2009

The New College Institute: An Institutional Analysis of the Creation of an Organization of Higher Education in the Commonwealth of Virginia

Edward Bowman
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd
Part of the Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/1746

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
THE NEW COLLEGE INSTITUTE: AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CREATION OF AN ORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

EDWARD L. BOWMAN
B.S. James Madison University, 1988
M.S. Virginia Commonwealth University, 1998
M.Ed. University of Virginia, 2008

Director: William C. Bosher, Jr.
Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Education
VCU Center for Public Policy
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
May 2009
Acknowledgement

I extend my sincere appreciation and thanks to all of the citizens, students, educators and elected representatives in the Martinsville and Henry County Virginia communities whose voices populate this narrative and bring it to life. It is my hope that the New College Institute will fulfill the achievement of their desires. Special thanks to Dr. Barry Dorsey and Dr. Leanna Blevins, stewards of the New College Institute and visionary leaders of the new public organization.

I am grateful for the mentoring and support provided by Dr. William Bosher who fostered my affective commitment to this research wherein the re-telling of a dramatic organizational identity narrative was made possible. I would also like to thank Dr. David John Farmer, my advisor at Virginia Commonwealth University who encouraged me to write beyond the margins of the page.

None of this was possible without unconditional support and involvement from my family, who suffered and exalted in equal measure with this writer’s educational dreams set backs and accomplishments.

Finally, this work represents a symbolic commitment to my future and the future dreams a father can give to his son and daughter. Malcolm and Rachel have witness my transition through education with an innocent sacrifice that they cannot at present understand. Education changes lives and transforms relationships. It is my hope that one day they will recall the collective sacrifices we all made to transform our own lives through education, commitment and patience.
# Table of Contents

<p>| Acknowledgements                                                                 | ii   |
| List of Tables                                                                   | viii |
| List of Figures                                                                  | ix   |
| Abstract                                                                         | x    |
| Chapter                                                                          |      |
| 1 INTRODUCTION                                                                   | 1    |
| The New College Institute                                                        | 1    |
| The Legislative History of NCI and the Policy Process                             | 4    |
| Purpose of the Study                                                             | 18   |
| Theoretical Framework: Education and Institutions                                 | 18   |
| Methods: Organizational Narratives, Story-Telling and Sense Making                | 19   |
| NCI is a Story with Symbolic Purpose and Meaning                                  | 22   |
| NCI is a Story of Legitimacy                                                      | 25   |
| Research Questions                                                                | 27   |
| Significance of the Study                                                        | 29   |
| 2 SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA                                                             | 31   |
| Southside Virginia: The Site for a New College                                   | 31   |
| Why Martinsville-Henry County as the Site for a New College                       | 31   |
| The Nature of Public and Private Goods in Higher Education                       | 41   |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory and Perspectives</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization: Organizational Identity and Legitimacy</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Political Theory of Organizations</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-liberalism</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 PUBLIC POLICY AND INSTITUTIONS</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Theories of Organizations</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip Selznick: A Theory of Organizations</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann: The Social Construction of Reality</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions and Institutionalization: A Framework for Understanding</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is Education an Institution?</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization as a Type of Knowledge</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Effects of Higher Education as an Institution and the Process of Legitimization</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Legitimacy</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy Defined</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Studies on Organizational Legitimacy</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Studies on Organizational Legitimacy</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimacy and the New College Institute</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics and Higher Education</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Politics of Structural Choice</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Politics</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-Liberalism</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Governor Gerald Baliles and the Harvest Foundation

The New College Institute: Building the ‘and, and, and’ Connections

Opportunity and Access

And Social Problems

And Economic Revitalization

Politics and the New College Institute

Political Choice of Organizational Structure

The Second Prong of Organizational Structure

Programmatic Decisions

Instrumental Decisions

Funding Decisions

Social Legitimacy and the New College Institute

Teleology

Toward a Process of Re-Socialization

DISCUSSION

Narrative Themes

State Agents

Professional Agents

Marginal Agents

Politics and Planning

A Neo-Liberal Experiment?

Analysis and Implications
List of Tables

Table 1: Population Growth Statistics Southside Virginia: 1997-2007 .................. 34
Table 2: Educational Attainment in Southside Virginia 2000 ......................... 34
Table 3: Comparison of Research on Organizational Legitimacy ..................... 87
Table 4: Interview Participants: The New College Institute .......................... 140
Table 5: Institutional Agents ........................................................................ 204
Table 6: State Agents: Thematic Legitimacy Mechanisms ............................. 205
Table 7: Professional Agents: Thematic Legitimacy Mechanisms .................. 206
Table 8: Marginal Agents: Thematic Legitimacy Mechanisms ....................... 208
### List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Legislative History of the New College Institute</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Employment Wages Southside and Virginia: 1998-2007</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Unemployment Rate Southside and Virginia: 1998-2007</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Percentage of Students Planning on Attending a 4-year College Southside and Virginia: 2003-2007</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Conceptualizing Narrative Methodology</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Analysis of Research Domain: Hierarchical Interviewing</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Combining Approaches: Qualitative Design in Use</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>The Social, Cultural and Political History of the New College Institute</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

THE NEW COLLEGE INSTITUTE: AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CREATION OF AN ORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

By Edward L. Bowman

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, May 2009

Major Director: William C. Bosher, Jr.
Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and Education
VCU Center for Public Policy

On June 6, 2006 Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine ceremonially signed legislation creating the New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia. Since achieving statehood in 1788, Virginia has directly created only three four-year colleges; the University of Virginia, Virginia Military Institute, and Virginia State University. With the exception of the College of William and Mary, created in 1693, all of Virginia’s other public four-year institutions began as branch campuses, state normal schools for women, or as acquisitions of independent institutions. In addition to the extraordinary occurrence of creating a new public college in the Commonwealth of Virginia, evidence preceding the enacting legislation suggested that Martinsville might not be an appropriate place for a new college. The economic conditions in Martinsville and the entire Southside region of Virginia have undergone a dramatic transition from a production and manufacturing economy to an area beset by unemployment and lack of industry. Once considered a thriving economy based on textile, furniture and tobacco related industries, Southside Virginia has suffered
resulting in a number of interrelated social and economic problems. Would a new college re-vitalize this region of the Commonwealth?

Legislative studies preceding the enacting legislation provided clear evidence of the social and economic problems facing Southside communities but often ambiguous and conflicting information about the role of public policy should play with regard to creating a public organization for economic development purposes. Contrary to the historical tradition of creating a new college to meet student demand, the proposed new college in Southside Virginia would have to create post secondary educational demand to meet the needs of a new public organization.

Colleges and universities can transform communities through their symbolic and legitimate structure, activities, goals and purposes. In recent research, education is described as highly institutionalized; exhibiting a socially legitimate structure and both formal and informal patterns of socialization. Educational organizations are institutionalized because they are infused with value and provide a symbolic mechanism for re-socializing and transforming individuals and communities. Institutional norms, rules and cognitions enhanced and constrained policy conversations and ultimately the decision to build a new college in Martinsville. Beyond the technical and rational arguments for constructing a new public bureaucracy, the symbolic goals and purposes of education are united with the values, beliefs and aspirations of its founders. These beliefs and values do not exist in an ahistorical space but are a condition and consequence of viewing education as highly institutionalized.
This study is both an exploration and explanation of the institutional themes that created the material conditions in which policy actors negotiated and compromised in consensual solution to the problems in Southside Virginia through the creation of the New College Institute.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The New College Institute

On June 14th, 2006, Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine ceremonially signed enacting legislation creating the New College Institute (NCI) in Martinsville, Virginia and named his first appointees to the New College Board of Directors. A press release dated June 14, 2006 from the Governor’s office summarized the anticipated impact of NCI in Southside Virginia communities. “I am very pleased to be here [Martinsville, Virginia] today to reiterate the bipartisan support for the New College Institute, which we consider extremely important for the future of Martinsville and Henry County, for Southside Virginia and for the entire Commonwealth.” Governor Kaine added: “The New

---

Southside Virginia and South-central Virginia are used interchangeably in pre-planning reports and resolutions introduced in the Virginia General Assembly prior to the founding of the New College Institute. The language and text of the legislation and reports created by the State Council for Higher Education (SCHEV) define Southside or South-Central Virginia as the affected geographic region. In their response to House Joint Resolution 197 (filed January 14, 2004), SCHEV identified Southside as “a region of 22 localities lying east and west between the Tidewater region and the foothills of the Blue Ridge, south of the James River. The localities include: Amelia County, Amherst County, Appomattox County, Bedford County, Brunswick County, Buckingham County, Campbell County, Charlotte County, Cumberland County, Franklin County, Halifax County, Henry County, Lunenburg County, Mecklenburg County, Nottaway County, Patrick County, Pittsylvania County, Prince Edward County, Bedford City, Danville City, Lynchburg City, and Martinsville City. On January 10, 2006, SCHEV submitted their follow-up to HJR197 in a Report on the Analysis of Education Demand in Southside Virginia and Recommendations for Action. In this report SCHEV re-defines Southside as “the cities of Martinsville, Danville, and South Boston and the counties of Henry, Pittsylvania, Patrick and Franklin”. From this point forward (January 2006) any reference to Southside Virginia circumscribes the original 22 counties referenced in the 2005 report with the seven cities and counties immediately surrounding or adjacent to the City of Martinsville and Henry County. For purposes of this study, Southside Virginia describes the three cities and five counties defined in the State Council for Higher Education’s 2006 report to the General Assembly.
College Institute will play a key role in our effort to expand access to higher education opportunities, and it will be critical to the entire Southside region as we move into a century in which knowledge has become the currency of the marketplace.” June 14, 2006 was a day touted as a “new beginning” for Martinsville and Henry County, one with modest beginnings and a promising future.

The New College Institute is currently located in the “uptown” area in the City of Martinsville, Virginia where previously vacated buildings have been renovated and converted into classrooms, faculty and administrative offices. Physically, the New College Institute includes two academic buildings and an administrative building. The New College Institute’s Director, Dr. Barry Dorsey works with established higher education institutions in the Commonwealth of Virginia to bring degree programs to students who have been offered acceptance to the New College Institute after completing an associate’s degree. As such, students can complete the final two years of a baccalaureate education in a variety of programs offered by member institutions.\(^2\) Administration of degree programs is in some instances provided by faculty in residence.

Since achieving statehood in 1788, Virginia has directly created only three four-year colleges; the University of Virginia, Virginia Military Institute, and Virginia State University. With the exception of the College of William and Mary, created in 1693, all of Virginia’s other public four-year institutions began as branch campuses, state normal

\(^2\) Virginia post-secondary institutions providing degree programs at the New College Institute include: Averett University, James Madison University, Longwood University, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Radford University, University of Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University.
schools for women, or as acquisitions of independent institutions. The Commonwealth of Virginia last established a public four-year college in 1977 when Christopher Newport College became an independent institution six years after its elevation from a two-year branch campus of the College of William and Mary to a baccalaureate degree granting institution. Establishment of NCI honored a tradition in Virginia higher education beginning in 1823 when a former Virginia Governor and former United States President begrudgingly received financial backing from the General Assembly to open a public university in Charlottesville, Virginia serving 123 students.

Preceding the political breath of life creating NCI in June 2006, the purpose, goals, and potential benefits of an organization of higher education were debated and negotiated. Delegates and senators to the Virginia General Assembly, Virginia’s educational leaders, citizens in Southside Virginia communities and philanthropists committed to practical and symbolic transformation of Martinsville and Henry County would all share a voice in policy conversations preceding legislative enactment and founding of the New College Institute. Consequently, the creation of NCI can be documented in narratives that link themes and metaphors of progress, community transformation and a quest for organizational identity and legitimacy with the founding of a new public university.

The founding of NCI is also a story where multiple narratives define the process of public policy making. The founding of NCI can be re-told as a historical lesson in sense-making implicating group interests, institutional influences and intentions translated into policy discourse and texts, and contextualized within a framework of presumed causal
relationships and recommended programs. Policy means and goals are understood as co-opted from individual narratives (i.e. retrospective understanding). Social and cultural representations frame policy discussion, interpretation and propositions leading to the founding of NCI (Cox & Hassard, 2007). Paradoxically, Southside Virginia would not have emerged as the site of a new college in Virginia based on a typically rational-planning model of policy making rather, the creation of NCI involved policy processes that were essentially creative and contextual; the result of negotiation, compromise and concession. The reasons for which will become clear.

Looking at the past for explanation of the New College Institute invariably leads to questions of institutional and political influence and ideology affecting policy processes and outcomes. Policy in this sense is understood in a broad way as “any course of action (or inaction) related to the selection of goals, the definition of values or the allocation of resources.” (Codd, 1988, p. 235) Consequently, the purpose of this study is to look for explanation and understanding of policy processes (means) and outcomes (ends) in terms of symbolic meaning, social legitimacy and institutional influences linking higher education with themes emphasizing social and cultural transformation. More importantly, narratives in the form of policy conversations, texts and discourse can be used to (de)construct the implied assumptions and intentions of policy makers. As a mode of alternative knowing, narrative inquiry is an “attempt to integrate a context of what has happened” with both understanding and explanation (Czarniawska, 1998, p. 4).

The Legislative History of NCI and the Policy Process
On January 21, 1999 a group of bi-partisan Virginia patrons and delegates introduced Senate Joint Resolution 459 establishing a subcommittee to study the need for a college in South-Central Virginia (S.J.R. 459, 1999). The language of the joint resolution cites a demonstrated “thirst for knowledge and a reverence for learning” (S.J.R. 459, 1999) as previously motivating establishment of schools and universities in the Commonwealth of Virginia. By proposing an exploratory study, the sponsor of the resolution, then republican Senator Charles Hawkins emphasized the south-central region of the state where it was tacitly inferred that diffusion of knowledge and access to post-secondary education was lacking. No further reports on this particular resolution are noted.

Following the resolution introduced in January 1999, Senator Hawkins representing the 19th district\(^3\) and democratic Senator William Roscoe Reynolds representing the 20th district\(^4\) co-sponsored Senate Joint Resolution 123 on January 20, 2000 responding to “data on higher education in Virginia” and noting “a critical period for revitalizing the economic base of South Central Virginia” (S.J.R. 123, 2000). Their joint resolution specifically targets South Central Virginia as the region identified for a new public university. In euphemistic language, the resolution’s sponsors based their emphasis on claims and evidence “demonstrating a disquieting exodus from the South Central region of young people...yielding a population that is older, poorer, and less educated than in the

---
\(^3\) The 19th Congressional District includes; Campbell County (part), Danville City (all), Franklin County (all) and Pittsylvania County (all). Retrieved June 13, 2008 from www.state.va.us/.
Commonwealth as a whole.” (S.J.R. 123, 2000) The legacy of Senate Joint Resolutions 459 and 123 is unclear and no further legislative action would be taken until January 2004.

In retrospect, senate joint resolutions 459 and 123 are representative of what John Kingdon (2003) calls agenda setting. In essence the process of agenda setting accompanying the introduction of senate joint resolutions 459 and 123 involves problems pressing on the system and a process of gradually accumulating knowledge and perspectives among the specialists in a given policy area. (Kingdon, 2003) While further action on these resolutions is not specifically noted in the Virginia General Assembly (Virginia General Assembly Legislative Information System), it can be inferred from prospective legislative action that the idea of a post-secondary educational institution for Southside Virginia continued to be discussed in various policy communities. According to Kingdon, politicians and bureaucrats constantly request studies and reports “in preparing a policy community for some future direction, even though no immediate result is evident” (p. 129). Problems present themselves, as Cohen, March and Olsen (1972) suggest in their seminal article on organizational choice through streams and process assumptions. Applied to policy initiatives, choices are made out of “a loose collection of ideas [rather than] a coherent structure; it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preference” (Cohen et. al, 1972, p.1). Policy agendas developed in the process of coupling

---

4 The 20th Congressional District includes: Carroll County (all); Floyd County (all); Galax City (all); Grayson County (part); Henry County (all); Martinsville City (all); Patrick County (all); Wythe County (part). Retrieved June 13, 2008 from www.state.va.us/.

5 Located in Martinsville, Virginia, Patrick Henry Community College currently provides two-year associates degree programs in the Southside region.
solutions with problems all of which might be in advance of a consensus emerging within a policy community. As we shall see, initial attempts to draw attention to the problem of educational access in a rural area of the state will be coupled with a proposed solution to a larger problem of increasing undergraduate enrollment in Virginia’s current college and university system. Following the logic of Cohen et. al (1972) we see a situation where solutions and problems share equal status and the popularity of a given solution at a given time often affects the attention given to problems that come up for consideration.

The idea of a new college in Southside Virginia is revived in January 2004 when corresponding resolutions (House Joint Resolution 197 and Senate Joint Resolution 86 filed on the same day) were introduced in both the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate. It was House Joint Resolution 197 introduced by Delegate Ward Armstrong that would initiate a comprehensive educational needs assessment in Southside Virginia. House Joint Resolution 197 specifically instructed the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to consider the establishment of a public four-year degree granting institution of higher education in south central Virginia. SCHEV was directed to “submit...an executive summary and report...in meeting the request of this resolution [H.J.R. 197] no later than the first day of the 2005 Regular Session of the General Assembly” (H.J.R. 197, 2004). By April 2004 an interesting turn would be added to policy discussions in the form of a solution looking for a problem.

On September 4, 2002 the Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont was formed, from the sale of Memorial Health System in Martinsville, Virginia to Province Health Care. As
reported in the Martinsville Bulletin on October 14, 2001 the sale of Memorial Hospital, a community hospital to a for-profit health care provider would reportedly result in $7-11 million in annual interest. Proceeds from the sale would generate income that could be used to pay for “charitable initiatives—anything from schools to rescue squads to recreation centers—‘aimed at helping this [Martinsville-Henry County] area get back on its feet’.” (Wray, 2001) Entire proceeds from the initial sale of the hospital would initially go into the hospital’s charitable foundation and in September 2002, the Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont was formed.

The Harvest Foundation would operate independently from the hospital and was charged with investing the proceeds from the hospital’s sale to programs benefiting Martinsville and Henry County. On January 10, 2004, a press release from the Harvest Foundation announced a $50 million challenge grant to the Commonwealth of Virginia for the establishment of a four-year baccalaureate college in Martinsville-Henry County (The Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont, 2004). In May 2004, the Harvest Foundation would present the Commonwealth of Virginia with a pre-planning report in the form of a feasibility study and their plan for a new college in Southside Virginia. (Bosher, Craigie, Davies & Janosik, 2004)

The Harvest Foundation through the work of their planning commission intended to create a context within which the proposal for a new college in Southside would be justified as both a social and economic necessity. The authors of the Harvest Foundation’s Pre-planning Report noted that; “Since the mid 1990’s, the State Council for Higher
Education for Virginia and the General Assembly have taken the position that the ‘increasing temporary demand’ for higher education in Virginia should be met not with ‘bricks and mortar’ but by the increased use of technology, incremental growth at existing senior institutions, and the development of higher education centers using leased space” (Bosher et. al, 2004, p. 4). Contrary to addressing enrollment capacity with structural changes to Virginia’s current system of higher education, the authors of the pre-planning report would propose a new college as “a visionary and pragmatic ” (Ruff, 2004, B-3) solution to the eroding economic base in Southside Virginia.

Competing solutions to undergraduate enrollment projections in the Commonwealth of Virginia in the form of structural changes to the current system of higher education and the proposal from the Harvest Foundation open what Kingdon (2003) refers to as a policy window or expressive framing of choice options by coupling policy solutions with problems in anticipation of their political adoption. What becomes interesting is how competing proposals reveal general themes about the selection of policy problems and the appropriateness of political solution opportunities. What makes this point in time significant for the creation of NCI is the coupling of agendas or streams where problems, policies, and politics become joined thus increasing the probability that a policy item will be considered and/or rejected. Accordingly, the coupling of problem and solution streams takes on a decidedly political objective, one that would define access to post-secondary education in Southside Virginia. Statewide, policy leaders would now give serious consideration to the precedent of establishing a new public college that was
intended largely to serve economic development needs and create educational demand and opportunity in a rural region of the Commonwealth.

“Goal setting is a political and not technical problem” (Labaree, 1997, p. 16) and the terms of choice often arise from the tension between democratic politics and capitalist markets. According to Labaree, decisions about the purposes and goals schools should pursue involve making choices between social mobility, social efficiency and democratic equality. The ascendancy of goals writes Labaree, “is a story of shifting priorities, as particular goals come into favor, then slide into the background, only to reemerge later with renewed vigor” (1997, p. 34). The role of the Harvest Foundation and more specifically the role of the authors of the pre-planning report is that of policy entrepreneurs, facilitating linkage between policy solutions and social problems. Within the context of political decision making, the Harvest Foundation would challenge Virginia’s deference to “bricks and mortar” as a solution to higher educational access, opportunity and supply. The opening of a policy window expressively framed the economic decline in Southside Virginia with higher education as an institutionalized and potentially transformative organization. Again, in the paradoxical method in which policy solutions look for problems, indications that Virginia would have to accommodate increasing undergraduate enrollment within its current system and the historical economic decline of the Southside region preceded the proposal for a new college. The context of the debate is altered once the streams expressing diffuse interests, values and beliefs regarding
expected benefits of an organization of higher education enter into policy conversations and identification of Martinsville and Henry County as the proposed site for a new college.

Approximately two months prior to receipt of the Harvest Foundations Pre-planning Report in May of 2004, the Virginia House and Senate would pass *House Joint Resolution 197* (March 19, 2004). Sponsored by Delegate Ward Armstrong, the resolution summary document directed SCHEV to complete a needs assessment of the Southside region’s access to postsecondary educational opportunities. While undocumented, it does not appear coincidental that the General Assembly directed SCHEV to undertake a study of post-secondary educational opportunities in Southside Virginia prior to receipt of the Harvest Foundation’s pre-planning report. In fact we might conclude, given the social and economic problems in Southside Virginia that solutions for improving Southside’s regional economy, accommodating the projected increase in undergraduate enrollment, and effective social and cultural transformation of Southside Virginia would coalesce or unite within the policy community. What might be perceived during policy considerations involving a new college in Virginia is “a process of successive approximations to some desired objective in which what is desired itself continues to change under reconsideration.” (Lindblom, 1950, p 86).

On January 12, 2005 SCHEV filed its report on *House Joint Resolution 197* to the Virginia General Assembly. The executive summary reads in part as an apology for the conclusions and recommendations of its authors. The intent of the opening paragraphs was to provide commendation and recognition for efforts on behalf of the Harvest Foundation,
Virginia’s educational leaders, and the public. Deference to Virginia’s long standing commitment to education and its preferential history of creating four-year institutions based on an incremental model of expanding normal schools is also cited (HJR 197 Report, 2005). Consequently, SCHEV would not support a new college in Southside Virginia. “In light of their findings, SCHEV is not ready to endorse fully the proposed New College of Virginia, or the creation of any new institution in Southside” (HJR 197 Report, 2005, p. iii). Urging the Commonwealth to move at a slower pace, the authors of HJR 197, cite the need to evaluate other proposals, the need for an objective assessment of demand and costs associated with a new institution, and suggestion for a collaborative approach to the problems of the Southside region combined with other solutions to Virginia’s system wide enrollment projections.

While the prospects of a new college in Southside Virginia appeared to be diminishing, the General Assembly did agree to an additional allocation of $100,000 in 2005 for SCHEV to “conduct or contract for an assessment of postsecondary enrollment and program needs” (SCHEV, 2006, p. 1).

In her 1997 address to the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Beryl Radin employs a metaphor of “conversations” to explain emerging policy systems. Radin is not alone in considering the policy environment as historical, complex, social and value laden. (also see; Rein, 1976; Ball, 1993; Heck, 2004) Policy systems, argues Radin are understood in terms of multiple conversations occurring in the context of “multiple actors, levels of meaning and external pressures” (p. 211). The policy environment is
complex exhibiting the “ad hocery” (Ball, 1993) of social dynamics. Policy conversations involving the New College Institute emerge as data is generated and interpreted. Evidence from *H.J.R. Report 197* is merged with information from the Harvest Foundations Pre-planning report and with cyclical reports on enrollment trends at Virginia’s public colleges and universities. Collectively, multiple policy conversations reveal differing commitments, understanding, capability, resources, practical limitations, cooperation and compatibility within the emerging stream of policy discussions. In the emerging policy conversations it is values that become central. As explained by Martin Rein (1976), the purpose of research in public policy cannot be separated from the values coming into the analysis of policy. Values guide action, affect the interpretation of political feasibility, and influence the interpretation of policy options.

As the year (2005) came to an end other influences entered into the policy conversations. As a result, the birth of the New College Institute would move to center stage.

In January 2006, SCHEV completed a *Report on the Analysis of Education Demand in Southside Virginia and Recommendations for Action* (2006) as a follow-up to their initial assessment completed in January 2005. Summarized in their report was data obtained from a comprehensive needs assessment of access to higher education in Southside Virginia conducted by Chmura Economics and Analytics (CEA). The 133 page report provided to SCHEV by CEA intended to “capture the multifaceted aspects of the needs assessment for higher education in Southside…utilizing modeling, surveys, focus
groups and other research methods to quantify the market demands, student and household interests, as well as employers’ needs for such an institution” (CEA, 2005, p. 4). The authors of the January 2006 report recognized what had become a compelling case among legislators, philanthropists and citizens that additional post-secondary educational opportunities were needed in the Southside region as the means of producing a better educated workforce and to attract businesses to the area.

The needs assessment provided by CEA to SCHEV is not easily summarized. CEA’s exhaustive description of the Southside region is replete with statistical information, demographic data, educational assessments, economic analysis, and survey data from Southside residents, educators and businesses. While not specifically drawing any conclusions, the stated goals associated with CEA’s assessment articulated the diffused interests and publics having a stake in a new college. For example, CEA stated in their report that the educational needs assessment should consider the Commonwealth’s current system of colleges and universities, underrepresented rural and economically disadvantaged populations, the specific area in which an institution is located and tacitly implied economic interests relevant to the Commonwealth of Virginia (CEA, 2005).

Seizing upon bi-partisan support, democratic Delegate Ward Armstrong and republican Delegate Robert Hurt would sponsor House Bill 517 on April 19, 2006, amending the Code of Virginia and creating the New College Institute as an educational institution. In a similar measure, democratic Delegate William Roscoe Reynolds would sponsor Senate Bill 40 establishing the New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia.
On Thursday June 15, 2006 the story It’s Official ran in the Martinsville Bulletin announcing Governor Timothy Kaine’s signing of the bill to establish the New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia. Ceremonially surrounding Governor Kaine were bipartisan Virginia Delegates and Senators who made passage of the bill possible (Senator W. Roscoe Reynolds, Delegate Robert Hurt, Delegate Danny Marshall and Delegate Ward Armstrong). Describing the project for a new college in Southside Virginia, Governor Kaine stated his personal interest in the institution and pledged monetary support for NCI in the Virginia budget. According to former Governor Gerald Baliles who served as the senior advisor to the New College Institute Planning Commission, NCI’s creation was the result of “grassroots support, a hard working bipartisan legislative delegation and stumping from governors, past, present and future” (Martinsville Bulletin, 2006). On October 24, 2006 Governor Kaine would speak about the history of higher education at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the New College Institute. Excerpted from Governor Kaine’s speech were references to a new beginning and promising future for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Today, with the cutting of this ribbon, we begin a new era in Martinsville/Henry County and a new era throughout Southern Virginia...Today, we begin a new era where moms and dads in this part of the state are no longer forced to send away their children to pursue the opportunity of a higher education, knowing that there was little chance they would permanently return.

The New College Institute honors a tradition in Virginia Higher Education...[as] a collection of independently managed, distinct and even quirky institutions, with different strengths and personalities for the very different students who arrive to learn.
Like Virginia’s other institutions of higher education, the New College Institute will grow as we move forward...and so goes’ the many things we will be counting on from this institute as we work to keep Virginia moving forward. (Retrieved March 4, 2008 from www.governor.virginia.gov)
Figure 1: Legislative History of the New College Institute

**Senate Joint Resolution 459:** In January 1999, Delegate Charles Hawkins sponsored SJR 459 calling for a study to establish a college in South-Central Virginia.

**Senate Joint Resolution 123:** In January 2000, Delegate Charles R. Hawkins sponsored SJR 123 calling for a four-year college in South Central Virginia.

**House Joint Resolution 197:** On March 9, 2004, HJR 197 is passed in the House and Senate: The bill mandates a study for establishing a public four-year institution in South Central Virginia.

**April 2004:** Harvest Foundation announced its support for a New College in Martinsville with a $50 million matching grant towards its development. In May 2004, the Harvest Challenge Pre-Planning Report was prepared in support of a new college in Martinsville/Henry County.

**Report on HJR197:** On January 12, 2005, the SCHEV submits its report for “determining the need for a new public four-year, degree granting institution in South-Central Virginia.

**July-August 2005:** Chmura Economics and Analytics (CEA) conducts a need assessment for the demand for higher education in Southside Virginia.

**House Bill 517:** Introduced on January 11, 2006 by Delegates Armstrong and Hurt House Bill 517 requested amendment to the Code of Virginia and creation of the New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia.

**Senate Bill 40 and House Bill 517:** On April 17 and April 19, 2006 respectively SB 140 and HB 517 provide the final legislation creating the New College Institute.

**June 14, 2006:** Governor Kaine ceremonially signs legislations creating the New College
Purpose of the Study

Theoretical Framework: Education and Institutions

In a number of articles (Meyer, 1977; Meyer and Rowan, 1978; Boli, Ramirez & Meyer, 1985; Meyer, Ramirez, Frank & Schofer, 2005), institutional theorists prescribe conditions in which local educational organizations and systems are understood and constituted by rules and models operating within an institutional environment. Writing about the effects of education as an institution, John Meyer (1977) provided a conceptual framework for viewing the legitimacy of educational organizations as the reconstruction of reality based on a theory of knowledge and ritual classifications. “Research” Meyer concludes; “must examine the effects of education as an institution, considering effects of variables quite beyond the level of the classroom, the peer group, or the school as an organization” (p. 75). For Meyer, education as an institution is understood by the myths in modern society that recreate social structure and provide the legitimating conditions in which education is viewed. While Meyer acknowledges the local impact of education on the production of knowledge and personnel, he seems to reserve his strongest explanation of education as an institution for a theory of the origins and creation of educational organizations. “Any theory of origins...must deal with the core ideological elements of the institution, its highly institutionalized structure, its explicit incorporation of all members of society, its dramatic stress on individual action, and its homogeneous and universalized rationalistic frames” (Boli et. al, 1985, p. 149).
Beyond the rational and technical arguments used to determine policy decisions and outcomes, and beyond the politics of preference and resource commitment lurk narratives linking organizational founding with existing educational practices, institutional ideologies, and themes merging social legitimacy, collective interests and, public and private benefits. In essence, organizations do not just “spring from local soils” (Meyer et. al, 2005, p. 6) rather they derive their meaning from socio-cultural environments (i.e. institutionalized cultural processes) and exogenous models and meanings (i.e. exogenously legitimated properties). According to Stephen Ball (1994), public policy reflects institutional influences when, in the case of policy reception, such responses are in part socially constituted in activity systems and communities of practice as well as in larger social structural groupings. “A response to policy must...be put together, constructed in context, offset against other expectation. All this involves creative social action not robotic activity.” (Ball, 1994, p. 19)

**Methods: Organizational Narratives, Story-Telling and Sense Making**

The birth of NCI occurred in an instant with the ceremonial signing of enacting legislation by Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine. But the creation of NCI is understood and explained as a process in which public policy becomes accessible through examining the enacted narratives of individuals participating in creating the proposal for a new college in Southside Virginia. In the field of organizational studies the approach taken is to see how organizations are a product of policy making narrative and discourse influenced by the desire for institutional legitimacy and based on an ideological commitment to higher
education as both symbolically and practically transformative. Critiquing policy processes as a framework of segmented and sequential stages, Hall and McGinty (1997) recognize a policy making alternative in “the dialectical relationship between context and activity” (p. 338) where policies emerge from the transformational and dynamic interaction among policy actors and their intentions. Such a view considers how symbolic representations are a product of human action and how meaning is constructed in relation to individual and collective purposes. Policy intentions are according to Hall and McGinty “symbolic representations for the involved interests, where the realization of those intentions and interests can be seen in the specific form, content, and consequences of the policy products and process” (p. 441). As such, the founding of NCI can be examined in relation to context and intention implicating education as an institution with regional or local consequence and significance. Policies are a combination of text and action, words and deeds, what is enacted as well as what is intended.

In the tradition of historical research and narrative approaches to organizational studies the purpose of this study is to examine narratives as a “process of association, of building the ‘and, and, and’ connections” between actions, events, intentions and outcomes (Czarniawska, 1998, p. 20). The founding story of NCI must also be intimately related to the policy processes, the choice of organizational design and structure and selected programs. Policy makers act as problem solvers and policy studies emphasizing the social construction of problems seek to establish the influence of existing social, political and ideological structures on policy negotiation and compromise.
The purpose of this study is to examine the history of NCI through the use of historical sources including studies, legislation, media reports and interviews\(^6\) with key stakeholders and policy entrepreneurs. To understand the structure, semiotics and interpretative dimension of the founding narratives, history in the narrative tradition is approached as both art and science, as a process of discovery and interpretation (Rury, 2006). History as narrative involves the “creative use of evidence, constructing inventive recreations of the past, and utilizing historical exposition to consider certain values” (p.327) in the construction of a coherent story. Orienting the founding story is a framework for integrating a conceptual understanding of institutional theory with an analysis and interpretation of historical information and data. Within a conceptual framework for a theory of institutions, organizations are actors inserted within the narrative script and understood according to their core responsibilities, symbolic purposes and relations derived from a wider socio-cultural, political and ideological environment.

Specifically, as a source of legitimacy, policy processes involving the founding of NCI can be examined for themes, regularities and patterns relating higher education to organizational models and rules, political institutional frames and symbolic commitment to an organization of higher education as transformative. The story of NCI will be considered based on the following interpretative themes; institutional influences on organizational legitimacy, political decision making and compromise, and an ideological commitment to neo-liberal education policies. From an institutional perspective, issues of organizational

\(^6\) Collectively, interviews provide history information contained individually and socially in the collective memory of participants involved in the founding of the New College Institute.
structure, function and relation to the external environment will be considered. From a model of political choice, consideration will be given to the exercise of public authority and from political tensions that exist in the creation of collective public and private goods. From an ideological perspective, issues arising from neo-liberal ideology will be examined as giving rise to dominant values and beliefs attributed to founding NCI. Thematically and conceptually, this framework is interactive and reflexive. It is an attempt, as Carl Weick (1995) explains to construct a story “that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something which resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to contrast” (p. 60-61). In short, Weick adds, what is necessary in sense making is a good story.

**NCI is a Story of Symbolic Purpose and Meaning**

Narratives are analyzed in the process of sense-making in an effort to produce explanations of how the world works or to provide an interpretative lens through which the founding story of NCI is told. According to Barbara Czarniawska (1997), narratives enter into organizational studies and research as a collection of stories conceptualizing organizational life and providing an interpretative context for organizational stories. Stories are contextual and explain the relation between history, culture and social practices shaping our understanding of human experience and collective purpose (Henry, 2006).
The story of NCI is discovered in narratives that provide a type of psychic conversion because of their promise to resolve scary problems such as the dramatic economic and population decline in the Southside region, lack of access to post-secondary educational opportunities for Southside residents and transformation of the region’s social and cultural ethos. It is argued that narratives help legitimize the context in which events take place and in doing so they “exhibit an explanation instead of demonstrating it” (Czarniawska, 1998, p. 5). For example, the story of NCI generates a symbolically meaningful discourse about purposes, goals and ambitions linking higher education with individual achievement, economic, social and cultural re-vitalization. From the narrative perspective, participants insert the organization as an actor within stories in which the organization is perceived as a symbolic representation of their interests, values and beliefs (Golant & Sillince, 2007).

In order to understand symbols and meaning, narratives should be read in terms of “the deep semiotic structure” residing in discourse generation. Deep structures “are customarily opposed in semiotics to surface (or superficial) structures…the latter ostensibly belonging to the sphere of the observable, the former are considered as underlying the utterance” (Czarniawska, 2000, p. 22). The story of NCI is also a multi-voiced story in which narratives originate from different participants expressing different preferences and intentions. Policy actors at the State Council for Higher Education, delegates to the Virginia General Assembly, public officials and private actors have all contributed to policy conversations preceding the founding of the New College Institute.
Accordingly, NCI offers a researcher opportunity in re-construction. That is, re-constructing a founding story of the New College Institute around a powerful metaphor rooted in institutionalized forms of social choice. Representing the position of the Harvest Foundation, the authors of the pre-planning report provide the context in which the symbolic and legitimate purpose for NCI would dominate the founding story. According to their assessment, the “creation of a college in Southside Virginia should reflect an institutional story involving the proposed design and model of an organization relevant to its impact on the region’s economy and culture” (Bosher et. al 2004, p. 15). What the authors imagine is a new organization for post-secondary education in Southside Virginia. An organization inserted into a cultural and economic narrative where social revitalization and economic transformation link the state to the region and the region to its citizens. The story of NCI’s creation involves re-framing or re-structuring fragmented social problems through symbolic analogy to “bricks and mortar”. Drawing on the literature of symbolic action, founding narratives employ language to instrumentally signal the importance of organizational choice to both internal and external audiences.

“The emphasis of the new institution should be upon providing educational opportunities beyond high school to residents of the rural communities of Virginia” and in “providing high-quality post secondary education to a student body consisting primarily of students who may lack the educational advantages of your people from suburban parts of the state and from middle and upper income families” (Bosher et. al 2004, p. 6-7). Symbolically, NCI represents a “new story” or model based on developing new patterns of
community revitalization linked with access to post-secondary education in underprivileged and underserved regions and the creation of a public organization to serve those needs. States seeking to address limited post-secondary educational access in rural areas can look at NCI as an instance where committed citizens, legislators and philanthropists with a stake in the economic, social and cultural transformation of an affected region participated in designing an educational organization and programs, by re-defining its mission and by linking that mission with a distinct vision of higher education and community development.

NCI is a Story of Legitimacy

In principle, the creation and survival of NCI is based on how it defines its organizational identity within the context of existing institutions. Organizational identity is established to the degree that NCI incorporates externally legitimate formal structures contributing to commitment from internal participants and external constituents, and the degree in which the organization creates programs and services with ceremonial conformity to institutional rules (Meyer & Rowan, 1991). Institutional theorists, Meyer and Rowan argue that institutional organizations are “dramatically reflected [in] the myths of their institutional environments” (1991, p. 44) and provide structure to formal organizing activities giving them ritually validating significance and appearance. The process of legitimization extends beyond determining the formal structure of the organization or beyond the “bricks and mortar” housing its participants and reifying its internal structure. Rather, organization is viewed from what Philip Selznick (1948)
describes as analytically distinct but empirically united reciprocal consequences: as a concrete organizational system and an adaptive social structure. Organizations are according to Selznick infused with value and symbolic purpose. Beyond technical requirements and formal structure, organizations are created within a cultural system constituting an objective reality having both evaluative and cognitive dimensions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Golant & Sillince, 2007). According to Scott, institutional environments contain cognitive and normative elements where the “symbolic-expressive aspect of human behavior” is realized (Scott, 2007, p. 168).

Legitimation occurs at the institutional level when formal organizations become identified with symbols, values and ideologies having a strong base of social legitimacy (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). “Organizations seek to establish congruence between the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system of which they are a part.” (1975, p. 122) The hermeneutic task is to translate individual narratives involving the interests of constituent groups, policy makers and legislators as they relate to an institutional framework linking NCI with legitimate social practices and cultural ideology. As Czarniawska (1997) states: “If we want to understand a society, or some part of society, we have to discover its repertoire of legitimate stories” (p. 19). Similarly, narratives will help elaborate what Meyer and Rowan (1991) refer to as “rationalized organizational myths” or the building blocks (metaphorically the bricks and mortar) of NCI. Despite their emphasis on formal organizational structure, Meyer and Rowan (1991) realize legitimacy extends beyond
technical requirements to include; “[organizational] policies, programs, and procedures...enforced by public opinion, by the views of important constituents, by knowledge legitimated through the educational system, by social prestige, by the laws, and by the definitions of negligence and prudence” (p. 44). In addition, educational organizations are increasingly influenced by exposure to and pressure from ideologies and structures in the world system resulting in universal legitimacy in terms of creating both individual and collective goods within a “new globally institutionalized model of society” (Meyer et. al 2005, p. 23).

Czarniawska eloquently states the imperative of linking legitimacy with organizational creation and survival when she writes that organizations are “engaged in a quest for meaning in their life” (1991, p. 42). It is anticipated that narratives collected for this study will help translate norms and practices associated with the founding of NCI to norms and values communicated through legitimate social institutions and practices. Specifically, the founding of NCI can be examined through narratives uniting NCI’s mission with education as an institution and sources of legitimacy found in a transnational system of education.

**Research Questions**

What is the symbolic importance of an organization of higher education to a community and how is symbolism related to the process of institutional legitimacy? According to Deborah Stone (2002), symbolic representation is “the essence of problem
definition” and found in the essence of related public policy initiatives and organizational creation.

**Research Question:** How is NCI’s symbolic, social and cultural legitimacy understood and explained by viewing education as an institution?

Prior to founding of NCI, legislative initiatives, needs assessment, and pre-planning reports where generated by different constituent groups, representing different stakeholders with differing political and social capital. The resulting organization combines aspects of traditional post-secondary educational organizations while diverging in part from those models. NCI’s organizational structure represents a compromise resulting from political negotiation and differing constituent interests.

**Research Question:** How does NCI’s founding reflect political decision making and compromise within an institutionalized environment of higher education?

When I first entered a classroom at NCI, I was struck with my impression of the students. These were not traditional college students. They were older students, professionals in the Martinsville area, with families and full-time work schedules. They were students who had completed at least a two-year associate’s degree and through agreement with NCI were granted admission into their bachelor’s degree program. How is the policy discourse that defines student(s) different at NCI than at traditional four-year colleges? Was the founding of NCI linked to redefining the social identity of a traditional college student(s)?

**Research Question:** Is the social and cultural context of a community reflected in the construction of student identities and influenced by neo-liberal ideology?
Significance of the Study

On Wednesday October 25, 2006, the Martinsville Bulletin reported on the opening of the New College Institute in terms of a “can-do spirit” infecting the Southside region of Virginia. In a speech commemorating the ceremonial first class of students, Governor Timothy Kaine metaphorically compared the founding of NCI with the biblical story of loaves and fishes suggesting the spiritual nurturing of a new public bureaucracy. Other speakers included the new executive director of NCI and representatives from the State Council for Higher Education. NCI’s symbolic beginning was described as consensual, receiving bi-partisan support and expressively framing a new future for Martinsville and Henry County through a collaboration of leadership, vision and purpose.

Notwithstanding NCI’s ceremonial beginning, the political choice of an institution of higher education in Southside Virginia leaves many questions unanswered. Why was a new college started in Southside Virginia? The region suffers economically and the population has shown a decrease in recent years. What potential could a new college have in attracting college students? What is the role of other organizations providing access to higher education in adjacent regions? Have those organizations been successful in attracting disadvantaged students, increasing business activity or social transformation of affected communities? What role does legitimacy play in the quest for organizational identity within a highly institutional organizational field and how might NCI’s social legitimacy be understood in relation to policy enactment? And was evidence regarding the relationship between education projects, poverty and unemployment disregarded?
Notwithstanding these concerns, NCI does exist and by early indications, exceeds its founders’ expectations.

It is anticipated that some of these questions can be answered by examining the founding of NCI through the theoretical lenses suggested. In doing so, separate but related narratives are constructed as reflexive devices for seeing assumptions shaping the conceptual and ideology properties of higher education as an institutionalized organization. Reflexive interpretation seeks to re-create, as creative re-construction the founding narrative in terms of causes and consequences, symbols and intentions, beliefs and preferences during the creation of public bureaucracies. The purpose of this study is to inquire about and explain the basic patterns that all of us, including social scientists use in making sense of human experience and, more importantly, those aspects of human experience concerned with public policy, governance and organizational choice.
CHAPTER 2 SOUTHSIDE VIRGINIA

Southside Virginia: The Site for a New College

In deference to the type of understanding sought in this study, we can start with the question of why policy makers in the Commonwealth of Virginia chose the City of Martinsville as the location for the New College Institute.

Why Martinsville-Henry County as the site for a new college?

The study of social problems, for example the lack of educational attainment and economic decline can involve application of social science techniques to produce a causal understanding and framing of social problems and prescriptive policy solutions. Simply put, the choice of a new college in Virginia could be evaluated by documenting and assessing costs and benefits of a new college in the Southside region against comparative evidence indicating need in other areas or regions of the state for educational programs or against evidence linking rural education projects with community revitalization. Policy is, according to a traditional approach, “the explicit specification of courses of purposive action being followed or to be followed in dealing with a recognized [educational] problem or matter or concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals.” (Harmon, 1984, p. 13) Traditional policy analysis is predicated on the notion that problems and solutions are easily identified and isolated (Trowler, 2002, p.2). Data
provides evidence of a problem and consequent solutions to policy issues are then generated through application of a stage heuristic (e.g. Lasswell, 1956; Bardach, 2000).

The rational-purposive approach to policy processes and implementation can be justified through accumulating empirical evidence providing the foundation and basis for problem recognition and subsequent policy choices. The criterion of efficiency or cost effectiveness often provides justification for a specific program or policy (Bardach, 2000). As a commonly applied criterion for policy analysis, implementation studies based on utility, efficiency or cost effectiveness conceptualizes economic benefits to individual citizens relative to social or collective costs and resources. Commensurate with a stages heuristic, rational policy analysis places an economic valuation on students’ education experiences relative to economic theories and the bureaucratic model of organization. Policy processes simplified and stylized by assessments related to cost-effectiveness often lead to politically acceptable solutions by framing the causes, consequences, and solutions to social problems in terms of rational choice or rational planning objectives. That is, a model of reasoning offers intuitive appeal for identifying and achieving policy objectives (Stone, 2002). Scientific evidence coupled with economic analyses justifies “starting or stopping programs by providing...sound information that policy makers can use to make decisions.” (Birkland, 2001, p. 12) If we predicted the founding of a new college in Virginia based on economic analysis would Martinsville-Henry County emerge as a site for selection or even consideration for a new college?
In contrast to other regions of the state, the Southside region is in decline as evidenced by demographic and social variables. For example, the region is characterized by declining population (see Table 1). Residents living in Southside communities are underrepresented with regard to educational attainment (see Table 2). Depressed wages (see Figure 2) and unemployment (see Figure 3) also characterize the Southside region and student’s planning to attend a 4-year college is comparatively lower than statewide percentages (see Figure 4; Southside Virginia Higher Education Needs Assessment, 2005). Coincidentally, arguments favoring cost effectiveness were used by the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) during their initial assessment (HJR Report 197, 2005) for a new college in Southside when they consequently recommended not to “fully endorse the proposed New College of Virginia” (p. 19).

---

7 Using information obtained from the Virginia Department of Education (DOE), 34% of the high school students from Southside plan on attending a 4-year college compared to 47% statewide. However; a 2005 needs assessment conducted through survey research of local students indicated 75% of the students at Southside high schools were interested in attending a 4-year institution (Chmura Economics and Analytics [CEA], 2005). Different results are attributed to survey design (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia [SCHEV], 2005, p. 29). Controlling for various survey factors, CEA researchers estimate that 42% of the students could realistically overcome the barriers to college attendance and 30% would likely go to a 4-year college.
Table 1: Population Growth Statistics Southside Virginia: 1997-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Danville City</td>
<td>50,941</td>
<td>44,947</td>
<td>-11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>45,073</td>
<td>51,133</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry County</td>
<td>57,934</td>
<td>55,544</td>
<td>-4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinsville City</td>
<td>15,989</td>
<td>14,578</td>
<td>-8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick County</td>
<td>19,006</td>
<td>18,870</td>
<td>-0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsylvania County</td>
<td>59,757</td>
<td>60,826</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>248,700</td>
<td>245,898</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>6,829,183</td>
<td>7,712,091</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Educational Attainment in Southside and Virginia 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City/County</th>
<th>25+ Population with Bachelors Degree or Higher</th>
<th>Total +25 Population</th>
<th>Percent of Population with a Bachelors Degree of Higher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Danville City</td>
<td>4,614</td>
<td>43,120</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>4,889</td>
<td>33,037</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry County</td>
<td>3,809</td>
<td>40,518</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinsville City</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>10,843</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick County</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>40,518</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsylvania County</td>
<td>4,010</td>
<td>43,120</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southside</td>
<td>20,311</td>
<td>174,529</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>1,376,639</td>
<td>4,666,574</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Employment Wages Southside and Virginia 1998-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Southside</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$434</td>
<td>$604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$449</td>
<td>$635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$458</td>
<td>$676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$463</td>
<td>$706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$482</td>
<td>$716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$490</td>
<td>$742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$498</td>
<td>$779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$509</td>
<td>$813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$520</td>
<td>$847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$528</td>
<td>$885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Unemployment Rate Southside and Virginia 1998-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Southside</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The State Council for Higher Education conducted assessments prior to the founding of NCI indicating that a new college in Southside neither assured economic benefits to the region nor provided an efficient solution to projected enrollment increases facing Virginia’s college and university system \(^8\) (SCHEV, 2005; 2006). Rationale initially used to oppose founding the New College Institute in Martinsville is located in narratives contextualizing higher education in Virginia as a system and reifying the connection between Virginia’s system of higher education and the efficient and productive use of existing resources throughout Virginia’s current college and university system. For example, structural changes to the current college and university system, including use of

\(^8\) Every two years, the State Council of Higher Education works with the 15 public four-year institutions and Richard Bland College to produce a comprehensive set of enrollment projections to advise the Council, Governor and General Assembly on institutional enrollments for the following six years. For the 2003 process, SCHEV has been studying the trends and changes of the last fifteen years to help provide a context for the individual colleges’ and universities’ ability to absorb additional enrollment growth. (SCHEV, 2003, p. 1)
special purpose research institutes and public service centers, off-campus sites, and elimination of non-productive degree programs offered potential opportunities for increased efficiency and savings to the Commonwealth of Virginia in deference to establishing a new college (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission of the Virginia General Assembly (JLARC), 2003).

In addition to the Southside region, other regions in the state of Virginia are also underserved by post-secondary educational institutions and suffer from similar economic and cultural conditions characterizing the Southside region. Should these regions have been given consideration in policy deliberations when the topic of a new college emerged in the Virginia General Assembly? Complicating matters was Virginia’s previous attempt at a rural education project, the University of Virginia’s campus in Wise County, which proved unsuccessful in re-vitalizing the regional economy.

Conversely, major population centers in Northern Virginia, the tidewater region, and Richmond all boast major state universities with documented financial issues impacting enrollment practices (JLARC, 2003; SCHEV, 2007). The Commonwealth of Virginia could have directed resources or made structural changes to inefficiencies in non-core programs or activities at these heavily utilized universities as a solution to funding higher education and increasing enrollment opportunities throughout the state. Finally, why was a market solution to the problems of post-secondary education in the Commonwealth of Virginia not explored or encouraged? Private colleges and universities have developed niche markets within the state and provide an alternative to the state’s
investment in higher education, particularly at a time when market solutions are receiving considerable attention and when state budgets are contracting (Geiger, 2004).

If cost is not the only criteria for implementing public programs, there is also cause to question the benefit of a new college in Martinsville-Henry County. In terms of economic benefits derived from an increase in the supply of skilled labor, a primary argument cited in the creation of a new college, there is no evidence that labor supply both in terms of quantity and quality re-vitalizes economies or attracts business (Beck, Elliott, Meisel & Wagner, 1995). Economist John Galbraith (2008) argued that labor cannot be represented in terms of supply (i.e. in terms of a supply curve for labor). According to Galbraith, an increase in the supply of labor is not causally related to an increase in demand for labor which remains largely a function of employers who control the scale of the work place. It might be argued that new business and hence new jobs would simply not migrate to the Southside region in order to take advantage of the proposed surplus in skilled labor that a college would produce. This is precisely the experience attributed to the University of Virginia’s College in Wise County, an area also beset with unemployment and loss of industry. According to SCHEV and based on the experience in Wise County, “the mere presence of a post secondary institution does not necessarily ensure a strong economic base for a region” (SCHEV, 2005, p. 18).

Economic impact studies remain popular marketing tools for policy decisions. It is estimated that almost half of the colleges and universities in the United States have completed economic impact studies to encourage continued support for their institution
(Stokes & Coomes, 1998, p. 1). Economic studies describe both the short-run benefits of regional colleges in terms of the annual flow of regional economic activity and long-run contributions in terms of a region’s stock of human capital (Beck et al. 1995, p. 248-249). The impact of regional colleges must be measured in terms of both types of economic benefits and outcomes. According to Stokes and Coomes (1998, p. 2), the local economic impact of higher education requires assessing the value of expenditure impacts and knowledge impacts. The expenditure impact of a college is the number of jobs, the amount of sales and payroll that it generates over and above what is required to meet purely local demand. Knowledge impact results from the transmission of ideas to the community and is measured by an increase in human capital that translates into higher productivity and greater earnings. Externalities in the form of “better functioning democratic processes...more enlightened citizens, better government services to the community, more rapid technological growth...[and ] reduced crime” also occur with an increase in a regions knowledge capital (Stokes & Coomes, 1998, p. 2).

In assessing the impact of a new college in Southside Virginia, the authors of CEA’s needs assessment suggest the immediate impact of a college on Southside in terms of “a sizable, well-paid, stable employment including faculty, staff and administration... [and] the procurement of goods and services for its operation” (2005, p. 18). In terms of long-term impacts, CEA authors describe community development to the region such as

---

9 According to CEA (2005), a new college in Southside Virginia would create externalities in terms of direct, indirect and induced spending throughout the region. According to their estimates the total and immediate impact of a new college in Southside would result in “an estimated 160 jobs in the regions and $11.1 million in local spending” (p. 19).
improved infrastructure, and more social and cultural activities for community residents (2005, p. 21). With regard to economic impact studies, it is clear that economic analysis should focus on both the short-run and long-run impact of regional colleges and universities. Beyond that, comparative analysis coupled with realistic expectations defines economic impact as the difference between existing economic activity in a region without the presence of an institution of higher education and the level that would be present if the institution existed.

Policy analysis is often directed through the accumulation and use of technical information; information concerning the magnitude and facets of problems, their solutions, and the probable impact of various solutions (Heck, 2004).

Writing about science, rationality and the policy processes, Birkland (2001) acknowledges a research tradition in policy studies relying on the application of quantitative and qualitative research techniques used in the discovery of policy objectives. Policy process studies rely on rational, scientific and quantitative information as evidence for preferred policies. Such a view of the policy process does however have its critics and detractors.

We must realize writes Birkland (2001) that policy processes go beyond what is called rational analysis or rationality planning. Policy processes “transcend economic and statistical analysis” and reveal the interplay of “values and belief systems of the participants in the process, the structure of the process itself, and the distribution of power” (2001, p. 17). We should recognize what Deborah Stone (2002) and others (Rein, 1976;
Farmer, 1995) acknowledge as the limits of the rationality project. To paraphrase Stone (2002), the rationality project misses the point by offering categories of thought logically and causally connected with our ability to judge the real world. Instead, Stone suggests that “the very categories of thought underlying rational analysis are themselves a kind of paradox” (p. 33) exhibiting abstraction and multiple meanings. Reviving the concept of society as a polis, Stone is critical of assumptions associated with a rational-technical analysis of common social problems and suggests that the nature of information in a polis is ambiguous, interpretative, incomplete and strategically manipulated. The essence of policy making in political communities is seen as a struggle over ideas. It was a struggle over ideas central to higher education, ideas concerning the diffusion of knowledge and its relationship to social mobility and economic transformation, and ideas central to educational opportunity and individual achievement that would justify the creation of the New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia.

*The Nature of Public and Private Goods in Higher Education*

Perhaps we are faced with a paradox in the founding of NCI. Evidence of a paradox exists when something cannot be two different things at once (Stone, 2002). In the case of the New College Institute the model of society providing justification for policy decisions and implementation is the market. Despite conflicting information about the efficacy, efficiency and potential productivity of market solutions to public problems, NCI could not have been founded without confidence in market solutions and rational planning objectives to social problems. Paradoxically, NCI also incorporates legitimate community interests
and collective purposes beyond circumscribed self interests and private benefits; for example enhanced cultural and workforce literacy and a concomitant growth in human capital throughout the region. In the context of culture, NCI also incorporates a socially constructed set of assumptions surrounding political systems, socially shared symbols, meaning and ideology specifically associated with an organization of higher education.

Education is seen as producing both public and private externalities and the role of education supported by state subsidies is justified, as in the case of NCI, to markets and the production of a knowledge economy, and enhanced human and cultural capital. The founding of NCI in relation to ideology and the pursuit of educational goals involves the legitimacy of higher education as an institutionalized organization and the symbolic outcomes of educational attainment or the production of externalities in terms of collective social and cultural benefits. Paradoxically, NCI is organizationally oriented to a quasi-market curriculum and the production of knowledge is based on an analysis of a competitive market environment for professions that are in demand. The language explicit in the economic recommendations contained in SCHEV’s (2006) analysis of educational demand in Southside Virginia makes explicit the connection between a knowledge economy, higher education and the region’s economic growth or re-vitalization.

A critical contribution made by higher education is the development of the local workforce in skills such as critical thinking and analysis, oral and communication skills, computer skills and comfort of computer use for non-IT employees, the ability to work in teams and forge collaborations—basic people skills, a strong work ethic and self-discipline, and the self-confidence that comes with a higher level of educational attainment (2006, p. 18).
This study however; is based on an analysis of the New College Institute established in Martinsville-Henry County, not as the inevitable result of “planning rationality” (Hall & McGinty, 1997) but rather as a process and consequence of institutional, ideological and political factors or variables. An economic analysis fails to demonstrate a causal connection between an organization of higher education and regional economic development or provide a solution to projected undergraduate enrollment increases throughout the state. More importantly, an economic or rational planning analysis of NCI fails to express evolving social objectives central to the development of public policies and social institutions. Rather, the founding of the New College Institute can be understood as a process involving the perception and interpretation of higher education in terms of public and private externalities, the institutional and symbolic significance of an organization of higher education to a local community, and as a process and consequence of an ideological commitment within the state to provide solutions to social, cultural and economic problems. Institutional theory provides the context for examining policy processes and implementation through a set of theoretical arguments about the influence of societal values, cultural theories, ideologies, and perceptions of organizational structures and practices that influence the policy making process and organizational legitimacy (Birkland, 2001, p. 150). Policy is expressed by different participants who exist in a matrix of differential priorities, pressures and interests. Furthermore, policy processes are value laden and values enter into the policy debate prior to the point when policies are enacted. It is claimed that policies are “vehicles for
intentions” (Hall & McGinty, 1997) serving the aims, goals and purposes that motivate multiple actors in the policy arena. Policies transform intentions into symbolically institutionalized ideals, goals and purposes.

Theory and Perspectives

Institutionalization: Organizational Identity and Legitimacy

Theoretically, institutionalization of an organizational field is social activity defined by the interaction of individual actors (micro-level), organizational actors in the form of coalitions and interests groups interacting with the state as a supra-organization, and education as an institution. The creation of NCI can be examined and explored in terms of different and interacting levels of analysis reflecting the construction of organizational identity and legitimacy based on institutional themes and narratives. In their seminal work on the sociology of knowledge, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) consider the social foundation for a theory of institutions. Considered by some as the founders of a cognitive theory of institutions (Scott, 2008), Berger and Luckmann posit institutions as foundational to social order, direction and stability. Institutions contain knowledge “that is learned in the course of socialization and that mediates the internalization within individual consciousness of the objectivated structures of the social world. Knowledge...[that] programs the channels in which externalization produces an objective world.” (p. 66) For Berger and Luckmann, institutional structure is sedimented and accumulates as historical knowledge necessary for coordinated activity essential to
social order and cooperation. Underlying institutional knowledge is a history of legitimacy emphasizing the consistency of organizational goals with societal functions.

Institutional theory applied to policy situations offers the flexibility of examining policy outcomes through multi-level analysis and multi-disciplinary perspectives. The activity of individual actors, professionals, policy experts, and individuals in the local community is defined, objectified and made legitimate by linking individual intentions with organizational activities and social institutions. Linkages are seen by institutional theorists when organizations are examined in relation to their environmental embeddedness or interpenetration (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 2003). Policy decisions reflect action predicated by the history of institutional norms and production of social knowledge relating individual achievement and status with the goals of higher education; social mobility, social efficiency and democratic equality (see Labaree, 1997). Institutionalization is a process in which the rules and patterns of professional groups, the state and non-governmental associations typify socially constructed realities and habitualized patterns of human activity.¹⁰ For Berger and

¹⁰ According to Burger and Luckmann, institutionalization is a process involving the construction of social knowledge. As such, they claim institutionalization occurs whenever there is a “reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors.” Furthermore, institutions imply historicity and control. They are built on a course of shared history in which man constructs his own nature or man produces himself. Burger and Luckmann’s thesis is foundational in institutional theory because of their focus on how institutions develop and why institutions persist. Their focus is not on the rules or patterns within an institutional environment per se, rather they are concerned with the social production of knowledge and how the product of knowledge relates to cooperative human activity. The origin of institutions is found in accumulated patterns of human activity. “All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern (i.e. institutionalized), which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and...is apprehended by its performer as that pattern.” (1966, p. 53)
Luckmann legitimacy evokes “second order” meaning. “Legitimation ‘explains the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectified meanings… and by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives.” (p. 92-93)

Expanding on the literature of legitimacy expressed by Berger and Luckmann was a shift in the focus from organizational goals to the structural and procedural aspects of organizations (Scott, 2008). In their article, The Iron Cage Revisited, Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (1991) re-examine the concept of organizational isomorphism and competition over legitimacy and social fitness. Of consequence are mimetic processes and normative pressures on organizations to model themselves after similar organizations. From the standpoint of organizational creation, organizations must exhibit features that make them both “recognizable and in conformity with normative and regulative requirements” (Scott, 2008, p. 153) with organizations in the same arena.

Education as an institution is characterized by processes of secularizing organizations according to ideological rules and membership requirements. Education as an institutionalized organization contributes to increasingly homogeneous organizational forms (i.e. isomorphism) within an organizational field and the attribution of social legitimacy. Creating an organization of higher education viewed as a highly institutionalized process suggests that any theory of the origin of educational organizations must deal with the “core ideological elements of the institution” (Boli et al., 1985). Institutional theorists assert that educational institutions in the United States demonstrate
“considerable ability to survive, precisely because they are matched with—and almost absorbed by—their institutional environments” (Meyer and Rowan, 1991).

Does the system of colleges and universities in Virginia constitute an organizational field or societal sector? In modern societies, education is a highly developed institution and a network of colleges and universities forms an organizational field to the extent they are defined by processes of “institutional definition and structuration” (Meyer & Rowan, 1991). The organizational field for higher education in Virginia can be thought of and viewed empirically as the development of a mutual awareness among organizational participants that a “set” of organizations are involved in a common enterprise; the production of knowledge (Geiger, 2004). Formal educational systems, whether defined as a network of colleges and universities in Virginia or as a relational network of post-secondary higher education centers in Southside Virginia are institutionalized according to rules establishing standards, practices, programs, administration and accountability functioning at a collective level. For example, rules form the structural basis for a system of education when they deliberately promote socialization of organizational members (i.e. students, teachers and administrators) and non-members (Meyer, 1977). In modern societies, institutional rules and patterns—products of professional groups, the state, and nongovernmental associations provide the (social)

—

11 Societal sectors are defined by Scott and Meyer (1991) to “include all organizations within a society supplying a given type of product or service together with their associated organizational sets, suppliers, financiers, regulators, and so forth.” Distinguished from organizational fields, which are largely defined by geographic proximity, societal sectors
framework for the creation and elaboration of formal organizations (Scott, 2003). In essence, this is a process of organizational legitimacy.

The similarity of formal organizations within an organizational field reveals the powerful influence institutional environments exert on organizational structure by creating conditions for cooperative social action. It is however, not simply the structure or rules of formal organizations that are determinative. Notably, sociologists of new institutionalism focus increasing attention on the roles, procedures, symbols, professions, knowledge, and expertise that is defined within an institutionalized organizational field. Meyer (1977) argues that education has structural properties ordered by broader institutional belief systems and that relational networks transmit institutional knowledge in the form of rationalizing myths. While Meyer’s emphasis on rationalization and structure should not be overlooked, institutions are also considered symbolic systems for transmitting values and expectations.

In order to understand organizational founding, we must separate (conceptually) the rules of formal organizational structure from institutional mechanisms of interpreting, theorizing, and framing alterations of individual and collective perception. According to Scott (2008), researchers are paying attention to institutional mechanisms as symbolic systems or carriers of institutional knowledge. The common theme underlying such approaches is the emphasis on meaning and forces within the institutional environment that convert information into symbolic practices. Accordingly, institutions can be seen as considered broader vertical and nonlocal linkages among organizations in order to understand the structure and functioning of organizations in contemporary society.
carriers or symbolic systems in which practices are abstracted, codified, and converted into recognizable models.

The New College Institute was founded by an act of the Virginia General Assembly. Preceding the enacting legislation are narratives defining the proposed role of a new organization of higher education. From an institutional perspective, the organizational founding of NCI is constrained and enabled through the composition of cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources provide stability, meaning and legitimacy to the new public bureaucracy (Scott, 2003). If policy makers want to design and create an organization of higher education, they should examine similar organizations that collectively comprise the organizational field and model their organization on successful models within the field or sector. In doing so, policy makers should look for patterns of legitimacy, identity, purpose, compliance, and order structuring entrance into an organizational field. If researchers want to understand NCI’s founding from an institutional lens, they should also examine the “stories, rituals and world views” used in the selection of organizations as the solution to collective problems.

**A Political Theory Organization**

In September 2007 the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia produced its report on enrollment trends at Virginia’s public colleges and universities (SCHEV, 2007). Data compiled for SCHEV’s report was accumulated over the past 19 years and published in bi-annual reports demonstrating a steady increase in full time enrollment in Virginia’s
college and university system. Across all measures of student enrollment (FTE and Fall Headcount), the system wide increase in total undergraduate enrollment is attributed to the expansion of three existing institutions: James Madison University, George Mason University, and Virginia Commonwealth University. Situated in the Valley Region, Northern Virginia Region and Central Region of the state respectively, these institutions drew the largest number of incoming freshman and experienced the greatest increase in FTE enrollment. Not surprisingly, an analysis of enrollment by geographic region indicates that the Valley Region (24.1%), Northern Virginia Region (28.2%) and Central Region (15.1%) also experienced the largest percentage increase in undergraduate fall enrollment compared with other regions of the state.

The City of Martinsville and Henry County are located in the Southern Piedmont Region of the state as defined by SCHEV. This region experienced a 12.2% increase in fall undergraduate enrollment at public four-year institutions compared with a state average of 19.6%. In addition to the slower than expected growth of undergraduate enrollment in the Southern Piedmont region is information obtained from student need assessments in the Southside area. According to the authors of CEA’s assessment (2005) and based on the most recent data from the Virginia Department of Education, “only 34% of the high school

---

12 The report by SCHEV cites data from 1987 through 2006. During that time, full time equivalent student (FTE) enrollment at Virginia’s colleges and universities increased 25.1% or the equivalent of 27,627 students.

13 Full time equivalent enrollment is a statistic derived from the student-credit hour productivity of an institution. For undergraduate students, this is the total annual credit hours divided by 30.
graduates in the six cities and counties defined as Southside Virginia plan to go to a 4-year college, compared with 47% statewide” (p. 26) The report by CEA also implicates college attendance rates with socio-economic status and census data concluding that “students with lower social economic status have lower college attendance rates” (2005, p. 47). The relationship between socio-economic status and college attendance is however, complicated and not easily summarized.

Researchers (Roscigno, Tomaskovic-Devey & Crowley, 2006) have documented educational achievement and geographic inequalities linked with community and family expectations, local job structures and historical arrangements. Collectively, lower than expected undergraduate enrollment, the reluctance of Southside students to indicate an interest in attending college and the historical inequalities of place are conditions that might prohibit the allocation of public resources to the Southside region for a new college. In fact, CEA indicated that the policy problem facing Virginia’s legislators in considering a new four year college in Southside is one in which the demand to meet the capacity of incoming students must be measured against the benefits of building a new institution in Southside or by expanding capacity at existing institutions.

So, how was the political decision made to found a new four year college in Southside Virginia? Specifically, if institutions in other areas of the state are experiencing

---

14 Chmura Economics and Analytics conducted a student needs assessment as part of their report on Southside Virginia Higher Education Needs Assessment (August 19, 2005). In that report, the Southside region is defined as: Danville City, Franklin County, Henry County, Martinsville City, Patrick County, and Pittsylvania County. While not coterminous with the Southern Piedmont Region as defined by SCHEV, the Southside region is included in the Southern Piedmont Region which is a larger geographic region.
increasing undergraduate enrollment and if their populations do not experience the same disadvantages as students from Southside then why was funding provided to a new college in Martinsville and not to expanding existing institutions?

The founding of NCI can be viewed in the context of political decision making where the political choice of organizational structure is inextricably linked with policy development and outcome. As previously noted, alternative choices to NCI were codified in a set of policy alternatives linked with projected increases in undergraduate enrollment throughout the state of Virginia. Policy options included structural changes to the current college and university system or efficiency improvements. In fact, it appears contrary to an institutional theory of economics to fund a new college in Southside Virginia. Commensurate with a theory of institutions and organizational choice, institutional theorists emphasizing transaction costs suggest that organizations evolve within a governance structure that contains both constraints and enhancements to transacting (i.e. costs of transacting) (North, 1991). Organizational development is demonstratively constrained and/or survival is jeopardized when it is costly to transact. NCI would appear to be a costly alternative to enrollment demand given other options of expanding enrollment at existing institutions or efficiency improvements to the current system. In fact, we know SCHEV initially did not support a new college in Virginia and CEA’s analysis indicated cost as a factor in considering a new college verses expanding capacity at current institutions. In order to understand why NCI came into existence we need what Terry Moe (1990; 1991; 1995) referred to as a theory of political organization.
Building on the new economics of organization, Moe (1995) explains how the allocation of public authority is diffused in different groups or publics operating in an environment characterized by uncertainty. Moe suggests how a new organizational structure becomes politically legitimate when public agencies are created as a result of the authoritative action of politicians and interest groups. A political theory of organization begins with an understanding of public authority as a valuable property right and public bureaucracies emerging from the “struggle to control” how public authority will be exercised. According to Moe (1995), if we want to understand how new organizational structures are created then we need to understand how public policy is decided and how existing groups participate in political choice.

A theory of public bureaucracy is built around three types of actors—interest groups, politicians, and bureaucrats, who compete for interests and enter into exchanges within the hierarchical ordering of democratic politics. These groups are variously identified in this case as Virginia delegates and senators to the Virginia General Assembly, the Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont, the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia, and the citizens of Martinsville and Henry County. The politics of building a public bureaucracy involves a choice of organizational structure, location and anticipated performance. Investigating political choice requires asking questions about how client interests are negotiated and how ideas are exchanged. Consequently, attention must be given to the expected impact of rural education projects (do they really work?), the power
of rhetoric to symbolize educational investment in an economically depressed area, and the perceived role of NCI in solving collective social problems.

In a sense, public organizations are created through external political exchanges securing legitimacy and basic life support (Wamsley & Zald, 1973). Public-sector theory of organizations addresses the structure, personnel, location, oversight, and funding characterizing public organizations and determining specific acts of public authority. The creation of public bureaucracy is bounded by political choice and power. Integrating politics and organization involves consideration of a plurality of interests within a political community and the kinds of structures different groups demand, design, and impose (Moe, 1991). Decisions over organizational structure are embedded within an institutional context or framework involving scenarios over competing interests vested in public authority.

What might become clear is the structural choice of NCI as a policy solution to Virginia’s projected undergraduate enrollment demand or as a remedy to an economically disadvantaged region of the state can be viewed through a political theory of institutions. This insight will help explain how bi-partisan political actors, interest groups and public agencies entered into a contract for a new public organization of higher education in opposition to other economically efficient options and evidence that rural education projects do not necessarily lead to economic growth. Organizational choice cannot be separated from political choice or political processes. Organizational factors are influenced by politics to the extent that “political institutions affect the distribution of resources” and programs (March & Olsen, 1984). Choosing NCI as both a solution to the economic
problems of Southside Virginia and as a promise to meet projected enrollment demands involves a battle over ideas which, according to Deborah Stone (2002) are “the very stuff of politics” (p. 54).

**Neo-liberalism**

Implicit in the policy documents produced by the Harvest Foundation, SCHEV and CEA are implied relationships between economic production, community responsibility, individual responsibility and the state.\(^\text{15}\)

For example, reference is made to building a knowledgeable work force as essential to the future of Martinsville and Henry County (Bosher et. al, 2004), to regional economic development through entrepreneurial training programs (SCHEV, 2006), and to a significant economic impact on the region resulting from the new college (CEA, 2005). The citizens of Martinsville and Henry County are variously described as culturally and economically disadvantaged (Bosher et. al, 2004) with college attendance rates substantially and proportionately underrepresented (CEA, 2005). In comparison, the role of the state is assumed to provide institutional conditions that ameliorate regional disadvantage by discovering solutions to Virginia’s workforce and student enrollment needs. Organization of the state structure is said to require the “marriage of an economic and political organization” (Galbraith, 2008, p. 132) where public decisions yield gains to specific private persons. Surprisingly, it is SCHEV that understands the changing role of

\(^{15}\) The state is an abstraction and reference is made to various policy and political entities, their practices, status, function and power.
the state when they warn against moving too quickly to establish a new college in Southside.

Contrasting the immediacy of establishing a new college with a slower approach, the authors of SCHEV’s response to *House Joint Resolution 197* (2005) write: “...one can view the Commonwealth’s approach to advancing public higher education as a minimal response to market forces. In other words, an immediate need of the market is met and then institutional entrepreneurship is encouraged to grow each institution into its own market” (p. 1). Commenting on the changing role of the state in support of a new college, CEA (2005) authors make a similar claim with regard to the economic benefits of a new college including “development tied to research and technology transfers to the local economies...whose purpose is to create value by enlarging patent thickets and research publications driving grass-roots demands for graduates knowledge, skills and abilities” (p. 5). And by analogy, the authors of the Harvest Foundations Pre-Planning report suggest increasing state action by citing other examples of policy involvement in regional and local educational systems and efforts to strengthen and re-vitalize economies. Interestingly, the authors of the Harvest Foundations Pre-Planning report suggest the proposed new college would transform the importance of civic virtue and cultural understanding in both the personal lives of students and in the communities in which they live.

Clearly, these narratives suggest linkage between implicit and tacit assumptions and propositions characterizing the citizen as entrepreneur and the state as an enabling entity. The structure of narratives reflects a commitment to market solutions and the desire
to create public bureaucracies that take advantage of market forces. As a political project, the founding of the New College Institute is influenced by discourses linking competitive entrepreneurialism with market solutions to social problems (see Apple, Kenway & Singh, 2005). Once again our task is to interpret narratives within a framework that provides explanation and meaning.

In a growing body of theoretical literature, neo-liberalism is ideologically implicated in transforming our understanding of the state and its role in educational programs.

Neo-liberalism has its historical roots in classical liberalism but differs markedly regarding discourses characterizing the state and individual. Within the neo-liberal form of governance, the concept of citizen is transformed; “The so-called passive citizen of the welfare state is transformed as an autonomous active citizen with rights, duties, obligations, and expectations – the citizen as active entrepreneur of the self; the citizen as morally superior” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252). A corresponding shift occurs as a result of redefining the citizen and in this case the student in terms of his or her relationship to society.

In his critique of neo-liberal school policies Hursh writes that neo-liberal governments have “attempted to retain legitimacy by shifting social responsibility from the community to the individual” (2007, p. 17). In doing so, governments have transformed the relationship between the individual and society by reducing everything to individualized relationships between providers and consumers, and [by] understanding inequality as a
sign of personal/community deficit. Furthermore, Hursh (2007) suggests that “by reducing success to individual merit, schooling becomes one more consumer choice” (p. 19). Hursh clearly considers the dark side of neo-liberalism when he equates inequality with perceived differences in personal effort. By squeezing surplus value from individuals, “teachers and students, like all workers, are valued for their contribution to the economy: Teachers are expected to create appropriately skilled and entrepreneurial citizens and workers able to generate new and added economic values” (Hursh, 2007, p. 22).

The neo-liberal state seeks to (re)create individuals defined in thought and behavior as enterprising and competitive entrepreneurs. According to Apple (2001) neo-liberalism marks “a shift involving a change in subject position from ‘homo economicus’, who naturally behaves out of self-interest and is relatively detached from the state, to ‘manipulatable man’, who is created by the state and who is continually encouraged to be perpetually responsive” (p. 414). The state, according to neo-liberal theory has a transformative role and associated discourse. The welfare state is replaced by the enabling state and governance is “reshaped and rationalized” bringing it in line with globalizing economic realities. The state is organized as such, to reflect an ideology where the economic sphere “is removed from moral and social discussion by portraying these latter realms of discourse as entirely dependent on the former” (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 11). Accordingly, neo-liberals imagine the state embracing new forms of governance based on quasi-entrepreneurial and market models of action. Instead of relying on hierarchical organization in the creation of public bureaucracies, neo-liberals in the
tradition of public choice theory suggest public policy should enable organizational arrangements that take advantage of “diversity, variety, and responsiveness to the preferences of constituents” (Ostrom, 1989, p. 63).

Discourse linking individual survival and prosperity with that of the state suggests “artificially arranged or contrived forms of free, entrepreneurial and competitive conduct of economic-rational actors” (Olssen, 2003, p. 199). Individual freedom and autonomy are understood in relation to systems of expertise and technology utilized for the purpose of political control or to shape social consciousness in a manner that circumscribes societal possibilities with market outcomes. The neo-liberal project is constructed through discourses of inevitability where individuals “have been persuaded to willingly take over responsibility for areas of care that were previously the responsibility of government” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 249). Corresponding investment in government shapes individual desires, consciousness, intention and thought through which economic survival or demise are secured.

For example, policy narratives (Bosher et. al, 2004; HJR197 Report, 2005; SCHEV, 2006) explicitly equate job training and entrepreneurial education with labor markets and the demand for labor by business. The causal relationship is surreptitiously applied to labor markets and the assumption that business will move into the Southside region to take advantage of the increased supply of skilled labor. While it is claimed that jobs in health care, technology and other growth industries are aimed at making the labor
market in Southside robust, this type of logic misconstrues the nature of policy problems by superimposing an artificial relationship between labor supply and demand.

What does this mean for the student and citizen of Martinsville and Henry County? What is the expect impact of neo-liberal economic policies on the future of NCI? Finally, how does the establishment of NCI reflect the emphasis on knowledge capital in the Southside Virginia region, the corresponding emphasis on education as the product of private action, and the relationship between labor markets and economic activity? Stated empirically neo-liberalism offers a number of open-ended questions related to educational policy goals and outcomes.
CHAPTER 3 PUBLIC POLICY AND INSTITUTIONS

The process of public policy making growing out of institutional theory describes public policy as the result of the action of individuals, rules, procedures and governments. Consequently, institutional bias or how certain design features of the institutional environment predetermine the outcome of policy decisions becomes a central theme. This approach to policy studies contrasts with traditional policy processes which view public policy resulting from an incremental or stage heuristic.

In terms of institutional approaches, public policy takes on a decidedly social and ideological dimension. That is, policy processes reveal the interplay and location of different individuals and groups shaping interests and perceptions about the nature and relevance of particular policies. At the institutional level, policy is influenced by regulative, normative and cognitive scripts, biases and influences. More importantly, institutional theorists understand ambiguity and unresolved purpose as part of the policy process. Contrasting institutional approaches to policy process with rational planning Trowler writes; “At the institutional level... policy making and policy implementation are more likely to be the result of negotiation, compromise and conflict than of rational decisions and technical solutions, of complex social and political processes than careful planning and the incremental realization of coherent strategy.” (2002, p. 5)
Charles Lindblom (1950) provided the earliest expression of policy formation as contextual, chronological and approximate in his seminal article, *The Science of Muddling Through*. Lindblom anticipates a growing focus on institutions as constraints and limits on the complexity of policy choices and emphasized values, beliefs and preferences as central to the development of social policy. While Lindblom did not fully develop an alternative method of social policy analysis, he does identify a method of successive limited comparisons according to which policy formation is understood as the practice of “muddling through”. Successive policy choices are determined by value and preference. According to Lindblom (1950), limits on human intellectual capacities and on available information restrict man’s capacity to be comprehensive while institutional arrangements provide adaptive solutions to problems of imperfect or asymmetric information and costly monitoring.

Institutional theorists would expand the role of values, perspectives and preferences by describing institutional mechanisms giving rise to a certain degree of regularity and predictability effectively restraining the complexity of rational comprehensive planning. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) would implicate institutional arrangements as specific limits on the complexity of social problems and human interaction.

Policy making as a socially constructed activity emphasizes the social setting in which policy actors compete, negotiate, compromise and cooperate over time in integrating diverse interests to create support for policy actions. Policy makers also play a key role in transforming social and cultural values into policy actions. From this perspective, two
related propositions become salient. First, the process of public policy making cannot be reduced to rational planning objectives. Public problems represent complex social problems and our ability to comprehensively analyze social problems is limited. As such, values, preferences and beliefs delimit policy alternatives by imposing constraints on otherwise rational action. Institutional theorists add to our understanding of social policy processes by explaining how institutions contain “varying assumptions about the interests that motivate legitimate action, the auspices under which persons or collectives may act, and the forms of action that are appropriate” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 10). Secondly, institutional constraints can only be understood in reference to the cultural and historical frameworks in which they are embedded. Cultural values shape institutions and their traditions and these values are imbedded in public policies. From an institutional perspective and with a commensurate emphasis on the social and cultural dimensions of policy making comes an emergent set of theoretical arguments about the influence of societal values, cultural theories, ideologies and perceptions of organizations, their structure and practices. According to Heck; “From the institutional perspective, policy action results from the enactment of intuitional norms and rules as opposed to individual choices, and policy implementation refers to the extent to which organizations adopt structures consistent with these broad values and ideological positions.” (2004, p. 150)

In moving forward, the policy process involving the New College Institute is properly examined through the lens of institutional theory with a focus on the rules, values, beliefs, preferences and ideologies that legitimize the range of human needs with the social
institutions created to meet them. As background to examining institutional influences on policy processes, Martin Rein (1976) recommends the following value critical dimensions of policy analysis.

1. Examine policy in historical perspective.
2. Approach social policy as a moral critic.
3. Consider the political reception of policy studies.

**Institutional Theories of Organizations**

Institutions are social phenomena (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Selznick, 1992). Defined by “the presence of authoritative rules or binding organization” (Jepperson, 1991), institutions and institutionalization are core concepts in a general sociology of organizations. Despite concern over the thoughtful usage and clear understanding of institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Jepperson, 1991), there is general agreement that, in the words of economist Douglass North; “Institutions matter.” (1990, p. 12) The sentiment is echoed by sociologists Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell (1991) in their introduction to *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* [16]. Editing articles with an interdisciplinary perspective, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) suggest their objective is not to unite institutional theory around a single set of assumptions or goals rather they

---

[16] Powell and DiMaggio argue for a distinction between “old institutionalism” and “new institutionalism” based on their understanding of core differences between the two institutionalisms. These differences appear to be practical and not necessarily theoretical. Old and new institutionalists argue that institutions constrain organizational rationality. Although not noted in the literature, this belief owes its origins to the work of Herbert Simon. Nevertheless, differences in old and new institutionalism are explained by attribution of the sources of constraint and in the relation of an organization to its environment.
acknowledge; “many new institutionalisms – in economics, organizational theory, political science and public choice history, and sociology” (p. 1). Despite an interdisciplinary focus, DiMaggio and Powell assert new institutionalism coalescing around a “common skepticism toward atomistic accounts of social processes” and conferring “a common conviction that institutional arrangements and social processes matter” (p. 3). In order to understand why institutions matter and how institutional theory contributes to an understanding of public policy making, we must start by explaining the “nature of human cooperation and coordination” (North, 1990, p 11).

Institutions are defined by W. Richard Scott (2008) as a combination of “regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life” (p. 48). The theoretical framework for a theory of institutions is found in evidence accumulated about human interaction, socialization, habits and routines. That is, institutions are a lens through which we can understand social relationships and explain coordinated social activity including policy processes. To say that people are social means they associate with one another, interact, form groups, develop norms, control the behavior of group members, and develop status order and habits. Following the sociological premise that societies are collectives of individuals who seek some type of meaningful outcome, coordination and cooperation are necessary and institutions matter.

In this study, institutional knowledge constrains the choice according to which the organizational form (structure, rules and norms) for the New College Institute is of primary
significance. Formal organizations can be defined according to their structural components, practices and rules and not to a specific organization, as institutionalized. Effort will be made to understand how social choices are shaped, mediated and channeled through institutional arrangements. In addition, institutional knowledge provides a mechanism for the transmission of symbolic action and the intention of policy makers (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). From a sociological perspective, organizations are institutionalized through ideological and cognitive processes that reveal the symbolic nature of organizational functions. Institutions create taken-for-granted understanding by imposing constraint, enhancement, scripts and classifications eliciting affective commitment from organizational members and non-members and shapers of interests and politics.

The New College Institute is an example of institutionalization, the origins of which can be located in the symbolic search for organizational legitimacy, meaning, identity and purpose. The New College Institute is the symbolic representation of an organization of higher education sui generis. That is, in the tradition of new institutionalism effort will be made to examine the founding of the New College Institute in the relationship between organizations and their environments, as a consequence of cultural and ideology shaping the intended outcome of educational programs and as the symbolic transformation of policy making intentions. The origins of institutional theory and the role institutions play in social, cultural and cognitive processes provide the theoretical framework for this study.

**Philip Selznick: A Normative Theory of Organizations**
In his article on the adolescence of institutional theory, W. Richard Scott (1987) writes: “One of the earliest and most influential versions of institutional theory in organizations remains that associated with the work of Philip Selznick” (p. 493). Working under Robert K. Merton at Columbia University, Philip Selznick expanded on Merton’s idea that multiple forces (not a single force of instrumental rationality) within a bureaucracy produced discipline and oriented officials to a valued normative order (Scott, 2008). According to Selznick, researchers should see beyond the technical core in organizational studies or beyond organizations as instrumental mechanisms to achieve specific goals but (rather) view organizations as “consequences of purposive social action” where the setting or context in which social outcomes occur is relevant. Organizations were viewed within a social or environmental context where constraint and enforcement arise from commitments enforced by informal structures or institutionalism. For Selznick (1992) “because organizations are social systems, goals or procedures tend to achieve an established, value-impregnated status. We say that they become institutionalized.” (p. 256-257)

In his seminal work The Moral Commonwealth, Selznick (1992) turned his attention to the moral character of organizations. It is here that Selznick fully developed his theory of institutions reflecting his accumulated understanding and scholarship. The Moral Commonwealth is a treatise on the social foundations for a theory of community implicating the moral significance of socialization and institutionalization with organizational purpose and function. Selznick (1992) would recognize that to
institutionalize is “to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand” (p. 233). Paraphrasing Selznick (1992), institutions provided a normative context for cooperative behavior. By integrating patterns of behavior, institutions created social entanglements and commitment from organizational members. Additionally, institutionalization infused organizations with meaning and legitimacy bound into the fabric of social life. New institutionalists would see organizations as entities conditioned by a process of institutionalization extending beyond formal structure by incorporating means that become infused with value.

Selznick’s contribution to the adolescence of institutional theory was to identify the operative or social system, not the formal structure alone as the focus of institution building. Institutionalization was predicated on emergent informal structure that upheld formal systems by enhancing cohesion, initiative and morale. According to Zucker (1987), Selznick’s “classic statement, to ‘institutionalize is to infuse with value’... suggests a fundamental opposition between task and institutional elements, both internally and in the environment” (p. 452). In the years following Selznick’s pronouncement, institutional theorists (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) would articulate a theory of institutional fields as limits on the direction and content of organizational change and creating an “inexorable push toward [organizational] homogenization."

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann: The Social Construction of Reality

What had been lacking in a theory of institutions up until this time was a prescription for the social foundation and origin of institutions originating in cognitive
process (i.e. the transmission of knowledge). Selznick described institutions as emergent patterns of social interaction and institutionalization referred to social practices integrating individual (socialization) and group practices within a formal and informal organizational structure (institutionalization). Through the process of absorption and interpenetration, institutions acted upon members of an organization as constraints on decision making (as in the case of bounded rationality) and as incentives to socialization and group integration based on a commitment to value and purpose. The question remained as to how institutions were created and maintained, and to what extent do institutions affect the everyday activities of organizational members.

Working collaboratively, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) would publish their treatise on the sociology of knowledge forming the premise of their book, *The Social Construction of Reality*. Regarded as foundational (Zucker, 1987; Scott, 2008) to a theory of institutions, Berger and Luckmann were concerned with the task of developing an epistemology of knowledge. “It is our contention”, write Berger and Luckmann; “that the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for ‘knowledge’ in a society... [and] we contend that the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality” (1966, p. 3). Founded within the philosophical tradition of phenomenology\(^{17}\), Berger and Luckmann identified the dialectical process in the emergence or construction of social reality and the construction of meaning giving rise to both social order and institutionalization. Institutionalization occurs when we observe

\(^{17}\) See Alexander Kojeve (1969) for a description and explanation of Hegel’s phenomenological method.
man as both producer and product of his social world “in moments of externalization and objectification” (p. 61). To put it another way, the external world is a social world, co-constructed through human activity, habitualized over time and exhibiting a history of sedimented meaning. For example, student and teacher roles represent organized social activity having both a history and shared meaning. Roles are reproduced out of necessity to social order within an institutional environment and objectively real and subjectively meaningful; that is, socially shared or integrated meaning.

Institutionalism proceeds in three phases or movements: externalization, objectivation and internalization.¹⁸ Each movement determines how the objective world is internalized determining the subjective structure of consciousness itself. According to Burger and Luckmann (1966), each movement corresponds to “an essential characterization of the social world. “Society as a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man as a social product.” (p. 61) According to Scott (1987), Burger and Luckmann’s influence has lead to the belief among institutional theorists that “institutionalism...is viewed as the social process by which individuals come to accept a

---

¹⁸ In their article *The Reification and Sociological Critique of Consciousness* (1965), Berger and Pullberg describe the dialectical process as “movement” to gradually different states of consciousness. In the Social Construction of Reality, Berger and Luckmann refer to externalization, objectification and internalization as dialectical “moments” (p. 60-61). Both Scott (1987) and Tolbert & Zucker (1996) prefer to use the term moment to describe the transition from individual experience to social facts. While not incorrect, the use of the word “moment” can be misleading. Alexandre Kojeve (1969) a foremost scholar on Georg Hegel, describes the dialectic of the real and the phenomenological method in Hegel as a process of action, creation and conversion. It is, according to Kojeve, active realization that characterizes the dialectical method. The term “moment” is found at that instance when negation is overcome. I prefer the term movement which I believe is consistent with Hegel’s method and with the process of institutionalization.
shared definition of social reality – a conception whose validity is seen as independent of the actor’s own views or actions but is taken for granted as defining the ‘way things are’ and/or the ‘way things are to be done’” (p. 496). Institutions are primary in the process of constructing a meaningful social reality.

*The Social Construction of Reality*, although not specifically applied to organizations is used by institutional theorists (Zucker, 1977 & 1987; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott 2008) as foundational to a cognitive theory of institutions and as a distinguishing feature of organizational studies. Applying his own analytical framework to institutional theorizing, Scott (2008) writes “these institutionalists [cognitive-cultural theorists] take seriously the cognitive dimensions of human existence: mediating between the external world of stimuli and the response of the individual organism is a collection of internalized symbolic representations of the world” (p. 57). Beckoning Max Weber who claimed social action was primarily important to constructed meaning systems and symbols, Berger and Luckmann’s modern organizational actor must make sense (meaning) out of objective conditions and the actor’s subjective interpretation of them. Research conducted by cognitive psychologist’s instantiates institutionalization as information processing activity that affects the evaluations, judgment, predictions and inferences of organizational actors (Scott, 2008). Berger and Kellner (1981) summarized the process of institutionalization as the “sedimentation of meaning” or “a crystallization of meaning in objective form” (p. 31).
A theory of institutions depends on the sociology of knowledge providing the connection between institutions, organizations and individuals. “Formal organization, considered as an institution, is a packaged social technology, with accompanying rules and instructions for its incorporation and employment in a social setting.” (Jepperson, 1991, p.146-147) Institutions embody programmed actions or common responses to situations as a source of information, knowledge and legitimacy. Institutional knowledge is, according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) “the sum total of ‘what everyone knows’ about the social world, an assemblage of maxims, morals, proverbial nuggets of wisdom, values and beliefs, myths, and so forth” (p. 65). As a source or origin for a theory of institutions, Berger and Luckmann emphasized the importance of symbols and meanings containing both cultural and cognitive elements. Meaning arises from individual interaction, shared conceptions constituting the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is constructed.

**Institutions and Institutionalization: A Framework for Understanding**

The field of institutional theory defies consolidation. It is as W. Richard Scott (2008) suggests, a field of knowledge where “the concepts and arguments advanced by our predecessors have been strikingly diverse, resting on varied assumptions and privileging differing causal processes” (p. 47).

This analysis does not exhaust the diversity of explanations and prescriptions for a theory of institutions. Nor does it exhaust the rich intellectual tradition and conceptual work that has accompanied the evolution of institutional theory. As previously noted,
institutional theory defies consolidation or uniting. This is not to suggest categorizing principles, variables, processes, and mechanisms, clarifies the relatedness of institutions to social systems and organizations. Saying that institutions can be viewed from a sociological perspective does not create exclusion from biological, psychological or cultural explanation. In fact, every social activity involves a set of individuals with their own habits and tastes, a way of interacting and relating to one another, and expected patterns of interaction.

Institutional theory does provide a road map according to which empirical observations and policy processes make sense. In terms of qualitative research and research questions generated for this study, concepts derived from institutional theory can be connected to an understanding of policy processes, political outcomes, organizational choice, and legitimacy. Moving forward, the task is to understand education as an institution and to explore the effects of legitimacy and symbolic action during policy processes leading to organizational creation. A conceptual framework provides what Maxwell (2005) refers to as a “system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs research” (p. 33). Mapping the framework used in this study includes institutional theories of human behavior, assumptions regarding institutions as a social system and the process of institutionalization in the social construction of meaning and cooperative activity.

*Is Education an Institution?*
For purposes of this study, educational systems must be connected with organizational choice and broad institutional ideologies in a meaningful and symbolic way. Meaningful in the sense that a post-secondary educational system must be seen as embedded in an institutional context or environment, and penetrated by institutional ideology and knowledge. Education has a meaningful history and institutional distinctiveness derived from its fundamental social and cultural role in the transmission of knowledge and the socialization of members and non-members. Conflicting educational goals, as Labaree (1997) has suggested contrast with its relatively stable institutional identity (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Educational organizations are correspondingly symbolic to the extent that education is seen as an institution for transforming individuals and communities, remedying inequalities, and providing opportunities through enhanced mobility. Education depends on its symbolic character and investment as a means of influence, acceptance and political viability. Symbolically, the educational system is a combination of processes characterizing both individual and societal needs and aspirations packaged as a causal story and making for an effective policy drama.

Institutionalization as a Type of knowledge

In 1975 French post-modernist Michel Foucault published perhaps his most accessible book, *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Over time Foucault would publish a series of other books permanently altering our understanding of many institutions of Western society. Foucault’s methodology notwithstanding, his task is that of a diagnostician who concentrates on relations of power and knowledge in modern society. In *Discipline and
Punish. Foucault applies his method to schools, focusing his analysis on the “political technology of the body...and the institutional apparatuses of force” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 115). What is salient in Foucault’s analysis is application of individual disciplinary and discursive practices on relations mediating the organization of society and knowledge. In modern society writes Foucault, truth is centered on discourse and “the institutions which produce it” (Foucault, 1980, p. 43). For Foucault a system of education functions as an institution to the extent that it is implicated in the productive use of knowledge.

Foucault never deviated from his analysis of discipline and power as the ideological basis and possibility for constituting a politics of truth. Foucault was concerned with control over individual bodies as a product of social, economic and political institutions. For Foucault, and for Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer (1985), a modern system of education produces and transforms individuals and society into new institutional frames that are symbolically rational and purposive. “[E]ducation is built around a model of creating societal members...[and] the effort to create properly socialized members of rational society as workers, innovators, consumers, organizers, and committed members of the political community.” (Boli et. al, 1985, p. 158) For Foucault, the specification of pedagogical practices at the individual level and the organization of schools at the institutional level converge. The privileged status of rationality, the project of modernity and the normative power of knowledge (i.e. techniques and procedures accorded value in
the acquisition of truth) connect the historical foundations for a theory of institutions with the modernized organization of education as an institution.

Beginning in the late 1970’s John W. Meyer in collaboration with other institutional theorists and sociologists (e.g. Meyer, 1977; Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Boli, Ramirez & Meyer, 1985; Meyer, Ramirez, Frank & Schofer, 2005) would begin examining and explaining the rise of mass education as an institution. For Meyer (1977), education could be viewed as an institution implicating a system of ideologies “institutionally embedded in our doctrine of progress” and “bureaucratization” (p. 66). In their critique of the rise of mass education found in the similarity of organizational structure, Boli, Ramirez and Meyer (1985) proposed an institutional explanation of education stressing ideologies of universalistic integration embedded in modernism19. Working from a theoretical and conceptual level to pedagogical practice, Meyer outlined a theory of educational institutions foundational to social order implicit in modernism, professionalism, and rationalism. The doctrine of progress provides meaning, continuity and purpose to the project of modernity and links organizational form and structure with universal models. Referencing Foucault, Meyer et al. (2005) observed that the modern university is

19 It is both interesting and understandable that the authors connect institutions or institutionalism with modernist ideology. While various definitions and precepts are proposed as characteristic of a modernist world view, modernism themes appear to capture the ideas of progress, rationality and equality. More importantly modernity works at the level of the individual. For Meyer (1977), modernism presupposes the construction of individual identities through and epistemological project in which truth and values require grounding in the self. “In the broadest sense” writes Meyer (1977), “mass education arises as a purposive project to construct the modern polity, reconstructing individuals in accordance with collective religious, political, and economic goods and purposes. “ Although highly de-centralized, educational systems exhibit striking
supported by a claim of unified knowledge and authority, social progress and a new
globally institutionalized model of society.

Modernism does not explain institutional processes but provides an ideological
basis for educational organizations according to; a system of rules and regulations,
definition of formal structure, commitment to the production of knowledge, and
socialization of both organizational members and non-members. Collectively, institutions
influence the creation of modern organizations which in turn construct modern identities
based on ritually reproducing patterns of socialization. Meyer et al. (2005) observed that
education functions as an institution in modern society as individuals become aware of
rules that govern their life courses, acquiring appropriate “consciousness, abilities and
orientations” (p. 34). Returning briefly to Foucault, Meyers would agree with Foucault that
educational systems work at the collective level by constituting a symbolic infrastructure
sustaining the status of individuals (collectively) as conferred by institutional knowledge-
society myths.

According to Myer et al. (2005); “At the societal level, taken-for-granted cultural
and organizational models contribute to...the content and scope of citizenship and ...define
the features of proper social organization.” (p. 6) Meyer’s theoretical insights establish the
organization (i.e. the formal structure) of mass education as an objectified social structure
providing symbolic representation of public goods, ideals and universal truths. Meyers
understandably produces a rationalist explanation of organizations in a normative context.

______________________________
similarity because they are linked, through the project of modernity with an ideological
commitment to creating societal members.
Juxtaposing rationality with myth provides the ideological basis and explanation for ubiquitous formal organizational structures. Rational organizational structures are a source of legitimacy and authority. Education is viewed as an institution because of its ability to bind organizations based on technical procedures of production, personnel selection, programs, and taken for granted means of achieving organizational objectives. The project is contingent on the possibility of rationalized institutional myths integrating the work of students, teachers and administrators.

**The Effects of Higher Education as an Institution and the Process of Legitimization**

From the literature on education as an institution comes the basis for viewing education as a legitimating structure in modern society. Legitimacy is a determinate of organizational identity and ultimately survival. Legitimacy is not a commodity organizations possess or exchange rather it is “a condition reflecting perceived consonance with relevant rules and laws, normative support, or alignment with cultural-cognitive frameworks...[and] a symbolic value to be displayed in a manner such that it is visible to outsiders” (Scott 2003, p. 213-214). Institutional environments are consequential to a theory of organizations and legitimacy plays a prominent role in organizational survival (Meyer, 2005). Legitimacy encourages commitment from internal participants and external constituents and is implicated in the notion of organizational prestige (Perrow, 1961). The literature on legitimacy is also associated with the analytical basis of institutions previously discussed. For example, legitimacy can be based on an organizations established legal status relevant to laws and regulations. Legitimacy can have normative
elements relating to the socialization and professionalization of organizational members. And, organizations might seek legitimacy through cultural-cognitive elements or taken for granted understanding within an organizational field.

Collectively, the literature on legitimacy explains how established organizations are impacted by their institutional environments and how adoption of structural change is processed through institutional mechanisms stressing legitimacy. What we need to consider with the founding of NCI is if legitimacy is a salient feature of public policy processes and if there is a different source of legitimacy during an organizations founding. It is to these questions that we now turn.

**Organizational Legitimacy**

On Sunday June 18th, 2006 three days after the ceremonial signing of legislation creating the New College Institute, the Martinsville Bulletin reported on the excitement generated by the colleges’ founding. The history of the college up until this time had been ideological, conceptual and imagined. Now it was a reality.

From the time the college first was suggested by state Senator Charles Hawkins to its approval by the General Assembly, years of brainstorming, study, discussion, haggling and persuasion took place. As described last week by former Governor Gerald Baliles and Executive Director of the New College Institute, Dr. Barry Dorsey, efforts were political yet non-partisan, guided by the desire to improve access to higher education for students in this [Martinsville/Henry County] area and the economic outlook for this part of the state at the same time. (Martinsville Bulletin, June 16th, 2006)
There seemed to be an assumption of legitimacy pervading the founding of the New College Institute. Because it was the result of careful study and deliberation, because it was perceived to be supported by non-partisan political coalitions, and because it was linked with discourses that both explained and recommended solutions to economic decline and social problems in the Southside region, the New College Institute was not seen as a quixotic cure for the regions social and cultural decline. Rather, the New College Institute symbolized access, opportunity and investment in human capabilities causally linked with the legitimate goals of higher education, the production of knowledge and social transformation. Absent from the language associated with the policy papers or sponsored legislation was mention of legitimacy.

*Legitimacy Defined*

While a number of definitions of legitimacy have been proposed (see Suchman, 1995, p. 573) it is Dowling and Pferrer (1975) who provided an accepted normal science definition of legitimacy. Working with historical sources, Dowling and Pferrer (1975) define legitimacy as “congruency between the social values associated with or implied by [organizational] activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system” (p. 122). Their definition is congruent with Meyer and Scott (1983) who explain legitimacy as stemming from congruence between the organization and its cultural environment. Broadly, organizations are perceived as legitimate when they are understandable. “Organizational legitimacy refers to...the extent to which the array of established cultural
accounts provides explanations for [an organization’s] existence.” (Meyer & Scott, 1983, p. 201)

Researchers (Meyer, 1977; Rowan, 1982; Gamson & Horowitz, 1983; Suchman, 1995; Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Ruef & Scott, 1998; Morphew, 2002; Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002; Golant & Sillince, 2007) have examined organizational legitimacy as it relates to acceptance and adaptation of organizational forms, practices, programs and policies within an institutional context. In fact, a discussion of legitimacy cannot proceed without reference to the institutional environment where elements of legitimate organizations are embedded (Suchman, 1995). Understandably, the script for organizational legitimacy is described by Meyer and Rowan (1991) in myths that define organizational activities in relation to ritually significant experiences and appearances perceived to validate an organizations function. Similarly, meaning is bestowed on organizations when they exhibit structural or formal similarity (i.e. isomorphism) with other organizations defining an organizational field or societal sector (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott & Meyer, 1991). This gives a system of colleges and universities its universal rationalistic frame, similar formal structure and informal patterns of socialization.

**Institutional Studies on Organizational Legitimacy**

Studying the influence of societal sectors and the structural properties of schools, Meyer and Rowan (1978) reported on data collected from 188 elementary schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. Their findings indicate low levels of within school consensus on policy matters but relatively high levels of consensus across the district among role groups.
Their findings implicate institutional sectors as influential in the adoption of conforming practices across schools to specifications and norms established within the educational sector. To put it another way, schools are not structured by means of organizational mechanisms but are ordered by broader institutional belief systems such that they appear legitimate. As reported by Scott and Meyer (1991), “Institutional environments are, by definition characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy” (p. 123). Organizational structure is not without consequence, however; it is the establishment of practices conforming to an institutionalized value system that is salient to issues of organizational legitimacy. Legitimacy is thus a process of socializing organizational members based on discernable patterns and rules.

In 1982 Rowan examined structural changes in California schools pursuant to innovations in school related programs. Beginning in the 1930’s, California public schools came under pressure to assimilate structural changes related to legislation involving school health, school psychology, and school curriculum (Rowan, 1982). Working with historical documents, Rowan examined the prevalence and stability of structural innovations related to changes in the institutional environment. Accordingly, institution building seen in the adoption of structural changes within an organizational field or sector “demonstrates an important proposition in institutional analysis, that organizational structure becomes isomorphic with norms, values, and technical lore institutionalized in society” (p. 250). In an effort to gain legitimacy, Rowan proposed an idea of “balance” as a constraint and basis
of social evaluation and endorsement. Balance emphasizes “the establishment of ideological consensus and harmonious working relations among legislatures, publics, regulatory agencies, and professional associations” (p. 260). Rowan hypothesizes that in sectors characterized by imbalance, innovations are less wide-spread and less stable. Conversely, the evolution of balance in the institutional environment legitimizes new structures. According to Rowan, “as legislatures and professional agencies develop programs and grant credentials, new programs gain status as important collective goals and are imbued with a glow of lawfulness and scientific rationality” (p. 263) Legitimacy is contingent on both isomorphic organizational structure and on ideological relatedness to institutional norms and beliefs. More importantly, legitimacy requires consensus among constituent groups that constitute a social network or societal sector. Rowan cites his conclusion as follows: “The findings reported here show that utility of an institutional approach to the problem of structural expansion. They demonstrate that organizations tend to become isomorphic with institutionalized norms, standards, and technical lore and that this process is aided by the evolution of balance within social control networks.” (p. 276)

Research involving organizational legitimacy also includes study of a regional college system. In 1983, Gamson and Horowitz established a protocol for examining relatively new and dispersed influences on the Israeli Education System. In the 1970’s, Israel was moving towards the certification of regional colleges according to criteria established by the newly formed Council for Higher Education. The Council was granted authority for licensing post-secondary institutions that according to the authors, “found
themselves on constantly shifting ground as they struggled to find identity and a basis for legitimacy.” (Gamson & Horowitz, 1983, p. 186) According to Gamson and Horowitz, in the early 1970’s the Council of Higher Education began licensing post-secondary educational organizations thus establishing a move towards greater institutionalization.

“The effort in the 1970’s to define a rational basis for the standardization and control of postsecondary education after a decade of unplanned expansion is…precisely what an institutional framework would predict.” (p. 186) Of interest is the reciprocal process of institutional legitimacy occurring simultaneously within a system of regional colleges and in the Council of Higher Education as a quasi-governmental agency. According to Gamson and Horowitz, both processes reflect institutional effects on organizations based on; (a) assessment criteria defined by important groups in the environment, and (b) the link between performance and acquisition of resources.

In 1998, Reuf and Scott developed a multidimensional model of legitimacy to test hypotheses involving hospital survival in changing institutional environments. Using data from 143 hospitals, Reuf and Scott examined the effects of managerial and technical legitimacy on organizational survival over time. The strength of their study was the connection between legitimacy and Scott’s (2003; 2008) previously articulated analytical framework for institutional theory. According to the authors, “it is useful to distinguish analytically among three basic components of institutions –the normative, the regulative, and the cognitive –each giving rise to a distinctive basis for evaluating legitimacy and to distinctive types of control mechanisms –normative, coercive, and mimetic.” (Reuf &
Mechanisms and processes involved in organizational legitimacy operated at different organizational levels. As such, the authors were able to confirm that, hospital organizations responded to the source of legitimacy assessments and the organizational function being legitimated. Legitimacy assessments in the form of normative pressures were salient with regard to organizational function. “Our analysis suggests that the salience of managerial and technical forms of normative legitimacy can fluctuate across different institutional regimes” (p. 898) and are a primary determinant of organizational survival. Different hospital organizations operating in different institutional environments responded to normative pressures by altering either managerial or technical functions ultimately affecting organizational survival.

Finally, linking legitimacy with organizational survival often begins at organizational conception. Defined by the acquisition of resources, legitimacy is a social judgment of acceptance, appropriateness, and desirability enabling organizations to survive and grow (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). In their study of organizations within the early years of existence, Zimmerman and Zeitz argue that legitimacy is determined during the time of organizational founding when the strategic actions of an organization conform to properly constituted social systems or the rules that guide acceptable behavior. Legitimacy is based on judgments and perception about the future of an organization. Organizational survival is enhanced when it is properly constituted; committed to the proper scripts, rules, norms and values, and models; able to use appropriate means; and pursuing acceptable ends. Borrowing Scott’s (2003; 2008) analytical framework, the authors conceptualize and
then test legitimation strategies relating organizations with their environments.

Conformance, selection, manipulation and creation strategies are conceived of as choices within an institutional matrix. Choice, according to the authors, involves “manipulation of the environment and the selection of performance standards within which one will operate” (p. 421). Extracting strategic information from the environment tends to marginalize the impenetrable qualities of institutions as mechanisms for the transmission of normative information.

Table 3 summarizes the research on organizational legitimacy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Study Population</th>
<th>Type of Legitimacy</th>
<th>Source of Legitimacy</th>
<th>Mechanism of Transmission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meyer and Rowan (1978)</td>
<td>188 Elementary Schools</td>
<td>Normative &amp; Regulative: Legitimacy is conforming to an institutionalized rule structure and value system.</td>
<td>Legitimacy is based on organizational practices reflecting an institutionalized rule structure (norms, values, beliefs).</td>
<td>Reproduction or socialization of organizational members pursuant to established norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowan (1982)</td>
<td>California Public School System</td>
<td>Cultural and Cognitive: Legitimacy is achieved through balance and consensus.</td>
<td>Constituent Groups and social networks; legitimacy is acceptance as the basis of social evaluation.</td>
<td>Ideological/Rational: Legitimacy is conditional on endorsements from legal and professional authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamson &amp; Horowitz (1983)</td>
<td>Israeli Regional College System</td>
<td>Regulative: Legitimacy is achieved through assessment of performance and acquisition of resources.</td>
<td>Government agencies provide the basis for legitimacy through the link of performance with the acquisition of resources.</td>
<td>Ideological/Rational: Legitimacy is a system function defining the basis of authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reuf &amp; Scott (1998)</td>
<td>143 Hospitals</td>
<td>Normative: Organizational legitimacy is assessed through conformity to a specific standard or model.</td>
<td>Correspondence between organizational function and source of legitimacy.</td>
<td>Rational: Legitimacy is inter-organizational and transmitted through the functional aspects of the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimmerman &amp; Zeitz (2002)</td>
<td>New Ventures</td>
<td>Cultural/Cognitive: Legitimacy is equated with scripts and models involving appropriate means to obtain organizational goals.</td>
<td>Legitimacy is a condition of selecting an appropriate environmental strategy.</td>
<td>Social and Political: Organizations select strategies during creation that will enhance resource allocation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of Studies on Organizational Legitimacy

Regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive determinants of legitimacy are critical to organizational survival and a search for organizational identity. With isomorphism as a driving force for organizational creation and legitimacy, we might wonder how organizations define their mission and purpose within a localized context and how this might impact an evaluation of organizational legitimacy. That is, how do legitimacy assessments and evaluations transcend macro-level institutional isomorphic influences in order to meet legitimacy requirements in a local context or at a local level during the proposed creation of a new organizational structure? Researchers look for generalities at the macro-level and then identify cases that fit prescribed conditions of socially appropriate and recognizable behavior congruent with an organizational field or societal sector. But we cannot ignore agent action in legitimacy valuations particularly when variation or divergence occurs or when public policy is being decided.

Legitimacy is implicated in strategic planning and cognitive approval when material resources and moral credibility are seen to exist at the organizational level. Everything else appears to follow logically from this process and organizations exist and survive based on their linkage with institutions that enhance a supply of resources and social acceptance. The argument is similar to North’s (1991) prescription that organizations learn strategies to exploit the “rules of the game” within an institutional framework. Emphasis on organizations acquiring legitimacy as an economic or strategic
activity marginalizes acquisition as an active process involving inter-related systems, social valuations, symbolic representations, and political acceptability and commitment. Emergent public organizations seeking legitimacy engage in a process akin to interaction not acquisition.

During organizational creation, both formal and informal networks link institutional actors with the process of policy making (Ogawa, 1994). In a sense, policy process studies involving institutional approaches describe how policy is made: the actors, rules, procedures and government entities that comprise the policy-making process. The focus is on how certain design features of the institution tend to predetermine the outcome of policy decisions.

Legitimacy and the New College Institute

In January 2005, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia included in their response to House Joint Resolution 197 a proposed service matrix for two competing models for the new college in Martinsville, Virginia. The matrix, according to the authors of the report; “compares aspects of the NCV [New College of Virginia] proposal and the Collaborative proposal” (SCHEV, 2005). The comparison is framed in rationalist or cost-benefit terms with language stressing the difference between a high-cost non-traditional approach and a lower-cost traditional approach. If we frame consideration of these competing models in terms of institutional theory with an emphasis on organizational legitimacy, then we can begin to appreciate developing linkages between the conceptual and organizational properties of the New College Institute, the current system of higher
education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and policy reflecting the choice of organizational structure. While the language of organizational legitimacy is absent from SCHEV’s 2005 report, there is every indication that identity and legitimacy are implicated in the perceived acceptance of the proposed college. Linkages that would eventually result in establishing NCI not as a traditional four-year institution but one based on the collaborative proposal served by a consortium of established organizations through modification of the “2 + 2” model\textsuperscript{20}.

On November 3, 1994 Longwood University issued a news release calling for a cost saving alternative to the New College of Virginia (retrieved August 4, 2008, from http://www.longwood.edu/news/releases/partnership). The news release summarized the sentiment of Longwood University President Patricia P. Cormier that “a collaborative, innovative program” offered on the site of Patrick Henry Community College would meet the education needs of Southside Virginia residents. The anticipated saving to the taxpayers of Virginia when compared with the establishment of a new college would be $4.1 million. The proposal, which would eventually be used as the comparison model in SCHEV’s initial report to the General Assembly, would tap into existing resources of Longwood University, Old Dominion University (ODU) and Patrick Henry Community College (PHCC) by providing a “2 plus 2” program toward undergraduate education.

\textsuperscript{20} According to the authors of HJR 197 (2005), a 2 + 2 program is built upon programs at the local community college and offerings at established institutions on site in the Martinsville/Henry County area. In essence, the community college serves as a feeder school where students can complete a 4-year degree through agreement with established institution offering the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} programs (only). This proposal is in contrast to establishing a stand alone 4-year baccalaureate college in Martinsville.
Students would complete the first two years of study at Patrick Henry Community College and then Longwood and ODU would offer the third and fourth years of study on site at PHCC. Three advantages beyond the cost saving to the Commonwealth of Virginia were cited.

First, all three [Longwood, ODU and Patrick Henry Community College] institutions are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Such regional accreditation is required for federal financial aid or if students want to transfer to another institution or enroll in graduate school after completing their undergraduate program... Secondly, all three institutions have administrative structures and the latest technological infrastructure. Finally, Patrick Henry Community College already has an outstanding physical plant including science labs and computer labs. Over its 40-year history, the college has served more than 30,000 Southside residents in their quest to improve skills, increase knowledge, and become productive community members.

An alternative to the collaborative plan was introduced by former James Madison University President, Dr. Ronald E. Carrier representing the interests of the Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont. Dr. Carrier wrote an editorial in November 2004 in what appeared to be anticipation of SCHEV’s report to the General Assembly in January 2005 (HJR 197 Report) rejecting the new college project advanced by Longwood University. In establishing the framework for the New College of Virginia, Dr. Carrier deftly links the symbolic importance of education to the quality of life in Martinsville and Henry County.

By establishing a new college in Martinsville, Dr. Carrier imagined transformation of the Martinsville community, creation of a “21st century work force” and a “canopy of education that stretches from kindergarten through graduate school” (retrieved August 4, 2008 from www.theharvestfoundation.org/news). However described, education would meet the challenge articulated by progressive educators at the turn of the century as the
impetus of social reform and the development of society (see, Ravitch, 2000). The goal of public education was symbolized by the opportunities afforded citizens to remake themselves and hence society through educational opportunities and individual achievement. While the collaborative proposal relies on social efficiency as a means of promoting educational opportunities for Southside residents, Dr. Carriers’ proposal arises from his understanding that education is inherent in an ideology of choice and possibility.

Legitimacy for NCI was not conceptually distinct from the policy intentions expressed in competing proposals. In fact, it can be argued that NCI would not have become a reality if not for the policy tensions and debate created over conflicting visions of post secondary education. Debate can lead to consensus as a socially legitimate and taken-for-granted method of policy analysis and political action (Ogawa, 1994). Policies do not develop in an ahistorical space but are shaped by cultural values, institutions and traditions (Heck, 2004).

Examining the history of school based management reform Ogawa (1994) categorized actors within the institutional environment as institutional actors, political actors and other interest groups (including teachers and professionals). Relying on interview and archival data, Ogawa distinguishes the policy environment as institutionalized or comprised of entrepreneurs working to institutionalize structural elements which organizations may adopt to gain social legitimacy rather than to enhance technical efficiency. Through inference, Ogawa described the unofficial (i.e. institutionalized) policy environment where different actors and groups negotiate policy
outcomes based on their interests. Ogawa developed inferences connecting legitimate policy activity with different actor networks in the policy environment. Contrasted with ad hoc and official explanations of policy making, Ogawa offered a policy making alternative stressing the legitimacy of coalitions that enter into the policy debate. Noting the diversity of legitimation processes occurring across space and time, Ogawa recognized that policy making is legitimate when actors are linked with institutionalized organizations and different actor networks in which interaction (i.e. coordination and cooperation) shapes and promotes preferences. Ogawa is also keen in noting that the process is historical and that policy outcomes do not have to be efficient in order to appear legitimate rather they are influenced by the salience of legitimation agents and agent networks.

In order to appear legitimate and to connect with socially legitimate stories, the proposal for NCI had to be related and linked with the symbolic purpose of education as an institution, with the ideals of social mobility, and with socially efficient outcomes. Legitimacy originated in the debate over educational goals within the context of ambivalent educational objectives (means) and relational networks. Legitimacy that Mark Suchman (1995) suggests is derived from exchanges between organizations and their audience and determined through consensus in support of an organizational policy and its expected value to a set of constituents. Legitimacy connecting the founding of an organization of higher education with our best interests, shared values, hopes, desires, dreams and imagination. Institutionalizing legitimacy in policy making requires a history, a means of constructing meaning (i.e. meaningful activity) and “a social setting in which
policy actors compete, negotiate, compromise and cooperate over time in integrating diverse interests...[and] policy action” (Heck, 2004, p. 7).

Second, founding NCI required an act of institutional entrepreneurship beyond simply selecting among existing structural forms and cultural values. In the dialectical fashion characterizing the objectification of institutions, competing proposals provided the context for a synthesis in which elements of both proposals were accepted in the final design of the New College Institute. In fact, distinctions between the two proposals are obtrusively blurred in the final choice of organizational structure reflecting the founding of a symbolically unique post-secondary educational organization.

Legitimacy involves a social audience (Suchman, 1995) and consequential social judgment, acceptance, appropriateness, and desirability (Zimmerman & Zeitz, 2002). Given the efficiency of the collaborative proposal and the legitimacy of established institutions providing post-secondary education, why was SCHEV criticized for what appeared to be their tacit support of the 2 + 2 model for the New College of Virginia?

Rhetorical exchange in the form of news releases and editorials decried SCHEV’s initial assessment of the need for post-secondary education in Southside Virginia almost immediately after their report (HJR197 Report, 2005) was received by the Virginia General Assembly. In January 2005, the Roanoke Times quoted sources supporting the new college who accused SCHEV of “malign neglect” and “timidity” for not endorsing the proposal contained in the Harvest Foundations Pre-Planning Report. “It is unfortunate and sadly disappointing that the SCHEV report is not more sensitive to the dire educational and
economic needs of Southside Virginia...where we see a need for bold, new approaches, SCHEV”s response is one of timidity...[and] to seek delay.” (Roanoke Times and World News, January 22, 2005) Expressing disdain for the 2 + 2 collaborative proposal, the Harvest Foundation reaffirmed their financial position in support of a new college as a distinct and separate organization that had no equal. “That proposal [2 + 2 collaborative approach] does not meet the criteria for the foundation’s $50 million challenge grant to establish a college in Martinsville and Henry County” and “we find many of the assumptions, findings and conclusions in SCHEV’s report to be deficient”.

**Politics and Higher Education**

*The Politics of Structural Choice*

Contrary to the divisiveness characterizing exchanges between the Harvest Foundation and SCHEV over competing proposals for the organizational structure of the New College Institute, the idea that a new college was needed in Southside Virginia appeared to have broad political support and appeal from its inception. *House Joint Resolution 197* was sponsored by members of both political parties and a similar resolution was introduced in the senate (Senate Joint Resolution 86). Subsequent legislation regarding a new college in Southside would also receive support from then Lieutenant Governor Timothy Kaine and former Governor Mark Warner including a proposed $1.5 million in the 2005 budget to begin planning for the NCI. Local constituent groups also offered support for NCI. Using funds from the $150 million sale of Memorial Hospital in Martinsville, the Harvest Foundation of the Piedmont sought to improve the quality of life
in the economically struggling Southside region through investment in access to higher education. Responding in part to Governor Warner’s budget proposal and Lieutenant Governor Kaine’s push for legislation to study a four-year college in Southside, the Harvest Foundation offered $50 million toward the college if built in Martinsville. Still, the policy making body for the Governor and General Assembly would urge caution with regard to building a new college in Southside Virginia. Quoting SCHEV’s Executive Director Daniel LaVista:

Given the high unemployment and evident suffering in South Central Virginia, I can well understand the impatience of yourselves [referring to the Harvest Foundation] and the desire of the citizens of Southside to take action as quickly as possible. While we understand the need, SCHEV sees its obligation to provide well-researched and well-reasoned recommendations to the General Assembly concerning the policy issues confronting Southside in the context of all of Virginia’s higher education needs. (Roanoke Times and World News, January 30, 2005)

Under increasing pressure from bi-partisan legislators (SCHEV, 2006) and owing to “generous” support from the Harvest Foundation, SCHEV policy makers sought a compromise with constituent groups in a “collaborative approach” as the topic of their 2006 report on the analysis of educational demand in Southside. “A collaborative approach such as the partnership model proposed by SCHEV provides a more cost-effective alternative that is consistent with Virginia’s rich history of establishing new higher education institutions in affiliation with existing institutions. Savings that would result from shared administrative, physical and instructional resources would lower the costs considerably to both the students and the state.” (SCHEV, 2006, p. 19)
In 2006, enacting legislation established the New College Institute in Martinsville as an act of compromise and not necessarily consensus. A hybrid organization was selected from the two competing proposals, one emphasizing a 2 + 2 model and the other suggesting a 28-month four-year degree program. Practically, NCI was a combination of both proposals.

Degree programs were designed for prospective students as transfers after completing general education requirements at a community college or other accredited college or university. Programs were offered through a consortium of Virginia’s colleges and universities including; Virginia Commonwealth University, Radford University, the University of Virginia, Old Dominion University and Longwood University. Courses would be offered at night and on weekends to accommodate non-traditional students. Symbolically, NCI could claim existence as a new organization where partnership with other Virginia universities provided accredited academic programs to incoming students. NCI offered realization of the vision for a college in Southside by providing a “practical educational experience that could be completed faster and more cheaply than a traditional four-year college experience” (Quoting Dr. Ronald Carrier from Richmond Times Dispatch, January 14, 2005).

A political theory of institutions and the consequent choice of public organizations have imported economic models to explain political behavior (Scott, 2008). The general argument has been that “economic organizations and institutions are explained in the same way: they are structures that emerge and take the specific form they do because they solve
collective-action problems and thereby facilitate gains from trade” (Moe, 1990, p. 217-218). Similarly stated, “political institutions of a society provide the framework within which the preferences and resource commitments of its citizens are transformed into collective actions that are expected to yield utility.” (Mitchell, 1977, p. 657).

Moe however, has argued that a positive theory of institutions substitutes macro-level explanations for individualistic behavior and choice. According to Moe (1991), public organizations arise out of politics and cannot be understood apart from the actual behavior of the “powerful, calculating, well-informed players in the politics of structural choice” (p. 121). We must recognize, writes Moe that structural choice is not about the design of efficient organizations or the design of structures that allow political actors to cooperate in the realization of gains from trade rather, political institutions arise from the exercise of power and interests.

The entire structure of American public education, every piece of it, is the product of specific decisions by state legislatures and governors, school boards, superintendents, and state and district bureaucracies –all of which have public authority to determine aspects of educational structure, and all of which are under constant pressure from interest groups and constituencies to use that authority in particular ways. (Moe, 1991, p. 121-122)

Moe’s comments are instructive. One cannot talk about politics without mention of power, interests and ideology. In addition, the struggle for public authority, as Moe suggests is “up for grabs” and whoever wins hold of it can legitimately promote their own interests through policies and structure of their own choice and design. Politics is a process in which interest groups and public officials make decisions about the structure of government, in this case the structure of the New College Institute in an effort to solve
collective social problems. An agent with public authority exercises control over the political process and imposes “structures” on the behavior of principles creating both political winners and losers. The impression that “winners” and “losers” in a political conflict are discernable seems ambiguous. The political process allocates tangible benefits to a few and symbolic benefits for the many. Education, or more precisely the choice of educational policies, is not about structural choice per se, but rather reflects a contest implicit in a pluralist view of the State as a representative of the common good and the interests of the economic ruling class.

Political contests involve defending institutional logics that are symbolically grounded and organizationally structured. The choice of organizational structure involves a contest in terms of contradiction over the logic of capitalism and the commodification of human activity. The struggle for public authority and winning the consequent right to choose an organizational structure is a struggle over contradictory and symbolic institutional logics with the winners advancing their own ideology, interests and preferences. Structural choice is important because it reflects the importance of collective interests and ideologies. Structure is the symbolic enactment of policy at an institutional level.

Institutions constrain not only the ends to which their behavior should be directed, but the means by which those ends are achieved. They provide individuals with vocabularies of motives and with a sense of self. They generate not only that which is valued, but the rules by which it is calibrated and distributed. Institutions set the limit on
the very nature of rationality and, by implication individuality. Nonetheless, individuals, groups and organizations try to use institutional orders to their own advantage (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 251)

Education is a site of political conflict with power and politics playing a role in higher educational choice (i.e. structural choice) and governance. There is a connection among the various interest groups, politicians and public bureaucrats to consider when a new public agency emerges. Moe (1995) is correct in asserting that in “politics, compromise means something very different for the structure of public organizations” (p. 126). The New College Institute is not a structure or a choice of structure having mutual advantage for all of the interests involved during the debate preceding its founding. Rather, politicians offered access to a service (higher education) with which they were already familiar in the hope of creating demand for that service.

**Education and Politics**

In his introduction to *How to Succeed in Schools*, David Labaree (1997) argues that the “central problems with education in the United States are not pedagogical or organizational or social or cultural in nature but are fundamentally political” (p. 16). The choice of structure, as Moe has correctly suggested is a political question in which policies are created at the intersection of political ideals and economic realities. As a site of conflict, education can be seen as the product of competing demands for capital accumulation and democratic participation (e.g. Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Labaree, 1997) with the state playing a critical institutional role in determining
outcomes. Moe (1995) contends that the point of structural choice is to “anticipate, program, and engineer bureaucratic behavior” (p. 14). Clearly, the structural choice of the New College Institute is an example of political compromise. Political choice can be based on programmatic, instrumental, and funding decisions or the selection of educational programs, organizational purpose and allocation of scarce resources. Political choice can also be regarded as a place for discovering, elaborating, and expressing meaning and symbols as the instruments of an interpretative order (March & Olsen, 1984).

Education as a site of political conflict gives rise to competing sources of legitimacy. Legitimacy can be interpreted according to the type of organizational structure adopted and the kinds of resources allocated for its maintenance and survival.

Legitimacy can also be viewed in relation to the type of goods produced. For example, the New College Institute produces a combination of both private goods benefiting the individual citizen in Martinsville-Henry County and public goods associated with collective benefits flowing from a general rise in the threshold of community and workforce literacy (Marginson, 2007). Competing interpretations of what goods are produced can result in political conflict during policy deliberation and incorporate either economic models or democratic theory (i.e. models of equality). Competing models or theories are a source of conflict over schooling as a matter of politics and organizational choice (Carnoy & Levin, 1986).

Simon Marginson supplies us with an understanding of how interests are translated into policy outcomes within a political theory of organization. According to Marginson
(2007), “policy actions to augment public goods can involve political conflicts and often complex tradeoffs between one public good and another, as well as tradeoffs between public goods and private goods” (p. 316) In terms of public sector organizations, the details of structure, personnel, location, oversight and funding are a condition of how public authority is exercised and a condition of how goods are constructed. Quoting Marginson: “Higher education is policy determined, in that governments can enhance its ‘privateness’ or ‘publicness’, it is nested in culture, and varied by time and place. In short, the nature of the goods does not determine the character of production. The character of production determines the nature of the goods.” (2007, p. 34-35) Public organizations are fundamentally different than private organizations not only in structure and governance but in the production of socially legitimate public and private goods. Public organizations are designed to produce policy outcomes that legitimately and symbolically speak for society and define citizens’ rights and obligations. The state exercises control over public bureaucracies in the provision of an equitable structure of opportunity and in the production of both public and private goods.

**Neo-liberalism**

**Neo-liberal Ideology**

Throughout the literature on neo-institutionalism and perhaps owing to the definitive treatment by Berger and Luckmann (1966) of actors internalizing institutional ideologies, we arrive at a point of examination and conflict with neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism is implicated as an influential force on institutions over the past two decades.
(Levin, 2007) and specifically on educational institutions (Apple, 2004). By definition, neo-liberalism is an ideological system of language, thought and behavior prescribing both economic and social practices, administration and governmentality (Weiner, 2003). According to Apple (2004), neo-liberal ideology specifically implies both social control and legitimacy in the justification of educational programs and world-views (Apple, 2004). Neo-liberal ideology is equated with globalization, the global movement of capital, global development of capitalist markets and the development of regional and local needs and services based on uncritical acceptance of market principles or models.²¹ Neo-liberalism has also been equated with a system (Apple, 2001) or apparatus (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006) for transforming policy, educational objectives and learning through discursive practices privileging conformity with market economic dictates and self-regulated training in response to job displacement. Michael Apple (2001) characterized the neo-liberal ideological system in the context of educational commitments as: “the dramatic expansion of...the free market; the drastic reduction of government responsibility for social needs; the reinforcement of intensely competitive structures of mobility both inside and outside school; the lowering of people’s expectations for economic security; the ‘disciplining’ of culture and the body; and the popularization of what is clearly a form of social Darwinist thinking” (p. 410) Neo-liberalism is said to involve an integrated system of assumptions and world views whose central aim is to “prepare students as politically

---

²¹ According to Engel (1984) the market model “attempts to explain the exchange of goods and services in society as the result of the interactions among buyers and sellers seeking to maximize their individual gain under the conditions of unrestricted competition.” (p. 20)
passive and compliant workers for the dynamic labour market conditions consistent [with] the global economy.” (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 15)

Neo-liberal ideology works at the institutional level by constraining and enhancing construction of social identities through the re-establishment of educational goals. The neo-liberal ideological apparatus results in educational institutions following the logic of isomorphism and legitimacy with an emphasis on developing human capital through acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for economic success. Neo-liberalism also empowers the state to produce, monitor and evaluate public organizations for attainment of the neo-liberal economic and political agendas (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Neo-liberalism does not simply re-construct or re-orient education policy rather; neo-liberalism is an ideology that functions at the institutional level by structuring educational discourse within the world of work (Moore, 1987). Neo-liberalism habituates a discourse of idealized conceptions linking production, industrial relations, and free market conditions with individual responsibility and initiative. As such, writes Moore (1987), “it [neo-liberal ideology] carries powerful and highly specific messages concerning the nature of society and the individual and the relationship between then” (p. 231).

**Neo-Liberalism, Governance and Citizenship**

Neo-liberalism radically reconstructs the state with regard to governance and the individual in regard to citizenship. Viewed as a sociological institution (Goodman & Jinks, 2003), the state derives its characteristics from global models and cultural processes in world society (Apple, Kenway & Singh, 2005). Accordingly, for Apple (2001) and others
(e.g., Olssen, 2003; Olssen & Peters 2005; Davis & Bansel, 2007), neo-liberalism represents a new form of governmentality or regulation ideologically contracted from global economic perspectives and market mechanisms. Governmentality based on a preferred notion of sovereign responsibility for enacting policies and programs oriented toward a neo-liberal order. Neo-liberalism establishes, justifies and legitimates state power to specify, manage, monitor and enforce educational outputs. And it is precisely in defining this new form of governmentality that neo-liberal ideology works at the institutional level to create organizational arrangements in which educational knowledge precedes teaching and content (Karmon, 2007). In creating what Apple et al. refer to as legitimate forms of knowledge, neo-liberalism “operates through the institutionalization of the market in knowing and willful complicity with state mechanisms of centralized command and control” (2005, p. 15).

At the institutional level, neo-liberalism establishes the state as an active agent in the creation of appropriate markets, organizations, laws and institutions necessarily arranged and contrived for the entrepreneurial and competitive conduct of economic-rational individuals. The reconfiguration of individuals is another salient feature of neo-liberal governance, language and discourse. Developing a new governmentality implicates a new citizenship mentality. Neo-liberalism “installs apparatuses and knowledges through which people are reconfigured as productive entrepreneurs of their own lives.” (Davies & Dansel, 2007, p. 248) In his critique of education and the ideology of production, Moore (1987) argues that it is not the ideal worker that neo-liberal or free-market ideology
creates, rather is it the model citizen. Citizen’s created through a “production ideology”
regulating discourse and restructuring educational practices.

Secondly, neo-liberalism is implicated in educational institutions where the goal of
learning is considered legitimate when it is understood to be natural, unavoidable and
inevitable. Neo-liberalism is espoused through a repetitive discourse of manifest destiny
where faith in institutions is replaced by the can-do spirit of individual students who are
productive, competitive and entrepreneurial. Neo-liberalism de-politicizes discourse by
abridging dissent and installing a discourse of inevitability and application of market
principles to all things social. Quoting Henri Giroux, neo-liberalism “assaults all things
public, mystifies the basic contradiction between democratic values and market
fundamentalism, and weakens any viable notion of political agency by offering no
language capable of connecting private considerations to state issues.” (Quoted in Weiner,
2003, p. 26) Similarly, in his critique of behavioral occupationalism as the new ideology of
educational practice, Moore (1987) observes the extreme rationalism of free market labor
in delimiting the political power of the individual. In mastering it’s sleight of hand, neo-
liberalism links individual survival with national survival and global markets. Students are
captured in the discursive framing of choice where it is difficult to imagine choices being
shaped by anything other than their own desire and rational calculations. The paradox is
seen in an educational system emphasizing the entrepreneurial spirit as natural, productive
and instrumental and students who enter labor markets as passive and adaptable. Writing
about the tension between democratic citizenship and neo-liberal education policy Hyslop-
Margison and Sears (2006) describe neo-liberal education as restricting student learning to instrumental rationality, technical skills and competencies at the expense of democratic participation, self-actualization and social change. For neo-liberalism to be effective, it must abridge educational content with a series of prescribed instructions and instrumentalities. Neo-liberalism it might be claimed, does not allow for the opportunity to understand how ideology shapes individual and social consciousness.

My point here is not a critique of neo-liberalism per se but rather to impose on the founding of the New College Institute a method for examining the ideological basis for its institutional legitimacy. Ideological in the sense that world knowledge is captured by narratives that provide credibility and legitimacy to conversations occurring during the founding of the New College Institute. Institutional in the sense that neo-liberalism provides the world script in which states themselves are enactments of a world economic and cultural order. World scripts that; “define, legitimate and shape the structures and policies of nation states and other national and local actors in virtually all of the domains of rationalized social life” (Goodman & Jinks, 2003, p. 1765). It is not difficult to parse the policy documents relating the founding of NCI with discourses invoking global interests, economic competitiveness, economic survivability, and market realities. So natural and unavoidable is the connection between NCI and neo-liberal ideology that we can fall into the trap explained by authors who critique neo-liberalism and its dogmatic orthodoxy. We must be cautious, writes Weiner (2003), in viewing neo-liberalism as an “economic, political, and cultural system that requires a certain level of political docility, social
cynicism, and economic fatalism on behalf of its constituents to maintain its hegemony”
(p. 23) Neo-liberalism connects both an institutional theory of organizations with an
institutional theory of the state through a process of ideological legitimacy. In proceeding,
I am connecting institutionalism and ideology, the state with citizens and students, and
organizations with markets.

**Southside Virginia**

On December 6, 2007, the Virginia State Council of Higher Education reported to
the State Finance Committee Education Subcommittee on related educational projects in
Southside Virginia. Preceding the founding of NCI in Martinsville were two related
educational projects financed in part by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In 2004, the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR) opened in
Danville, Virginia approximately 30 miles to the east of Martinsville, the future home of
the New College Institute. Language used in celebrating the founding of IALR is
coincidently similar to that used in the debate preceding the founding of NCI. As reported
in the Richmond Times Dispatch on February 22, 2004, supporters of IALR “hope it
becomes the catalyst for the transformation of the region's economy... [by offering] a
highway to a technology based economy.” The continued economic decline and/or
transformation of Southside Virginia is couched in terms of an inevitable future linked
with a global economy, current economic and political realities and the production of a
knowledge society. Conceding the future decline of Danville former Mayor Linwood
Wright stated that without IALR the economic future of Southside Virginia is critically
jeopardized as many of the areas young people migrate in search of jobs and opportunities. Intentionally modeled after North Carolina’s Research Triangle Park, IALR is symbolized as the embryo in which the economic and technological future of Southside would be developed and nurtured.

In similar news, SCHEV (Senate Finance Committee Meeting Education Subcommittee, 2007) reported on the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) located in downtown South Boston approximately 60 miles from Martinsville. In operation since the mid-1990’s the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center, a consortium of higher education institutions, was planning expansion in anticipation of attracting an innovative and creative workforce essential to transformation of the region’s economy. Citing regional economic decline and the exodus of young people from the region, the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center had become a symbol of transformation linking education with industrial development and economic growth. Although funding was appropriated from numerous sources, the Commonwealth of Virginia had increased their general fund appropriation to SVHEC from $400,000 in fiscal year 2006 to $1.9 million in fiscal year 2008. In an interesting comparison to the Harvest Foundations involvement in the founding of NCI, SVHEC benefited from the financial support of the Halifax Educational Foundation, Inc. and their efforts to bring higher education and workforce training to south central Virginia.

Collectively, a network of organizations has developed throughout the Southside region to combat economic and population decline. Martinsville, Henry County and the
City of Danville were recipients or future recipients of over $9 million in support of higher education and research. Collectively, the development of degree and non-degree programs orients the goal of higher education with neo-liberal dictates and career preparatory programs stressing the importance of ideologically driven attitudes and dispositions under the generalized heading of employability skill, knowledge and technology. Each initiative outlined in SCHEV’s presentation to the State Finance Committee represents a compelling example of what Eric Weiner describes as transformation of state power and ideological state apparatuses in the age of globalization (2003). How is it that the State of Virginia became involved in these educational projects, injecting millions of dollars in their creation and creating a discourse of symbolic and pragmatic legitimacy for their support and continued funding? What is the neo-liberal project at work?

**The Individual and Neo-liberal Ideology**

According to Friedland and Alford (1991), in order to bridge the gap between institutions, organizations and individuals, new institutionalism requires re-conceptualization as “simultaneously material and ideal, systems of signs and symbols, rational and transrational” (p. 243) In order to function, the logic of institutions includes a set of material practices and symbolic constructions which constitutes its organizing principles. At this level of legitimacy, write Berger and Luckmann, “the reflective integration of discrete institutional processes reaches its ultimate fulfillment...[and] a whole world is created.” (1996, p. 96) For example, the institutional logic of capitalism is accumulation and commodification of human activity and symbolic construction of “the
“market” to account for the reality in which all human activity takes place. In the developing logic of neo-liberal education policies, the student/citizen must be symbolically and practically transformed in order to enact the script of the system in which he or she now finds themselves. It is said that institutions not only define the ends in which behavior should be directed, but also supply the means in which those ends are achieved. It is precisely in re-defining both means and ends of education where neo-liberal ideology functions at the institutional level to transform student identities and align them with the ideology and structure of the world system or symbolic universe (Berger & Luckmann, 1996).

In a compelling essay examining the relationship between education and “the city”, renowned pedagogue Pablo Freire (1998) explains how the identity of each defines the other.

As much as the City is an educator, it is also a learner. Much of her educational change implies our own political position and, obviously, the manner in which we exercise our power in the City and the dream or utopia toward which we direct our policies and to whom and what we dedicate our efforts (p. 25).

The logic of neo-liberalism is institutionalized in myths of progress, rationality, universality and uniformity. Education is the means of socializing citizens and the ends are personal development and entrepreneurial citizenship. The city as an educator euphemistically reifies responsibility for education at a local level according to national principles and programs prescribed by rules institutionalized at highly generalized levels. The entire ideological structure views progress as “the summation of the actions and efforts of discrete individual citizens working in harmony under the overall planning and
guidance of the national state.” (Ramirez & Boli-Bennett, 1981) Where we observe investment in education, we can be sure of justification under the social imperative of investment in human capital. In addition, we should also observe individual transformation according to a theory of education linked with and made legitimate through the adoption of formal state rules and ideologies justifying the profitability of educational markets and the development of human capital. In creating societal members, education serves as a purposive project to reconstruct individuals according to a state discourse of progress and rationality. With neo-liberalism as the ideological context, individual rights, duties, obligations and responsibilities are complicit with that of the state and any antagonism between the economic citizen and democratic duty is obliterated.

Creating individual identities is not simply a matter of creating “entrepreneurial education” as noted in SCHEV’s January 2006 report to the Virginia General Assembly rather it involves discourses linking individual survival with that of the state, region or locality through the production of educational knowledge. The ascendancy of neo-liberal ideology is seen in the vocationalism of higher education (Giroux, 2005), the application of production ideology in educational practices (Moore, 1987), development and growth of the credentials market in education (Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Labaree, 2004), and curriculum revision in terms of consumer demand and industrial need (Engel, 1984). These changes concern educational practices which must, in turn be contextualized within the broad context of global educational agendas and investment in education to develop human capital and promote economic growth. It is simply not a matter of educational program
design rather neo-liberal ideology re-creates society and citizens by coordinating shared social understanding defining the production of knowledge (i.e. knowledge production and information processing for competitive purposes) (Vaira, 2004). Education is the vehicle through which discourses implicating individuals, localities, states, and nations are legitimated through social typifications (i.e. taken-for-grant understanding) redefining individuals as responsible subordinate members of the state organization (Meyer, 1977).

It may seem paradoxical that NCI is both a reaction to and program for the realities of globalization. Globalization impacted Southside’s regional economy when manufacturing based on “tobacco, textile manufacturing, and timber products” was closed due to off shore competition causing economic hardship and decline. NCI was proposed as a policy solution linked to a traditionally defined public good, education. In this scenario however, NCI’s programs were designed to re-define students as consumers, education as a private good, and the evolution of a market-oriented curriculum as transformative. The logic of progress enclosed the actor is what Meyer and Jepperson (2000, p. 109) refer to as an “abstract, rather contentless entity in social space” (p. 109) The point being, agentic actors exist in a broader system forming the basis of their own existence and authority. Agentic construction is “contentless” because participants in modern society enact through their identities the legitimate interests of nation-states reflected in global organizational fields and institutional frameworks comprising them. Mass education “creates a whole series of social assumptions about the common culture of society and thus expands the social meaning of citizenship, personhood, and individuality.” (Meyer, 1977, p. 69)
In the construction of identity, neo-liberalism is implicated as the primary ideological apparatus for reproduction. Neo-liberalism forms the connection between what ideas are considered “real knowledge”, economic functionalism and the inevitability of globalization. In his earliest writing about the role of higher education, Thorstein Veblen (1918) provides insight into the connection between education and institutions that proves revealing 90 years after being written.

More particularly, standards of organization, control and achievement that have been accepted as a habitual matter of course in the conduct of business will, by force of habit, in good part reassert themselves as indispensable and conclusive in the conduct of the affairs of learning. While it remains true that the bias of workmanship continues to guide the quest of knowledge, under the conditions imposed by modern institutions it will not be the naive conceptions of primitive workmanship that will shape the framework of the modern system of learning; but rather the preconceptions of that disciplined workmanship that has been instructed in the logic of the modern technology and sophisticated with much experience in a civilization in whose scheme of life pecuniary canons are definitive.
CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Design: Using Historical Methods and Narrative Inquiry

The purpose of this study is to tell a story through the enacted narratives of those individuals involved in the policy process preceding founding of the New College Institute. Narratives involving informal and formal actors or individuals identified within the policy community are considered primary source of narrative data. For example, in constructing the field of inquiry in qualitative studies, Barbara Czarniawska (1997; 1998) focuses on the “constellation” of relationships in creating an action net situationally related to action occurring within an organizational field. “In practical action, actors or organizations may form action nets not only with other organizations within the same field but also with many other organizations that have nothing to do with their field but are necessary for a given activity to take place.” (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 67) The focus is on action occurring within and around constellations of organizations and actors. Efforts are made to include individuals who, while not having a direct impact on policy decisions, constitute the organizational field in which policy decisions are considered.

A second related concept connects actors in a field to an “institutional thought structure.” This is a particularly salient and useful concept with the founding of NCI and narrative methods. Actors whether defined by action nets, defined by an organizational field or defined within a societal sector are seen as engaging in communication according to a set of basic assumptions or norms appearing axiomatic. Institutionalized thought structures are similar to Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) understanding of sedimented
knowledge or taken-for-granted understanding. Institutionalized thought structures, writes Czarniawska (1997) “[are] assumed to exist, that they are shared by the majority in the field, and their presence is evoked whenever an action is questioned” (p. 68). Within higher education, institutional thought structures include organizational requirements for social legitimacy namely; a discernable structural arrangement, socialization of students and professionals, symbolic purpose, and identifiable curriculum and instructional practices.

The proposed research design is qualitative employing conceptual properties and practical application of narrative and historical methodologies. It is perhaps useful to consider the narrative tradition as a technique for social science inquiry within the field of historical research (e.g. Rury, 2006). In this context, the history of the New College Institute is written in narrative form, with the element of explanation woven into a story, presented in terms comprehensible to most readers, and with arguments about causation generally implied. Furthermore, the specific research goals in both narrative and historical methods are concomitant with a qualitative research design. Again, it might be helpful to think of historical methods as a type of qualitative research design and narrative inquiry as the technique employed. As derived, the design is inductive, focuses on specific situations and people, and emphasizes the construction of stories or narratives that are both process oriented and meaningful (i.e. meaning creating).

The strength of this design is commensurate with the “intellectual goals” of qualitative methods discussed by Maxwell (2005). Qualitative methods are based on: (a)
understanding the meaning of events, experiences and actions in which participants are involved; (b) understanding contextual influences on participant action; (c) identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences; (d) understanding the process by which events and actions take place; and (e) developing causal explanations (Maxwell, 2004, p. 22). Similar if not identical dimensions of historical methods are discussed by Rury (2006) with specific reference to constructed meaning and attention to context.

Finally, it is critical to reflect on the use of narratives in both conducting data collection and in writing. Narratives are related to the structure of human experience in terms of significance, value and intention. With regard to time, it is useful to think of narratives in terms of the past conveying significance, the present conveying value and the future conveying intention. Data is collected and interpreted (i.e. re-constructed) in narrative form with an implied notion of temporality and intention. According to Connelly and Clandinin; “By virtue of being related to the structure of time, these three dimensions of meaning [significance, value and intention] help a writer structure plots in which explanation and meaning themselves may be said to have a temporal structure...this structure helps convey a sense of purpose on the writing as one deals with various temporal data and fits them into past, present, or future oriented parts of the narrative.” (1990, p. 9)

Designing this study according to the narrative tradition involves commitment to collecting narratives as data and writing as narrative construction. As such, narrative inquiry involves selection of stories for interpretation and, the reconstruction of narrative plots.
Qualitative Studies

Qualitative methods are used in both policy research and organizational studies to address questions relating to the delivery of services and the policy process (Heck, 2004). In organizational studies, researchers have adopted qualitative methods as an alternative to reductionist methods found in a natural science paradigm. Additionally, qualitative methods arise from fundamentally different epistemological assumptions regarding social, as opposed to scientific knowledge. Paraphrasing Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the essential features of qualitative research methods are: (a) a focus on the social construction of reality by participants; (b) understanding the setting or context which surrounds the subjects (i.e. the social environment); and (c) sense-making which gives qualitative methods its distinct constructivist validity.

Constructing qualitative studies in the narrative tradition makes use of interviews and document data to symbolically build an interactive text that is emergent rather than tightly prefigured (Creswell, 2003, p 181). Methods relying on collective stories involve the researcher as participant in an interactive relationship where “intersubjective depth and deep mutual understanding can be achieved (Miller & Glassner, 1997, p. 100). According to Krathwohl (1998, p. 230), qualitative studies are useful when:

1. The focus of the study is on a process and its internal dynamics or its strengths and weaknesses more that on its product or effect and you want to understand the process of local causality in depth.
2. Detailed, in-depth information is sought on the implementation or quality of a program or process including description with nuance and detail.

3. There is interest in the diversity among, idiosyncrasies or the unique qualities of persons or processes.

4. Unexpected consequences or side effect may be important.

**Retrospective Methods**

There is a popular misconception that historical research is simply a chronicle of the past, an objective discipline in which independent events are chronologically re-told. In deference to historical research as simply a chronicle of the past, noted historian Marc Bloch (1953) refers to the methods of history as a “craft” requiring exploration and selection of historical evidence. For Bloch, the historian should be careful not to cram the stuff of history into the legalistic framework of physical science. Instead, questions historical researchers pose are bound up with their own experiences, expressing their values and, reflecting a “large dose of personal opinion” (Bloch, 1953, p. 13). Similarly, for historian Edward Carr, the meaning of history consists essentially in seeing the past through the eyes of the present and in the light of its problems. According to Carr, “the main work of the historian is not to record, but to evaluate; for, if he does not evaluate, how can he know what is worth recording?” (1961, p. 22) Historical research involves selection of historical facts and telling a story about the past from the perspective of the present involving interpretation and creative reconstructions of the past. The researcher is a product of society, a spokesperson of the society to which he belongs and a part of its
history. The point in the procession which he finds himself determines his angle of vision over the past. The centrality of interpretation in historical research and the way in which researchers practice their “craft” invariably affects the inquiry process. As a researcher, I choose evidence for constructing my explanation of the founding of the New College Institute, to bring into the picture facts relevant to the themes in which I am engaged and to the interpretation proposed. In doing so, I risk the possibility of rejection and/or misunderstanding.

Guidelines within the narrative tradition of historical research are employed to meet professional standards of serious scholarship. Steps in the process of historical inquiry include (Rury, 2006, p. 330-331):

1. Having a clear idea of what one is studying. For example, examining how a particular policy or organization came into being.

2. Determining what scholars have said about the subject through a formal literature review. Typically, scholars use both primary and secondary sources to reach interpretative conclusions.

3. Applying the axiom that historical inquiry is not possible without understanding an event in relation to its context or without knowledge of its context.

4. Constructing historical narratives with a distinctive interpretation. Historical inquiry and writing does not follow a linear path and researchers should be aware of insights occurring while the evidence is put together.
In a comparison of retrospective methods, Cox and Hassard (2007) understand methods of interpretation as sympathetic to the idea of present reality as socially constructed. Borrowing from Burger and Luckmann (1966) and Weick (1995), interpreting the past is an effort to retrospectively make sense of the past given the context of the present. Interpretative retrospection is paradoxically the method used to pursue narratives for this study and the method of constructing the narrative that is this study. For example, the methods used for this study involve data collected from documents and interviews wherein actors have reflexively constructed narratives with some understanding constrained by an ideology and psychology of the past. The narrative presenting itself in the form of a text is produced; that is, involves a choice of construction, with regard to style, subject matter and design. In eliciting narratives describing the founding of the New College Institute, I tacitly involve myself with the participant in co-constructing a shared narrative in which both voices are heard.

*Narratives as Stories*

Reference to story-telling as narrative inquiry and general methods of historical methodology in organizational studies involves the researcher infusing facts with meaning (Gabriel, 1998, p. 136). In terms of stories, the researcher approaches, communicates and constructs the field as a conversation between texts with stories as one type of narrative or text. Theories, texts, conversations, interviews, documents and social artifacts are all considered sources of data contributing to construction of the organizational field separate from logico-scientific knowledge. Barbara Czarniawska (1997; 1998; 2000) pioneered
narrative approaches to organizations with the notion of narrative formulated by Alasdair MacIntyre. According to Czarniawska, application of narrative methodology in organizational studies involves narrative theories developed in cultural studies and applied to organizational settings in an effort to construct meaning through evaluation, interpretation and understanding. Narrative methodology is infused with subjective interpretation, intentions and multiple meanings and offers conceptualizations of organizations, actions and individuals that cannot ignore the relationship between meaning and context. According to Czarniawska:

We cannot understand human conduct if we ignore its intentions, and we cannot understand human intentions if we ignore the settings in which they make sense. Such settings may be institutions, set of practices, or some other contexts created by humans – contexts that have a history, within which both particular deeds and whole histories of individual actors can be and have to be situated, in order to be intelligible (1997, p. 12).

Stories contain a familiar literary content and include a bewildering variety of interpretative possibilities. Applied to social science research, stories are co-constructed with researcher and subject participating in mutual intelligibility and sense-making. “The two narratives of participant and researcher become, in part, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry.” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 5) Stories as narrative construction also consist of structure and can be classified according to their thematic and dramatic qualities, plot and/or actors (Gabriel, 1998). Yiannis Gabriel argued that: “stories are narratives with plots and characters, generating emotion in narrator and audience. This material may be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience of earlier narratives” (2000, p. 239).
Narrative Interpretation

Interpreting the polyphony of narrative voices within the field can create difficulties in re-contextualizing themes and events. Czarniawska claims that researchers do not have to take a stand on “right” or “wrong” interpretation. Rather, the researcher re-contextualizes narratives by creating the impression of authenticity that is novel, credible and respectful. Practically, researchers in the narrative tradition interpret texts (i.e. speech) according to meaning that is indefinite but not infinite. Weary of relativism, interpretation involves understanding the meaning of a text and its use. One way of approaching the problem of interpretation is to classify the meaning and use of a text according to the conceptual model or framework developed by the researcher. For example, narrative methods focus on the construction of meaning by supplying both interpretation (i.e. plot, theme, characters) and context (i.e. temporality and setting). However, a second level of interpretative construction occurs simultaneously with regard to theory and practice. The researcher is constructing stories from the field and co-constructing evidence in support of his or her research proposal. The proposal, as Maxwell (2005) suggests, functions as a type of argument and evidence provides the logic for reasonable interpretations. According to Maxwell, the essential feature of a good argument is coherence. “First, it [proposal] has to cohere –flow logically from one point to the next, and hold together as an integrated whole. Second, it has to be coherent –to make sense to the reviewers.” (p. 199-120) Similarly, Czarniawska suggests that theory imposes coherence that facilitates conversation. “If science is a conversation, then theories can be seen as conversational
devices, which facilitate conversation by imposing cohesion and stability on interpretations that are being negotiated.” (1997, p. 71)

Narrative research is not a retreat toward relativism and all of its implications. Rather, narrative researchers acknowledge relatedness between a text, its interpretation and reality. Whether we claim to speak of a reality or a fantasy, the value of our utterances cannot be established by comparing it to its object, but only by comparing it to other utterances, as Goffman noted when he systematically compared various forms of talk. In such a perspective, good knowledge is what is judged by a relevant community (i.e. scholarly community) to be useful, moral or beautiful.

The literature on qualitative methods lacks an understandable distinction between narratives and stories with the terms often used interchangeably and without distinction. Stories appear to be one kind of narrative exhibiting structure and temporality. The distinction between narratives structured as stories as opposed to other types of narratives (i.e. informal conversations, policies, theories and social artifacts) hinges on distinctions of structure and plot. Stories, it might be claimed, comport with a notion of drama and the self-imposed conceptualization of organizational life as story making and organizational theory as story reading (Czarniawska, 1997, p. 26) Stories include reference to: agent, purpose, scene, agency and act. Although researchers have not made a clear distinction between stories and narratives (e.g. Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Maines, 1993; Golant & Sillince, 2007) they do focus on narrative or narration as the principle mode of communicating stories. Without distinction we encounter claims, such as that from Jerome
Bruner (quoted in Czarniawska, 2005) that “narrative knowledge tells the story of human intentions and deeds, and situates them in time and space” (p. 2). There remains a consensus among researchers in the field of narrative methodology that stories and storytelling are ubiquitous social activities.

More importantly, for the purposes of institutional studies, the researcher must be aware of the shared and negotiated classifications in which reality is understood. Negotiation in which the text, whether written or spoken, reveals categories in which reality is (was) perceived (Tosh, 2006). Institutions supply the rhetorical strategies, code of representation, social metaphors and symbolic language for narrative construction.

“Institutions systematically direct individual memory and channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize. They fix processes that are essentially dynamic...” (Czarniawska, 1998, p. 10). In a compelling account of “narratology”, Barbara Czarniawska describes how organizational narratives unfold within the framework of human institutions and interpretative studies.

The analyses I intend to present are closer to the poststructuralist spectrum of narratology. Such an analysis does not look for chains of causes and effects but for frequent (“usual”) connections between various elements of a narrative. It does not search for laws, but for patterns and regularities, which do not reveal a deep structure –either of the world or of the mind –but which are affixed to a text by the writer and the reader alike. The reader is able to see how a text was made not because she divines the writer’s intentions, or comprehends universal human nature, but because reader and writer are both producers and consumers of the same set of human institutions. (2000, p. 4)

The proposed collection, analysis and, interpretative use of narrative data is presented in figure 5.
Field of Practice: Institutional and Organizational Context

Source of Data

- Collect stories from the field
- Observe how stories are being made
- Researcher provokes story-telling

Data Analysis

- Interpret the stories (what do they say?)
- Analyze the stories (how do they say it?)
- Deconstruct and re-make stories (unmake them)

Re-Constructing the Past

- Construct you own story
- Say it against and together with other stories (re-construct processes)
- Apply theory and causality

Figure 5: Conceptualizing Narrative Methodology\textsuperscript{22}

Case Study Methods

Case studies are an ideal method when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed.

\textsuperscript{22} Adapted from Czarniawska (2000).
According to Heck; “Case studies focus on an in-depth understanding of complex social processes up close within their natural contexts and holistically.” (2004, p. 208). Broadly defined, a single case study involves intensive investigation of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units.” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342) Case studies are also used, as in the case of the New College Institute, to confirm or challenge the theoretical framework through presentation of a unique or extreme case. The strength of case study methods applied to policy processes is found in the researcher’s ability to bring together an abundance of information from a variety of sources that can be used to examine a situation.

In reference to the New College Institute, the type of case study proposed is both exploratory and explanatory as described by Yin (1993). Evidence is collected to explore the process of organizational founding by chronicling a sequence of events through which a policy perspective became law. Evidence is also used to explain theoretical propositions held prior to data collection and to develop causal explanations. Adding to Yin’s classification, Stake (1995) argues that case studies can be classified according to intrinsic and instrumental types. Stake’s classification is particularly useful with regard to the present study. Intrinsic case studies occur when the researcher has a particular interest in the case. The New College Institute, as we have learned, is the first new college created by
the Commonwealth of Virginia since 1823. In addition, NCI has a unique organizational structure (i.e. two-plus-two model). Instrumental case studies occur when the researcher wants to understand more than what is obvious. The context and conditions preceding the founding of the New College Institute suggest different causal explanations as a supplement to rational decision making. With regard to instrumental studies, emphasis is on meaning, processes and context derived from interviews framed in terms of the respondents’ perceptions or beliefs about what happened, rather than what actually happened. According to Maxwell; “In qualitative studies, the real interest is in how participants make sense of what has happened, and how this perspective informs their actions” (2004, p. 74).

Case studies also relate to the structure of time previously discussed. Because of the emphasis on how events unfold over time, the case study provides an excellent design for explaining causal links reflected in the dynamic nature of events being examined. Referred to as thick description (Heck, 2004), case studies are used to examine temporal variation in a process or phenomena. The distinctiveness of the case study approach is to examine temporal variation within a single unit and to search for evidence of co-variation (i.e. causality). Furthermore, case studies are a specific technique applied to historical research because of their focus on events occurring over time. While case studies focus on data collection in the present, the purpose of case study research can be classified

---

23 As noted in the introduction, all of Virginia’s other public four-year institutions began as branch campuses, state “Normal Schools” for women, or as acquisitions of independent institutions.
according to its temporal setting (i.e. the collection of data about past events) with the time period identified according to its internal integrity and causal significance.

**Interviews**

As a primary source of social knowledge, interviewing is a technique for generating empirical data. According to Holstein and Gubrium (1977), “interviews are special forms of conversations...[varying] from highly structured, standardized, quantitatively oriented survey interviews, to semi-formal guided conversations and free-flowing informational exchanges” (p. 113). The choice of alternative interviewing methods depends on the nature of the inquiry and research questions. In a comparison of structured and unstructured approaches to qualitative study, Miles and Huberman (1994) discussed issues of “local causality” with regard to contextual understanding in an unstructured interview situation.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), generalizability and comparability are traded in unstructured settings in an effort to examine processes that led to specific outcomes and to focus on the particular phenomena being studied. Conversely, pre-structuring methods reduces the amount of data and simplifies analytic work (Maxwell, 2005). Researchers conducting qualitative studies in an interview situation should have a tentative plan while leaving open the possibility of revisions. In addition the amount of pre-structuring is not as important as how pre-structuring is used. According to Maxwell: “The degree to which you pre-structure your anticipated research methods is a separate decision from how much flexibility you leave yourself to revise the plan during your study. Emergent insights may require new selection plans, different kinds of data, and different
analytical strategies.” (p. 81) Finally, the objective of interviews is to contextualize data and to validate emerging themes and ideas related to the focal organization’s development (Golant & Sillince, 2007).

For purposes of this study, I have pre-figured a set of interview questions with the understanding that interviews present the possibility of building rapport and credibility that redefine the interview situation and open up other themes of interest.

Hierarchical focusing is an interview strategy suggested by Tomlinson (1989) that appears applicable to this study. Tomlinson applies a constructivist ideology to interviewing techniques in a model of hierarchical focusing. “At its broadest, the principle of hierarchical focusing is that the interviewer seeks to elicit the interviewee’s construals with a minimum of framing and uses a hierarchical interview agenda to raise topics only as necessary.” (1989, p. 165) In addition constructing a hierarchical model allows the researcher to arrange questions derived from an initial hierarchical analysis of the subject domain (i.e. the theoretical or conceptual framework for the study). Of particular interest is structuring interview questions in which topics are raised in order of generality. In addition hierarchical focusing allows researchers to make explicit to themselves the nature of their own conceptual framework of a topic domain. With regard to this research proposal, there are implied hierarchical relations within the topic domain. Figure 6 depicts a general outline of the conceptual framework used in this study related to a hierarchical question agenda.
Yin argues that “every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit research design” (1994, p. 19) Adopting a research strategy for the New College Institute required piecing together fundamental concepts and principles from different research
traditions and mapping those concepts into a structural design in use for data collection, analysis and reporting. Mapping the research design proves useful in identifying; the conceptual framework used, research methodology, data collection techniques and strategy, and analysis. It should be noted that the framework is interactive involving interaction between different design components. The idea of a research design should be considered the logic in use for data collection and the logic of reconstruction and reporting results. Figure 7 summarizes the research design in use for this study.
Figure 7: Combining Approaches: Qualitative Research Design In Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Framework</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Re-Conceptualization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical Methods</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Creative re-construction of the past.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Centrality of interpretation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Context specific.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Selective causal explanations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Individuals as story-tellers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Universal condition of multiple versions of narrated events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Narratives as sites of conflict, competition, and cooperation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Production of interpretative data.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case Study</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Illustrative if based on a single case or event.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Includes exploration and examination of meaning, process and context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Recording results in natural settings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Mutual construction of meaning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides historical information.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hierarchically focused.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constructing Stories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Authentic stories engage the reader.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stories offer a consensus view of reality.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provides a synthesis of past events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposal as Argument</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Explain and justify conclusions based on theoretical framework.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Combine parts (i.e. evidence) into an integrated whole.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Explain inconsistency and gaps in interpretation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limitations**

Limitations in qualitative studies are well documented and include threats to validity and reliability introduced during case selection, data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 2003). Maxwell proposes critical evaluation of validity issues in qualitative research as an important step in reporting results. According to Maxwell; “crucial issues in addressing validity is demonstrating that you will allow for the examinations of competing
explanations and discrepant data—that your research is not simply a self-fulfilling prophecy.” (p. 126). While I agree with Maxwell’s goals for qualitative research, I differ with regard to the means for achieving those goals. Notably, qualitative research can lead to a best conclusion if, as previously noted, the narrative is constructed as a result of coherent, understandable and trustworthy methods. To establish trustworthiness, the researcher must convince the reader that they have used rigorous and systematic methods to collect and analyze data, have a complete understanding of qualitative methods and have appreciation and respect for qualitative methods. Researchers have sought critical examination of qualitative methods to confirm concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in the research protocol as the means of assuring valid, reliable and generalizable conclusions. (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Babbie, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Other researchers (e.g. Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Czarniawska, 1997) have sought to distance qualitative studies from positivist paradigms by suggesting a new language for validity and reliability applied to qualitative studies. For example, Seale (1999) suggests the term “criteriology” in reference to the constructivist tradition in qualitative studies. Criteriology refers to various concepts regulating and constraining qualitative research with regard to creativity, exploration, conceptual flexibility, and a freedom of spirit” (p. 467). Lincoln and Guba argue that establishing trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability. And Czarniawska considers theoretical arguments emphasizing function, goodness and beauty as criteria for what constitutes knowledge in interpretative
studies. Notwithstanding the challenges qualitative researchers encounter, standards are employed to assess the accuracy of the researcher’s intentions and conclusions.

**Validity: Narratives and Case Studies**

According to Creswell (2003), “validity...is seen as a strength of qualitative research...[and] is used to suggest determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of the account.” (p. 195-196). As suggested, concepts related to validity in quantitative studies do not appear applicable to qualitative research. The language of validity applied to qualitative studies underlies its constructive or interpretive tradition particularly when applied to narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue that “it is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research.” (p. 7) Similarly, Czarniawska suggests confusion over interpretative methods when defined in comparison with the positivist paradigm. Interpretative studies writes Czarniawska (1997); “represent an approach in the social sciences that comes closest to the narrative knowledge, while positivism provides us with an example of paradigmatic knowledge.” (p. 55) Notably, qualitative researchers in the narrative tradition must search for and defend the criteria that best apply to his or her field work. Identifiable criteria include notions of apparency,

---

24 In contrasting a “modernist paradigm” with naturalistic inquiry, Lincoln and Guba (1985) define differences with regarded to conventionally held notions of validity, reliability and generalizability namely their truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Truth value assumes a single tangible reality whereas qualitative research makes the assumption of multiple constructed realities. Applicability depends on generalizing from a sample to a population while qualitative researchers emphasize potential uniqueness and local context. Finally, consistency and neutrality depend on the artificial separation of fact and value.
verisimilitude and transferability. In relation to a constructivist paradigm, narrative explanation derives from the whole or explanations gleaned from the overall narrative. According to Peskin (1985), good narrative invites readers to participate in the construction of a story as something both read and vicariously lived. “My ideas are candidates for others to entertain, not necessarily as truth, let alone Truth, but a position about the nature and meaning of a phenomenon that may fit their sensibilities and shape their thinking about their own inquiries.” (p. 280).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a similar shift in language and understanding with regard to qualitative studies. Naturalistic researchers should seek criteria for qualitative studies as a replacement for concepts applied to conventional (i.e. quantitative) inquiry. According to Lincoln and Guba, researchers should replace credibility with truth value, transferability should be replaced by applicability, and dependability is proposed as a replacement for consistency. They added a fifth criterion of authenticity to describe a sophisticated but temporal “consensus of views about what it to be considered true.” Authenticity is demonstrated if researchers can show that they have represented a range of different realities and viewpoints other than themselves.

Yin supports similar conceptual properties in the application of qualitative methods specifically applied to case studies. According to Yin (1989), “the case should represent a significant policy problem or interest, it must be complete and provide a thorough investigation of evidence, it must consider alternative perspectives, it should display sufficient evidence to enable readers to see how conclusions were drawn, and it should be
written in an engaging manner for readers. Addressing issues of generalizability in case study methods, Yin suggests a distinction between analytic and statistical generalization. Case study methods employ the concept of analytic generalization in which a previously developed theory is used as a template against which to compare the empirical results of the case study.

Finally, Gabriel (1998) suggests corroborating techniques which strengthen internal consistency in interpretative studies when applied to the use of stories. According to Gabriel, interpretation of stories should be guided by the ability to demonstrate internal consistency where relation of the parts or collection of stories is consistent with the whole. Internal consistency can be theory driven privileging over-determined outcomes according to different mechanisms (i.e. causal factors). Nevertheless, interpretative story telling is not based on claims of falsification because evidence is often presented that can refute interpretative conclusions. Rather, strong interpretations will generally address, account for and supersede weaker ones.

**Triangulation**

The idea of triangulation derives from discussions of measurement validity. In conducting qualitative studies, triangulation is the practice of collecting information using a variety of sources and methods (Maxwell, 2005). When applied to a constructivist paradigm, triangulation does not necessarily imply moving to a single fixed point of interpretation rather research reveals multiple constructed realities conceived of as the revelation of difference. In this sense, triangulation exposes situated accounts of actions
within the field. Maxwell suggests the use of triangulated data collection methods as a strategy for reducing the risk that conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows the researchers to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues under investigation. In the present study, triangulation involves the use of different sources of evidence in the form of narratives and texts including: interviews, policies, legislation, social artifacts and other historical documents. The idea is to triangulate sources of information by examining evidence from those sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. The legitimacy for the approach is concomitant with the aforementioned discussion of validity emphasizing authenticity, trustworthiness and coherence.
CHAPTER 5 THE HISTORY OF THE NEW COLLEGE INSTITUTE
(RE-CONSTRUCTED)

Interviews

The individuals interviewed, their professional title and relationship to the founding of the New College Institute are noted in Table 4. Each individual was mailed a cover letter with a set of interview questions prior to and in anticipation of participating in this research. None of the individuals contacted for this study refused to participate and all participants agreed to allow their interviews to be recorded and transcribed. In fact, interview participants demonstrated overwhelming willingness to share their experiences and stories in re-constructing the history of the New College Institute. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes and the recorded interviews were then transcribed for use in re-constructing the founding history. The following re-constructed narrative of the founding of the New College Institute is both an exploration and explanation of the themes that emerged based on evidence from the interviews, documents and literature. As represented to each of the interview participants, the subject and object of the narrative is the New College Institute. The organization is inserted into the narrative as the actor and only when appropriate is the source of quoted material attributed to an interview subject. This method of narrative reconstruction preserves continuity through a consistent focus on the New
College Institute as an organization that embodies and exhibits the values, beliefs, desires, preferences and intentions of its founders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Relationship to NCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward L. Armstrong</td>
<td>Minority Leader</td>
<td>Delegate Armstrong represents the City of Martinsville and Henry County and sponsored legislation in the Virginia House of Delegates to establish the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>House of Delegates Tenth District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Blake</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor</td>
<td>Mr. Blake was serving as the Deputy Secretary of Education and then Secretary of Education in Governor Warner’s administration and involved in policy conversation involving the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workforce Development Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Virginia Community College System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leanna Blevins, Ph.D</td>
<td>Associate Director</td>
<td>At the request of former Governor Baliles, Dr. Blevins began working with the New College Planning Commission in 2004 and transitioned into the role of Associate Director of the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New College Institute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nolan Browning, Ed.D.</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Mr. Browning was involved in conversations occurring and involving Patrick Henry Community College prior to the founding of the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic and Student Development Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrick Henry Community College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ronald Carrier</td>
<td>Distinguished Visiting Scholar</td>
<td>Dr. Carrier, former president of James Madison University was a consultant for the Harvest Foundation beginning in 2004.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LMI Research Institute and President Emeritus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Madison University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Relationship to NCI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry Dorsey, Ed.D.</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Dr. Dorsey was hired by the Harvest Foundation in 2005 to provide leadership to their initiative for the New College Institute. He is currently the Executive Director of NCI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Hawkins</td>
<td>Former Senator</td>
<td>Senator Hawkins sponsored legislation in 1999 and 2000 calling for studies on post secondary educational access in South Central Virginia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott Kizner, Ph.D.</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>Dr. Kizner was a participant in the policy conversations preceding the founding of the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel J. LaVista</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Dr. LaVista worked with principles and the General Assembly in presenting options for a post-secondary educational organization in Southside Virginia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tod Massa</td>
<td>Policy Research &amp; Data Warehousing Manager</td>
<td>Mr. Massa assisted in the preparation of both assessments prepared by the State Council of Higher Education pursuant to requests from the General Assembly regarding post-secondary education in Southside Virginia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. David McWee</td>
<td>Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Dr. McWee was Longwood’s representative in policy conversation involving the New College Institute. Longwood presented an alternative model for establishing a post-secondary presence in Southside Virginia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Relationship to NCI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Monday</td>
<td>City Manager City of Martinsville Virginia</td>
<td>Mr. Monday was involved in policy conversations preceding the founding of the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Taylor Reveley&lt;sup&gt;25&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Associate Director Miller Center of Public Affairs University of Virginia</td>
<td>Mr. Reveley initially worked with Governor Baliles and the Harvest Foundation to establish the New College Planning Commission and launch the initial challenge grant proposal for the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimble Reynolds, Jr.</td>
<td>Attorney and Counselor at Law Vice-Mayor City of Martinsville</td>
<td>Mr. Reynolds participated in policy conversations preceding the founding of the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm. Roscoe Reynolds</td>
<td>Attorney at Law Senate of Virginia Twentieth District</td>
<td>Senator Reynolds represents the City of Martinsville and Henry County in the Senate of Virginia. He sponsored legislation in January 2006 to establish the New College Institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allyson K. Rothrock</td>
<td>Executive Director The Harvest Foundation</td>
<td>Mrs. Rothrock was on the Board of Directors and then appointed as Executive Director for the Harvest Foundation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>25</sup> W. Taylor Reveley was interviewed at the request of Governor Gerald Baliles and served as his proxy regarding the history of the New College Institute. According to Associate Director Reveley; “This [NCI] project is actually what Governor Baliles and I first worked on significantly together and since that day we've probably worked together every day for the last five years.” It should also be noted that Associate Director Reveley was involved in establishing the Harvest Foundation after the sale of Memorial Hospital. At the time, he was working at the Law Firm of Hunton and Williams in Richmond, Virginia where he met Governor Baliles.
The Founding Narrative(s)

“It [the New College of Virginia] needed to be transformational. It needs to transform the people to believe in education, it needed to transform attitudes and transform the community physically.”

The creation of New College Institute begins with understanding its founding narrative. It is a narrative that has separate parts and therefore separate meaning attributed by the actors who participated in and explained the founding of the New College Institute. There are at least three threads to the founding narrative with the initial storyline beginning in 1999 with a request for studies initiated in the Virginia General Assembly by former republican Senator Charles Hawkins. A commensurate storyline also developed locally within the City of Martinsville and is initiated by a challenge grant of $50 million and a subsequent $2 million grant by the Harvest Foundation to encourage and study access to post-secondary education in the Southside communities of Martinsville and Henry County. While the source of each narrative has different authors, implicates different constituencies, and proposes significantly different structural outcomes for a post secondary educational institution in Southside, each narrative contributed to the discourse that would eventually result in the final organizational structure for the New College Institute and signal a shift in the social and cultural trajectory of a community in transition.

---

26 On June 3, 2004, the Harvest Foundation committed $2 million to “advance the work for the establishment of ... an institute of higher education in the Martinsville Region.” This grant largely funded the work of the planning commission for the New College Institute. On May 8, 2008, in response to their challenge grant to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Harvest Foundation awarded $3,369,618 over 2 years to match funds requested from the State of Virginia
or “limbo”. In addition each narrative contains themes emphasizing the potential outcome and transformational properties access to higher education could offer Southside communities. The symbolic analogy to building an organization of higher education with “bricks and mortar” is metaphorically transformed into a symbol of a “shining institution on the hill”. You “get a plot of land and you put something big up there and you have the residents point to it and say, you know that’s our future.”

**Dr. Carrier and the New College of Virginia**

Clearly, the most thematically innovative and transformative theme created around the founding of the New College Institute was the result of the work and consultation of Dr. Ronald Carrier, former president of James Madison University. In early 2004, the Harvest Foundation created an advisory committee to consider their investment in education in the Southside region as a result of their $50 million challenge grant. That advisory committee included Dr. Carrier as an early representative and consultant. His work on the “New College of Virginia” included non-traditional components and a model for higher education which, it would later be claimed, received only marginal consideration in the final organizational structure of the New College Institute.

Dr. Carrier’s vision for a “New College in Virginia” included interrelated values and beliefs in the transformational qualities of higher education articulated in his model for a “New American College”. Dr. Carrier advocated a new vision and model for higher education by taking advantage of “pedagogical innovations” and redefining “valuable...

---

General Assembly to support existing and proposed academic programs offered by the New College Institute. (Source: www.theharvestfoundation.org)
knowledge in contemporary society”. In metaphoric style and with a consistent and unwavering vision, Dr. Carrier would equate the strategic objectives of higher education with transformation, transparency, affordability and social change. His model would ask for the creation of a “cadre of knowledge workers” who would diffuse the possibility of democracy and freedom throughout the Martinsville and Henry County communities; knowledge that would transform collective social purpose. “If you want democracy, if you want freedom in this world, you’re going to have to educate people and we have to take a different approach, an additional [non-traditional] approach.” In an executive summary dated September 2007, titled *A Conceptual Model for Higher Education* (R. Carrier, personal communication, March 9, 2009), Dr. Carrier provided his rationale for a unique approach to traditional pedagogy.

Preceding the evolution of what Dr. Carrier would now call the “New American College”, his conceptual model for a higher education organization in the Southside region reflected work performed on behalf of the Harvest Foundation beginning in early 2004 to create a plan and vision for a transformational post secondary educational organization. The “New Virginia College” represented an evolution in traditional university curriculum, form and structure; “A contemporary education that would offer rural...students the relevant knowledge-based skills, and individual personal and professional skills necessary to be employed in specific business and industrial sectors without sacrificing an understanding of the liberal arts and sciences.” Dr. Carrier's model was described as bold, radical, innovative, non-traditional and visionary. Political acceptability of the model was
however, less than enthusiastic. “It [the model] was interesting. But...ultimately it wasn't politically or financially going to sail.” According to W. Taylor Reveley who was then consulting on behalf of the Harvest Foundation, the “Carrier Model” involved a number of interrelated challenges making its political receptivity prohibitive.

The General Assembly was having to deal with lots of novelties with regard to this idea and the Carrier model which was a significant departure from the way baccalaureate education tends to work was just one further wrinkle to it all...there’s a question at the time as well as to how SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools] would deal with it [Carrier’s Model] because it's enough of a departure, they were telling us; you know we think this is all going to work out but this is different than the way things tend to work and so many of our accrediting standards we have to...look at closely with you all. So, novelty, plus no money, plus SACS, not sufficient state funds to do something full bore, plus a whiff of concern from SACS that this was not going to be just a snap of the fingers but instead would require some diligent attention on their part to figure out how to deal with the accrediting. I think, all combined to have, to generate a coolness in the receptivity of the General Assembly.

“The Harvest Foundation formed a committee to try to see how we would do this thing at the state level and they first turned to former president of JMU, Ron Carrier. And he came forward and made a pitch to the General Assembly but he pitched it as a full four year stand alone university and the problem is the price tag on the thing was enormous.”

Dr. Carrier’s gift of imagining a new and innovative model for higher education taking root in the Southside community was met with political resistance and financial realities. As a new model for higher education it seemed “unrealistic” and financially untenable. The former president of James Madison University had proposed a model that was “very lofty”, one in which “learning coordinators instead of faculty would provide a brave new world and a brand-new vision for higher education.”
Despite such ideals and regardless of its political acceptability, Dr. Carrier’s model for higher education carried with it thematic and symbolic purposes that linked higher education with innovations in instructional design, curriculum programs and faculty. Dr. Carrier asserted that a contemporary model for higher education “needed to be transformational.” And his model for a new college and its proposed site in uptown Martinsville would provide a catalyst for the symbolic transformation of Martinsville by “revitalizing every space into classrooms and into apartments for students.”

Notwithstanding the physical qualities of the proposed model for higher education, Dr. Carrier’s design for a new college would also offer externalities to the community symbolized in the concomitant goals of transparency, cost-effectiveness, and social and cultural change. “The second strategy was it should be transparent...dealing with students who are the first generation to go to college. You needed to have a program where it was transparent that...they [the students] knew what they had to put in and what they’d get out of it. They actually could see the end...” Third, the model had to offer an efficient and cost-effective method for providing educational access to a community where cultural, social and economic realities constituted obstacles and barriers to four-year college attendance. Through a number of interrelated project objectives, Dr. Carrier proposed a model for a competitive undergraduate institution that would; operate on a 28-month cycle with students attending classes five days a week, give prior credit for experience through competency based assessments, and employ “knowledge managers”, “learning coordinators” and technology to effectively reduce costs. Finally and perhaps most
importantly for the Southside community was the fourth strategy articulated by Dr. Carrier. “The fourth objective, the fourth strategy was that it should have a social and economic benefit. It should be socially and economically beneficial... we’re going to have something unique and different, and we transform this community and create an educated population and people who appreciate education.”

To his disappointment, the Virginia General Assembly rejected Dr. Carrier’s plan as “grandiose”. By the summer of 2005, Dr. Carrier had withdrawn from the Harvest Foundation Planning Commission as efforts were being made to modify his original model.

I think as people began to push him [Dr. Carrier] to change the model and he obviously still passionately believes in that model, he wasn’t ready to change it. He wasn’t ready to give that up so I think ultimately for him the model was more important than the realization of something... from my perspective, something was better than nothing. [For Dr. Carrier] it had to be all or nothing and whereas for this community [Martinsville and Henry County] I think the consensus was something would be better than nothing.

As noted, there were some who suggested that no elements from Dr. Carrier’s original proposal made their way into the final compromised organizational structure that became the New College Institute. I disagree.

First, Dr. Carrier’s initial suggestion and vision for an innovative New College of Virginia provides an anchor or benchmark against which all other proposals would be evaluated; not specifically on a structural basis but rather based on ideology and commitment to higher education symbolized as socially transformative. From this point forward, the New College Institute would be linked with a metaphor of transformational
change and education would be euphemized as “the most powerful social force in the world.” Dr. Carrier would also highlight the need for a non-traditional educational experience as critical to the organizational structure for the new college, its identity and survival. That is, he would articulate a different model for post-secondary education that while not practical for the Martinsville and Henry County community would distinguish the need to plan for post secondary education based on a non-traditional approach. “I think if I can say this; that model [Dr. Carrier’s model] didn't work for here, what became increasingly evident as time went on is that a traditional college model would not work at least at the time we were trying to get it started. So, you had two very different models one very stagnant and one not at all and so we had to try to find a place somewhere in the middle that would work.” Third, Dr. Carrier alerts not only the community through his work with the Harvest Foundation but also Virginia legislators to the General Assembly that post secondary educational institutions create significant social and cultural externalities and can be transformational to a community. In deference to the history of creating post secondary educational organizations in the Commonwealth of Virginia based on the presence of demand for higher education and in deference to the higher education centers that currently populate the Southside region, the New College Institute would specifically need to establish a legitimate purpose in the social and cultural transformation of Martinsville and Henry County by attracting students, faculty and community support (i.e. by creating demand for higher education) and through divergence from the institutional model for higher education centers. The tripartite concepts of transformation,
transparency, and social and economic change would continue to echo throughout each of the subsequent accounts of the founding narrative. They are concepts that provide “anchors” for the creation story or founding narrative of the New College Institute. And finally, Dr. Carrier would be a mechanism or conduit through which enthusiasm and inspiration would create the material conditions in which the New College Institute would eventually become a reality. It was claimed that Dr. Carrier brought “stature” and “gravitas” to efforts on behalf of the Harvest Foundation to establish a four-year baccalaureate degree granting institution in Martinsville. Affecting the region with purpose, Dr. Carrier would prescribe a vision for the new college, passion to pursue that vision and courage to make it a reality. In Dr. Carrier's words, “it is the ability to take the smallest idea and build it into something very important.”

Senator Charles Hawkins: The Need for a College in South Central Virginia

Politically, the New College Institute benefited from another thread of support beginning with the initial requests for studies of post-secondary educational access in the Southside region sponsored in 1999 by then Senator Charles Hawkins. “New college probably gets its initial start in the study that Charles Hawkins undertook when he was a state senator probably going back, well it was before Tim Kaine was running for governor so the early part, either the later 1990s or early 2000”. The initial study requested by Senator Hawkins did not receive support in the Virginia General Assembly or by then Governor Jim Gilmore who believed that it was not the Commonwealth's job to grow Virginia’s government. Nevertheless, the idea of a new college in Southside Virginia
continued to be a topic of discussion among the local delegates and senators. Senator Hawkins’ proposal also attracted the attention of then Governor Mark Warner and Lieutenant Governor Timothy Kaine. In 2004, while campaigning for governor, then Lieutenant Governor Kaine would generate renewed interest in a Southside university during a speech in Danville, Virginia.

I think it was the year before he ran for governor and every candidate for office is looking...what is the issue that would have some saliency in an area and you know of course part of it is actually altruistic; what can we do to help an area? Some way or another he [Governor Kaine] came across, and I don't know whether it was the Charles Hawkins’ study or whatever but he remembered that there was this plan and on the campaign trail he suggested that there ought to be a college [in Southside] in fact he said it in Danville.

And;

Several years later [in reference to 1999 when Senator Hawkins proposed to study a new college in Southside], when he was Lieutenant Governor, Tim Kaine picked up the refrain. There should be a public college in the region, he argued, for important economic, social and cultural reasons. The idea caught on.

While initially unsuccessful, the study requests Senator Hawkins made to explore the possibility of establishing a university in Southside Virginia focused political attention and recognition on the social and economic problems in Southside and connected those problems with the lack of access and presence of a higher education organization.

Problems come to attention because some more or less systematic indicator simply shows that there is a problem out there, particularly in the form of a deficiency. Senator W. Roscoe Reynolds who was appointed to Senator Hawkins’ study commission in 1999 recalled that after several meetings with the study commission it was “very clear that Southside Virginia was underserved with regards to colleges and universities”. And despite
its failure to produce tangible results, Senator Reynolds recalled some years later the occasion, circumstances and consequences of then Lieutenant Governor Timothy Kaine’s speech in Danville.

You had Ferrum, you had Longwood, but basically Southside Virginia, there was a big empty space if you look at a map you can see a lot of other fine institutions spread across the state. I believe the purpose of that study, the result of that study [referring to Senator Hawkins’ study]...and my recollection and I hope its correct is that no one ever did a report and the reason that report was never done is that the Gilmore administration took the position with Senator Hawkins and others that they were not elected to grow Virginia’s government... I'm pretty sure that at least that was my understanding then and the thing kind of stayed dormant for some time after that and I don't recall exactly the year but Tim Kaine was serving I think as lieutenant governor at the time and he came to Danville and he made a speech and one of the things he said was that Southside, Southside Virginia ought to have a major university. That created a lot of excitement in the community.

While campaigning for Governor, then Lieutenant Governor Kaine renewed the idea for a post secondary educational presence in Southside Virginia. With his proclamation, an inchoate commitment to higher education in Southside begins to have material meaning and consequence. In general, we might view then Lieutenant Governor Kaines announcement in context as a “focusing event” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 94) or a symbolic act that reinforces and focuses attention not simply on the need for an educational presence in Southside but rather articulation of the diffused social, cultural and economic interests relative to the region and its history. Focusing events reinforce some pre-existing perception of a problem and focusing attention on a problem that has always existed in the back of people’s minds.

What kind of image or model is suggested with the creation of a major university? While Governor Kaine had announced at the very least an interest and perhaps even
intention of creating a new college in Southside Virginia, what kind of model did he have in mind? “I couldn't tell you exactly what Governor Kaine, what Lieutenant Governor Kaine at the time had in mind when he said we needed a higher education institute because he could mean a number of things.” If we consider Dr. Carriers plan or model as ground clearing; creating the idea of a new, innovative and transformative four-year postsecondary educational institution in Southside Virginia then we might perceive then Lieutenant Governor Kaine’s announcement as a tempered, perhaps modified and certainly more traditional model or plan for a post secondary educational presence in Southside. What is apparent however, at this time, perhaps in early 2005, is a growing consensus regarding the transformational and non-traditional qualities that the organization would have to meet for its political and practical acceptability. In order to transform the region and win the approval of the General Assembly, the new college “must be more than a typical baccalaureate college that it must reach out to the underserved as well to traditional students, and offer innovative student services.” (W. Taylor Reveley, personal communication, March 25, 2009) Two visions for higher education, one supported in subsequent studies conducted by the State Council for Higher Education and the other rising out of advocacy efforts on the part of the Harvest Foundation and precipitated by the innovative thinking of Dr. Carrier would eventually be nurtured under the direction of former Governor Gerald Baliles.

**Governor Gerald Baliles and the Harvest Foundation**
The events of January 2004 could not have had more precipitative urgency for the founding of the New College Institute. With the “fairly pronounced” statement of then Governor Timothy Kaine, the Harvest Foundation would find a vision and tangible object for its philanthropic initiatives. Then Executive Director of the Harvest Foundation Henry Cerino would contact former Governor Gerald Baliles in reference to the lieutenant governor's announcement and perhaps urging a partnership would take up the challenge for a new college in Martinsville. “Look [the] Lieutenant Governor is saying there ought to be a public college in Southside somewhere [and] I think this is precisely the type of thing that the Harvest Foundation ought to get involved with.” Having been formed by the sale of Memorial Hospital in 2002, the Harvest Foundation was committed to “fulfilling its legacy” to the citizens of Martinsville and Henry County through education initiatives that would be “transformative for the community”. In recollection of the early planning efforts on behalf of the Harvest Foundation, current Executive Director Allyson Rothrock commented on the organization's priorities.

I'll take you back just a few steps quickly. The foundation was formed in May of 2002 from the sale of our rural not-for-profit hospital here. The proceeds from that sale formed the Harvest Foundation. The foundation and its policymakers, its board of directors spent about 13 months planning, organizing, and deciding what areas it wanted to fund in and how it wanted to help the community that it served. Our geographic area for the foundation, our service area is Martinsville and Henry County because that's the service area of the hospital from which the funds flow to us from that sale...During this 11, 12, 13 months of planning one of the things that clearly came out early in the process that was an area that they wanted to be involved [in] was education.

The events of January 2004 would unite politics and philanthropy through the leadership and administrative oversight of former Governor Gerald Baliles, “a native son
of Southside Virginia”. Speaking on behalf of the efforts of Governor Baliles vis-à-vis the Harvest Foundation, W. Taylor Reveley would recall the events of January 10, 2004 and the initial challenge grant announced by the Harvest Foundation.

...January 2004, and I believe that Tim Kaine said there ought to be a college in Southside. Charlie Hawkins, State Senator had said things along those lines in prior years as well but Tim Kaine said something fairly pronounced in January 2004...we went to speak with Gerry Baliles very promptly, either that afternoon or the next day knowing that he had three strong ties to the issue. One he was a native of Patrick County. Second, no one better to interpret the impulse of sitting governors and lieutenant governors than a former governor of the same party. And third, one of the things that he's been most devoted to throughout his career has been higher education...January 10, 2004 the day sticks in my mind because it was a Saturday morning and it was kind of snowy. The Harvest Foundation had a special meeting...[and] we participated by conference call. We had prepared a resolution for them to announce the harvest challenge, a $50 million challenge grant to the Commonwealth if it should establish a baccalaureate, public baccalaureate college in Martinsville-Henry County. The Harvest Foundation passed a resolution unanimously, a press release went out and you know, the General Assembly, Tim Kaine, Mark Warner, all took note of the fact that this was in the offing.

So, the Harvest Foundation would provide immediate traction to the issue that had in part lay dormant since 1999. By the spring of 2004, the Harvest Foundation had established an advisory committee and a working group to propose a model for the new college. These groups were created under the direction of Governor Baliles. “One thing Governor Baliles is often very adept at is figuring out what group of people would be good to bring together to both give substantive thought to an idea and to kind of give it some gravitas.” Among the members of the advisory group was Dr. Carrier who had, as previously noted consulted with the Harvest Foundation on the design of a new and innovative model for higher education. What we also know is that after pitching his model to the General Assembly in early 2005, Dr. Carrier’s involvement and consultation with
the Harvest Foundation waned and eventually ended. At about that time (March 2005), Governor Baliles would step in to fill the void and take a more active advising role. Under his direction, the New College Planning Commission was established in the early spring of 2005. Dr. Carrier had provided an initial conceptual model for a transformative organization of higher education. He had fleshed out a concept that as it stood was not likely to get General Assembly “traction” or approval. What also became clear at this time was that the model for the New College Institute would have to address substantive and practical realities if it was going to sustain political consideration.

It became clear that it was going to be a much more attenuated and crab wise effort so, it was in March of 2005 that the... Harvest Foundation...on the advice of Governor Baliles set’s up the New College planning commission as a practical reality, kind of a separate, separate functional comportment or wing of the foundation to deal with the General Assembly and other colleges and universities around the state. To try to, in a more crab wise fashion get to the point of legislation and a path to the college...March 2005, that's when Ron Carrier passes the torch and the New College Planning Commission inherits his work.

In the months that followed, Governor Baliles would commission a pre-planning report by Virginia experts in education. That report sets the stage for all the work that followed. According to sources, the Harvest Foundation initiated a bifurcated planning process involving both a working group and advisory group. The working group that

27 Dr. Bill Bosher, The Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State Department of Education under Governor Allen, Walter Craigie, the Treasurer for the Commonwealth under Governor Godwin and Secretary of Finance under Governor Dalton, Dr. Gordon Davies, the Director of SCHEV under Governors Godwin, Dalton, Robb, Baliles, Wilder and Allen, and Dr. Steve Janosik, Deputy Secretary of Education under Governor Allen.

28 Dr. George Johnson, Former President of George Mason University, Dr. Paul Torgersen, Former President of Virginia Tech., Dr. Ron Carrier, Former President of James Madison
prepared the pre-planning report consisted of “a superb collection of educational advisor's and recognized thinkers”. Similarly, the advisory group would provide political clout and stature through comment and endorsement of the pre-planning report by a group of former college and university presidents.

The challenge confronting the working group and advisory group was to construct a model for a new college that would meet both the nontraditional and transformative qualities articulated by Dr. Carrier and to further address practical realities that would facilitate political adoption.

The planning commission then meets, I don't know six or seven or eight times all together between the spring of 2005 in the winter of 2005. And it's probably dealing with three main items one of which is supplementing the Carrier...work with additional consulting and advice from higher ed. consultants about what the array of feasible options are, what can be done, what would it cost? Those types of things. What else do we need to think about too really specifically get a new entity going? A lot of the Carrier work had not so much focused on brass tacks, things like how does the IT system work, what kind of staff do you need?... so dealing with those brass tacks types of things. Then a second task was to deal with the General Assembly and as a subset of that, deal with other higher ed. institutions around the state in one regard just to communicate as best as possible that this was not a zero-sum game where a new public college in Martinsville would be taking away from resources from other universities because that was a concern that people would see this as an additional snout at the trough taking away from them. Likewise to communicate to the General Assembly that this doesn't have to be an Athena from the head of Zeus type moment where a new entity, a new college springs to life full bore but instead we can progress which is alternately the way the legislation works, and then third to go about finding a... first director or president for the planning effort and the entity. I say the first part of the work of the planning commission was probably focused on the first prong, some more consulting advice about just the brass tacks of what needs to be done... once the General Assembly’s season began to get closer and closer there was work on what the legislation would actually look like and how it would work and it was probably then in the late

University, Dr. Cynthia Tyson, Former President of Mary Baldwin College, Dr. Harrison Wilson, Former President of Norfolk State University and General Samuel Wilson, Former President of Hampden-Sydney College.
summer -- early fall that the model that's in place now really began to take shape which is to put a strong administrative structure in place, physically in Martinsville and then bring faculty physically to Martinsville as well but under the auspices of other colleges and universities.

As the 2006 General Assembly session grew closer, the Harvest Foundation Planning Commission intensified its work to identify a model for higher education that meets the local needs of the Martinsville and Henry County community while balancing those needs with a politically viable organizational model. One of the individuals closest to these negotiations was Leanna Blevins who at the request of Governor Baliles began working with the Harvest Foundation in the summer of 2004. Once again under the leadership of Governor Baliles, the planning commission would inch closer to a compromise with the General Assembly. Leanna Blevins, now Associate Director of the New College Institute would recall those final months of negotiation at the end of 2005 and the events leading to the enacting legislation for the New College Institute.

At the same time we [the planning commission] were meeting, Governor Baliles led the discussions...we were [also] meeting with SCHEV and the governor's office by way of the Secretary of Education on a regular basis... so we were moving forward...we didn't know what this [the New College Institute] was going to look like alternately it was back and forth... and I remember several times being in Richmond sitting at the table with the folks I just mentioned...[and] at one point you just have to say okay what would you take?... and then they would say what would the committee [the planning commission] take...[and] it was just inching toward meeting in the middle to what it ultimately became. And it really didn't come together until about November. I mean it was literally right before the General Assembly, the submission and have patrons to carry the bill through, it was really right before that that we came to a consensus and had the current model. It changed a little during the General Assembly session but that ultimately came about in November of 2005.
What began on a snowy day in January 2004, a partnership forged between an ex-governor with meaningful ties to Southside Virginia and a philanthropic organization searching for a tangible presence to its efforts would two years later, culminate in the establishment of a new public college in Virginia. During the process what had initially been idealized as a new and innovative higher educational organization would undergo iterations in size and scope and program parameters in meeting both the needs of the local community, the necessity for political compromise, and articulation of a distinct however marginal role in Virginia's system of colleges and universities. “In two a half years, through plain patience and persistence, through negotiations and modifications, much has been achieved - an idea, a transformative idea has become a reality. This community has rallied to the cause.” Reflecting perhaps serendipitously about the events of January 2004, Governor Baliles would tell those gathered in Martinsville to honor of the New College Institute one of his proudest moments in the creation of the New College Institute.

One of my proudest moments as a native son of Southside was to hear the unanimous vote to make a $50 million challenge grant to the Commonwealth -- a unanimous vote to pledge one of the largest private contributions in Virginia's history. I told the board then -- based on all of my experience in Virginia and across the world -- that college education was the only sure way to transform the region.

It is generally agreed that the Harvest Foundation’s $50 million challenge grant provided political traction to the idea of a new public college in Martinsville and Henry County. However, simply proffered, money alone would not have ensured creation of a new college.

...it became more clear as time went by, that well $50 million is a lot, $50 million only goes so far...the annual budget of a small liberal arts college is probably on the
order of $15-$20 million... $50 million from that area was clearly an effort on Martinsville's and the Harvest Foundation’s part to show lots of good faith to the state that look, we really want to do something transformative here but in a cold eyed analysis back in Richmond by SCHEV and the General Assembly folks, they just saw...the state was still going to be providing the lion’s share of the funding unless something...private materializes.

In considering the role of the Harvest Foundation beyond their commitment of material resources to the founding of the New College Institute; the Harvest Foundation, its group of advisors, and individuals working through the planning commission did more to move the idea of a new college in Southside to a reality than money could offer. If we consider institutional and political processes as debate and negotiation over ideas, then the Harvest Foundation served as the “incubator” of those ideas. Through its partnerships, its social networks and its relational influence, the Harvest Foundation gave birth and nurtured the ideas that linked higher education with greater social purposes and transformation qualities. That is, the Harvest Foundation incubated the idea of transformational change that brought the new college to reality. This sentiment could not be expressed with more honest simplicity then through the words of the current Executive Director of the Harvest Foundation Allyson Rothrock.

We are trying to re-create ourselves. We are really trying hard and there are areas in rural America that are trying to do that but everybody isn’t... but in this area there is a huge uprising and push to be something different to memorialize the legacy of who we are... to memorialize that but also at the same time to become a cutting edge 21st century community that can serve all kinds of people and so, there’s an incredible sort of wave now coming together between a push to be different than we ever were before while we preserve our history and changing the culture here from an education standpoint... this thought and this idea, we will be different.

In 2002, the Harvest Foundation is formed from the sale of Memorial Hospital.

January 2004, then Lieutenant Governor Timothy Kaine makes a campaign speech in Danville calling for a new college in Southside Virginia. According to sources, Governor Kaine may be recalling early request for a study of higher education access in Southside initiated by Senator Hawkins.

January 10, 2004, the Harvest Foundation issues a press release announcing a challenge grant of $50 million for the establishment of a four-year baccalaureate degree granting institution in Martinsville-Henry County.

In early 2004, Dr. Carrier was hired to consult with the Harvest Foundation in developing his evolutionary model of the “New College in Virginia.”

In March of 2005, Dr. Carrier would give way to the New College Planning Commission which would inherit his work and begin addressing the practical realities of establishing a college in Martinsville-Henry County.

In the summer of 2005, under the leadership of former Governor Baliles, the New College Planning Commission begins working on a modified model for the New College Institute.

May 2004, the Harvest Foundation releases its Pre-Planning Report.

December 2005, Barry Dorsey is hired as the first Executive Director of the New College Institute.

Figure 8: The Social, Cultural and Political History of the New College Institute
The New College Institute: Building the ‘and, and, and’ connections...

Opportunity and Access...

The founding of the New College can be traced back to the efforts of Senator Hawkins, Dr. Carrier, the Harvest Foundation, former Governor Baliles, and local delegates and senators to the Virginia General Assembly who represented the Southside region. We see in their disparate efforts the emergence of local and regional themes that link the creation of NCI with education as an institutionalized organization. But what exactly are these themes and do they differ from the conceptual, ideological, cultural and social properties that characterize institutionalized educational organizations? The answer is obviously yes, in some very fundamental and significant ways. But the answer is also no. If we examine the founding stories for the themes, motivations, intentions and preferences of local actors and politicians, regional actors, and state actors we see surface differences and latent similarities in creating an educational organization with symbolic, institutional and transformative significance. Building the,” and, and, and” connections between education and its social and cultural purpose is not a matter of consensus rather educational organizations by their very existence symbolize a plurality of interests characteristic of our democratic form of governance.

Few would question that the presence of an institution of higher education affords a local community and its citizens both opportunity and access; they are unquestionable policy objectives motivating the desire of participants both inside and outside the Martinsville and Henry County communities to establish a new college. If you create an
organization of higher education, so the logic goes, people will attend as a matter of access and opportunity. But if access and opportunity are understood and evaluated in terms of rational planning objectives, an argument favoring other communities or other localities in Virginia could be used to oppose a new college in Martinsville. In fact there are a number of regions throughout the state that are not served by an organization of higher education leading to the comment:

You know, Roanoke has claimed for years that it’s the largest city within a 500 mile radius that doesn’t have a public four year institution. So you put one there, then the next city on down the road is going to say the same thing and the next city can say the same thing... there’s always good legitimate reasons to expand higher education and from the public policy point of view you have to determine...you know what’s cost-effective.

But there is more to this narrative than access and opportunity or perhaps there is more to the idea of access and opportunity than simply creating a physical structure and opening the doors for business. The lack of access to opportunities for post secondary education are, for the citizens of Martinsville and Henry County and perhaps throughout Southside Virginia, representational and a symbolic feature of their shared history and social situation. Access and opportunity are conceived and understood in a local context; through conversations describing events linking the history of Martinsville and Henry County with the history of industry, labor consciousness, educational attainment and generational inertia marginalizing the need for post secondary education. Only an organization of higher education with distinct design features could transform this community. Vice-Mayor Kimble Reynolds provided background and historical perspective
by contextualizing the need for an organization of higher education juxtaposed with the historical economic, social and cultural realities characterizing Southside communities.

I'm going to give you the backdrop of what it was like here so you can hopefully have a complete understanding of the point I'm trying to make. Growing up here there were furniture factories, textile factories... at its prime a person could go to work literally quit that morning and that afternoon go across the street or up the road and get another job and be ready to go back to work the next day. It did not require a high education level. So you saw a lot of temptations of independence, you go so far in high school, get a nice car; And education, why should I have to be concerned or worried about it?... so that's the uphill battle that you're fighting and so bringing an institution of higher education into the community reaching out especially to the younger grades and showing them the importance and demonstrating to them not only the importance but also the need for them to value education and to get hired and to invest in higher education...I think it’s more than just symbolic it’s addressing a sincere need in our community.

NCI’s creation, legitimacy and ultimately its success is intimately connected with overcoming an inter-generational dissonance and perhaps outright historical apathy towards higher education. “As I told you, education was not an important social and cultural thing here for a century.” Access and opportunity could not simply be represented by doors that needed to be open, buildings symbolizing the presence of a higher education organization or affordable local options for post secondary education, rather NCI would need to be committed to attracting and “anchoring” the first generation of college going citizens throughout Martinsville and Henry County. Addressing issues of access and opportunity meant addressing social and cultural problems in the context of Martinsville and Henry County and changing the way citizens viewed higher education. The first generation college students that NCI needed to attract required more than a traditional college could offer. NCI needed a support network for families who had traditionally...
“Stayed at home to take care of the family and work” and who placed only marginal value in higher education. The New College Institute needed to symbolize the realization of opportunity afforded through access to higher education by connecting the organization with a concomitant commitment to social change and community revitalization. The New College Institute would need to create desire among the citizens and educators in Martinsville and Henry County if it was going to be successful in attracting first-generation college students and creating a new “knowledge economy”. In separate narratives, access and opportunity for higher education is symbolized as a mechanism for overcoming the intergenerational inertia that marginalized the need for post-secondary education in Southside communities.

...for many, many years you could earn a good living without being well-educated. There were many families that had not done that and so the kids that go to college are going to be the first generation that’s going to go to college. As hard as that might have been when I was growing up it's gotten even harder now and it's gotten harder for a lot of reasons I mean, you know it's gotten harder because of the cost, it's gotten harder because most families today...there are way too many teenagers who don't have responsible adults living in the household, there are way too many teenagers today who don't have both mom and dad living in a household. There are way too many teenagers today that by the time the family unit keeps the wolf from the door they don't have much energy to do much of anything else. So that is one of the things, that's one of the things that I think is really great about now... a child in this community after graduation from high school can go to Patrick Henry Community College for two years get their associate’s degree, come to New College Institute take courses offered by other institutions and get their degree.

And;

You know, you [students] can't be away, they've never been away from home before and that's another reason for having it in a rural area is so important because they don't have to necessarily go away from home right away and watching the success of that and making them feel comfortable. What we've actually seen here with new college...what you see over here are a lot of people first generation
college but now the parents are going too which is exactly what we're trying to do. Change the culture. Education is important and I think that for so long no one thought it was important because they could get a job and they could put a roof over their family and put food on the table but that was about it and that was okay.

Access and opportunity to higher education was consequential to the New College Institute's organizational design. Perhaps the result of fatigue on the part of the General Assembly and the State Council of Higher Education in funding and supporting a network of higher education centers throughout the Southside region, the New College Institute emerged as similar in organizational design and structure to the model for higher education centers but differed with regard to its mission, objectives and purpose. NCI’s unique mission and purpose was foundational to the organizations outreach programs that sought to create a culture of participation and inclusion throughout the systems of education in Southside Virginia. Systems that were once described as “operating in silos” would now be asked to establish a new collaborative dialogue and discourse linking higher education with community revitalization, economic transformation and cultural renewal. NCI would have to incorporate a new ethos that would distinguish it from the other higher education centers in Southside Virginia while simultaneous linking them based on transforming the social, cultural and economic realities. In describing the differences between NCI and the higher education centers in Southside Virginia, Dr. Barry Dorsey would explain the institutional divergence that accompanied NCI's founding and oriented it to the local need for access and opportunity.

We determined which programs to bring here based on what we think, what we determine are the needs of this area and also high demand programs because that's one of the things that legislators told me that we want you to offer high demand
programs that help that entire Commonwealth, not just the people in Martinsville-Henry County even though they were very concerned about the economy and the people in this area. So we’re very different in that regard. We're also different because we have faculty in residence. We’re also different because we have staff who are dedicated to outreach activities to try to increase the college going rate in this area. So we are really different from any of the other so-called higher ed. centers.

In granting its charter, the Virginia General Assembly decided that the New College Institute would differ from the higher education centers in fundamental ways. NCI would maintain its own faculty, it would develop programs based on local needs, interests and demands and it would engage in a critical outreach function where the aim was not simply recruitment but rather creation of a culture of participation and inclusion in higher education. These components of the New College Institute are not a political or organizational afterthought rather they are critical organizational design insertions and features contributing to NCI’s social legitimacy, identity and purpose. They are also consequential and material choices in the original plan and design negotiated prior to the enacting legislation. Leanna Blevins Associate Director of the New College Institute recalled the planning commission’s commitment to outreach prior to establishing the New College Institute.

...what we have held to from our original design; one is the outreach component. At none of the higher education centers in Virginia at least, are there full-time staff members dedicated to going out into the community and raising the bar educationally and trying to increase the college going rate and change the culture of the area. So that was part of our original design and I think it's a necessary component in this region, if we’re to ultimately be successful. We have a lot of low hanging fruit, people who want to finish their degrees but after a few years if you don't build the pipeline and allow people to have aspirations beyond what it has historically been then we would just be dead in the water.
With outreach as a conscious design choice, NCI not only hoped to capture the “low hanging fruit” that represented its current pool of eligible students but it also tried to capture the imaginative possibilities that higher education or for that matter any type of education offered to individual citizens and the community. In its effort to provide access and opportunity, the New College Institute had to become a topic of local conversations and filled “the voids” left by the textile and manufacturing industry. “Their [NCI’s] presence, their engagement what they’ve done with things...allows them to impact other conversations and that’s where real change occurs.” And while the practical consequences of this type of organizational design might fail to be demonstrated empirically, the belief that NCI can impact conversations with moral significance is unmistakable. Once again, Vice-Mayor Kimble Reynolds symbolized the expected impact on conversations occurring during the founding of the New College Institute.

When you have a region that has been hit with tough economic times and facing some of the things I mentioned earlier, there is a morale or image factor or image factor that affects the morale. The fact that New College is here despite the odds that it was given to begin with, it's thriving and doing better than initially anticipated...has placed the attention on Martinsville and Henry County and has sustained the interest of the State Council of Higher Education as well as the governor's office. That does a lot for the people that live here. It raises their self-esteem and it also inspires many of them. There is a hope for the area to rebound and to once again be a very thriving community and participant in the Commonwealth. That's difficult to measure from the outside. But the number of people that come in here and sit at the table in which were sitting, and talk about what their opportunities are given their limited job...[and] the limited income that they have, and opportunities that may exist for their children, NCI is a bright spot for them.

And Social Problems...
... to what extent does the Institute help to solve local or regional social and other problems and that means that their staff are involved in social service activities, they're working with foundations, they're participating in career nights at high schools, I mean they're expressing a public face that indicates their interest not only in being an educational provider but a problem solver. You know as a major component of the activities within that community and that region you know to me those would be some of the key things that I feel as eventually will be marked on.

In considering the potential externalities that access and opportunity to higher education afforded the Southside communities there was also a corresponding emphasis on NCI is a mechanism for social change. Change that would not simply result in the growth of human capital or cultural competencies but change that would alter the perception and consequences of the social problems that characterized the region. The creation of NCI involves a causal story having both an empirical and moral dimension. (Stone, 1989) The New College Institute had a pragmatic mandate to address access and opportunity to higher education and a moral mandate relating higher education with overcoming social ills. In a curious juxtaposition of cause and effect, the social problems of drug and alcohol abuse, poor work ethics, teenage pregnancy and overall educational attainment found their solution in an organization of higher education. Curious, because there seemed to be plausible sensibility among policy actors that the social problems experienced in Martinsville and Henry County resulted from the absence of an organization of higher education and perhaps were not properly attributed to social and cultural norms. That is, the social problems experienced in this rural Southside community are redefined by the absence of higher education and its symbolic methods of socialization.
“In fact, when you look at the needs, what the data show, there's a prime need for secondary education that the areas in Martinsville, Henry County, Patrick County and further west needed far more in the way of GED's completion because you have up to half the adults without a high school diploma.” Learning it might be claimed involves more than just offering curriculum programs at the post secondary educational level; learning involves cultural literacy and understanding that social problems can be ameliorated with collective changes in educational attainment. While the subject of cultural literacy and social problems received marginal thematic attention in the narratives collected for this study, it was clear that those individuals willing to discuss the social problems in Martinsville and Henry County created a causal story in which the organization offered solutions. Education would have an intimidating presence in a community where overall literacy rates were comparatively lower than state and national averages.

Martinsville, and I used to know the numbers by heart but when you look at adults 26 to 35 and older that have a college degree, I mean kids need to have models so when students are living in homes were in many cases in Martinsville, single parent homes that do not have a college degree, it's harder for them to aspire to seeing a connection between high school graduation and secondary education because they haven't seen that as a link in their parent's lives.

If it could be argued that the communities in Southside region suffered collectively from the same types of social problems then NCI offered a distinct advantage in alleviating the conditions in which these problems were created. As a model for community revitalization, the New College Institute would have to address social problems through real and perceived change. Paradoxically, colleges can often exacerbate social problems although these relationships are complicated and socially dynamic. Claiming that the
citizens of Martinsville and Henry County suffered from a low literacy rates, drug and alcohol abuse, a poor work ethic and disproportionate teenage pregnancy would lend additional social legitimacy to a new organization for higher education with regional implications. And perhaps as a corollary to the economic decline in Martinsville and Henry County, the need to address employment related problems associated with drug and alcohol abuse, and criminal records had tacit social implications. “You know one of the biggest problems for a lot of our employers... is people passing drugs and police background checks.” Similarly, a type of re-training was required if NCI was to capitalize on its creation.

We are going to put this new type of institution in here... we are going to retrain them, are going to retrain them how to think because our surveys showed, our focus groups showed that they couldn't get people to come to work because if they worked call centers, if they got unpleasant calls they just up and quit or if it was a nice day they’d just not show because they’d go hunting and fishing and drug and alcohol use was a problem.

To be clear, NCI was not specifically identified as the cure for social problems rather, NCI would provide a material link with higher education, specifically attainment of a bachelor’s degree with other educational systems in the region as a general solution to social problems. Addressing the need for a socially transformative organization, Scott Kizner Superintendent of Martinsville public schools commented on his recent efforts to investigate and bring attention to the community’s social problems.

Martinsville city schools, well not Martinsville city schools but Martinsville has the second highest teenage pregnancy rate in the state. It has one out of four children under 17 who have been arrested for a juvenile crime. You have a low birth weight, you have so many kids... 80% of the kids born in 2007, I know because I just had to do a presentation, 80% of the kids born in 2007 were born to a single mother, 60%
of that same student group was born to a mother without a 12th grade education. I mean the social challenges are what make this really more of an urban setting...very few people speak openly and honestly about that. I put it out there as much as possible because not to place blame but for people to recognize, if you’re going to change the community, you’ve got to first not be in denial.

Bringing a new college to Martinsville and Henry County provided an intentional response on behalf of policy actors committed to social and cultural changes in the community. These changes did not require a specific design commitment to the organization's formal structure but were reflected in its overarching goals and the production of externalities that would have a long-term impact on both the public and private lives of citizens. Perhaps the objective of NCI as it related to discovering achievable objectives in terms of an ideology of choice, freedom and authenticity was to relate its presence and its ceremonial social function with discovering the meaning of transformation. Submerged in reality, the oppressive nature of social problems became the order which served the interests of an internalized image of despair and hopelessness; that which exists objectively had not been perceived in its deeper implications until it begins to stand out and assume the character of a problem and therefore of a challenge. Education as problem posing forces people begin to develop their power to perceive critically the ways they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process and in transformation.

... one of the things that is hard to overcome is making the decision not only to yourself that you need more education but having the encourage to say to others, I need to improve my education, especially those whose levels are below the high school level, below the high school graduate level and one of the things that's been really moving to me is to hear people who have made the decision to talk about it. Talk about how proud they are of themselves and just about how it's natural not to
want to...overcome that natural hesitancy to say look I’ve got a problem I need to [do something about it].

Problem posing education writes Pablo Freire, “sets itself the task of demythologizing as indispensable the act of cognition which unveils reality.” (2008, p. 83)

A deepened consciousness of their situation leads the citizens of Martinsville and Henry County to apprehend their situation as an historical reality susceptible to transformation. The founding narrative is dependent on this type of consciousness raising and striving for critical intervention in reality. It is here that we find the communities of Martinsville and Henry County stripped down to “skin and bones”. And it is here in the conscious image of their collective historical reality that rebirth and rebuilding can take place.

We are a community that, we’re sort of close to skin and bones. The canvas is clean so we can look at this as an opportunity to not only revitalize our community but what are the ways we can do it so that we can be a model for those other communities because we’re starting from zero... we don't have to be entrenched with the traditional approach. We can be innovative we can be creative as an educational institution; NCI plays a central role in that.

And;

...it’s not about new college it’s about this community how does it fit? What part of the engine is it driving? Is it reaching out to all the sectors in the community? It’s not just that one entity, it’s everything around it and you know if it isn’t all-encompassing and a place that embraces this community for all of its warts and all of its beauty, it’s not going to make it. It’s got to embrace it all and it’s got to embrace the people from all walks of life in this community for it to be successful in my humble opinion. You know, I believe that...

And Economic Re-Vitalization...

Foremost in the minds of local citizens, politicians and advisers to the New College Institute was that it had to be an “engine for economic development”. In a generation the
Southside communities had abruptly transitioned into decline from a prosperous and thriving industrial and manufacturing economy to a community beset with the loss of industry, concomitant unemployment, “hopelessness” and “despair”. There was similar recognition that these communities would never return to a manufacturing economy and that creating a new “knowledge economy” would be the only way to assure future economic prosperity. The New College Institute symbolized recognition of the historical significance of the regions past and acknowledged the challenges of a new global information technology and knowledge marketplace.

Information technology today increases efficiencies through increased productivity and, in the process, creates new wealth, new jobs, new opportunities. It also involves certain economic disruptions, closures of inefficient facilities, and with it the loss of jobs and companies that can no longer compete. Some communities have been transformed dramatically. In Southside Virginia the 3T economy -- timber, tobacco and textiles -- is a pale shadow of its former self, as we all know so well.

While the causal connection between increasing human capital through knowledge acquisition and the proposed potential of economic growth is practically consequential, it does not render economic considerations theoretically unproblematic. That is, as the policy conversations accrete, we begin to get a sense of the antagonism created by viewing higher education as an engine of economic development and traditional perspectives on education and evolving social consciousness. Again, it seems remarkably naïve to suggest that an increase in knowledge capital would not have a commensurate impact on the regional economy and individual mobility. However, at the institutional level higher education has not always been viewed through the lens of social mobility; the view that education is a
private good and distinguished by its focus on the needs of individual educational consumers. Conversely, education can be distinguished as a public good when it leads to a more generalized collective benefit for the community. Differences in viewing NCI as an economic engine for private gain contrasted with viewing education as a public good having material effects on the community as a whole. As David Labaree remarks, “for taxpayers in general and for all other constituencies, the notion of education for social mobility is politically seductive but socially inefficient... responsible deployment of societal resources calls for us to look beyond political platitudes and individual interests and to consider the human capital needs of the economy as a whole.” (1991, p. 39)

The insistence that the new College Institute would have to meet the economic needs of in demand professions was distinguished from institutional perspectives on traditional liberal arts education.

Legislators didn’t want to hear you’re down there offering degree programs in history and English and the arts. We want you to be sure to offer programs that students can get jobs from or that are in high demand... you know I'm a strong supporter of liberal arts and all those things that I mentioned but I knew that they were saying to me and knew that we better at least initially begin by recognizing what they had said quite honestly. Even those liberal arts institutions that are well known... cannot attract enough students financially. I think all of those, all of us who come out of the more traditional higher ed. background are dismayed with the loss of the cultural anchors but that increasingly has to happen as students have said; Well I need to go to college to become a lawyer or get a job quickly or whatever...the fact is we have to understand the reality, we really do... I would much rather have, even though the curriculum has shifted and the goals have modified, the traditional institutions, I'd still much rather have the degree offered by the traditional institution than a for-profit institution.

The fundamental change brought about by an emphasis on economic revitalization is a change in the character of work and the instruments of production that change the
attitude and the consciousness of the laborer and which become manifest in the widely discussed social and cultural integration of the laboring class with capitalist society. In a sense transitioning the Southside communities to a knowledge economy required transcending the political and economic history of the Southside community not through a bridge from the past to the future but rather through production of a new labor or social consciousness equated and updated with societal conditions and the functioning of social institutions. The production of graduates, the socially legitimate purpose of any organization of higher education is after all a political challenge that can be measured in terms of economic indicators. But the political economy also owes its symbolic importance to the relationship between production, as in this case of the production of knowledge, and the economic and social structure of society. In this sense opportunity is not necessarily equated with access to post-secondary education but rather opportunity resides in the community that must re-structure its political economy, the social consciousness of its working class, and the opportunity structure to take advantage of “high skilled graduates”.

I think in the early 1900’s opportunity for them, for this community was a real job in a factory; that was opportunity. And it's a whole new ballgame now and I think that everybody in this community now is understanding [that] and when they think about New College they think about opportunity. It's completely different it's not about you know a minimum wage job anymore, it's about who I can be. Who can I really be and what is possible for me. The sky's the limit. And I'm not saying that manufacturing was a bad thing because the 1900’s that whole decade that whole century almost was the Industrial Revolution and it changed the face of this country... this is different. This is, there are many things you can choose from and none of us are telling you what you should be, you have the ability to make the decision about who you want to be and what you want to be and here's the menu and you pick from it and for me what better thing could community have at its feet than that kind of opportunity. I mean it's just incredible to me.
Economic revitalization equated with “the production of graduates”, “creation of a knowledge economy”, “acquisition of practical skills”, and “workforce development” tends to characterize community growth in a structured and functional manner. It tends to equate economic revitalization with a corresponding opportunity structure that will allow graduates to move freely into professional positions. Nowhere in the comments regarding legitimacy do we find economic revitalization as measured by a change in the economic structure of Southside communities. But this should not come as a surprise. Tacitly and perhaps inevitably, it is presumed that generating local graduates will inevitably objectify a new social and economic order.

So, you know again, I think that he has been pretty conscientious about trying to provide a broad canvas of opportunity at the same time programs that... have a more practical bearing on the community. And as we look at the recent job list that came out, you know they are in business fields and health fields and he's starting to move into those areas with nursing...I don't think that we tried at SCHEV to dictate the programming as much as we did looking to assist in a process that would identify programs that had the capacity to generate community interest and eventually jobs.

Ultimately economic revitalization subsumes the political, social and cultural goals previously discussed. Access to educational opportunities, recognizing and addressing social problems are proxies for the need to legitimize higher education as an economic engine and a new opportunity structure as an objective reality. Absence in this case reveals more than presence. Absence in the sense that economic revitalization is not specifically equated with a corresponding change in the opportunity structure available to local college graduates but rather absence that signals the need to remake social consciousness as a functional necessity. The aesthetic privilege that an organization of higher education
symbolizes is the ability to re-orient people towards understanding the role higher education plays in revitalizing and changing a community. Not simply by attracting high-paying jobs or providing graduates for in demand professions but rather through subtle cultural and social changes that will ultimately alter the political economy and labor consciousness. At this point, the New College Institute represents a community in transition.

So, we have this; people from this area are very proud of their past, their very vibrant economically sound past. Photos of people going through uptown, right now you could walk through uptown and maybe not even meet one or two people on the street but not too long ago that wasn't the case it was a very busy community... so, New College puts this in limbo, we can either, and I don't mean to say that New College is a panacea but it's part of a puzzle that helps to better the community. We can either take this New College and put everything in it from a grass roots effort on and build our community to become something different and yet hopefully better and stronger or we can just cling to the past have a few people take advantage of it but it not really becoming a transforming part of the community...I think we are in limbo right now. We're not so sure which way we're going to go because we haven't yet realized which way the communities going to go... this community is never going to come back as a manufacturing, textile community...that is not going to happen. It can stay the same, it can get a little worse, it can get a little better...but if it's going to get a lot better, I think that's only going to happen if people become educated and bringing more white-collar jobs and train their young people for those jobs and begin to retain those young people and then it becomes something different... it [becomes] an area where people want to be and have hope that they can have a life that's not depressing.

Politics and the New College Institute

Politics involves negotiation and compromise over ideas. The founding of the New College Institute was significantly impacted by political compromise. The current organizational structure, programs and relational influence all figured prominently in the policy processes in relation to political compromise. Also, figuring prominently in the
political debate surrounding the New College Institute were studies generated by the State Council of Higher Education, the influence of the Harvest Foundation and its $50 million challenge grant, the relational effect of the New College Institute on both the system of public and private universities and colleges in the Southside region and the more direct impact the New College would have on the higher education centers and funding decisions. Importantly, these political debates are specific to the organization’s social legitimacy; its ability to attract students, its non-traditional organizational structure, its relational significance to higher education and its perceived utility in the system of higher education in Commonwealth of Virginia. The political story also involves established alliances; group interests, systems influences, and “catalytic events” which acted to “moved this thing [the New College] forward.”

**Political Choice of Organizational Structure**

As Longwood’s representative at the time we were directing the higher education Center in South Boston so we probably had that kind of unique relationship [with] South Boston, Danville and Martinsville. So we were already involved in extension education in Southside Virginia. When the original proposal came out, that is to start the New College Institute, Longwood was asked by SCHEV and by the governor to put forth a, I don't want to say a counter proposal but a different proposal in which we put forward a 2+2 type program working with Patrick Henry Community College. We were asked to put forth this offer as an alternative process to creating an entirely new institution...So when Dr. LaVista, SCHEV was holding his interviews throughout Southside, I went to Martinsville and was part of the public hearings in the town of Martinsville. Later I was part of the group in Richmond, and I was also part of testifying before the Senate Finance Committee about the cost and structure of our 2+2 proposal versus starting an entirely new four year institution in the town of Martinsville.

The new College Institute would begin as a political debate over the size and scope of the new organization. As already noted, the original proposal from Dr. Carrier for a new
four-year college in Southside was determined to be politically unacceptable. Attention, largely attributed to the contributions of the Harvest Foundation, turned to the structural composition of a new public bureaucracy that would (at very least) contribute to consensus and therefore facilitate political support from the General Assembly while meeting the local needs of Martinsville and Henry County citizens. Curiously, this debate is also distinguished through a tacit understanding that the New College Institute should look different than the higher education centers in South Boston and Danville. Distinguishing the New College Institute from the higher education centers was a matter of political compromise. It was also a defining feature of institutional divergence from the model of a higher education center and perhaps minimal isomorphic consideration for a more traditional model of higher education; a structure that could be recognized as socially legitimate. More importantly, the political compromise in creating the current structure for the New College Institute would give it a distinct institutional identity and in some regards isolate it from further political control. W. Taylor Reveley commented on the New College Institute’s distinct political and organizational identity.

The biggest reason I would say is higher education centers tend to remain higher education centers, they don't, there's not a history of a higher education center kind of working through the years and then becoming a college. They always serve as kind of aggregators rather than colleges themselves and the Harvest Foundation for sure and the community really wanted in my opinion, needed a college more so than the higher education center...and it is striking if you look at a map there isn't any public college, they're plenty of public and higher education related things and community colleges, and higher education centers but there is not a public college within a very meaningful radius of Martinsville.
The politics of organizational structure would indicate “a permanent and ongoing investment [in higher education] by the Commonwealth” to meet the demands for access to higher education for nontraditional students in the Southside area. In addition, the compromised organizational structure which would preserve elements of a 2+2 model by offering the final two years of instruction toward a baccalaureate degree “brokered through established institutions” and would resolve an important political consideration in the founding of the New College Institute; cost.

It’s a question of economics. I don't know what it would cost to put a full stand alone four-year university with, complete with residence halls and let's say one that would service... four or 5000 students, might guess would be it's in the billions of dollars. Easily, probably would cost more than an aircraft carrier. And so who can afford that? We still have to give post secondary educational services to people, to students. And so, mother the necessity of invention, that's what I think you’ve seen, the reason NCI has involved the way it has, it's just cheaper, much cheaper to do it the way and to have these types of consortiums were you, you know you're able to draw on other universities and their resources and to bring them into this area and to do it, it's just a question of economics. We just don't have the resources to build a stand alone.

The arrangement and organizational structure for the New College Institute was brokered politically. Infrastructure, remarked Delegate Ward Armstrong sometimes occurs with the “fickleness of politics”. The resulting framework for the New College Institute would be considered by most commentators as “the most meaningful compromise that was available for the state allowing it a tipping of the toe in the water to see if things would kind of take hold” and to leave in place a potential path to becoming a four-year public university. As we shall see in each instance where a political compromise is reached regarding the New College Institute, we find an overwhelming emphasis on potentiality.
Public bureaucracies are not simply designed to meet some present need rather political negotiation is always oriented to the future. Remarking on the debate over politically funding the New College Institute, Delegate Ward Armstrong recalled his discussion with the Chair of the House Finance Committee and the possibility of funding a new public college; “You know, I understand what you need now maybe is not very much but I can't just buy a single apple I have to buy the whole bushel meaning I'm not just committing to a year or two of funding [rather] this is something that's going to occur in the out years.”

Distinguishing the New College Institute from the higher education centers in South Boston and Danville was a political decision; a compromise to create a path in which the New College Institute might transcend its initial organizational structure and become a four-year institution. In doing so, arguments favoring the establishment the New College would transcend the particular and point toward a generalized institutional form of a four-year college as a matter of teleology and purpose. “There was something very important about creating the New College Institute as a distinct organizational identity and in seeing that its future identity might be something very different than its present reality.”

Now, where will NCI be in 10 years or 20 years? Well, I hope that it continues to grow I would like to see it become maybe more of a...I hate to use the term standardized, typical college or university where there's residence halls and other things as to whether it would be more of an urban type university, a VCU, a mini-VCU in Martinsville or whether it might expand over to Patrick Henry and be more of a, more of your typical college campus setting kind of convergence of ignorance and apathy. I don't know [and] I don't care. It doesn't matter to me how it grows or where it grows but that it grows. I do think that the more it grows, the more it will help this particular community, the more it will help this region.

*The Second Prong of Organizational Structure*
The second prong of organizational structure is clearly derived from institutional theory and political decisions affecting the New College Institute’s congruence, fit, acceptability and relation to other organizations compromising the organizational field or societal sector. Three types of political decisions are identified: (1) programmatic decisions referring to the right to determine the purposes and goals towards which organizational activities are to be directed; (2) instrumental decisions referring to the right to determine the means or procedures to be employed in pursuing organizational objectives; and (3) funding decisions referring to the right to determine what level of funds are to be expended and/or how funds are to be allocated among program activities to organizations within the sector or field. Organizational fields or societal sectors display varying degrees of complexity and coherence ultimately affecting the structural features of organizations operating within a sector or field. Politically, the New College Institute involved institutional considerations and political compromise taking shape within the organizational fields; compromising the higher education centers in the local region, and the field compromising the system of colleges and universities in the Commonwealth.

**Programmatic Decisions**

Determining how the New College would fit programmatically into the regional field or sector was an early topic of political debate. Up until this point in time, entrance into the field or sector characterizing Southside’s post-secondary educational organizations was largely based on the higher educational center model. Some commentators would
identify all of the post-secondary organizations within the field (i.e. the Southside region) as isomorphic.

They are similar. They're all part and parcel of the same structure really and don't let the names confuse you there's not a whole lot of difference between Roanoke, Abbington, and NCI, and Southern Virginia [Higher Education Center]. IALR is a little bit different because it was pretty much formed by [Virginia] Tech. as an outreach project but the others, their entities unto themselves they exist in state law and they recruit partners [and] have staff. They have some funding from the state. They have some funding from foundations or have membership fees and they're all essentially a stripped down administrative model; that is administration and recruitment.

Despite what might be perceived as their structural similarities, the New College Institute would be structurally distinguished by its program purposes and objectives. For most commentators, the New College Institute represented the model of a higher education center with distinct features related to outreach, resident faculty, and locally brokered and need based curriculum programs. These features emphasized the unique and transformative role that would distinguish NCI's political founding. Describing the development and evolution of the higher education center models in the Southside region, Peter Blake would highlight their differences in program design and mission.

I'll take South Boston. That actually grew out of the community and they got together as a community without seeking state support and documented the support to get the thing off the ground and I think that they viewed it as vital to their well-being to have some higher education presence. I don't know if it was necessarily to raise the academic standards as much as it was providing affordable opportunity to keep people in the community... they saw a very direct workforce and education need. In Roanoke, it was just a question of how can would have such a big city like this with no public university options plus we have this building across the street... and so we need some sort of economic development revitalization project around that building. So it was a real estate deal as much as anything. Danville was kind of a dream... to make a research presence in Southside. So that wasn't so much about undergraduate education or training programs or workforce [development]. So
those three models [are] all a little bit different... Martinsville really grew out, I guess more of Governor Baliles vision that we needed to change the culture of this community in order to bring us into the 21st century. That's kind of a different model.

Politically the structure of the new College Institute would match and in some respects absorb the model of higher education centers; at a minimum in structure and administration. This model would provide immediate social legitimacy particularly its ability to broker programs from other institutions and to confer degrees from established institutions with accredited degree programs. Interestingly a number of the interview participants could relate directly to the consortia model of higher education. Many had attained their degrees through consortial arrangements with established colleges and universities. However, for Senator Roscoe Reynolds local control of program decisions could not have been more critical to its political acceptability. Nevertheless the programmatic decision that appears most consequential to the political compromise for the New College Institute arises from its relationship with partner institutions.

We do pay a lot of money to bring degree programs here and the General Assembly recognized that we would be paying money to institutions to bring programs here and in fact in the original draft of the appropriations bill, probably on the House side they put money in and said it needs to be used to bring programs from three institutions and we got that taken out so that, so that I'd have more leeway in negotiating with institutions to bring programs here.

**Instrumental Decisions**

Instrumental decisions are reflected in the degree to which the New College Institute fulfills it's a legislative mandate. A mandate that includes local, regional and state government interest in the organization; as an “educational anchor in the community”, as
an “organization of quality” and “magnet for business”, as a “vehicle for affordability”, and as a “partner in building relationships for mutual benefit”. Regionally, the New College Institute has a leadership mandate; that is to provide leadership and vision for what some perceived to be a relational and social network of post-secondary educational organizations across the Southside region. Instrumental decisions are also reflected in the prescient potentialities that unite the New College Institute with an extended partnership in the hope and promise of bringing a regional educational framework into perspective.

I can see in the near term it [NCI] kind of puttering along as it continues to broker programs that appear to be in demand in the region and developing excellent partnership with its four year partners. Now, over time 10, 20, 30 years might it transform into something else? I can see it either becoming a freestanding institution as we've discussed or becoming part of a larger partnership with some of the other institutions which I think would be a fascinating and politically charged development. If it were to come about when you have a single University of Southern Virginia or whatever you want to call it with three campuses and you have, you know this campus in Martinsville that specializes in whatever... this one over here that specializes in healthcare or whatever... and then you have a research component as well. And somehow you stitch them all together in such a way that a student in Martinsville can take, can get two years at a community college and then do a healthcare program over here and then interact with research scientists in a similar field here in Danville... I don't know how you do that but, I could see something like that somewhere down the road it would take a strong leader a lot of vision in order to pull that off but I could see something like that developing and then the New College Institute becomes part of a larger, part of a larger fabric.

In terms of organizational objectives the New College Institute contains the promise of uniting the diverse organizations throughout the Southside region and reaching down to the community colleges and the K-12 system in order to achieve its objectives. Within the field of educational organizations symbolized as cultural anchors, the New
College Institute is defined by its role as an “incubator system” that can symbolically construct a curriculum on the basis of a “2+2+2 model”.

To me that's a form of consortium. Because what you are doing is building a bridge together and you're bringing as part of the consortium... an elementary representation, and middle school representation, high school representation, community college and maybe the baccalaureate and we kind of all work and think together in terms of how all these pieces fit together.

Effective grassroots support will according to one commentator not go unnoticed by the General Assembly. The ability to collaborate regionally with the higher education centers and locally with the K-12 system and the local community colleges will increase the New College Institute's “political viability”. Instrumentally the task is to create support throughout the community.

I should add we, we partner a lot. I mean there are a lot of people out in the community talking about college access that's a thing, the UVA College guide program for starters. I mean Harvest Foundation has funded one of those people in each of our high schools. They're working with juniors and seniors in helping them fill out or take SAT’s and filling out, college forms and writing essays etc. We have high school guidance counselors, we have all these different people who are working toward very similar goals and we [NCI outreach staff] try to complement them, we work with them, the more the merrier, the more opportunities we can use to expose people to that. Let's do it because otherwise were not going to accomplish what we're trying to do here.

**Funding Decisions**

...economic development occurs because of the leadership of people with vision. It doesn't necessarily occur because the state engages in the community welfare program and drops $50-$100 million into the community to create an institution. There are other unintended consequences from any action like that. That's the way I viewed it that, it's a welfare program for communities. If you do that, the minute you do it here [Martinsville] somebody else is going to be screaming... so what happened this year, a bill for the need to study a public college in Virginia Beach because it doesn't have one and it's the largest locality in America without its own public institution.
The debate over funding the New College Institute would occupy center stage throughout the policy making process. In fact it was the legislative and political process that determined not only the structure of the New College Institute but decisions as to how it should be funded and operated. Clearly input from the Harvest Foundation “pulled”, “focused”, “attracted” and “multiplied” the attention of the General Assembly. According to Dr. Barry Dorsey, the Harvest Foundation's involvement was not politically neutral nor was it necessarily beneficial. “In relatively good economic times there were General Assembly members who said; ‘Well if you got that kind of support from the Harvest Foundation [then] they should just fund the whole thing.’” Nevertheless, as compromises between the Senate Finance Committee and the Harvest Foundation Pre-Planning commission were reaching a conclusion in late 2005, the original commitment from the Harvest Foundation for a $50 million stand-alone institution would be modified. “The Senator [Chichester] asked the president of the Harvest Foundation if harvest would commit to matching the funding [if NCI was not specifically a four-year stand alone institution] and the president of the Harvest Foundation wrote a letter to the money committees indicating that they would.”

Notwithstanding the Harvest Foundation's philanthropic commitment to the New College, funding decisions also required a level of systems agreement among the public and private universities in the state of Virginia and agreement relative to the higher education centers in Southside. The decision and commitment to fund a new college in Martinsville regardless of its size and scope would unquestionably take “a slice from the
funding pie” of higher education in the state. The exercise of public authority and influence is also clearly evident during the legislative process to fund new public initiatives. In the case of the New College Institute, public authority was vested at the executive level through current and past Virginia governors. Senator Reynolds provided the following account of the legislative process and how public authority influenced the final push to fund the New College Institute.

We ran into some difficulties in the legislative process and Governor Warner and Lieutenant Governor Kaine were very helpful in making sure that they got through the process.... that was a very difficult legislation to get past...there was some strong resistance and there were some comments made by some of the key players especially in the Senate Finance Committee...they were very concerned. When the second bill itself... the one that created it [NCI], when the bill was presented to a subcommittee of the Senate Finance [Committee] it was not received very well. There were some negative comments made and I was very disappointed that the tone of the hearing because it was very clear that at the hearing the folks that were speaking and as I recall it they didn't like what was going on very much at all and I will never forget it. That day had been a long day and we left that meeting, I was very concerned and I think Barry Dorsey had been there at that meeting also...it was a tough day and what was being said was very disappointing. My understanding is at that point the lieutenant governor and governor spoke to people in favor of it and said it was something that needed to be done and we were finally successful in getting the legislation adopted.

While the Harvest Foundation provided “immediate credibility” to the idea of a new college in Martinsville, it would be left to a network of political influence to finally pass the legislation. One of the benefits contributing to the New Colleges Institute’s bipartisan support was the “fractured way in which Henry County is redistricted” which includes two republicans, Danny Marshall and Robert Hurt; and two Democrats, Ward Armstrong and Roscoe Reynolds. According to Ward Armstrong, it was the combination
of republican political connections and “not just a Democratic initiative and a Tim Kaine initiative” that resulted in the enacting legislation.

In addition, there is a curious sidebar to the funding decision concerning the State Council of Higher Education. Is the State Council of Higher Education a politically neutral entity? That is, does the State Council of Higher Education exercise political influence or public authority? Well, we know that the General Assembly is comprised of elected officials throughout the state who represent the interests of their communities. It might be surprising to learn that the State Council of Higher Education might alternately represent the established institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth. “It [SCHEV] is political because it has as its members representatives of the various higher educational institutions... their representation is not just well what's good for the state but what's good for our member institutions as well.” The position that the State Council of Higher Education took with regard to the new college in Southside clearly reflected their relational perspective on higher education in the region. According to the Executive Director of SCHEV, Dr. Daniel LaVista:

The thinking was that if in fact we were going to start slowly there; there are institutions in place that can help to defray some of the costs and which also frankly had capacity. So you look at Patrick Henry Community College, Danville Community College, you have institutions that could provide a mix of programs that could be a floor for this new institution and do so in a way that was economical... I think that the other attendant, I think sort of philosophy that was in the air was the notion of, you know let's kind of test the water and see what happens, we haven't started a new institution in Virginia in a long time but see how this plays out and I think you saw that...in terms of the original appropriation.
It would be strange indeed if higher education conformed to the free market model in which competition drives costs and achieves market prices. Besides being differentiated, a system of college and universities is a heavily subsidized service, involving third-party payers that are appropriately located in public and nonprofit institutions. The state maintains a powerful interest in assisting every citizen to attain a level of education commensurate with his or her own inclinations and abilities. Just as full employment promises to maximize the production of goods and services, full education in a sense should contribute to maximizing the productivity and well-being of all members of society.

Funding decisions are largely a matter of perspective. Consequentially, the view that some commentators took with regard to the New College Institute's relationship with the system of higher education in Virginia was a determinative funding consideration. Perhaps the most thoughtful and articulate perspective was offered by Peter Blake.

I don't think it [NCI] plays at all into the projected college and enrollment because I think what it does if it's successful is that it creates new demand. And so how it plays into the broader higher education picture in Virginia...it has the potential of increasing enrollment and participation and completion and success in higher education which is the goal we need as a Commonwealth to pursue. I don't know what our numbers are right now; they're somewhere around 36% of our population has a bachelor's degree or higher. The highest achieving states according to...the national data are around 39% or 40%... so I think we have a public policy interest in expanding our capacity and so what New College can do is expand that capacity. I don't...know what SCHEV says but I believe it has the potential to make the number larger get more people enrolled who might not have been enrolled otherwise get those who aren't enrolled into your institutions completing a four year institution through transferred agreements and getting more well educated folks out to the community...[the impact] is clearly regional at this point... and if you can be successful in increasing the high school to college participation rate in the region in an appreciable way then and you can check it off as a success; which is keep on moving.
In the state subsidized environment of higher education however, the potential of establishing a new college would signal relational funding sacrifices at existing public institutions. In a sense, the New College Institute required an act of political altruism and compromise. The perspective that the New College was “a means to deliver additional capacity on the part of the state” would be something “that a delegate or a senator in Tidewater or Northern Virginia is concerned about as well as one from Martinsville.” In addition, there seemed to be a symbolic importance in support of altruism and representational authenticity among the delegates and senators in the Southside region. That is, a geographical connectedness signified the extent to which public authority could be used to effect funding decisions. For example, Senator Reynolds commented on the perception of authentic interaction with his constituents in the Southside community. “I think one of the things that can happen to legislators is that if you were in session constantly you lose touch with the folks that you're representing. I spend more time in Martinsville and in Henry County and in the legislative district I represent than I spend in Richmond.”

Altruism also extended to network support for the New College. As mentioned, former Governor Gerald Baliles would use his ties to the community to effect political compromise. Accordingly, Delegate Ward Armstrong described his involvement with the New College and his relationship with former Governor Baliles.

I would say my level of involvement really escalated when Gerry Baliles became involved... he and I are good friends, he is originally from Patrick County a district I represent, still has a home there. We talked regularly. And when all this went down, one of the first things he did was call me and sort of keep me abreast of what
was going on. Then when it came time to put the bill in, I was the chief patron of the bill on the House side and carried the legislation.

Finally, it was argued by analogy that the New College Institute’s regional significance, that is a college for Southside Virginia would neither represent something new in the state of Virginia nor would it affect the potentiality that accompanied its founding. A number of commentators argued that the history of colleges and universities in the state of Virginia had analogous regional impact and were established to meet both practical and political considerations in providing (and privileging) regional access to higher education.

Let me into your question by maybe drawing an analogy in George Mason University. Project back 35 or 40 years when George Mason was an infant University, it started in a storefront I think... in its early stages did it draw from around the state or at least from around the region? No, it did not. Now NCI is in its infancy it will continue to grow and as it grows it will have more marketability to other regions particularly if it, if it does move in a direction where we can provide some residency, facilities and broadened the degree programs.

**Social Legitimacy and the New College Institute**

The following refrain was repeated frequently by number of commentators.

The other part that I think we can't under estimate and you see it at JMU, you see it at UVA, you see it everywhere, is community identification, community pride. When you think of Harrisonburg you think of JUM, when you think of Charlottesville you think of UVA, when you think of Blacksburg you think of Virginia Tech. So, when you think of Martinsville you think of this new College... to give Martinsville a different identity, another identity except the speedway... you can't under estimate the value especially in a community that's struggling.

The founding of the New College Institute relied on both the appreciation of a universal and generalized model of a higher education organization (i.e. a traditional model) and the thematic quality of ideas. Legitimacy was attributed to the ceremonial or
ritual function that a college performed; “the production of graduates and degrees” and “by documenting successful outcomes”. Perhaps unlike private sector counterparts that depend on branding and marketability as a source of legitimacy, higher education depends on its potential; by projecting into the future the promise of performing a socially transformative function. That function is metaphorically described by reference to social and cultural “anchors” giving the New College Institute a sense of purpose and place within the Southside community. “I think from the political perspective, I think certainly from the legislative delegation which supported and earned funding for [NCI]...they have an interest because this has the potential for being an educational anchor in the community, so they’ll want it to succeed.” That is, the New College Institute not only becomes the situational (i.e. geographical) location for a new organization of higher education but also comes to symbolize the “situation” in which thematic transformation is made possible. “If it’s taken away that would be a very hard lesson for this community...[and] I don’t want to give our young people the message that educational institutions die.”

The New College Institute describes a generative theme within a thematic universe. The language of policy makers is not understood without thought and without a structure to which they refer. In order to communicate effectively, to legitimize the purpose of higher education, the educator, politician and policy maker must create a dialogue where education is conceived of in terms of a generative theme reflecting situation and context, future and purpose. NCI needed to become an aspiring symbol of “hopefulness as transformational to the community”. The theme of social legitimacy is characterized by
complex ideas, concepts, hopes, doubts, values, and challenges in dialectical interaction with their antithesis. Some will work to maintain the social structures in place while others will work to change them. “I think there is still some idea among some people that somehow the answer to job opportunities in this community is ...to bring back some big company here that’s going to be the reproduction of Bassett or DuPont.” Transformation does not exist as an objective reality outside of the human subject rather transformation resides in the meaningful semantics of human aspirations, motives and desires. To apprehend themes and to understand them is to understand both the people who embody them and the reality to which they refer. In dialectical fashion, the New College Institute was designed to supersede the situation of its creation or the synthetic blending of the past and present into a future potentiality.

We have a short-term goal of I think sort of... establishing a beachhead if it were, by 2012. We have to be able in 2012 to convince SCHEV and ultimately the General Assembly that NCI is working, that it is providing services not just to the community and region but also the state at large; that it has a place and it has a role in higher education in Virginia...the long-term goal is to be a significant participant in getting this region turned around economically. The unemployment rate in Martinsville is 15% today it's never dropped, I think one time in the last 10 years it struck below double digits... it's got to turn around [and] NCI is going to be a part of that it has not yet achieved its potential.

And;

I think the ability of the institution or organization to position itself, to legitimize itself as an organization of quality and looking out for the well-being of their students and the community... is a very significant force. I think at the state level though some of the leadership has changed, and the House and Senate when this organization was first supported... their spirit continues to imbue this project with continuing support and I think there's a growing recognition that there are many Virginians and when we look at the disparate economic health around the state...we know that there is a state interest in having this portion of the state be successful
and it's not just about business attraction that is important, it's about having local organizations that do education work be successful to help those businesses and community at large grow and develop.

Human beings must continuously reproduce themselves through social activity and the production of objectified meaning and purpose. Legitimacy, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) explained has its institutional origins in the creation of social order; objectified and integrated social knowledge that explains and justifies both objective order and the subjective internalization of a symbolic universe of purpose and meaning. Legitimacy unites these reciprocal goals through the formal structure and social function of institutions. The New College Institute’s legitimacy unites the goals of knowledge production, economic revitalization, and social and cultural transformation into an identifiable and normatively ordered organization. Underlying the search for legitimacy and identity is the imperative that the New College Institute re-create “social capital”, re-orient “social purposes” and re-build the “social structure” in Martinsville and Henry County. In performing a legitimate transformative role or purpose the New College Institute must provide for the social distribution of knowledge structured in terms of specific tasks, standardized solutions, and of the means/ends relationships in terms of which solutions are socially defined.

... the whole country at the same time has been transitioning to this knowledge economy and if, to participate meaningfully in a knowledge economy you need to have higher education to some extent. It's as simple as that. And so, if Southside, if Martinsville was going to have, couldn't find a way to get access right there to higher education it would mean in the long sweep, just the continued decline of the region probably.

And;
It’s always been the hope and the dream that the foundation could transform, not change the past because the past is incredibly important, but to transform coming from what we were, we were a manufacturing community like many across rural America and all of that has changed and so we wanted to move into the 21st century with skill levels for our workers here and our residents here that would have them be engaged and working at higher levels than they ever were before. So, it really was a cultural commitment as well; very much a cultural commitment.

The most important policy consideration for the attribution of social legitimacy is not found in an organizations immediate strategic position or in resource commitments, rather for the citizens, educators and delegates in the Southside communities, social legitimacy would be measured according to the New College Institute’s future potentiality; potentialities linking NCI with universal and transformative purposes, progress, re-vitalization, re-birth and renewal. In this respect the New College Institute is representational of a learning situation, not specifically found in transferral of information but in an act of cognition that perceives the outcome of education in relation to a new existential situation and outcome.

Then, I think you know looking down the road, my hope is that... NCI will pop into mind when they are concerned about different problem-solving tasks or studies that need to be done, you know that's something that will become more and more natural within the community. This is a resource we should value and nurture and help develop.

**Teleology**

In re-writing the history of the New College Institute, a new interpretative order is established. Order that is not necessarily discovered by studying the subjective interpretation of individuals but rather by viewing individuals as vehicles for the enlargement of objectified meaning and by considering meaning as it resides in
institutional order, structure or complexes. To interpret an event writes Philip Selznick, “is to seek an understanding of how it fits into a pattern of perception or motivation, history or culture...mainly concerned with the study of symbolic and functional unities, especially those that produce values and realize ends.” (1992, p. 76) To that end, the New College Institute becomes the organizational embodiment of values, institutional experiences and legitimacy derived primarily from its relevance to human purpose and oriented toward the future.

**Toward a Process of Re-Socialization**

Alternation, according to Berger and Luckmann “requires a process of re-socialization” and strong affective identification with an effective (i.e. institutionalized) “plausibility structure.” (1966, p. 157). The process of realizing a new subjective reality begins with a recipe, wherein the conditions or laboratory for creating and establishing a new interpretative order includes both the social and conceptual conditions for its realization. This is made possible and apparent through realization of a new plausibility structure mediated to the individual by means of significant others. In the case of colleges and universities, faculty are a prime example of a professional workforce (i.e. significant others) that looks to its professional organizations (i.e. plausibility structure) for what is considered normative. The New College Institute serves as the basis and point of reference for a new normative order arising out of a new plausibility structure (i.e. NCI) and significant others as guides into a new reality. Transformation is a form of alternation in which a new subjective reality is made possible by the dismantling of the old physical
universe. In the re-constructed story of the New College Institute, we find cognitive and affective commitment in the process of re-socialization. Socially, this means disassociation from the previous world and identification with a new legitimating structure.

And it goes to show that that transformation is starting to occur within our community. And I know the local government here we have a set of goals and initiatives things that we want to do as our strategic plan to move the community to the next level...I think NCI has an important role in that the more people they educate whether they are local people or people from another area you’re going to raise the bar for education and society which is going to make the next generation of people more noticeable about the need and importance of education. And the next generation, then, is going to be more culturally diverse than what the previous generation was.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that for organizations to be successful, for them to spring to life; they must create affective commitment and entanglements. If we view organizations through the rationalist frame, where purposeful action is mediated through formal structure, then we might fail to see organizations as the realization of our values and beliefs. Instead, we should realize organizations (i.e. organizing) is embedded with what Philip Selznick describes as a “moral vision” (1992, p. 78); that social experience everywhere, if allowed to follow its natural course, will provide opportunities for such positive goods as cooperation, reconciliation, personal autonomy, and enlargement of the self. And we can see investment in affective commitment to the Southside region beginning with both the establishment of the New College Institute and perhaps in the origins of its birthing partner the Harvest Foundation. A dialectic was initiated beginning with “a very real concern...that selling of the hospital [was] in the best interest of the community” wherein the possibility of exploring ideas, values, beliefs and
Origins is created sui generis. In this laboratory, ideas are “incubated” and individual purpose was translated into collective interests and the opportunity to re-make Southside Virginia “into a much better place for all of us.” “I think people are realizing... this is our hope, really now, this is our hope. So, everyone is interested, everybody's a part of it and everybody is trying to understand what they can do to make it a success...”

Affective commitment is present when individuals identify with their future and re-make connections through re-organization of the conversational apparatus. Through conversations with the new significant other, subjective reality is transformed.

You know a lot of folks in an area like this one, people who tend to be lower income, not well educated, they lack social capital. They lack the ability to have these connections with people outside of...maybe they're connected at church or at work and that's it. So, to bring in people with the ability to connect to them way beyond, I mean that exponentially increases opportunities for students... so, in order for this to become more than just showing up to class and getting a piece of paper it has to have that social capital component to the greatest degree possible...Somebody that is going to sit down with them [students] and talk about theories or when I was in Japan or whatever it may be to somebody who may have not really left the area or their parents may never went outside of Virginia.

Legitimacy is contingent on changing conversations.

There are conversations all the time now about it... to me that's legitimacy and it starts with the people in this community. It has to be legitimate for them and when they tell their friends and their family, it... it's that word of mouth thing and it is legitimate for them now. What I hear most of the time is what can we do to help? How can we help grow it? You know find your friends and family that need education and make sure they go there.

For the New College Institute and the citizens of Southside Virginia, a new beginning ironically signals an ending. In breaking with old connections to the world and taking apart the internal structures required by those connections, you also loose old ways
of defining yourself. The reality that is left behind in all endings provides a sense of which way is forward and which way is back. A community in transition must mark off the boundary of former experience and move into unfamiliar territory; where all the customary signs of location are gone and the only source of orientation is the state of mind it hopes to create. In the words of Robert Frost, you would be “lost enough to find yourself.”
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study to tell a story through the enacted narratives of those individuals involved in the policy process preceding founding of the New College Institute. Specifically, this researcher interviewed 16 individuals who were identified as having an input or effect on policy conversations occurring prior to the founding of the New College Institute. The interviews conducted were transcribed resulting in over 250 pages of narrative relating to the founding of the New College Institute. Interview transcripts, policy documents, media reports and personal correspondence were all used to re-create the founding of the New College Institute as a creative and interpretative historical account. The following is a brief explanation of the institutional themes that were used to create the prior narrative of the organizations founding.

Narrative Themes

The individuals interviewed during data collection are categorized based on their professional status and responsibility. In an effort to conceptualize the constellation of actors compromising the organizational field Scott (2008) identifies several different institutional agents. According to Scott, agent-based accounts of institutional construction identify “particular actors as causal agents, emphasizing the extent to which intentionality and self-interest are at work.” (2008, p.95) Unlike Scott, the emphasis is not on institutional construction rather data was collected in an effort to see how institutionalism
is reflected in the policy processes and in the type of social settings, arguments and interpretative themes constructed during the founding of a new organization of higher education. One might look at this analysis as an exploration of the form that collective authority takes or as variously constituted forms of decision making during the construction of formal organizations. That is, the capacity of organizational entrepreneurs is influenced by the institutional forms distinguishing a rule system for organizing persons and their activity within a concomitant social and institutional ideology. To put it another way, formal organizing depends on an institutional context, one in which the particular ingredients of organizing are formed by calculating agents with codified interests, a legitimate social function and knowledge systems. According to Jepperson and Meyer (1991, p. 207), integrating human activity around a specific goal involves the specification of persons and activities as interpenetrated with collective authority and legitimacy, and defined by their functional responsibilities. In addition, the types of actors populating the organizational field, in this case the field of higher education, includes a variety of diverse players each having a different professional status and relative position.

According to Scott (2008), institutional agents are conceptualized according to various perspectives. Conceptualizing the field of actors provides initial identification of how knowledge systems, interests and intended outcomes differ with regard to context, ideology and purpose. For example, Scott conceptualizes state agents as group of institutional actors employing a set of related propositions regarding the role and function of government. Collectively, they employ legal and regulative tools in the construction of
organizational fields. In relation to policy processes, government agents are responsible for instituting formalization and regulative controls on new organizations. Scott also identifies professional and marginal actors based on their use of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive tools. From his typology, an initial conceptualization of those individuals interviewed for this study can be compared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Agents</th>
<th>Professional Agents</th>
<th>Marginal Agents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions:</td>
<td>Assumptions:</td>
<td>Assumptions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government agents are responsible for exerting authority over organizations.</td>
<td>• Professionals provide the conceptual framework for the acceptance of ideas.</td>
<td>• Typically viewed as a network of actors who locate structural “holes” in existing practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government agents define the rights of political and economic actors.</td>
<td>• Professionals define categories of relationships such as chains of cause and effect.</td>
<td>• Marginal agents can be responsible for innovation and the introduction of new organizational forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government agents determine the conditions of ownership and control over the means of production.</td>
<td>• Professional agents often work with associations to promulgate standards in their area of expertise.</td>
<td>• Marginal agents emphasize differences in organizations based on their social location and connection with other existing networks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this typology, emerging institutional themes are re-examining in reference to the research questions asked, the agent’s contextual perspective and the legitimacy mechanism proposed.

**Research Question:** How is NCI’s symbolic, social and cultural legitimacy understood and explained by viewing education as an institution?

**State Agents**
The focus of legitimacy for state agents clearly reflected the construction of emergent themes and arguments emphasizing the rule-like and legal aspects of public policy and organizational founding. For example, symbolic, social and cultural legitimacy were understood and explained by the organizations ability to retain students, produce graduates and confer degrees. An additional theme emerging from state agents was the degree to which the New College Institute was recognizable within the system of higher education in Virginia. According to Scott; “relational contexts or the structural connections among organizations are” a source of identity and legitimacy. (1991, p. 171) Table 6 cites references to the thematic legitimacy mechanisms described by state agents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Production of Graduates, Retention of Graduates and Degree Confirmation</th>
<th>Coordinating Systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They want locally produced graduates.</td>
<td>• These institutes [NCI, Southern Virginia Higher Education Center, IALR, Roanoke Higher Education Center, Southwest Virginia Center]...are going to have to work together to survive and they're going to have to work with partnerships with the existing institutions to survive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They’re playing a role as long as they’re enrolling students and producing degrees.</td>
<td>• I think some sort of coordination and I think SCHEV is going in the right direction...to make [NCI] part of a larger regional framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• By producing graduates. That’s the only real measure of success that matters and if there quality graduates then that establishes its reputation from the beginning.</td>
<td>• We [SCHEV] wanted to take advantage of the existing systems which led to the 2+2 concept...and providing ideas on how...it integrated with other higher education services that were available in Southside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I guess you would want to look at a higher high school graduation completion, greater post-secondary participation.</td>
<td>• Higher education centers are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I’d be interested in looking at retention of college graduates in the region. We’re talking about retention and graduation, the ability to keep these students and see them through.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Nowadays, it’s all about educational attainment which is the buzzword for more degree production.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
...every school is required to meet a retention and graduation standard...that are selected and mutually determined by SCHEV and the institution.

established by law. They have an existence of their own and so they’re recruiting [and] coordinating partners.

Professional Agents

Professional agents describe legitimacy in relation to ideas emphasizing a cognitive basis for organizational norms, including ideas about altruism, transformation, and social purpose. Also, in contrast the hierarchical or horizontal relationships proposed and supported by state agents, professional agents distinguish vertical connections and non-local linkages in the functioning of organizations. Finally, legitimacy is a condition reflected in the selection of programs which remains largely a local decision.

Table 7: Professional Agents Thematic Legitimacy Mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Emphasis on Vertical Linkages</th>
<th>Program Decisions and Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Most everywhere that somebody thinks a college has been plopped down there has been a community college or some other educational entity as its base.</td>
<td>● We had a meeting with people from the community to talk about which programs would be most helpful and secondly I wanted to work...with institutions that I thought would be most cooperative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● I would say you’ve got NCI here, and you’ve got PHCC, but also out here you’ve got Danville Community College and...Virginia Western Community College...so all of this kind of ties together.</td>
<td>● We are very strategic about the degree programs we bring here. We [NCI] try to be responsive to local, regional, [and] statewide needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● But maybe we’re in an area were territorial boundaries merge...[and] facilitate a strategic plan on how you’re going to transform Southside through education.</td>
<td>● I do think the presence of NCI gives our [PHCC students] more options without having to move out of town. They can stay home and continue to attend programs that are brokered through NCI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We [NCI] are developing those pathways to make it easier for them [students] to</td>
<td>● We offered [programs] in a multiple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I think it’s important to get...the support from public and privates [colleges and universities] in Virginia...and partner with them.

and variety of ways. Sometimes it was once a week for some things and sometimes it was a weekend intensive program.

Marginal Agents

Marginal agents represent the most curious and perhaps transformative group of institutional actors. According to Scott and Meyer, institutional environments are by definition characterized by “the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy.” (1991, p. 123) We should expect that state agents and professional agents stress conformity to tightly controlled technical, administrative and programmatic requirements and regulations facilitating entrance into an organizational field. From the public policy perspective, the motivation and goals of state and professional actors or agents is explicitly oriented to recurrent practices in institutional contexts and undertaken in pursuit of a stated objective. Marginal agents, on the other hand establish the basis of legitimacy in vision, intention, and the “wild profusion of local practice” (Ball, 1994, p. 10) According to Steven Ball, the constructive work of marginal actors is “tacit as well as explicit, unconscious as well as conscious, sometimes unrecognized even by those involved in doing it.” (p. 19).

Adding location and creativity to policy creation, marginal actors are also distinguished by alliances, affiliation, group identification and social networks. A constellation or network of actors can often generate innovative ideas about the
relationship between problems and solutions; between teacher and learner, organization and context, and institutions and practices. For marginal agents, problems do not exist in isolation from the social and historical context and therefore solutions are emergent rather than imposed.

Table 8: Marginal Agents Legitimacy Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Building Coalitions and Influence</th>
<th>Emphasis on Innovation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• He [Gerald Baliles] is so focused and disciplined, smart and capable of just putting together a believable network in order to accomplish an end.</td>
<td>• I believe NCI is very assertive in looking for that niche curriculum...[that] the other institutions are not offering.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...what had happened is and I give Governor Baliles credit for this the whole idea of NCI almost dropped, almost died and he and the Harvest Foundation together kept the dream alive...he used his own contacts to make sure that NCI survived.</td>
<td>• But at the same time what our [Harvest Foundations] original idea was for this institution was not like any of the traditional...models, never was a traditional model.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We [Harvest Foundation Planning Commission] started out in the West Piedmont incubator...[and] I remember a meeting there even before I came here, just before I came here, with Senator Reynolds and others and Governor Baliles.</td>
<td>• I remember when putting this thing together that it was important to us [Harvest Foundation]...[to] include practical dimensions such as writing clear decisive prose, acquiring both analytical and higher order thinking skills, developing personal values and by addressing immediate and significant contemporary issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ...everything was connected to everything else so... the Harvest Foundation of course is the most obvious one and then this group of business leaders...the political establishment [i.e. local delegates] and then Gerry Baliles.</td>
<td>• There have got to be innovative programs that may not be offered in maybe a 50 or 100 mile radius [from Martinsville].</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Well, what you need really is something that transforms the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Research Question:* How does NCI’s founding reflect political decision making and compromise within an institutionalized environment of higher education?
Politics and Planning

The political themes and corresponding compromises characterizing the founding of the New College Institute were explored in detail in Chapter 5 emphasizing the institutional relationship between the state as a political organization and the creation of public bureaucracies. Peter Blake who at the time of the establishing the New College Institute was serving as the deputy and then secretary of the Virginia Department of Education, made the following remarks regarding the location for the New College Institute in Martinsville:

Well, I think it is the reverse question. I mean, I think there was a determination that there would be an institution of higher education in Martinsville or Henry County and then the question is what type of institution would be. I don't think there was ever a thought that there would be an institution of higher education in Southside and [then] Martinsville was chosen. It was the other way around. I think there was pretty much agreement that Martinsville had to have its own institution... it was more from the community's point of view a strong desire to have some sort of higher education presence for all the good reasons and then having them prevail through the legislative process.

What we know, is that political pressure from the executive branch of Virginia's government helped to push through the enacting legislation. But perhaps more important is the desire for the state to involve itself in growing government to specifically address an issue that the market could not solve. Planning, properly conceived, deals with the use of today's resources to meet tomorrow's needs (Galbraith, 2008). Planning in the modern world involves political decisions on matters representing the interests of the future; interests that are poorly represented by markets. In Southside Virginia the interests of its citizens now a generation removed from their manufacturing and production economy
required some form of planning; some type of state intervention and politically altruistic act based on the welfare and interests of the citizens and residents in Southside community.

Writing about the relationship between markets, freedom, and the state, John Galbraith (p. 167) summarizes the moral imperative for a country to have a public planning system:

Defenders of markets talk about futures markets, or long-term contracts, arguing that these serve the needs of the future and obviate the need for planning. This is a misunderstanding. Such markets and contracts serve only the needs of today's economic actors; they are a way of protecting the needs and interests of the present forward into the future, of managing risks for today's market actors. They have nothing to do with preparing for, protecting, or representing the needs of the future. In a market economy, no one speaks for those who will follow. Speaking for the interests of successor generations is a function that has to be imposed on the market by an outside agency and regulatory power; it is an act of imagination. The great fallacy of the market myth lies simply in the belief, for which no foundation in economics exists, that markets can think ahead. But they cannot. The role of planning is to provide that voice, if necessary against the concerted interests and organized power of those alive today.

In defending the premise of a new institutional role for government based on an ethic of planning, we do see or sense a plausible political condition in which the New College Institute becomes a reality as a result of planning for community interests (instead of self-interests). Interpreting establishment of the New College Institute can be seen in the benevolent and altruistic interests and action of the state toward a community in transition. We are becoming increasingly aware that markets do not create solutions to social and cultural problems, rather it might be claimed that markets exacerbate social problems. Creating another market for higher skilled labor in Martinsville is well enough, but creating a different culture and populace can only be achieved through thoughtful political planning and intervention of the state. In the domain of public policy, the state does not
have to act as a unitary actor or overlord but can partner with groups and individuals who envision authentic and representational change in a community of shared interests. Thus leading to the comment; “the New College Institute allowed the state...a dipping of the toe in the water to see if things would take hold”.

**Research Question:** Is the social and cultural context of a community reflected in the construction of student identities and influenced by neo-liberal ideology?

*An Neo-Liberal Experiment?*

The logic of neo-liberalism would assert institutionalized uniformity in the cultural construction of identities or actors. Subsequently, social and individual actors attain greater reality and standing, and more functions and responsibility when they are highly legitimated in ways unique to modern Western culture. Elaborate schemes of socioeconomic development become the responsibility and purpose of state systems and individuals become responsible carriers of state ideology. Structured social organizations such as education arise to pursue, with great legitimacy, validated individual and collective purposes and responsibilities. In terms of ideology, progress and rationality are used as the doctrine for managing social problems and mobilizing the self as entrepreneur and as responsible for both creating and participating in productive activity. Conversely, educational organizations are uniquely differentiated based on their mission to serve local needs by improving efficiency and effectiveness and by providing diverse educational opportunities for students. Educational organizations reflect the local conditions of their founding.
With regard to emerging neo-liberal themes during the founding of the New College Institute none appeared salient. However, one question did arise. Does the state acting in the interests of the local community also paradoxically act for society as a whole? That is, if legitimate, the state symbolically speaks for the society as a whole, or purports to do so through experimentation and creation of a new public bureaucracy. The distinctive features of the New College Institute, it’s symbolic significance, difference in funding, perception of ownership or rights and privileges, and resource constraint suggests a point of potential unity and coherence within the field of public policy. By expanding authority over educational systems the state seeks to engage in the type of social experiment where the New College Institute is representational of an organization where the production of education is for society, and not for individuals or families. That is, the New College Institute becomes a “beta site” for “experimenting with applications in terms of cost savings on the traditional cases” and where the state becomes benefactor of “a new model” for uniting a workable identity market with standardized social typifications and resulting change in social structure. In deference to traditional pedagogy, the laboratory conditions under which the New College was created invoked a difference where “occupational training” would evolve as a necessary, inevitable, and functional adaptation to new market realities. “One of the things we wanted to do right out of the box is have degrees and programs that have marketable skills.” The identity of the New College is determined by the ability to not only provide marketable skills but also through successfully “operating and continuing to market their programs and attract students.” If it proves successful the
New College Institute becomes an example of an experimental state sponsored program where economic and social realities or identities converge.

I think it’s really the job application...can South side because how do you keep them down on the farm logic when the opportunities are so few but I think increasingly we see businesses investing in Danville and in Martinsville and you know, the hope is that that will continue as the citizenry becomes more educated and businesses who are potentially attracted to the region believe that the workforce is there.

Some have argued that neo-liberalism involves systematically forfeiting ideological control of schools based on a legitimate relationship between markets and social, economic, and political culture (Weiner, 2003). However, rather than viewing the New College Institute as a union of market dictates and collective social purpose, we might see in this experimental situation the states evaluative function through identification with members of the managerial and professional class who tend to populate it. This might seem to indicate contradictory tendencies; the new College Institute as a locally distinct organization of higher education and the states influence in determining what types of social problems need addressing and what types of public bureaucracies are created and officially defined as legitimate. In a number of ways education does not liberate individuals from social and economic class divisions or distinctions rather it is seen as reproducing of social and cultural capital. In this experiment, education might not be seen as a new and transformative mechanism for social liberation but rather a condition according to which social transformation becomes an economic inevitability and necessity.

These institutions... their economic development generators of themselves, you bring students in, it helps the region and, it contributes to a culture of success and an awful lot of different things happen.
Analysis and Implications

Getting to Know the Interviews

The study began with a proposal to examine the establishment of the New College Institute from a public policy process perspective. Interviews were collected from the field, from the constellation of actors engaging in policy conversations preceding the acting legislation and would provide analytical insight through the distinctiveness of a case study. A guiding rationale was the proposition that research interviews were a method of gathering descriptions of the "life world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena". (Kvale, 1983, p. 174) Technically, the interview protocol involved a structured set of questions however, it quickly became apparent that neither a highly structured questionnaire nor a free conversation would capture the information sought. That is to say, from a phenomenological and hermeneutic perspective, the interview questions provided a guide that focused on certain themes and interpretation of meaning while conversations were allowed to emerge; both the interviewer and interviewee elaborated on specific topics of interest. This is not to suggest that the interview questions were not thoroughly covered during the interviews rather additional probing questions or observations further exposed the content and form of utterances. Finally, the research interview was thematically oriented and not person oriented. In this sense, which remains true to the proposed re-constructing of the founding narrative or story, both the interview and interpretation began with a common social situation.
constituted by the existence of the New College Institute. The organization was the topic of interest.

Overwhelmingly, the interview situation was characterized by positive feelings of common intellectual curiosity, reciprocal respect and emotional well-being. Kvale claims that an interview can be “a rare and enriching experience” when two people talk about a theme of interest. (Kvale, 1983, p.178) During this process, each interview was recorded and then transcribed using voice recognition software. More importantly during this process, each interview was examined on successive occasions; during the initial interview, during the initial transcription and then during editing of the final interview transcript. Once that was done, a master transcript of all the interviews was created and reviewed once again for interpretive themes and understanding. There was an urge to analyze and interpret the interviews in a strictly quantified form, perhaps based on a content or thematic analysis. This was resisted.

The proposal was to reinterpret and to reconstruct the founding story of the new College Institute. The proposal was to engage in a dialogue and discourse with the texts and commentaries in an attempt to understand and explain the structure of utterances. And by extension, re-constructing a narrative of the founding story rather one true narrative. In addition, the re-constructed story involved a type of dramatic reading of both the texts and the interviews with the object of showing that the text never exactly means what it says or says what it means. The pitfall of an un-reflective narrative construction is avoided by incorporating analysis into the narrative itself, to exploit the content of the form. As events
unfold, dramatic and interpretive understanding is supplied for example; (a) the meaning of transformation, (b) transition to a new labor consciousness, (c) the politics of structural choice, (d) the social legitimacy of organizations; and (e) the teleological aspiration of public policy. Secondly, an identity narrative is created through a contextual understanding of social problems in relation to organizational form and function. Organizational identity narratives are not only official accounts of what has happened, "but all kinds of collective storytelling that attempts to create a pseudo-subject, the organization" (Czarniawska, 2000, p. 27) Getting to know the interviews required successive and repeated readings of the texts and interview transcripts and was of critical thematic and reconstructive importance. Getting to know the interviews also supplied the interpretative order to the narrative and more importantly brought the texts into "historical consciousness". (Linge, 1984, p. 548)

At no point in historical understanding and in the reconstruction of a dramatic organizational identity narrative can meaning be achieved until it reaches self-conscious; the reflective level where the writer is ontologically related to the event, the context, and interpretation he or she is trying to describe. "Understanding itself" writes Gadamer, "is not to be thought of so much as an action of subjectivity, but as the entering into an event of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated." (1973, p. 538)

There are specific examples where a mediated process between the past and the present resulted in new dramatic and interpretive conclusions regarding the founding narrative. In the second chapter, the context for the New College Institute in Southside Virginia was introduced. It was suggested that the problems characterizing Southside
communities may prove prohibitive for founding a New College in that area. But it exists nevertheless. In re-constructing the founding story, evidence consistent with rational planning objectives recedes in light of a more textured and interpretive explanation. For example, evidence of rational planning objectives related to the New College provided through assessments indicated; (a) declining population in Southside (Table 1), (b) lack of educational attainment in Southside (Table 2), (c) lower employment wages in Southside (Figure 2); and (d) higher unemployment rates in Southside (Figure 3). It was also suggested that a supply of skilled labor would not necessarily lead to an increase in business activity and that the Southside communities do not have an occupational structure in place commensurate with placement of high skilled professions. Now, in the re-constructed interpretation of the founding, these facts become the mere utterances upon which the structure of a causal story is created. Remember that the subject is the New College Institute; an organization. Thematically, a solution to the declining Southside population is to create an “educational anchor” in the community that will attack and retain students and professionals in the local area. The lack of educational attainment in Southside is addressed by creating an organizational path to post secondary educational access and opportunities locally and to overcoming intergenerational neglect for higher education. Creating a new political economy and labor consciousness is the solution to depressed employment wages which is not simply seen in the creation of graduates but in a new labor consciousness and corresponding opportunity structure. And creating a socially transformative organization is the solution to unemployment in terms of work ethics and
social values. But perhaps the most thematic re-construction is found in a comparison of students planning to attend a four year college in Southside (Figure 4). Despite its modest physical appearance and despite its nontraditional design, the New College Institute is symbolically purposeful to transforming "aspirations" where hopelessness is replaced by re-vitalization and re-birth.

In the narrative re-construction, the policy story of the new public bureaucracy is situated in a small rural community in Southside Virginia. The story does not reflect a meta-narrative or macro-level investigation of social processes rather it is contextual, local and specific. The narrative is creative and in some sense idiosyncratic. The initial intent of this study was however, to expose the reader and writer of the text to the set of human institutions that are both produced and consumed. Public policy it might be claimed cannot be explained by telling how it was done but rather one can always tell a story about the policy process to invoke meaning and understanding.

**Southside Virginia as the Right Location for a New College**

Institutional theory provided the framework for the study. It was suggested that from an institutional view, organizations adopted structures for the purposes of aligning with their external environments and mirroring other organizations actions in order to gain social legitimacy and acceptance. Consequently, educational organizations emerge as a credentialing agency in modern society and link modern citizens with identities that are standardized and controlled. Society becomes schooled and education can be defined by its coordinated and shared social understanding, typifications and sedimented meaning.
Institutional constraints and enhancements can also lead to an examination and explanation of educational organizations as a symbolic carrier of institutional knowledge. That is, from an institutional perspective educational organizations contain beliefs, values and preferences for determining individual status and membership in a wider collectivity based on educational organizations social legitimacy. To institutionalize it is "too infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand" (Selznick, 1992, p. 233) and public policy processes unite a community and its well-being with the fate of its educational institutions in terms of values and commitments. In the transformation of institutional knowledge to organizations there is an associated quest for institutional solutions to problems of economy and coordination. But this is only a beginning. For organizations to exist and survive, they must also create social reality having its own dynamic and imperatives. The official design of an organization is always supplemented by an informal structure composed of attitudes, relationships, and practices that arise in the course of social interactions -- as individuals and groups bring into play their own personalities, values, and interests. Similarly, from a political perspective organizations cannot be seen as specifically goal driven particularly when their stated goals are too vague or abstract to be capable of determining policy choices. In this view, the typical organization is better understood as a coalition, and as governed by multiple and negotiated authority than as a unified system of coordination.

Southside Virginia becomes a preferred site for the creation of an educational organization specifically because education is institutionalized. The re-constructed
narrative of the policy process involving the New College Institute begins with articulating a creation myth. While institutional theorists have focused on "rationalizing myths" (Meyer & Rowan, 1991, p. 41) as the building blocks organizations must incorporate to avoid illegitimacy, what we find with the New College Institute and more specifically with the location of Southside Virginia for a new public bureaucracy is the conceptual and cognitive requirements for a legitimating processes that signals a whole sequence of transformations. The rationalist myth is replaced or subsumed under a creation ritual that is situationally specific and symbolically universal. The creation story establishing the New College Institute was metaphorically related to institutional methods of socialization built on emotional dependence between, for example, a child and a parent. Delegate Ward Armstrong made the following analogy regarding the nurturing of a new public bureaucracy.

...if we looked at having children as an economic exercise none of us would have children. Okay, they're a great expense and they bring very little return; maybe when I'm an old guy my kids might take me in the later two years of my life but apart from that contingency kids are an expenditure or more properly they're an investment. They're not something you make money on. And just like with the child you always find a way to afford the children that you have. You know, if you have one child you want to have a second child you find a way to afford that and I think that's true to, maybe we can't just have 100 colleges and universities in every locality still I think that, we have to find a way to afford new colleges and universities.

Whether it is due to the location, the size of their community, their shared economic and social struggle, or the perceived authentic leadership of local politicians and community experts, the creation myth for the New College Institute was able to generate effective emotional commitment from the Southside community. And from an institutional
perspective, no radical transformation of subjective reality is possible without such identification, which inevitably replicates childhood experiences of emotional dependency. The creation myth institutionalizes the symbolic features of an organization of higher education through an affective moral commitment to nurture and care for its new organization.

The normative context of public policy was used to create an organization of higher education to solve social, cultural and economic problems. The question remaining is whether this is an efficient use of public resources, an appropriate objective of policymaking and perhaps most importantly an effective solution to Southside Virginia's economic situation. But maybe this type of analysis would miss the point. Education is an ongoing and permanent investment in learning. The actor or citizen in the Southside community is internally motivated to do what he or she has to do to bring them in line with the identified members of the institutional environment. The individual plays no independent role in maintaining the institution rather it serves to constrain and enhance his or her behavior and to create a path according to which a new social reality can be achieved. It was only in the presence of absence that Southside Virginia could stand out as a community with a needed investment in a socially transformative organization.

**Epilogue**

At the corner of Franklin and East Main Streets in Martinsville, Virginia is a converted store front where life size posters of college students hang in what were previously the display windows of a furniture store. The images on the posters look
symbolically to the sky for inspiration, aspiration and hope. The New College Institute now occupies the previously vacated furniture store at the corner of Franklin and Main and throughout the “uptown” area and in the very “heart of Martinsville” there is promise of a new future. Whether the New College Institute delivers on that promise is another matter.

There is certainly hope that the historical trajectory of Southside Virginia has witness a moment of punctuation symbolized by the creation of a new public bureaucracy. But before any transition can take place and ending must be perceived and affective commitment to a new future embraced. Where educational institutions have been established and thrive there is a reciprocal commitment from the community to nurture a new institutional order predicated on the transformative qualities of higher education. The selection of an educational organization as the mechanism for social and cultural transformation depends on its highly institutionalized structure and its symbolic socialization of citizens and by proxy communities. Through this transition, through the period of “limbo” where the citizens of Martinsville and Henry County exist in ethereal disconnection from their past and the uncertain future, the New College Institute exists as a material commitment to the future and the embodied hope of its creators.

Organizations do not spring from local soils rather they are representational; the product of negotiation and compromise, reflecting symbolic purpose and creating the conditions for social acceptance. While these conditions are salient in the founding narrative, it will ultimately be the organizations identity that determines its future and
continued existence. Identity realized through achievement of its original design goals and identity not yet conceived in goals it has not yet defined.

2012 and Beyond

It was generally understood that the New College Institute would undergo an evaluation study conducted by the State Council of Higher Education at some point in the future.29 At that time, according to some commentators, the State Council of Higher Education would revisit the institutions intended impact on the local community and make recommendations regarding its continued funding and operation. How then should the New College’s effectiveness be judged? How are rational planning objectives assessed given the narrative re-construction of the New College Institute as described and explained by consequent affective commitment from the community with a new organization, a new plausibility structure? That is, how do policy makers assess the affective impact of an organization with community transformation? Similarly, given that the regional organizational field is populated by higher education centers, will the New College Institute be evaluated institutionally according to this established model? Clearly, legislative intent was to create the New College Institute based on a higher education center model but to distinguish it organizationally as an independent institution. As such, one of the salient evaluation decisions will be to consider the New College Institute's independence and identity, against socially legitimate criteria. And, while many believe

---

29 It was understood that at the time of the enacting legislation that SCHEV would conduct an evaluation in 2012 and most of the individuals interviewed believed that is in fact the case. While initially an evaluation request was included in the enacting legislation, it was latter taken out.
that the State Council of Higher Education has a mandate to conduct such a review of the New College Institute in 2012, the specific language requiring such action is absent from the enacting legislation. According to the current Executive Director for the New College Institute, Dr. Barry Dorsey, the State Council of Higher Education can initiate a review any time and at their discretion.

...in 2012/2013 there would be a review to determined how well we [NCI] had done and SCHEV would make a recommendation to the governor and the general assembly on NCI’s future and of course it could be one of three things. We could either continue to be a higher education center or we could become a branch of another four year public institution or become a stand-alone institution that the people in the community had wanted in the first place. There were also some other provisions in the original legislation such as there was to be an interim report to SCHEV on success in 2008, as I recall, that was taken out by legislators who said SCHEV can do a study anytime it wants to and make a recommendation. The 2012-13 date that was in the original legislation was taken out as well. So there is nothing in writing that says in 2012-13, SCHEV will make a recommendation but that's an understood situation that will occur then and whenever I talk with Dan LaVista the Director of the Council of Higher Education, I remind him that they made a commitment to review our success in 2012-13.

By revisiting initial rational planning objectives, policy evaluation will be contingent on demonstrating a material effect on the economic and social conditions in Southside Virginia. That is, the New College Institute will to some degree, be evaluated by tangible and short-term economic effects in the local community. As such, the degree to which the New College Institute can be equated with altering the social and economic demographics in Southside Virginia will effectively condition perception of its continued feasibility. But as we have learned, there will be challenges and questions with regard to whether and how a criteria of efficiency can capture the activities and design of the New College Institute in terms of community welfare, purpose and satisfaction. It might be
argued that a rational planning analysis and evaluation will fail to connect the production of baccalaureate degree holding graduates with externalities that fall outside of exchange relationships. That is, there are many ways a community can measure economic revitalization and social transformation. Externalities falling outside of short-term or exchange based assessments will have to consider among other things NCI’s relational impact in the Southside region and the symbolic and enduring commitment to education and learning throughout the region. In terms of political choice, NCI’s future might simply reflect a condition in which once “state governments establish something [it’s] very difficult to get rid of it.”

Every institution that is presented to us in the social-historical world is inextricably tied to the symbolic. Every institution consists of a particular symbolic network; a given economic organization, a system of rules and procedures, and a set of inducements and significations in consequence of action. What is understood here in the founding of the New College Institute is a specific, sui generis relation, which can be misunderstood and distorted when it is apprehended as pure causation, transparent rationality or as a sequence of raw facts. Symbolism is transformative writes Castoriadias when; “...[it] presupposes an imaginary capacity... the capacity to see in a thing what it is not, to see it other than it is.” (1987, p. 127) The modern view of the institution, which reduces its signification to a functional aspect, is only partially correct. In terms of organizational survival, the game is worthwhile to the extent that the organization is generating change and not reacting to it. It is here in the fertile soil of symbolically transformative intentions that a new vision and
confidence develops and a new deeper rooted understanding of the forces shaping reality takes place.

Policy evaluation will, it seems always tend toward the observable, measurable and discrete manifestations and purposes of a program, project or organization. These cannot be discounted. But we should also be reminded that with any research paradigm there is a perspective and skepticism that bias both how we define problems and their solutions. The task of this study was to freely speculate and develop an imaginative story with normative implications. With regard to program design and evaluation, any conclusion about the future of the New College Institute will rely heavily on the empirical dimensions of a social science paradigm. What I hope is that when such a time comes, that we tend not to neglect story-telling, design and value critical approaches as a new direction in which a policy responsive social science can and should develop.
Literature Cited


Establishing a joint subcommittee to study the need for a college in South-central Virginia, 459, S.J.R., (1999).


APPENDIX A

Department or Agency
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear

I am a doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University completing the requirements for a PhD. in Public Policy and Administration. I am writing to you regarding my dissertation research on the New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia. My proposal is to study the New College Institute and its founding from a public policy perspective. Along with my Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. William Bosher, Jr., and with the support of Barry M. Dorsey, Executive Director of the New College Institute, I outlined a qualitative research project involving interviews with individuals involved or influenced by the founding of NCI. In collaboration with Dr. Bosher, I consider you a person of interest who can add insight and depth to the story of NCI.

My research protocol is to record interviews structured around specific questions with individuals identified as influential in the legislative history and founding of NCI. My focus is not on individuals but on NCI as an organization of higher education, the legislative history of NCI and access to higher education opportunities in the Southside region. I realize that your time is valuable and your assistance with my research is voluntary. To that end, I appreciate you considering the opportunity to be interviewed and to tell your story as it relates to higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia. I will be contacting you by phone in the next week to schedule an interview should you decide to participate in my research. I have enclosed the interview questions and plan for interviews of one hour. Thank you in advance for helping me with my research and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Edward Bowman, Ph.D. Student
Virginia Commonwealth University

Sincerely,

Dr. William Bosher Jr, Professor
Virginia Commonwealth University
New College Institute

Research Summary and Interview Questions:

I am conducting dissertation research on the founding of the New College Institute (NCI) in Martinsville as partial requirement for my Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration at Virginia Commonwealth University. My research concerns the founding of the NCI through the lens of institutional theory. Institutional theory provides a perspective for evaluating formal and informal organizational structure as collective social action. As such, organizations like NCI are contextualized within a field of organizations exhibiting similarity in their formal and informal policies, norms and procedures. The interview questions below are intended to elicit information about your role in the founding of NCI as it relates to my research questions. The interview should not take more than one hour and I appreciate your participation in this research project.

Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe your role with regard to the founding of the New College Institute?
2. How would you explain selection of the City of Martinsville and Henry County as the location for the New College Institute?
3. What kind of educational programs/disciplines/subjects did you anticipate and plan for the New College Institute? [and]; how was the selection of programs determined?
4. How does the New College Institute fit into Virginia’s system of higher education and projected increases in college enrollment?
5. What is your knowledge of consortia or consortiums as a model for organizations of higher education?
6. How do you expect NCI to establish legitimacy and identity as an organization of higher education?
7. Can you describe the different constituencies or groups having an interest in the New College Institute?
8. Describe the significance of the New College Institute for the Southside region.
10. Looking into the future, what do you see as the future of NCI and southside Virginia?
11. Do you have any question for me?