears from Queensland. Since then it has seen the addition of two clubs from South Australia (Adelaide and Port Adelaide who joined in 1991 and 1997 respectively) and one more from Western Australia (Fremantle in 1995). Fitzroy merged with Brisbane to create a new club, the Brisbane Lions, at the end of the 1996 season (K. Taylor, 2000). This resulted in a sixteen team competition.

All of these clubs are licensees of the AFL. Some of them, particularly those known as the “*interstate*” clubs (because they do not come from Victoria, as do the majority) are licensees of their state leagues. Hence, the AFL is a national football competition consisting of sixteen clubs representing all states of Australia, except Tasmania. As a result, and the fact that the game is indigenous to Australia, the AFL claims Australian Rules to be the national football code of Australia.

4.5. THE AFL ENVIRONMENT

Across the “southern” Australian states of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania, Australian Rules football has a significant place in the lives of the population (Alomes & Stewart, 1998). Over six million people attended matches in the AFL in 1998, the year in which the current attendance record was set but which is expected to be exceeded in 2005. 2005 will also see the game played at more venues than ever before with reduced capacities in Melbourne and Brisbane enabling eight games to be played at smaller venues across more states and territories in Canberra, Launceston and Darwin in addition to the regular venues (Australian Football League, 2005b).

In business terms the AFL maintains an operating surplus from which it redistributes funds to clubs as well as supporting game development, the AFL Players’ Association (AFLPA) and facilities improvements. In 2004 it generated revenue of A\$124 million, up from \$63.9 million in 2000 (Australian Football League, 2005a). The Age newspaper, a Melbourne broadsheet, reported in 2000, “*Football employs 5003 people, nearly 14 million people watched it in 1998 and 448,410 played it*” (K. Taylor, 2000). Taylor also relates details of a report commissioned by the AFL that as long ago as 1999, Australian Rules football contributed A\$1.71 billion to the national economy.

These figures demonstrate that the social role and business of the AFL and Australian Rules football has a significant commercial, sporting and cultural role in Australian society. Significantly, it is not as male dominated to the degree of other football codes. At its elite level, Australian Rules is played only by males but 40% of its spectators are female (Alomes & Stewart, 1998).

When the AFL formed, it was cognisant of the game's history and the arguments over competing priorities of clubs and the welfare of the game. Each of the restructured competitions described had resulted from a threat of breakaway wealthier clubs from an existing ailing competition and the AFL was no different. To moderate the competing priorities of club versus game and establish itself as the national football code, the AFL imposed a strict and onerous regulated environment and the performance of the clubs depended on how well they adapted to fit the environment

4.5.1. The Regulated Environment

The cornerstone of the AFL's regulated environment is its “*Equalisation strategy*”, imposed through the terms and conditions of the clubs' licenses (Carter, 1988). The policy addresses the AFL's concern in the club versus game debate and the goal of becoming the premier football code. It is designed to protect clubs from their own predatory business behaviours that could undermine their competitiveness, and thereby weaken the code overall. The clubs' primary focus is on-field dominance and left unfettered, the wealthier clubs would dominate through higher salaries and larger squads of more talented players. The welfare of the game and competitiveness amongst clubs is a lower club priority. However, in a country with a small and dispersed population, and in a sport lacking international competition where the league is the pinnacle of competition, clubs are more accepting of the need for regulation to ensure the competition's long-term viability through a balanced, well-managed, and high quality competition. Even so, the regulations had firstly, to be enforceable through policies and procedures that constrain clubs' behaviours through “*sanctions*” and secondly, generate sustainable improvements in the appeal of the game to its consumers. Hence, the league wanted a regulated environment that controlled the conduct of its teams, players, coaches, and administrators including the number of teams and their locations and a system of player development and recruitment. The regulated environment was most recently reviewed in 2005 (B. Stewart, Nicholson, & Dickson, 2005).

The AFL saw benefits in a similar equalisation strategy used in the National Football League (NFL) and National Basketball Association (NBA) in the United States of America. Pete Rozelle, who was a commissioner of the NFL, is accredited with developing the principle of equalisation. Rozelle was widely regarded as the architect of developing American football into the USA's richest and most popular sport, creating a monopoly of the American Football League and replacing the individual clubs as negotiators in their own right (Quirk & Fort, 1992). Rozelle was a commissioner for 24 years and oversaw the merger of the NFL with the American Football League. It grew from 12 clubs to 28 clubs and was structured in such a way that a few rich teams did not dominate it (Carter, 1988).

The AFL relies upon similar licensing, marketing, broadcasting rights, restrictions, and specific labour market regulations to implement its *Equalisation strategy*. Firstly, the AFL is a single, centralised, decision-making, body that advertises, promotes, and governs the competition, penalising its members for any breaches of the policy. Secondly, the AFL generates revenue and profits through broadcast rights and merchandising, for redistribution to the clubs, whilst imposing cost minimisation strategies on them, such as club player payment limits, limits on numbers of players registered with each club and drafting regulations for new players (Australian Football League, 1999a, , 1999b; Macdonald, 1998). Thirdly, the AFL seeks to increase the game's attractiveness and marketability. The AFL's strategy to achieve these is to improve spectator comfort, player skills, and predictable playing conditions. Finally, by allowing poor performing clubs to have first access to the best of the developing talent and restrictions on what clubs can pay its players in total (Total Player Payments or TPP), the league introduces competitive balance amongst its club so each of them can maintain basic standards of administration and coaching.

The AFL reaffirmed its commitment to the *Equalisation strategy* in July 2000, although they are prepared to manipulate it from time to time to favour poor performing clubs (Ryan, 2000). The policy is designed to prevent teams from dominating over prolonged periods as occurs in other sporting codes such as soccer, whilst still being able to enjoy short periods of dominance that reward good management practices:

It's a serious concern for us that in many European countries only a small number of teams can win the domestic league title (Campbell, 2004).

The policy was also designed to overcome a perception that the strong clubs support the weaker clubs. The clubs recognised in a relatively small consumer market, that they needed each other, and the competition, to survive and the policy was aimed at balancing clubs' strengths and weaknesses. The *Equalisation Strategy* is regarded by the AFL as its most fundamental governing regulation (Carter, 1988). At the same time the AFL regarded football as part of the wider industry of entertainment and competition, which exists at three levels (Carter, 1999):

1. *At the competition level where competitors are the competing entertainment and participation interests;*
2. *At an organization level where teams compete for financial resources, players, coaches, management and motivation; and,*
3. *On the field where match day tactics are used and players compete against each other.*

The approach adopted by the AFL is that these strategies operate from the top level down and that the business competition should exist at the highest level against different sports. Hence, while the AFL would not be unhappy to see basketball go out of business, they have a strong interest in wanting competing clubs to survive through the support of an equalisation strategy.

A potential consequence for the AFL's regulated environment is that the sixteen clubs become clones of each other, modelled around the biggest and best of them. Consequently, the AFL is adamant that clubs are described as licensees and not franchises, enabling each club to establish its own culture and identity within the AFL environment.

4.5.2. The Club Environment

Given the regulated operating environment, it is the clubs' administration, recruiting, and coaching where clubs have room to create a competitive edge over each other and the better supported, stronger and wealthier clubs have discretion over their expenditure on them. The *Equalisation Strategy* aims to place all clubs on an even footing but it does not seek to control or influence clubs' structures, strategies of behaviours and it therefore comes down to managerial skills and behaviours off-field, skills of the coaching and medical staff, players' mental factors and other organizational behaviours,

that determine club performance. Therefore, each club has latitude as to how it goes about its business, driving its culture, identity and image as a consequence.

Clubs can recruit the management personnel they want with these skills and they have to be able to attract the people they want. For example, they can hire as many coaches as they consider appropriate and pay them what they consider is suitable. If the total amount exceeds the club's allocation from the AFL, the club has to generate the revenue for itself. For example, in 2001, FFC saw the need for a specialist coach and because of the club's poor financial status, Connolly acquired sponsorship for the specific position and person. Alternatively, if clubs wish, they can do as the West Coast Eagles has and allocate expenditure on research and development to investigate how they can do things differently. However, the clubs need the right organizational set-up for it to occur. Therefore, an essential area in which clubs can exercise influence is through their management organization and the way it is structured and implemented. This means that despite the heavily regulated environment, AFL clubs still have significant scope for developing strategies and programs that can deliver a competitive advantage. Cost advantage and product differentiation are two specific areas where a competitive advantage can be secured and the cost advantage and differentiation that each club creates for itself, has a direct impact on the way in which it is perceived and goes about its business, thus reflecting upon its culture and identity (Barney, 1996; Porter, 1985). The North Melbourne Football Club (the "Kangaroos"), for example, are differentiated as a financially disadvantaged club that overcomes its cost disadvantages by gaining the maximum return and effort from its resources in what is often termed the "*Shinboner Spirit*":

On the other hand, the notion of a warrior culture at Arden Street, otherwise known as the shinboner spirit, lives on like some sacred thread woven into the story of the Kangaroos' dreaming. This idea of a unique "spirit" or "culture", though, as easy as it is to believe, is not as easily understood or recognised for what it is (Reilly, 2005: Online).

4.6. FFC'S CULTURE, IDENTITY, CONTEXT AND ENVIRONMENT

Some clubs in the AFL remain consistently strong performers whilst others struggle to make an impact. Again, the Kangaroos is a club that is perceived to continually outperform what might be expected of its available resources. This begs the question:

What specific form of culture and identity provide the best fit for FFC in the heavily regulated AFL environment, and what part do they play in the developments of FFC's structures, strategies, and behaviours, and level of performance?

This thesis to date has placed emphasis on the need for FFC to have an appropriate culture and identity which are recognised as having a good fit with the context and environment in which the club exists. The better that fit, the more appropriate the culture and identity are and therefore, more effective in driving the strategies, structures, decisions and behaviours of the club appropriate to its environment.

Similar to the Kangaroos, other clubs have established appropriate regimes within which their performance has been maintained at a high level, over prolonged periods. After making its debut in 1987, the West Coast Eagles played in the finals in 1989, its second year and after making the finals again in 1990, played in every finals series for ten years. In eighteen seasons it has missed the final only four times. Similarly since the first season of the VFL/AFL national league in 1987, Essendon has only missed playing in the finals for four years out of eighteen, playing in the last seven from 1998 to 2004, consecutively. At the same time both of these clubs' off-field performances have excelled with both of them being among the most successful clubs in the league in terms of financial performance, membership and attendances. Both clubs appear to have enjoyed their success as a consequence of effectively managing the regulated environment in which they exist. They both have a reputation for constructive and aggressive lateral thinking, within and beyond football, in a search for the smallest sporting or organizational advantages to give them an edge in the regulated environment. Kevin Sheedy for example, the coach of Essendon has explored the recruitment of players from North America as well as the expansion of the game there whilst the West Coast Eagles has established a research and development committee to generate new research projects, mainly in sports science, in a search for a competitive edge.

Therefore, the next chapter will explore the cultures and identities within FFC and how they were manifested and fitted with the club's environment. Subsequently, they will be explored to see if they were appropriate to the context and environment in which FFC exists, to determine how influential they became in driving FFC's performance

5. CULTURE AND IDENTITY AT FFC

Culture is like the sum of special knowledge that accumulates in any large united family and is the common property of all its members

Aldous Huxley, author (1894 – 1963)

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 explained the research design for this study, and also described how the data would be collected and analysed. Specific operations were used to highlight the different categories and cultural representations of assumptions, values, beliefs, and artifacts. The categorisation was used to manage and organize the data which will be presented in this chapter as a narrative that both synthesises the themes that emerged, and describes how FFC's culture and identity evolved. This will be done under the following headings:

1. Cultivating a Culture (Building the Organization);
2. Searching for an Identity (Images and Representations of FFC); and,
3. Integrating Culture and Identity (Artifacts, Rituals and Symbols).

This narrative of FFC's organization describes the club as it matured from a concept into a fully functioning football club with a culture and identity that reflected its leaders' core ideologies, values and beliefs.

5.2. CULTIVATING A CULTURE (BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION)

In any organization, it is the leaders and senior managers, usually a CEO, who wields the most power and strategic influence (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998). Moreover, the strategic direction that accompanies this power and influence is a reflection of the CEO's own values and beliefs (Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis, 2005; Schein, 1992). The values of CEOs are strongly held and are embedded in their competencies and knowledge base. In turn, these competencies and knowledge base of CEOs provide a "*frame of the job*", or core ideology that they hold, and the perspective in which they wish their organization to be regarded (Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998). In turn, the CEO's core ideology drives strategy and structure to frame decisions and behaviours, or "*how things are done*". Hence, the CEO largely determines the culture and is responsible for perceptions about the organization from which, its more enduring identity will evolve. In turn, the outcomes of these strategies, structures, decisions and behaviours, require the CEO to reflect and reinforce, or transform, "*the way things are done*" through the organization's culture and identity (Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis, 2005; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998; Schein, 1992). It is anticipated that professional sporting organizations like FFC will exhibit the same characteristics.

5.2.1. The Financial Imperative

In its beginning FFC was characterised by a paradox that exists for all embryonic organizations entering an existing market. On the one hand there is a strong imperative to be different from its competitors, but on the other hand, to be similar so as to compete effectively in the same environment. FFC not only had to distinguish itself from its cross-town and interstate rivals to garner local and nationwide support but also had to embrace the traditions and values of the AFL competition. It was essentially a case of product differentiation that, for example, Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola face, but how could a football club differentiate its product, but still use best practice to establish a new business and improve on what the best-of-the-best were doing (Sh04, 2003). The best-of-the-best when FFC started was its cross-town rival, the West Coast Eagles who won the 1994 premiership. This meant that FFC wrestled with presenting itself as something different from the Eagles to attract new fans, supporters and members whilst it retained the values, traditions, and characteristics of the oldest codified game of football in the world. In turn, expectations were placed upon it that were often in conflict, from fans and administrators.

However, rather than address the above paradox, FFC adopted values and behaviours with a narrow focus on its financial well-being. One of FFC's senior executives in its early days, E06, described establishing the organization as “*extremely difficult*” in terms of setting it up with policies, processes, and procedures for the way it would go about its business. In fact, such policies and procedures took second place to the task of financing the club. The policies were produced on the run because of a delay in the award of the club’s license, which restricted the lead in time for the club to establish itself ready for its first game. E06 commented that before the club could concern itself with policies and procedures it had to find funding to ensure the club’s viability:

The first thing we had to do was find money to exist (E06, 2004)

Initial funding for the fledgling club was provided via a refundable grant from the WAFC, but by default, it meant one of the first strategies was to pay the grant back as soon as possible enabling the club to survive from its own resources:

...because as I said I reckon we were six months short on the administrative side, let me give you an example we had to sell millions of dollars worth of advertising in terms of signage around Subiaco Oval, we had to sell seats, we had to sell sponsorships...we had to sell private boxes...and we had to sell coterie tickets...these are the basic income streams for any AFL club...so we had to find \$12 million dollars without ever actually having to play a game. Now it’s very difficult to do that because a lot of people have to take it on trust so there wasn’t the time for the organizational niceties of long and comprehensive strategic planning....(E06, 2004)

E06 conceded that strategic planning was not ignored, nor forgotten, but was “*postponed*” because it came down the list of priorities of things to be done. Finding funding sources was critical because it was required to pay the bills and allow commitments to be made such as to players’ contracts. The playing squad had to be assembled and players had to be recruited, contracted, paid, and in some cases, relocated. Moreover, players were not going to be attracted to the club unless they knew the commitments made to them could be met. E06 believed there was a lack of appreciation for the problems involved in starting up a new club when he referred, resentfully, to comments about it being an easy job to start up the new club, to which responded, “*well it wasn’t easy*” and it was an “*administrative challenge bar nothing*”. However, the focus on finance, to the detriment of clear strategies and plans for the

club's direction, was to expose a frailty in the emerging culture that saw values and behaviours develop in staff that looked inward to the club's financial survival and ignored its external operating environment.

5.2.2. FFC's Parochialism

It was argued by some however, that FFC's administrative challenges were not helped by FFC's own lack of willingness to seek assistance from, among others, the West Coast Eagles, who had similar issues to deal with a decade earlier. W01 was a senior executive of the West Coast Eagles when FFC entered the competition and observed that FFC would not accept help and wanted to go about things its own way. The consequence was that FFC did very little to ingratiate itself, least of all with the AFL Commission, the league's governing body. This was a clear trait of FFC's infancy; it wanted acceptance from the football community as a serious contributor, but it wanted to do it on its own and do it its own way. This in turn led to another trait in the early organization, that of the unwanted little brother, both of the Eagles and the competition as a whole. FFC found it easier to survive and explain its early lack of success as because "*everyone's against us*". For example, FFC blamed the AFL and WAFC of not getting it as good a deal when it entered the AFL as other new clubs and it was an approach easily accepted by stakeholders. E07, who served on Fremantle's board of directors, referred to this attitude manifesting itself within the club when he joined in 1998:

FFC had a huge inferiority complex inside the AFL and one of the AFL's complaints when things were going tough for us was that we had less interaction with them than any other club in the competition and I put that down to our senior executive staff not engaging with the AFL on a daily basis as they should...they were a bit dark on the footy world they were sort of, they felt they'd been let down, they felt that they hadn't got the sort of deal that West Coast had got with priority picks in early drafts...they were at constant loggerheads with the footy commission over financial matters and matters of location...they were constantly fighting the football commission, they didn't seem to like the people, people like Jeff Ovens who were running it, they were constantly criticising them but they were constantly criticising a lot of elements of the football world and there wasn't

a positive sprit there when I arrived, they thought the world was against them...I just don't know why that was...(E07, 2004)

W02, a West Coast Eagles executive, suggested FFC's approach was partly attributable to its first coach, Gerard Neesham. Neesham was regarded as a very opinionated and parochial person (M06, 2003; W02, 2002). Prior to his appointment Neesham had a tense history with the West Coast Eagles as a result of a difference of opinion with the Eagles coach Michael Malthouse and the animosity remained evident when Neesham became FFC's first senior coach. Malthouse denied any animosity between himself and Neesham although in later years reference was made about the bad blood between the clubs when Malthouse and Neesham were in charge (F07, 2003).

The parochial nature of FFC contributed to, and consolidated, the inward-looking focus of the club and its lack of attention to its environment generated through its financial focus. The tendency was for staff to look inward at what the club was doing as the right way and that it was all the external bodies, the outsiders and interstate governing bodies that were preventing them from making progress. A characteristic that emerges in such situations is a narcissistic tendency, highlighted by thinking all well is well you're your organization and blaming everyone else when things go wrong.

5.2.3. FFC's Resentment

FFC, by its strategy of doing things on its own, and thereby incur the irritation of its governing bodies, failed to recognise the response such an attitude would bring from those it upset. E06 for example, resented the lack of assistance for FFC from the AFL. He saw FFC as a "battler" and the "runt" of the AFL litter, believing that FFC was continually victimized by whoever it dealt with in the football community, despite FFC making no attempt to embrace them. E06 cited an attempt to attract a highly respected coach, Leigh Mathews, to the club as senior coach. FFC failed in its bid but just a few weeks later the Brisbane Lions appointed Mathews, with assistance from the AFL. However, a lack of assistance was refuted by some and one media commentator suggested the opposite:

I'm probably getting of the track here one of the great myths of WA footy is there's an anti West Australian stance taken by the AFL. It's bullshit, it's actually the opposite. The AFL had a pro national standard it probably had done as much to help West Australian footy in Australia as any of the other states. You look at the concessions that West Coast got, look at the draft when Fremantle got Hasleby and

Pavlich and Leigh Brown. I think they were two four and five in the draft. They were actually only entitled to two of those picks they got three because Ian Collins basically invented a rule to get them three, you know its how the AFL works . That was the reason and Melbourne broke the salary cap and Cameron Schwab to get him and so Jeff White became a consolation pick and now Hawthorn had argued this, this year with some justification that they should get a consolation pick because Fremantle broke the salary cap to get Trent Croad. (M06, 2003)

Hence, issues such as the establishment of a full list of players, generating income, lack of assistance from the AFL, paying dividends to the WAFC (and avoiding the financial pitfalls of the West Coast Eagles) “*mitigated against*” FFC enjoying the luxury of time to properly establish strategies, policies, and procedures. E06 believed the WAFC’s expectations were reasonable and the WAFC was right in deciding to locate the club in Fremantle; that the two WA AFL clubs would perform adequately on a day-to-day basis; and he believed the WAFC was helpful. He did query though whether the WAFC negotiated hard enough with the AFL on the rules under which FFC entered the competition. E06 believed the obstacles that FFC had to overcome through the lack of any assistance from the AFL, or via the WAFC, “*were the most serious inhibitor to us making a solid first five year start in the competition* (E06, 2004). Notwithstanding these inhibitors, FFC set about establishing itself as an AFL club that was different to other AFL clubs but was becoming dominated by values and behaviours that emphasised the narcissistic inward-looking attitudes, characterised by a self belief that it could do things its own way using local people and that when things went wrong it was not their fault.

5.2.4. FFC’s Corporate Structure

FFC exists through a licence agreement between the AFL and the Western Australian Football Commission (WAFC), which is the club’s owner. When the club was constituted it consisted of a Board of Directors that reported to an interim management board, which in turn reported to the WAFC board. The Fremantle Board of Directors was responsible for the general operations and day to day running (e.g. football, marketing) of the club, whilst the interim management board and WAFC oversaw the governance (e.g.. policy, financial returns and due diligence) of the club (Sh05, 2003).

This was a top heavy structure, which was described by an AFL commissioner as:

...a bizarre management structure which if I understand correctly almost two levels of board which sounds like a formula for dysfunction (Sh04, 2003)

A similar structure remained in 2004 except the interim management board had been discarded and the reporting mechanism was directly from the club board to the WAFC, above which sat the AFL with responsibilities at the competition level as the WAFC and the club did at the organizational level. The AFL is concerned about the performance of all of its license holders and had certain expectations of them. A senior AFL representative described their expectations:

We expect them to trade profitably, we expect them to, within a short period of time, be competitive on the fields and over a long period of time we expect them to be somewhere between 6th & 10th on the premiership table (Sh03, 2003).

Such expectations were not documented but clubs were not awarded licenses if the AFL felt that those expectations would not be fulfilled. The AFL was not the only stakeholder that expected FFC to trade profitably; the WAFC had the same expectation. As sole shareholder, the WAFC expected FFC to repay the initial grant that helped set the club up; provide a dividend each year to fund lower levels of football in WA; and help repay a loan following redevelopment work at Subiaco Oval, which FFC shares with the Eagles. The redevelopment work at Subiaco was undertaken on the premise that WA would have two flourishing AFL clubs to pay off the loan. Whilst FFC made a small profit in 1994-95, and recorded profits from 1995 to 1998, they were not sufficient to provide any great windfall to the WAFC and provided very little by way dividend despite the WAFC setting dividend payments as an “*imperative*” on the new club (E06, 2004). From 1999 to 2002, FFC recorded losses, peaking at over \$2.5 million in 2001 and was in such a crisis that the WAFC waived its requirement for a dividend until the club returned to profitability. E06 spoke of FFC as “*generating a trading surplus*” from 1995 to 2000 despite the club being “*spectacularly unsuccessful on the field*”. This suggested that in 1999 and 2000, the club traded on its profits from the first four years. This was reinforced by E06 who defensively argued that even though 2001, was a “*bad year it was nothing like the stories that have been told of huge debts*”. The defensiveness was understandable since FFC’s profitability, was a particular area in which it had always compared itself to the West Coast Eagles. E06

pointed out that this profitability in the first four years compared very favourably to the Eagles first three years in which time the Eagles accumulated losses of up to \$12 million (Nadel, 1998; W01, 2002). At the time the Eagles was a private company but its losses made a rescue by the WAFC, a necessity. E06 was involved with the WAFC “*in the exercise to try and resuscitate West Coast*” and so had an unusually good insight when making such comparisons. Since the losses of 2001, FFC’s financial results have improved and E06 claimed the groundwork had been done prior to the latest administration taking over in 2001, but that the richer end of town was now supportive. He said the club had always enjoyed a strong and loyal membership, greater than anticipated, because the team was playing better football as a result of a stronger squad “*most of which was drafted before they got there but...*”. He said the greater sponsorship income was generated because “*the commercial end of town had now arrived as sponsors of Fremantle*” and larger corporations were willing to associate with FFC.

It is arguable whether FFC constituted a club or not, particularly in the traditional sense of football clubs in Australia which maybe defined as:

...an association dedicated to a particular interest or activity or an organization or an association of persons for some common object usually jointly supported and meeting periodically (Compact Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2004)

An Australian football club is commonly constituted through a founding and ongoing membership, which elects fellow members to a management committee or board, to undertake the day-to-day running of the club. The committee, through the delegated power from the membership, appoints the CEO, Finance Manager, Football Manager and the rest of the administration. Membership is a one way financial transaction based more on a vendor/customer relationship rather than a membership with any lasting or meaningful association (in the context of participating in the club’s destiny). Although it was structured in a similar way organizationally to a traditional club format, FFC was governed by the WAFC rather than its members, or member appointed representatives and FFC did not convene scheduled meetings for the membership. The FFC corporate model was the same as the one now used for the West Coast Eagles (which changed from a formerly private ownership model following the reputed \$12 million loss), also now wholly owned by the WAFC and similar to models operating in South Australia.

An advantage of the structures in WA and SA was that the shareholders dividends constituted payments to their governing state football authorities (the WAFC and SANFL respectively) which in turn distributed the funds back to the grass-roots level through the state football structures. In the case of the Brisbane Lions in Queensland, it had a structure similar to the Melbourne clubs (all of whom migrated from the VFL when the AFL competition was formed in 1990). In all these cases, the clubs were governed by elected members or a combination of elected and appointed members. The latter model was a direction in which FFC moved in 2003 when for the first time since the WAFC owned the two AFL clubs in WA, members were elected to the board of FFC. The opportunity was offered to both WA clubs and the West Coast Eagles decided against that form of governance. Hence, FFC now had nine directors of whom two were elected by the club members (Fremantle Football Club, 2004b).

The corporate structure through which FFC initially operated was a cumbersome system that enabled the WAFC to restrict some of FFC's operations to prevent, what the WAFC regarded as another debacle similar to the Eagles. This had two main effects on the policies, procedures and behaviour of FFC staff. Firstly, it generated a conservatism that saw the club focus on its financial viability described previously. Secondly, it provided a scape-goat for FFC's poor performance. The corporate structure was one area where this was a valid concern and the external governance was restrictive. FFC consequently used it for validation for all of their poor performances rather than just where it was the legitimate cause.

5.2.5. Similar But Different

Through its efforts to do things on its own, FFC was developing an original model for an AFL football club compared to the other fifteen clubs in the competition. Although on the one hand this caused some irritation with its governing bodies, on the other hand it was something the AFL promoted by the issue of licenses awarded to clubs to participate in the AFL. It raised an interesting semantic point in discussions with AFL representatives. The AFL representatives were precise in their references to the agreement between the AFL and WAFC as a license and not a franchise, despite use of the expression by one of its commissioners (Sh03, 2003; Sh04, 2003). Sh03 delineated between the concepts of a franchise and a license. Accordingly, he argued that franchisees performed within certain parameters and strict guidelines to ensure consistency of the product. The AFL was adamant, he said, that it did not want such a

scenario in its competition and hence the competition allowed clubs to participate through a licensing system rather than a franchising system:

I think it's largely left to the organization that wins the license to set up itself how it wishes to be set up...the reason for that is clearly is we don't want 16 clones of the same (Sh03, 2003).

Consequently, FFC had discretion about how it set itself up but W01 confirmed that FFC wanted to do things its way without help from anyone, which meant when it did need help from other organizations and particularly the AFL, it was not always readily forthcoming. A number of interviewees interpreted this isolationism as detrimental to its relationship with the AFL and therefore, FFC did not receive much assistance.

An example of how FFC was perceived at the time came from some Eagles' representatives. An ex Eagles coach, W03 spoke of FFC's *lack of respect*, referring to what he believed was FFC's isolationism, and W02 said that FFC did not endear itself to the competition because it did not embrace what the AFL was about, although he did not make clear what he considered that to be. FFC's approach to the competition was epitomised by its drafting and recruitment of players and what FFC felt was a tough deal that it received from the AFL compared to other clubs in similar circumstances. Some of these were issues that possibly all the clubs agreed or had sympathy with, but FFC was the new entrant that it was felt should have focused on establishing itself within the competition, before addressing problems with the competition.

Even in terms of its location, FFC was similar but different. When queried about FFC wanting to differentiate itself, E06 confirmed that FFC had explored similar "*portside places*" with sporting franchises but suggested:

I think above all other things we wanted to do things original as far as Fremantle was concerned because Fremantle is a unique place, like other places in a lot of instances but totally unlike them in others. (E06, 2004)

This drive to be similar but different pervaded many elements of FFC and at times the behaviours within the club were driven by a desire to be different for the sake of difference rather than focussing on the benefits and disadvantages that a particular difference contributed towards the club's strategies. This was possible because no

formal or documented vision or strategy existed to guide the staff as to what actions would help achieve organizational objectives.

The issue of being similar but different raises the issue of isomorphism and legitimacy, that is, being different to your competitors whilst retaining credibility and legitimacy within your own industry. Whilst the topic clearly infiltrates this discussion, it is a topic of some significance in its own right that is not intended to be covered in this thesis. However extensive work in the area has been completed by Deephouse (1996; , 1999) and Suchman (1995)

5.2.6. The Claremont Connection

Whilst FFC wished to identify itself as peculiarly Fremantle, it was not always successful in linking with the local community. In some cases, the reverse was true. W01 explained that in the first two years of FFC, an Eagles membership survey indicated it had more members in the Fremantle district than FFC did. Moreover, the club had only minor sponsorship from Fremantle businesses (W01, 2002). The “*Fremantleness*” to which FFC aspired was not always realised and was particularly manifested in the way FFC went about recruiting staff and players through close connections it had with the Claremont Football Club in the WAFL.

At the launch of FFC on July 21st, 1994, players paraded the new uniforms. Interestingly, they were drawn from Claremont football club, which became an indicator of a key identity problem that FFC was going to have to combat. In its early days, FFC was accused of having closer associations with Claremont than either of the two Fremantle WAFL clubs. Claremont players were used because FFC had no playing list of its own and Neesham used his connections at Claremont, from where he had been recruited. The use of Claremont players was not a problem so much as a seed of concern that would grow in the mind of many about FFC and its Claremont connections. When FFC announced its first squad in late 1994 it included a large number of Claremont players (18 out of an initial squad of 50). Ex-Claremont player Ben Allan was FFC’s highest profile recruit and the club’s inaugural captain having played with Hawthorn and won a premiership in a season in which he was Hawthorn’s best and fairest. He gained All Australian selection in 1993 and 1994. Peter Mann, also an ex-Claremont player returned to play under Neesham in FFC’s first season. Others, such as Anthony Delaney, John Hutton, Dale Kickett, Andrew McGovern, Jason Norrish, and Todd Ridley were all former Claremont players that had AFL experience

having made their AFL debuts with other clubs and were drafted back to play for FFC. Undoubtedly, it was thought these players would provide necessary experience to the newly formed team, help it prepare to the standard required of the national competition and help it to understand what was needed to play games at the elite level. The selection of Mann, Kickett and Allan was never questioned and they were respectively 1, 2 and 3 in the club champion award instigated at the end of 1995, “*The Top Dockers*” (Fremantle Football Club, 1996a). The concern was in the selection of other ex-Claremont players over and above potential players from the Fremantle WAFL clubs. It concerned FFC supporters and observers that Claremont was over-represented and the two Fremantle WAFL clubs were under represented, with only 8 players coming from East Fremantle and South Fremantle despite them underpinning the strength of WA football since the mid 1880s and being the *raison d'etre* for the Fremantle AFL club.

Another 17 players in the initial squad were either made up of a variety of players from the other five WAFL clubs, directly from the WAFL club concerned or drafted back to WA from other AFL clubs. Therefore, out of a an initial 50 man squad, 43 were from Western Australia and the resultant 7 players were from states other than Western Australia. The concerns about the place of origin of the various players were amplified by the lack of FFC’s success in its early years and largely a result of the notion that the new club would have exclusive access to everything Fremantle (players, support, and money) to which W03 had alluded. There was nothing to suggest that with more Fremantle players the outcomes would have been any different but the lack of immediate success reflected the concerns and expectations of a football community used to success and using its own resources to achieve that success.

The recruitment policy demonstrated not only a strong Claremont connection, but also Neesham’s focus on local talent and his belief in his ability to coach them to the level required in the national competition. The Claremont connection was not restricted only to the playing group or football coaches. Various other services that FFC sought were put out to public tender and a number were won by Claremont identities or submissions from groups formed by Claremont identities. They included the Recruitment Manager, the Video/Statistics Manager, the Physiotherapist, and the Doctor. Notably all of them were still at FFC in August 2004 having been there in some capacity since the start of the club in 1994 and despite a significant change in administrative personnel when a largely different administration took over in 2001.

A part-time member of FFC's medical staff since 1994 considered the accusation of FFC being "*Claremont centric*" as probably a "*fair comment*" since Neesham surrounded himself with Claremont people (F09, 2003). However, he saw it as no more unusual than a coach being reliant on people and players whose capabilities he knew and trusted. The Claremont personnel had been with the WAFL club for a number of years during one of its most successful periods and their curriculum vitae bore the hallmarks of successful careers (F09, 2003). Claremont was known for developing young players, subsequently drafted to the AFL, and yet managed to continue to win WAFL premierships. The removal of this talent, particularly at a relatively young age, had always been a source of concern for Neesham. Neesham believed local football suffered by young players who left their home state to try to break into AFL clubs and if they failed, they usually did not resume their local football careers.

The result of the strong connection with Claremont personnel was reflected in FFC's identity as success eluded it. There were too many variables to be able to assert that use of Claremont personnel was a problem but in terms of the club's identity, it caused resentment amongst supporters that built to such an extent that if FFC was to be unsuccessful, they'd rather be unsuccessful with Fremantle identities at the helm. The Claremont connection caused them to cite the club as having more affinity with Claremont than Fremantle and that with a stronger Fremantle connection it may have enjoyed more success. Such assertions had no evidence to support them but that matters little in the minds of parochial supporters.

5.2.7. Politics, Religion, Profession and Culture

As well as concern about FFC's relationship with Claremont, FFC senior management possessed similar political, religious, and professional backgrounds. Some of the political party backgrounds of club personalities created internal conflict. For example, the CEO and Chairman in the late 1990s came from opposite sides of party politics. Other key personnel, the CEO, the football manager and the coach, also had similar backgrounds having all trained and worked as teachers; all of them had a Catholic education; and all of them had political beliefs to the left of centre. This begged the question; did the common background produce similar opinions that produced a culture and identity reflective of the common background? It is a feature of strong cultures that they can become cult-like and that the members of the organization reinforce the culture if they come from a similar background. The common elements of the backgrounds of

these three men influenced FFC's approach to how the organization developed, managed its young players, and created a strong camaraderie.

The issues of politics, religion, and professional became an issue with E06's political leanings when E08 was succeeded by E07 within the club executive in 1998 because of the lack of interpersonal trust generated between members of the club executive. The poor relationships had the potential to undermine the club's culture and identity and strategic direction. Prior to joining FFC, E06 served as a political campaign manager during the 1993 federal election campaign when his candidate was elected to federal parliament. The opponent in the election campaign was E07 who was to join FFC's executive following the resignation of E08 in 1998. The significance was that E07 recalls the campaign as being particularly personal and unpleasant for which he held E06 responsible. Of further interest in political terms was that the predecessor in the seat of Perth was Labor member Dr Ric Charlesworth who was later to be appointed by E07, as a special coaching advisor. Therefore, at least on the surface, political differences were put aside by E06 and E07 (and Charlesworth). However, when queried about this and other events in their relationship at FFC, E06 and E07's responses were always conditional, not wanting to provide details and always having reservations about their counterpart.

According to E07, politics was rife in football in Western Australia, although he described it as not being Liberal/Labor politics even though, he added, party politics may have existed within FFC. When E08 retired from the board of management of FFC, a new executive member had to be found by the WAFC. The chairman of the Interim Board of Management at FFC at the time was Barry MacKinnon who was also a member of the WAFC and invited E07 to fill the vacant spot. Barry McKinnon was a former leader of the Western Australian Liberal Party as was E07 who had run as a liberal candidate for the federal seat of Perth. E07 did not think the political connections had anything to do with it saying it was a result of McKinnon's invitation. However, not only did the two men have a political connection, they had gone to the same school and were friends, although according to E07 they did not see each other from year to year and were not particularly close, "*not mates*". E07 was not clear why MacKinnon thought he was capable, or was interested, in the FFC position. E07 had been with the Perth Chamber of Commerce and Industry and was known to various members of the football commission through his political and business connections.

Hence, E07 took over from E08 as Chairman of FFC in October 1998 as the result of a direct invitation from Barry MacKinnon and said the invitation, “*came out of the blue, absolutely out of the blue*”. E07’s appointment coincided with Damian Drum’s (Fremantle’s second coach) appointment although E07 was not involved in making the appointment.

In a sense E07 and E06 made FFC more political because of their backgrounds and whilst to that point conspiracies may have been thought to exist there was no evidence of them. With E07’s arrival, the club was being administered by an ex federal Liberal politician and a federal Labor campaign manager who had both campaigned for the same seat. E07 claims that politics or peoples’ political backgrounds never influenced him in his time at FFC but believed some appointments at FFC were political:

But I did get the sense from time to time that were, there may well have been, people inside the Fremantle Footy Club or there were people inside who weren’t shy about their politics and there were a number of people appointed to positions there who were political people from the Labor Party. For example Vince Shervington, Burke’s driver (Brian Burke, the former state Labor premier), his wife was working in the club and I found others who had very strong, well one or two others, it wasn’t widespread but I imagine inside the Fremantle Footy Club there were both side of politics represented. I don’t think it was ever, it was never overt, but I, you sensed from time to time when they started calling each other ‘comrade’ in your presence that they were trying to needle you (E07, 2004).

E07 could not confirm any conspiracy because of the religious and educational backgrounds of the staff at FFC but he felt some of the staff “*got the boots into me*” because he was not part of the “*proletariat*”. He also accused them of not getting behind important initiatives, such as a past players’ association; reinforcing the idea of the “*Peoples’ Club*”; or rewarding some of the “*hard doers*” of the club that supported the club through thick and thin. They were “*disparaging towards the supporters*” and like his political opponents:

That doesn’t surprise me because I countered that in political life. I always found that in parliament that those who enjoy the best wine and the best food were the socialists and they love drinking at the public trough so they theorised about embracing the people but they never did it. Whereas those

of us who were portrayed as being the snobs and from the upper class or whatever, which I never was, we were the ones that actually saw the need for the club to embrace the people. I mean it was, they didn't want member elected board members which I did and we got it (E07, 2004).

E07 said he found a lot of the work that the club did and the messages that the club conveyed when he arrived, were very confusing because the club was not doing the things that he thought that its culture and politics would have made automatic.

Whilst football clubs by their nature are political places, FFC contained tensions beyond the normal organizational politics. By the inclusion of people from opposite sides of governmental politics, who had also fought political battles outside the club, it was inviting disunity and conflict amongst its executives and employees. Such disunity is transmitted through the organization with a tendency for staff to align with one personality or another with the result that work is performed with regard for who it is for rather than the importance of the task itself. Hence the disunity was a powerful force driving everyone's behaviours with disregard for the organization's well-being.

5.2.8. FFC's No. 1 Ticket Holder

Similarly, the appointment of the club's number one ticket holder had political overtones. The number one ticket holder at an AFL club is usually a well recognised member of the community who uses their personal profile to lift the club's profile. For example, in 2004 FFC's number one ticket holder was Rove McManus, cousin of former club captain and stalwart, Shaun McManus. Rove is a nationally known media personality but it was not always the case of neutral or show business celebrities as number one ticket holders for FFC. Prior to McManus, the club had joint number one ticket holders who were football celebrities in Jack Sheedy and Steve Marsh and who represented a strong connection with each of the two Fremantle WAFL clubs:

...Steve Marsh played 226 games for South Fremantle winning six premierships in the halcyon years between 1947 and 1954. He was three times best and fairest at the Bulldogs (South Fremantle) and won the coveted Sandover Medal (Best and Fairest medal in the WAFL) in the club's Premiership year of 1954. He was awarded the Simpson Medal for best a field in the 1953 Grand Final victory, was All Australian that same year and Captained WA in 1954. He continued his stellar career at cross

town rivals East Fremantle as their Captain-Coach. He took his winning ways with him guiding the team to the flag in 1957. He retired after a total of 284 games including 19 state games. Jack Sheedy too began his football career in the port, playing 210 games at East Fremantle winning four best and fairests and two premierships in 1943 and 1946. Nicknamed WA's "Mr Football" the Legend grew when he Captained-Coached East Perth to premierships in 1956 and back to back in 1958 and 1959. Sheedy played an extraordinary 360 games in 21 years of top flight football including a brief stint in Victoria for South Melbourne and 22 state games for WA. His coaching resume also includes leading WA to victory over arch enemy Victoria in the 1961 National Football Carnival played in Brisbane (White, 2005).

However, the original number one ticket holder was neither a media celebrity, nor legendary ex-player, but rather it was Carmen Lawrence, the sitting member of federal parliament for Fremantle. She was also previously the state's premier, the first female state premier in Australia, and a member of the Labor Party. It was an unusual choice because it is generally reserved for senior politicians such as the Prime Minister, Federal Treasurer or Premier. The main reason for the selection of Lawrence appeared to be a previous working relationship with one of Fremantle's executives. It begs the questions what, if any, benefit did Lawrence's selection provide to the club and what did statement did it make about the club? The problem is that it highlighted a low level political connection and an apparent lack of any other suitable personality to fill the role. This was not the case since, for example Luc Longley, then an internationally known basketball player was a FFC member and supporter but by appointing Lawrence the club was sending confusing messages about how it wanted to be seen.

5.2.9. A Planning Vacuum

When E07 was appointed he was unaware of any strategic planning tools that were used by those before him. He suggested that the club had no strategic plans or clear direction but had more of a wish list based around one year horizons, which was not his idea of a corporate plan. He commented that "*attempts to put in a strategic plan were not embraced by the executive*" and that there were no attempts to disseminate what it wanted to achieve in a strategic sense. E07 prevaricated and to some degree defended the apparent lack of planning:

...it is a bit hard to have a strategic plan when you're a 100% owned subsidiary and you don't control the levers (E07, 2004).

The comment was justified because it was hard for the club to budget in such a scenario because whilst it could control costs, it was a “*hostage to fortune*” for revenue, which was dependent upon playing performances. Poor playing performances meant sponsorship was lost; match day attendance revenue was lost; coterie group income was not achieved; and games were staged at a loss. However, E07 contradicted himself when saying that in 2001 FFC was losing between \$60,000 and \$100,000 a game, “*against budget*” because of the poor playing record that year. With no budget, the club was unable to explain why it had under performed or exceeded expectations. The real problem was not the lack of a budget as much as the WAFC could override the club on setting its revenue targets.

E07’s tenure at FFC was characterised by inactivity and a lack of direction or decision-making for the club. No clear visions or strategies were enunciated and the club, using an appropriate nautical analogy, was like rudderless ship. It meant none of the staff had any guiding principles about how the club expected them to behave or what they were expected to achieve and how they were meant to represent the club. No new values were emerging, no residual values were being consolidated and the dominant values were being undermined by poor performance.

5.2.10. The Inside Outsider

The frustration that E07 encountered with staff at the club and the WAFC reflected upon his own position. He observed that camaraderie had developed in FFC in 1994/95 when E06, Neesham and a few staff were working out of the club’s first offices, which was an obstacle to him:

...those people that had been there from day one, I suppose understandably, had a sense that this was their club and we were sort of blow ins (E07, 2004).

The attitude that the club staff’s residual values were a problem ran through most of E07’s experiences whilst at FFC. Whether it was political differences or governance issues, he was new to the organization and was having difficulty getting things done his way. He bemoaned the lack of any vision or mission statement for the club and the general apathy that greeted his activities. He felt that such statements are a point of

reference for the organization as to where it is and where it wants to be. If his push was not blocked by apathy he said it “*constantly got overtaken by events*”, both of which suggested he lacked control over them and that the organization was becoming directionless. E07 was vague about what the problem was, yet his failure to get done what he thought was necessary, contributed to the overall lack of direction that was filtering through the club:

It was hard to get the executive to...concentrate on what they really ought to do and that's plan strategically for the longer term. We had several attempts at it but there was, I don't know, it didn't happen and I found there was a reluctance at executive level to really embrace it seriously... (E07, 2004).

He felt E06 was sympathetic but few others saw any benefit in strategic planning and they all thought the club was performing well “*until it all hit the fan in 2001*”. He said that the disastrous season of 2001 came “*out of the blue*” at him and the club. With hindsight, he would have changed the executive level when he first arrived and he constantly reflected that he did not make changes he should have when he started at FFC. This was despite recognising a need for change and change was expected by the WAFC. For example, E07 said of the appointments of a new CEO and coach, “*I might have been a bit of a slow learner and I should have got on to it earlier...*” However, the hindsight seemed disingenuous from someone who lacked the conviction to be proactive and execute change and whose tenure seems to have consisted of an era of reactive management:

If I could do things over again I would have made some changes to the executive a bit earlier. It needed new ideas, it needed rejuvenation, they'd had years of disappointment and frustration, they were getting tired I think, tired and a bit dispirited (E07, 2004).

E07 and the club executive were not aware of how uncompetitive the club was to become on the field in 2001, or what the consequences would be off the field for a large proportion of the staff including E07, E06, and Drum.

Whilst FFC maybe described as a rudderless ship during E07’s tenure, it was also apparent that not much effort was made to embrace him or his ideas and the decision of the WAFC and its chairman to appoint him was a decision knowingly fraught with risks that operating relationships within the club would be tested with conflict and disunity

the outcomes. In 2001 E06 resigned which E07 had anticipated but waited for him to resign which, again in hindsight, he thought was wrong and that he should have acted earlier, believing the WAFC had “*probably*” expected him to act earlier. He had not acted because there had not been the “*good cause*” that was presented the organization’s performance in 2001. Disunity occurred at board level for which E07 considered E06 responsible. Despite claims of a good working relationship and never having been in dispute with each other whilst working at FFC, it was clear from both parties that there was rancour between E07 and E06.

The opportunity for E07 to make the changes he wished he had made earlier, presented itself at the end of 2001 and from a period of a planning vacuum, the club saw new values emerge through the appointment of a new administration team. The changes that followed are a legacy that E07 claimed but he is regarded more for presiding over a period of inactivity and indecisiveness and a period when FFC failed to represent itself with any clear culture or identity.

5.2.11. FFC’s Nadir

In 2001, FFC experienced its worst on-field performance which reflected a deep division at board level, manifested in the way the board conducted itself in the dismissal of Damian Drum. E07 recalled that at the start of 2001, E06 had an agenda to get rid of him by the end of 2001, why he did not know and he was never able to verify it. However, he conceded that rumour and innuendo were so prevalent in football clubs that not too much attention could be paid to it. He also asserted that a member of the football department was being given information by E06 that was being used to destabilise him. E07 made a number of similar assertions and demonstrated a concealed animosity towards E06. With regard to Drum’s dismissal and the way in which it reflected upon the club, E07 said he tackled E06 about it and asked whether E06 felt bad at the way Drum was treated. E07 believed that E06 showed little remorse and viewed the outcome as trivial. Whatever the rights and wrongs, the experience highlighted board disunity and internal conflict. It was something E07 was not used to and when he discussed it with E06 he was disappointed at E06’s response which he described as “*cruel...nobody had ever been cruel to me before*”. It has also remained within his psyche. With E06 gone the club was in completely new territory, searching for a new executive to replace him to a position he had won by virtue of being an incumbent on the sub-committee evaluating the new license.

5.2.12. Changing the People, Changing the Culture

Schwab, the new CEO, was appointed in July 2001 and E07 spoke very positively of his own role in Schwab's appointment, and what he thought they might have achieved together. Ironically, E07's time at FFC with Schwab only lasted a matter of months until E07 resigned over a breach of the salary cap in December 2001. Therefore, as well as Schwab's appointment, during the calendar year of 2001 between Drum's sacking after round nine at the end of May and December 31st, the Chairman, the CEO, the football manager, the senior coach and four directors left the club, a combination of the most important and significant office holders of a football club. The substantial change of such significant leaders in the organization represented an opportunity to introduce significant changes to the way the club managed its affairs as well as its policies, procedures, and practices.

When Schwab joined Fremantle an executive described the circumstances as not so different to when the club first started:

It was also at a time when the club was in turmoil as you would know, the CEO just left, the coach had been sacked, the chairman was about to leave, the club had lost 16 games in a row and was on track to lose \$2.5 million...I think probably the priority at that stage was probably keeping the wolves from the door... (E01, 2003).

Consequently, there was one significant problem reminiscent of the club's beginning, that of ensuring its financial future. However, the politics and intrigue that dogged E07 during Drum's tenure as coach also continued after the appointment of Cameron Schwab as the new CEO although what is clear was a period that demonstrated how a new leader and leadership team can bring about cultural change quite quickly. In FFC's case it was important that any change that did occur brought about significant improvement. The club had now been in existence for seven years without any real success and the staff and executive were getting restless with no vision, values or direction being set and the internal conflict was fracturing the organization.

5.2.13. FFC's Internal Conflict

E07 said that the process for appointing the new CEO was undertaken through a proper and formal process by a sub-committee, appointed by the board, appointing a recruiting firm to find a candidate based on certain criteria and qualities specified by the club.

According to E07, the firm did a professional job and produced a short list of candidates that had been double checked and fully refereed. From the list, Schwab was unanimously selected by the sub committee as the suitable candidate for the position with a “*clean bill of health*” after discussions with the AFL and others within the football community. The checks on Schwab were considered necessary because of his record in a previous similar position when, under his auspices, a club exceeded the salary cap to recruit a player. Despite the checks and subcommittee’s recommendation, E07 said he had trouble getting the choice of “*our committee*” approved, “...*I had a lot of trouble getting Schwab appointed*”. Despite the proper process, two members of the FFC board objected to the appointment and unbeknown to E07, Director A, a fellow FFC board member, was canvassing other possible candidates independently of the sub committee’s work. Director A, in conjunction, E07 believed, with E06, conducted his own investigations in an effort to undermine Schwab’s credibility because “*E06 and Schwab didn’t get on for some reason*”. This led the board to get “*pretty angry*” because every time they met to discuss the appointment, the work of the sub committee was being undermined by Director A’s investigations. Director A was described as having gone to enormous lengths to prevent Schwab being appointed. Another director, Director B, wanted a new coach appointed prior to the appointment, of a CEO, but E07 resisted the argument saying that a CEO had to be in place supported by robust selection processes through which a coach could be appointed. E07 knew that Schwab had such processes that to put in place. The sub committee’s decision prevailed and Schwab was appointed. E07 ignored the potential ramifications of the continuing internal conflict and described how positively he saw the appointment. He believed Schwab’s connections in Melbourne, the centre of the football community, and what he could do for FFC outweighed any such concerns. He also knew what Schwab’s shortcomings were because all candidates had been profiled. E07 described it as a “*very very difficult*” job to get Schwab appointed because in the end there external factors causing conflict such as the AFL which was also suggesting possible candidates driven, E07 believed, by the Eagles and WAFC. E07 alleged they were both trying to influence FFC appointments because:

...there’s a group of people in the Eagles who are very close to the AFL and very close to the football commission here and they were trying to push this

local bloke on us but we got Cameron up and it wasn't long before we realised that our profiling of Cameron was right (E07, 2004).

It was clear that internal conflict manifested through board disunity over Drum's dismissal, the appointment of Schwab and leaked decisions to the media, was still prevalent in 2001:

We got him, we got Schwab and we got Connolly but we got it over a couple of recalcitrant board members (E07, 2004)

E07 described how Director A and Director B, wanted to appoint another coach without reference to Schwab, at a cost of “\$800,000” per annum when the club was already making significant losses. E07 described this to support his backing for Schwab who enabled FFC to get Connolly for much less than the cost of experienced coaches.

5.2.14. The WAFC and Crawford Report

E07 was keen to demonstrate how the decision to recruit Schwab and Connolly that he supported, was the right one and how he and his allies on the board should be seen to have been doing the right things for the club whilst the “*recalcitrant*” directors were disruptive and unsettling without working towards improving the club’s position. He proffered notes from a meeting that he had with Neale Fong, newly installed chairman of the WAFC. Fong had taken over from Barry MacKinnon, in December 2001. At the meeting Fong advised he wanted to sack the FFC board with the exception of E07, Director D and Director E. E07 asserted that Fong wanted to make a statement about how he wanted his tenure as chair of the WAFC to be seen and make it clear that the WAFC wanted to “*see things change*” at FFC. E07 argued against changes at board level saying that the club had a new CEO and coach and had done some “*terrific recruiting*” of four high profile players, Jeff Farmer, Troy Simmonds, Trent Croad and Luke McPharlin, in recent weeks. The last thing the club needed, he said, was “*self imposed drama*” created by the WA football administration. E07 also thought that any sacking of directors should be focussed, that is the two recalcitrants should have been dismissed, rather than a wholesale removal of directors. Four directors were leaving any way through retirement and resignation (including Director F who had been abroad through the period of upheaval around Drum’s dismissal) but Fong wanted a greater change. E07 advised Fong that he proposed to resign within the next 5 to 6 months, after the implementation of The Crawford Report despite Fong wanting him to continue

for a longer period. The Crawford Report of August 2001 was commissioned by the WAFC to:

“To review the provisions of the Constitution of the WAFC and to report and make recommendations in relation to its

- *Objects*
- *Powers*
- *Relationships with its Special Members and associated leagues*
- *Governance of itself, its subsidiary organizations (including the appointment of Commissioners and the Boards of the Australian Football League (AFL) clubs) and the West Australian Football League (WAFL) competition and*
- *Related matters of importance.”* (Crawford, 2001)

Among the Crawford Report’s main recommendations was for the two WA AFL clubs to have member representation on their boards of directors and for the Commission to remove itself from the day to day dealings of the club (Crawford, 2001). Fong ultimately accepted E07’s argument.

In his time at the club E07 took most satisfaction from having achieved voting rights for members to elect two directors to the board of FFC. Whilst the Crawford Report recommended both WA AFL clubs should adopt such a policy, FFC went about implementing it expeditiously. The West Coast Eagles ultimately declined it, as not being a suitable recommendation for its club, and does not have any member elected board members. Given the history of Fremantle clubs’ WAFL success, the members of FFC had agitated for such representation almost from day one and a lobby group, the Fremantle MOB (Members’ Own Board) was formed to advocate for such representation. The difference between the two WA AFL clubs and their approach to member representation was a significant point of difference in their cultures and identities and, FFC members would claim, was a significant difference between the types of supporters FFC attract and their appreciation of football.

As a point of difference it was important to FFC’s identity because FFC had to deal with being second into the WA AFL football market and the West Coast “juggernaut” (M06, 2003).

5.2.15. Breaching the AFL Regulated Environment

FFC felt the impact of the heavily regulated environment in which it was operating at the end of 2001, a year in which it had undergone tumultuous change. Enforcing its *Equalisation Strategy* powers, the AFL found FFC guilty of a potential salary cap breach which E07 said was an “*administrative stuff up*” rather any deceitful act to undermine the AFL’s equalisation strategies. E07 felt that someone had to take “*ministerial responsibility*” for such a breach of regulations against what was “*a pillar of the equalisation*”. E07 considered that Schwab, who was new into the job as CEO at Fremantle, was not, and should not be held, accountable and so E07 resigned. E07 was adamant that it was the salary cap breach alone, rather than a culmination of factors that year, that induced him to resign. He saw the club’s position at the time as very positive because:

...in December 2001, things were starting to actually turn around, I mean we still had financial problems but we had a whole new administration in place, whole new football team and coaches, coaching structures, in place and we had the list, we had the Pavlices and Haslebys getting up to the 40, 50 game mark and we were also in a position where it had to get better, we were last, it was a terrible time to leave and I didn’t want to leave but when the breach came I just went to the chairman of the board of directors and said ‘I’m resigning’ (E07, 2004).

It is hard to believe that Schwab had no accountability for the breach which had dire consequences for Fabian Francis, who suffered a serious knee injury soon after moving to Perth and never played AFL football again. The breach occurred in December 2001, four and a half months after Schwab’s appointment and he should have been aware of FFC’s salary cap position, although Schwab and all involved still claimed there would not have been any breach. The breach was technical because the offence did not occur; it was claimed by the AFL that it would occur if the Francis recruitment went ahead. Schwab put together the figures in an attempt to show that FFC could still recruit Francis without further breaches of the cap. It appears that E07’s action in resigning and Schwab’s early work at FFC in recruiting the four high profile players may have saved Schwab from also having to resign (Everett, 2001).

Although in its early years FFC did not pay enough regard to its regulated environment, the breach occurred ironically, at a time when FFC was starting to come to terms with

the regulated environment in which it operate. During Drum's tenure the club had also recognised the draft, and used it to good benefit, as the source of recruiting and developing players. However in addition to a fine for the breach, FFC was excluded from the 2002 pre-season draft and had its 3rd pick in the national draft rescinded with a suspended sentence of possible exclusion from future drafts if there was a recurrence of the breach (Fremantle Football Club, 2004a).

5.2.16. The West Coast Eagles Dilemma

In creating its culture, and consequently its identity, FFC had two key, but contradictory issues with which to deal. Firstly, it had to integrate itself in the regulated environment of the national competition and demonstrate its ability to make a significant contribution to the competition. Secondly, it had to establish a distinctive market for itself as the second Western Australian team and create a unique identity to attract a sustainable supporter base.

These two issues created an interesting dilemma because FFC not only had to assimilate and demonstrate it was like other teams but it also had to demonstrate sufficient differentiation from the West Coast Eagles locally, and other AFL clubs, nationally. The dilemma was compounded because the Eagles was the first club into the WA AFL market and was the reigning premier. Between 1990 and 1994 the Eagles was the dominant team in the competition, having won 2 premierships and played in another grand final. Any differences had to be attractive to supporters with a choice between FFC and a club recognised as the best.

5.2.16.1. Second to Market

Fearing the Eagles dominance and to reduce the advantage that a first organization to setup in any market gets, the AFL commission originally sought two WA licenses to be awarded simultaneously (Sh04, 2003). Sh04 said that the AFL considered the entry of one and two WA clubs into the AFL in 1985 but that the commission dismissed a sub-committee report by Sh04 that WA be awarded two licenses, deciding to award one license with consideration to a second license at a later date. Sh04 justified the position his group took by reflecting on the ultimate outcomes in Perth and Adelaide. In both cities, the clubs that entered the competition first, the Eagles and Crows respectively, had and always would have had "*a huge head start*". They were able to "*mop up*" in terms of support and sponsorship with the second teams, FFC and Port Power, always

being poor relations in being able to garner the same economic support. Sh04 suggested that the AFL commission learned some lessons from FFC's struggle when it awarded South Australia's second license to an existing club, Port Adelaide. Port Adelaide, which he described as an "*absolutely standout franchise...a monster franchise in anyone's terms*" still suffered by being second to market. He indicated that the choice to go with one club or two was difficult, acknowledging that the financial feasibility of introducing two clubs simultaneously was also a risky strategy. On the one hand, the Eagles struggled financially in its first 2 or 3 years and two new clubs may not have survived. On the other hand, both clubs entering the competition at the same time would not have created the impediment subsequently created for the second club. Sh04 believed a similar problem would face a second licensee even in a market as big as New South Wales.

M06 (2003) suggested that comparisons between the Eagles and FFC were inevitable since it was the only guide that the local media and football followers had. FFC also made its own comparisons between its organization and the Eagles. However, the only real comparison it could make was off-field one, since the Eagles were dominant on-field for FFC's first five years. Hence, FFC aimed to be different from the Eagles and therein lay a dilemma because in focussing so much on being different, FFC did not give sufficient attention to the core components of what a football club must do to achieve success (M06, 2003; W01, 2002; W02, 2002). One FFC ex-player noticed this and believed it did not benefit FFC at the time to constantly compare itself to the Eagles:

...I reckon in the benefit of hindsight it has turned out to be a problem...they must have done some market research or whatever...West Coast was you know the chardonnay set, they went and did the exact opposite and tried to become working class and sort of they alienated a whole lot of people they didn't mean to...they're always comparing with the Eagles you know they only had 9 thousand members we've got 15 thousand...football has moved on its become way more popular you know (P02, 2003).

Whilst FFC had successfully differentiated itself from the Eagles (as a community club against the Eagles' corporate model) it had failed to adopt good corporate practices to achieve on-field success:

...if Fremantle did make a mistake it was trying to be too unlike West Coast you know West Coast was run as a corporate entity Fremantle wanted to be a community club but they also ignored a lot of their on-field practices which hurt them you know in terms of thoroughness in recruiting and stuff like that. I mean West Coast had procedures in place but Fremantle would have just been adopting and Fremantle now had a very good recruiting manager there whose been there since day one but its taken him five six years to set up his network properly. And you know had they perhaps worked a little more closely with West Coast in the early days they might have been able to set some of these things up a bit quicker having said that too, when they did deal with West Coast they got bent over the table basically you know they took players who they were assured were going to be good players for them like Tony Godden and David Hynes and it turned out that they had crippling injuries and that prevented them from playing much footy at all also you can understand the lack of trust and also the rivalry as well don't forget the two coaches hated each other.(M06, 2003)

As well as FFC differentiating itself, the Eagles protected its own market for its organization, shareholders, employees and supporters, wanting to maintain its dominance of AFL football in Western Australia,

...the managers spent a lot of time on what do we do to ensure that FFC are not successful. (W01, 2002)

Allegedly, one of the primary reasons for the AFL awarding a license for FFC was to diminish the dominance that the West Coast Eagles had established in a relatively short time in the competition. The Eagles entered the competition in 1986 and won two premierships, in 1992 and 1994 after losing a grand final in 1991. M02, a senior sports journalist in Perth, suggested:

By the time Fremantle came round because of the success of West Coast I think a lot of people were crying out for a second license in Perth...(M02, 2003)

M02 also put the launch of FFC into perspective within the local market because he recalled how the Eagles had to overcome fierce local opposition because many people saw the Eagles emergence as the demise of the local WAFL competition. The local

competition figured heavily when admitting the Eagles to the VFL because of the likely impact and demise of the local WA Football League (WAFL). By the time FFC was a realistic proposition this opposition had diminished, even though the predictions were accurate, reflecting the AFL's popularity.

5.2.16.2. Market Sustainability

Sh04 doubted the economic uncertainties that some such as W02 had over the viability of a second WA team. Consistent with his belief that two clubs should have joined at the time that the Eagles did, he believed a city with a population nearly 1.4 million at the time (Dabscheck, 1975) should have been able to sustain two teams:

...but we always thought there would a second team there because on a population basis, a million people plus whichever way you work the numbers you'd say that's the way you'd head... (Sh04, 2003).

The arithmetic certainly equated when compared to Melbourne with 9 teams (excluding Geelong) and a population of 3.6 million (Dabscheck, 1975). M04, the chief football writer of a Melbourne newspaper provided a different perspective of an awareness of the great traditions of Fremantle football and footballers that would invigorate the new AFL club, thinking as she did at the time, that the new club would be born out of South and East Fremantle:

I definitely applauded it, you know there was a lot of Victorian paranoia about the power of the west coast and we all felt it would be better for the Victorian clubs...certainly better for the media over in Perth...and also because both the Fremantle clubs in the WAFL had always had an enormous reputation...some really famous names had come out of both South and East Fremantle... and I was always a really big supporter of a non manufactured club which we thought would come out of those two clubs (M04, 2003).

W02 had the same concerns as the AFL Commission about the ability of the local WA market to sustain two AFL clubs and some of the reasoning for FFC's introduction. He confirmed that the Eagles had considered the possibility of a second AFL club in WA before FFC was considered, principally because the competition was concerned at the Eagles' early success:

We had several strategy meetings regarding in the event of another team coming in long before Fremantle was even mooted a new team and we anticipated that with all of the Melbourne clubs stating that the West Coast Eagles were going to be too strong in the future and all of this sort stuff which was a nonsense, probably because of the tyranny of travel. And because we had won 2 premierships they had become a little paranoid about the strength of the club but under a draft system it evens itself out. Our position was and certainly my position, I think we were almost unanimous on this, was that we believed the Perth economy couldn't sustain two teams but certainly it was my view that it was, the second alternative to the West Coast Eagles, was formed on the basis of emotion rather than fact. (W02, 2002)

5.2.16.3. Consequences of the Eagles' Success

W02's comment about the draft referred to the draft introduced by the AFL in 1986 as part of its *Equalisation Strategy*. Other clubs held the view that the Eagles had a preferential run in picking its first squad that saw it gain its early successes. The other clubs were adamant that the same mistake, as they saw it, would not be repeated. If it were true that FFC was licensed to diminish the West Coast Eagles dominance, it indicated a lack of confidence by the AFL in its own *Equalisation Strategy*. The draft's function was as a leveller of talent across clubs and the argument that the second WA club would weaken the Eagles position was spurious since all clubs had the same access to the same talent. The draft would now just have to satisfy one extra club and a club's player strength would be gained from having the better talent spotters and recruiters. W03 like W02 pointed out that the second WA license was never going to weaken the Eagles in terms of its playing stocks, it could only weaken the Eagles, potentially, from a financial point of view. The Eagles already had the players it had and future recruits would come from the draft and any strategy to weaken the Eagles, weakened the other clubs as well.

The argument that the AFL wanted a second team to combat the Eagles' dominance of the competition cannot be substantiated. Certainly, E06 was happy to let the myth be perpetuated and in fact went further to suggest that the AFL offered FFC no help whatsoever in the process of appointing a coach, because of the AFL's fear of creating a second Western Australian footballing tour de force:

The second thing was that a lot of the Victorian clubs that were still fairly prominent in the AFL wanted diminution of the Eagles' power...they certainly didn't want another Eagles but they wanted a diminution of the Eagles power in the commercial world because the Eagles had unchannelled access to everything...they were an economic powerhouse and a football powerhouse so there wasn't much tangible assistance given to FFC by the AFL (E06, 2004)

Within the parochial confines of WA football, conspiracy theorists thrived and they believed that every decision made by the AFL was for the benefit of the Victorian clubs or to the detriment of the non-Victorian clubs, or usually both. This was fuelled by the victimisation that E06 claimed FFC had experienced. The AFL knew that the second WA team was not going to weaken the Eagles dominance because its *Equalisation Strategy* would ultimately remove the Eagles' dominance. Additionally, the AFL, at the time of the West Coast Eagles formation, was already actively campaigning for two WA teams in the VFL/AFL, which Carter's sub-committee promoted in 1985, before any dominance was created. The AFL's desire for a second WA team meant that the WAFC was aware of that desire and the WAFC's strategy of applying for the license even though it questioned its viability, indicates that awareness rather than a scheme to undermine any dominance of the Eagles.

5.2.16.4. The WAFC and AFL Perspectives

Barker (2004) recorded that although the WAFC applied for the second license it was based in a desire to retain control over income from football in the state, than it was necessarily a desire for a second team. The WAFC accepted the inevitability of the second WA team and decided to be proactive in retaining control of the revenue source from the AFL:

Kelly believed 'the WAFC never really wanted a second team', but 'from the beginning' was under pressure from Victoria to consider having one. While agreeing in 2002 with Edwards and others that the Victorian clubs hoped its introduction would undermine West Coast's dominance, Tannock insisted the Commission did not succumb to pressure from either of those clubs or the AFL — '80-percent of the initiative for the establishment of the Dockers came from the WAFC, not from pressure from elsewhere'. Certainly, that

initiative came only after the Commission had conducted a series of investigations (Barker, 2004).

From 1993 to 1995, the WAFC was concerned at the pressure coming from the AFL to which W02 alluded. The pressure had been there since the Eagles was formed, which made a second club more of a probability than a possibility. The WAFC thought it prudent that it had control of the new club and considered it would be inappropriate for the West Coast Eagles to have its income used to support WA football and for the new club to be able to keep its income for its own uses. The West Coast Eagles was not yet fully owned by the WAFC but an agreed percentage of its profit, via annual royalty payments to the WAFC, was directed into WA football. The arrangement for the annual royalty was a modification of the Eagles' original agreement with the WAFC whereby it had operated as private company, Indian Pacific Ltd, and had agreed to pay the WAFC an annual royalty payment for the sub license to operate the club. In the event it could not afford to make the payments and when a proposed share float failed to raise sufficient funds, several prominent business people funded the club. The financial position of the Eagles became so weak that eventually the WAFC was forced to accept equity in the club in lieu of royalty payments (Nadel, 1998). Ultimately the WAFC regained the licence from Indian Pacific. The WAFC was always favoured by the AFL as the holder of the second license partly because of the experience with the Eagles but also because other ventures with private organizations in Sydney and Brisbane had soured the AFL's taste for private clubs other than those already in existence in Melbourne. Far from having concerns about the one organization holding both licenses, the AFL favoured it for the benefit of WA football. The AFL was now emphatically against private ownership and in relation to how the second WA club would be structured, AFL commissioner Sh04 said.

If you go back to, the reason for that is that we were, we've have always rejected the private ownership model, we had a couple of flirtations with that in Sydney and Brisbane and they both failed...and even that was done with great reluctance...anyway we were emphatically against that and so the option of creating a, in a sense, a rogue team in Perth and just destroying the West Australian Football League was an option but one that we rejected and so the decision was to do it cooperatively with the West Australian football authorities and I think the logic for them owning the

franchise was essentially a way of protecting football, the profits out of the clubs would flow back into the competition recognising that their existing competition would be severely damaged by this (Sh04, 2003).

The AFL's experience with privately formed clubs and the WAFC's experience with the Eagles early financial troubles were going to impact FFC in a significant way as both organizations placed pressure on FFC from the outset to avoid similar difficulties. In favour of two new clubs however, the WAFC was hoping that with the new club's success Subiaco Oval would be full every weekend instead of every fortnight, and the WA public could look forward to a fierce rivalry between the two WA clubs.

5.2.16.5. Sibling Rivalry

The second license brought with it a perception that FFC was the “*new kid on the block*” and from outside WA that FFC was a little brother of the Eagles. FFC tried to resist this image which was not helped in the very first on-field meeting between the clubs on May 14th, 1995, Mother’s Day. The game was promoted and launched as a great spectacle reflecting the success and contribution of Western Australian football to the national game. Subiaco Oval, the home ground for both WA clubs had just undergone extensive refurbishment with a new stand and seating on the southern side making the stadium an all seater venue with a capacity of over 43,000. The new stand was officially opened prior to the game. Dignitaries came from around the country including the Prime Minister, Paul Keating, State Premier, Richard Court and members of the AFL commission and hierarchy. The game followed what had been a more than respectable start to FFC’s AFL life that had far exceeded many pundits’ predictions that FFC would not win a game for the season (E06, 2004; E08, 2004). After 6 games it had won 3 and lost 3 with the 3 losses coming by an aggregate of 16 points, an average of less than a goal a game (5 points in its début away to Richmond, 9 points home to Essendon and 2 points away to the Western Bulldogs). Their 3 wins to that point had been by an aggregate of 120 points, an average of 40 points per win (Fitzroy by 43 points, Geelong by 19 points and Sydney by 58 points). The game against the West Coast Eagles has since been dubbed the “*Mother’s Day Massacre*” by the local media. The first “*Western Derby*”, it was played in front of 41,601 fans with FFC losing by 9 goals, 12 behinds (66 points) to 23 goals 13 behinds (151 points), a massive 85 points loss. Neesham said:

Today was good. It brought us back to square one and gives us a chance to get back to what we were doing. The players have taken a bit of a body blow in that they were beaten by a fair bit. But I still feel at the end of the day we were still going at it. We played the best team in the competition and they played much better than us. (Fremantle Football Club, 1996a)

FFC recovered to be in a reasonable position after 10 games but it was to find that it could not shake off the “*kid brother*” tag. FFC however may have generated the image for itself because of constantly comparing itself too closely with the West Coast Eagles, rather than the competition as a whole,

I think they would say “no” but I think they did, I think there was this underlying big brother syndrome thing that you know and the focus was on defeating the Eagles and setting up this town rivalry and whether it was the club itself or it was just the supporter base or whoever it was initially I think it was the wrong focus. (W02, 2002)

Barker (2004) suggested that even if W02 was correct about FFC adopting the wrong focus, it was also an image perpetuated by the WAFC:

Fremantle, said one of those board members, Ron Alexander, was ‘an unwanted little brother’ for the Football Commission after the success of the West Coast Eagles: ‘Don’t think Fremantle hasn’t crawled over broken glass for anything it had got!’

‘We were always the little runt of the litter,’ agreed Hatt. West Coast was ‘miffed about Fremantle’s entry into the AFL and was contemptuous. Ovens (Jeff Ovens, CEO of the WAFC) saw such attitudes as ‘a complex they’ve developed for themselves’. But in doing so he maintained the metaphor and confirmed the attitudes. He saw the Dockers ‘very much as one of the babies I helped bring into the world’. They were the second team in town and that was ‘the hardest thing to get over — the first team absorbs the members, absorbs the sponsors, the second team starts behind the eight ball. So, like it or not, they have a concerned parent that wants to cuddle the club to ensure its success.’ They wanted to be independent ‘the way West Coast had become independent because of their success. It was asking too

much for them to be given that freedom when their performance wasn't good enough to justify it (Barker, 2004).

Although it was an image that Fremantle was not happy to be represented by, it was one that the local media was happy to exploit. In January 2005 in a television news item that reported that the “*dark days were over*” for Fremantle, which made a profit of \$1,254,000 for the 2004 season and had been a “*boom year*” despite not making the finals. Channel Ten, Perth reported that corporate sponsorship was sold out, membership had increased by 35% (it was in fact 27% according to Fremantle’s figures) and merchandise sales enjoyed a tenfold increase in 3 years which positioned the club to resist possible loss of sponsors from the imminent introduction of the Perth Super 14 rugby union team but the reporter said:

...the immediate challenge is to compete with their big brother up the road
(Reid, 2005)

5.2.16.6. The West Coast Eagles Perspective

Now that FFC had arrived, as Barker suggested, somewhat like an unwanted child, but in fact more a bastard child of the WAFC and the two Fremantle WAFL clubs, the principal elements on which the West Coast Eagles focussed its efforts was to ensure that it had a better product than FFC. The major strategy that the West Coast Eagles adopted was to retain its staff and structure which, as a relatively young organization itself was critical to retaining its own supporters and sponsors (W02, 2002). The Eagles also focussed on how it could “*get into Fremantle*” and ensure it did not lose its support base in the port city to FFC. While W02 does not go so far as to say the introduction of FFC turned out to be a good thing, he did confirm that it created certain benefits for WA football:

In actual fact it really helped us because it made us probably more competitive off-field and it also made or encouraged more people to join our football club rather than just sit on the fence as a supporter or whatever. They had to declare their hand and I think that was terrific for the club and terrific for those supporters, who the majority of we still have involved. So there were certainly some positives for West Australian footy.
(W02, 2002)

A senior member of the West Coast football coaching staff at the time agreed about some of the outcomes being positive for the Eagles:

I wasn't bothered by it. I think for the good of the Eagles they needed competition. The timing of it I questioned. (W03, 2003)

Sh04 of the AFL commission also thought two WA teams was good for the spectacle on-field, support for the clubs and their income as well as the competitive edge it introduced off-field:

...and we liked the notion of intra city rivalry to some extent, bit like Manchester United and Manchester City sort of stuff. (Sh04, 2003)

Sh05, a senior member of the WAFC executive also saw competition benefits for WA football from two licenses but also highlighted that the new club operated in the same market as the Eagles and both could succeed if the West Coast Eagles retained its existing supporter and sponsor and FFC could identify and present a real “*point of difference*”. Sh05’s point reinforced that FFC had to differentiate itself to the market to win a share of the same market. The West Coast Eagles also differentiated itself from the new club and as reigning premiers, the most obvious place the Eagles could proclaim it was on the football oval. Hence, the “*Mother’s Day Massacre*” had even more significant context with the desire to do well on-field emanating from off-field initiatives as the Eagles objective to remain the dominant force against FFC became a key indicator for the Eagles:

...we in fact made it a key performance indicator within our own club that we wouldn't get beaten in the first, I think it was 5 years,...by FFC...make sure FFC does not beat us in the first 5 years of their introduction. (W01, 2002)

W01’s perspective, looking at FFC from afar (then as a senior executive of the Eagles and now of a Victorian AFL club), was that FFC was “*too Fremantle centric*” and too “*Western Australian centric even*”. More likely was that FFC suffered the Western Australian syndrome of parochialism. W01 noted how FFC was set up with an entirely Western Australian organization, all of whom lacked experience in the AFL. He cited the Coach, the Match Committee, and the Board as being examples who appeared to be selected on the basis of Western Australian football experience but who should have

been selected based on other and tougher rationale based around AFL experience. He felt that FFC's setup and organization was:

...far too creative for want of a better term in my opinion and it lacked some of the traditional values and cultures that's required to make a successful club in the AFL. (W01, 2002)

W01's descriptions of what he saw as FFC's shortcomings were provided with some authority given that he recalled the West Coast Eagles, made similar mistakes in its formative years until it also adopted what he regarded as traditional values of an AFL club:

I think the culture was absolutely lousy at the Eagles in the first years, you know, this spendthrift organization that also was going to do it its way...we'll show the Victorians how it's done...and they lost \$12 million of shareholder equity in the first 3 years...it's only when they started to become a little more traditional...that the Eagles became successful. (W01, 2002)

W01 felt that FFC compounded its parochial behaviour by rejecting what offers of help were made. Without being explicit about any particular offer, W01 suggested that help was offered by the Eagles to FFC to set up certain organizational structures to assist in its operations and interaction with the AFL but that "...they wouldn't accept help..." The merit of what W01 said was confirmed by E07 who said that FFC, prior to his joining the executive, tried to garner interstate AFL expertise by recruiting Cameron Schwab to assist with player recruitment and forward scouting in Melbourne. Additionally, Neale Daniher was an assistant coach for the first three years and he came with AFL playing experience and David Parkin was also recruited on an occasional basis as a consultant to the club. However, all of the key administrative people were local and did not have any AFL experience (E07, 2004). When Drum's contract was terminated in late May 2001, E07 said all that changed:

We changed that dramatically at the end of 2001...I wanted a totally Victorian team in there and that's why we got, not only did we get Chris Connolly, we got Cameron Schwab and we got Steven Icke, we brought Mick Moylan back simply because they knew the Victorian scene, whatever you think about it, Victoria is still the home of football...everyone knows

everyone and we had to get into that network and all of those guys are confident, they're AFL people and they're confident in their dealings with the AFL and I thought that was important to get them in place (E07, 2004).

W01's and E07's comments confirmed the dilemma FFC faced in its early years. While it aimed to be innovative and different, it was also important to retain the traditional values and practices of the game and the competition. Sh04 believed that a major problem FFC created for itself was trying to do too many different things at once and again compared FFC to Port Power from Adelaide who started up in the AFL with the same Board of Directors it had as a SANFL club (Sh04, 2003). Sh04 noted the significance of a club's culture and identity being appropriate, as well as strong, when he added the caveat that the comparisons were contextual, adding that had Port Adelaide's board been dysfunctional this would have been a hindrance rather than a help to Port Power. Equally of course had it been dysfunctional its application to join the AFL might have failed. Sh04's overriding point was that Port Power inherited a strong and appropriate culture and identity from Port Adelaide, which FFC might have been able to emulate had it been able to graft the new club onto the existing South and East Fremantle clubs.

5.2.17. The Difference is Fremantle

W01 confirmed that FFC clearly wanted to do things differently and to differentiate FFC from the West Coast Eagles in particular. On the other hand, E06 hesitated over whether there was a deliberate intention by FFC to be different but also concluded that it ended up that way as more of an outcome as the club focussed on identifying itself with the Fremantle community:

...a community oriented team and therefore we embraced all things Fremantle that we could (E06, 2004).

When reminded of how, in its first season, the players ran through an inflatable seatainer rather than the traditional banner at the start of the game, he recalled that it also gave rise to the “*Rock and Anchor Ceremony*” that still precedes all home games. (A seatainer is a container for goods transported by ships which upon reaching port are offloaded onto trucks for transport to its final destination. Hence, the symbolism of the seatainer maintained FFC’s nautical and seafaring identity). The “*Rock and Anchor*” ceremony consists of a supporter-group hauling a replica anchor embedded in a replica

rock into the playing arena whilst the club song is played. In time with players running onto the oval, a member of the supporter-group climbed the rock, removed the anchor and lifted it high above his head to the cheer of the crowd. This pre-game ceremony was different to what most other clubs do, which is merely to play their club song as the team runs on and breaks their banner. Prior to the club's first ever home game at the revamped Subiaco Oval on May 28th 1995 (it had only played an away Western Derby there previously) against Brisbane in round nine, the supporters' group hauled the anchor all the way from Fremantle to Subiaco, a total of 17 kilometres, see Figure 5.1 (Fremantle Football Club, 1996a).

As FFC tried to establish a peculiarly Fremantle identity and the club ended up being different as a result, it meant FFC created its own Fremantle identity. The desire was for FFC to draw on the Fremantle community and Fremantle's football past but the reasoning was because of the West Coast Eagles Football Club identity, based in Perth, Western Australia. The West Coast Eagles club was not based around a particular community but rather on an appeal state-wide to the entire Western Australian population. This was different to other clubs in Victoria such as Essendon or Collingwood established in particular suburbs and different to other non-Victorian clubs such as Adelaide, Brisbane, and Sydney, based around whole cities. These other clubs had a community base or club structure from which they built an identity and following. By aligning itself with Fremantle, FFC adopted the conventional values of suburban football clubs rather than corporate organizations that it believed the Eagles embraced.

Having orientated the club towards all things Fremantle did not stop FFC from looking at international comparisons, particularly clubs in other codes of football or other sports that were based in port cities. Examples cited were Oakland, San Francisco and San Diego on the west coast of the USA to see what could be gleaned from other portside sports clubs in similar climates. However, E06 explains that Fremantle, whilst having similarities to other port cities which it took account of, still had unique characteristics that the club wanted to harness and the desire to do things differently with a Fremantle flavour remained the guiding principle.

5.2.18. The Fremantle Community

While FFC continually signalled its intention to embrace the Fremantle community, the relationship was weak in its infancy. The Eagles carried out surveys that indicated it had more members in Fremantle than FFC and that FFC had little or only minor

sponsorship from FFC businesses, but E06 was positive about FFC being able to draw on a membership wider than just Fremantle. E06 confirmed that whilst the Eagles membership in Fremantle was greater than FFC's initially, FFC had 60% of its membership in Perth's northern corridor, a traditional Eagles' base. The debate over where each club's members were located extended to how FFC attempted to differentiate itself. FFC started to identify itself as being a “*south of the river*” club whilst the Eagles were the “*north of the river*” team. However, the main differentiation instigated by FFC was the concept of FFC as a community club and it incorporated the moniker, “*The People's Club*”, into its formal company documentation such as letterheads and fax cover sheets. This differentiation was attempted to show up the West Coast Eagles as being from the rich part of town with big corporate sponsorship as its support (infamously drinking chardonnay) whilst FFC was a humble club supported by the common man with a “*blue collar*” background thus reinforcing the theme that the club was creating for itself as a working man's club from a working class port city. The indications of both clubs' research were that these differences were entirely superficial and both clubs draw support from all sections of the Western Australian society, not least of all Fremantle which is now occupied by a middle class, gentrified society. Such an approach based on class differences was risky because of contradictions such as FFC wishing to be seen as tough, solid, working class, down-to-earth, and supported by blue collar people, yet its major demographic was middle class (Sh04, 2003). Sh04 believed that FFC had worked really hard to find “*something*” but ultimately he remained sceptical that it attracted additional support because of such apparent contradictions. Contradictions between realities and perceptions exist throughout football where clubs seek to project a particular image despite the reality of their circumstances. Collingwood is one of the richest clubs in the AFL yet in 2004/05 it continues to project itself as a working class persons club even though it vacated its premises in the working class suburb where it had been for over a hundred years to take up arguably the best facilities in Melbourne, at the Olympic Parks adjacent to the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The new facilities, not even in Collingwood, are sponsored, and named “*The Lexus Centre*” after a prestige car manufacturer.

At the same time, FFC was for the most part perceived in its earlier years as youthful, exciting and innovative. Even its own publications lauded its differences. In the club's inaugural yearbook, the first article was titled, “*The Fremantle Style*” and said:

From the time the FFC unveiled its colours and became the Dockers on July 21, 1994 it was clear the new club had taken up the AFL's challenge to be innovative while at the same time functioning as a traditional football club (Fremantle Football Club, 1996a).

An important event the club established that reinforced its identity was its first “*home game*” against Essendon on February 11th, 1995. The Essendon game, and its programme were important because although it was not FFC’s first game, it was regarded as its launch and was its first game in Fremantle, played at East Fremantle Oval; it was FFC’s first game against AFL opposition; it was the game at which FFC launched some of its match day rituals and its club song. The programme for the game had strong cultural overtones of how FFC wanted to do things, how it wanted to be perceived and went to great lengths to establish how it wanted to be regarded. A descriptor on the inside cover of the programme describes the front cover, saying:

Our front cover announces the entry of the Dockers into the AFL, they'll be doing it the Fremantle way. (Fremantle Football Club, 1995)

5.2.19. Heritage and Identity

Throughout the programme for the Essendon game in February 1995 great efforts were made to link the new Fremantle club to the city’s football heritage. The links were somewhat contrived but were part of FFC’s attempt to be regarded as a club from a strong, traditional football background that could match any other team in the competition. The inside cover editorialised:

In coming into the AFL, the Dockers bring with them a great football heritage, a history in football which predates the formation of the VFL in 1897. (Fremantle Football Club, 1995)

Contrary to this claimed heritage, Fremantle sent out a mixed message in a letter that commemorated its tenth birthday by claiming that whilst the club had no history, it was intent on creating links to the game’s traditions. In a letter to members that had been with the club for all of the ten years, the President, Rick Hart said,

Born from desire, imagination and the passion for football that is Fremantle, we did not have a history of our own, no existing club, nor were we formed or grown from the merging of other clubs. Fremantle began with

nothing and it had only been the loyal support of our members... (Hart, 2004).

The programme also indicated that Essendon were chosen for the game because it was the original VFL premiers and a former Essendon champion, Albert Thurgood, had played in the west with Fremantle at the height of his career and therefore an attempt was made to link the new Fremantle to past Fremantle football teams. Thurgood had come to Fremantle in 1895 as “*Champion of the Colony*” from the VFA and was leading goal scorer in the nation’s premier competition for the preceding three years. There was an attempt in the programme to build the game against Essendon into an immediate tradition to the extent that it would be part of an ongoing rivalry. The hoped for ongoing rivalry between FFC and Essendon was going to be undertaken under the guise of the Albert Thurgood Trophy whereby both clubs would hold replicas of cannons from the “*Endeavour*” ship. The Endeavour had a strong association with Fremantle since a replica of the original ship was built in a specially constructed dock in Fishing Boat Harbour, Fremantle and launched on December 9th, 1993. Fremantle was proud of its connection to the project because after the Bell Corporation could no longer support the project, and Yoshiya Corporation of Japan who took over from P01, also had to withdraw:

...a group of staff and the volunteer guides continued working on a voluntary basis thereby keeping the shipyard open to the public for the next eight months. (The HM Endeavour Bark Foundation Pty Ltd, 2004)

Undoubtedly, FFC would have liked to embrace the spirit shown by the project team that completed the Endeavour replica.

The rivalry between Fremantle and Essendon has simmered rather than been a significant affair since mainly because of FFC’s failure to make the finals on all but one occasion in the period since its formation during which time Essendon has only once failed to make the finals. Hence, many of their contests have been one sided affairs. There have been significant meetings such as Essendon played in FFC’s home debut in round 2 of 1995 on the 21st April; the two teams had a game decided by one point, an Essendon win at the MCG, in round 11, 1996; and Essendon was the first team that FFC played in a finals game, FFC losing comprehensively by 44 points at Subiaco in the first Elimination Final in September 2003.

5.2.20. Summary

This section has described how FFC went about building an organization and in the process evolving a culture, which was different from its competitors but also sensitive to the game's traditions. This was not an easy task since senior management were expected to be managing the club at short notice in a professional, national sporting competition and it was undertaken against a backdrop of funding difficulties, which became an overriding concern for the new club's first administration. Whilst seeking additional funds, the club also aimed to establish a niche for itself against the local competition as well as within the national league. The desire to be similar but different particular epitomised an internal conflict that FFC never properly resolved in its early years. It wanted to be successful but it wanted to do it on its own terms but given the heavily regulated AFL environment, doing things its own way created a number of tensions and contradictions. Whilst the club built a strong identity it was being undermined by a confused set of values that centred on fiscal responsibility (where budgetary processes were weak), community development (where the local context was often limited) and self-reliance (where parochialism dominated).

This section also examined the organizational foundations of FFC on which its culture evolved and its identity was established. In the club's infancy, the similar backgrounds of key staff in the club influenced the culture and identity that emerged. The search for FFC's identity within its cultural evolution is addressed in the following section which describes how they affected FFC as a maturing organization that sought to situate itself within its own local community and the greater football and business communities.

5.3. SEARCHING FOR AN IDENTITY (IMAGES AND REPRESENTATIONS OF FFC)

5.3.1. Understanding FFC's Identity

This section will describe the way in which FFC went about doing its business and how it represented itself to establish its identity and create an image locally and within the greater football community. Establishing the club's identity has cultural implications since identity is a manifestation of culture. Consequently, not only do the FFC's cultural stories provide an insight to FFC's identity (including elements of "*The Fremantle Way*" espoused in the programme for its first ever game) but the search for identity also shapes its culture.

5.3.2. The Tyranny of Locality

FFC was constituted initially as an interim board appointed by the WAFC in 1993 after the AFL agreed to the license going to the WAFC and with Fremantle determined as the locality of the new club. The interim board appointed one of its own members as an executive officer in January 1994 with the brief to set up the organization to be ready to enter a team into the competition in March 1995. The interim board and the executive officer's appointment followed a joint WAFC/AFL committee's recommendation in November 1993 for the establishment of a second WA club in the national football competition (Barker, 2004). In 1993, the club operated out of a single office within the WAFC headquarters in Subiaco, west of Perth. In late 1993, the WAFC decided that the club should be located in Fremantle and the then chairman of the WAFC, Peter Tannock, regarded that the issue least in doubt was that the new club should be located in Fremantle. However, it had not been named and part of the brief for the interim board was to find a name for the new club (Barker, 2004). A major reason for the decision to locate the club in Fremantle was to identify with the rich football heritage and culture generated from the many years of participation and success the two local WAFL teams had enjoyed since 1885. Indeed, the club used this heritage when the AFL instituted a promotional round of games each year called the "*Heritage Round*". Whilst there was no tangible link between the 1885 and 1994 versions of Fremantle and the 1994 version had no relationship to any of its Fremantle predecessors, the new club in 1994 drew on the history of football in Fremantle and created its own heritage:

The rich football heritage in Fremantle dates back to the 19th century when in 1885 the premiership was contested by 4 Clubs in 1885 – Rovers

(predecessor of the Perth Football Club), Victorians and Perth High School all of which were Perth based plus Fremantle, who wore a red and white playing strip....In this Heritage Round in 2003 against the Kangaroos at the MCG on Sunday 10 August , Fremantle wore a red and white playing uniform game that has its origins in that worn by the Fremantle that contested the first premiership in 1885. The wearing of the red and white jumper of the original Fremantle in the Heritage Round against the Kangaroos recognises the rich football heritage of Fremantle. (Callander & Murray, 2004)

While the plan to locate in Fremantle and draw on its heritage had a strategic benefit, it also contained some serious risks. In the 146 years that Australian Rules Football has been played, clubs have been born, grown, and disappeared, based around their geographical location. Contemporary football clubs draw on a far wider support based for their existence and Collingwood, the Victorian club with the highest number of members, was an example of that in the AFL. Collingwood is arguably the closest example that Australian Rules has to the like of Manchester United and Real Madrid for widespread and national support having a greater number of supporters not from their locality than they have based in their locality. Named after the suburb of the same name from which it originated, Collingwood no longer even has its training facilities or offices in that suburb. The relevance to FFC was the expectation that it should draw support from a geographical “*speck of Western Australia*” but compete nationally against the other AFL clubs:

...they locked into a traditional area a strong football traditional area... wonderful wealth of players...they probably thought they could draw almost everything from it players, support money (W03, 2003)

The contrary view to W03 was presented by E07 who contended that at least the geographic connection meant that FFC would have support “*through thick and thin*” in its infancy, the kind of support that the West Coast Eagles had lacked in its earlier difficult times. Even if it did not perform well, FFC could be sure of 18,000 spectators because of the locality (E07, 2004). However, E07 cautioned about overplaying the Fremantleness because the club had to attract a wider support base as well.

If the club was going to be established in a locality because of the heritage of that locality, it could only draw on that heritage if it was incorporated into the new club. If

the new club could not have unfettered access to the players, support, and finances of the area in which it existed, then arguably it had no real or lasting association with that area. What that meant was that in establishing its identity, FFC contrived its heritage. Further, the new club, even though it was based in Fremantle, was not going to play its home games in Fremantle.

5.3.3. Home Away From Home

An aside to the issue of where the club was located was that it was destined to play the majority, and eventually all, of its home game at Subiaco Oval, in the western Perth suburb of the same name, and share its home ground with the West Coast Eagles. Initially, eight home games were to be played at Subiaco while the remaining three were played at the Western Australian Cricket Association (WACA) ground in East Perth. Hence, none of FFC's home games were to be played in Fremantle but were played approximately 17 and 22 kilometres northeast of Fremantle in Perth. The lack of proximity is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

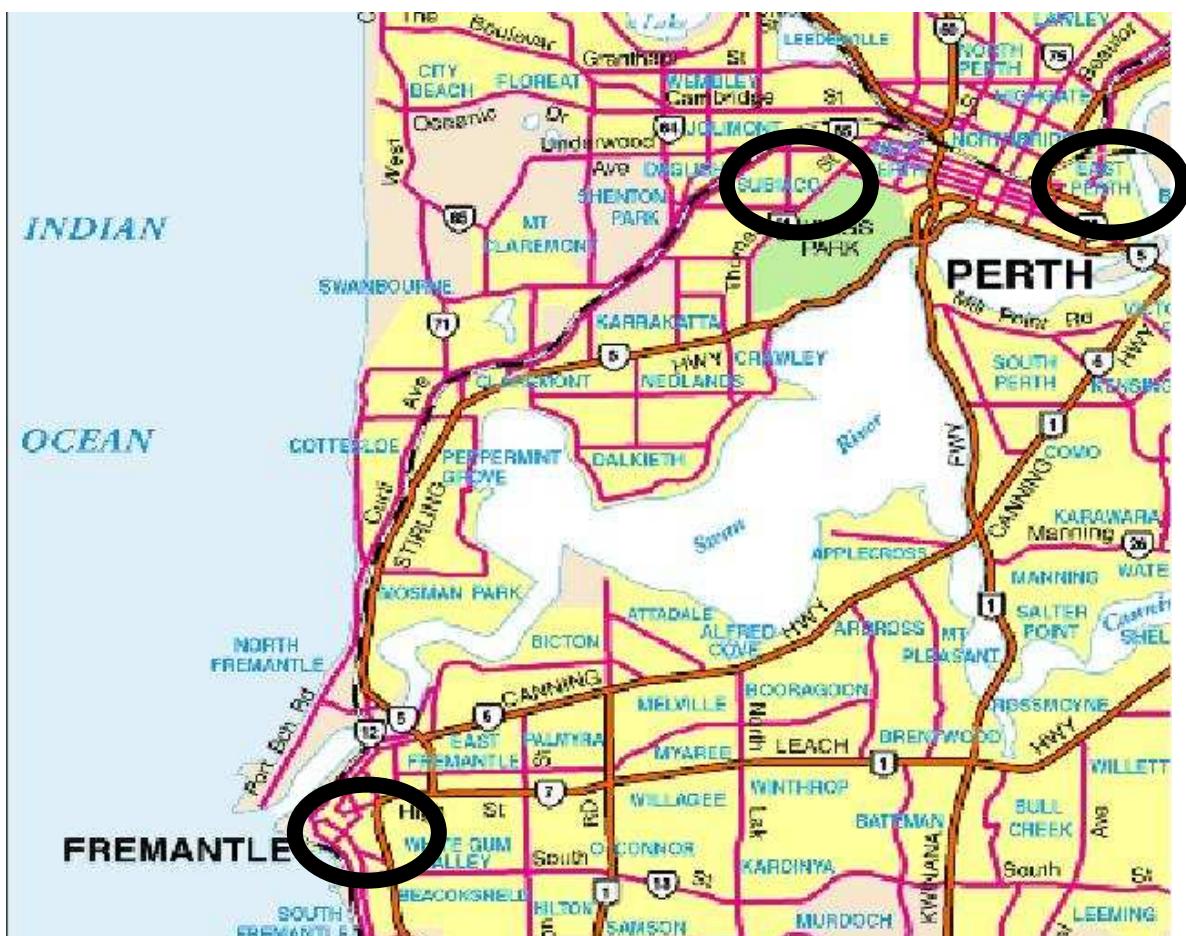


Figure 5.1 - Map showing relative locales of Fremantle Subiaco and East Perth

The basis for the ground sharing arrangement emanates from the AFL's cost minimisation strategies for its clubs whilst providing quality playing surfaces and comfortable spectator facilities. Over the years, desires have been expressed by FFC staff and supporters, for games to be played in Fremantle and whilst the playing surface maybe suitable, the issues of crowd safety and economics, make that unlikely. Fremantle Oval is the club's base and logical choice but the oval is restricted on all sides by, a hospital, a heritage site (Fremantle Prison) and a busy road, making redevelopment costly. These problems are not dissimilar to potential expansion of Subiaco Oval.

The issue of Subiaco as a playing home base became a major issue for the club in 1997 when the WAFC threatened to relocate FFC's headquarters within the redeveloped Subiaco Oval complex. This drew a response from FFC supporters, coordinated by the club and Fremantle City Council, that saw a crowd estimated by the club as "*more than 12,000*", march in protest through Fremantle on Saturday August 2nd 1997 (Fremantle Football Club, 1998). The aim was to ensure the relocation of FFC's facilities did not take place and to keep FFC's base in Fremantle. The response to the WAFC's plans by marching was important for two reasons. Firstly, it was one of the earliest indications that the club was accepted into the Fremantle community which identified the club as its own. Secondly, it revealed a strong level of support within the city that could underpin the club if it became successful, indicating a healthy sustainable future for FFC. The 1997 FFC Year Book described various people and some dignitaries that marched and most of them were fans of the club, but one - the Mayor of Subiaco, Tony Costa – was not. He addressed the crowd saying that he did not want Fremantle in Subiaco! However, it was claimed that the participants,

...all made the point that Fremantle was the rightful home of the Fremantle...the spirit of an important day in the short history of the Dockers (Fremantle Football Club, 1998).

Although only in existence for three years and having only played two and half seasons, FFC demonstrated that the city of Fremantle had embraced the club and its future was more uncertain if it moved than if it stayed. The reasons for the proposed move were economic with the WAFC considering the opportunity to reduce the overheads of its two clubs and still gain the same return. In its favour, the plan would have provided the new club with brand new, state of the art administrative and training facilities, which

E06 had been trying to bring about as part of his desire to find funds for FFC and make it economically viable.

5.3.4. Time Delays

The joint AFL/WAFC committee that recommended a second license in WA also recommended that the new club play in the expanded competition in 1995, following award of the license at the end of 1993. Ultimately however, the license was not awarded until March 1994. This proved to be a significant delay because any contracts that the new club wished to enter into with new personnel, coaches and players in particular, had to be undertaken after all the other clubs had contracted their personnel prior to the 1994 season – the time when FFC was active in its own recruitment. This may not have an apparent affect on the club’s identity but it was to emerge in the years to come that FFC would be regarded in a poor light for many of the decisions it made during this period in haste, particularly with regard to the AFL draft. The issue with a new sports organization is that it is not like starting out in the corporate world where a business starts small and expands as the business develops, sometimes over decades (E06, 2004). Rather it was a case of having a complete organization, fully staffed and operating in a similar capacity to its competitors, some of whom had been in existence for over 150 years, in less than a year (E08, 2004). E08 recognised that a later start was unacceptable to the AFL because of a proposed national rugby league team, “*The Western Reds*”, starting up in Perth for the 1995 rugby season which ran concurrently to the AFL season (E08, 2004). The concern was that a later start would mean lost financing and sponsorship opportunities for Fremantle. Certainly, FFC would have had more time to address the recruitment of players and the mechanics of the AFL draft and regulatory environment. E06 implied with hindsight that because of the compressed timetable poor decisions were made. The implication was that with more time it would have been better prepared and made better decisions. An example he cited was the appointment of the first coach, Gerard Neesham, made after round 9 of the 1994 Western Australian Football League (WAFL). He was selected as the best of who was available rather than being able to select from a wider range of candidates no longer available. Similarly, one of FFC’s senior recruitment managers only joined the club on September 1st, 1994 giving him about eight weeks to prepare for the first draft. He described how he had never seen a game outside Western Australia, “so we were totally

unprepared for it (the draft) compared with what we do now" (F12, 2004). FFC had appointed a football manager and at the start of September 1994, he was appointed:

... which was totally inadequate to prepare yourself for a national draft in 7 or 8 weeks time and so there was (sic) a few mistakes made in regard to all that (F12, 2004)

Realising it was totally under-prepared, FFC appointed consultants to assist with setup and recruitment tasks. Interestingly one of those early consultants later became the club's CEO and his function was to act as a forward and recruitment scout for FFC in Victoria. Whilst this initial work of establishing the core business in the football department was carried out, it was creating an image for itself that would emerge of a club that ignored several potential AFL stars because of its lack of preparedness and attitude to the AFL draft. FFC was starting to establish characteristics which would establish its identity, initially under the guidance of E06.

5.3.5. Establishing FFC's Identity

In sport, the identity of an organization, particularly a new one carries, arguably, a lot more weight than in most other industries. How FFC sees itself and how it projects its identity to the public, are critical to its well being and long term sustainability. It is also critical for clubs to have congruence between their culture and identity, not only for it to be perceived as they wish, but also to ensure it reflects an integrated management structure. Not being clear about identity, or how identity is reinforced by culture, can have ramifications for the marketing of organizations and their membership levels. Given that sporting organizations rely heavily on income generated by marketing their merchandise using club colours and logos, their identity will have a greater impact on their income streams than in most other business organizations.

5.3.5.1. Geographical Identity

The AFL consists of several clubs that have no definable space or territory, and as a result, lack a clear geographical identity. Footscray was renamed The Western Bulldogs to draw on the wider area of the Western Melbourne suburbs rather than the one particular suburb of Footscray. North Melbourne undertook a similar exercise when it was renamed The Kangaroos. This was a deliberate strategy as clubs previously associated with diminished catchments or populations sought wider appeal to maintain their supporter base. The West Coast Eagles did something similar in an attempt to be

inclusive for all Western Australians, although that was not its initial intention. W03 recalled:

West Coast were denied the opportunity to call themselves Perth and probably in hindsight it's probably the best thing ever because they draw from anywhere in Western Australia supporter base...it has got universal support in West Australia from Wyndham down to Albany so I mean no matter where you are in Western Australia basically you barrack for the West Coast generally, there's always going to be exceptions. So a new side in I thought that it was always going to struggle for members because of the weight of the Eagles, financially it has to go to where the Eagles hasn't and the Eagles has really covered it very, very well so financially it was always going to be, to me, difficult. (W03, 2003)

In terms of FFC, W03 explained that associating itself with a particular geographical area also had pitfalls regarding the supporters it could attract:

Whereas Fremantle basically is an area of the state and I think that probably gives them a greater sense of identity but it gives them a limited number compared to what their neighbour can draw on. (W03, 2003)

While FFC was conscious about such ramifications, it nevertheless sought assistance from marketing consultants about establishing club colours and logos that were identified with the club's locale and the consultant was given a comprehensive brief to meet FFC's requirement:

We wanted something that was singularly Fremantle, we wanted something that was original in the AFL and we wanted something that affected or gave effect to the club's wish to be seen as a 'people's club'. (E06, 2004)

5.3.5.2. A Nautical Identity

The consultants developed a theme for the club using the ocean, the port, and the docks, which was an association that Fremantle had since the colonisation of WA in 1829. "Docks" is a British term that describes the berthing point of ships whilst "wharves" was a more familiar expression in Australia. However, the term was not unknown in Australia, or Western Australia. Federally the Federated Ship Painters & Dockers Union of Australia acted on behalf of some branches of the merchant navy from 1916 until it was deregistered in 1993. In WA, the Amalgamated Seamen & Dockers Union

of Western Australia acted within state jurisdictions (University of Melbourne, 2002). E06 pointed out that in Western Australia the people who provided a safe haven for sailors and their ships, pushed down and across the Indian Ocean by the “*Roaring Forties*” winds to WA, were known as “*dockers*” because they were responsible for docking the boats prior to the men on the wharves then unloading the ship. E06 said of these dockers:

They were seen as tough, reliable and safe and that's what we wanted to be
(E06, 2004).

Hence, FFC adopted the nickname of the Fremantle Dockers and incorporated a docker into its corporate logo. This was original and innovative to the AFL as the only club with a human symbol as its logo. Most of the other clubs had animals, mainly birds, or cats although Port Power from Adelaide who joined the competition two years after FFC has a human arm holding a lightning bolt.

5.3.5.3. The Colours and Jumper

E06 added to his description of the original dockers and the pervasive maritime analogies in FFC’s identity, noting that they wore purple beanies. The beanies’ colour was significant in selecting the club colours since the marketing consultants recommended colours that represented historical and maritime links to Fremantle. Purple had also already been identified as a potential colour because it was considered a strong marketable colour, it was not in use by any other club in the AFL and the connection to the beanies led to it being adopted as the principal colour of four that feature on the club jumper and logos. Other colours considered and eventually adopted for the jumper, with maritime connotations, were red and green, colours that represented lights used to mark navigations channel (Figure 5.2).

Navigation channels for boats in or close to port have an established signals system that marks the channel using red and green lights on either side of the channel. When you face the front, or bow, of a boat the red navigation lights should be on your left (port) and the green navigation lights on your right (starboard). FFC adopted these colours in panels on the chest of its jumper with red on the left chest and green on the right chest as the player looks forward. The red and green were separated vertically by the shaft of a white anchor. The anchor also separated the red and green panels horizontally from the main body of the jumper which was purple as shown in Figure 5.2.



Figure 5.2 - Fremantle Football Club Jumper

© The Australian Football League

The anchor represented the fourth colour, white, principally for contrast but also as an opportunity to include another maritime icon which was to become an important symbol for the club. The red and green not only represented port and starboard but with the white of the anchor the three “*subsidiary*” colours were also the same as the Italian tricolour, which provided a serendipitous connection to the large Italian community in Fremantle that was considered responsible for much of what Fremantle is today; a cosmopolitan town with its famous “*Cappuccino Strip*” of al fresco cafés and restaurants.

The anchor though was more important symbolically than just a contrast for the rest of the jumper. E06 said it continued the maritime analogies that the club was gradually evolving. Once a ship berthed, the first thing it did was to drop anchor and what “*dropping anchor*” represented to ships was also how FFC wanted to be symbolically seen by the football community:

We're sound, we're going to be here for a long time, we're durable and yeh, we're here. (E06, 2004)

The sub-committee formed to oversee the setup of the new club was adamant that red was incorporated in the new FFC jumper (E06, 2004). E06 recalled that the AFL did not like green and that many other people had concerns over the combination of purple and green, which he defended on the basis that they were colours that had served the All

England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, (which organizes the very successful Wimbledon Tennis Championships) very well over many years.

5.3.5.4. FFC's Inherited Identity

On deciding the new club's colours, consideration was given to the colours worn by the original Fremantle in 1885. The colours were officially recorded as red and white and are currently worn by FFC once a year in the "*Heritage*" round of AFL fixtures (a round of fixtures, devised by the AFL for the competition to pay homage to its origins). The explanation of where FFC's heritage colours were derived was provided on the AFL website:

The red and white is from the Fremantle, born over 100 years earlier, before the East and South split. (Australian Football League, 2004b).

The web page is historically inaccurate because East and South Fremantle did not "split" from the Fremantle club and a convincing argument could be mounted as to whether its original colours were red and white. The original Fremantle went through several iterations; initially it played in blue and white and shared its ground with the "*Unions*" playing in red, white, and blue. However, after joining the WAFL in 1886, going through the season undefeated and winning the premiership in blue and white jumpers, Fremantle inexplicably folded (Errington, 1996). Unions recruited Fremantle's best players, changed its colours to red and white, and became known as the "*Invincibles*". The Invincibles then won the next three premierships before changing its name to Fremantle and winning a fourth straight premiership. Fremantle moved to Barrack Field, which was given to Fremantle Council by the government in 1895 and which was the site now known as Fremantle Oval. Fremantle shared Fremantle Oval with the "*Imperials*", who were newly formed that year and revived the blue and white jumpers of the original Fremantle. Interestingly, in the same year "*West Perth*" and "*Rovers*", who were the other two teams in the four team WAFL competition, moved to the Western Australian Cricket Association ground in East Perth, the WACA, and both Fremantle Oval and the WACA made their debuts as WAFL venues on May 11, 1895. Any "split" that may have taken place, occurred in 1897 when Fremantle was split by a decision on whether to continue with its amateur status or to go professional. Several players switched to The Imperials and ultimately East Fremantle was formed in 1898 out of The Imperials and played in blue and white. East Fremantle was unconvincing in its first year when it came last. By 1899 Fremantle

incurred unmanageable debts and was having difficulty fielding a full side. It became impossible for Fremantle to continue and the club went into liquidation following a meeting at which creditors refused an offer of 23 cents in the dollar. However, at the start of the following season there were still enough players looking for a game and it got together with a few supporters and officials from the Fremantle club and formed itself into a new club called South Fremantle with a home ground at Fremantle Oval, playing in red and white (Errington, 1996). The two Fremantle WAFL clubs have won 39 premierships (28 for “*Easts*” and 11 for “*Souths*”) and been runner up 36 times (27 and 9 respectively) between them. *Easts* were the second most successful state club side in Australia after Port Adelaide in the SANFL and arguably, the blue and white colours of *Easts* have as much right to be the heritage jumper as the red and white of *Souths*.

The history of club jumpers provides an indication of how clubs perceive themselves and to what extent their identity is clear and solid, or vague, ambiguous and confused. Essendon, Melbourne, and Collingwood jumpers have changed very little since they were first adopted in the 19th century but Fremantle has already had seven in its short ten-year history as shown at Figure 5.3, albeit, they were variations on the same theme. However, another reason for so many jumper designs is because jumpers are now part of the marketing of a football club. FFC commenced with its standard jumper (Figure 5.3 top left) and an away jumper in which the red and green portions were replaced by purple and the purple area was green (Figure 5.3 bottom left). This was complemented by white shorts and green socks. A later jumper adopted for away games comprised various hues of purple with a jaunty diagonal anchor placed on it, (Figure 5.3 centre right). This jumper was then replaced with one that had ribbons of red, green, and purple and a white anchor in its more traditional upright position (Figure 5.3 top centre). This was complemented by an all purple jumper (Figure 5.3 centre left) used on “*Purple Haze Day*” and a new white jumper with purple anchor (Figure 5.3 top right) introduced at the end of the 2004 season as a potential “*clash*” jumper (where FFC’s colours clash with an opponent). The seventh jumper in use apart from training jumpers has been the heritage jumper (Figure 5.3 centre).



Figure 5.3 – Fremantle’s Club Jumpers since 1995

(Anon, 2005)

The identity, logo, and uniform created for FFC was launched at the Fremantle Passenger Ship Terminal on July 21st 1994 and the logo is illustrated in Figure 5.4. Since FFC did not yet have any players contracted to play for the club, the new club uniform was paraded by WAFL players, mainly from the Claremont club including several players that would ultimately be recruited to play for the Fremantle Dockers.

5.3.6. The Club Name

Associated with development of club colours and logo was the name of the club itself. This was incorporated in club documentation, and the initial decision was to call itself The Fremantle Dockers. This was reflected in all of its early documentation between and including 1994 and 1997 and would seem to have been part of a strategy where the club wanted to seen as drawing on the Fremantle heritage but it did not want to be alienated from the rest of the potential WA football public and support. In those early

days the name of the club was represented by a nameplate that featured the name “*Dockers*” prominently whilst “*Fremantle*” featured far more discreetly as part of an inset bar above the word Dockers, as shown in Figure 5.4.



Figure 5.4 - The inaugural Fremantle Football Club Nameplate

© The Australian Football League

However, the club hit a major obstacle because a clothing company in America had patented the brand name “*Dockers*” for a range of casual clothing. The rights to the name were deemed to have coverage in Australia and FFC was required to remove it from all apparel and refrain from using it in any formal sense. In effect, it required FFC to be known as the Fremantle Football Club Ltd and the nickname of the Fremantle Dockers was only to be adopted in informal situations. This resulted in a change in the way in which the club presented itself and how it could be referred to in the media. The club changed the nameplate by which it represented itself in 1998 such that the nameplate was similar in appearance to the original but now “*Fremantle*” was the prominent word with words “Football Club” now in an inset bar that was moved from above to below the main word, as shown in Figure 5.5. The nameplates were very similar in colour and appearance and the changes were made to documentation, club apparel, and merchandise with no fanfare whatsoever from the club since it did not want to draw attention to what it regarded as an embarrassing cause for the change of emphasis in its name:



Figure 5.5 - The contemporary Fremantle Nameplate

© The Australian Football League

More commonly, the logo and the name appear together as shown in Figure 5.6:



Figure 5.6 - The contemporary Fremantle Nameplate & Logo

© The Australian Football League

As a result of the enforced change, the club is now more generally known as Fremantle rather than the Dockers, which serves to strengthen the geographical identity of the club and its association with Fremantle. Being known as Fremantle rather than the Dockers meant there was no doubt where the club was from and with which place it was associated.

5.3.7. Facilities

One of the issues that concerned FFC and supporters of the new club was the lack of facilities. The club had no office, no clubrooms, and no ground at which to train. E06 overcame the lack of initial offices by using an office at the WAFC headquarters before renting offices in the west end of Fremantle. Both offices were temporary measures as the club commenced operations. As it grew the club moved from the west end to Market Street in Fremantle, prior to the present clubrooms. Each of these facilities was provided based on what was required to function at the time on a strict budget with little income having been sourced.

Training facilities used were at Troy Park, a public open space in the adjoining suburb of Attadale and Aquinas College in Como. Aware of the new club's dilemma with training facilities, both Fremantle WAFL clubs were courting the new AFL club to entice FFC to adopt their respective ground and facilities. However, there were two sets of circumstances that made life impossible for the new club to resolve its dilemma to the satisfaction of both Fremantle WAFL clubs. Firstly, the two WAFL clubs, despite claims to the contrary, would not deal with each other, for example the President of

South Fremantle, Ric Gloede, refused to enter the East Fremantle facilities. Also, when querying why E08, with a West Perth heritage, was appointed as a senior executive of FFC, Jack Sheedy, an East Fremantle legend, was told by Len Hitchen, then President of East Fremantle, that at least he was not a “*South Fremantle bastard*” (Barker, 2004). The two Fremantle WAFL teams fought over the new club and it foundered in its early days as a result of them not even being able to agree where to meet (E06, 2004). Secondly, the WAFC specifically excluded executives from the two clubs from serving on the new FFC board. E07 supported the assertion that South and East Fremantle fragmented rather than unified the new club saying that one of the reasons for his predecessor’s (E08) appointment was to get away from the “*Fremantle tribalism*”. This created an identity dilemma for the new club. The club was founded in Fremantle to use and draw upon such tribalism as a basis for its existence and yet it was discouraged from having too great an impact.

5.3.8. Fremantle v Fremantle

E07 said South and East Fremantle could not agree which of them should be chairman and could not even agree on meeting places. Both sets of circumstances meant that there was no consensus in any of the discussions and FFC was stuck in the middle of a domestic dispute between the two clubs out of which it was supposedly emerging. Instead of being embraced by the two WAFL clubs and drawing on their facilities, character, heritage and expertise, FFC was forced to stand apart and develop its own plans. This was devastating to the new organization and went against the very expectations and reasoning of the AFL for the new license to be given to FFC. Sh04 noted that he thought it a shame that the new club did not benefit from being a merger of South Fremantle and East Fremantle but he also acknowledged that the politics of the two WAFL clubs may also have been a hindrance (Sh04, 2003). The example of Port Power from Adelaide, who joined the AFL in 1997 as a direct offshoot of the Port Adelaide SANFL club, demonstrated the advantages of entering the competition with an organization and structure in place that could be readily utilised towards the establishment of the new club. It was this kind of heritage, culture and support that the AFL had hoped FFC would be able to call upon from the two WAFL clubs to establish itself as a strong competitor in the AFL. This was thwarted from the moment that FFC had to establish itself independently of either Fremantle WAFL club. Sh04 again spoke of the benefits that Port Power was subsequently able to enjoy that FFC lacked:

They (Fremantle) didn't start off with the hardcore club. Port Adelaide was able to take those traditions across. I think Fremantle started in a sense with much more of a clean sheet of paper (Sh04, 2003).

Despite FFC having to tread carefully for fear of being perceived as preferring one of the two WAFL clubs to the other, the FFC hierarchy decided early in 1995 that the headquarters and training facilities should be in the heart of Fremantle at Fremantle Oval (South Fremantle's headquarters and ground). This decision was made despite possible facilities at East Fremantle that had space that could be more readily adapted or improved. The decision was critical in the club's opinion because of the physical association it wanted to create with the city of Fremantle and not least because it wanted to be as competitive as possible which meant having better facilities. Prior to the new complex, the football department was working out of the visitor's changing rooms at Fremantle Oval which were only available 3-4 days per week and were shared with the host club, South Fremantle. Meanwhile the administration of the club was being undertaken in rented offices in Market St, Fremantle, a five minute walk away. Whilst not an insurmountable difficulty, it presents problems to any organization that is geographically separated without ready means of communication between the different locations. Therefore, FFC was keen to establish its football and administration operations under one roof at its proposed home venue as soon as possible. However, its initial plan for an office and training complex was objected to by local heritage and conservation groups who did not want it built, as initially proposed, at the northern end of the ground because it would be in the shadows of the historic Fremantle prison and would require the removal of two Moreton Bay fig trees. Ultimately, it was located at the southern end of the ground in the shadows of Fremantle hospital behind the opposite goal. This again created delays in the new club having its modern training facilities available to help make it more competitive. This was an impediment to FFC's early progress since not only are AFL clubs elite sports organizations that require modern, extensive facilities to maintain a competitive edge but the facilities represent how the club wishes to be seen (Sh02, 2003; Sh03, 2003). The issue was relevant to FFC though because some discussion took place on the problems that FFC had in its infancy with a lack of facilities. FFC's predicament was in fact no different to what the West Coast Eagles, Brisbane Bears (as it then was) and Adelaide Crows clubs had endured. Further, there was evidence to suggest that the hardships that those clubs and FFC

endured were not much different to what was the norm at some Victorian clubs. Arden St (home of North Melbourne), Punt Rd (Richmond) and Glenferrie (Hawthorn) are all Victorian facilities similar to what FFC had endured when it started in 1994/95.

FFC facilities now compare to the best facilities available in the competition such as Adelaide, Port Power, Brisbane, Sydney, and West Coast Eagles which notably are all non-Victorian. The facilities represent how all those clubs, including FFC wish to be identified as modern, progressive clubs providing state-of-the-art facilities to gain any minor competitive advantage and attain maximum performance from their players. It is an area that the Victorian clubs are now catching up to, particularly the wealthier clubs such as Collingwood and Essendon whilst others such as the Western Bulldogs have formed strategic partnerships with organizations that have provided similar but non-exclusive facilities.

The credit for the improved facilities rests with the actions of E08 and E06, both of whom although consumed with the financial position of the club, created the Fremantle Foundation in 1994, which was charged with raising funds to change the club facilities, “*from a rabbit hole to the best facilities*” (E06, 2004).

5.3.9. Summary

This section described the emergence of FFC’s identity and how the research indicated the kind of organization under development and the identity it was building as part of that organization. The club’s identity was explained in the context of FFC positioning itself within its local community and the football community at large and some of the problems it faced. One such issue that encapsulated its difficulties was that of how the club’s executive regarded these communities to be against them.

FFC, in the mind of its own executive was trying to establish itself and discover its identity against the protestations of the two Fremantle WAFL clubs, local heritage groups and of the tough conditions it believed it had been given by the AFL. However, despite these hurdles, the club’s culture and identity emerged, based on key rites and symbols established after its debut against Essendon in February 1995 as well as the influence of the club’s senior coaches. As the club’s identity and its culture evolved and strengthened, so too have these rites and symbols. They are examined in the next section under the following headings:

- The FFC Pledge;

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- The First Coin Toss;
 - The Pre-Game Ceremonies;
 - The Len Hall Game;
 - The Club Song;
 - The Fremantle Mascot;
 - The Anchor;
 - The Colour Purple;
 - The Fitzroy Farewell;
 - Fremantle's First Final;
 - Tuesday Night;
 - Re-Signing Pavlich; and,
 - The Coaches' Influence

The rites, ceremonies and symbols became cultural manifestations and building blocks of FFC's culture and identity. Not only were they crucial in the formation of the club's identity and the projection of that identity to its communities, but they were also pivotal to understanding the processes and behaviours within the club and the strategic decisions that followed.

5.4. INTEGRATING CULTURE AND IDENTITY (EMBEDDING ARTIFACTS, RITUALS AND SYMBOLS)

5.4.1. Interpreting Fremantle's Culture and Identity

FFC's culture and identity manifested itself, not only through its assumptions and values, but also through its artifacts, rituals and symbols. In isolation, they represent a simplistic and superficial declaration of the culture but when observed in their organizational context they make a significant contribution to mapping FFC's culture and identity. The exploration of their significance and meaning was critical to understanding the club's culture and identity.

In FFC's case, the artifacts included their style of play, their offices, common language or jargon, the physical environment, clothing such as club uniforms, protocols, emotional displays as a group or by individuals, myths and stories as well as the more conventional (in AFL football) rituals and ceremonies. The mapping of FFC's culture and identity relied on a similar approach to the anthropological approach to culture. Rites, rituals, myths, legends, stories and artifacts, all concepts developed in anthropological research of culture, were mapped as part of FFC's organizational culture and identity to understand its values and core ideologies.

This section focuses on FFC's rituals, ceremonies, stories, myths and artifacts, what they say about FFC's culture and identity and what they contribute to the club's core ideology. They will be examined under the following headings:

- The FFC Pledge;
- The First Coin Toss;
- The Pre-Game Ceremonies;
- The Len Hall Game;
- The Club Song;
- The Fremantle Mascot;
- The Anchor;
- The Colour Purple;
- The Fitzroy Farewell;

-
- Fremantle's First Final;
 - Tuesday Night;
 - Re-Signing Pavlich; and,
 - The Coaches' Influence

5.4.2. The FFC Pledge

After FFC played its first game against the Northern Territory Football Association on January 28th, 1995, it returned to Fremantle to make its home town debut on February 11th 1995 against Essendon on what was labelled “*Fremantle Football Club's D-Day*”. Particular representations of FFC included were the launch of the club song, an introduction to the club mascot and in a festival like atmosphere, FFC made a pledge that is now largely forgotten since the club has failed to reinforce it. It was featured in the match day programme and featured as prominently as the new club song, and said:

The FFC makes his (sic) public pledge to the people of Fremantle and Western Australia.

As proud West Australians, we accept with humility the privilege we have been given to represent this great state in the elite Australian Football League competition.

As the Dockers we aim to build a football club that earns the respect of the people of Western Australia, especially the youth of this State.

Therefore, we pledge ourselves:-

To honour our club – the People's Club – before ourselves.

To promote our great Australian game of football both nationally and internationally.

To respect our team mates, officials and supporters.

We pledge to do our best at all times, to play with toughness, principle and passion while giving an unswerving commitment to our club, its members, officials and supporters.

We also pause to thank the people of the past who have helped shape Fremantle's football image and pledge our endeavour to carry on a tradition of pride and passion.

This mantle of trust that has been thrust upon us will be guarded with courage commitment and humility.

No matter the odds, the Dockers will never give up.(Fremantle Football Club, 1995:22)

The Pledge was recited on the day and acknowledged the following year when FFC claimed to have honoured it but otherwise it has received little attention in the history of the club. However, there were two items that endured. FFC aimed to embrace the “*The Peoples Club*” concept which featured as a by-line on all of its initial documentation in the printed letterhead. The other idea was one of “passion”. Along with purple as the main club colour and the People’s club as a desired image, the alliteratively minded marketing people ensured passion remained as a key concept used to describe the club and its supporters. It was a theme carried through to the present day with 2004 membership stickers that declare, “*I Have The Passion*”. In terms of its identity, the pledge tried to be inclusive of the people of WA as well as Fremantle and spoke of honouring traditions of the game which it did, but in its own way.

5.4.3. The First Coin Toss

The coin for FFC’s Fremantle debut was tossed by George Doig, a legend of the East Fremantle Football Club. The coin toss is a relatively insignificant or routine ceremony that precedes every game of football in which the winner decides in which directions the teams kick in the first quarter. In common with most other clubs, FFC has a guest with some particular association for each game, toss the coin. For example, on its charity day for the Starlight Children’s Foundation, known as “*Purple Haze Day*” a representative of the foundation tosses the coin. On its debut FFC was especially keen to demonstrate links with Fremantle’s football history and hence the choice of Doig. Since then the medal awarded to FFC’s best and fairest player (club champion) each year has also been named the Doig Medal. Doig made his debut for East Fremantle in 1933, kicking 100 goals in the season, generally considered a benchmark of excellence for goal kicking forwards. Doig then repeated the feat in each and every season for nine

years up to and including 1941. The Doig name is synonymous with Fremantle football with seventeen family members having played league football at the two Fremantle WAFL clubs. Ten played for East Fremantle and seven for South Fremantle (Fremantle Football Club, 1995). Doig was a ready made FFC “*legend*”, a representative of both Fremantle clubs and he was incorporated into the heritage of the new Fremantle AFL club that was attempting to build a culture and identity around Fremantle’s football heritage.

5.4.4. The Pre-Game Ceremonies

In keeping with its aim to be similar but different, FFC developed a novel pre-game ceremony. Most games have a routine in which club songs are played as the teams run onto the oval, conventionally, through banners prepared by their respective cheer squads on which are written words of encouragement for the team and maybe words of derision about the opposition. FFC was still forming its own cheer squad and so had no one to create or hold up such a banner. In what was described as “*a special camaraderie*” to be found amongst the cheer squads of AFL teams, the West Coast Eagles cheer squad constructed FFC’s banner for its first home appearance (E06, 2004). This was in fact one of the rare occasions in its early history that FFC ran through a banner. Instead of banners, FFC provided its team with an inflatable seatainer to run through at home games. FFC procured an inflatable facsimile of a seatainer with a hollow centre and placed it at the end of the players’ race. As the players ran up the race they ran through the inflatable seatainer and emerged onto the football oval. The seatainer was purple with the Docker’s logo on the sides. This one aspect of a relatively insignificant pre-game ceremony highlighted more than any other, FFC’s attempts to respect the rites, rituals and traditions of football and football clubs yet to do it in its own innovative and creative way. FFC’s pre-game ceremony was often preceded by some kind of performance in association with local theatre groups to keep the fans occupied whilst they took-up their seats. As a result, FFC became known for the quality and style of its pre-match entertainment which was different and more elaborate than other clubs. Together with the Deckchair Theatre Company, the club was recognised by the 2002 National AbaF Bytecraft Innovation Award for its ceremonies and tributes to Australia’s wartime exploits prior to Anzac Day games, The Len Hall Game.

5.4.5. The Len Hall Game

The epitome of FFC's pre-game ceremonies was displayed at the Len Hall game, played each year in tribute to veterans of Gallipoli and "*the deeds of Australian servicemen and women*" (Fremantle Football Club, 1997). The Anzac Day tribute games have become a strong club tradition and each year the game is preceded by a special ceremony commemorating Western Australia's returned servicemen and women. Inaugurated in 1996, the Len Hall game was in fact the second time that FFC had commemorated the war in one of its games, having taken part the previous year in an AFL event, "*Australia Remembers*" celebrating 50 years since the end of World War Two. FFC lead the way in its tribute which has now also become a tradition in Melbourne with Essendon and Collingwood playing on Anzac Day. The response to FFC's tribute encouraged the club to contact the Department of Veteran Affairs to undertake a similar event in 1996. The department showed an interest but was keen to commemorate Gallipoli veterans for which there were not many remaining. Hence, the game in 1996 was used to commemorate remaining WA Gallipoli veterans and was named after one of them, Len Hall.

Hall was born in New South Wales on May 9, 1897, one day after the first ever VFL game, and moved to Western Australia in 1906. The first "*Len Hall Game*" was played at the Western Australian Cricket Association (WACA) ground on April 20th 1996 and commemorated the Anzacs who took part in the Gallipoli landings on April 25th 1915. Hall had volunteered as a 16-year old to go to war and landed at Gallipoli one week after the first troops went ashore and he was one of the last evacuated (Black & Radici, 2004; Hindley, 2001).



Figure 5.7 - Photo of Len Hall

(Black & Radici, 2004)

A description of the ceremony was written as an important cultural event in its own right and the comparisons that were often made between soldiers and war with players and games. Prior to each game, the floodlights are dimmed and actors perform a scene reminiscent of a war or battle scene, finishing with a rendition of the Last Post and the lighting of an Eternal Flame,

The first element is the lone Navy drummer who comes onto the oval beating the drum. The gathering audience grows quiet. Then, veterans or their descendants are brought onto the ground often in vintage jeeps. An important and moving part of the ceremony is when the Flame of Remembrance has its passage onto the ground, held again by an honored veteran or descendant. The cauldron is then lit. This is followed by a re-enactment of a significant moment in Australian war history. The atmosphere amongst the audience is one of reverence and emotion. The performance ranges from quiet simplicity to spectacular proportions. At the same time it is carried out with great respect and sensitivity.

At this point the two institutions combine. A veteran serviceperson tosses the coin to decide the direction of kicking. Then, the teams line up facing each other. The Australian flag is lowered to half-mast as the last post is sounded. Subiaco Oval is quiet and still for the traditional minutes silence. The bugler plays Reveille and the flag is raised. To remind the audience of the sacrifice made by the Anzacs the Ode to the Fallen is read, followed by the National Anthem. An almost jolting sensation occurs as the audience's focus changes from the Anzac ceremony as the siren sounds to signal the commencement of the game. (Hindley, 2001)

Len Hall attended the first game named in his honour along with fellow Gallipoli veteran Francis Isaacs who tossed the coin.

Whilst the game represents a commemoration to Gallipoli veterans and is played as close to Anzac Day as possible each year, each individual game has a theme related to military campaigns and their participants. In 1997, the second annual Len Hall game was played at Subiaco Oval on April 25th, Anzac Day, and was preceded by a tribute to Australia's war veteran community. The torch was paraded onto the ground by Jack Sheedy, a FFC legend and passed to another FFC legend in Steve Marsh, who lit the eternal flame situated atop the scoreboard. Sheedy and Marsh later became number one

ticket holders at FFC and vice patrons of the club. It was also Len Hall's last game; he died a few months later.

In 1998, again on Anzac Day, the game returned to the WACA for a tribute to Australian prisoners of war. The West Australian newspaper reported the following Monday that,

Something happened at the WACA Ground on Saturday night which stirred emotions deep inside. ... and it happened before the first bounce (Garry Stocks of "The West Australian" newspaper April 27th 1998, cited in Hindley, 2001).

In 1999, the game was played at Subiaco and commemorated Vietnam veterans. Len Hall's passing was included as part of the tribute. Subiaco was now the permanent home ground for FFC so all games were played there. This game was said to have assisted Vietnam Veterans overcoming the negativity they had experienced since the end of that war. In 2000, the Len Hall Game commemorated the role of women in Australia's war effort and the defence forces that were returning from active service in East Timor. In 2001, the game commemorated the veterans of the Siege of Tobruk and the Kokoda Trail. Bokoi Faola and Basil Tindeba who were two of the famed 'Fuzzy Wuzzy angels', local civilian porters in Papua New Guinea who carried food, ammunition and injured troops for the Allies, were flown in from Papua New Guinea to be part of the commemoration. On 21 April 2002, eight survivors of *HMAS Perth* were represented and a total of 453 inverted white anchors were placed in rows across the centre of the oval, each bore the name of a crewmember who lost his life, either in the battle in Sunda Strait or later as a POW. George Weetman, one of the survivors lit the Eternal Flame of Remembrance and Arthur Bancroft, another survivor, tossed the coin. The Department of Veterans' Affairs' WA office encouraged relatives of the *Perth* crew to come forward and claim anchors used in the Len Hall game.



Figure 5.8 - Some of the inverted anchors of the 2003 ceremony

(Black & Radici, 2004)

In 2003, the Len Hall game paid tribute to Australian indigenous servicemen and women and a contingent of indigenous ex-servicemen marched onto the oval behind the banner they used in an Anzac Day parade in 2001. Ken Colbung accompanied the bugler, playing the Last Post on his didgeridoo. The Red Cross and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) veterans were commemorated in 2004 to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Australian Red Cross (Black & Radici, 2004; Hindley, 2001)

The lighting of the Eternal Flame enabled an opportune arrangement with one of the club's sponsors, Alinta Gas who provided the means by which the flame could be lit from the Eternal Flame that was permanently alight in King's Park in Perth.

The Len Hall commemorative matches are now recognised as cultural events in their own merit and Alinta Gas promote the game as one of WA's most significant sporting events.

5.4.6. The Club Song

In the adoption and commissioning of a club song FFC maintained the tradition of football club songs but tried to be different when it adopted a song with a different style. The song was composed by a Western Australian songwriter, Ken Walther, who also wrote some of the words to the club song for the West Coast Eagles. The lyrics were written to a speeded up version of "*The Song of the Volga Boatmen*", by Stravinsky (Callander & Murray, 2004). The writing of the lyrics, to music that summoned images of hard working manual boatmen hauling barges, again appealed to the maritime representations that FFC invoked as part of its image. The Volga boatmen possessed the same stoicism of the original dockers on the Fremantle wharves with which FFC

wished to be associated. The original theme was arranged for a Diaghilev (a Russian ballet choreographer) gala in Rome at the time of the February 1917 Russian Revolution by Igor Stravinsky. Stravinsky called it "*a hymn to the new Russia*", and was inspired by the folk songs of the boatmen of the Volga River in Russia, "*the Volga Boatmen*". The Volga, a symbol of Russia was over 3,700 kilometres long and used extensively as a means of transporting goods and people and the boatmen hauled the boats upstream by hand because there was no wind or fuel.

The Fremantle Docker's song, "*Fre-o Heave Ho*" was launched at half time of the game against Essendon and was performed by a local choir of Italian ladies (The Joys of Women), accompanied by a detachment of the Australian Royal Navy band and local popular musicians Dave Warner and Jim Fisher. The song featured wording typical of a seafarer's ditty and talked of giving the opposition the "*Fre-o Heave Ho*" and "*Hit 'em real hard and send them down below*" in keeping with the club's nautical identity:

Chant:

Fre-o heave-ho, Freo heave-ho,

Give them all the Freo heave-ho

Chorus:

Fre-o Way to go, hit 'em real hard and send them down below

Fre-o give 'em the old heave ho,

We are the Freo Dockers

Freo Way to go, hit 'em real hard and send them down below

Fre-o give 'em the old heave ho, we are the Freo Dockers

Chant Repeat

We're the rollers, we're the rockers,

We're the mighty Freo Dockers,

We're gonna send 'em to the bottom,

And if they get up, we'll do it again,

The Dockers stop at nothin', nothin'!

Chorus repeat

Chant Repeat twice

Doc-Doc-Dockers

Show ‘em how we rock

Freo heave ho

Doc-Doc-Dockers

Show ‘em how we roll

Go Dockers go go go!

Chorus Repeat

Fre-o way to go hit em real hard and send them down below.

Fre-o give ‘em the old heave ho, we are the Freo Dockers. (Fremantle Football Club, 1995:23)

However, the words and tempo were and continue to be the subject of much debate by fans of FFC and its opponents. Club songs are generally upbeat in tempo, with words about the team being good enough to win a premiership and almost all of them based on foreign songs. One club, Brisbane, after merging with Fitzroy, adopted the Fitzroy club song sung to the tune of La Marseillaise, the French national anthem. Whilst FFC’s song remained controversial, it was “*irrepressible*” (Callander & Murray, 2004). The club retained it and the current coach, Chris Connolly lauded it as “*at least being Australian*” and being as good as any other when you win. The Australian origins are very doubtful given it was based on work by Stravinsky, even if the words were by Walther. Hawthorn, for example, the club from which Connolly came to FFC, had a club song equally “*Australian*”. It was sung to the tune of Yankee Doodle Dandy, the American confederate hymn, but with words by an Australian, Hawthorn club stalwart, Jack O’Hagan. Historical semantics aside, the comments were an admission that none of the club songs were musically or lyrically inspiring but when teams win, anything sounds good.

In reality the comments by Connolly was an attempt to talk up the club’s symbols that had been scorned because of the club’s on-field lack of success. Connolly, and others in the administration, attempted something similar in discussions about the club’s colours when at a number of forums they have laughed off suggestions about the excessive

number of colours and their composition, saying they at least “*don’t clash with other club colours, just with each other*” (F07, 2003). It is self-deprecating humour that, gained the trust of the rest of the football community towards ultimately gaining greater acceptance.

5.4.7. The Fremantle Mascot

Major organizations such as car and oil companies have pictorial and written logos by which they are easily identified or branded. The company is represented by a symbol and the way in which their name is graphically presented. As Hatch (1993) indicated, the symbol of any organization is open to interpretation and misinterpretation. Misinterpretation in the case of opponents is of course often deliberate. In the programme for the Essendon game FFC announced that it would have two symbols “*which will feature at all Fremantle Dockers home games.*” The mascot, “*Grinder*”, a person dressed in a caricature outfit of a docker, became the mascot and the anchor became the primary symbol easily adapted to different kinds of presentation by the club.

The club mascot was a distilled representation of how the Dockers wished to be perceived. Grinders became well known during Australia’s unsuccessful defence of the America’s Cup off Fremantle in 1987/88 when extensive media attention was given to their role on the yachts. Grinders are burly, tough, resilient crew members of ocean going yachts that are measured for their muscle rather than any sailing ability. Their muscles, height and weight were important because grinders provide the physical energy to power the boat around the race course. Their job is a precise art that requires concentration to turn handles at a rapid speed to rotate winches that raise and lower sails and spinnakers and it is critical that the right winch has the right power at the right time. The process was very fast, and physically, very tough.

Hence, “*Grinder*” as a club mascot represented how FFC wanted to be seen and complemented its nautical identity. As a human mascot, it was different to all other AFL club logos. Grinder the mascot, shown at Figure 5.9, was a tough but friendly, square jawed docker caricature, dressed in purple overalls and a beanie with a seagull perched in his shoulder symbolising a team that was strong, fast, and resilient. The beanie reflected the wearing of such headwear by the original dockers that E06 alluded to, whilst the overalls represented typical clothing for workers on the docks as well as permitting a serendipitous link to the club’s first major naming rights sponsor, Hard Yakka.



Figure 5.9 - Fremantle Football Club's First Mascot (Anon, 2005)

© Fremantle Football Club

Hard Yakka is a Melbourne based work clothing manufacturer for whom overalls were a staple product. The use of overalls on the mascot was also extended to the supply of purple overalls to the soon to be formed FFC cheer squad. Hard Yakka was at the time running television commercials that showed a number of tough dirty mine workers hauling a two hundred tonne truck up an incline on a mine site. The inference was that the clothing and the people that wore it were tough, uncompromising, and not fearful of what appeared to be an insurmountable challenge. E06, felt that the fit between the sponsor and the club was perfect. Hard Yakka was also an Australian colloquialism for hard work which continued the theme of FFC as tough and uncompromising, carved from the granite foundations of the docks and in it for the long haul. In its inaugural programme against Essendon an article entitled "*Fremantle Dockers face Up To Hard Yakka*" was included, deliberately using Hard Yakka as a double entendre, and quoted the Yakka Pty Ltd managing director Barry Prideaux. Prideaux agreed with E06's assessment of the association between FFC and Yakka as making perfect marketing sense:

The Dockers portray an image that is consistent with the Hard Yakka culture and that is a strong work ethic (Fremantle Football Club, 1995:11).

E06 described the Hard Yakka sponsorship, the naming right or premier sponsor, as a "good sponsorship and they were good people" that was a "very good fit and they were a very good sponsor" for FFC. He said Yakka only withdrew as the commercial attraction of the game increased to a point whereby Yakka was unable or unwilling to pay the sums that AFL clubs were able to demand (E06, 2004).

The role of Grinder as the initial club mascot was undermined when it was considered as not being dynamic or child-friendly enough and it has since undergone two metamorphoses. The first change was for the mascot to don more athletic wear and it spent more time running around the oval before the game and waving or shaking hands, particularly with the younger fans. The mascot also did various somersaults, rode a personal hovercraft, first seen at the Sydney Olympic Games and participated in friendly jousts with opposition mascots. The head was still a human caricature but it now had long straggly blond hair which, deliberately or otherwise, was interpreted by some as being representative of two of the players who also had long straggly blond hair, McManus and Waterhouse.



Figure 5.10 - Fremantle Football Club's Second Mascot (Anon, 2005)

© Fremantle Football Club

The club could not have chosen two better players to use. McManus in recent times in the context of discussions about his future, has been described by F07 as the heart and soul of the club, having been an inaugural player. He has undergone two knee reconstructions and co-captained the club through its worst season on record. Anecdotally, it seems that whenever the club had to put forward a player to give bad news or explain bad play, it was McManus that got the job. Waterhouse was said by some to epitomise FFC because of his sometimes erratic, sometimes brilliant, but never predictable, play.

The second club mascot was christened “*The Doc*” and the latest and contemporary change to the mascot was governed by the AFL who took on responsibility for club mascots and the latest mascot is more similar to the second than the first one. Now

known as “*Johnny Doc*”, the hair was now straighter, the face was less fierce and rather more comical but the antics and athletics remained very similar.



Figure 5.11 – Fremantle Football Club’s third mascot (Anon, 2005)

© The Australian Football League

This latest version was designed to appeal to the perceived laid back beach culture of western Australian youth with the anchor displayed on the surfboard and the mascot wearing beach clothing with FFC motifs and in FFC colours.

5.4.8. The Anchor

The anchor was the second primary symbol used to represent the club and it was prominent at the birth of FFC. It continued to feature in all of FFC’s activities although there was a period, coincidental to FFC’s poor on-field performance when it was not used as prominently as it once was. This period passed and there has been a rebirth of its popularity and use in recent seasons following particular events. As a club that had not performed to its expectations since joining the AFL, FFC was a club that was an easy target for ridicule. Opponents and commentators used the anchor as being symbolic of the way FFC failed to lift itself and as a consequence it was “anchored” near the bottom of the league. Locals wrote to the Fremantle Herald newspaper suggesting that the anchor was a reason for FFC’s lack of success because the anchor represented bad Feng Shui.

The anchor has featured in all of FFC’s home game pre-match routines since the Essendon game. The “*Rock and Anchor*” ceremony invoked the Excalibur myth of the sword being removed from the stone in the Legend of King Arthur. However, as an event that occurred at every home game, whilst it was treated with due reverence by the most partisan fans, it was also an event, that as a prelude to the main event, was

somewhat perfunctory and even unnoticed by some. Consequently, the main symbol of the club was falling into disrepute.

One attempt that revived the anchor's failing fortunes was the use, by supporters, of inflatable anchors launched in previous seasons. One of the club's main sponsors was Alinta Gas Ltd. Alinta Gas had several thousand inflatable anchors manufactured which were distributed for free, at first, among supporters and then again later at a cost of \$5. The idea was not unlike a tradition developed in English soccer where inflatable replicas of club symbols were popular among fans. The anchor was created in two sizes, the smaller of which could be held in the hand of a child by its shaft to be waved vigorously when a goal was scored. Larger inflatable anchors were also available. The idea which, although a contrived imposition of a spontaneous gesture, caught on and was very popular for a season or two, until like the ceremony, it too fell into disrepute through lack of use and lack of reminders to wave the anchor. In 2004, a more recent sponsor, Allphones, adopted the Alinta idea and again made inflatable anchors available, this time with its logo on it, for the crowds to wave. The reason for again making them available was because the anchor was restored to some prominence by an event the season before and the way in which it was done reflected the approach of the current administration in a similar way to the approach it adopted for the club song.

Rather than get involved in the debate of whether the song and the anchor were good or bad, the administration considered the debate was meaningless. The club considered that the negative view only occurred because the club's supporters no on-field success to enjoy and the opposing supporters used the anchors to further ridicule FFC. The new administration went about the process of embracing all of the controversial elements of the club's symbols. The prime visible mover behind the restoration of the anchor to some of its former glory was the senior coach, Chris Connolly. The strategy that the club adopted used Connolly as the vehicle to implement it and became apparent in the round 12 game in 2002 versus Collingwood, played on June 16th, 2002, a Sunday afternoon, at Subiaco Oval in Perth.

In the week preceding the game Connolly built it up as one of great importance to FFC. It was a game against a club now coached by Michael Malthouse, the former West Coast Eagles coach when the Eagles had dominated FFC. It was a game against one of the biggest and best supported clubs in the competition and a team that was placed third on the ladder (compared to FFC's eleventh place). Collingwood was expected to play

in the finals series in September (which it ultimately did and went on to play in the grand final, losing to Brisbane) and Connolly, in reference to previously poor relationships between Malthouse in particular, and FFC drew an analogy between Malthouse, and Darth Vader from the Stars Wars movies.

Connolly spoke freely about the historically bad blood between his young club and the once dominant West Coast Eagles, comparing Malthouse's attitude at that time to that of the infamous Star Wars character Darth Vader (Lane, 2002)

Darth Vader was a Dark Lord and scourge of the Jedi. He began life as Anakin Skywalker before becoming Darth Vader, a fearsome enforcer. Skywalker was wounded in a fight and forever scarred so he abandoned his former identity and when metal coupled with flesh in the form of cyborg implants and enhancements required to sustain him, Skywalker was transformed. He was no longer Anakin. He was Darth Vader (Lucasfilm, 2004).

FFC prevailed in a tough contest to keep its perfect 2002 home record in tact with an 11-point win over Collingwood at Subiaco in front of a record home crowd for games other than the local derby against West Coast. The crowd of 33,087, was subsequently surpassed in the home game against Collingwood in 2004, saw FFC provide what was then its usual strong finish to win 12.18 (90) to 12.7 (79). At the end of the game as he left the coaches box, Connolly borrowed a large version of the inflatable anchors that supporters waved in support of FFC. Connolly was then filmed before a national television audience walking around the perimeter of the ground waving the anchor (Figure 5.12).



Figure 5.12 – Chris Connolly waves the anchor after victory against Collingwood

(Fox Footy, 2002)

The FFC hierarchy was delighted with the prominence given to the anchor, which in light of the victory had none of the negative connotation with which it had previously been associated. There was a perception that Connolly may have demonstrated too much elation waving the anchor for what was a routine win during the home and away rounds with no greater significance than other wins. However, Fremantle had different reasons for appreciating what Connolly did. It was well regarded by the Melbourne media and helped to raise the profile of the club in the home of Australian football, which to that point in time had largely ignored FFC. FFC stories were not “sexy” and the Melbourne media had not made the effort to find out much about FFC but now it was being regarded as having an apprentice coach in the mould of Kevin Sheedy and the waving of the anchor was “*fantastic*” (M04, 2003). The match commentator for the game was Dennis Cometti who described Chris Connolly as “*nursing*” the anchor as he held it to his chest in a post match interview (Figure 5.13).



Figure 5.13 – Chris Connolly "nurses" the anchor in a post match television interview

(Fox Footy, 2002)

As an event that followed that particular match it was significant because Connolly subsequently described it as a partly intentional act that raised awareness of the symbol and its association to FFC. A senior coach recalled Connolly leaving the coaches' box at the end of the game and looking round for the anchor that he borrowed and paraded as he walked to the dressing rooms (F07, 2003). The action with the anchor has since been regarded by E01 as one of the most significant moments in raising the awareness of the club and its supporters with the general football community (E01, 2004). Subsequently the event and its attendant publicity enabled the club to capture some sponsorship interest with the use of the anchor. From 2004, FFC used the anchors as a means of sponsorship and more recently, the anchors feature advertising from the club president's business, Rick Hart, including his suppliers in a sponsors' partnership arrangement.



Figure 5.14 - The Club Logo as Sponsor's Advertising on “Purple Haze Day”, 2005

The use of the anchors now reflects an immediate association with FFC, which the cameras were not averse to showing and it was cost effective sponsorship for the club (Figure 5.14). When asked what symbols they associated with Fremantle, respondents typically replied:

When I think of a symbol I think of the anchor...I think that's just because of the jumper (P01, 2003).

Almost everyone considered the anchor as key symbol of FFC and invariably it was the first thing that they thought of. The second most common theme that people suggested was either the colours or more often, the colour purple.

5.4.9. The Colour Purple

The responses, suggesting purple in association with FFC, supported the strategy that the club implemented to promote the dominant club colour as well as the anchor. FFC now has what is known as “*Purple Haze Day*”, a once a season occasion at a nominated home game where everyone attending the game is urged to dress in purple and FFC played in an all purple playing strip with a white anchor on the jumper (Figure 5.15). The day serves two purposes in that it is a charity fundraiser for the Starlight Children’s

Fund whose predominant colour is also purple and it serves to reinforce the colour purple in the mind of the supporters. It is apparent that the new administration sees an importance in focussing on FFC's predominant colour, perhaps ultimately to reduce the number of colours in the jumper.



Figure 5.15 – The crowd at Subiaco on Purple Haze Day, August 6, 2003

In the final away game of the 2004 season FFC was required to change its jumper because it was considered that its jumper clashed with its opponent, St Kilda. FFC launched the white jumper with a purple anchor. The jumper was in stark contrast to FFC's traditional jumper and to traditional AFL jumpers. Subsequently, in its quarterly publication to members at the end of the season there was a poll for members to participate in where they were asked to rank four different jumpers that had been worn by the club since 2002 and decide which ones the club should retain and for which venues. The poll and questioning about the playing strips generated a lengthy discussion on a popular fans' website, "Dockerland", where the club poll was regarded with suspicion and fans demonstrated a keen sense of tradition that had already been instilled in them by the jumpers the club had already worn. The web site has a message board called Docker Discussions where surfers are advised:

Here at the Message Board you can talk about the Dockers, the AFL or just bag the Eagles. Please don't say anything that will get lawyers involved and

remember that the message board is for everyone so leave the bad language out. (Dockerland.com, 2004a)

When a poster placed a message that sought opinions on the options of playing strip, the post drew eighty five responses which put it among the highest number of responses for any post on the site and the responses were generally in favour of no change. Three of the regular posters who tended to provide more constructive comments, although varying in opinions, had comments to make. The responses also indicated the thought that was given by supporters to their club, its colours and its heritage which clubs have to be aware of and not take for granted. “shane” stated:

Our colours are green, red, white and purple. Not red and white, not purple and white and certainly not blue and white. It's bad enough we have to put up with a new away jumper every year and a dozen marketing promotions throughout the season changing the jumper but to change the colours and get rid of the home jumper would be the dumbest thing ever done by the club - and that would put it at the top of a big pile.

A lot of things have changed at FFC in 10 seasons, the one constant has been the jumper. If they change the jumper and then go on with their hundred years of tradition crap next year so they increase merchandise sales I will dead set spew up. Someone should be sacked just for thinking about it. (Dockerland.com, 2004b)

Whilst “Dutchey” added:

The thing you can't escape is that we have four colours, not two!!
(Dockerland.com, 2004b)

And “Mission Man”, known for his irony, said:

I really don't give a crap about the jumper. I give a crap about changing the jumper willy-nilly. In fact, I like it that the jumper is a masterpiece in theory (Freo's port heritage looked after in a way that can be argued looks after Freo's Italian heritage, individual, distinctive colours, striking use of the anchor motif which combines elegance of design with powerful semiotics) and an eyesore in reality (all of the above).

It's a lot like the Australian flag. The fact that it is wrong and stupid and kind of embarrassing is actually the reason we should keep it, embrace it, make it ours and be proud of it.

You can't deny where you came from. You can only change where you're going. Denying and disrespecting YOUR past, no matter what that past is, is no way forward. It's the cheat's way out and your enemies never let you forget about it. (Dockerland.com, 2004b)

In the change of emphasis in colours Fremantle also ignores the FFC Tartan. The tartan is a unique way that the club devised for the four colours to be represented on clothing items. The official club tie was a tartan tie and nobody from the club was photographed or seen at official functions without it. Scarves were produced for staff and supporters alike to wear at matches and arguably the most gregarious, was the provision of tartan waistcoats for club officials to wear on match days. Even tartan bow ties were produced for more formal occasions.

5.4.10. The Fitzroy Farewell

An event occurred at the end of the 1996 season, FFC's second season in the AFL, for which FFC did not receive much attention other than in the local media. The event did not fit into the categories of rites and rituals which imply a recurrence at particular points in the lives of those taking part. It could certainly be argued though that it was part of FFC's rite of passage into the AFL. For many years, the Fitzroy Football Club had been struggling to retain supporters and remain financially viable in the expanding AFL competition. In 1995, FFC's debut year, the AFL announced that it would award another license to a South Australian team to participate in the competition in 1996. The license was awarded to the Port Adelaide club. However, the AFL arm of Port Adelaide, to be known as Port Power, was only going to be allowed to enter a sixteen team competition which meant that Port Power could not join until one of the other clubs closed down or two other clubs merged (Nadel, 1998). In the event and after other merger possibilities were assessed and rejected by other AFL clubs, Fitzroy merged with the Brisbane Bears to become the Brisbane Lions. Mechanisms were put in place where certain artifacts of Fitzroy were incorporated within the Brisbane club in an attempt to allay Fitzroy supporters' fears of their club being lost forever, but,

Although Noel Gordon promised to carry on the Fitzroy tradition in Brisbane, most Fitzroy supporters saw the events of the first week in July 1996 as the end of their football club (Nadel, 1998:249).

Brisbane has embraced, and included Fitzroy supporters in its events and celebrations and Brisbane's success since the merger has made the merger easier to accept for Fitzroy fans.

FFC's role in the demise of Fitzroy was to host Fitzroy's last ever AFL game. For Fitzroy fans it must have been a sad occasion made worse because their beloved club played its last game on the other side of the country, meaning very few of them could attend. Consequently, Fitzroy was farewelled in its last home game, against Richmond, which was played at the Melbourne Cricket ground (MCG) in front of more than 48,000 fans (compared to fewer than 8,000 and 9,000 at its previous two home games). Fitzroy was unceremoniously thrashed by Richmond, 187 points to 36, a margin of 151 points. In its final game at Subiaco Oval against FFC, more than 22,000 predominantly Fremantle fans turned up to watch a game of no significance to either side in terms of the ladder or premiership points. FFC finished 13th with seven wins and Fitzroy finished last with only one win all season (against FFC). FFC won the game by 157 points to 71, a margin of 86 points but gave Fitzroy a send off fully deserving of a founding member club of the VFL in 1897,

FFC, the youngest club in the AFL, went to both the trouble and expense to see that Fitzroy's last appearance was occasioned with due respect. School kids danced, a band played, a handful of former Fitzroy greats were paraded before the crowd, among them the son of Fitzroy's matinee idol from the 30s and triple Brownlow medallist, Haydn Bunton. The AFL contributed nothing to the event (which a club spokesman said cost more than \$10,000). Perhaps its PR firm might care to think about that. (Martin Flanagan of "The Age" newspaper, September 2nd 1996 cited in Fremantle Football Club, 1997:59)

FFC described the Fitzroy game in its 1996 year book explaining it put a lot of time and thought into the game and farewelled Fitzroy with dignity by, for example, flying over from Victoria, several past Fitzroy champions as its guests for the game. They included Bernie Quinlan who kicked the second highest total of goals by a Fitzroy player; Kevin Murray who captained Fitzroy a record 159 times and coached them in 1963-1964;

Haydn Bunton junior who represented his father Haydn Bunton Senior who had played 119 games for Fitzroy kicking 209 goals and who has been accorded AFL Legend status and had a statue erected outside the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Prior to the game Fitzroy's last premiership flag was paraded around the ground and the coin was tossed by Ron Alexander who in 1996 was FFC's chairman of selectors but had also played for, and captained Fitzroy. At the conclusion of the game the Fitzroy players left the ground through a guard of honour formed by the FFC players and a rendition of "*Auld Lang Syne*",

It was a dignified finale which drew praise from Fitzroy supporters and officials including coach Alan McConnell (Fremantle Football Club, 1997).

The league's youngest club farewelled one the league's original and oldest clubs with due respect and dignity befitting that of a close relative who had passed away. The Fitzroy farewell was significant because E07 described FFC at the time he took over as having many cultural representations of which the club could be justifiably proud and one he cited was the Fitzroy farewell. Another was the response of the predominantly Fremantle crowd at FFC's first ever finals game played at Subiaco.

5.4.11. Fremantle's First Final

E07's comments concerning the Fitzroy farewell and FFC's first final were raised in the context of discussing an air of defeatism that E07 thought the club had when he started and whether FFC was too orientated towards the eagles in terms of how competitive it was, when he joined:

Let me get that right, they were proud of themselves as a club and I think they had every right to be, I mean there were so many good things about the footy club, you know they way they, their half time ceremonies were very sophisticated, there wasn't like the sort of ritzy, Las Vegas, West Coast Eagles cheap and crass stuff, they did that well. The Anzac Day service was terrific, the way they farewelled Fitzroy was terrific. There was a terrific, there was some really good things happening at the club but they still weren't winning games of footy and you had to find a way to preserve the culture as far as you could but become more successful on the field. Now, that's not always, that might be trying to reconcile two pretty difficult things because part of the culture I suspect was that they were proud of the way

they carried themselves in defeat and I just wanted them to get worse at defeat (laughs) you know what I mean, to be really upset and angry at defeat and I don't know they're complex things to talk about. I think there was a lot of terrific and there still is a lot of terrifically good things about FFC. There was a strength and resilience inside that club, amongst its supporter base, that I think other clubs don't have frankly...There are some special qualities about the FFC Footy Club that we need to preserve. I mean, I reckon after that Essendon game last year you saw it you know when everyone just stood and cheered and clapped hands, we'd just been trounced but everyone just stayed on their feet and clapped the players. I just thought that said a lot about our footy club and the quality of supporters and their sense of sportsmanship (E07, 2004).

E07 asserted that the response of the crowd after FFC's first ever finals game against Essendon indicated how FFC supporters saw their club but it was what the response expressed to the football community that caused a great deal of discussion. The game was FFC's first in a final's series, played on a Friday night and televised live nationally with FFC favoured to progress. In the event, FFC was comprehensively outplayed by a team and organization with far greater experience of playing in such important games, losing the game by 44 points. However, the crowd of nearly 43,000 responded by giving FFC a standing ovation and continued the applause long after the game finished. Losers in Australian Rules football normally have nowhere to go. They are not reviled so much as ignored, and considered to be of no great importance. The FFC crowd continued with its applause until the players responded with a lap of honour. Losers do not get laps of honour. FFC fans after nine years of non-achievement recognised an historic event. The club had made the finals and the crowd thanked the players in its last appearance that year. The football world debated the crowd's response for some time and was divided. Kevin Sheedy, the opposition coach was apparently stunned that his club's song (being played because his team won) was drowned out at the end of the game by the cheers for the losers. One FFC executive explained how opposition clubs and fans queried why fans would cheer their team when it lost with comments such as "*You're a bunch of losers; you clap your players when you lose and I said 'No sorry, it's a bit deeper than that'*" (E07, 2004).

5.4.12. Tuesday Night

Another significant event in the tenure of the current administration is Tuesday night training. The club has attempted to instigate a feature from suburban clubs whereby fans are invited to come down and watch the players train on Tuesday evening before a weekend game. Generally, before big games such as local derbies and finals, the two local AFL clubs opened up their training session for fans to watch. However, this was the first time one of them did so on a regular basis. More importantly, it was a case of being seen to do what the club said it did, embrace the local community. As well as setting up a “*Community Development Programme*”, every Tuesday evening fans can go down to Fremantle Oval and have a beer or soft drink and a hot dog at a club “*sausage sizzle*” and watch the players train. Afterwards time is put aside for the players to gather with fans for autographs. It is a very popular evening with the fans and very busy during school holidays. It is also another point by which FFC differentiates itself from its local competitor, where public access is less easily afforded except on special occasions. It has been a real point of difference where FFC has influenced the West Coast Eagles, rather than the reverse. The West Coast Eagles are now making strong representation to the WAFC to take over premises at Subiaco so that the Eagles have somewhere for its fans to congregate and participate in more of a club atmosphere.

5.4.13. Re-signing Pavlich

Mathew Pavlich is regarded as an up and coming star not just for Fremantle but for the competition and suggestions were made of him as a champion of the future and Fremantle now claim him to be an elite player in the competition. However, having been passed over by all clubs in the 1998 draft, Fremantle drafted him in 1999 with its second pick (and fourth overall) and his contract was due to expire at the end of the 2002 season. There was conjecture in the media about what Pavlich would do and the consensus was that he wanted to return home to South Australia because of a lack of success at Fremantle. Ultimately, Pavlich decided to stay at Fremantle because he saw the likelihood of success had increased because of a talented squad and the introduction of a new coach the previous year. The decision was regarded as highly significant to the club in the message it sent to the coemption about its ability to retain high profile players and the plans it had for the future (E01, 2004; P07, 2004).

Credit for the change of Pavlich's attitude and what it represented for the future of the club was given to Connolly and the current football department because of changes they had instigated. In his first season the club came off its disastrous 2001 campaign in which it won only 2 games, to win 9 games although it only finished 13th. However, the changing circumstances convinced the players, particularly Pavlich, that things were improving.

In 2003, the club won 14 games and for the first played in the finals series. Significantly, though, it changed the mindset of many people, predominantly the club's supporters, from one of hope to one of expectation. The expectations were disappointed the following season when the club did not make the finals series.

FFC's first final and resigning of Pavlich encapsulate the paradoxes FFC encountered throughout its brief history. On the one hand it worked hard to define itself as a club with strong community traditions with a core of mental toughness, and a strong sense of self-reliance. On the other hand it also understood it had to grow outside its community to secure a viable and successful future. This tension between these local and global issues was particularly evident in the club's coaching appointments.

5.4.14. The Coaches' Influence

Elements of what made FFC similar and different were also displayed within the football department. The core business was football and like any other club, FFC sought a competitive edge and to attract greater brand loyalty. E06 believed that the product was so important in a football club that the rest of the organization could be poorly organized but still look good because it had a good product, a winning team. Consequently, it made the coach a critical leader and personality in the culture and identity of the club:

You can tell me as many time as you like, who's the most important person in the club, but it's the coach because the coach determines, in the final analysis, how the footy team plays and how the footy team plays determines everything else. You can have the worst financial manager or you can have the worst membership manager or whatever but if you've got the best team because you happen to have the best players then I could sell sponsorship, I could sell signage... (E06, 2004)

What this approach failed to recognise, indicative of E06's time at the club, was that no vision, strategies or organizational infrastructure existed to identify, recruit, and retain the players for the coach to develop.

Organizations evolve as a reflection of the desires of its leaders, CEOs and owners and how their values are transformed into the organization's ideology. FFC and some other AFL clubs were different because its owners actually had very little to do with the organization. The WAFC was the sole shareholder in FFC but left the leadership and development of the club to the directors and staff such as the CEO and coach. The football leadership and development was entirely within the domain of the football department through senior coach and football manager but the coach was appointed by the board and was therefore a reflection of board's values and attitudes for the club on and off-field.

Previous research in various sports has pondered the role of the coach in sporting clubs, e.g. soccer (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 1997; Finn & Giulianotti, 2000). However, the research never questioned the impact within the club of the coach's style of play, personal ideology, character or personality. There was anecdotal evidence in this area in the American National Football League when the Seattle Seahawks entered that competition for the first time (Moore, 2004). Convention in grid iron football recognised particular values in certain plays but the Seahawks confronted the conventions and passed when it was expected to kick and vice versa. As it became more successful, expectations replaced hope for the new club and more conventional plays became the norm. In the case of FFC, the style of play and player values strongly reflected the coach's values which were also embedded in the operation of the football department.

5.4.14.1. Gerard Neesham 1994 -1998

Gerard Neesham brought a style of play that was different to any other team in the AFL although he had adopted it previously with Claremont in the WAFL. Neesham was an elite water polo player, having played for Australia, as well as being an elite footballer, playing nine games for the Sydney Swans in the AFL and a successful career in the WAFL with East Fremantle (79 games), Swan Districts (97 games) and Claremont (42 games) (White, 2005). It was his background in other sports that drove his strategies for football. Prior to its first game against AFL opposition, the opposition coach, Kevin Sheedy, was reported as saying,

I don't know what that football-come-water polo coach might do. I might have to get a water polo expert in the box with me to work out what's going on. (Kevin Sheedy, 4th February 1995, cited in Fremantle Football Club, 1996b:64)

Why Neesham?

The appointment of Neesham was partly as a result of the delay in the award of the license by the AFL and when appointed to FFC, Neesham was contracted to Claremont and Neesham continued in his role at Claremont in the WAFL to the end of the 1994 season:

...effectively we were nearly half way through the WAFL season and yet he was still required to be prepared for and make good decisions on such things as the draft...we were not in a position to do that in retrospect, we did as well as we could but mistakes were made. (E06, 2004)

Criticism was levelled at FFC because of the appointment of a coach lacking AFL experience but the late award of the license to the club meant Neesham was the best of what was available despite tentative enquiries to several experienced coaches. They included Kevin Sheedy, Robert Shaw and Alan Jeans, all highly respected AFL coaches at the time. The appointment was not made by FFC but by a sub-committee of the WAFC. Neesham reflected his self confidence and never regarded himself as lacking experience,

Oh I'm ready, I've done a pretty big apprenticeship. I had a chat to Kevin Sheedy and he was saying that he (assistant) coached at Richmond for seven years and had done an apprenticeship that he felt quite comfortable going to the next level. I've done eight years at Claremont and it's a natural progression. (Gerard Neesham, April 1995, cited in Fremantle Football Club, 1996b:65)

Although some questioned Neesham's lack of AFL experience, Sh04 cited Essendon as a successful football organization whose administration lacked football experience but had expertise in the required areas from other industries. E08 and E06 remain adamant that Neesham was the best coach available to the club at the time and his record prior to joining FFC was impressive (E08, 2004). Under Neesham, Claremont won 11 out of 14

finals including 4 premierships from 6 grand finals and used what was known as a “*chip and draw*” game. M06 a Western Australian sports journalist said of the style:

...the team became very much like Neesham, a sort of eccentric, which meant they won some games they shouldn't have won and they lost a lot of games they could have won...so they were this incredibly frustrated team, he thought he could build it and he thought he could coach anybody. He had a system that would beat the systems being employed by the Malthouses the Sheedys ...the guys that have been coaching in the industry for twenty years (M06, 2003).

A playing style that reflects the coach’s personal characteristics is relevant because it was a behaviour that reflected the values, beliefs and ideology of the organization and contributed to the regard with which the club was held. Two emergent, and ultimately dominant, values of Neesham’s era were differentiation and innovation and Neesham’s philosophy resulted in a style of play to suit.

The Pioneer

“*Pioneering*” evokes images of the discovery and settlement of Australia and represents what Neesham invoked as Fremantle’s first coach, believing in the innovation and youth of his players and game plan as well as his original, even revolutionary playing style:

We have done some incredibly hard yards both on and off the field and in the market and the club’s infrastructure. It had been a really tough two years but that is fantastic. When you get the chance to pioneer something that is the most exciting aspect of doing anything. Exciting like it was for the people who pioneered the Yukon or pioneered the Kimberley or discovered different parts of Australia. (Neesham 7th October 1996 cited in Fremantle Football Club, 1997:59)

Neesham was an innovative thinker, open to new ideas, and a good teacher who induced loyalty from his players although some accused him of arrogance. Transposed to his playing style, the innovation and arrogance were reflected in the “*chip and draw*” game. This style was based on other team sports, particularly water polo which Gerard Neesham played for Australia (Devaney, 2002-2004). Neesham also resisted other major tactics of the time such as close man on man marking or “tagging”. Most of all he relied on the leg speed of his own players to outrun the opposition. His teaching

qualities came out in his ability to instil his game plan in his players for whom it would also have been unconventional. A senior player who started with FFC at the start of the 1998 season, Neesham's last year, said,

...Gerard Neesham was terrific very unique some very different ideas. I was a very negative player...as in defensive sort of player, well he opened me up to a whole new philosophies and stuff like that and philosophies that I use here...(he) wasn't the perfect coach but he certainly opened up some great avenues for me which was good... I think in one year with Gerard Neesham I probably learnt more in one year than I did in five years because he's just is very unique (P01, 2003).

Similarly, a player at the club from its inception said,

Gerard was an excellent teacher...he's definitely a different character somewhat different definitely unorthodox and I liked a lot of his theories (P02, 2003).,

The arrogant nature of the style relied on the player in possession retaining possession until he enticed opponents to tackle him (the "draw"). Having attracted an opponent and hopefully more than one, team mates were responsible for finding space to receive the ball as the tackle was laid on the player in possession. Very often the ball was passed by hand or a short kick (the "chip") rather than the more conventional long kick forward, thus maintaining possession. One of the underlying principles of Neesham's game plan was built around FFC's players being fitter and faster than its opponents, so that if the plan was properly executed, then players would find free space to receive the ball.

Neesham's game plan required an enormous amount of confidence from the player in possession and reflected what some say was Neesham's arrogance, or self-confidence, because he believed it would succeed and his players believed in him and his plan. No one represented this belief in Neesham, or Neesham's belief in his players, more than Dale Kickett. Kickett played 200 senior games, 154 of them with FFC and when he returned to play under his old Claremont coach in Neesham, he said,

I just enjoy playing footy under him (Gerard Neesham) and having the confidence to do things without being dragged or missing the next game for

making a mistake (Dale Kickett, 25th April 1995, cited in Fremantle Football Club, 1996b:65).

The game plan became apparent in FFC's first game, which FFC won because the Essendon players were bewildered by what their opponents were doing. FFC broke the conventions of how the game was played at the time and did not do what was expected in certain situations:

I think they'll surprise a lot of teams, mainly because they play a different sort of footy to what we are used to in the AFL (Kevin Sheedy, 13th February 1995, cited in Fremantle Football Club, 1996b:64).

Neesham's game plan was eventually countered by opposition teams but fundamental principles of the Neesham approach have survived. Neesham's assistant for 3 years, Neale Daniher, now head coach at Melbourne, used a running, possession style of play that saw Melbourne get to the 1999 Grand Final:

...a lot of teams now employ the tactics that he employed to some degree
(M06, 2003)

Neesham reciprocated his players' regard for him although his regard for his players resulted in some concerns, from players, that Neesham was too close to them and did not maintain the authority and distance that some believed necessary for a football coach. The style also reflected Neesham's approach to how the club should be run:

I found there was a real buddy system there you know I found that Gerard Neesham more or less had his say about everything ... if Gerard said you know this is the way we are going to do it this is the way we are going to do it, I think it was set up around him... (P01, 2003)

While Neesham's innovative approach to coaching created the difference FFC was searching for, it often came at the expense of the game's traditions. It is often said in football that you must respect your opponent, the traditions of the game and the competition itself (W03, 2003). However, under Neesham's guidance FFC frequently lacked respect for the AFL's traditions and structures. This was particularly evident in the club's initial player recruitment and development policies, and Neesham's ambivalence towards the AFL's *Equalisation Strategy* and player draft.

The Draft

F12 was one of FFC's recruitment team and was with the club at the beginning (F12, 2004). He was a member of the staff that joined from Claremont having responded to an advertisement for the position for which he also sat a “*very formal*” panel interview before Gerard Neesham, Gerard McNeil (the Football Manager), Ron Alexander (board member) and Grant Dorrington (WAFC). Recruitment managers' roles vary from club to club but F12 explained that he always had a fair degree of autonomy in his role at FFC. The senior coach gave him the typical characteristics of players they wanted and left him to draft the players that fitted those characteristics. Other clubs' coaches attended the national draft and provided input as the draft progressed but Neesham left F12 to himself and did not even attend the early drafts. Neesham's attitude to the draft was interpreted as disrespectful by the AFL and in some circumstances perhaps it was. M06 was a senior football correspondent in WA at the time and described Neesham approach to the draft:

He didn't rate it, he thought it was a flawed concept, he thought it was morally wrong and as a result he didn't pay it the due attention that other clubs did and they suffered because of it. (M06, 2003)

Consequently, M06 said the perceived lack of awareness or understanding of the AFL was instilled not only in Neesham but also in the club as a whole. Ultimately Neesham's lack of respect for the draft and the talent available from it meant that ultimately he lacked the calibre of player required at the AFL level. However, he was convinced he could develop them from whoever was available.

Self Belief

Neesham had a great self-belief in his own talent and coaching methods, believing that players of the calibre required could be developed from locally recruited players. Further, the draft was a detriment to the development young WA talent:

The players from the local competition could give you all a nice little surprise. The WAFL still has reasonably competitive players; all they need is some time to train together (Fremantle Football Club, 1996b:64).

Neesham is alleged to have called his players together at training one day and told them that he thought they were going to take the competition by storm and eventually knock off all the top teams and their coaching philosophies (M06, 2003). Neesham believed his style of football would be the style every team would be playing and that the

philosophies of more experienced coaches such as Malthouse and Pagan would be forgotten and he would revolutionise footy. Whilst there was some truth in this because some teams employed some of his tactics, M06 said:

Gerard thought he could coach you or I to play AFL footy, that was he was such a good coach, and he was, but he was so arrogant so arrogant and he didn't respect the competition and he didn't respect the needs to draft talent and the team just wasn't good enough and had nothing to do with his tactics or anything like that... (M06, 2003)

Neesham's belief that the draft was "*immoral and flawed*" was based on his experience of players drafted and then delisted as unsuitable, who tended to be lost to the game because they did not go back to play where they were drafted from. He said that players saw delisting as failure and gave the game away. Neesham favoured players being recruited on a zone basis and at a later age rather than seventeen as current draft rules allow. There is anecdotal evidence of players being recruited and developed by clubs and seeking to a trade back to their home state when an opportunity arose (usually when their contract expired). This helped FFC with senior experienced recruits like Peter Bell, Jeffrey Farmer, Josh Carr and Des Headland citing it as a reason to leave successful careers at other clubs to join FFC. However, Neesham's self-belief and desire to recruit local players indicated an unhealthy self-reliance within the heavily regulated AFL that under estimated the club's need to adhere to the regulations and conditions.

The Dismissal ("The Sermon on the Mount")

FFC did not enjoy the success that many anticipated or felt it should have. After 3 years competition, it had not made the finals. F09 recalled that the turning point for Neesham came at the end of the 1997 season when FFC needed to win its last game of the season at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), and for other results to go its way, to make the finals (F09, 2003). With an injury depleted squad FFC lost by 40 points having gone into the game without several key in-form players and then lost two more key players, Jones and Kickett, during the game. Neesham's comment at the end was:

We just had too many people who played badly today, some through injury, some through a lack of focus and belief. This year has been quite heartening. The fact that we won 10 games with the amount of injuries we've had, well, it was a promising year (Fremantle Football Club, 1998).

The problem was that it was not a heartening or promising enough year for the administration and Neesham was rewarded with only a one year extension rather than a two or three year contract which was the norm. In hindsight, E06 agrees that the one year extension was a non decision and that Neesham should have been sacked or given two more years. However, the decision was made by the board of directors of the club and E06 agreed with the board's decision, which was aimed at "*something different*" being needed after four years in the competition. The "*non decision*" resulted in an "*immediate change in atmosphere*" because of pressure that told on Neesham. It also had a fundamental and detrimental affect on the football management group which:

...went from a well contained well structured successful group relatively into a very anxious very performance driven group that, if they didn't win, everything was going to disintegrate it was very destructive year, a very destructive year across the board (F09, 2003).

Subsequently, in 1998, FFC won just seven games finishing 15th, or second last, on the ladder and there was a complete clean out of the football department with a new coach appointed with his own new assistants.

Typically, FFC handled Neesham's dismissal in a way that was similar but different to how most clubs would do it. Neesham was informed after round 20 of the 1998 season that his contract would not be renewed at the end of the season. The club attempted to "*do the right thing*" by Neesham and gave him the opportunity to farewell the supporters at the last home game, its penultimate, of the season. At the conclusion of the game, "*The Australian*" newspaper reported that,

FFC coach, Gerard Neesham stood on a platform above the grassy bank at the city end of Subiaco Oval and delivered his 'sermon on the mount'. Before a gathering of the FFC faithful, who had just witnessed a 53-point loss to Port Adelaide, Neesham urged the fans to stick with the embattled club. "They reckon the best steel is made in the hottest furnace," Neesham said. "Ours has been . . . a pretty hot furnace". (P. Smith, 1998)

5.4.14.2. Damian Drum 1998 - 2001

Damian Drum was appointed FFC's second coach at the end of the 1998 season. Prior to this, Drum was an assistant coach at Sydney and was the most highly regarded assistant coach in the AFL. His football pedigree was as a midfielder at Geelong,

playing 65 games between 1981 and 1990 before retiring prematurely with a knee injury. At Sydney, he worked under Ron Barrassi and Rodney Eade, both highly regarded coaches, the former is a legend of the game as a player and coach (Drum, 2004). Drum was coach in 1998 of the Allies team for a one off annual State of Origin game and came to the attention of the rest of the football community for trying some innovative tactics and positional play in a hard fought loss to Western Australia at Subiaco. He was a coach in waiting who was held in high regard by the football community.

Why Drum?

FFC approached Drum about its vacancy because of his reputation as a talented assistant coach. FFC acted quickly after dismissing Neesham and approached Drum in Melbourne whilst preparing for a game, the week after giving Neesham his notice. At the time, Drum was already in negotiations with Collingwood who unlike FFC had not dismissed its coach. Drum made FFC aware of Collingwood's interest and that he was close to making a decision about it. Drum recalled that FFC had an "*extensive programme*" in place for selecting its new coach and planned to interview five or six candidates. The planned programme was to put the candidates through a specific interview and assessment process:

...which was the norm for clubs looking for new coaches (F01, 2003).

The problem for FFC was that it was particularly keen to obtain Drum's services and Drum's timeline was based around his commitment to give Collingwood an answer. Implied but not stated was that Drum would take the Collingwood offer if FFC could not be certain of making him an offer,

Because they found themselves in a situation where they had a particular coach who they were very interested in, who had another timeframe going, they were forced to speed things up quite considerably. (F01, 2003)

Drum's view was that FFC condensed its programme to about ten days. He attended two more interviews each with FFC and Collingwood and after receiving offers from both, he elected to go to FFC. At the time, the ability of FFC to attract the best young coach available ahead of strong competition from a rich, well established club in Melbourne, was very well regarded. Whether FFC took shortcuts to their process was forgotten as it was presented in a positive light of FFC moving quickly to secure the

services of the man it wanted. Drum's decision to take the FFC job was because both he and FFC were intent on utilising draft picks as means of recruiting and developing a player group rather than creating a list through trading of draft picks and players and he said he found, on the significant issues, that his philosophies and FFC's were in alignment.

Prior to Drum's appointment, FFC set up a sub committee to find a successful AFL experienced coach but that proved to be not possible for various reasons cited by E06. It therefore went for the most promising of the assistant coaches available in Drum. It had interviewed Mark Williams, now at Port Power, Peter Schwab who went to Hawthorn but was unified that it got the best available in Damian Drum. One "*hugely important*" criterion in E06's mind was that the new coach should be a "*decent human being*" since players respect a coach as a person first and if they did not respect him as a person he would not enjoy their loyalty and confidence.

When Drum started at FFC, he alluded to the issue of Neesham's arrogant style of play. Drum thought that Neesham "...had very strong views on how the game of Australian Rules should be played." However, if the style of play truly was a reflection of the coach's character and personality, then Drum was going to bring his personality and character to bear.

It was certainly pointed out very strongly in the interviews that I would only be interested in coming if we took a certain path (Drum, 2004).

Drum's confidence, like Neesham created a self belief for him to develop the squad to play in a style that represented his own character and ideology.

The Agriculturist

Drum grew up in country Victoria in the agricultural region of Shepparton, "*the heart of the Goulburn Valley*", renowned for its fruit farms but also important for milk and dairy products, pigs, beef, wool, mutton, and food processing.

About 84% of the shire was farmed in 1995, with over 570 farm establishments. Livestock figures were 20,000 meat cattle, 23,000 dairy cattle, 99,000 sheep and lambs and 13,000 pigs. (Monash University, 1999)

Drum was educated in Shepparton and at Assumption College in Kilmore, Victoria's oldest inland town (Monash University, 1999). Hence, his background was in a rural and agricultural community and it was reflected in the style of play he brought to FFC.

“Agricultural” is a term used in various sporting codes as a subtle way of describing players as unsophisticated and primitive. For example, a slog over mid-wicket in cricket might be referred to as an agricultural shot in comparison to an elegant cover drive for four. Drum’s approach was to eliminate a complicated game plan that relied on risk, athleticism, confidence and running. FFC’s style under Drum reverted to a more rudimentary football style of “*get the ball*” and “*kick it long*”. It was unsophisticated and simple in its execution, relying on players with the basic skills of the game but it required them to be superior players to their opponents in the one-on-one contests that result from such a style. The Drum style and personal ideology also makes his “*shock*” understandable when he first arrived at FFC. If he was to implement his game plan that relied on players with fundamental football skills, he would have been disappointed to find them lacking the very skills he considered essential.

In 2000, the side played more in line with Drum’s philosophy in what was a tougher “*in and under*” style. The players no longer waited whilst in possession. Instead they were disposing of it quickly often to a contest where as many players as possible had to be at that contest. The instructions were to get to the drop of the ball and if not win the contest, hold it in the pack that would form until the umpire stopped play.(P04, 2003). The style was not as free flowing as Neesham’s style in full flight though it proved to be a more effective style, measured by results. FFC moved up the ladder to 12th place with eight wins in Drum’s second year.

The Draft

Despite FFC’s disappointing on-field performance in Drum’s first year, he remained committed to early draft picks, and drafting young, talented players. As a result of the favourable picks in the draft, FFC recruited a nucleus of what were regarded as extremely promising youngsters, particularly in 1999. FFC selected Mathew Pavlich at number four, Leigh Brown at number five and at number two, Paul Hasleby. Hasleby went on to win the AFL’s Rising Star Award in 2000, an award contested amongst the best of the emerging young talent in the AFL, who must be:

under the age of 21 at January 1 of that year, must not have played more than 10 games to the start of that season and must not have been suspended by the AFL or State League tribunals during the season (as with the Brownlow Medal, players found guilty of certain offences and fined or

reprimanded by the Tribunal remain eligible to win the award) (Australian Football League, 2004c)

FFC received three Rising Star nominations in 2000, an indication at least, that it was on the right track with quality young recruits and it represented FFC's second best year of nominations after 1996. Added to earlier years' draft picks, such as Jess Sinclair, Heath Black, James Walker, James Clement and Brodie Holland, FFC developed a talented but young and inexperienced list.

Drum's Tenure

Drum's senior AFL coaching career started disastrously for him and the club with six losses from the first six games. It finished the year with only five wins and finished second from bottom. It was described as a "*tough year*" by E07 but in some senses he accepted it as a necessary step backward to make progress (Fremantle Football Club, 2000). Continued "*steady*" progress that "*showed promise and the potential of our young players*", was lauded by E07 in Drum's second year, 2000 when the club won eight games and lost 14 and finished 3 places higher in twelfth position (Fremantle Football Club, 2001).

FFC's staff during Drum's tenure regarded his legacy as being his commitment to the recruitment and development of young players(E06, 2004; E07, 2004; F12, 2004). E07 claimed that of the team that played in FFC's first ever final against Essendon in 2003, two years after Drum's dismissal, Des Headland was the only player that had not been recruited through previous administrations of the club (E07, 2004). Clearly then, many of those recruited during his tenure were still at the club and were, in 2004, starting to mature and live up to the potential they displayed when recruited. The consequence of planning for the long term through the recruitment of young inexperienced players in the draft, was that the club "*hurts*" whilst it went through the process and "*it hurt us like crazy*"(E07, 2004)

However, Drum's period of tenure was also the most volatile time the club experienced in its short history. It was always going to be difficult if success did not come quickly, or worse did not come at all. The portents for Drum were not good when in his very first game in charge FFC lost to its local enemy, the West Coast Eagles by 4 points in a strong finish. This was followed by some very competitive games, all of which FFC lost. Close results and consideration of what "*might have been*", for example if the

West Coast game had run for a few minutes more, concealed the problems that FFC had. As early as round four he was reassessing the situation and putting out contradictory messages. Quoted after the loss to Carlton by 29 points, he said,

We might have to reassess our aims for 1999, instead of looking long term I suppose we'll go shorter term (Fremantle Football Club, 2000)

F09 noticed a change in Drum's demeanour in that he was far more confrontational in his second year. This change was compounded at the start of Drum's third year when the club again started with six losses that became nine losses before Drum was dismissed. Drum by this stage had become very confrontational and F09 said, "*Drum's personality changed massively*" and he did not handle it well (F09, 2003). Drum questioned everyone and everything about their processes and procedures with the physiotherapist pushed sideways out of the system, the fitness coach "*under the pump*" because of injuries and it was "*an anxious year*" anyway but became more anxious when the performance on the field dropped so dramatically.

The highlight of Drum's coaching tenure was the first ever win by Fremantle over its local rival, the West Coast Eagles in his first season, 1999. This was followed in 2000 by Fremantle's second win over the Eagles in what has been dubbed the "Demolition Derby". What this game highlighted was the style with which Drum had inculcated Fremantle. Fremantle played an uncomplicated style of football that sometimes produced good results but it was very hard and very physical, played in packs, geared to generate favourable results in the present with no real plan or thought for the future. The third year of Drum's tenure however was disastrous in the football department with the coach not succeeding and becoming even more anxious, "*causing tremendous strain in football department, questioning everything about everyone whether they were doing the right thing*". Drum was dismissed after round nine of the 2001 season.

The Dismissal

Whereas FFC was credited with treating Neesham with dignity when he was dismissed, Drum's dismissal was a day of shame for the Fremantle club precipitated by boardroom disagreement. It reflected a club that was badly fractured. The club board had decided after round nine of the 2000 season that Damian Drum was to be sacked but a dispute over his tenure had been going on for months within the club at executive levels and was a catalyst for widespread internal conflict.

There was a serious division of opinion on the board and among senior executives over what needed to be done about FFC's performances after losing the first nine games of the season in 2001. The board recognised that there had been an "*alarming slide*" in on-field performances. A majority that thought it was time for a change, an opinion that was also shared by key people at the WAFC and supporters of the club. The conflict within the board and between board members was emphasised by a personal level of attack (E07, 2004).

The various executive levels of the club, both board and senior management had previously discussed the issue of Drum's position as senior coach at some length and were split over whether to sack him or not. E07 took the high moral ground and wanted to keep to the contract that the club had signed with Drum. E07 had two allies on the board but the remaining board members wanted Drum sacked. Hence the club management and the board were split whether to sack him or not. The board members, who wanted Drum sacked and were in the majority, were concerned that the WAFC board might overrule them so some amongst them took the decision to leak the club board's decision to the media on the basis that if it became public knowledge it could not be overruled. Therefore, the structure of management at FFC contributed to the conflict, and ultimately, the determination to leak the decision. It was argued that if the extra level of committee was not involved the dismissal would not have driven the reason to leak the decision and it would not have occurred in such a public and distasteful manner. However, the decision to leak the information resulted in Damian Drum infamously being stopped on his way into The Duxton Hotel in Perth, to attend a meeting with the AFL executive, by the media and being informed by them that he had lost his job.

E07 said the club's treatment of Drum was "*very shoddy treatment*". Again, E07 was dismissive of E06 who he claimed was with Drum when the media approached them at the Duxton Hotel. E07 said that E06 ducked out the back to avoid the media and left Drum to face them alone. What the dismissal reflected, which was not recognised until some time afterwards within the club, was the fractured nature of the organization and a complete lack of any ideologies about how it should behave.

Whilst FFC fractured at board and executive level over what to do about Damian Drum, the AFL became involved when it carried out an investigation into the performance of FFC. The AFL was greatly concerned because apart from FFC's performance, the West

Coast Eagles were also not performing very well on the field and as it transpired, would sack its coach that year as well. The AFL investigation resulted in a report that was supposed to be confidential but was leaked to the media and characterised FFC and its board as “*dysfunctional*” and E07 as “*tired and distracted*”. The WAFC and FFC were particularly upset at the contents of the report whilst the AFL was embarrassed by its report being made public. The investigation was carried out by Sh03, then a senior executive of the AFL with his assistant, and author of the report, Sh02, another senior executive. A distribution error in the AFL made the report public, via distribution to all 16 clubs.

It was clear that before the disastrous season of 2001 even started that the playing group within the club was also badly fractured. Drum had lost the support of key senior players and the loss of support revolved around the way players saw some of their colleagues treated when delisted by FFC, for which Drum was blamed (P01, 2003; P02, 2003; P03, 2003). P01 and P02 were two very experienced players on the FFC list in 2001. P01 had played over 100 games in 5 years at his previous AFL club before coming to FFC in 1998 in exchange for a number two draft pick whilst P02 had been at FFC since its formation on 1995 having been with the West Coast Eagles for 3 years before that. P01 explained that he found Fremantle a very welcoming place and club despite not intending to leave his former club,

it didn't take you too long to actually warm to Jason Norrish, Matthew Burton and Sean McManus who now are probably three of my closest mates you know and I only played there for two years so ... but I just warmed to it the place itself I warmed to...(P01, 2003)

Consistent with F09’s observations that Drum’s demeanour changed towards the end, was the way in which P01 and P02 were delisted. Initially Drum had spoken to P01 and said he was looking towards the younger players as the future of the club but promised him,

...you'll be captain but you've got to understand that I'm going to go for youth and your spot in the team after this year isn't a certainty...I sort of said right give me a couple of days but I appreciate the honesty and openness so I spoke to my wife I spoke to my family the decision I made because I was going to stay on (P01, 2003).

However, when it came to the trading period P01 was called into Drum's office where he was met by Drum and the football manager, and was told he was to be delisted. Drum reputedly told him,

I'm going back on my word we've de-listed you (P01, 2003).

The meeting occurred on the Friday of the weekend of FFC's player of the year dinner and P02 was delisted at the same time. Asked about how he thought it was handled, P02 said,

Shocking. I'd been appointed vice captain...Bondy was the captain...(P02, 2003)

The problem for the club was that players such as P01 and P02, who were captain and vice captain respectively at the time, had close friends that were players and /or board members and did not like the treatment that the players received and they contributed to the ongoing disunity within the club.

F09 described the period in which Ben Allan took over as senior coach as an extremely difficult phase. In essence, Allan did what he could to maintain the players' competitiveness on the oval but all he could do was ensure the organizational atmosphere remained calm. F09 said Allan "*calmed things down but the horse had bolted*". It is inappropriate to characterise Allan's time as being anything other than the caretaker's role. Allan insisted when he took the job on that he was doing it as a favour for the club until it could organize a new coach.

5.4.14.3. Chris Connolly (2001 -)

Connolly came to FFC at the end of 2001 after a year of turmoil for the club that consequently saw McLean succeeded by Hart as Chairman, Hatt succeeded by Schwab as CEO and a vacant coaching position after Drum was sacked mid season in an unprofessional and a personally insulting process. Schwab set about rebuilding the club administration. Drum had infamously been sacked from the senior coaching position mid season and Ben Allan had filled the spot temporarily. The club immediately put in place a process by which the new coach was to be selected via a rigorous process and all applicants were required to participate in that process. Allan did not apply.

Why Connolly?

Connolly, then assistant coach at Hawthorn, expressed interest in the FFC coaching position and Hawthorn, was prepared to facilitate his move to a senior position. Connolly's playing career, like Drum's, was cut short by knee injuries and he was limited to playing 84 games for Melbourne between 1982 and 1989 (at the same time as FFC's current football manager Steven Icke and assistant coach Earl Spalding). He joined Hawthorn in 1996 and remained at Glenferrie (Hawthorn's home ground) until winning the FFC job at the end of 2001 (Australian Football League, 2002). E01 thought Connolly was the right person for the position but was determined that the process be adhered to so that he was also seen by everyone to be the right choice. This was important for three reasons:

Firstly, Connolly and Schwab were good friends from Connolly's playing days at Melbourne when Schwab was the CEO at Melbourne. Undoubtedly Schwab would have liked to see Connolly get the position because of their friendship which included Schwab being best man at Connolly's wedding but he wanted it to be seen as being achieved on merit rather mateship.

Secondly, the club was accused of unseemly haste in its appointment of Damian Drum and did want to make the same "mistake" again.

Thirdly, questions had been raised about the inexperience of FFC's two previous coaches. FFC had to again appoint a coach with no senior experience because of a lack of availability or interest from experienced coaches. Therefore, it was important that the search and recruitment process was fully exhausted and seen to be fully exhausted. E07 described the risk of appointing another inexperienced coach as being not as risky as it appeared,

This guy was different , inasmuch as he'd had, I think, 5 or 6 years actually coaching, some of these other guys had only ever been assistant coaches, John Worsfold had only ever been an assistant coach this guy had coached with success in that very strong under 18 competition in Victoria for 5 or 6 years, had a lot of success and then he was assistant coach to Parkin and others, he had some pretty good teachers with success...he had all the qualities, they all checked out and the process Cameron put them through...and he came through with flying colours (E07, 2004).

In fact, the decision on the new coach came down to four people, two of whom, Neil Craig and John Worsfold, became unavailable or subject to other offers. Worsfold accepted the senior coach's position at the West Coast Eagles before FFC's process was complete and Craig ultimately decided to stay at the Adelaide Crows. Of the two remaining candidates, the favourite was Connolly, but FFC still went through the process of flying Brian Royal over from Melbourne and going through the entire interview process with him. Ultimately, Connolly prevailed and was appointed as FFC's fourth senior coach in eight years.

The Synthesiser

A synthesiser is a person who combines elements to form a more complex and integrated product. In this sense Connolly's approach to coaching and management was as a "synthesiser". Since Connolly joined FFC, he has undertaken various tasks as part of an effort to not only re-establish the club to achieve its new vision but to incorporate the elements of its culture and identity that were already established and accepted. Connolly uses the term "*journey*" with regard to the plan he sees as necessary to try to deliver a premiership to Fremantle. The references to the journey and its duration are without certainty of outcome but for what happens along the way for FFC and him while he is in charge. Connolly was discussing his disappointment at a defeat by a team that FFC should have beaten and the missed opportunity of winning an away game, he was quoted as saying:

"Because we know across the journey not many teams are going to, so that's very disappointing"(Chong, 2003)

However, the journey is partly one of synthesising various playing styles including Neesham's and Drum's styles. The club is also keen to retain some of FFC's innovative ways of expressing itself whilst becoming an accepted part of the AFL community and performing in accordance with more conventional practices and behaviours of AFL clubs. Further, Connolly became the public face of the club, balancing marketability with coaching. Hence, Connolly's role has been to continually balance or synthesise the elements of the club's past whilst still trying to introduce new elements and exert his own influence in a more conventional establishment. Initially, Connolly was outgoing and active in marketing the club to the point where concerns were expressed about where his priorities lay. More recently, he has tempered this behaviour to focus on coaching, having achieved greater prominence for the club.

The premise for Connolly's journey is the underlying philosophy of Connolly and Schwab that a football club is always in one of two phases. Either a club has the capacity and ability to win a premiership, or it is building the capacity and ability (undertaking a journey) to enable it to win a premiership (E01, 2003). When Cameron Schwab became CEO in 2001 and appointed Connolly after due process, Fremantle was a club without the capacity or ability to win the premiership and was not building it effectively either.

The style of play Connolly brought to FFC was a synthesis of the two previous full time coaches to which he added his own ideas. It included aspects of Neesham's game-plans such as the fast running midfield, drawing opposition players and playing in zones but kept some of the more traditional aspects that Drum had such as being "*tough at the ball*" and "*respecting your opponent*".

Connolly also had a personal charm that endeared him to the local media and to those who met him. His extrovert personality saw him used as a marketing tool in his first three years at Fremantle and it became apparent that he was also an opportunist. He was prepared in the event of the team winning, to take advantage of the opportunity to expose the Fremantle brand to a wider audience. Typical of his approach was the waving of the anchor after victory over Collingwood which has now been suggested as not so wise for a senior coach and he should focus more on coaching (Wilson, 2005). However, he says he is still learning to ply his trade and confesses that with hindsight, he has not always done things the best way but he is moderating his behaviour.

The Draft

The draft has not been a significant issue at FFC since the days of Neesham. It is the principal element of the regulated environment within which clubs recruit players. Fans and members reflect and comment upon the various selections but the draft is the means through which FFC acquires its players. Connolly arrived in late 2001 after the draft had been conducted and had no influence in it that year. Subsequently he has tended to set an agenda for each year's draft but has spoken continually of developing the existing talent at the club and recruiting further talent to complement it. In his first active draft of 2002 four players were taken from under 18 competitions (Schammer – pick 13, Edgcumbe – pick 48, Crowley – pick 55 and Doswell – pick 63) and three existing rookies were elevated to the main list. One other player recognised as a prodigious young talent, Des Headland, was recruited from Brisbane via the trading of other draft

selections. Hence, all of the players recruited in Connolly's first draft were under the age of 22 and added to the pool of talent, which Connolly wanted to develop over his "journey".

In 2003, FFC recruited Ryley Dunn, Ryan Murphy, David Mundy, Adam Campbell, and Brett Peake and continued with a youth policy that saw them dispense with the services of two relatively experienced players in Trent Croad and Steven Koops. Fremantle's involvement in the 2004 draft was limited in that it only recruited three players but was active in the trade period when it seemed to respond to the disappointment of not making the finals by recruiting three experienced players from other clubs. Josh Carr and Jarrad Schofield came from the reigning premiers, Port Adelaide, and Heath Black returned from St Kilda. This was a significant change to Connolly's approach because the club had recruited three players who were 24, 29 and 25 years old respectively and it was recognition that the developing pool of existing talent needed synthesising with some experience. This is likely to have been a result of Fremantle not making the finals as expected and a reflection the continuing education of Connolly.

Connolly's Tenure

Connolly believes that the contemporary coach's role extends to the club's business practices and welfare as well as coaching football. F09 recalled that when Connolly and Schwab took over there were significant changes throughout the organization:

If Drum was a big change, no idea of what was about to happen when Connolly and Schwab took over. Through the process, 2 were left of 15 or 16 in the footy dept by the time new broom came through (F09, 2003).

Despite the upheaval and disappointment that F09 felt because of the changes, he also felt that Connolly was "*a breath of fresh air*" although the changes caused some tension within the medical staff. Connolly's approach included the recruitment of a "*Strength and Conditioning Coach*", Adam Larcom. Initially the club did not have enough funds to employ Larcom and so Connolly went on a personal funding drive to secure sponsors' funds with the express purpose of being able to employ Larcom. This was a massive vote of confidence in Larcom and he was appointed as a "*coach*" rather than a "*physiotherapist*" or "*sports scientist*" and with the coach's support Larcom was situated in the coaches' area of the offices and not the medical area. This was

significant because the medical staff was located on the ground floor of the building near the gymnasium so that the staff has easy access to the players to help with gym work and recovery sessions such as massages. Larcom was located on the first floor with other coaches where communication was much easier and participation in non formal dialogues such as “*coffee room chats*” was accomplished more easily although he was described as a loner and poor communicator (F11, 2004; P04, 2003). The disparate locations caused tensions amongst the medical staff and created uncertainty as to their future roles but those tensions had wider ramifications than just within the medical department.

Larcom’s influence with Connolly also extended to the coach’s management of players. Larcom and Connolly identified what maybe termed a “*purple circle*” of players to whom they both devoted a great deal of time and effort, often at the expense of other players. This was transferred to match days when Larcom exerted influence over team selection and player rotation policy. This policy resulted in the senior coach being perceived as having too much loyalty to a certain group of players and Connolly has since admitted the special attention to certain players was a mistake after the players voiced their concerns about the division to the club’s management (P04, 2003).

At the heart of the problem with Larcom was that when Schwab and Connolly took over at FFC, policies and procedures in the football department were not clearly defined. It meant that all members of the department had to redefine their roles again, as they had when the club started up. F09 described it as “*the book was rewritten*”. Whilst the outcomes were described as quite good, the football department structure remained unclear. The organizational chart for example showed F09 as reporting to F08 as his organizational head and yet discussions regularly take place between Connolly and F09 to the exclusion of F08.

Connolly’s tenure was still evolving at the completion of the research and it is unclear whether he will achieve sustainable success at FFC. He is popular and took the club to the finals for the first time in its history in only his second year in charge and has a consultative and collaborative management style which some with traditional football management backgrounds perceive as “*soft*”. Connolly does not berate the players in public or invoke severe punishment regimes for poor performances. To satisfy some of the critics, staff and players from the club commented publicly after one defeat that

Connolly had let the players know in no uncertain terms that their performance was unsatisfactory and unacceptable.

The difficulty for the club and the coach is that a new coach is never a success until he wins constantly. For supporters, this is represented by regular appearances in the finals series of matches and preferably a premiership. Consequently the coach is always likely to be questioned when the club does not perform well and if the club constantly fails to perform the questions continue. The performances to date reflect the swing between excesses that Connolly has to control. In his first year he enjoyed the honeymoon period of a new coach and in his second he took FFC into the finals. Once that was achieved hope turned to expectation for supporters but the following year the club failed to make the finals, with 2005 showing swings between the form expected of a premiership contender and the form of a failing side. Not until these performances can be synthesised on a game by game basis to a season by season basis, will a judgement be able to be made on the synthesiser's style.

5.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter told the story of the Fremantle Football Club from its inception to the end of the 2004 playing season, a convenient but coincidental period of ten playing seasons.

Thoughts of the second AFL club in Western Australia went back as far as when the first AFL club was mooted for WA. However, the new club needed something different to give it marketability and a competitive edge so that it could gain a market share of a highly regulated football industry. This chapter examined the steps that Fremantle took as a fledgling organization in a tough and uncompromising environment and showed how it engaged with the competition and with the local community.

It was explained how the club made good progress in establishing an identity and how it worked hard to project the commensurate image to stakeholders. An important part of this process was the nautical theme in all facets of the club and how it helped identify roles for the club. However, the strong identity was undermined by its dissonance with the club's emerging values and behaviours of fiscal responsibility and self-reliance. Finally, this chapter considered how the organization behind a sporting team under a particular coach reflects the character and personality of the coach.

There are clearly many more artifacts, anecdotes, facts and hearsay about FFC which have not been included and it would be impossible to include all of them in this thesis. Rather, an attempt has been made to underscore the significant events in the club's history to highlight the culture and identity of the club as it evolved, intentionally or otherwise. Equally, the intention in this chapter was not to make critical judgement about that culture and identity but to trace its development and provide the foundation for analysis in the next chapter.

6. MAKING SENSE OF FFC'S CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Why shouldn't truth be stranger than fiction? Fiction, after all, has to make sense.

Mark Twain, author (1835 - 1910)

6.1. SENSE FROM PROCESS

As the Introduction to this thesis indicated, the primary tasks of researching FFC's organizational culture and identity were to:

1. Examine what forces and factors brought them about;
2. Identify the forms that FFC's culture and identity assumed; and,
3. Assess the influence they have had on the club's strategies, structure, behaviour, and performance.

Completing those tasks enabled sense to be made of the specific culture and identity that evolved in the context and environment in which FFC operates.

The previous chapter described the evolution of FFC's culture and identity from the club's beginning in 1994. While the club was concerned initially with its financial viability and creating an identity that reflected the nautical and maritime traditions of its surrounding community, it had some difficulty in establishing a consistent and integrated culture and identity. At the same time it became clear that the club's culture and identity in 2004 had changed significantly from what it was in 1994.

To make sense of FFC's culture and identity, that is, to explain what it all means, this chapter maps FFC's cultural values, beliefs and identities since the club's inception in 1994. The mapping process is undertaken in the context of Schein's Levels of Culture, Hatch and Schulz's model of Organizational Identity Dynamics, and Williams's model of emergent, dominant and residual values. It aims to reveal and identify the different sets of cultural values and their impact on the club's identity across its entire history. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the impact of the club's culture and identity on its organizational performance.

Two additional theoretical constructs are used to make sense of FFC's culture and identity, the concepts of *social validation* and *cognitive transformation* (Schein, 1992). *Social validation* is the initial willingness of staff to test the values and beliefs of club leaders to see if they are effective in solving problems. *Cognitive transformation* is the

change of minds and acceptance of the values and beliefs based on them being effective when routinely used. Consequently, when staff engage in both processes they see the values, beliefs and strategies as suitable means to resolve problems and they become the accepted way that the club conducts business.

6.2. THE PERIODISATION OF FFC'S CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Fremantle's culture and identity exhibited three distinct periods or phases between 1994 and December 2004. Each period was characterised by a significant shift in the club's culture and identity, evidenced through the examination of the values, beliefs and behaviours of the incumbent leaders, and the resultant emergent, dominant, and residual values that were identified (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). The distinction between emergent, dominant, and residual, values is critical to understanding how the club operated because they exist within different hierarchies, sub-cultures, and periods, thus creating tension amongst staff about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Two points need to be made regarding the transitions between the three periods. Firstly, the transitions did not occur at precise moments in time, but lasted for some time to allow social validation and cognitive transformation to take place. Secondly, a catalyst for each transition was a change of Fremantle's senior coach, reflecting a shift in the values of the leadership team. A summary of the features of each period and their respective emergent, dominant, and residual cultural values is presented at Table 6.1.

6.2.1. Period 1 (1994 to 1998) – A Self-absorbed Club

Period 1 began with the founding of the club in 1994 and concluded with the demise of its first senior coach in 1998. As a new organization the club initially reflected the values and beliefs of its founders, leaders and staff, without any existing organizational values to modify. The Chairman, CEO and senior coach formed the nucleus of the founding leadership that determined the internal environment from which the club's culture and identity emerged.

FFC's first cultural period was represented by strong inward-looking values. Whilst these values rewarded talent that emerged from within the club, problems developed because of a failure to accommodate the AFL's regulatory structure and systems. These inward-looking values became so dominant that they resulted in a "*Self-absorbed*" culture. This self-absorption was manifested in two core values held by the club. First, the club had a concern with *fiscal responsibility* and second, it had a strong desire to be *self-reliant* which, became the club's core ideology of the period.

6.2.1.1. Fiscal Responsibility

The club's value of fiscal responsibility was evident through its very strong focus on financial management derived from the CEO, the WAFC, and the AFL. Both governing

organizations expected FFC to generate profits immediately. This was an onerous demand since the football community did not expect Fremantle to win many games, and it was recognised that poor playing results would result in a lower club income and less profitability:

If you don't win games eventually people don't come (E06, 2004).

Yet, the WAFC expected the club to trade profitably and provide dividends, partly because of their experience in the early days of the West Coast Eagles. FFC's CEO had been involved with the rescue of the Eagles, and recognised the need for FFC to perform well financially. Whilst financial viability was a meritorious goal that served FFC well, it became dominant at the expense of other values. The cognitive transformation process saw the staff endorse financial viability as their sole focus and few organizational resources were available for an analysis of strategies, structure, policies and procedures. Despite the need for financial stability, the club still needed to establish an organizational structure with appropriate governance processes. Without a vision or a plan around which to build targeted strategies, FFC was destined to struggle. Moreover, the focus on finances came at the expense of weak relationships with the local community. An example was the poor management of sponsorship opportunities for local companies who sensed that once their money was received, there was little follow up from the club to include them in other functions and activities. The club's player management strategies were also ineffective because of an indifference to the draft and its role as the source of future players. This represented a serious misunderstanding of what was needed to compete in the heavily regulated AFL environment.

6.2.1.2. Self-Reliance

FFC's emphasis on self-reliance was evident from its “*go it alone attitude*” when establishing the club; a dependency on local talent; and its confrontations with the WAFC and the AFL, for what the club believed was unfair treatment when it was established. This resulted in “*narcissistic*” tendencies that Hatch and Schulz (2002) warned of in organizations that examined internal processes, allowing them to prevail over external engagement.

The club's self-reliance was reflected in its focus on internal administrative issues. Typically, the founders established the club on a firm financial footing, whilst rejecting

offers of expertise from external bodies that included the Eagles, with their experiences of similar processes. When assistance was offered, it was regarded with suspicion as a patronising overture. The club ignored the traditions of the competition; ignored the competition's other members; did not seek advice on the way other new clubs had organized their operations; failed to engage with the local community; and importantly, failed to engage with the competition managers and regulators.

Characteristically, FFC regularly compared itself with other new clubs, particularly the West Coast Eagles, and what it believed to be a poor agreement it has with the AFL and WAFC for preferential draft selections, which fuelled its willingness to question the league's regulations and processes. The constant conflict with the league's governance bodies represented a serious misunderstanding of what was needed for the club to perform in the heavily regulated environment. A common refrain within the club was "*us and them*" and a perception that it was being treated as the "*runt of the litter*" of AFL clubs, with regard to the league's regulators (E06, 2004). The club, and particularly the senior coach, positioned FFC as a defender of WA football which they believed had its distinctive characteristics and an identity which would be lost to the greater dominant culture of the AFL. Consequently, FFC also believed it was disadvantaged by the Melbourne centric administration of the AFL. It was easily understood and accepted by its supporters and stakeholders since it mirrored the parochial culture of Western Australian society.

FFC's inward-looking self-reliance also affected the identity it was creating, which recognised the club's history and traditions, manifested through its artifacts which were typical of football clubs but in a different form to most. The club's mascot was human, unlike all other clubs; their guernsey, displayed an unusual symbol of an anchor; the guernsey contained four colours, an unusually high number for a sporting uniform, that included purple and green which again, for sporting uniforms were not commonly used colours; and their initial playing style adopted principles from other sports. These features symbolised a club firmly positioned in its local traditions with an unconventional football style. While the club's self-reliance developed a strong identity based on nautical connotations, its inward looking management style conspired to undermine its performance by neglecting core planning and strategic issues.

6.2.1.3. Impact of the Dual Values

By the end of FFC's fourth season in 1998, the focus on fiscal responsibility and self-reliance, to the detriment of organizational development and external engagement, meant that on and off-field performances were below the expectations of the club, the AFL and the WAFC. In maintaining its focus on finance and self-reliance, the club became an isolated, closed, and defensive organization. It was self-absorbed with limited interaction with its stakeholders. For example, despite having always trained at a public venue, the club did not encourage supporter or sponsor attendance at training. Moreover, none of the club's major sponsors were from Fremantle and lacked a distinctive Fremantle connection. The club's on-field results were also mixed. The club was one win away from the finals in 1997 but numerous injuries and a poor away record thwarted them in the final game of the season. Off the field the club was enjoying good membership from supporters but the early promising financial results were starting to diminish.

In addition, FFC had recruited branding consultants who helped the club build a strong identity with images that differentiated the club from its competition. Its self-absorbed culture contributed to the strength of this identity, but the identity lacked external engagement.

The emergent values of this period of self-reliance and fiscal responsibility became the dominant values and whilst they helped bond the off-field staff, they deflected attention from the need to work within the AFL's regulatory framework. On and off-field the staff developed a very strong camaraderie built on values of mateship and teamwork reinforced by introverted values of the club administration. However, long-term, the strategy of under-valuing regulatory processes, such as the draft, negatively impacted its player list and the club's ability to compete effectively in a competition that regulated how players could be recruited. In the process, the club became unreceptive, defensive and closed to outsiders, and contributions from external sources that might have helped the club were ignored.

6.2.1.4. Period 1 Summary

This period was characterised by the club's self-absorption and inward-looking approach, manifested through the dual emergent and ultimately dominant, values of fiscal responsibility and self-reliance. One aspect where it overcame this was in

attempting to be different from its local rival, the Eagles. However, being different to the Eagles and clashes with authorities were the only concessions it made to its operational environment. The focus on the Eagles meant FFC failed to attend to the core components of establishing its own organization by means of a comprehensive strategy with supporting organizational structures and processes. Surprisingly, the club lacked a vision and a formal or documented strategic plan.

However, a positive feature of FFC's self-absorption was its efforts to be innovative, that saw the club adopt unusual club colours, a human symbol, and adopt the nautical theme. As a result of its innovative approach the club received the 2002 National AbaF Bytecraft Innovation Award for its Anzac Day pre-game ceremonies. Additionally, this period was represented by the appointment of a senior coach with innovative ideas and an innovative style of play that was a feature of its early years.

At the same time, this period was critical to the development of FFC's identity despite the club's poor on-field performance. Many of the artifacts created remain a part of the club today and have been embraced by its supporters. Whilst its parochial approach to the AFL was problematic, the club worked hard to establish itself, although it did not quite manage to align its culture with its identity.

In 1998 two important factors forced the club to change direction and reassess its core ideology. Firstly, the club's inaugural chairman resigned and secondly, the senior coach was sacked as playing results failed to match FFC's expectations. The club prevaricated in 1997 when the coach's contract was due for renewal and ultimately extended it by one year. The on-field performance in 1998 made the coach's demise inevitable and the position had been subject to intense speculation all year. These factors heralded significant changes to the club's culture and identity.

6.2.2. Period 2 (1999 to 2001) - A Fractured Club

FFC's second cultural period emerged through the off-season of 1998/99 and continued until the demise of the club's second senior coach in 2001. The significant leadership change that drove the transition was the appointment of a new chairman brought into work with the continuing CEO. However, instead of providing a clear sense of purpose and direction for the club, it produced chronic tension and friction. This was the most turbulent era in the club's history when the club should have been consolidating its early promise, but instead it was afflicted by internal conflict at different levels within the

organization. The club lacked any strong ideology and operated with a weak culture that became both structurally and behaviourally “*Fractured*”.

As a consequence, a cultural vacuum emerged where senior staff at board and management level lacked the conviction to be proactive and to execute changes they knew were required. The board and senior executive lacked the will to adjust off-field activities despite trends reflecting the internal conflict and disunity through weaker financial performances. Instead, they relied on strong on-field performances to distract attention from the off-field management of the club.

This lack of unity and indecision were exemplified in one senior board member who was a popular person with the staff, but was not popular at the executive level, where he was considered a weak leader. Added to this was a senior executive who was resentful of the board. This antipathy created a lack of trust and conflict between the board and the club executive as well as the club executive and members of staff. Ultimately, the distrust and conflict were translated to the core business of the organization, the football department, where the coach ultimately became accountable for the club’s poor performance. In the nautical terms of FFC’s identity, it “*battened down the hatches*” to ride out a stormy period in the organization’s history, achieving its worst performances on and off the field. In 2001, the club won only 2 from 22 games and made a loss in excess of two and a half million dollars. The staff fulfilled their duties despite a disjointed leadership. The board did not agree with the executive; the executive did not agree with the football department or the senior coach; and no-one assumed the leadership to repair the fractures. The fractured culture in this period of FFC’s history was dominated by conflict and insecurity that emanated from a lack of vision or core ideology. It was characterised by values of *Individualism* and *Nihilism*.

6.2.2.1. Individualism

Without any vision or plan the club lacked purpose and direction which meant this was a period during which it made little progress. The staff had no clear guidelines or direction and became insecure, forced into a position of justifying what they were doing through acceptable individual performances and relying on their own criteria for their assessment. Staff functioned within departmental silos relying upon personal and residual values without executive support. Hence, the staff failed to operate as a unified organization and paid less attention to customers, supporters, sponsors and other stakeholders’ satisfaction.

It was hard to get the executive to...concentrate on what they really ought to do and that's plan strategically for the longer term. We had several attempts at it but there was, I don't know, it didn't happen and I found there was a reluctance at executive level to really embrace it seriously...(E07, 2004).

Consequently, the club lost any external or constructive focus it had that would help gain the smallest advantage to attain an edge in the regulated environment. It was not functioning properly and displayed uncertainty, hesitancy, and a lack of direction in its decision making.

6.2.2.2. Nihilism

With senior executives failing to take any initiative, the club lacked direction, purpose and unity and staff lacked the will to address the club's growing dysfunction as it shifted from self-absorption to inaction, and ultimately paralysis. In addition, the board was split on how to deal with the dismissal of the senior coach and was operating in factions against each other. Added to this, it was divided over who it should appoint to the position of CEO. The executive distrusted each other, and as a result, serious conflict erupted between senior members of staff. There was conflict among the new executive bringing in their own ambiguous values to an existing culture; conflict between two members of the executive; conflict between the executive and the board; conflict between the executive and the football department; and conflict between factions on the board.

This period covered Damian Drum's tenure as senior coach and his dismissal highlighted the conflict between members of the club executive, which represented the nadir of Fremantle's short existence. E07 observed that the camaraderie developed in FFC in its early days was now a serious obstacle to change. He was encountering the effects of residual values from the club's early days when the staff were used to working together in routine and internally focussed ways. The problem for the staff was that the new executive questioned their underlying assumptions without offering a clear substitute. They consequently resorted to the values and practices they knew and trusted but which were not necessarily effective.

6.2.2.3. Period 2 Summary

With the FFC organization operating in organizational silos staff engaged in acts of self preservation without any dominant values to drive them. Hence, cognitive transformation and social validation were not occurring as part of the transition because no new values were emerging. As a result, the organization was performing badly in all of its own key performance indicators (KPIs); losing games; losing money; losing members; and falling attendances. The administration stagnated in a dysfunctional state and the KPIs supported the view held by the club's owners (the WAFC) that change was required. While previously the club had been obsessive about its need to perform financially, it had at least provided the basis for decision making. However, subsequent to the internal quarrelling over the club's direction, staff reverted to residual values of confrontation with the WAFC and AFL, apportioning blame to the regulators for its problems.

The club's identity and image suffered during this period with references to it usually in a negative context. The cultural vacuum that developed, and the dismissal of Drum, brought about the transition of the club into its third period of culture and identity. In 2001 the club meandered with a CEO in limbo; an introverted and disillusioned coach; the worst ever on-field results; the worst ever off-field results; and the club's identity became confused as it operated without direction or leadership. It was no surprise when the chairman, CEO and senior coach had all departed by the end of the season.

6.2.3. Period 3 (2001 to 2004) - An Externally Engaged Club

The club faced monumental problems in 2000 – 2001 and it resulted in the appointment of a new CEO. After settling into his new position, he launched the club on its footballing “journey”, signalling the transition into the third and current cultural period.

Drum had been sacked because of poor results, in very public circumstances. There had been internal disagreement about how to terminate the coach's services and the decision was leaked to the media. Drum was made aware of the decision to dismiss him by representatives from the local television stations on his way into a meeting with the AFL. A temporary senior coach was appointed for the remainder of the season and one of the new CEO's principal duties was to establish a process by which to appoint a new senior coach.

This latest transition also signalled by the departures of key personnel which saw the newly installed CEO work with a new chairman to bring about change in other areas of the club leadership group. Positions that changed hands in late 2001 and early 2002 included the CEO and chairman (who was renamed the “President”), five of the seven board members, the senior coach, the football manager, the business manager, the marketing and sponsorship manager and the communications and media manager.

The new chief executive came from Melbourne with a mandate for change and a football club pedigree, having been a CEO at two other Melbourne football clubs. The appointment saw an immediate shift in the way that FFC did things, and the club’s culture became **“Externally engaged”** as it adopted organizational values that centred on *adaptability, strategy, and accountability* to repair and rebuild its fractured culture, identity and ideology.

6.2.3.1. Adaptable

A significant feature of the club’s new administration was that it strived to assimilate its business processes to suit the competition’s regulated environment and thereby, become more conventional as a football club in the way it did things as it embraced a value of adaptability. The club no longer publicly confronted the league’s regulators or club owners over disagreements, and instead raised its concerns within forums such as regular inter-club meetings held by the AFL for such issues. This more collaborative strategy was adopted to remove the confrontation that remained from the original administration. The club now believed it was necessary for its survival and success to adapt and be accepted and integrated into the greater football community. For example, the organization was re-structured enabling two of its directors to be elected by the membership and the football department was integrated into the club’s administrative functions. Symbolically, the club chairman became the club President similar to other AFL clubs. The collaborative approach was clearly illustrated in FFC’s 2001 strategic plan, which noted:

“Fremantle will respect relevant governance issues, including Corporations Law and the Player Rules of the AFL.” (Fremantle Football Club, 2001:22)

The club’s emerging value of adaptability allowed it to integrate with the AFL community, which was accelerated by its new leaders. The CEO, football manager and senior coach all came with football backgrounds based in Victoria that demonstrated

lengthy involvement and experience in the running and administration of AFL clubs. They had strong internal industry contacts and understood how the football organizational system operated, and how to be effective within it. FFC's emergent adaptability was used by the new leadership group to supplant the parochial self-reliant values of FFC's earlier years. The principal difference was to place greater value in the strategic planning process.

6.2.3.2. Strategic

For Fremantle the “journey” meant developing the club with a vision based on strategic values. The new administration resolved to repair the fractured culture and it was intent on establishing a plan to resurrect the club into an effective and united organization realising that the club had reached its nadir. A strategic plan was developed that detailed what had to be done and how, with the key phrase “*Every Quarter of Every Match*” to provide a football analogy that indicated that consistent and persistent effort was required by everyone. Underpinning the plan was the theme, “*It's not how you go down, it's how you get up*” using video captures of a Fremantle player being knocked-out during play, but getting up to kick a goal. The strategic planning approach and its constant indoctrination saw the emergence of unity and a sense of purpose and direction in the staff. Staff who did not embrace the new approach were encouraged to leave, whilst those that remained or were recruited worked towards the intent of the plan. Hence, the resistant residual values of staff were minimised as FFC developed a staff to fit the new culture and identity of the organization. The approach has seen vastly improved performances on and off-field that strongly indicate the need for football clubs to immerse themselves as deeply as possible into their particular sport’s culture, or way of doing things.

The strategic plan was a crucial component of the club’s new ideology primarily because there had not been any coherent, articulated planning done in either of the previous periods. For the first time in its history FFC had an executive that provided a clear vision of where the club wanted to be, when and what it wanted to achieve. As Collins and Porras (1998) indicated, visionary companies have clear ideas about, and very strong beliefs in, what they want to achieve; they base their organizational aims upon their beliefs; they strive to indoctrinate their staff with those aims; the personnel develop a close and united bond and belief in achieving those aims; and they develop a sense of elitism.

FFC's strategy development was undertaken by a small team headed by the CEO who worked on restructuring the club and recruiting personnel they believed were required to implement the new structure and plans. The process immediately sent a message to stakeholders, particularly the staff, what the plans were; their timeline; and how they would be fulfilled. To reinforce what they wanted to achieve the plans were enunciated and repeated at every opportunity such as team meetings, staff meetings and departmental briefings. One staff member when asked if he had been made aware of any planning processes, said they had been repeated to him so often that it was like "*Groundhog Day*". The indoctrination of the club's values in this way ensured that the plan was disseminated. The strategic plan was also available publicly demonstrating a new constructive approach with a value on accountability emerging to replace the defensiveness of the previous two periods.

6.2.3.3. Accountable

The club's accessibility and accountability were evidenced by the availability of club personnel to the community for training and special events in the city of Fremantle. This contrasted with the previous administrations' defensive and self-absorbed cultures that saw the club become closed, defensive and isolated. Likewise, the football coach encouraged accountability and honesty. The coach indicated that the journey upon which the club has embarked would be a long one and he made no guarantees, or promises, of premierships. His primary approach was to develop a strategic direction for the football department against which it could be measured and held accountable:

*Either it is in a position whereby it has the capacity to win the Premiership,
or it is building to win a Premiership.* (Fremantle Football Club, 2001:32)

The difference between starting to build the capacity and having the capacity represented the "*journey*" which the coach constantly repeated, would take six to eight years to complete.

FFC's open, transparent and externally engaged culture of this period improved the club's image across the competition. Commentators judging from afar now accepted the club more readily because it had a strategic direction and was more accommodating and responsive in its dealings with the football governing bodies (M04, 2003; M05, 2003; M06, 2003). However, they also look to FFC's past to explain its present and

when things do not go according to the plans, FFC has to address criticisms that judge the club in terms of its past.

6.2.3.4. Period 3 Summary

The most recent period in FFC's evolving culture and identity was the most positive and constructive period that saw outstanding organizational performance as measured by the club's KPIs. However, it is not clear yet how well accepted the change is by some stakeholders. Tensions are again emerging between the values that the club now holds, of adaptability, strategy and accountability, with the residual self-reliant and confrontational values. Whilst there is a firmly held core ideology amongst internal stakeholders, this has yet to be fully transmitted and accepted externally. On-field the club has remained competitive with improvements but still failed to win more games than it lost, except for 2003 when it made the finals for the first time. Hence the fans are keen for success but no longer have the external factors such as the AFL and WAFC to blame. The focus is clearly on the FFC administration as the means by which the club succeeds or fails.

Whilst the administration maintains its reconciliation with the league's regulatory bodies, it is also trying to retain values described as "*quirky*" which endeared the club to its stakeholders, and to be innovative but not for the sake of being different (E01, 2004). Innovation is now evaluated in terms of what it contributes to the strategic direction and competitive edge for the club, rather than just how it makes the club different from other clubs. Fremantle has built for itself, since 1994, a clearly defined identity which stakeholders can differentiate from other AFL clubs. The identity, which has a strong nautical theme, situating the club within its port location and traditions, is reinforced in terms of a professional and organized football club, based on strategies and a clear direction with a renewed core ideology.

FFC is now more responsive to its regulated environment and works with, rather than against, the league's governing bodies. For example, it now actively participates in the end of season draft and trade periods as a means of identifying and recruiting quality players to the club. It now expects achievement at the individual and the group level rather than having individuals focussed on their personal outcomes to the detriment, or disregard, of the group. Instead of operating in silos, the processes of social validation and cognitive transformation have been embraced again as staff work and collaborate, not only because they have to but also because that is "*the way things are done*". For

example, departments like membership and sponsorship are now merged under one manager and work together to address supporter and sponsor needs.

The professional, organized and cooperative image that FFC now holds reflects its visionary identity based around adaptable, strategic and accountable values of an emergent and externally engaged culture. The club still regards itself as being innovative in the way it goes about its business although this is not the strong characteristic, it once was.

In summary, FFC has undertaken a traumatic cultural journey over its 10-year existence. The journey has involved significant changes to not only its values, identity and image, but also its leadership and drivers of change, strategic direction, organizational behaviours and coaching philosophies. These features, and the ways they interacted to change the way FFC “Did business” are discussed in the following section.

6.3. FFC’S CULTURAL JOURNEY

It is clear from FFC’s most recent experiences that an externally engaged and visionary culture that embraces its environment is appropriate within a heavily regulated environment like the AFL. FFC has sought to reinforce and develop the approach further to achieve the highest level of performance in the very competitive and heavily regulated AFL environment. This study of the FFC demonstrates that strong and appropriate cultures and identities were developed through visionary values that balanced the need for internal accountability and efficiency against the strategic desire for external engagement.

FFC adopted an “externally engaged” and visionary culture in 2001 which has grown and strengthened with values of adaptability, strategy, and accountability to their environment. As a result the club has become a major contributor to the competition. During its early development the club endured a period of dysfunction and disunity and the establishment of an identity that was not commensurate with its culture. Table 6.1 summarises how FFC’s culture and identity shifted between 1994 and 2004, and how it has presented itself to its stakeholders and the football community in general. It divides FFC’s evolving culture and identity into three distinct periods, with each period distinguishing the important features and practices as they have emerged. Table 6.1 also confirms that the culture is a result of the leaders of the time, and the way they shaped the club’s values, structures and practices. It presents each distinctive period

identified in FFC's history, and summarises those periods against key factors that contribute to its culture and identity. Those factors are discussed below.

6.3.1. Cultural Drivers

Drivers help establish, as well as drive a particular culture and identity. However, it is important to assess if the drivers are those that the literature anticipated. In this instance the leaders and executives were identified as key drivers. Table 6.1 identifies the individuals that were driving FFC's culture and identity through each period. The Chairman, CEO and Coach were the principal cultural drivers during each period and provided the first indicators to distinguish each period of FFC's culture and identity. However, their influence fluctuated and their sequence in Table 6.1 indicates the scale and scope of their influence.

6.3.2. Cultural Typology

The cultural typology was adopted to reflect the values of the cultural drivers and to contextualise FFC's culture and identity. With three distinct periods emerging, there was a significant change in the club's cultural typology across them that reflected the cultural drivers and the changing leadership style. The club began as a self consumed and self-absorbed culture before fracturing and finally becoming externally engaged.

6.3.3. Residual Cultural Values

Residual values were those retained by staff from either a previous period in FFC's history or from their previous employer (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). The three distinctive cultural periods established in this research were reinforced by the lack of residual values carried over from each period to the next. Initially, FFC embraced the residual bureaucratic values that its founders brought with them. In turn, when they left, values of fiscal responsibility and self-reliance remained as part of FFC's culture and identity. The fiscal and individualistic values have remained a focus into the current period.

6.3.4. Emergent Cultural Values

The key factors in Table 6.1 were the values the resulted from the factors described thus far. Given particular cultural drivers, certain values emerged that influenced FFC's performance and the way they conducted their business. These are the same as the emergent values in William's model (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). The initial

emergent values were derived from the new club's leaders and how they believed the club should be managed (Schein, 1992). The middle period became a time of little change or impetus for emerging values before the latest period when strategy, adaptability and accountability became important emerging values.

6.3.5. Dominant Cultural Values (Core Ideology)

Similarly, in each period, some values became the dominant values of that period (Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). Dominant values may have emerged within the same period or they may become dominant in a previous period and retained a dominant position. They were the values that dictated how FFC conducted itself during each period. FFC's dominant values evolved from initially focussing on fiscal responsibility and self-reliance, into values of individualism and nihilism before emerging as strategic, adaptable and accountable values. No dominant values were carried through from the second to third periods, one of the primary indicators that reinforced three distinctive periods of leadership, culture and identity that this research established.

6.3.6. Identity and Image

Table 6.1 provides separate typologies for the club's identity and image during each period. However, they are linked here because identity is attributed to an organization from expressions and manifestation of its culture through its leadership, values and behaviours, and is reflected in the club's image (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Image represents the way in which FFC is perceived by others and ideally its identity should be congruent with its image. Initially FFC established a strong identity tied to its maritime traditions that marked it as different and distinctive to other AFL clubs but with a dissonant image as a "go it alone" or isolationist club. During the second period, FFC drew its identity as a youthful club but still with a dissonant image as an under-achieving organization for its period of existence. More recently FFC's identity of being a visionary and organized club is congruent with its image as a professionally managed and well organized club, operating with regard for its heavily regulated environment.

6.3.7. Leadership Style

Both the literature and the research into FFC established that leaders, executives and senior managers drive the culture, values and behaviours of organizational members because their values are instilled as the core ideology of the organization (Clegg, Kornberger, & Pitsis, 2005; Mintzberg & Quinn, 1998). Hence, it was critical to

examine FFC's cultural periods in the context of its leadership styles. The initial leadership style was bureaucratic before lacking coherency during the middle period and then becoming more inclusive and consultative in the final period. The different leadership styles served to reinforce the initial distinction of three cultural periods.

6.3.8. Key Organizational Issues

Over the ten year period, key organizational issues were identified in each period that the club had to address with regard to its culture and identity. The initial issue was to establish the club as a viable enterprise after a delayed start. The second period saw internal conflict became the significant issue with the club divided internally to the detriment of its business affairs. Finally, the club's key issue has been to re-establish FFC as a professional, well-managed football club engaged with its external, heavily regulated environment.

6.3.9. Organizational Strategy

The strategy was highlighted as a key element because it was identified as a critical element to the implementation of organizational structures, processes and values to address organizational issues (Corley, 2004; Porter, 1980). Therefore it has a significant influence on whether the leadership style, cultural typology and strategy were dissonant or congruent. Since organizational design and structure are derived from the club's strategy, which in turn is driven by the club's organizational culture and identity, the strategy has also changed from being short-term and financially orientated to one that considers the club holistically and long-term with a focus on its regulated environment.

6.3.10. Behavioural Characteristics

The different values that staff adopted, governed the way they conducted themselves and did business on behalf of FFC and so they would behave in a particular way. It was useful to describe some of those behavioural characteristics to see how staff behaved given a particular culture, identity and set of values as Table 6.1 indicates. The behaviour of staff reflected the values of the time, having gone from a defensive style in the first, more insular period, through conflict as internal differences emerged, to a more collaborative style as the club seeks to implement long-term plans with an emphasis on external engagement.

6.3.11. Coaching Style & Influence

The remaining factors in the periodisation summary in Table 6.1 relate to the role and influence that the coach had within each identified period. Football was the core business and the coaches were described in the analysis as having particular styles and influences during their tenures which are used here to demonstrate how they aligned with organizational culture and identity of the same period. Initially, the coaching helped define the club with a pioneer as coach of a pioneering club. With Neesham in particular, the influence was for an innovative and attacking style of play reliant upon players running a lot and maintaining possession of the ball. The style reinforced FFC's organizational culture of innovation, self-reliance and even confrontation which in turn complemented FFC's distinctive maritime identity. In the second period the basic agriculturist style of the coach also matched the club's culture and values, which in this case centred upon a back-to-basics conservatism. On the other hand, Drum's no-frills style of football had a clear focus, which the organization did not. The current style reflects the professional nature of the club's management which nurtured a young group of players in a complex environment. The dominant club values of adaptability, accountability and strategy underpinned the club's on-field management.

6.3.12. Football Analogy

In the context of considering culture and identity in an elite football club, it is appropriate that an analogy with football should be drawn between the culture and identity established in each period. In the first period the analogy is "*FFC as a rookie*". That is, it was full of enthusiasm and willingness to do well but was naïve in its approach. As the club progressed the analogy of "*overusing the ball*" is appropriate. That is, the club tried hard without achieving much. The current period is represented by "*The Journey*" a common phrase in football parlance referring to the time it takes for clubs to develop an organization and playing list capable of winning a premiership in the heavily regulated AFL environment. It is a phrase commonly used by Chris Connolly, the current coach.

The sum of these factors of FFC's culture and identity provides a multi-dimensional descriptor of the club's culture, identity and image during each period. Table 6.1 illustrates the shifts that have occurred in the club's culture and identity during the three distinctive cultural periods.

Period	Period 1 (1994 – 1998)	Period 2 (1999 – 2001)	Period 3 (2001 – 2004)
Cultural Drivers	CEO and Coach.	CEO.	CEO, Coach & President.
Cultural Typology	Self-absorbed	Fractured	Externally Engaged
Residual Cultural Values	Bureaucratic	Fiscally Responsible, Self-reliant.	Individualism, Nihilism.
Emergent Cultural Values	Fiscally Responsible, Self-reliant, Innovative.	Individualism, Nihilism	Adaptability, Strategic, Accountability.
Dominant Cultural Values (Core Ideology)	Fiscally Responsible, Innovative.	Individualism, Nihilism	Strategic, Fiscally Responsible, Adaptability, Accountability.
Identity (How the club sees itself)	Port City/Fremantle Heritage, Independent, Community Centred.	Port City/Fremantle Heritage, Maturing, Resilient, Unified.	Port City/Fremantle Heritage, Visionary, Organized.
Images (How others see the club)	Innovative but Isolationist.	Under Achievers, Dysfunctional, Soft.	Professional, Organized, Cooperative.
Leadership Style	Bureaucratic	Laissez-Faire	Collaborative
Key Organizational Issues	Delayed Start, Establishing the Club.	Internal conflict, Poorly Performing on & off-field.	Rebuild & Re-establish, Reverse performance trends.
Organizational Strategy	Short-term, Financially orientated, undefined.	Short-term, Football orientated, undefined.	Long-term, Organizationally orientated, Legitimization.
Behavioural Characteristics	Defensive, Confrontational, Parochial.	Conflict, Self-serving, Survival.	Planning, Stakeholder Engagement,
Coach Typology and Influence	The Pioneer (Chip and Draw)	The Agriculturalist (Basic and direct.)	The Synthesiser (Inclusive and Nurturing)
Football Analogy	A Rookie	Overusing the Ball	The Journey

Table 6.1 – FFC’s Competing Cultural Values and Identity Characteristics 1994 – 2004

The similarities between the club’s off-field and on-field behaviour suggests that the club’s culture and identity have been integrated into its overall operations thereby confirming the close relationship between an organization’s values and beliefs and its structures, strategies and behaviours. Table 6.1 confirms that FFC has undergone significant transformation over its 10-year existence as new leaders and management teams reconstructed the club’s culture and identity, using them to create different structures, strategies and behaviours.

However, this transformation of the club’s culture and identity begs the question as to whether it has improved club performance. The next section examines the results of the club’s KPIs for its entire history to see if any association can be drawn between them and the club’s changing culture and identity. It does this by first, reviewing key

changes to the factors that comprise the club's culture, identity and management over its entire history from 1994 – 2004, and secondly, by measuring the club's performance across the dimensions of the club's KPIs:

1. Profit-loss ratio;
2. Win-loss ratio;
3. Annual Membership; and,
4. Average Attendances (Home, Away and in aggregate).

6.4. FREMANTLE'S ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE 1994 - 2004

An underlying assumption of this thesis is that FFC's culture and identity influenced its performance. If that is so, it maybe anticipated that an association maybe evident between the strength and appropriateness of culture and identity and the club's KPIs.

The previous section mapped and periodised FFC's culture and identity across three distinct periods since its inception. It found that FFC's culture and identity impacted on its values and behaviour. This immediately begs the question as to its impact on its organizational performance. This section addresses that question by presenting the KPIs for FFC across the same timeframe, distinguishing each period to illustrate the variances in performance between periods. Descriptive statistics have been used to indicate graphically the performance of FFC over its entire history in support of the assertion that between 2001 and 2004, the club developed a more appropriate, as well as stronger, culture and identity that saw the club improve its performance both on and off the field.

The KPIs are provided in

Table 6.2 and the accompanying six charts which provide statistical measures of on and off-field performance. The charts show annual results overlaid with the three distinct cultural periods described earlier. While the results and interpretations are not a detailed statistical analysis of the club's performance, they support the contention that FFC's performance was linked to the shifts that took place in the club's culture and identity.

During the first period when FFC's focus was placed disproportionately on its fiscal position, it was to the detriment of other organizational areas. Although this helped the club establish a strong identity and good early performances, the early success through confrontation and self-reliance were not sustainable in the highly regulated AFL environment. The second period represented disastrous results in all areas except for attendance which stabilised. The fan base remained loyal despite the internal failure of the organization although if organizational improvement had been sustained, improvement in memberships and attendances would also have been sustained. The average away attendances showed a significant improvement in 2000 which underpinned the overall average attendance but these results are skewed as a result of playing five of the best supported teams at their home grounds; Richmond, West Coast, Adelaide Collingwood and Essendon. Finally, the current period is represented by positive and strong trends in all areas as the club conforms to the regulations of the

competition. As well as recognized performance measures for AFL clubs, the results are also strong indicators of appropriateness of the emergent and dominant values of the current FFC executive. FFC has significantly improved its performance from the nadir of 2001 with 2003 being a watershed when they won more games than they lost; they returned to profitability; they attained significant increases in membership on top of what had been steady increases with minor fluctuations since their inception; and it also attained significant increases in match day attendances which continued in 2004 and reflected the other improvements.

The KPIs highlight the important development in FFC's performance. Firstly, they reveal changing performances that reflect the shifting values and beliefs of the club's governance and management. Second, they show a discernible improvement in the performance of the club that reflects the appropriateness of the current values and beliefs as they impact. The data are aggregated in Table 6.2 which summarises FFC's KPIs for the ten years from 1995 to 2004 inclusive.

The data comprises:

1. FFC's profit-loss ratio;
2. FFC's match win-loss ratio;
3. FFC's Annual Membership; and,
4. FFC's Average Attendances (Home, Away and in aggregate).

Year	Profit/ Loss	Wins	Losses	Annual Membership	Average Attendance (All Games)	Average Attendance (Home Games)	Average Attendance (Away Games)
1994	Commenced trading as Fremantle Football Club on July 21st 1994						
1995	\$85,253	8	14	18,456	22,775	23,286	22,264
1996	\$1,374,102	7	15	19,622	21,442	22,113	20,773
1997	\$223,820	10	12	19,949	21,481	22,025	20,937
1998	\$161,469	7	15	22,186	24,986	22,780	27,194
1999	-\$153,960	5	17	24,896	24,777	23,869	23,546
2000	-\$681,707	8	14	24,925	24,163	22,405	25,922
2001	-\$2,539,093	2	20	23,898	22,163	21,258	23,069
2002	-\$1,698,000	9	13	23,775	24,008	26,358	21,659
2003	\$711,223	14	8	25,368	29,775	30,680	28,871
2004	\$1,254,000	11	11	32,780	31,717	35,118	27,892

Table 6.2 - Performance Indicators for Fremantle Football Club 1994 – 2004

6.4.1. Financial Performance

Chart 6.1, drawn from

Table 6.2 shows fluctuations in FFC's financial performance in relation to the defined periods. Initially, when the focus was on finance and the club's on-field performance was hesitant, its financial performance was acceptable. It did not suffer the losses as the Eagles had, which the WAFC wished to avoid, and it reflects FFC's emphasis on financial performance. However, from 1998 to 2001 as the club fractured so did its financial performance which reflected poor on and off-field performances, declining attendances and sponsorships as a result. Since 2001, FFC's management regime with a perspective of external engagement and an inclusive approach to its regulated environment had improved the club's financial performance and produced a firm foundation for its subsequent sustainability.

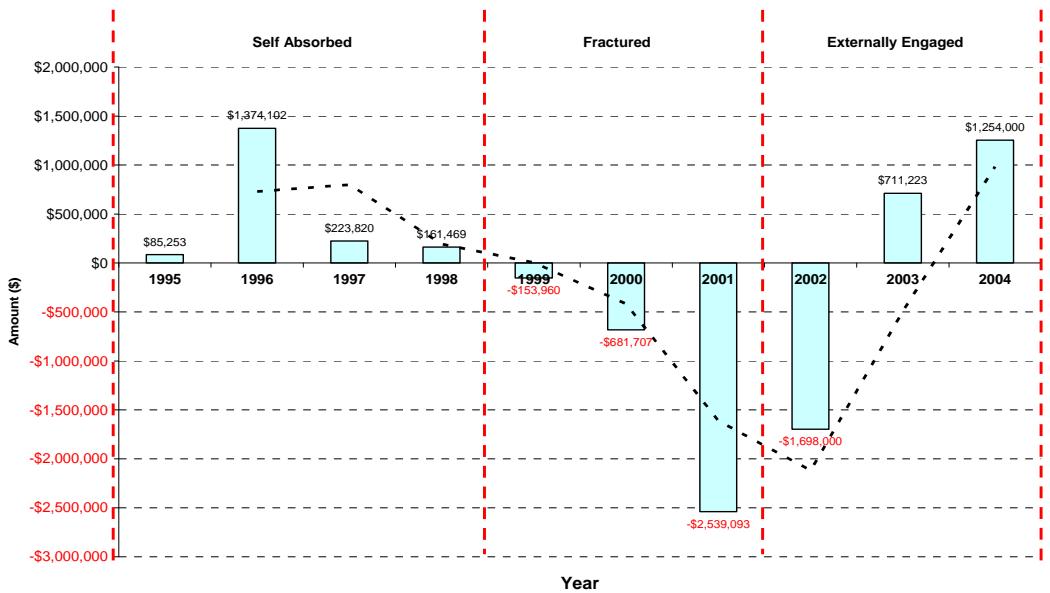


Chart 6.1 - FFC Profit Loss Chart 1995 – 2004

6.4.2. On-field Performance

Chart 6.2 indicates how FFC's on-field performance varied over the ten years, which for the most part replicates its off-field performance. When the club was self-absorbed and internally focussed the club performed reasonably well on the field. As the club fractured the playing performance suffered and the club endured its two worst seasons. During this period the losses increased and wins decreased. Finally, as FFC's a new administration and staff in the football department took up office with a vision and strategy aligned to goals, the on-field performance improved. The win-loss ratio is the most contentious area for the club since organizationally its performance on-field is only one key performance indicator, but for fans and supporters it is the critical one.

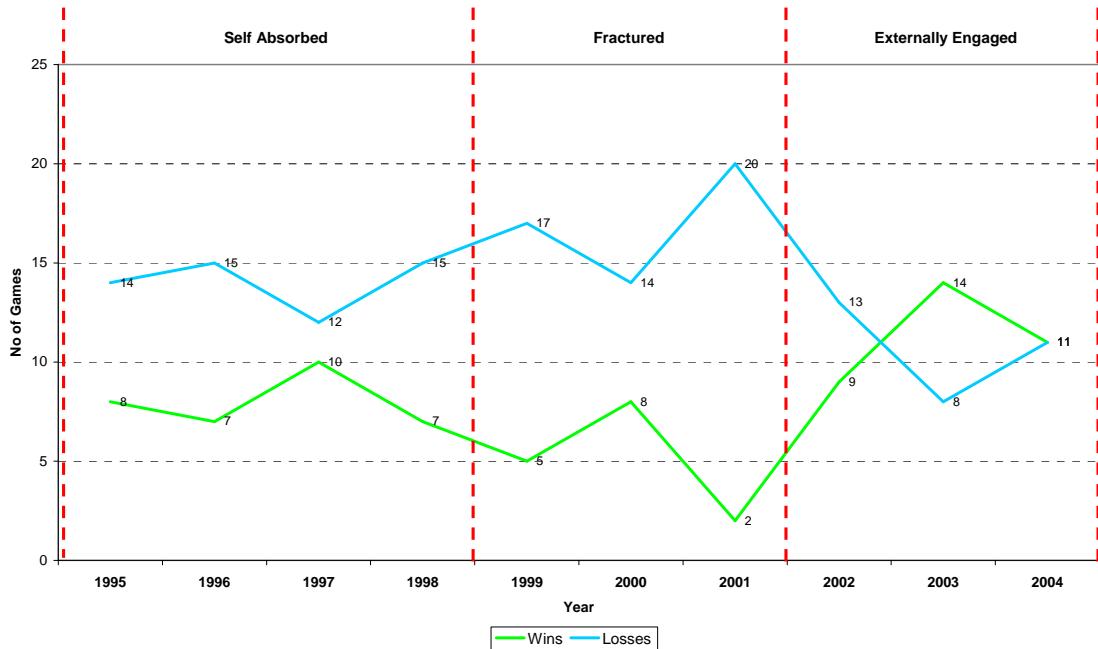


Chart 6.2 - FFC Win Loss Record 1995 – 2004

6.4.3. Membership Performance

Chart 6.3 represents the most ambiguous data of FFC's key performance areas. Even when on-field success eluded the club and it became dysfunctional as an organization, the level of membership was sustained at a reasonable and respectable level. The first period, as might be expected of a new club full of enthusiasm and optimism, saw the club steadily build its membership and it appears that the members were prepared to tolerate early difficulties as the club found its footing in the competition. However, during the second period, the club managed to maintain membership numbers despite very disappointing on-field performances. This can be attributed to firstly, the club's clearly defined identity, and secondly by its members' passion and loyalty, both areas in which it claims differentiation from its local rival. However, what is significant however, is that the membership was declining in 2001 as the new administration took over and it was clearly a critical issue for them to address and make sure that their fresh start reversed that decline. As the new administration imposed its vision, strategy and values, the club's overall performance improved and the level of membership increased, reflecting the new optimism. In 2004 FFC achieved record levels of membership, which put it in the top five of membership levels of all AFL clubs.

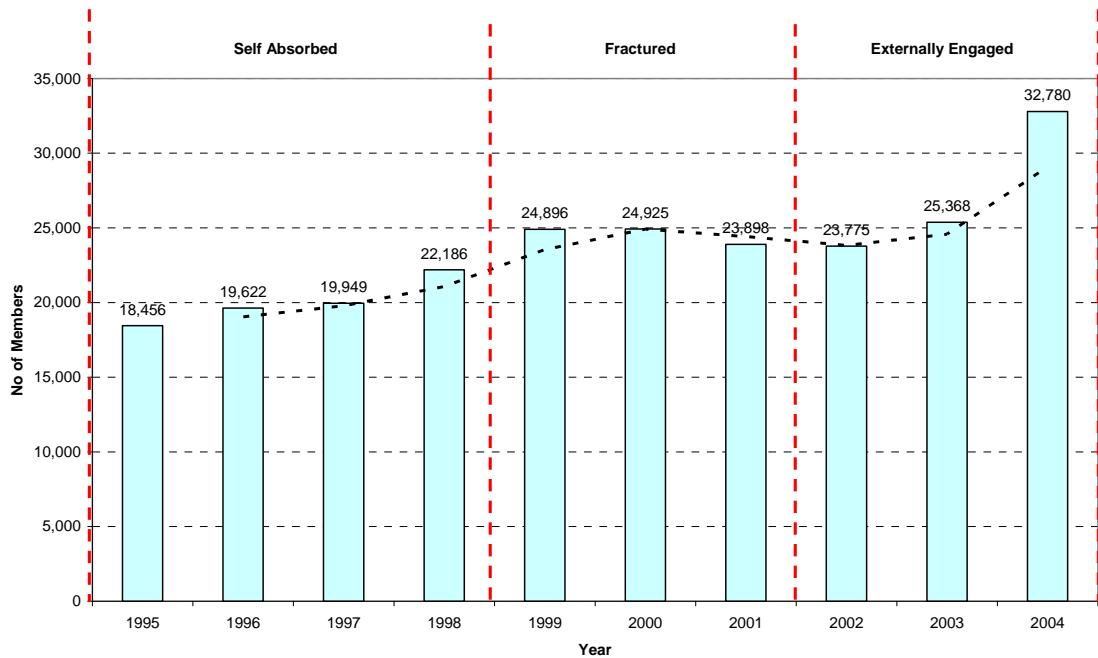


Chart 6.3 - FFC Annual Membership Totals 1995 – 2004

6.4.4. Match Attendances Performance

Attendances at games are the final key performance areas represented in the charts and they have been split into three charts that display FFC average attendances season by season. Chart 6.4 displays attendances for all FFC games,

Chart 6.5, displays attendances for FFC home games and

Chart 6.6 displays attendances for FFC away games. The attendances are unreliable on a season by season basis because particular results can be skewed depending on who FFC plays and where each season. However the trends are representative of the club's performance and the desire for crowds to watch them.

Chart 6.4 showing the combined attendances reflects quite closely the on-field performance. As a new club people were interested to see them, and a novelty factor came into play. In 2000 and 2001 FFC failed to win many games, and the attendances fell away, while in the third period the club was more successful and attracted its best-ever crowds.

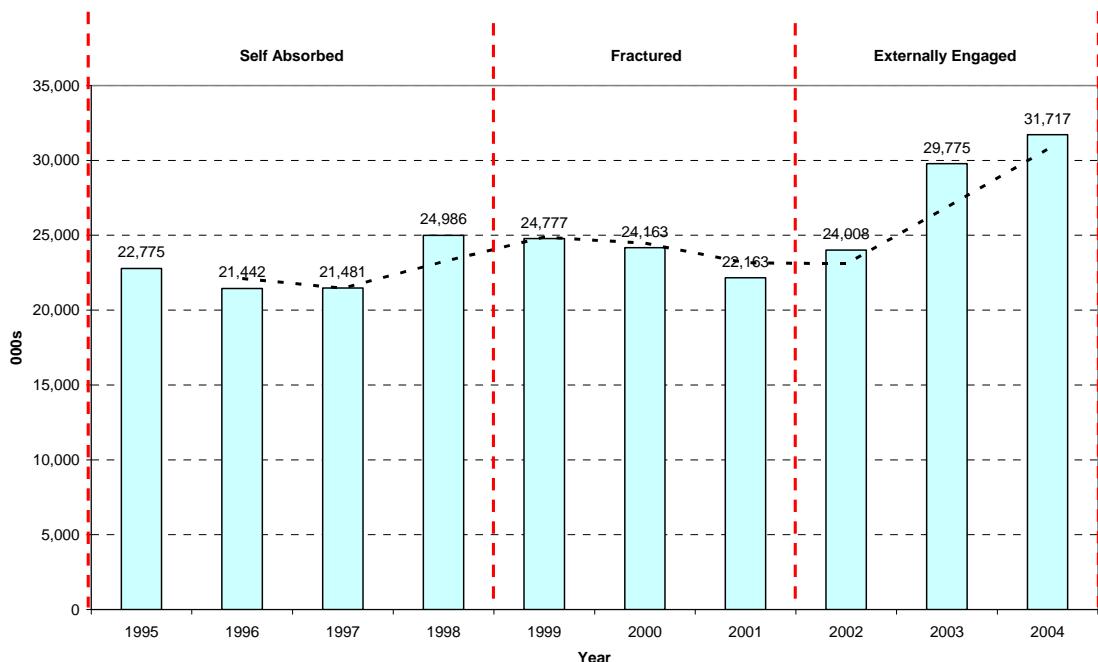


Chart 6.4 - FFC Average Attendances 1995 - 2004 (All Games)

Chart 6.5 represents the most reliable indicators for attendances because it shows the home attendances for a club that is remote from its opponents and the home crowds are predominantly FFC fans. The figures in the first period indicate the novelty value and interest that the new team presented but the figures waned, or significantly, lacked improvement, as the team failed to produce any meaningful on-field success. The second period indicates that the interest waned even further as the club played out its two worst seasons and 2001 saw its worst home average attendance. The figures then show a marked improvement reflecting the improved on and off-field performance for FFC since 2001. More recently in 2003 when it made the finals for the first time saw a record average attendance achieved which was the comfortably surpassed the following year.

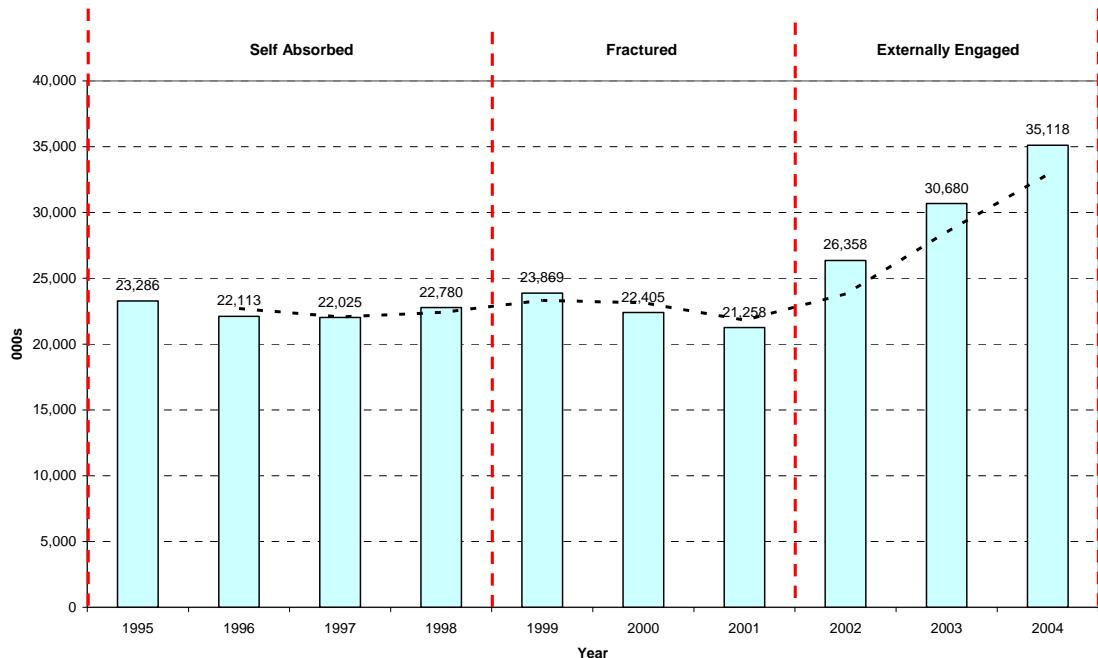


Chart 6.5 - FFC Average Attendances 1995 - 2004 (Home Games)

Chart 6.6 shows the average away attendances for FFC's games and are more difficult to interpret. The reverse of home attendances is true whereby as a new club form the other side of the country, it lacks support at most away venues and the crowds comprise predominantly home fans. The 1998 season for example was its third best average despite no remarkable playing success that year and it compares favourably to far more successful periods in 2003 and 2004. It would appear that 1998 was an unusual season in which FFC played all of the best supported clubs at their grounds in what may have been good years for those other clubs. Because all clubs do not play each other twice every year such skewed results are to be expected. 1998 aside, the average away attendances again reflect the on-field performance of FFC. The first period shows relatively modest but consistent figures culminating in the peak of 1998. The second period between 1999 and 2001 reflects the poor on-field performance and demonstrates FFC's inability to attract fans to games during that period. The third period then reflects the improved performance of FFC, with 2003, FFC's most successful season on-field, attracting the best average for away games since it started. This waned slightly in 2004 but attendances still reflected strong support and an expectation that they would continue their 2003 success.

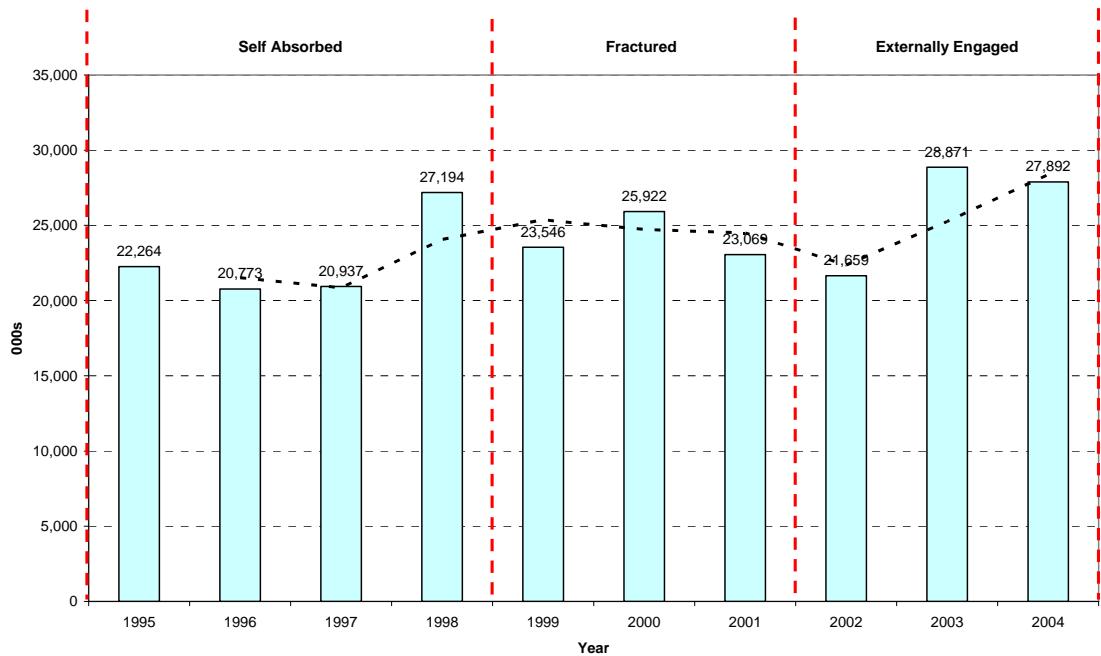


Chart 6.6 - FFC Average Attendances 1995 - 2004 (Away Games)

6.5. SUMMARY

This chapter charted FFC's cultural values, beliefs and identities since its inception in 1994 to December 2004. The mapping process revealed different cultural and identity values as they emerged in three distinct cultural periods at FFC. The mapping process also identified emergent values that became dominant and residual values in each period.

During its first, *self-absorbed* the values of fiscal responsibility and self-reliance emerged and became dominant. The values of individualism and nihilism emerged and dominated during the second, *fractured* period which also relied on residual values of fiscal responsibility and self-reliance. During the third, *externally engaged* period, the values of adaptability, strategy and accountability emerged and subsequently dominated the club's culture and identity.

The values, beliefs and behavioural characteristics summarised in Table 6.1 demonstrate the dynamic nature of FFC's organizational culture and identity, whilst also demonstrating the importance of residual values in times of cultural vacuum and dysfunction. Table 6.1 also encapsulates the key outcome of the thesis, demonstrating how cultures and their associated identities are modified to suit the incumbent leaders' values.

The mapping of the three distinct periods enabled each period to be correlated with the club's KPIs to assess any coincidence of each cultural period with a change in performance measures. The result supported the contention that the club performed moderately well in its early days before becoming seriously fractured and dysfunctional. The results also show that the club emerged from the 1999 – 2001 doldrums, in late 2001, with a new image that gave optimism for its future sustainability. The club performed creditably in its early days attracting and maintaining a supporter base that helped support the club financially despite indifferent on-field performances. The support, membership and consequently, financial results deteriorated markedly in the middle period when the club was performing within a cultural vacuum. By contrast, memberships, attendances and financial results have never been better than in the current period when the club has placed a strong emphasis on strategy and external engagement.

7. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The future belongs to those who prepare for it today

Malcolm X, minister, activist (1925 – 1965)

A feature of the culture and identity of the current administration is the development of a visionary and externally engaged culture for the organization supported by an identity that projects a professional and organized image. FFC has radically changed its responses to its internal and external environments. Internally, the club recognised that it was fractured and stagnating, not having made any significant progress despite making substantial changes in 1998. Externally, it recognised its performance could not justify confrontation with regulators about its own dysfunctional state of affairs. It had not performed adequately within the competition or as an organization, and fundamental change was necessary.

What the visionary and externally engaged culture and identity provide is recognition of the club's stakeholders' concerns and aspirations which for external stakeholders are focussed primarily on on-field performance. Especially important is the stakeholders' emotional attachment to the club which drives their aspirations and FFC need to be able to recognise and account for them. Organizationally, the club's external stakeholders such sponsors are satisfied with the club's performance and increasing in their numbers and amounts sponsored but the fans, players and the club still seek finals qualification and success. Hence, even though FFC has reversed its off-field performance and is performing creditably as an organization, an ongoing lack of on-field success represents the biggest challenge for the club to overcome. It is a measure by which the current administration and its values and beliefs will be judged successful or not. Consequently, unresolved tensions remain between the club's image and identity, how the club sees itself and how it is perceived by stakeholders. Whilst the club sees itself as a professional organization on and off-field, across all divisions with a strategy and long term objectives in place, stakeholders have a shorter term view demanding on-field success and with less regard for the off-field operations. The tensions will only be resolved by consistent on-field success through winning games, making the finals on a regular basis with an impact on the premiership decider and thereby satisfy the stakeholders' emotional attachment. The current administration and football department under Connolly recognise the requirement to satisfy those stakeholders FFC and it is starting to show dangerous signs of withdrawing and becoming insular and defensive

about its lack of success although unlike the early period, it is not placing the blame anywhere else. The sense is that the club probably has one or two seasons more to really make an impact on the competition otherwise the lack of success will force more changes or be enforced by the WAFC which in late 2005 has also called for a review of operations within the club to see why it is not consistently playing finals football.

The way FFC aims to achieve on-field success and external engagement through its off-field management, and how it currently goes about its business and the way it does things, was starkly revealed through a number of club-related incidents that took place in July and August 2004 when the research for this thesis was near completion. They consisted of a newspaper report and two club events which distinguished FFC's cultural evolution and level of performance since its formation in 1994.

Firstly, on Thursday July 8th 2004, Australia's only national daily newspaper, "*The Australian*", published an article entitled "*Dockers to Escape from the Red Zone*" that described the improvement of FFC's off-field performance since August 2001 (P. Smith, 2004). This date was the time in FFC's history that was cited, in the article by its CEO, as a pivotal turning point in the way the club operated. It also coincided with the time his largely new administration took control of the club.

Secondly, on Wednesday July 21st 2004, FFC held the "*'Carlton Mid' Banquet Auction*". The auction was an annual event, sponsored by the Carlton and United Brewery to raise funds for the club and the player's end of season trip. In 2004, the banquet celebrated ten years, to the day, since the official launch of the club, its colours, and logo. The 10th anniversary generated various anecdotes and newspaper articles about significant events at the club since its inception.

Finally, on Monday August 9th 2004, access was given to a meeting at FFC's offices, typical of the meetings that the club holds on Monday afternoons at which all of the staff was present. The meetings provided a forum at where information was exchanged about the club's operations.

The newspaper report and club banquet tracked certain key indicators that reflected upon the club's performance over the period of its existence. They both relied on indicators of membership, attendances and financial performance to confirm that FFC was performing as well as it had since its inception and much better than it had 3 years previously. While the data revealed many interesting performance outcomes of the

club, there was no indication of what brought about the claimed changes in those performances. The meeting of August 9th was most significant to this research, as a turning point in FFC's evolution about the new way the club went about doing things. These three incidents provide a succinct indication of the FFC's current culture and identity and how they have changed in response to a variety of forces, influences and incidents within its regulated environment.

7.1. ACCESSING FFC

One of the most obvious ways in which FFC did things differently from its early years was demonstrated by the way in which the researcher gained access to the club and subsequently access to the Monday meeting.

When this research commenced in 2000, FFC was under-achieving and the club agreed, somewhat reluctantly, to participate in the research. Not surprisingly, it was wary of outsiders wanting to investigate its organization. The club's agreement was given only after three attempts to meet with the CEO. This included one appointment when the researcher was met by a relatively junior member of staff without enough authority to give the necessary permission, because the CEO had been called away on an emergency. This left an impression of an insecure and even secretive organization not wanting, or encouraging, scrutiny.

However, FFC underwent significant changes in senior management in 2000/01. E01 joined the FFC executive and all of the other senior management positions changed hands. The researcher then had to confirm the permission to research and access FFC's staff and premises. The permission was granted, in the first of three interviews, which formed a robust and enthusiastic discussion that addressed what it was the research was going to study and a lengthy dialogue about definitions of concepts. It was clear from those early discussions that E01 was intent on establishing a strong, clearly defined culture and identity within FFC. A major issue was how appropriate would that culture and identity be.

A request was made to E01 some weeks earlier to attend one of the Monday meetings that had been referred to by several interviewees. The meetings were internal to the club and potentially discussed confidential matters. E01 had provided confidential material previously and it was somewhat surprising when the answer was "no". The surprise was exacerbated because to that point in time FFC had extended every courtesy

that could have been expected in facilitating access for the research and at times, exceeded those expectations. At a later interview with E01, he was again asked if the researcher could attend and he explained that it was not so much that he did not want outsiders there, as he could not see what benefit it would be. The reasoning was clarified, saying that in studies of organizations that were trying to establish the culture and identity of the organization, attending meetings such as these could be very enlightening, and not always in an obvious way for those being observed. He then agreed to the researcher's attendance. The discussion was not acrimonious but it was interesting that he thought he knew what would be useful for the research. E01's explanation and approval was interesting because it also indicated a significant shift over time in the willingness of the club to allow outsiders access to scrutinise the club and its workings. It was to be an indication of values that had changed since the club's beginning and an orientation towards a set of core values on which E01 aimed build the club's ideology

The question of gaining access is important to research such as this because without it the research could not have been completed. However, the access must be provided with the necessary authority so that access to the right people can be obtained and yet the authority must be tempered so that the participants cooperate willingly and without concern for their organizational well being whether they choose to participate or not. At the time of seeking permission to gain access to FFC, attempts were made to gain access to the West Coast Eagles and undertake a comparative case study of the two WA AFL clubs. The West Coast Eagles CEO, initially agreed until the research proposal was put to its Research and Development sub committee after which the West Coast Eagles withdrew. The Eagles formally advised that the research was not in an area of interest to it at the time, but one of the reasons later proffered was that the Eagles did not wish to be compared to FFC in any context. This reflected the thinking of the Eagles towards FFC generally; the Eagles saw itself as a leader in the way it run its football club and it did not wish, by chance or deliberation, to provide any information about its organization that might benefit FFC. This also revealed a lot about the competitive nature of sports people. In other industries, leading organizations were more prepared to share the lessons of their success e.g. Collins and Porras (1998).

7.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MONDAY MEETINGS

Under the current management regime, FFC staff meets every Monday afternoon at 4pm. The entire staff, from the Chief Executive Officer to the front desk receptionists attends, with the notable exception of the playing group. Temporary or work experience staff were recruited to fill in for key positions, such as reception, that cannot remain unattended during the meeting enabling full time and permanent staff to attend. The meeting took place in the boardroom of FFC's headquarters at FFC Oval and whilst it had two declared purposes, it actually served many more. The meeting was convened to let each of the senior managers provide staff with information about significant happenings in their department and to allow administrative issues to be communicated. The meeting provided each staff member with a reasonably clear picture of what was currently important to the organization to ensure they were aware of the current issues affecting the club and what the club's perspective was about them, particularly those issues that had some prominence in the media. Like most professional sports, AFL football was of great interest to the local and national media and FFC managed its media contact very carefully. However despite the meeting's significance, some issues, as on August 9th, were mundane, for example, requesting staff not to park in the areas not allotted to them.

All full time staff attended the meetings, seated in what appeared to be no particular order, but generally in their working or departmental groups indicating some of the sub cultures that might have existed. The room was long and rectangular in shape, about 15 metres by 5 metres and one complete long side of the room was fully glazed from floor to ceiling with sliding doors leading out onto a balcony that overlooked the training oval. The room was also where corporate guests and sponsors were entertained. Although the room itself was identified as a boardroom, it was clearly multi-functional, widely used, and served as a meeting space for those within the office that did not have their own private space or meeting area. Several of the interviews conducted were carried out in the boardroom. The room had none of the opulence usually associated with boardrooms. It was sparsely furnished with odd tables and chairs in no particular arrangement and the board table consumed about a quarter of the room with a fitted carpet in club colours. Both ends of the room (the narrow sides) were solid construction with one end housing a drinks vending machine, a wash area, and cupboard and the other end blank with a mobile whiteboard positioned against it. The other long side of

the room contained two or three access points to the corridor outside that ran parallel to the boardroom. The corridor outside extended from the reception area to the football department and adjacent to the main administrative work area with photos of past Fremantle players. Therefore, the room was also a neutral space within the overall office layout with no attachment to any particular department.

The staff, which numbered about 30, sat around the edge of the room in an ellipse. Seating was typical office chairs with an occasional small table where one or two people sat leaning sideways on them. There was a larger long table at the end of the room with the whiteboards that appeared to be the “*top*” table, behind which sat members of the football department. The group at this table consisted of the assistant coaches with the senior coach on one end. I positioned myself towards the rear of the room, on the left hand side as observed from the table of coaches, where I could unobtrusively observed everyone in the room.

Dress standards varied but veered on the side of casual for most participants. The members of the football department were in shorts and polo shirts or tracksuits and the rest of the staff were in a variety from casual clothing to more formal business dress. Two or three of the men connected with the finance and marketing departments were in business shirts and ties, prepared for working and dealing with the business community. E01 sat off to one side of the table, dressed in a business shirt with an open collar and no tie. Whilst everyone clearly knew he was in charge of the meeting, his informality was an attempt to show, at these meetings, he was just one of the staff with the same issues and concerns as everyone else and importantly, everyone had the same opportunity to put their issue forward. E01 informally called the meeting to order by calling out to everyone that it was time to get the meeting underway. He introduced me as a guest and explained that I was sitting in as an observer as part of my PhD research project. A large number of those present were already aware of the project since I had interviewed them and no further explanation was offered. E01 requested, after joking that everyone should be on their best behaviour because of my presence, that the meeting should be conducted in the usual way indicating that perhaps he did not want too much dirty linen aired in public but that the meeting should be conducted along the usual lines.

The senior coach was called upon to provide an overview of the previous weekend’s game. That game had been against Collingwood, at home and for the first time in the

2004 season, had been a home game on a Friday night. “*Friday Night Football*” was presented by the AFL as its main event of the week, its “*blockbuster*”, and although selected before the season starts, it was anticipated to be the match of the round and a close hard fought contest, significant in the context of the league ladder at the time it was played. It did not always turn out that way. Sometimes it resulted in a top versus bottom game or a lopsided contest but it was a chance for the clubs concerned to display themselves to the remainder of the competition. It also had the biggest television audience of any game or sport each weekend to a national television audience. A game against Collingwood generally ensured a big match attendance relative to other games, whatever either club’s ladder position, because of the Collingwood supporter base. In FFC’s case, the Collingwood game at Subiaco had twice set the record for a home attendance in a non West Coast Eagles game, including this game. It was expected to be FFC’s biggest ever non-derby attendance (a derby being a game against the local competitor - the West Coast Eagles), which at nearly 41,000 proved to be the case (in FFC’s top 10 attendances at Subiaco, only 4 of them were non-derby crowds and all were recorded in 2004). FFC was expected to win against a Collingwood team that had suffered the loss of several key players, it was below FFC on the ladder and had no prospect of making the final eight. FFC on the other hand was in the top eight and a win would confirm FFC’s position and probably ensure a place in the playoff finals. FFC lost. On an official AFL website that reviewed each team’s season, Fremantle’s game against Collingwood featured in the summary of FFC. Under the category of its “*Worst Loss*”, it said,

It was undoubtedly the round-19 loss to Collingwood, where the four points would have all but assured the club a finals berth for the second straight year. Unfortunately for the purple army, the Dockers wilted under the harsh glare of Friday night football, losing the match and ultimately their season by 33 points. It started a run of four straight defeats to close out the home-and-away rounds and resulted in the club missing out on September (Australian Football League, 2004a).

The coach said nothing new to the staff that had not been recorded in the media immediately after the game, nor in the day or two after the game (the meeting occurred 3 days after the game). He expressed disappointment at the result and recalled that he said to others in the coach’s box that he felt very early on that the players were not

“switched on” for the big game. He suggested to the meeting that everyone like him had probably turned off “*talk back radio*” for the 3 days since. E01 added some comments about how everyone was feeling the pressure and angst that was felt by the football department because of the result of the game (E01 was shown on television immediately after the game seated and bowed, with his head in his hands and slowly wiping his drawn face). The coach resumed and compared the build up to the game (as being positive and ready) with the poor result and outcome, and could not explain why there was a discrepancy but it was something the players had to work on as a group. He outlined that it now meant because of Friday night and other results on the weekend, that FFC had to win one and possibly two of its remaining three games. The meeting was opened up to the floor by the coach, asking if there were any questions at which time the room was quiet. This did not appear to be a democratic gesture of asking for input. Rather it was a challenge to the staff to respond, which none was expected, and none did respond. E01 enquired of the coach about any injured players. For the first time for two seasons, there were concerns over two of the senior players, Parker and Bell who the coach advised should be fit to play the following week.

By this stage most meeting participants were relaxed and other managers were about to discuss their issues when the coach added as an afterthought that the match committee had met early in the morning rather than that evening, so that one of the assistant coaches could fly east to attend a friend’s funeral.

The meeting continued with discussion from the Marketing Manager, who spoke about plans for the forthcoming “*derby*” against the Eagles. He emphasised that the lack of tickets available to FFC supporters who were not club members was an opportunity to reinforce the value of memberships to any disappointed supporters. He also outlined that for the derby, the usual Friday lunch was sold out with 650 attendees and Wayne Carey would be the guest of honour. Other functions were detailed which included a function on Kitchener Park (adjacent to Subiaco Oval) on the Saturday night and training in Fremantle’s “*Cappuccino Strip*” on the Tuesday prior to the game.

Some general announcements were made to welcome one new staff member and explain how another new staff member had not reported for work and had decided not to work at FFC. At this point, someone jokingly interjected that the new staff member was seen in Fremantle after the Collingwood game and that the result of the game was why she decided not to join. Another staff member was congratulated for completing

the Avon Descent white water race at the weekend coming 3rd in his class. Again, there was interjection from someone who joked that there were only three in the class.

The Chief Financial Officer took over from the marketing manager, explaining that Friday's crowd of just fewer than 41,000 was a good result which would see FFC fall just short of 400,000 in total for its 11 home games in 2004. Financial details were then discussed about the month end just passed and the need to get invoices in and approved to close off the accounts. He also addressed the parking issues. At this point in the meeting apologies were provided on behalf of the sponsorship team who were entertaining a corporate group from Bankwest, the club's premier sponsor.

E01 resumed the floor and announced that the club now had approval to wear a new away uniform for the last game of the season comprising a predominantly white strip with purple anchor and socks. It was emphasised that the new uniform represented a good marketing opportunity but was likely to be controversial. All staff was requested to seek feedback on the supporters' preferences.

As the meeting ended, two members of the staff social club – “*The Wharfies*” (in keeping with several maritime analogies evident in FFC) – gave feedback on a function, held on the previous Saturday. Particular staff members were thanked for contributing to, and organizing, the event. Like most staff social clubs, the same people volunteered each time and other staff were encouraged to help when they could. People were also requested to attend and be a part of functions and one or two people were highlighted for not having attended any. This was an interesting element of peer group pressure. A particular staff member who had not attended any staff functions was also a member of staff that had been with the club since its inception and was an important member for the recruitment of players. He claimed not to want to be involved but also indicated later that he had a lack of confidence in whether he would be retained when the new administration took over in 2001. Staff were further advised that photographs from the function were available for staff on one of their computer network drives.

The meeting concluded after 2 club volunteers, Beryl and Stuart Hogan, were recognised and commended for their efforts associated with the function and in general around the club. The meeting concluded at 4:20 pm after about twenty minute's duration

7.3. SO WHAT?

There were several significant points drawn from the meeting. It was interesting that the players did not attend the meetings and yet it was critical for all other staff to attend, or proffer good reasons for not attending. This suggested that the players were not considered integral to the running of the organization. The meeting dealt with organizational matters and how the club went about its business but the players, even the most senior ones, did not have a role in that. The players constituted an asset of the club around which the club was judged as successful or not, but they did not have a role in administration. There was a clear dichotomy in the organization between the administrative staff and the playing staff, bridged by the coaching staff. The coaching staff was considered part of the administration of the organization. The inference was that the players were told what they needed to know and they needed to keep themselves focussed on what happened on-field rather than in the off-field aspects of the club. This was further evidenced by the support provided by the football department to the players for their welfare including accommodation, study, and personal problems that the players encountered. Consequently, the playing group, made up of young, fit, and healthy males, was cocooned with no part to play in the off-field administration of the club.

The room in which the meeting was held was maintained as a boardroom but it served as a general purpose room during most days. This would not have been unusual for most businesses, where the boardroom perhaps doubled as a meeting room but not with the everyday use that FFC's boardroom attracted. This was representative of the informal nature of the workplace for the staff at FFC, which was also reflected in their dress and demeanour.

The details of the meeting, a regular weekly event, were of no great importance but the event was significant because it was driven by the FFC's newly emerging values, and how it now wanted to be seen as a club and how it saw itself. The meetings were instigated by E01 when he joined FFC and represented a different process inclusive of all staff. Prior to the meetings being held information was disseminated in a haphazard manner reliant upon individual managers passing on what they saw as relevant, to their departmental staff. Now, all staff hears the information simultaneously, directly from department managers, with time for questions and answers. The meetings represented an important forum for staff to get together and both divulge and provide information

about the club's business. It was a forum which many staff attested to be an important and necessary means of communication with each other in a diverse organization.

The meetings were also a forum in which E01 outlined the vision, aims, objectives, and strategies for FFC. It was apparently done so frequently (and effectively) that one employee likened it to "*Groundhog Day*", a movie in which the main character feels as if he is living the same day over and over and over no matter what he does to change it (F04, 2003). In other words, E01 was repeatedly disseminating his vision for FFC and how he wanted the club to be seen by others. E01 clearly used the meeting to reinforce the type of culture and identity he wanted to see instilled within FFC. He enunciated the characteristics in an interview in which the concept of culture was discussed with him (E01, 2003). His vision was for FFC to be seen as an open and accessible organization for its staff and members that performed to, or set, the highest benchmarks for similar organizations in the sports and commercial industries. He was keen the FFC might be regarded in the same way, irrespective of its on or off-field performances, at any particular point in time. Citing Collingwood as an example, he recognised that whilst performance levels fluctuated on and off the field, Collingwood were still regarded as a tough, no nonsense team that always gave maximum effort in a contest and was never easy to beat. E01 saw this as a culture built over more than 100 years of playing football and a culture that was an enduring aspect of a club through which it would be associated with certain key characteristics. In other words he saw the culture of the club in terms of key organizational identity constructs which are regarded as "*a sense of sameness over time*" (Ravasi & Rekom, 2003). To be seen in such a way, E01 saw it as vital that FFC went about its business, doing things in a particular and consistent way. However, FFC had not always "*done things this way*". The meetings were evidence, and a representation, of the culture and identity that E01 and the executive staff at FFC were trying to instil in the club. The club was now more open and accessible, evidenced by the access granted for the research and the consequent debate with E01 on the research concepts. Whilst it may not be the original way in which FFC did business, E01 was through the meeting aiming to develop his own "*Fremantle Way*".

8. CONCLUSION

As already noted in the introductory chapter, this thesis set out to explore how FFC's organizational culture and identity were formed and evolved and to see how they influenced the club's organizational performance. To satisfy those aims, one broad research question was formulated:

How was Fremantle's organizational culture and identity formed, how did they evolve, and how did they influence its organizational strategies, behaviour and performance?

This question was subsequently broken down into four specific objectives that when resolved, would achieve the research objectives which were to:

1. *Map Fremantle's organizational culture and identity in the context and environment in which it operated;*
2. *Examine and record how Fremantle's organizational culture and identity evolved and was manifested in its management strategy, internal processes and strategic responses to its context and environment;*
3. *Categorise and distinguish the different stages Fremantle's culture as it evolved and was manifested across its entire history between 1994 and 2004; and,*
4. *Assess Fremantle's organizational performance during the same period and identify the values that underpinned its culture and identity and either enabled, or prevented, appropriate responses to its environment.*

These objectives were addressed by fully engaging with the Fremantle Football Club organization to explore its culture and identity within their real-world context. The clubs evolution was mapped by focussing on its management strategy, internal processes, and strategic responses to its context and environment. The mapping firstly identified the values that underpinned the club's culture and identity; secondly, it examined how the club interacted with its environment; thirdly, it categorised the different stages of FFC's culture and identity; and finally it assessed the club's performance during the same period.

To provide a frame of reference for the research and to understand the data and subsequent results, this thesis first presented the literature on organizational culture and

identity, and defined a qualitative case study research methodology as suitable for studying culture and identity in a sporting organization. This was based on fundamental theories from similar organizational diagnoses. The literature review culminated in a proposed organizational culture/identity/performance framework by which the FFC could be studied.

The qualitative case study research approach, using purposive sampling of stakeholders, enabled an insight into the way in which Fremantle Football Club did things and consequently, how it was perceived by stakeholders. Consistent with the literature, a background to the game of Australian Rules, nationally and locally was presented, as well as its governance in a highly regulated environment, in order to understand the case study in its context.

The results of the research were presented in a narrative of the Fremantle Football Club from its inception to the end of the 2004 playing season. The narrative enabled a periodisation of the culture and identity of FFC since its inception in 1994 until December 2004 and formed the basis of a tabulated summary of FFC's culture and identity. By researching an Australian sporting organization, this research added to existing knowledge of organizational culture and identity and provided a platform for further research.

The first distinctive cultural period defined in the research showed how FFC started out and took its initial step as a fledgling organization in a highly regulated and competitive sport league, knowing it had to be marketable, different, and fiscally responsible. The club established a strong and clear nautical theme through its location as a port city, and worked hard to project the image to its stakeholders. However, the club failed to engage with its regulated environment, and only partially engaged with the local community. With a core ideology driven by its CEO and coach, and based on innovation, the club nevertheless became insular and too heavily focussed on economic viability and demonstrated a culture that was not aligned with its identity. Consequently, the club was clear about how it presented itself on game day and in business dealings as well as how it wished to represent itself through various artifacts. On the other hand, many of its management practices were not congruent with its image and identity. It claimed to be the "*People's Club*" but presented little evidence of any connection to the people and provided no understanding of what they meant by the term. The reality was that the club lost sight of its external stakeholders and a heavily

biased internal focus saw its day-to-day operations undermine its identity and image. The way the club went about doing things was orientated to its fiscal well-being with scant regard for its owners, or the competition of which it was a part. The club's culture was not aligned to its operating environment. However, as the research indicated, in a heavily regulated environment such as the AFL, no club can afford to ignore the basic rules and regulations as FFC did with respect to the player draft in its early years.

The second cultural period, driven by the CEO, was highlighted by loose leadership and loss of direction by the club's administration, which lead to an organizational decline and was represented by internal conflict, resulting in poor performance across all of its KPIs. Firstly, the club showed signs of dysfunction as a result of its misaligned culture and identity and secondly, it lacked any clear vision, values, beliefs, or core ideology. The club survived initially on its strong nautical and port city identity, but without the vision, strategies, or ideology to drive it. The club retreated into a cultural vacuum. Indecisive action saw a culture evolve that valued individualism. The subsequent fracturing of the club not only reinforced the misaligned culture and identity, but also created a strong dissonance between its identity and image. Instead of acknowledging its weaknesses and addressing its poor public perception, it saw itself as resilient and unified. In a competitive and heavily regulated environment such as the AFL this blinkered view of itself became a serious problem since external engagement is a pre-condition for achieving a competitive advantage...

The third cultural period at FFC has seen the club refocus and rebuild under the auspices of the CEO, President and coach. The poor performances and internal dysfunction became the catalyst for change, which saw a new administration assume power. The club legitimised itself with the competition regulators and conformed with the requirements of the regulated environment. It thereby avoided the confrontation that characterised its early history. The club also redefined itself by re-affirming the club's nautical, port city identity, and focusing on its logo (the anchor) and the colour purple, both of which stakeholder support. In reconciling with its governing bodies the club set about building organizational relationships that enabled it to accommodate its environment and for the first time in its existence, FFC was driven by a visionary ideology, and strategic plan to achieve the vision. The vision and strategic plan for the club was widely disseminated, and quickly permeated its internal environment. This was achieved by virtue of it being a relatively small organization in staff terms, and

because of its short history which made it less institutionalised and more amenable to change.

The club consequently engaged with its governance bodies and competition. In turn, it ensured that staff were rewarded and held accountable for the club's performance whilst implementing changes to improve its competitive edge. The club executed its strategic plan and pursued its goals, objectives and values which represented a culture, identity and ideology appropriate to its regulated environment. That is, it evolved a culture and identity which were low on dissonance and high on alignment.

In summary, this latter period was the club's most successful, and as a young organization it was able to build on its existing strong identity, whilst also changing its culture and presenting an image consistent with its identity. It is concluded therefore that by 2004 FFC had finally adopted appropriate strategies, and developed a culture and identity that was externally engaged, linked to its community through an attractive nautical, port city image, and geared to player development. Each of these initiatives became the means by which FFC could gain a competitive advantage in the regulated AFL environment.

This research showed that in the case of FFC, culture and identity are dynamic and fluid which enabled the club to better meet the challenge of its competitive and heavily regulated environment. It also indicated, contrary to existing theories, that culture and identity were not difficult to transform. This was particularly evident in the case of FFC, which despite its emphasis on tradition, was amenable to change because of its brief history and relatively small size. This research also showed that for the culture and identity to be sustained, they must be supported by a clear, strong vision with strategies to realise the vision. Moreover, because sport has a heavy emotional involvement of stakeholders as well as commercial interests, there was greater desire for early and constant success in terms of winning premierships or making the finals. Consequently, FFC stakeholders were more willing to underwrite change; in fact they advocated change when results were not being achieved. This made the club more willing to undergo change to its culture and identity to gain a competitive edge.

There is potential for research of a similar nature to be undertaken into other sports and particularly other sports with deregulated or partially deregulated environments, to see if similar results prevail. Whilst other sports in Australia are adopting some of the key regulations that govern equalisation, and rugby league is the prime example, other

international sports are largely free of such regulations. However, moves are being made for more regulation, such as transfer windows in soccer, to increase competitiveness amongst its leagues and stop the domination of two or three clubs. It would also be interesting to extend the research into other elite non-professional or semi-professional sports, such as netball, hockey, and swimming.

A further topic for research raised by this research that needs addressing is the issue of “isomorphism versus legitimacy” whereby organizations seek to be different from their competitors but retain similarities that make them credible and acceptable within their own industry.

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10. APPENDIX

The appendix is a copy of the interviewee consent form that all respondents signed to agree to the interview that set out their's and the researcher's rights and responsibilities.

Interviewee Consent Form

Information to Participant

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into the Organizational Culture and Identity of Fremantle Football Club. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Any information you provide will remain confidential at all times.

Certification by Participant

I, (Name)

of (Address)

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the experiment entitled:

Organizational Culture and Identity: A Case Study from the Australian Football League

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by:

Gervase Haimes (Researcher) and Bob Stewart (Supervisor)

I certify that the objectives of the experiment, together with any risks to me associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the experiment, have been fully explained to me by:

Gervase Haimes

and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these procedures at my premises.

Procedures - Personal interviews.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this experiment at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:.....

Witness

(other than the researcher):

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the research supervisor (Bob Stewart ph. 03 9218 3263). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710).

11. APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2 is a set of questions developed during the research process that were defined as being of potential use to either guide the interview or establish a relationship with the interviewee before delving into the interviewee's relationship with FFC.

Research Question to Diagnose Organizational Culture and Identity at FFC

1. Personal

- i. What is your position at the club?
- ii. How did you become involved with FFC?
- iii. How long have you been involved with FFC?
- iv. How and through what process were you appointed?

2. History

- i. What attempts have been made to fit the club with the town?
- ii. What attempts have been made to fit the club with the two existing Fremantle WAFL clubs?
- iii. What resistance has been made to any of these attempts?
- iv. Have these attempts been embraced at all?
- v. At the time of starting the club was there such a thing as the Claremont connection?
- vi. Initially did the club orientate itself with too much focus on the WCE rather than the competition as a whole?
- vii. Did or does the club disregard the AFL and its policies and procedures (did it prefer to do things “its own way”) by way of recruiting

3. Mission

- i. Does FFC have a Mission Statement?
- ii. Do you know what it is?

4. Strategies and Goals

- i. What strategies and goals is FFC employing to fit with their Mission?
- ii. Where did the strategies and goals come from?
- iii. How were the strategies and goals developed?
- iv. How do the goals fit with the strategy?

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- v. Did they come from formal reasoning and logic or from the beliefs and values of the founders?

5. Structure & Organization

- i. What do you see as the role of the board?
- ii. What part does the board play in strategy implementation?
- iii. Through what kind of organizational structure does Fremantle implement its strategy?
- iv. How did this structure develop the way it did – again was it from formal reasoning and logic or from the beliefs and values of the founders?
- v. Why was the structure designed the way it was?
- vi. What relationship is there between functional and geographic components of the organizational structure?

6. Organizational Systems and Measurement

- i. Do you know how FFC's goals and objective measured to see if they are being achieved?
- ii. What error detection systems are in place to track if goals are being met?
- iii. What is done if goals are not being met?
- iv. Do all divisions measure their goals the same way?
- v. Do all divisions respond the same way when goals are not met?

7. Group Membership

- i. What symbols or privileges are associated with your belonging to the board?
- ii. Do you ever think about others in terms of them belonging to particular groups and being insiders or outsiders?
- iii. What was it like when you first started at FFC?
- iv. Have you brought anyone into FFC and how was it managed?

8. Relationships

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- i. If there is a disagreement with other members of the board do you feel able to voice disagreement face to face?
 - ii. Do you feel able to disagree in private?
 - iii. Do you feel able to disagree in public?
 - iv. Are you kept informed about your performance?

9. Status

- i. Can you identify a person's status within the club?
- ii. If so how?

10. Assumptions about Humans to their Environment

- i. How does FFC define itself relative to other AFL clubs?
- ii. What are FFC's aspirations for the future?
- iii. Does FFC accept its niche?
- iv. Does FFC passively accept its position because that's what its environment allows?
- v. Does FFC see itself as dominating?

11. Assumptions about Human Nature

- i. Can employees be developed or do you select them for specific qualities?
- ii. Can managers be developed or do you select them for specific qualities?
- iii. What qualities can be developed?
- iv. What qualities cannot be developed?

12. Assumptions about Reality and Truth

- i. How do you differentiate fact and opinion?
- ii. How much did opinions matter?
- iii. What gave the opinions credibility?
- iv. Is FFC a moralistic or a pragmatic organization?

13. Assumptions about Time

- i. Do meetings start on time?

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- ii. Do meetings finish on time?
 - iii. Do you regularly cancel appointments?
 - iv. When you make an appointment how much time do you allow?
 - v. Do you get concerned trying do two things at once?
 - vi. What happens if you miss a target or schedule?