

MIMETIC, COERCIVE, AND NORMATIVE INFLUENCES IN  
INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES: THE CASE  
OF DISTANCE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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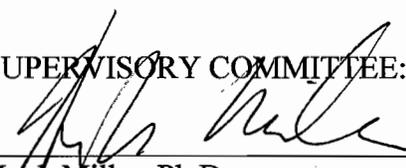
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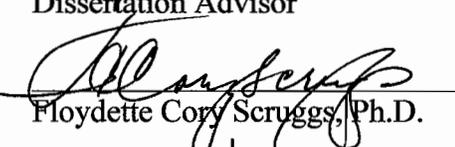
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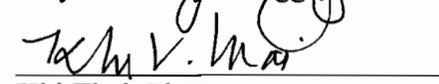
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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Hugh Miller, School of Public Administration, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College for Design and Social Inquiry and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

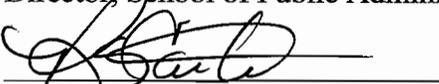
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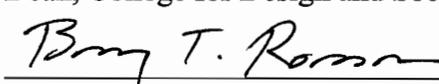
  
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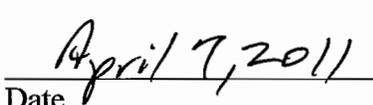
  
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## ABSTRACT

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In this study, DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional model of isomorphic change is hypothesized to explain the changes witnessed in educational organizations with regard to the acceptance, implementation and institutionalization of distance learning. In order to show the power of institutional theory in explaining organizational change over time, a comparative qualitative case study methodology is utilized. Document analysis and interviews are used to explore the utility of this isomorphic change model. Each research question seeks to explore different influences of institutional isomorphism, coercive, normative, and mimetic.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest organizations converge on similar practices and behaviors and appear similar to like organizations over time. The

appearance of change toward homogeneity is explored through the isomorphic change theory which identifies three forces, coercive, normative and mimetic, influential in determining how adopted behaviors and practices become isomorphically accepted by the organizational field. Coercive isomorphism stems from political influence and organizational legitimacy, often conveyed through laws, regulations, and accreditation processes (or outside agency requirements); normative isomorphism is associated with professional values; and mimetic isomorphism is copying or mimicking behaviors that is a result of organizational response to uncertainty. By examining the organizational field for the presence of these forces and measuring the extent of these forces at various points in time one is able to explain convergence on regularized practices and institutionalized behaviors, or how an organizational field becomes institutionalized, around a particular idea or practice. The coercive, mimetic, and normative forces present in the field dictate institutionalization and theoretically produce an environment that induces organizational conformity, or homogeneity, through pressure to appear legitimate, competition, mandates associated with funding, and influential professional group and network values.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this study, DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional model of isomorphic change is hypothesized to explain the changes witnessed in educational organizations with regard to the acceptance, implementation, and institutionalization of distance learning. In order to show the power of institutional theory in explaining organizational change over time, a comparative qualitative case study research methodology is utilized in this study. Document analysis and interviews are used to explore the utility of DiMaggio and Powell's isomorphic change model. Each research question in this study seeks to explore different influences of institutional isomorphism, coercive, normative, and mimetic. The three research questions explore the three individual sources of influence as theorized by DiMaggio and Powell.

### Research Questions:

Research Question 1: Do coercive pressures lead to institutional isomorphism?

Research Question 2: Do normative values of professionals lead to institutional isomorphism?

Research Question 3: Does mimetic reinforcement lead to institutional isomorphism?

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that organizations converge on similar practices and behaviors and appear similar to like organizations over time. The appearance of change toward homogeneity is explored through the authors' isomorphic change theory which identifies three forces influential in determining how adopted behaviors and practices become isomorphically institutionalized (accepted) by the organizational field as a whole. According to Merriam Webster's dictionary (2007) isomorphism is defined as "being of identical or similar form or shape or structure." These three forces include coercive pressure, normative values of professionalism and mimetic reinforcement. Coercive isomorphism stems from political influence and organizational legitimacy, often conveyed through laws, regulations, and accreditation processes (or other outside agency standardization or oversight and compliance requirements); normative isomorphism is associated with professional values; and mimetic isomorphism is copying or mimicking behaviors that are a result of organizational response to uncertainty. Mimetic behaviors are "of the nature of imitation or mimicry" (Random House, 2011). By examining the organizational field for the presence of these forces and measuring the extent of these forces at various points in time, it is theorized that one is better able to understand convergence on homogenized practices and institutionalized behaviors, or how an organizational field becomes institutionalized, around a particular idea or practice.

The coercive, mimetic, and normative forces present in the field dictate the institutionalization of organizations. Theoretically, these three forces, coercive, mimetic, and normative, produce an environment that induces organizational conformity, or homogeneity, through pressure to appear legitimate, competition,

mandates associated with funding, and influential professional group and network values.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) theorize that institutionalized behaviors may limit organizations' innovative capacity. In essence, an organization may get stuck in an isomorphic institutional rut or path that can consume its structures, processes, culture, norms, and, in the long run, its organizational goals. Another problem with institutionalized structures is that once developed and diffused throughout an organizational field they can limit and constrain an organization's ability to change its course or develop new structures in the future. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983) institutional structures can become so concrete and overreaching that organizational change can be limited for decades to come. This concept of how organizational field forces can impact the institutionalization of organizational practices is important for organizational leaders who are often faced with implementing large scale organizational change. If leaders are cognizant of these forces they might be able to use them to their advantage in achieving desired organizational change.

Isomorphic change happens when "organizations are heavily influenced by institutional environments that dictate how legitimate, successful organizations should look and behave and constrain the ability and motivation of their decision makers to conceive of and implement certain (other) types of organizational change" (Zajac & Kraatz, 1993, 85). As a result, "such environments often lead to the uniform adoption of certain practices and structures by organizations (institutional isomorphism) and to the persistence of these practices and structures (inertia), independent of rational

efficiency or effectiveness concerns” for the particular organization (86). If indeed the dangers of isomorphism exist then studies that explore organizational change using an institutional isomorphic framework are important as these studies can illuminate key aspects of organizational change such as efficiency, innovation, and effectiveness.

Hole in the literature:

In a comprehensive analysis of the studies using DiMaggio and Powell’s (1983) theory of isomorphic change, Mizruchi and Fein (1999) note that while there are more than 160 studies found in six journals that attempt to use DiMaggio and Powell’s framework, only seven of those studies incorporate all three isomorphic forces, coercive, normative and mimetic (The six journals include: *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociological Review*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *the Academy of Management Journal* and *Organization Science*).

Mizruchi and Fein (1999) discuss the importance of analyzing all three forces. What the authors find problematic of the studies in their literature review and analysis is that “researchers are positing a particular process that results in a behavioral outcome, but they are measuring only the outcome while assuming the process” and that the focus on only one isomorphic force “leads to failure to consider an alternative process (that) might be operative” (664). The authors’ concern is that “this selective appropriation provides a limited picture of the world and at the same time unfairly implicates them (DiMaggio and Powell) as accessories to this limited picture” (680). Based on Mizruchi and Fein’s research on the use of DiMaggio and Powell’s theory

this study seeks to fill this hole in the literature by considering all three forces theorized by DiMaggio and Powell.

In addition, this study is an empirical test using qualitative data hypothesized toward more isomorphic institutionalization of organizational practices because of the effect of these three forces – this is an approach not found in the current literature. Notably, the qualitative data garnered through the normative and mimetic interviews in this study illuminates the hypothesis that coercive, mimetic, and normative forces overlap and intermingle, a concept that was not thoroughly explored or examined in other institutional isomorphic change studies.

#### Significance of Research:

According to Galaskiewicz and Wasserman (1989) the study of decision making under conditions of environmental uncertainty still occupies a central position in the organizational literature and that “DiMaggio and Powell’s contribution to this literature points out that decision making under conditions of uncertainty is often influenced by subtle social processes – coercive, mimetic, and normative” (454). Considering the many uncertainties of state and federal fiscal support, and the complexity of the organizational field in which colleges and universities operate today, it is important that this institutional framework continues to be perfected as studies using this framework highlight aspects of organizational efficiency and effectiveness, organizational change and innovation, inertia, organizational change capacity, and organizational ruts.

Also, many of the challenges and criticisms of the isomorphic institutional change model focus on the model's inability to account for organizational change. By clarifying the differences between isomorphic change and the natural process of institutionalization, this study addresses these challenges thereby influencing future research studies using this theoretical model. The next chapter provides an overview of the institutional framework. Both the old and the new institutional streams are discussed. The institutional framework in which this study is posited also is outlined.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

This chapter describes the theoretical framework upon which this study is based. Institutional theory finds its most traditional roots in the social sciences ranging from studies in ethnography, phenomenology, political science, organizational studies, and anthropology. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991) “sociologists find institutions everywhere, from handshakes to marriages to strategic-planning departments.” March and Olsen (1984) note that “human actions, social contexts, and institutions work upon each other in complicated ways, and these complex, interactive processes of action and the formation of meaning are important to social life” and are at the heart of the institutional framework. March and Olsen continue their explanation: “Institutional thinking emphasizes the part played by institutional structures in imposing elements of order on a potentially inchoate world” (743). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991) institutional analysis is “neither to expose the inefficiency of organizational practices nor to celebrate the non-optimality of institutional arrangements...but to develop robust explanations of the ways in which institutions incorporate historical experiences into their rules and organizing logics” (33). According to Dacin, Goodstein and Scott (2002) institutional theory has the ability to explain both individual and organizational action.

Institutional theory as it relates to organizational change is a departure from the rational perspective which “suggests that the characteristics of organizations shift over time in order to pursue better substantive performance” and achieve economic efficiency (Ashworth, Boyne and Delbridge, 2005, 2). Institutional theory explains organizational change as driven by “formal legitimacy,” or the need to “conform to expectations of key stakeholders in their environment” (Ashworth, Boyne and Delbridge, 2005, 2). In addition, rather than focusing on “technical” elements that tend to separate and identify variation among organizations with regard to change, institutional theory emphasizes “social and cultural” elements that attempt to understand “similarity and stability” with regard to organizational change (Ashworth, Boyne and Delbridge, 2005, 3).

Like the rationalists, institutionalists focus on centralization and internal control. Similar to the internal, top-down hierarchy that exhibits force on individual organizational players in the rational school, in the institutional school a clear top-down hierarchy exists between an organization and other influential organizations in its external environment that affect the organization’s ability to make decisions and engage in change. For example, accrediting and appropriation agencies like the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and the Department of Education (DOE), respectively, have power over schools through the enforcement of accrediting standards and appropriation authority.

Authors such as DiMaggio and Powell (1991) and Frumkin and Gadjuschek (2004) note that there is still an overriding rational school paradigm that organizations strive to be efficient, but in the institutional framework researcher theorize that the that

the drive for efficiency comes from internal and external pressures of the environment. For example, government agencies, other organizations, and elites in the environment exert enormous amounts of pressure in various ways that force organizations to conform to particular legitimized models of efficiency (or inefficiency).

Traditionally, there are two main streams of institutional theory; old and new or neo-institutionalism. Classic or old institutionalism is a theoretical paradigm that focuses on roles, structures, processes, and norms of organizations; or the internal environment of the organization. New institutionalism switches the focus to the interaction of the organization with others in the field, or the external environment or a blend of interactions from both the internal and external environments. While there are many differences between old and new (or neo) institutionalism, both approaches agree that institutionalization constrains organizational rationality, but it is the sources of the constraints on which these approaches differ (DiMaggio and Powell, 2001). Old and new institutionalists “identify different sources of constraint, with the older emphasizing the vesting of interests within the organization as a result of political trade-offs and alliances (similar to the rational school) and the new stressing the relationship between stability and legitimacy and the power of common understandings that are seldom explicitly articulated” (12).

The next section further explores the old and new schools of institutionalism as well as the differences between the two schools. In addition, Schmidt’s (2008, 2010) and Scott’s (1987) typologies for institutionalism are explored which includes the discussion of a new stream called discursive institutionalism. Discursive institutionalism might represent a post modern institutionalism as aspects such as

discourse, structuration, and cognitive processes, often associated with the post modern school, are explored. Finally, the institutional isomorphism framework in which this study is posited is outlined.

### Old Institutionalism:

The old or classic institutional framework has many similarities to the rational school including a strong focus on material, specifically economic, interests. Prior to the 1970s most work on organizations and their environments involved the inter-workings of the internal environment including Gulick and Taylor's work in the rational, scientific management framework and the rational choice decision-making lens of March and Olsen (1984) and Cyert & March (1963). Institutional theory, at its most traditional, suggests that the behavior and actions of people within an organization are often shaped and influenced by informal institutions including patterns, coalitions, cliques, and elements of recruitment or promotion (Aldrich, 1999).

Such authors such as Parsons (1956), Selznick (1949, 1957), and Berger and Luckman (1967) are considered influential in establishing the traditional, or old, institutional stream from a sociological perspective. This framework focuses on social construction and institutional norms and values (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Parsons (1951) describes a system of regulatory norms and rules that govern action in terms of conformity to the common value system of society. Aldrich summarizes Parsons' work as both solidifying the concept of institutional rules influencing behavior and identifying "supra-organizational societal norms as the context within which authority and inter-organizational contracts are carried out" (1979, 15)

On the resource dependency side, Selznick (1949) illustrated the phenomenon of organizational change in his study of the Tennessee Valley Authority where he found that “environmental factors play a crucial role in the institutionalization processes; ... values, goals and procedures become strongly established, not necessarily because managers choose them as the most efficient means of production, but in large as a result of environmental influences and exchanges” (256). In this study, Selznick (1949) explains that formal organizations are shaped by forces separate from the organizationally stated structure and goals of the group. Each person in the organization functions as a “whole,” with actions and alliances separate from the formal organization (251). The organization also is affected by the environment; it is an “adaptive social structure,” facing problems independent of its creation (259). Selznick states that informal structures and communication lines develop from the actions of individuals to “control the conditions of their existence” and that this informal system is “indispensable” for the formal control and delegation structure of the organization (259). The tensions and dilemmas caused by structural constraints also are highlighted in this study.

In his second study, Selznick (1957) addresses the concept of organizational commitments that are enforced by several aspects including organizational imperatives, the social character of the personnel, institutionalization, the social and cultural environment, and centers of interest generated in the course of action. New institutionalists such as DiMaggio and Powell (1984) and Zucker (1983) have picked up on the theme of organizational commitments first explored in Selznick’s work.

### New or Neo-Institutionalism:

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, when John Meyer (1977) and W. Richard Scott (1987) published papers on the “effects of culture, ritual, ceremony, and higher-level structures on organizations” the institutional framework in organizational studies became divided along two lines; a focus on the internal environment of organizations (old institutionalism) and a focus on the external environment of organizations or a combination of both thereof (new institutionalism). The emergence of the transaction cost framework in the late 1970s spearheaded by Pfeffer and Selznick, (1978, 2003) and Williamson’s (1975) seminal work on transaction costs also shifted the focus to external aspects of the organizational environment; areas such as resource dependency, networks, and power structures (Selznick and Pfeffer, 1978, Williamson, 1975 and Tullock, 1977, later 1997 & 1998) and myth and ceremony (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

Streams of new institutionalism are many and can be found in such areas as new institutional economics (North, 1981; Posner, 1981 and Schotter, 1981), positive theory of institutions (Shepsle, 1986; Williamson, 1975 and Ostrom, 1986), and sociological approaches to institutions including organization theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1984) (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). New institutionalism in organization theory “tends to focus on a broad but finite slice of sociology’s institutional cornucopia; organizational structures and processes that are industry-wide, national or international scope” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1984, 9).

New institutionalism also has roots in phenomenology. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) note that while the phenomenological foundation of institutional theory is not

widely discussed it is implicit in new institutional works like Meyer and Rowan's treatment of "accounts," in their emphasis on the role of the "logic of confidence" in sustaining an illusion of intersubjectivity within schools, and in their definition of "institutionalized rules" as "classifications built into society as reciprocated typifications or interpretations" (21-22).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) develop the social construction side of the new institutional framework in their description of the myths and ceremonies that are created by organizations to maintain legitimacy and power in their environment. The authors argue that formal structures reflect myths of institutional environments. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1991) this work lays out many of the central components of new institutionalism in sociology.

According to Meyer and Rowan (1977), "organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work institutionalized in society" (343). Institutional practices, including professions, programs, and technologies, function as myths and organizations adopt them ceremonially. Conformity to outside institutional rules can impact organizational efficiency and control over technical systems, so organizations often will develop buffering strategies to reduce conflict between institutional rules and operations. For example, myths of best practices often are based on the supposition that they are rationally effective which may induce legal mandate status. Although mandated based on rational assumptions of efficiency, these best practices may not be seen by an individual organization as efficient which may result in the

development of internal organizational strategies aimed to buffer against, or resist the implementation of the prevailing external environmental strategy, or best practice.

Another important aspect of Meyer and Rowan's (1977) is the discussion of organizational legitimacy. "Organizations that incorporate societally legitimated rationalized elements in their formal structures maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities" (355). The authors argue that the more an organization's structure is derived from institutionalized myths, the more it shows elaborate displays of confidence, satisfaction, and good faith, internally and externally. Organizations become isomorphic with their institutional environment to maintain legitimacy. Organizational dependence on external institutions reduces uncertainty by establishing legitimacy, and therefore, theoretically organizational legitimacy ensures survival. For example, the myths of job titles, occupations, and organizational charts are "vocabularies of structure;" by using "vocabulary of structure" myths are legitimized (357). Theoretically, an organization's failure to incorporate external, legitimized myths is seen as irrational and negligent.

Levy (2006) states that a good portion of literature in the new institutional school attempts to explain the growing and "startling homogeneity of organizational forms and practices" (Levy, 2006, 143). This focus on homogeneity and persistence has been criticized often as it fails to acknowledge that institutional arrangements can "change in character and potency over time" and can, themselves, act as powerful agents of change (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002). This focus on organizational homogeneity (or institutional isomorphism) is the keystone of DiMaggio and Powell's 1984 study.

According to Di Maggio and Powell (1984), while “organizations are becoming more homogeneous, and bureaucracy remains the common organizational form,” change is less driven by rational pressures such as “competition or efficiency than it is by structural pressures applied by the state and profession” (147). When the structure of an organizational field changes it emerges from “the activities of a diverse set of organizations” and ends in a process of homogenization into the established, legitimized form (147). The activities of the diverse set of organizations represent the multiple streams of institutional influence described by W. Richard Scott (1987). Once diverse streams of organizational activities are incorporated into an overriding policy, they become legitimized by state and professional structures and associations and become a model for new entrants and existing entities in the organizational field, a model toward which new entrants and existing entities will seek to imitate (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Theoretically, at this point, a trend toward homogenization rather than variance presents itself in the organizational field.

More recent neo-institutional studies have sought to address the criticism of a focus on homogeneity by “acknowledging both variation and change” and diversity derived from “exogenous sources and perceptions, interpretations and enactments of institutional logics by actors who give meaning and life to institutions” (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002, 47). Specifically, Dacin, Goodstein and Scott (2002) note three main areas in which neo-institutional studies address institutional change 1) studies about “primary sources or drivers of institutional change” 2) studies about “factors that influence how organizations respond to organizational change (by

resistance or legitimization)” and 3) studies about “the process of institutional change, in particular deinstitutionalization and the emergence of new forms” (45).

#### Old Institutionalism versus New Institutionalism:

According to March and Olsen (1984) while scholars recognize a shift in the institutional framework, that many of the ideas are not “entirely new” but rather an acknowledgement “there was indeed and ‘old institutionalism’” and it would “probably be more accurate to describe recent thinking (new institutionalism) as blending elements of an old institutionalism into the non-institutionalist styles of recent theories of politics” (738). This section outlines some of the differences and similarities between the old and new streams.

Old institutionalism tends to focus on individual actor actions and how these actions are socially constructed through stories and myths or how these actions become structured (Giddens, 1984) while theories of the new institutional school extend the social construction theme to the organizational level and considers how organizational behavior becomes so similar (DiMaggio & Powell, 1984) and recursive in nature (Giddens, 1984; Mizruchi and Fein, 1999). Another fundamental difference between the two institutionalisms (old and new) is the conceptualization of the environment. Old institutionalism describes organizations that are “embedded in local communities, to which they are tied by multiple loyalties of personnel and by inter-organizational treaties (co-optation) hammered out in face-to-face interaction” while new institutionalism focuses on “non-local environments, either organizational sectors

or fields roughly coterminous with the boundaries of industries, professions, or national societies” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, 13).

In addition, because “institutionalization was a process in which constraining relations with local constituencies evolved over time, older institutionalists regarded organizations as both the units that were institutionalized and the key loci of the process” and by contrast new institutionalists view institutionalization as occurring at the sectoral or societal levels, and, consequently, inter-organizational in nature (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, 14). Finally, although both the old and new institutional streams “reject a view of organizational behavior as merely the sum of individual actions, they do so on quite different grounds” (14). Old institutionalism has more to do with a moral frame of reference that guides normative values associated with professionalism (Zucker, 1983). New institutionalism focuses on “normative obligations” and “taken-for-granted scripts, rules and classifications” as the substance of institutions (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

There are areas in which the new and old approaches are similar which include: a skepticism toward rational-actor models of organization, a common view that institutionalization is a state-dependent process that makes organizations less instrumentally rational by limiting options they can pursue, an “emphasis on the relationship between organizations and their environment, a promise to reveal aspects of reality that are inconsistent with organizations’ formal accounts” and an emphasis on the role of culture in shaping organizational reality (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, 12). In addition, both streams of thought maintain a strong emphasis on similarity in social action that is not a result of “competition or an objective requirement of

efficiency but rather as a result of organizations' quests to attain legitimacy within their larger environments" due in part to the organizations' reliance on resources (various types including financial, intangible, and professional) from these environments (Mizruchi and Fein, 1999, 656).

#### Other Typologies of Institutional Theory:

Schmidt (2008 and 2010) categorizes the institutional school into four streams; historical institutionalism (HI), rational institutionalism (RI), sociological institutionalism (SI), and discursive institutionalism (DI) with HI, RI, and SI being the "traditionally recognized new institutionalisms" (2010, 1). Schmidt (2008) states that the "newest new institutionalism, 'discursive institutionalism' lends insight into the role of ideas and discourse in politics and the role they play in providing a more dynamic approach to institutional change than the older" (2008, 303). Discursive institutionalism has a strong focus on ideas and discourse with the definitions for discourse varying widely. Ideas are set in institutional and meaning contexts and discourse follows a particular logic of communication. Finally, discursive institutionalism puts ideas and discourse at the forefront of dynamic organizational change and focuses on how ideas and discourse actively overcome obstacles leading to change.

According to Schmidt (2008) DI differs from new institutionalism in that institutions are "not external-rule-following structures but rather simultaneously structure and constructs internal to agents whose 'background ideational abilities' within a given 'meaning context' explain how institutions are created and exist and

whose ‘foreground discursive abilities’ following a ‘logic of communication,’ that explains how institutions change or persist” (303). HI, RI and SI, the old new institutionalisms, all consider institutions external to actors collectively. DI also differs from other new institutionalisms (specifically SI) in its focus on dynamic, cognitive ideas rather than normative ideas attached to static values and structures.

DI is better at explaining change rather than the continuity which is at the heart of much of older new institutional studies. According to Schmidt (2008), DI’s “turn to ideas has been a useful corrective to the limits of new institutional approaches and a tacit acknowledgment of their difficulties in explaining change” (304). Discursive institutionalism “puts the agency back into institutional change by explaining the dynamics of change in structures through constructive discourse about ideas” (316).

Discursive institutionalism might represent a post modern institutionalism as aspects such as discourse, structuration, and cognitive processes, often associated with the post modern school, are explored. Schmidt (2008) states that while postmodernists and poststructuralists are “often unfairly” assumed to “interpret ‘texts’ without context,” the discourse of DI is “not just ideas or ‘text’ (what is said) but also context (where, when, how and why it was said)” thereby addressing both structure and agency (304-305).

DI therefore provides researchers with another “institutional approach to our methodological toolkit” to address questions such as “the role of ideas in constituting political action, the power of persuasion in political debate, the centrality of deliberation for democratic legitimization, the construction and reconstruction of political interests and values, and the dynamics of change in history and culture”

(Schmidt, 2008, 305). Some approaches that might be considered part of the DI framework include ideational and constructivist institutionalism, deliberative democracy, discourse analysis, and advocacy coalitions.

In addition, DI is useful in explaining “why some ideas become the policies, programs, and philosophies that dominate political reality while others do not” (Schmidt, 2008, 307). By using the older new institutionalisms as “background information for what one normally expects given the structural constraints” in conjunction with the DI approach an understanding for “what one often gets – the unexpected” is realized (314).

Another institutional typology is outlined by Scott (1987) who categorizes three “Pillars of Institutions,” or aspects of the institution; the regulative pillar which is based on the rational actor model of conformity and sanctions with power and the maximization of self-interest being at its center; the normative pillar emphasizes what individual actions and behaviors are appropriate and expected of various social roles and values and what norms are pertinent; and the cognitive pillar where individuals have perceptions of social reality that come from their understanding of the way that the institution has internalized social perceptions. Individuals’ free will is subjective based on their interactions within groups of the organization. Of these three pillars, neo-institutionalists have focused on the cognitive pillar as it is based on subjective rather than objective standards. Given the focus on subjectivity of standards this pillar can be grouped into the discursive category established by Schmidt (2008).

One predominant area of the new institutional framework includes studies of institutional isomorphism or change toward similarity. This concept is explored in the next section.

### Institutional Isomorphism:

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) study of the concept of institutional isomorphism falls into the new institutional tradition. Specifically this framework can be posited in the sociological institutional (SI) category coined by Schmidt (2008) and the cognitive pillar advanced by Scott (1984). According to Schmidt (2008) SI is "all about...norms, cognitive frames, and meaning systems, and the way in which they are created and changed" (320). The isomorphic change model through exploration of normative forces considers these aspects of the SI stream. While DiMaggio and Powell focus on organizations and the organizational field as units of analysis, Schmidt (2010) posits "culturally specific practices" or "institutions" as the unit of analysis in SI studies; where institutions are made up of "norms, cognitive frames, scripts, and meaning systems that guide human action" (13). Discursive institutionalists who "engage with the SI tradition, then like SI scholars... speak the language of cultural framing, ideas, and discourse" but with a greater focus on the concept that these aspects are "more dynamic and, thereby, better able to explain institutional change (and continuity)" (14). Because of this focus, SI is able to place attention on homogeneity (if present) across organizational fields and purposive legitimization efforts as conveyed through cultural practices, norms, scripts and meaning systems.

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) were able to further develop the understanding of the theoretical concept of isomorphism by articulating that organizations "compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, (and) social as well as economic fitness" (151). With its focus on "other organizations" in the (external) environment or organizational field as well as the internal environment, institutional isomorphic change theory is useful in understanding the politics of organizational change and structure (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 150).

As noted in the introduction, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) recognize "three mechanisms through which isomorphic change occurs, each with its own antecedents: coercive, mimetic, and normative" (150). DiMaggio and Powell's coercive, mimetic, and normative forces are considered processes or mechanisms for isomorphism, not types or forms of isomorphism (Mizruchi and Fein, 1999).

Coercive isomorphism stems from political influence and the problem of legitimacy, normative isomorphism is associated with values of professionalism, and mimetic isomorphism is a result of an organizational response to uncertainty. Examples of coercive pressures that would lead to organizational isomorphism include government mandates, a system of contract law, the budget cycle, financial reporting requirements, and regulatory agencies. Normative pressure "stems primarily from values of professionalism" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 152). Professionalism is associated with the members of an organization and their desire to maintain autonomy over work procedures and legitimization of their work. Examples of normative pressures are professional networks or boards, on-the-job socialization and

networking, training or professional development, formal education, and certification processes accredited by professional bodies. Finally, mimetic reinforcement also influences organizational isomorphism through organizational copying or mimicking triggered by the compulsion to establish organizational legitimacy. Hanson (2001) notes that mimetic isomorphism occurs when an “organization consciously models itself after another that it believes to represent a high level of success and achievement in the public eye” (649).

March and Olsen (1976) also explain the tendency for organizations to model or mimic other organizations. Organizations tend to model or imitate each other with regard to structure “when there is new technology that is poorly understood, when goals are ambiguous, or when the environment creates symbolic uncertainty” (in DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 151). Copying is most prevalent “where actors cannot be sure of what the outcomes of the adoption of different processes or systems will be” (Ashworth, Boyne and Delbridge, 2005, 3). Selznick (1996) agrees “mimesis (copying) is considered a response to uncertainty presumably more deeply rooted in anxiety than in rational efforts to avoid reinventing the wheel” (273).

Also, Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) note that all three types of forces, coercive, mimetic and normative, “can overlap and intermingle,” even though they are derived from different conditions and therefore have the likelihood of influencing organizational characteristics in different ways (Frumkin and Galaskiewicz, 2004, 285). Coercive force often is linked to the “environment surrounding the organizational field (or the external environment),” while mimetic and normative

forces are “internal to field and help explain the spread of roles and structures” and the reinforcement of organizational norms and values (285).

Fennell and Alexander (1987) note that DiMaggio and Powell took pains to point out that these three mechanisms through which institutional isomorphism is diffused are not necessarily empirically distinguishable therefore resulting in few empirical investigations using the isomorphic framework. Each involves a separate process, but two or more could operate simultaneously and their effects will not always be clearly identifiable. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) state:

This typology is an analytic one: the types are not always empirically distinct. For example, external actors may induce an organization to conform to its peers by requiring it to perform a particular task and specifying the profession responsible for its performance. Or mimetic change may reflect environmentally constructed uncertainties. Yet while the three types intermingle in empirical settings, they tend to derive from different conditions and may lead to different outcomes (150).

In an empirical test of DiMaggio and Powell’s model, Ashworth, Boyne, and Delbridge (2005) attempt to capture aspects of organizational change with regard to their influence on four organizational characteristics: process, strategy, culture, and structure. In light of the implementation of a new organizational policy, the authors found that organizational characteristics were affected differently by the three isomorphic forces. This led them to group organizational characteristics into core and periphery functions. Based on these two categories, the authors found that coercive forces will have the most impact on organizational characteristics of process and

strategy; mimetic forces will have greater impact on strategy and process than normative forces; and normative forces will have the greatest impact on organizational culture. Of the three isomorphic forces, the authors found coercive force to have the greatest overall influence on isomorphic change (or homogeneity) in the educational organizational field. Frumkin and Galaskiewicz's (2004) study found that organizational culture and structure were the most resistant to the three isomorphic forces. They also showed that public organizations are more influenced by isomorphic pressures than private and non profit organizations.

DiMaggio & Powell (1983) also discuss the process of homogenization in an organizational field. As defined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), an organizational field is a group of organizations that, "in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 148). Organizational fields exist only "to the extent that they are institutionally defined" or structuralized (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 148). Structuration involves four aspects: "an increase in the extent of interaction among organizations in the field, the emergence of sharply defined inter-organizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition, an increase in the information load with which organizations in a field must contend, and the development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 148). Once structuration in an organizational field has occurred, the process of homogenization begins. The process of homogenization is best described by the concept of isomorphism which is "a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (DiMaggio

and Powell 1983, 149). Some examples of organizational fields might include regulatory agencies and groups of organizations that produce similar services or products, like education or health care organizations.

As described in the introduction, homogenization occurs when the structure of an organizational field changes from “the activities of a diverse set of organizations” to a homogenized, established and legitimized form and overriding policy (147).

Ashworth, Delbridge, and Boyne (2005) describe this homogenized state of a field as conformity, which, according to the authors, can be seen through compliance, a state where organizational moves are consistent with the direction of isomorphic pressures in the field, or through convergence, which is the “extent to which all organizations in a field resemble each other more closely over time” (Ashworth, Boyne and Delbridge, 2005, 6).

Once established, these homogenized policies become legitimized by state and professional structures and associations and they become a model for new entrants and existing entities in the organizational field. Legitimacy is seen as a “sustained and driving force...that is both a source of inertia and a summons to justify particular forms and practices” (Selznick, 1996, 273). Legitimized policies become the organizational model toward which new entrants and existing entities that are highly sensitive to their organizational environment will seek to imitate, thereby resulting in institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). For example, according to Hanson (2001) as schools seek legitimization the process of “replication” begins as they “look for guidance to what highly regarded schools are doing (even if they don’t have the human or material resources),” and begin to act and look like these highly

regarded schools (650). An unintended consequence of the quest for legitimacy is that organizations are often rewarded for their conformity to legitimate practices rather than “the quality of their product” (650). An example here would involve educational organizations that go to great lengths to comply with accreditation standards not to accomplish instructional ends, but to maintain their legitimate accreditation status as schools.

Hanson (2001) explains in his study of educational change that new organizations (schools) are created in the “reflection of their existing counterparts” which is called “imprinting” and that this process furthers the process of homogenization (651). By limiting the scope of new entrants through imprinting, opportunity for heterogeneity is decreased and the potential for homogeneity is increased. In addition, Hanson (2001) states that organizations (schools) that “stray too far from the established norm by attending a dramatic change risks the loss of legitimacy” (651).

#### Educational Institutions and Isomorphic Institutionalism:

Many, including DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Scott (1987), Meyer and Rowan (1977), and Zajac and Kraatz (1993) have noted that educational organizations face “strong institutional pressures” and “operate in a highly structured organizational field,” making the educational organizational field an appropriate unit of analysis for understanding of institutional isomorphic change (Zajac and Kraatz, 1993, 86). According to Hanson (2001) “schools get tied down by the network of organizations in their fields, by laws, operating procedures, ... expectations of what a

‘good school’ does, and so forth” (648). Each level of the organizational field has forces that “constrain the independence of action at each successive organizational level” (652).

According to Scott (1987) “perhaps the most important contribution of institutional theorists is their re-conceptualization of the environments of organizations” which includes recognition that educational organizations, like any other type of organizations exist in an organizational field (165). For example, a school’s organizational field would include accreditation agencies, teacher training programs, state boards of education, state legislatures, courts, other colleges and universities, textbook producers, professional associations, and federal agencies (Hanson, 2001). Organizational field pressures intensify when schools have to compete with other organizations for shared resources (public schools) and shared customers or clients (private and public schools).

Hanson (2001) also notes that “the greater the constraining pressures from the environment, the fewer the degrees of freedom for educational change” which consequently makes educational organizations increasingly similar (649). The institutional isomorphic change model is able to provide an understanding of the environmental conditions at the organizational field level which lead organizations to conform and converge on structured practices, structures, and policies. According to Hanson (2001) for the field of education this model not only provides a greater understanding as to why educational systems are so isomorphic or homogenous but also can illuminate organizational change in educational systems. The author considers “three energizing forces in the external environment of educational system

that can bring about organizational change; environmental shifts, environmental regression, and environmental shocks” (654). Environmental shifts occur when “one or more of the many organizations in an educational system’s organizational field modifies some aspect of an expectation or requirement placed on the school” (654). Environmental regression is when “the activities of an organization are so far beyond the accepted norms of the institution that its legitimacy in the institution is questioned” and pressures are exerted on the organization “to initiate change that brings it in line with the accepted standards” (654). And, finally, organizational change can occur through environmental shock which is a condition where “changes in an educational system’s external environment get seriously ahead of any incremental adaptations the schools can make” (655). These shocks can be brought about by dramatic shifts in technology, the law, or public awareness; and “when a strong environmental shock runs through our system of education, the institutionalized forces that have held schools to the status quo tend to be weakened and major change becomes possible” (656). Other recent neo-institutional studies on educational organizations that explore aspects of non-conformity and change include analyses of market forces, dynamic change, and organizational competition (Davies, Quirke & Aurini, 2006; Baker, 2006, and Levy, 2006).

Focusing on the importance of market forces and their influence on organizational change and institutional arrangements, Quirke and Aurini (2006) argue that the new institutionalist schools of the 1970s and 1980s that portray organizations as loosely coupled and isomorphic” are being challenged (105). In their study of the emergence of the private schools in K-12 they acknowledge the challenge of market

forces in the educational organizational field and how these forces are changing the organizational environment as many institutions are engaging in new structures like private schools, charter schools, magnet schools, and home schools. Quirke and Aurini (2006) state that this presents a challenge for the new institutional framework, particularly the institutional isomorphic change model, which is based on ideas of “indifferent standards and bland conformity” when describing organizational structure and change (146).

Another study on higher education organizations in the neo-institutional school focuses on understanding the dynamic nature of organizational change within the constraints of institutional arrangements. Levy (2006), in his study of the emergence of the presence of the private school sector, notes that the “heralded concept of isomorphism does not prepare us for an increasingly important chunk of higher education, for the burst of distinctive private higher education growth” (146). Levy (2006) explored case studies in China, Hungary, and Argentina for evidence of the “diversity (or) inter-institutional differences” and found high levels of heterogeneity or diversity among institutions.

Baker (2006) offers direction for neo-institutionalism in addressing the origins and effects of change. Baker (2006) states that in its current form, new institutional theory is hard pressed to address questions such as “how can we detect when social institutions undergo fundamental change versus long-term deepening of existing institutional patterns? And how can we predict when change in institutions will happen?” (163-64). In his study of international education and institutional change, the author notes that “the role of global institutional forces in the isomorphic spread of

formal education has been the subject of intense study from the neo-institutional perspective” (165). In the current world system, the global institution of education greatly shapes individual national cultures of schooling. A major insight of neo-institutionalism is that institutionalism is essentially a cultural product and thus is heavily supported by the power of culture. Modern society is “constructed out of the transforming power of a dynamic world culture” (181).

As seen through the literature discussed in this chapter, there are many classifications that have been used to describe the various strains of institutionalism (see March and Olsen, 1984; Scott, 1987 and Schmidt, 2008). Scott (1987) notes that since there is so “much variation among contemporary institutional theories of organizations” it is necessary for a researcher to address the stream used in his or her study (501). This study is posited in the new institutional stream, specifically new institutionalism in organization theory utilizing an isomorphic change model. This change model is used to explore the institutional arrangements that contributed to the phenomena of distance learning in higher education organizations. The next chapter outlines the methods used to explore the research questions posed in this study.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a comparative, qualitative case study methodology consisting of document analysis, review of institutional records and interviews with individuals who have been influential in the implementation and development of distance learning in higher education in Florida. One challenge of the new institutional framework and institutional theory in general is the empirical investigation of institutional arrangements. Some important empirical case studies of the new institutional stream include Galaskiewicz (1984) on corporate philanthropy, Brint and Karabel (1989) on the evolution of community colleges as vocation oriented, and DiMaggio and Powell on art museums. As noted in the Significance of Research section, this study fills this gap in theory in practice research as it is an empirical study using qualitative data.

This study examines how distance learning came to be an acceptable form of instructional delivery in higher education or how distance learning has been institutionalized in higher education. The main objective of this research is to test the institutional framework for its utility and strength in explaining this sweeping organizational trend and explaining influences of institutionalization. All data reviewed in this study is compared between two time periods; Time Period 1 (1995-

2000) and Time Period 2 (2004-2009). Measurements that are not compared between these Time Periods are acknowledged in the relevant sections.

#### Documents and Institutional Records:

Institutional documents and records are reviewed and analyzed for evidence of institutional isomorphism, or change toward similarity with regard to distance learning. Using the framework developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), criteria for each category of force or source of influence to be measured; coercive pressure, normative values, or mimetic reinforcement are outlined in this section with respect to pursuing the research questions in this study. Each research question in this chapter seeks to explore different influences of institutional isomorphism. The three research questions explore each the three individual forces of influence as theorized by DiMaggio and Powell.

Research Question 1: Do coercive pressures lead to institutional isomorphism?

Research Question 2: Do normative values of professionals lead to institutional isomorphism?

Research Question 3: Does mimetic reinforcement lead to institutional isomorphism?

One question is devoted to each force; coercive, normative, and mimetic.

To answer research questions 1 and 2 several documents and records are reviewed, categorized and compared. In order to answer research questions 2 and 3 interviews are used.

### Interviews:

The interview method in the social sciences has a long history in both public administration and education studies (See for example Merton & Kendall, 1946 & Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1956). Through these interviews the constructs of mimetics, specifically copying or imitation behaviors in the areas of structure and programs, phrases and language (lingo, buzzwords and catch phrases used by insider education technology group), “firsts,” symbols and signs, and normative values of professionalism, specifically participation in professional associations and on-the-job socialization, in distance learning are explored.

The interview candidate selection process was achieved by using the snowball method. First, two pre-test interviews were conducted with colleagues I knew for their role in the development and implementation of distance learning over the last two decades. Each of these interviewees recommended an additional candidate for a pre-test interview. These preliminary, pre-test interviews were conducted with four persons considered to have a strong institutional knowledge of the development of distance learning at the higher education level. One interviewee is from a private university, two others are from a community college, and the final interview is with a director from a prominent professional organization associated with distance learning for higher education in Florida. After conducting the four pre-test interviews, a final interview question tables were formed (See Appendices A, B).

This researcher then attended a Florida professional distance learning association’s 2010 meeting in Daytona Beach, Florida. The Florida Distance Learning Consortium is a statewide consortium of practitioners and administrators in the

distance learning arena (Florida Distance Learning Consortium, n.d.). Membership in the Consortium is open to all public or private school districts, colleges, universities, and private institutions recognized by Florida's State Board of Education and accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Each institution can appoint a member by notifying the Consortium. Currently there are 28 community college members, 11 state university members, and 27 independent college and university members in the Consortium. Accordingly, all schools in this study are FDLC members.

The purpose of attending this meeting was to gain further participants for the final round of interviews in this study. A brief synopsis of this study was presented to 46 members of the Florida Distance Learning Consortium (FDLC) who attended this quarterly 2010 meeting and members were asked if they would like to further participate in the study. Contact information from 20 willing members was obtained at the meeting. These names of potential candidates were all assigned random numbers and then a free online computer program was used to randomly select 9 numbers (6 names with three alternates). The persons (names) attached to the first 6 numbers were sent emails and letters to further participate in the study. Four out of six of the initial candidates responded and were interviewed. The next two random numbers were used to obtain two more candidates of whom both were interviewed.

The six randomly selected respondents selected were contacted for follow-up interviews to get more in-depth responses in one of two categories – mimetic or normative influences. Three interviews for each category, normative and mimetic, were conducted over the phone, 6 interviews total.

Interviewees were asked questions that help answer aspects of the research questions in this study. Follow-up questions were used as necessary. The questions, organized around the two variable constructs, mimetic and normative, are outlined in the Interview Question Table Appendices (Appendix A – Mimetic Question Table, Appendix B – Normative Question Table). Interview questions are intended to be chronologically comparative in nature asking about each of the two timeframes considered in this study – the time periods of 1995-2000 and 2004-2009.

These six interviews were conducted in an unstructured, active interview format (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). Bryman and Burgess (1999) describe the active interview as such:

Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation, so to speak – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers. (106)

This type of interviewing method has also been called the “narrative approach” (See Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

In addition, the active interview process realizes the assumptions that “meaning is neither predetermined nor absolutely unique” and that “reality is continually ‘under construction’ (as) it is assembled using the interpretive resources at hand” (Bryman and Burgess, 1999, 114). These are important assumptions for this study as distance learning and its associated meanings continue to be (socially) constructed and reconstructed as this study is conducted. The active interview enables

the researcher to garner both past and present realities of the distance learning story. This methodology also was useful in this study as gathering evidence on mimetic and normative forces over time is very interpretive and one is hard pressed to find quantitative data on these constructs.

With respect to guiding the interview in a “preferred” path that is desired of this researcher, this often noted negative aspect of the active interview was considered but the benefits of the active interview; the new linkages that can be discovered and explored and the diverse aspects of respondents’ experiences and interpretations, could not be sacrificed (Bryman and Burgess, 1999, 115). Care was taken to not “dictate interpretation” but rather to “provide an environment conducive to the production of the range and complexity of meanings that address relevant issues, and not be confined by predetermined agendas” (115).

It is important to note that by definition some of these interviews are considered elite in nature in that these interviewees have “knowledge that, for the purposes of a given research project, requires that they be given individualized treatment in an interview” (Manheim & Rich, 1995, 161-162). The elite status of these interviewees is based on their access to information that can help answer a given research question. Generally, elite interviews are unstructured in nature as there is a “greater opportunity to learn from respondents and acquire unexpected information that can lead to truly new ways of understanding events being studied” (162). The fluidity and open ended nature of this approach is important for gathering evidence in this study as it lends itself to both breadth and depth in data collection. The majority of interviews in this study are considered elite.

Through this researcher's involvement in the Florida higher education community access to these leaders in the distance learning field was achieved. Confidentiality and anonymity was orally discussed with all participants and due to the descriptive, narrative format of the data collected from the interviews it is realized by all participants that it is possible, although not likely, some readers would be able to identify the institutions participating in this study and possibly, then, the actual interviewees even though not named in the study. All participants signed consent forms as required by the University Institutional Review Board.

As mentioned earlier in this section, the questions posed through the interviews are aimed at answering one final aspect of normative values of professionalism, genuine participation in professional associations, and all aspects of mimetic reinforcement, or symbiotics.

#### The Distance Learning Case Study:

The case study considered in this study of institutional isomorphism is the development of distance learning in higher education from 1995-2009. The emergence of new technology has caused dramatic changes in many organizations today including the development of distance learning or online learning processes and programs. According to a 2010 report by the Babson Research Group, in the United States more than 4.6 million students were taking at least one online class during the Fall 2008 term, which is equal to more than one in four higher education students taking at least one course online (Babson Research Group, 2010). In the last 30 years, colleges and universities have incorporated technology into their educational policies,

programs, and structures that accommodates the needs of non-traditional or continuing education students through distance learning (Ohler, 1991; Carey, 1991; Hawkins, 1991). Use of technology in education is not only driven by the need to accommodate non-traditional students, but also by federal and state government mandates to continue to provide greater access to post-secondary education despite tightened fiscal constraints (Martin-Epper, 1997; Zeller, 1995; Zajac and Kraatz, 1993). Higher education institutions in the United States that participated in a 2009 research survey of distance learning trends reported that the tough economic times have increased the demand for online courses (Babson Research Group, 2010).

In addition the need for technology congruity between education and the workplace has been cited as justification for the use of technology in education (Privateer, 1999; Miller, 1999). Technology trends in the external environment have created a need to restructure and to alter “the portfolio of offerings typically provided by the (educational) organization” (Zajac and Kraatz, 1993, 87). In the same research study cited above, seventy-four percent of public institutions and 51 percent of private institutions (2,500 schools were surveyed) believed that online learning is critical for their long-term organizational strategy.

For most organizations, the initial implementation of distance learning programs, courses, and structures was a haphazard process. Evidence of this can be seen in what researchers called a “national potpourri” or “hodge-podge” of distance learning programs in the higher education organizational field (Zeller, 1995, 123; Owston, 1997). Distance learning programs, policies, and structures across the higher education organizational field emerged with a strong tone of non-conformance and a

great degree of heterogeneity. At first, individual educational organizations were encouraged to pursue their own interests with regard to implementation of technology, and as a result a wide range of distance learning program designs emerged including web-enhanced courses taught in a traditional face-to-face format that utilized the World Wide Web and the use of other technologies to complement traditional face-to-face formats including video conferencing and television.

Today professional literature and research indicates more commonality among higher education organizations in their delivery of online programs and distance learning policies and structures. Examples of commonalities exist in delivery structure through the use of advanced Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Blackboard and WebCT, standardized program and course templates like Quality Matters and Florida Orange Grove, and networking and socialization structures like e-learning faculty mentor programs and professional associations such as the Florida Distance Learning Consortium (FDLC) and the SREB (Southern Regional Education Board). The following sections outline how the independent and dependent variables are measured in this study.

#### Independent Variables:

In this section the independent variables or the contributors that are theorized to influence and change the level and presence of the dependent variable, institutional isomorphism, are considered. These independent variables are grouped and discussed in three areas of influence, coercive, normative, and mimetic as theorized by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). It is hypothesized that when the independent variables

happen that there will be evidence of institutional isomorphism among the schools in this study.

Coercive Pressures:

Coercive Pressure Variable Measurement 1 – The Higher Education Act:

Several coercive pressures can be seen as influencing the institutionalization of distance learning education in the higher education organizational field pushing the field toward convergence on this teaching pedagogy. The most common coercive pressures or influences seen in the education organizational field are both federal and state government mandates, the budget cycle and funding, and regulatory agencies. By examining three sources of data in this area, The Higher Education Act, the 1998 amendment and the 2008 amendment (government mandate), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation manuals, and four types of SACS commission documents including guidelines, policy statement, good practices, and position statements (regulatory agency), the first research question in this study is addressed.

*Research Question 1: Do coercive pressures lead to institutional isomorphism?*

In this example of distance learning, governmental mandates and policy guidance are initiated by both the Federal and State (Florida) Departments of Education (DOE). The DOE is the regulatory agency that acts in accordance with and governs the Higher Education Act. The Higher Education Act is analyzed for its influence on distance learning. Specifically, the Act is reviewed for any mandating language with regard to distance learning and for any definitions that the Act might set

forth for distance learning. The original Act was passed in 1965. The 1998 amendments (Time Period 1) and the 2008 amendments (Time Period 2) are compared for mandates and definitions related to distance learning. Evidence of government mandates for distance learning or prescriptive language to define distance learning would be indicative of coercive pressures operating in the higher education field. Evidence of an increase of government mandates and definitions for distance learning from the 1998 (Time Period 1) to the 2008 (Time Period 2) amendment would be indicative of the strengthening of coercive pressure in the field and of institutional isomorphism, or institutionalization of distance learning. If there is no evidence of government mandates or definitions this would indicate an absence of coercive force which would theoretically contribute to the lessening of the overall amount of institutional isomorphism in the higher education field.

Table 1: Sources for Coercive Variable Measurement 1

Online Resource:	Document Used:	Purpose/Variable Construct
Department of Education <a href="http://www.doe.gov">www.doe.gov</a>	1998 and (2004-2009) Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965	Mandates, definitions

Coercive Pressure Variable Measurement 2 – SACS Accreditation Manual and Commission Documents:

In addition to government mandates and definitions, in order to measure for the presence of coercive forces the influence of accreditation standards for distance learning also is considered. Since this case study examines schools based in Florida, SACS, or the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' policy and accreditation guidelines and commission documents are reviewed. The 2001 (Time Period 1) and 2008 (Time Period 2) editions of the accreditation manual are reviewed for their guidance of distance learning, if any.

The guidance from these publications specific to distance learning is measured between the 2001 edition and the 2008 edition. Evidence of increased guidance specific to distance learning accreditation between the two time periods would be indicative of coercive pressure in the Florida higher education field. No specific reference to distance learning or a static number of references as compared in the two editions theoretically would be indicative of a lack of coercive pressure from this source. Overall, the fewer sources of coercive pressure present would indicate less isomorphic institutionalization in the organizational field.

Table 2: Sources for Coercive Variable Measurement 2

Online Resource:	Document Used:	Purpose/Variable Construct
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools <a href="http://www.sacs.org">www.sacs.org</a>	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Accreditation Manuals 2001 and 2008 Editions	Distance learning specific guidelines

In addition to the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, the accreditation standards manual of the Commission on Colleges, the Commission has four categories of documents: policies, guidelines, good practices, and position statements. The presence and quantity of these four types of documents was compared between the two time periods in this study. The documents were reviewed and compared for any definitions of distance learning. Other content was reviewed but not considered in this analysis as all the language speaks to distance learning policy and development so the quantity rather than the content between the two time periods is a better indicator of a greater presence of force.

In summary, to answer the first research question “*Do coercive pressures lead to institutional isomorphism,*” the evidence from these three sources, The Higher Education Act, SACs accreditation guidelines, and commission documents is considered in its entirety. An increase in government mandates and definitions and an increase in distance learning specific accreditation and policy guidance over the two

periods compared 1995-2000 and 2004-2009 would indicate evidence of strong coercive pressures operating in the organizational field. A decrease or static level of any of these factors theoretically would be evidence of a lack of coercive pressure from that particular influence and also would diminish the overall amount of institutional isomorphism experienced by the Florida schools in this study.

#### Normative Values of Professionalism:

Examples of normative pressures seen in the higher educational field that affect distance learning policy are professional networks or associations, on-the-job socialization, training, education, and certification processes accredited by professional bodies for personnel. These normative pressures appear to be targeted at organizational characteristics of culture and structure (Ashworth, Boyne & Delbridge, 2005). The following sources are used to answer Research Question #2: *Do normative values of professionals lead to institutional isomorphism?*

#### Normative Value Variable Measurement 1 - Professional associations and On-the-job socialization:

For the personnel at higher education institutions, the early development of distance learning policy had raised questions regarding the effectiveness of these types of learning programs as compared to traditional learning programs. Over the last 20 years, this new teaching methodology has been analyzed, critiqued and debated by numerous scholars and practitioners in the field. Some feel distance learning is just as effective as traditional face-to-face learning, while others feel the opposite; yet others

fall somewhere in the middle of this debate. Michael Privateer (1999) states, “higher education is at a crossroads – one path continuing an essentially administrative approach to the management of learning, and, a second, promising meaningful change by redesigning instructional technology in terms of being both a strategic and cognitive tool” (61). While Privateer (1999) is a proponent for distance learning development, he says, “innovational uses of technology, grounded in traditional notions of teaching, will not bring about important reforms needed to reduce the cost of higher education (a federal priority for distance learning) and will not create first-rate learning environments” because users “may not understand how to capitalize fully upon the computer’s power to revolutionize learning” even where new technology is available (62).

With so many pedagogical issues to consider regarding the effectiveness of distance learning policy and the uncertainty of the success of distance learning policies and programs, many faculty member and administrators resisted the implementation of such policies until further proof surfaced to ensure distance learning is better than or equal to traditional learning methods (Owston, 1997). It is this researcher’s contention that this dissention regarding policy effectiveness at the institution level has been one of the major antecedents for the variation in institutions’ distance learning policies. Since many actors were un-accepting of the pedagogical change and unwilling to change their professional values, at many colleges and universities traditional teaching institutional arrangements remained intact, making implementation of new technologies extremely difficult on a practical level (Dede, 1991). One response to changing organizational culture has been the mobilization of professional associations

to steer the development of distance learning policy and standards and to eliminate institutional barriers associated with changing professional values.

Professional networks and associations are important as they also work as an on-the-job socialization process with peers. Participation in these activities starts to shift the cultural paradigm in which actors in the field operate (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). In essence the emotive context of participation and training and professional development affects the on-the-job socialization process. Genuine participation and involvement in these professional associations is more likely to shift or modify the cultural paradigm of organizations while participation represented only by membership status would be less likely to influence the culture of an organization. Membership in what is considered legitimate professional associations would be a sign of organizational mimicking to enhance organizational legitimacy whereas true, or genuine, participation would be evidence of deep rooted commitment to organizational change and a shift in an organization's cultural paradigm. Genuine participation might include adoption of programs, policies, structures, or content that is promoted by the group.

In order to measure this construct each organization is evaluated for its genuine participation in professional networks discussed above as well as counted for its membership in major distance learning professional associations in the field. It is expected that organizations with a high number of memberships and with a high level of evidence of genuine participation in these professional associations will exhibit values that resemble those of these leading professional associations as shown through adoption of group advocated programs, policies, structures, or content. This section

explains the documents reviewed in this study for exploring normative values with regard to membership; the influence of normative values with regard to genuine participation is explored further through the use of interviews and is explained in the mimetic variable measurement section.

While membership is not a direct correlation to genuine organizational participation, evidence of membership in a high number of professional associations is indicative of a presence of normative professional values. Institutions with a low number of memberships would be expected to exhibit less of the values of professional associations. A high number of professional association memberships indicates a strong presence of normative values at the institutional level, and also theoretically would indicate a greater degree of institutional isomorphism across the field.

#### Normative Value Variable Measurement 2 – Professional and Academic Journals:

Finally, one tangible, measurable manifestation of these professional networks and boards are the professional and academic journals about distance learning topics. A comparison of the number of distance learning journals is conducted between the time period of 1995-2000 and from 2004-2009. Using the Florida State University System (SUS) Library Electronic Journal database, a search for journals on the topic of distance learning was performed to obtain data on the number of journals in these 2 time periods. The SUS Library has more than 3300 electronic journals available in the area of education. This comparison provides a timeline of the emergence of these

journals, indicates whether this was during Time Period 1 or 2, and provides a brief description of each journal's scope.

An increase or static number of professional and academic journals indicates a heightened level of normative values of professionalism in the organizational field. A decrease in the number of journals between the two periods would indicate an absence of professional normative values of in the field. If there is an absence of normative values of professionalism in the field from multiple sources one could expect that institutional isomorphism would be lessened. However, if a strong presence of normative values from this source combined with other sources discussed in this section including a strong presence in professional associations and on-the-job socialization, one can expect that institutional isomorphism would be present in the organizational field.

Table 3: Sources for Normative Variable Measurement 2

Online Resource:	Document Used:	Purpose/Variable Construct
World Wide Learn <a href="http://www.worldwidelearn.com">www.worldwidelearn.com</a>	List of distance learning journals/reports	Number of distance learning journals and reports, year journal was established, scope of journal
Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education <a href="http://www.aace.org">www.aace.org</a>	List of Electronic/Online Journals and Conference Proceedings and Papers	Number of distance learning journals and reports, year journal was established, scope of journal
Florida SUS (State University System) Library System <a href="http://www.fau.edu/library/ecollect/ejournals">www.fau.edu/library/ecollect/ejournals</a>	Electronic Journals List	Number of distance learning journals and reports, year journal was established, scope of journal

Normative Values Interview Variable Measurements – Genuine Organizational Participation and On-The-Job Socialization:

Questions were asked in order to answer the second research question, “*Do normative values of professionals lead to institutional isomorphism*” with respect to organizational participation in professional associations and on-the-job socialization. Specifically, normative values communicated through on-the-job socialization and networking to emotive, genuine organizational participation in professional associations were investigated via the interviews. The questions used to elicit evidence of these aspects are in Appendix B of this study. A high number of favorable responses with regard to genuine participation in professional associations, and with that, evidence of on-the-job socialization would be indicative of the presence of normative values of professionalism in the field. A low number of favorable responses with regard to participation in professional associations and on-the-job socialization would be indicative of an absence of normative values of professionalism in the field. Evidence of normative values of professionalism with regard to participation in professional associations and on-the-job socialization combined with evidence of the other indicators of this force discussed earlier in the normative section, memberships in professional associations and the number of professional academic journals theoretically would lead to institutional isomorphism in the field.

### Mimetic Reinforcement:

Mimetic reinforcement, like coercive pressures and normative values, also influences organizational isomorphism. Mimetic pressures are best explained as the tendency for organizations to model themselves after or to mimic other organizations. Mimetic reinforcement can be seen in aspects such as standardized program formats, one-best-approach formats, common symbols or phrases, and common organizational structures in the process of implementation of distance learning policy in the higher education organizational field that might result in isomorphic adoption and convergence on policy. In order to investigate the third research question regarding mimetics in this study interviews are used.

*Research Question 3: Does mimetic reinforcement lead to institutional isomorphism?*

The interview method is also used to refine findings for research question number two as mentioned in the normative section of this study. Here, the actual participation, or the emotive context of participation, in professional associations and on-the-job socialization is explored. As noted earlier, organizational membership with a professional association does not necessarily translate into organizational participation in these networks. Therefore, these interviews are used to explore genuine organizational participation and on-the-job socialization.

Mimetic Reinforcement Interview Variable Measurements - Standardized Program Formats, One-best-Approach Formats, Common Symbol and Phrases, and Common Organizational Structures:

Mimetic reinforcement such as standardized program formats, one-best-approach formats, common symbol or phrases, and common organizational structures can be seen in the process of implementation of distance learning policy in the higher education organizational field that might result in isomorphic adoption and convergence on policy. These concepts were explored through three mimetic interviews. The interview questions used to answer research question three, “*Does mimetic reinforcement lead to institutional isomorphism,*” are contained in Appendix A of this study. A high number of favorable responses with respect to the influence of mimetic reinforcement would be evidence that this reinforcement leads to institutional isomorphism. A low number of favorable responses in this area would be evidence of the absence of mimetic reinforcement in the field.

In summary, data accumulated through these various methods – document and institutional record analysis and interviews is used to test the research questions of this study. The findings of the methods described in this section are presented in the next chapter.

Dependent Variable - Institutional Isomorphism:

In this section the dependent variable, institutional isomorphism, as measured through legitimization in media sources and distance learning full time equivalencies (FTEs), is considered. It is hypothesized that the dependent variable, institutional

isomorphism, will increase among the schools in this study from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2. It is hypothesized that isomorphism occurs as a result of the appearance of independent variables in the organizational field. These independent variables which were discussed in detail in the previous section are grouped into three areas of influence stemming from different sources of force, coercive, normative, and mimetic. This study considers how each source influences the level of institutional isomorphism, or the dependent variable, in the organizational field. It is theorized that the greater the presence of these forces the more institutional isomorphism will be seen among the schools in this study. In order to measure the level of institutional isomorphism present and compare the amount of isomorphism between the two time periods in this study an observation of the following concepts in each time period is taken.

Theoretically, institutional isomorphism is said to have occurred when organizations in a field have homogenized organizational practices and behaviors. Increased distance learning FTEs between Time Period 1 and Time Period 2 among the schools in this study is considered evidence of convergence on this teaching pedagogy. The fact that schools increased their use of distance learning shows that the practice itself has been accepted and legitimized in the organizational field. Therefore, it can be said the organizational field has homogenized around the idea that distance learning is an acceptable method for delivery of education – this is counted as a manifestation of isomorphism, or the dependent variable. FTEs for distance learning courses was obtained for the years of each time period in this study and an average of the 5 years in each time period was compared among the institutions in this study.

The schools considered are the schools represented by the interviewees randomly selected to participate in this study. Averages for each institution are compared from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2.

The dependent variable also is measured by evidence of representation in mainstream media sources. These sources constitute a formal external legitimacy that is separate from the higher education organizational field which is the subject of this study. Increased positive and legitimizing language and positive tone as seen in two news magazines, *U.S. News and World Report* and *Newsweek*, and five national newspapers; *the Chicago Tribune*, *the Washington Post*, *the Sun Sentinel*, and *the Miami Herald*, and *the New York Times* from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 is considered evidence of isomorphism. The fact that major news sources acknowledge distance learning in positive light, or as progressive, practical, and good, shows that the practice has been accepted and legitimized in the organizational field. This researcher acknowledges that determining tone of articles can be a subjective process but has taken every effort to ensure objectivity in the determination by counting positive and negative references or pros and cons where applicable.

#### Variable Measurement 1 - Distance Learning Full Time Equivalencies (FTEs):

Regulatory agencies are implicitly connected to the budget appropriations process. Odden and Clune's (1998) analysis of educational fiscal policy highlights the connection between financial support and policy implementation by stating that the finances of a school are a "major force in the evolution of programmatic objectives"

therefore making it likely that the programming objectives reflect funding opportunities (160).

For example, in the State of Florida, the 1997 Legislature created the Technology Review Workgroup (TRW) in s. 216.0446, F.S. to provide analysis and recommendations regarding agency funding requests for information technology products. The TRW provides support to the House and Senate appropriations committees in analysis of funding requests for information technology (mostly infrastructure). Their review includes an analysis of the cost to implement and operate the technology; an evaluation of the alignment of the technology to the agency business functions; and an assessment of the agency's ability to successfully plan and implement the technology. In addition, the TRW sets forth the process for project review which includes a consistent set of guidelines for submission of legislative budget requests. The TRW also acts as an oversight agency of strategic information technology requests in the General Appropriations Act and reports to the Legislative Budget Commission its findings and recommendations. Since the TRW has authority and oversight over the funding process it is expected that agencies will conform to standards set forth by this agency to achieve their funding requests. The Florida Department of Education receives its funding through this process for all IT projects which in turn gives this agency the ability to mandate programming, policy, and coordination specifics from individual organizations that are applying for project funding.

While this is one way at the state level that higher education institutions in Florida can get distance learning funds, currently the federal government remains the

largest source of funds for higher education institutions (Office of Educational Technology, 2005). Through a myriad of grants, acts, programs, and agencies, funds for distance learning policies are dispersed to educational institutions (Office of Educational Technology, 2005). Most of the funding awarded to higher education organizations through these initiatives is based on levels of full time equivalencies or FTEs which is the most standardized measurement for counting students (i.e. enrollment).

The Florida Distance Learning Consortium, a professional association with regulatory power granted by the State Legislature, has gathered data on FTEs for distance learning since 1995 from all community colleges in the State and from all the public universities since 2000. This data is important as it is indicative of growth of distance learning over the years and also as indicative of institutional isomorphism in the higher education field. The budget cycle as it relates to institutional funding operates as coercive pressure as organizations will seek to maximize their growth through funding. More students, traditional or distance learners are more FTEs which equals more funding for the institution. An increased number of distance learning FTEs in the majority of higher education institutions in this study would be evidence of isomorphism in the organizational field. A decreased or static number of FTEs across the organizational field indicates an absence of isomorphism in the field. This data also are used to triangulate information in other areas such as with information obtained through the interviews so as to explore the growth of distance learning at specific times of events as necessary.

Table 4: Sources for Dependent Variable Measurement 1 - FTEs

Online Resource:	Document Used:	Purpose/Variable Construct
Florida Distance Learning Consortium <a href="http://www.fldc.org">www.fldc.org</a>	FTE data (1995-2009)	Distance Learning FTEs and courses by institution

Note: Private school data was obtained directly from the institution.

Variable Measurement 2 - Media Sources:

Archives from the seven periodicals mentioned above (*U.S. News and World Report and Newsweek*, and five national newspapers; *the Chicago Tribune, the Washington Post, the Sun Sentinel, and the Miami Herald, and the New York Times*) for the years represented from Time Period 1 (1995-2000) and Time Period 2 (2004-2009) of this study were searched using the keywords; “distance learning” and “distance education.” An increase in the number of articles with positive, legitimizing language from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 is evidence of isomorphism. Articles in these sources that substantiate distance learning and speak of growth, development, and pros of distance learning are evidence that distance learning has homogenized as an accepted practice in the educational organizational field. Language that devalues distance learning and focuses on fears and concerns associated with the practice would de-legitimize distance learning and would be evidence of lack of isomorphism in the

organizational field. A decrease of de-valuing language from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 is evidence of increased isomorphism.

#### 4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter describes and summarizes the findings of this study. All data collected was grouped according to the two time periods of 1995-2000 (Time Period 1) and 2004-2009 (Time Period 2). Findings include comparisons between each of these time periods where applicable and relevant.

##### Coercive Pressures:

Two sources of data in this area, The Higher Education Act (1998 amendment and 2008 amendment) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation manuals and commission documents (regulatory agency) were reviewed to answer the first research question in this study.

*Research Question 1: Do coercive pressures lead to institutional isomorphism?*

##### Coercive Pressure Variable Measurement 1 – The Higher Education Act:

For the first coercive variable measurement, the 1998 Higher Education Act (HEA) (H.R. 6-5 20 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.- October 1, 1998) and the 2008 Reauthorization of the HEA (122 STAT. 3362 PUBLIC LAW 110–315—AUG. 14, 2008) are compared for evidence of government mandates for distance learning, definitions of distance learning, or prescriptive policy language to guide distance

learning practices and development; and for evidence of an increase of government mandates and definitions for distance learning between the two periods in this study.

The original Higher Education Act (HEA) was passed in 1965.

History of the Higher Education Act:

1965 →	1998 →	2008
Higher Education Act Passed	Amendment to HEA	Reauthorization of 1965 HEA

As noted, both the 1998 and 2008 amended versions of the 1965 Act were analyzed in detail for references to distance learning. While both versions of the Act make occasional reference to technology infrastructure this analysis focuses specifically on distance learning. Therefore, the documents were reviewed and searched for references to distance learning, distance education, and e-learning. The table below outlines the sections from both the 1998 and 2008 versions that reference distance learning. For each reference it is indicated whether it appears in the 1998 or the 2008 version, or both. The 1998 HEA version represents Time Period 1 in this study and the 2008 HEA version represents Time Period 2 in this study.

Table 5: 1998 and 2008 Higher Education Act – References to Distance Learning

<b>Section of Legislation/Title/Description of Reference</b>	<b>Time Period 1 1998 HEA</b>	<b>Time Period 2 2008 HEA</b>	<b>Mandates (M), Prescriptive Policy Language (PL), or Distance Learning Definitions (D)</b>
Title II, Part B Subpart 4 Sec. 255: Adjunct Teacher Corps (Fund Authorization for Distance Learning Activities)		√	M
Title III, Part E Sec. 303: Strengthening Institutions (Authorized Activity)	√		M
Title III, Sec. 311D: Institutional Aid (Change of term referencing distance learning)		√	D
Title IV, Subpart 8 Sec. 420G (Authorized Activity)	√		M
Title IV, Sec. 486 (Definition of Distance Learning)	√		D
Title IV, Sec. 488 (Establishing Distance Education Demonstration Program)	√		M
Title V Part A: Developing Institutions – Hispanic Serving Institutions (Authorized Activity)	√		M
Title V, Sec. 503: Developing Institutions - Hispanic Serving Institutions (Change of term referencing distance learning)		√	D
Title VII, Part B, Sec. 637: Promoting Post Baccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans (Distance learning regulation/requirement for use of grant funds)		√	PL, M
Title VII Part D: Demonstration Projects to Ensure Students with Disabilities Receive a Quality Higher Education (Authorized Activity)	√	√	M

Section of Legislation/Title/Description of Reference	Time Period 1 1998 HEA	Time Period 2 2008 HEA	Mandates (M), Prescriptive Policy Language (PL), or Distance Learning Definitions (D)
Title VII, Part D, Subpart 1, Sec. 762: Demonstration Project to Support Post Secondary Faculty, Staff, and Administrators in Educating Students with Disabilities (Distance Learning regulation/requirement for use of grant funds)		√	PL, M
Title VIII, Part C, Sec. 803: Business Workforce Partnerships for Job Skill Training in Higher Growth Occupations or Industries (Authorized Activity)		√	M
Title VIII, Part D, Sec. 804: Capacity for Nursing Students and Faculty (Authorized Activity)		√	M
Title VIII, Part P, Sec. 851f: Jobs to Careers - Grants to Create Bridges from Jobs to Careers (Authorized Activity)		√	M
Title VIII, Part S, Sec. 872c: Training for Realtime Writers ((Distance Learning regulation/requirement for use of grant funds)		√	PL, M
Title IX, Part C, Sec. 911: Other Programs – International Students (Definition of Distance Learning – specific to international student enrollment and grants)		√	D, M
Title IX, Part G, Sect. 971: Minority Serving Institution Digital and Wireless Technology Opportunity Program (Authorized Activity)		√	M
Title XI, Sec. 1112: Study of Correctional Post Secondary Education (Distance Learning Study Mandate/Authorization)		√	PL, M

As seen in the table above, there are 23 total references to distance learning in the 1998 and 2008 versions of the HEA combined. There are significantly more references to distance learning in the 2008 version as compared to the 1998 version (17 as opposed to 6). This indicates an overall increase in references from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2. Of the three types of references, mandates, prescriptive policy language, and definitions, mandates were the most common type totaling 15 references as compared to prescriptive policy language and definitions which each had 4 references combined between the two time periods. Mandate references doubled from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 increasing from 5 to 10 references. Prescriptive policy language increased from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 from 0 to 4 references and definition references increased from 1 to 3. These results are summarized in the table below.

Table 6: Summary HEA References by Time Period

Reference Type	Time Period 1	Time Period 2	Total – Combined Time Periods
Mandates	5	10	15
Prescriptive Policy Language	0	4	4
Definitions	1	3	4
Total References	6	17	23

An example of a mandate reference is language that substantiates distance learning as an authorized activity. This is considered mandating language because it authorizes distance learning education for funding. Some of the areas that distance learning was established as an authorized activity for federal funding include post baccalaureate Hispanic education programs, nursing student education programs to enhance capacity, and job to career programs. These mandate references are evidence of strong coercive force in the field in this area as universities and colleges are dependent on federal, state, and local funding based on FTEs. If distance learning activities are considered an “authorized use” then universities and colleges are incentivized through funding to offer distance learning courses. Since there was an increase in the number of mandate references from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 it can be said that there is an increased level of coercive force based on the evidence collected in this area from Period 1 to Period 2.

Examples of prescriptive policy references include language that prescribes distance learning as a recommended activity or approach, and therefore funded, for a particular program. Some examples of programs for which distance learning is prescribed include minority serving digital and wireless technology opportunity programs and training programs for Realtime writers. It is significant that there are zero (0) prescriptive policy references in Time Period 1 while there are four (4) in Time Period 2. This shows a much greater acceptance, one might even say advocacy, for distance learning. Prescriptive policy language is significant for colleges and universities because if a practice becomes accepted by government agencies that have oversight of their operations, institutions can be assured funding for these activities.

This will inevitably influence the organizational decisions made by these institutions with regard to the future and development of distance learning. It seems logical to assume that if a college or university perceives acceptance of a practice that it will be more likely to zestfully pursue that activity. Increased prescriptive policy language indicates a greater level of perceived acceptance resulting in a greater propensity to perpetuate distance learning activities. In other words, since there was an increase in the number of prescriptive policy language references from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 it can be said that there is an increased level of coercive pressure based on the evidence collected on this item from Period 1 to Period 2.

Examples of definition references include language that defines distance learning and also updates distance learning terms from the 1998 version of the Act to the 2008 version. The actual definition of distance learning did not change from the 1998 to the 2008 version and mirrors that of the SACS definition which is discussed in a later section. Normative and mimetic variable evidence like the SACS definition of distance learning and interview testimonies, to be discussed in forthcoming sections, also indicates that the professional definition has only changed slightly over the years but rather the connotative meaning associated with distance learning has evolved from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2. While there was an increase in the number of definition references (1-3) from Time Period to Time Period 2, this is due to the inclusion of the distance learning definition in new programs authorized in the 2008 HEA and therefore is not necessarily a significant indicator of increase coercive force between the two periods.

When the three types of HEA references; mandates, prescriptive policy, and definitions, are combined, there is a significant increase of references to distance learning in this important Act that governs many of the operations, particularly the funding, of universities and colleges. This evidence indicates a growing presence of coercive pressure based on the evidence collected in the field over the time periods considered in this study. This variable measurement is considered in conjunction with the other coercive measurements in the summary of this section.

Coercive Pressure Variable Measurement 2 – SACS Accreditation Manuals and Commission Documents:

First, for this variable measurement, SACS, or the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' policy guidelines contained in the Principles of Accreditation Manual were reviewed. During the first time period in this study (1995-2000), no editions of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement are available. This publication was first published in 2001; therefore the 2002-2006 version (called the 2001 First Edition and referred to as such in this study) and the 2008 edition were reviewed and compared for their guidance of distance learning, if any.

History of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Accreditation Manual Publications:

During the second period in this study (2004 – 2009) four editions of accreditation guidelines were published. They are listed below:

1. The 2010 Edition of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement (adopted December 2009 and effective January 1, 2010)
2. The 2008 Edition of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement (adopted December 2007 and effective January 1, 2008)
3. The 2007 Interim Edition of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement (adopted December 2006 and effective January 1, 2007)
4. The 2002-2006 Edition of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement (adopted December 2001 and effective January 1, 2004)

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools is the regional body for the accreditation of higher education institutions in the Southern states, including Florida, that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. SACS is a private, nonprofit, voluntary organization founded in 1895 in Atlanta, Georgia. According to SACS, "Accreditation by the Commission on Colleges signifies that an institution has a purpose appropriate to higher education and

has resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that purpose. Accreditation indicates that an institution maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees it offers, and that it is successful in achieving its stated objectives” (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2001). In addition, the statement of an institution’s accreditation status with the Commission on Colleges is an affirmation that the institution continues to commit to the Commission’s principles and philosophy of accreditation. The Commission on Colleges accredits degree-granting higher education institutions and entities based on meeting requirements outlined in the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement.

By first reviewing the SACS characteristics of accreditation printed in both editions of Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement considered in this study, the ways in which coercive forces are exhibited through this publication and the agency in general are illustrated. The accreditation characteristics below are from the SACS 2001 Edition of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement to which there were no changes in the 2008 edition.

The Commission on Colleges adheres to the following fundamental characteristics of accreditation:

- Participation in the accreditation process is voluntary and is an earned and renewable status.
- Member institutions develop, amend, and approve accreditation requirements.

- The process of accreditation is representative, responsive, and appropriate to the types of institutions accredited.
- Accreditation is self-regulation.
- Accreditation requires institutional commitment and engagement.
- Accreditation is based upon a peer review process.
- Accreditation requires an institutional commitment to student learning and achievement.
- Accreditation acknowledges an institution's prerogative to articulate its mission within the recognized context of higher education and its responsibility to show that it is accomplishing its mission.
- Accreditation expects an institution to develop a balanced governing structure designed to promote institutional autonomy and flexibility of operation.
- Accreditation expects an institution to ensure that its programs are complemented by support structures and resources that allow for the total growth and development of its students.

(Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2001 & 2008)

In these characteristics several aspects such as program structure, policy development and evaluation, resources, and mission and learning outcome alignment are addressed all of which would apply to accrediting distance learning courses and

programs. Since these characteristics remain the same in both versions of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement, it can be said that these general accrediting principles have had an equalizing influence over the implementation of distance learning over the years in this study.

In 2007, SACS published the policy statement: “Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges” which speaks specifically to accreditation requirements for distance learning, the 2008 edition of the Principles of Accreditation incorporates the mandate to follow this policy statement. Therefore, Time Period 2, represented by the 2008 edition, shows slightly greater evidence of coercive force with the inclusion of this policy.

The next two sections of the accreditation manual lay out the specific policies those institutions must adhere to. While all standards of the accreditation manual from Sections 2 (Core Requirements) and 3 (Comprehensive Standards) apply to distance learning generally, these sections were reviewed for specific references to distance learning, distance education, or e-learning. In the Comprehensive Standards Section (3) of both versions of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement, Section 3.4 specifically includes distance learning programs and coursework as programs subject to accreditation standards. In addition, interview respondents indicated that SACS has referenced Sections 3.4.1 (learning outcomes), 3.4.2 (alignment of mission and programs), 3.4.3 (alignment of mission and policy), 3.4.9 (academic support services), 3.4.11 (student data), and 3.4.14 (technology use) as specific areas their institutions have been asked to address when applying for substantive changes for distance learning. Specifically, the direction given by SACS

is that all aspects considered for traditional learning format accreditation must be addressed in accreditation documents for distance learning format accreditation.

In Section 3.7 of the Comprehensive Standards Section (3) of the 2001 version of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement, titled “Faculty” there is subtitle, “Credential Guidelines” which contains no specific references to distance learning requirements for faculty. In the 2008 edition, these guidelines are completely removed from the section and there is still no specific reference to requirements for faculty certification or credentials with regard to distance learning. This communicates a lack of evidence that would support the presence of coercive pressure in the form of training certification by an external body or agency.

In addition to the requirements of Sections 2 and 3 of this manual, SACS also requires that all member institutions comply with federal requirements of the 1998 and later the 2008 amendments to the 1965 Higher Education Act (HEA). Coercive Variable Measurement 1 reviewed the HEA for evidence of coercive pressure. The U.S. Secretary of Education recognizes accreditation by the Commission on Colleges in establishing the eligibility of higher education institutions to participate in programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Amendment for funding. Through its compliance with these federal regulations, the Commission assures the public that it is a reliable authority on the quality of education provided by its member institutions. The HEA includes mandates that the Commission review an institution in accordance with criteria outlined in the regulations of the Amendments as developed by the U.S. Department of Education. As part of the review process, institutions are required to document compliance with these criteria. Here there is a clear connection between the

pressures created by these agencies, in that one agency (DOE) has authority over schools through control of financial appropriations and the second agency (SACS) through its authorization by the first agency (DOE) is able to enforce policy and program development.

The 2008 Edition of the Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement, adds a fifth area of compliance (original four are: Principles of Integrity, Principles of Accreditation Part B, Principles of Accreditation Part C, and Federal Requirements) which is adherence to the policies, good practices, position statements, and guidelines published by SACS. While various commission documents (to be discussed in further detail later in this section) were available at the publication of the 2001 Edition, it is not until the 2008 Edition that compliance with these commission documents is spelled out in the manual. This includes the policy mandate for the accreditation of distance learning programs.

Finally, the 2008 Edition contains new sections, 3.12 and 3.12.1 not contained in the 2001 Edition that articulates mandatory compliance with the SACS “Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions” policy which speaks specifically of the requirements for distance learning accreditation. This policy states that when distance learning is 24 percent or less of the degree this is not a substantive change that must meet accreditation requirements; where distance learning makes up 25-49 percent of the degree this change requires “prior notification” to SACS before implementation; and where distance learning makes up 50 percent or more of the degree this change requires 6 month SACS “prior approval” before implementation. This is a significant

change in mandates for distance learning between the time periods in this study and clearly indicates greater evidence of coercive pressure in Time Period 2 in the area.

Overall with regard to the quantity of distance learning policy direction in Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, evidence shows that Time Period 2 has significantly more policy direction including a specific mandate for distance learning accreditation. This indicates that coercive pressure through this mechanism was of a greater influence in the second time period.

#### SACS - Policies, Guidelines, Good Practices, and Position Statements:

In addition to the Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement, the accreditation standards manual of the Commission on Colleges, the Commission has four categories of documents: policies, guidelines, good practices, and position statements. The presence and quantity of these four types of documents was compared between the two time periods in this study. In addition, the documents were reviewed and compared for any definitions of distance learning. Other content was reviewed but not considered in this analysis as all the language speaks to distance learning policy and development so the quantity rather than the content between the two time periods is a better indicator of a greater presence of pressure.

Commission policies are a required course of action to be followed by the Commission on Colleges or its member or candidate institutions. Commission policies may also include procedures, which are likewise a required course of action to be followed by the Commission on Colleges or its member or candidate institutions. The Principles of Accreditation requires that an institution comply with the policies and

procedures of the Commission. Policies are approved by vote of the Commission on Colleges. At its discretion, the Commission may choose to forward a policy to the College Delegate Assembly for approval. During the first time period, two policy statements were written that speak to distance learning and during the second time period, three policy statements were written on the topic.

Commission guidelines are advisory statements designed to assist institutions in fulfilling accreditation requirements. These guidelines describe recommended educational practices for documenting requirements of the Principles of Accreditation and are approved by the Executive Council. The guidelines are examples of commonly accepted practices that constitute compliance with the standard. Two commission guidelines specific to distance learning are available. These sets of guidelines are non-dated publications so they are significant for their content and existence but no time comparisons are made.

Commission good practices are commonly accepted practices within the higher education community that enhance institutional quality. Good practices may be formulated by outside agencies and organizations and endorsed by the Executive Council or the Commission. During the first time period one paper on distance learning good practices was published in 2000. During the second time period no statements on good practices exist for distance learning programs. Again, this document is noted for its distance learning content but no comparison can be made during time periods except that in Time Period 1 one set exists whereas in Time Period 2 of this study none were published so in essence there was a decrease in evidence of

coercive pressure from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 from a purely statistical standpoint.

Finally, no SACS position statements, or statements that examine an issue facing the Commission's membership that describes appropriate approaches and states the Commission's stance on the issue, were published during either time period of this study that are specific to distance learning education. The table below summarizes these four categories of documents.

Table 7: List of Southern Association of Schools and Colleges Policy, Guidelines and Good Practices

Commission Document Title	Year Published	Time Period 1= 1995-2000 2 = 2004-2009	Commission Document Type
Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs	2000	1	Good Practices
Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges	2007	2	Policy Statement
Distance Education and the Principles of Accreditation: Documenting Compliance	No date	N/A	Guidelines
Guidelines for Communicating Information Electronically	No Date	N/A	Guidelines
Distance and Correspondence Education	1997	1	Policy Statement
Distance and Correspondence Education	2000	1	Policy Statement
Distance and Correspondence Education	2006	2	Policy Statement
Distance and Correspondence Education	2009	2	Policy Statement

As seen in the summary table below there is an equal number of combined SACS Commission documents (3 per time period) in Time Periods 1 and 2 of this study for a total of eight commission documents with two in neither time period reviewed. Policy statement commission documents were the highest represented between the two time periods increasing from two to three between periods and representing five of the eight total documents reviewed. This finding is evidence of coercive pressure for variable measurement 1. Evidence from Coercive Variable Measurement 1 indicates an increase in HEA prescriptive policy language and there was an increase in SACS policy statement commission documents with regard to distance learning. Evidence from these two measures indicate that these two outside agencies, DOE and SACS, have increased influence through coercive pressure, on colleges and universities through these binding policy documents over the two time periods represented in this study. In addition increased policy direction from regulatory agencies such as the Department of Education and SACS substantiates and legitimizes the practice and development of distance learning in colleges and universities. This is so in that through the policies of these agencies there is an acknowledgement of the presence of distance learning and acceptance as an instructional delivery format. The concept of legitimacy is further explored in the interview section.

Table 8: Summary Data SACS Commission Documents

	Time Period 1	Time Period 2
Combined Commission Documents	3	3
Total: Combined Time Period 1 and 2		6

SACS Distance Learning Definitions:

In the 1997 and 2000 versions (Time Period 1) of the SACS “Distance and Correspondence Education” policy statement, the definition of distance learning is as follows: “Distance education is defined, for the purposes of accreditation review, as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ correspondence study, or audio, video, or computer technologies” (SACS, 2000). This definition is accompanied by the following policy statement: “Institutions must ensure that their distance education courses and programs comply with the Principles of Accreditation. The referencing of the particular requirements listed in this policy does not imply that they are the only requirements of the Principles that apply to distance education. This policy applies to degree and certificate programs and their courses” (SACS, 2000). In the 2006 (Time Period 2) version of this same policy statement, “Distance and Correspondence Education” the distance learning definition remains the same. But from 2009 to present, (Time Period 2) the definition of distance learning is as follows: “For the

purposes of the Commission’s accreditation review, distance education is a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVD’s, and CD ROMs if used as part of the distance learning course or program” (SACS, 2009). This definition is accompanied by a definition of “correspondence education” which states: “Correspondence education is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced” (SACS, 2009). The major difference between the two definitions is the inclusion of correspondence education in contrast to distance learning. This is aimed at formalizing the definitions set forth in the 2007 “Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges” policy statement. The number of hours a program is online sets the mandate for reporting program changes to SACS for accreditation review. The changes in these definitions between the two time periods are significant as they solidify the mandates first established in 2007 making evidence of coercive pressure from this source greater in Time Period 2 as it includes a link to a mandated policy statement.

In summary, to answer the first research question “*Do coercive pressures lead to institutional isomorphism,*” the evidence from these two sources, The Higher Education Act and SACs is considered in its entirety. An increase in government mandates and definitions and an increase in distance learning specific accreditation guidance over the two periods compared 1995-2000 and 2004-2009 would indicate evidence of strong coercive pressures operating in the organizational field. A decrease or static level of any of these factors would be evidence of a lack of coercive pressure from that particular force and also would diminish the overall amount of institutional isomorphism experienced by these Florida schools.

As seen in this analysis evidence of coercive pressure for Coercive Variable Measurement 1 on HEA references increased and evidence of coercive pressure for Coercive Variable Measurement 2 increased for SACS accreditation manual guidance and remained the same for commission documents. For both of the indicators there is an increase in evidence of coercive pressure. Overall, this increase represents accelerated isomorphic institutionalization as a result of the coercive pressures investigated in this study.

#### Normative Values of Professionalism:

Examples of normative pressures seen in the higher educational field that affect distance learning policy are professional networks or boards, on-the-job socialization, training, education, and certification processes accredited by professional bodies for personnel. This section looks at data related to membership in

professional networks and the number of distance learning professional and academic journals in order to answer Research Question 2.

Research Question #2: *Do normative values of professionals lead to institutional isomorphism?*

Other aspects of the normative value variable, as noted in the methods section of this paper, such as emotive participation in professional networks, on-the-job socialization, training, education, and certification processes, were addressed through the interview process and are discussed in detail in the interview section.

#### Normative Value Variable Measurement 1 - Professional Associations:

In order to measure this construct each organization was evaluated for its genuine participation in two professional networks, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Florida Distance Learning Consortium (FDLC) as well as counted for its membership in major professional associations in the chart below. Information on professional association membership was obtained through the interview process. Respondents were asked which organizations they belonged to that influenced the development of distance learning at their respective institutions. The membership information was verified by checking membership lists of the named professional associations where available.

Table 9: Professional Associations by Institution

Time Period	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C	Institution D	Institution E	Institution F
N/A	SACS	SACS	SACS	SACS	SACS	SACS
N/A	SREB	SREB	SREB	SREB	SREB	
1	FDLC	FDLC	FDLC	FDLC	FDLC	FDLC
2	League of Innovations	Florida Orange Grove		League of Innovations	Florida Orange Grove	
2	WCT			WCT	IMS	
2	QM		QM	QM		
Total	6	4	4	6	5	2

Key:

SACS = Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

FDLC = Florida Distance Learning Consortium

QM = Quality Matters

SREB = Southern Regional Education Board

IMS = IMS Global Learning Consortium

WCT = WCET (WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies)

As seen in the table above, all colleges and universities considered in this study are members of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and have been members of this organization since before Time Period 1 (1995-2000) of this study. SACS is the accrediting body for all degree granting colleges and universities in the State of Florida and schools were accredited before distance learning was established. Not only does this membership work as a networking association for higher education

leaders in distance learning, but this association is also an accrediting agency. Being accredited by SACS carries a certain sense of legitimacy for the institution. This sense of legitimacy achieved through SACS accreditation also was communicated in the interviews conducted for this study and will be discussed in the interview section in greater detail.

The Florida Distance Learning Consortium was formed in July 2003 by combining the resources of two separate but related organizations: The Florida Community College Distance Learning Consortium which was established in 1996 and the Florida Virtual Campus which was established in 1998. In 2003 all Florida Community Colleges were members of the FDLC and public university and independent (including private) colleges and universities of Florida (ICUF Institutions) joined the Consortium the following year (2004). Since all institutions in this study were members of one of the two antecessors to FDLC, all memberships would have started during Time Period 1 of this study. The normative professional values associated with FDLC communicated through the interview process will be discussed in the interview section of these findings.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works with 16 member states to improve public pre-K-12 and higher education. Founded by the region's governors and legislators in 1948, SREB was America's first interstate compact for education. Five out of the six institutions in this study are members of the SREB and all five schools have been members since before Time Period 1 in this study.

Other professional associations mentioned include Quality Matters, IMS Global Learning Consortium, and WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCT). All of these associations for all schools were joined during Time Period 2 of this study. Quality Matters offers a quality standards rubric for distance learning that these respective member institutions have adopted as their internal quality standards. Membership in QM allows institutions to submit individual courses for external certification and review by QM standards. IMS Global and WCT are more specialized professional associations; one deals with international issues with regard to distance learning and the other deals with the adoption of effective practices and policies in technology-enhanced teaching and learning in higher education, respectively.

Overall, there is not dramatic change related to membership in professional associations or networks between the two time periods in this study. All institutions statically belonged to SACS and FDLC throughout the time period studied and all but one belonged to SREB throughout the study. The static membership in professional associations does not necessarily indicate a lesser influence of normative values of professionalism as in this case it appears there are a few powerful leading associations in the field that dominate the influence of values on distance learning.

#### Normative Value Variable Measurement 2 - Professional and Academic Journals:

One tangible, measurable manifestation of professional networks and boards are the professional and academic journals about distance learning topics. A comparison of the number of distance learning journals was conducted between the time period of 1995-2000 and from 2004-2009. Using the Florida State University

System (SUS) Library Electronic Journal database and the World Wide Web on the sites indicated in the table below, a search for journals on the topic of distance learning was performed to obtain data on the number of journals in these 2 time periods. The SUS Library has more than 3300 electronic journals available in the area of education. For the online search the following keywords were used: “distance learning, distance education, distance learning journals, distance education journals, e-learning, e-learning journals” as well as the websites listed in the methods section of this study (see Table 3). For the SUS electronic journal search the following keywords were used: “distance learning, distance education, technology, e-learning” and produced 67 hits.

The online search produced 19 relevant results of which 14 were first published during Time Period 1 (1995-2000) and 3 were first published in Time Period 2 (2004-2009). Two of the 19 journals were not started in either of the time periods analyzed in this study (years published include 1987, 2002). The Florida Library Statewide University System (SUS) search produced 5 relevant results, none of which were first published in either of the time periods analyzed in this study (years published include 1980, 1984, 1990, 1992, 2001). Combined, the two searches produced a total of 14 relevant journal results for Time period 1, 3 journal results for Time period 2, and 7 journal results that were not specific to either time period considered in this study for a grand total of 24 journals. The table below provides a timeline of the emergence of these journals and a brief description of each journal’s scope.

Table 10: List of Journals, Dates Published, and Scope

<b>Name of Journal/Publication</b>	<b>First Year Published</b>	<b>Scope of Work</b>	<b>Time Period 1 or 2 (1,2, N/A)</b>	<b>Still in Circulation? √ = Yes</b>
<b>Online Search</b>				
<b>1. International Journal on E-Learning (IJEL) - Corporate, Government, Healthcare, &amp; Higher Education</b> (formerly International Journal of Educational Telecommunications and the WebNet Journal)	2002	Technology/E-learning current topics/ Administrative	N/A	√
<b>2. Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching (JCMST)</b>	1995	Information Technology/ Pedagogy	1	√
<b>3. The Journal of Interactive Learning Research</b>	1997	Theory of interactive learning and teaching and current research	1	√
<b>4. Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia (JEMH)</b>	1996	Theory of interactive learning and teaching and current research	1	√
<b>5. AACE Journal (AACEJ) – International Forum on Information Technology in Education</b>	1999	Information exchange for information technology practitioners	1	√

<b>Name of Journal/Publication</b>	<b>First Year Published</b>	<b>Scope of Work</b>	<b>Time Period 1 or 2 (1,2, N/A)</b>	<b>Still in Circulation?   √ = Yes</b>
<b>6. Contemporary Issues in Technology &amp; Teacher Education (CITE)</b>	2000	Interactive and innovative media use	1	√
<b>7. American Journal of Distance Education (AJDE)</b>	1987	Theory of interactive learning and teaching and current research	N/A	√
<b>8. Journal of Technology and Teacher Education (JTATE)</b>	1997	Information exchange for information technology practitioners	1	√
<b>9. The Internet and Higher Education</b>	1998	Information Technology/ Pedagogy	1	√
<b>10. Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN)</b>	1997	Information Technology/ Pedagogy	1	√
<b>11. Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia (JEMH)</b>	1996	Interactive and innovative media use	1	√
<b>12. Journal of Interactive Media in Education (JIME)</b>	1996	Interactive and innovative media use	1	√
<b>13. The Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning at Virginia Tech</b>	2005	Technology/E-learning current topics/ Administrative	2	√

<b>Name of Journal/Publication</b>	<b>First Year Published</b>	<b>Scope of Work</b>	<b>Time Period 1 or 2 (1,2, N/A)</b>	<b>Still in Circulation? √ = Yes</b>
<b>14. Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration</b>	1998	Technology/E-learning current topics /Administrative	1	√
<b>15. International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning</b>	2005	Theory of interactive learning and teaching and current research	2	√
<b>16. Innovate</b>	2004	Technology/E-learning current topics/ Administrative Information exchange for information technology practitioners	2	Discont. 2009
<b>17. The Online Chronicle of Distance Education &amp; Communication</b>	1998	Technology/E-learning current topics/ Administrative Information exchange for information technology practitioners	1	Discont. 1998
<b>18. The Technology Source</b>	1997	Information Technology/ Pedagogy	1	Discont. 2003
<b>19. Journal of Library Services for Distance Education</b>	1999	Theory of interactive learning and teaching and current research/ Information exchange for information technology practitioners	1	Discont. 1999

<b>Name of Journal/Publication</b>	<b>First Year Published</b>	<b>Scope of Work</b>	<b>Time Period 1 or 2 (1,2, N/A)</b>	<b>Still in Circulation?   √ = Yes</b>
<b>SUS SEARCH</b>				
<b>20. Distance Education</b>	1980	Theory of interactive learning and teaching and current research/ Information Technology/ Pedagogy	N/A	√
<b>21. Distance Education Report</b>	2001	Technology/E-learning current topics/ Administrative Information Technology/ Pedagogy	N/A	√
<b>22. Technology &amp; Learning</b>	1990	Information Technology/ Pedagogy	N/A	√
<b>23. Technology Teacher</b>	1984	Information Technology/ Pedagogy	N/A	√
<b>24. Technology, Pedagogy and Education (Previously published as: Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education)</b>	1992	Information Technology/ Pedagogy/ Information exchange for information technology practitioners	N/A	√

As seen from the data in the table above, there are a significantly greater number of journals (14 as compared to 3) first published during Time Period 1 than Time Period 2. While this data does not show evidence of an increase in the number of journals as predicted, it is significant to note that only 4 of the 24 journals were

discontinued and that means that the same number of journals existed for both time periods (after adding the new journals from Time Period 2). One explanation for the decrease in new journals can be that once a certain number of academic and professional journals are established in a particular area they tend to grow in depth and breadth of content rather than in increased numbers. But nonetheless, there is evidence of a decrease in normative values influence in this area.

The scope that is most represented in the journals is that of information technology and pedagogy with 8 journals containing these topics. Appendix D provides a full description of the scope of these 24 journals. Future research might include a more detailed investigation the scope of these journals and categorize them according to coercive, mimetic and normative forces.

#### Normative Value Interview Results - Genuine Organizational Participation and On-The-Job Socialization:

As noted in the Methods Section of this study, to further explore normative values and mimetic reinforcement, six interviews were conducted – three interviews to explore normative values of professionalism and three interviews to explore mimetic reinforcement. The interview method is used to refine findings for research question number two as mentioned earlier. This section outlines the evidence gained from these interviews with regard to normative values of professionalism; the next section addresses the mimetic interviews and results thereof. Specifically, normative values communicated through on-the-job socialization and networking to emotive, genuine organizational participation in professional associations were investigated via the

interviews. As noted earlier, organizational membership with a professional association does not necessarily translate into genuine or emotive organizational participation in these networks so the in-depth interview discussions served as a better method to explore these concepts. All interview questions were asked in a comparative nature; respondents were asked to comment on both of the time periods in this study. All participants interviewed were in the higher education distance learning industry in one capacity or another for the entirety of the time periods in this study. All quotation marks in this section are attributed to anonymous interview participants.

#### On-the-job socialization and Networking:

One of the most commonly noted aspects of socialization and networking was that the dialogue about distance learning had become much more sophisticated. Rather than talking about how to become more functional in using technology to post a syllabus online or create an online discussion board (Time Period 1), the distance learning discussion has moved more to the pedagogy of teaching online and achieving learning outcomes through this new teaching methodology (Time Period 2). Several respondents noted that this was purely due to the fact that people (students, administrators, and teachers) are generally more comfortable with technology than they were 10-15 years ago. So while there might be the same amount of on-the-job socialization between the two time periods in this study, it is clear that the content of this socialization has changed between the two periods.

Peer assistance or mentor program formats are discussed in the mimetic interview section, but it must be noted that these structures or programs play a big role

in the communication, promotion, and development of distance learning at the institutional level. Two respondents indicated that the internal networking about distance learning was always the driver of its development; and one said it was “these folks who kept talking about the greatness of distance learning that made it succeed.” Another respondent attributed the development of distance learning to a “grassroots movement that spread throughout the organization by its early champions.” Finally, one respondent noted that what started as informal, internal socialization about distance learning later developed into a formal, required certification process where faculty can even get paid to share and network with newcomers to distance learning.

Emotive organizational participation:

Several respondents described the early days (Time Period 1) of participation in professional associations as “informal” and a group of “interested” persons. As compared to the early days, respondents described today’s (Time Period 2) professional associations as “formal” and “highly sophisticated.” A common theme among respondents is that since in the early days of distance learning things were chaotic and reactive and focused on an effort to try to bring multiple systems that had been initiated by faculty together, today distance learning was much more “systemized” allowing more time for substantive participation in professional associations where the dialogue had also changed to a more sophisticated discussion that included aspects of pedagogy and achieving learning outcomes. The majority of respondents described their participation in distance learning associations today as “strong” and “very involved.” Respondents also noted that the availability and utility

of professional associations and networks had simply increased during Time Period 2 allowing for more social interaction and communication. So, it can be said that between the two time periods in this study the emotive participation described by interview respondents has increased and become much more substantive in nature.

The most common reasons cited for participation in professional associations were for shared resources and exchanging best practices. It does not seem coincidental that half of the institutions in this study, all of which are members of FDLC, have similar faculty mentor programs for distance learning training and certification. It is likely that the adoption of this best practice was a result of participation in a professional association where the idea was shared. In fact, one respondent mentioned participation in the teaching of best practices at professional association meetings including their institutional e-mentoring program. This example of a commonly shared and utilized best practice would indicate that there is a true sentiment of learning and sharing and a sense of ownership on behalf of participants in these professional associations.

Overall, evidence from these interviews pertaining to on-the-job socialization and emotive participation indicates a change in content and an increase in the extent of participation between the two periods. In summary, evidence of normative values with respect to membership in professional associations from Normative Variable Measurement 1 remained the same over the two time periods, evidence of normative values with respect to the number of professional and academic journals from Normative Variable Measurement 2 decreased from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2, and evidence of normative values stemming from on-the-job socialization and emotive

participation from Normative Variable Measurement 3 increased from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2. Research on normative values had mixed results statistically when combined. But when indicators are analyzed separately in both periods while there was not an increase in evidence of normative values of professionalism there also is not a strong indication of a decrease of them either despite the absence of evidence considered.

Mimetic Reinforcement:

Mimetic reinforcement, like coercive pressures and normative values, also influence organizational isomorphism. Mimetic pressures are best explained as the tendency for organizations to model themselves or to mimic other organizations. Aspects of mimetic reinforcement such as standardized program formats, one-best-approach formats, common symbol or phrases, and common organizational structures can be seen in the process of implementation of distance learning in the higher education organizational field and might result in isomorphic adoption and convergence. These concepts were explored through interviews and used to investigate the third research question regarding mimetics in this study interviews are used.

*Research Question 3: Does mimetic reinforcement lead to institutional isomorphism?*

Again, all interview questions were asked in a comparative nature; respondents were asked to comment on both of the time periods in this study. All participants interviewed were in the higher education distance learning industry in one capacity or

another for the entirety of the time periods in this study. All quotation marks in this section are attributed to anonymous interview participants.

### Mimetic Reinforcement Variable Measurements - Interview Results:

#### Organizational copying and mimicking:

Respondents gave varied responses as to the origins of distance learning at their institutions some said the initiative was faculty-driven, competition driven, elite or administratively driven, while still others claimed it was customer (or student) driven. One institution's representative clearly communicated that they were pioneers in the development of distance learning in the State and that other organizations "copied" their distance learning model. This respondent stated that "other schools were scared and felt threatened by the success of our program (distance learning cluster program format)" and that this caused other institutions to copy this format. Other respondents clearly communicated that their institution was not a pioneer and that their administration preferred the "cutting edge over bleeding edge" approach to distance learning and that they preferred to adopt "off the shelf" program formats. In addition, a few respondents identified specific schools or programs that they copied in their development of distance learning. Another respondent vocalized the following terms to describe which group schools fell into as far as copying and mimicking; "early adopter" or "late adopter" but that it seemed all schools were copying the distance learning approach at some level. In addition, all represented organizations considered themselves part of a shared community in distance learning where a network of resources and content is available to all members. This shared community

enabled organizational copying and mimicking. In summary, there was an equal number of copiers and leaders, but all participated in some form of mimicking through, at the least, resource sharing.

Standardized program formats:

The most common standardized program format that was referenced by all interview respondents is SACS accreditation. All respondents in this study, being SACS accredited, claimed that SACS accreditation was a “must have,” “the only game in town,” and was “where it’s at” for distance learning programs with respect to legitimacy. While SACS does not prescribe a standardized program format per se, the fact that all schools in this study go through the same accreditation process for their programs indicates a level of consistency among program formats, and as communicated by interviewees, a level of legitimacy. As noted in the Coercive Variable Measurement 2 section, all schools were members of SACS throughout both time periods in this study which indicates that there is not evidence of change in the type of standardized program formats other than those initiated by SACS. This at a minimum communicates that any substantial change to program format would be consistent among the SACS accredited schools. Other responses included internal program formats developed holistically within their institutions.

It is interesting to note that several respondents mentioned the financial incentive to be SACS accredited in addition to the legitimacy incentive. As mentioned in the SACS section, SACS requires schools to conform to the federal HEA which authorizes funding for all colleges and universities. So, by adopting the structure for

distance learning (as well as all traditional educational programs) as dictated by SACS, in essence, schools are able to receive funding for this endeavor. Overall, there was consensus among the respondents that standard program formats were more available during Time Period 2 as they had time to be developed or took the time of this study to develop internally at the organizational level. All interviewees were experiencing the process or had experienced the process of accrediting their distance learning programs to SACS standards.

One-best-approach formats or best practices:

Most respondents interviewed agreed that there were definitely best practices or best-approach formats in the higher education field today but that 10-15 years ago this was not the case. Two respondents noted that best practices “just weren’t available 10-15 years ago.” Several respondents noted that this was just the natural progression of the practice in the field. One stated, “10-15 years ago we were putting out fires, today we are sharing best practices and creating resource networks.” Most respondents also agreed that the idea of nationally or even state mandated best practices wouldn’t work as these types of mandates would limit academic freedom of professors and would not serve the needs of students in the most efficient way. Others noted that best practices were evident but usually internal to the specific institution and that these best practices were slow to catch on at a broad level or across institutions because distance learning still remained varied among institution, program, and course delivery.

Half of the respondents cited Quality Matters as the model format for distance learning and the format that their institution sought to emulate. Like SACS, Quality Matters offers an external review that institutions can then use to bring legitimacy to their distance learning programs. By implementing standards of the Quality Matters distance learning outcomes and quality rubric, schools can get a Quality Matters certification for a course. Since Quality Matters is perceived to be a quality best practice model in the State, certification of a course through this review would convey a sense of legitimacy.

Common organizational structures:

There were several common organizational structures that were discussed by interview respondents. It is interesting to note that some institutions considered themselves “pioneers” and innovators with regard to organizational structure while others felt extremely comfortable with the fact that all their structures were borrowed or copied from other organizations, but that all interviewees recognized common organizational structures in the higher education field today (Time Period 2) where they were not evident 10-15 years ago (Time Period 1). This aspect was discussed earlier in the organizational copying and mimicking and organizational modeling sections.

One of the most commonly cited organizational structures was a cohort model structure for both faculty and learners. This group structure either links faculty through the process of learning to teach for the first time online or links students who are taking their first online courses. Another common training structure cited was a

mentor model for faculty training and internal certification processes or professional development. All of the respondents were referring to an internal certification or training process where faculty who have taught online and completed training or certification are assigned to mentor another faculty member through this process.

Other organizational structures mentioned by respondents include compensation and contract structures for distance learning faculty. Some institutions have distance learning copyright and ownership structures in place including placing terms in employment and union contracts and others have merit pay structures in place for faculty who assist in the development of organizational distance learning structures and programs. Overall there was a strong commonality among the distance learning organizational structures mentioned by respondents.

Common symbol or phrases:

Interview respondents were asked to talk about common phrases or symbols that were used to describe, promote, and communicate about distance learning at their institutions. No respondents were able to think of symbols that were used for distance learning except for WebCT, Blackboard, or other LMS (Learning Management System) logos. There was clear convergence on the use of the term “traditional learning” as learning that did not involve the Internet. Some other terms to describe face-to-face teaching include “chalk and chalkboard teaching” and “cardboard and paper teaching.” There was also strong commonality in the phrases used to describe teaching today that involves distance learning including: “e-learning,” “virtual colleges or campuses,” and “online academy.”

Some other phrases referred to the actual distance learning program or to other internal aspects of distance learning that insiders or professionals used to communicate with each other. Examples of these phrases include “clusters” and “cluster coordinators” referring to the online student support system cohort program at one institution, “e-associates” referring to mentors in a distance learning faculty mentor program, “smart rooms (technology rich classrooms)” and “e-texts (electronic textbooks)” at another institution. New support systems for distance learning for both professors and students also were described. The most common phrases used to describe these programs include “instructional technology department” and “media and instructional designers,” and “e-student helpdesk.” Several respondents noted that vocabulary like “Blackboard,” “WebCT,” “LMS” (Learning Management System), and “podcasts” is basic today but 10-15 years ago (Time Period 1) were considered buzz words.

Finally, some respondents recalled phrases used to negatively describe distance learning with regard to its legitimacy in earlier days (Time Period 1), but that for the most part had gone away today (Time Period 2). For example one respondent describes an internal battle with an associate dean where an article was written to a newspaper calling the first distance learning program at the school a “monkey farm.”

In summary, evidence shows that there has been convergence on terms used to describe, promote, and communicate about distance learning in both time periods but that there has not necessarily been a change in these terms from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2. This lack of change, as noted by several respondents, is in large part due to the fact that as technology has become more commonplace new words to

describe this technology have evolved and replaced old terms – what might have been a buzz word 10-15 years ago is just the professional lingo of the higher education industry today. It should be noted that language plays a large role in changing an organizational culture so the fact that language has changed to encompass and include distance learning terminology shows a level of acceptance and buy-in of the practice of distance learning itself in the institutions included in this study. The final change noted with regard to language is that most respondents noted a decline from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 in the amount of negative language about distance learning, again hinting at organizational acceptance and inclusion of distance learning in the institutions in this study.

#### Definitions of distance learning:

There were many definitions of distance learning vocalized by interview respondents. But one thing that seemed to be an overriding commonality is that respondents felt that there was a denotative meaning of distance learning that is used for formal circumstances but that each institution had its own connotative meaning of distance learning at their institution that was one that would be appropriate to the particular institution and the students it served. One respondent's comments best captures this theme: "distance learning then was Webcams, TV, and telephone, and today it is online; the definition has not changed but meaning to users has changed."

Some of the phrases used to define distance learning in earlier days (Time Period 1) include "learning that is not on campus," "bringing education to people where they want it," "(distance learning) is what we call it," and "distance learning

meant physical distance (between students and professors).” Some current definitions (Time Period 2) include: “any teaching methodology implemented to make course and degrees available to those off campus,” “distance learning is where, how, and when the students want it,” and “distance learning is any situation where the student and teacher are not in the same physical location.” One respondent defined distance learning in Time Period 1 as “correspondence courses” and in Time Period 2 as “the Internet.” Another said that “distance learning is not geography alone like it was in the past, today it is a core function of higher education and a central and respected part of an institution.”

To summarize these comments, it is clear that there has been some change in the definition of distance learning between the two time periods in this study. Also, the denotative definition for distance learning in the higher education field is relatively agreed upon showing evidence of field convergence on a definition. It also is clear by these responses that while there is convergence on a professional denotative definition of distance learning that there is still a lot of diversity within distance learning practices at the organizational level, or the institutional connotative definition of distance learning remains varied. This would be true of both time periods in this study. This is an interesting perception of these interview candidates in that in many cases as they see it there is a lot of difference between what they do and what other institutions do, but other interview data from this study actually indicates a lot of similarity in these institutions’ distance learning practices. These similarities have been discussed in other areas of this interview analysis.

The following statements summarize the evidence of mimetic reinforcement gathered through the interviews on standardized program formats, one-best-approach formats, common symbol or phrases, and common organizational structures.

- evidence of convergence on professional denotative distance learning definition
- varied connotative definitions for distance learning at the institution level
- evidence of a decrease in negative language about distance learning
- evidence of common words and phrases and technical jargon used among professionals in field
- respondents perceived greater legitimacy for distance learning due to program and structure standards
- clear evidence of increased availability and use of standardized program formats and best practices
- clear evidence of organizational copying and mimicking of schools in study

Overall, evidence indicates a greater presence of mimetic reinforcement during Time Period 2 than Time Period 1 based on the measurements outlined in this section.

#### Institutional Isomorphism:

This section describes the evidence collected to measure the dependent variable, institutional isomorphism. Distance Learning full time enrollment (equivalencies) or FTE data and outside media sources were investigated to explore and measure this variable. It is hypothesized that isomorphism occurs as a result of

the appearance of independent variables in the organizational field. The independent variables were discussed in detail in the previous section.

Dependent Variable Measurement - FTEs:

Through a myriad of grants, acts, programs, and agencies, funds for distance learning policies are dispersed to educational institutions (Office of Educational Technology, 2005). Most of the funding awarded to higher education organizations through these initiatives is based on levels of full time equivalencies or FTEs which is the most standardized measurement for counting students (i.e. enrollment). The Florida Distance Learning Consortium, a professional association with regulatory power granted by the State Legislature, has gathered data on FTEs for distance learning since 1995 from all community colleges in the State and from all the public universities since 2000. As one private university was randomly selected, this data was collected directly from the school. The table below summarizes the distance learning FTE and course data compiled for the colleges and universities included in this study. These institutions represent those of the interview candidates randomly selected for this study.

Table 11: Distance Learning Full Time Equivalencies (FTEs) by Institution

	Avg. FTE (Undup. Headcount) or # of distance learning students Period 1	Avg, # of Distance Learning Courses Period 1	Avg. FTE (Undup. Headcount) or # of distance learning students Period 2	Avg, # of Distance Learning Courses Period 2	+/- Difference Avg. FTE Period 1/Period 2	+/- Difference Avg. Course Period 1/Period 2
School A	1607	138	11208	962	+9601 (+597%)	+824
School B	1729	235	8474	736	+8474 (+204%)	+501
School C	435	25	2288	229	+1853 (+235%)	+204
School D	2044	112	10729	742	+8685 (+235%)	+630
School E	1182	72	6430	568	+5248 (+225%)	+496
School F	3581	Data Not Available	20621	1050	17040 (+210%)	Increased- Data Not Available

As seen in the data in the table above there are significant increases in both average distance learning FTEs and distance learning courses from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 for all schools considered in this study. Distance learning has grown significantly between the two time periods in this study with some schools increasing distance learning FTEs and courses by as much as 597 percent (Institution A). It should be noted that while distance learning course data could not be obtained for one school in this study during Time Period 1 as no data was collected for this institution before 2000, when asked, school officials including the institution's interview candidate confirmed an increase between the courses available between Time Period 1 and Time Period 1 which would account for the significant increase in this institution's FTEs (see Table 9 above). Hence it makes sense that regulatory agencies would seek to enforce consistency in definitions, standards, and delivery through mandates and policy direction for an activity that has taken such a stronghold in the organizational field.

Specifically, all six of the schools in this study showed significant increases in enrollment of distance learning courses. The increase in distance learning FTEs is evidence that within the schools in this study, distance learning as a practice has been isomorphically institutionalized as a teaching pedagogy. Increased FTEs are representative of the fact that the practice of delivery education online, or distance learning, has been legitimized and institutionalized among the colleges and universities in this study. This does not mean that the structure of each institution's distance learning program is identical, but, rather, that the practice has become homogenized in the educational field. Some of the aspects that influenced this

homogenization are represented in the independent variables considered in this study like accreditation, socialization, legitimization, and training. It is acknowledged that there are other influencing factors of homogenization that are beyond the scope of this study like technology capabilities, funding, and elite power.

Dependent Variable Measurement – Media Sources:

The dependent variable also was measured by evidence of representation in mainstream media sources. Increased positive and legitimizing language and positive tone as seen in two news magazines, *U.S. News and World Report* and *Newsweek*, and six national newspapers; *the Chicago Tribune*, *the Washington Post*, *the Sun Sentinel*, *the Palm Beach Post*, *the Miami Herald*, and *the New York Times* from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 is considered evidence of isomorphism. The table below summarizes the evidence gathered from the archives of the eight periodicals mentioned above for the years represented Time Period 1 (1995-2000) and Time Period 2 (2004-2009) in this study. These newspapers' and news magazines' archives were searched using the keywords; "distance learning" and "distance education." Articles that involved distance learning for secondary education were excluded. Also, due to the volume of articles in the national newspapers including *Chicago Tribune*, *the Washington Post*, *the Sun Sentinel*, and *the Miami Herald*, Year 2000 for Time Period 1 and Year 2009 for Time Period 2 were searched. *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, and *the New York Times*' archives were searched for all years considered in this study.

Table 12: Summary of Dependent Variable News Source Data

Source	# of Articles in Time Period 1	# of Articles in Time Period 2	Topics covered
U.S. News and World Report	2	10	Growth and presence of distance learning, possibilities for distance learning, registry and definitions for distance learning programs
Newsweek	2	2	Growth and possibilities for distance learning
Chicago Tribune	3*		Growth of distance learning, best practices, dangers, fears, development
Washington Post	3*		Origins, growth, mainstreaming, and pros and cons of distance learning
Sun Sentinel	0	0	N/A
Miami Herald		1*	Growth/presence of distance learning
Palm Beach Post	0	0	N/A
The New York Times	10	4	Origins, growth, and pros and cons of distance learning (in comparison to traditional learning), doubts, fears, and legitimacy issues
Time Period Totals:	20	17	

\* These figures represent the years 2000 and 2009 respectively for Time Period 1 and Time Period 2.

As seen, a total of 20 articles were found in these news sources during Time Period 1 and 17 articles for Time Period 2 of this study. It is not the sheer number that matters in this analysis but rather an increase in the number of articles with positive, legitimizing language from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 is evidence of isomorphism. Articles in these sources that substantiate distance learning and speak of growth, development, and pros of distance learning are evidence that distance learning has homogenized as an accepted practice in the educational organizational field. Seventeen articles from Time Period 1 and 16 from Time Period 2 substantiate and endorse distance learning. Six articles from Time Period 1 and 4 from Time Period 2 question the value and legitimacy of distance learning. Articles that discussed both the pros and cons of distance learning were counted for both categories.

The majority of articles (32 as compared to 10), from the combined time periods in this study, substantiate and legitimize distance learning in higher education. In addition, the general focus of all articles was the presence of distance learning and the number of these articles increased from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2. This is evidence of increased homogenization of distance learning as an organizational practice, or teaching pedagogy, in the higher education organizational field. Also, the number of articles containing de-valuing language decreased from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 (6 to 4) which represents an increase in isomorphism with regard to distance learning.

### Correlation of the Independent and Dependent Variables:

This chapter has outlined the finding of the measurements for both the independent and dependent variables. For the independent variables, an increased influence of coercive, mimetic, and normative forces through and by the pursuit of legitimacy, HEA guidelines, SACS accreditation mandates and criteria, the presence of professional journals, membership in professional associations, on-the-job socialization and networking, use of common language, program formats, structures, and best practices, and competition for resources was observed between the two time periods in this study. The increased presence of these forces, coercive pressures, normative values of professionalism, and mimetic reinforcement between Time Period 1 and Time Period 2 has created an environment conducive to institutional isomorphism. Isomorphism, as measured in this study through distance learning FTEs and legitimization through media sources, increased from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2, or the data from the independent and dependent variables shows signs of concurrent tendencies.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study used a comparative, qualitative case study methodology consisting of document analysis, review of institutional records and interviews to examine how distance learning came to be an acceptable form of instructional delivery in higher education. The main objective of this research was to test the institutional framework for its utility and strength in explaining this sweeping organizational trend. All data reviewed in this study were compared between two time periods; Time Period 1 (1995-2000) and Time Period 2 (2004-2009), where applicable, to show the change in the level of isomorphic institutionalization (the dependent variable) between these two periods. This empirical test using qualitative data was fruitful in producing good measures of the dependent variable in both time periods. While two independent variable measurements, professional association membership and number of professional and academic journals were not necessarily good indicators of the force they represented, the test still produced sound data for analysis in these areas.

Future research should use a similar test on an area of organizational change that has a more finite ending period like a pilot study with set time parameters for implementation. One drawback of this study was the significant ongoing change that is occurring in distance learning as we speak. This made comparisons difficult in some areas that could have been included but were left out as obtaining data was not

possible. For example, it was this researcher's belief that evidence of increased progress toward industry wide best practice from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 would be a good indicator of the dependent variable, isomorphism. But as noted in the interview section, respondents and this researcher's independent search found a lack of evidence of industry wide best practices. While some respondents mentioned best practices their school modeled, most agreed that there was lack of consensus as of yet to what distance learning best practices should or would be.

Also, while Mizruchi and Fein (1999) encouraged the use of DiMaggio and Powell's framework considering all three forces, this is done at the expense of depth of analysis. This actually might explain the results of Mizruchi and Fein's findings in the lack of use of all three studies as researchers are willing to sacrifice breadth in order to gain a more in depth understanding of one area of influence, coercive, normative, or mimetic in the organizational field.

#### Research Questions:

As shown, the three research questions explored the three individual sources of influence as theorized by DiMaggio and Powell.

Research Question 1: Do coercive pressures lead to institutional isomorphism?

Research Question 2: Do normative values of professionals lead to institutional isomorphism?

Research Question 3: Does mimetic reinforcement lead to institutional isomorphism?

In answering Research Question 1, coercive pressure was measured through HEA references and SACS accreditation manuals and Commission documents. The number of references in these documents increased from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 of this study showing evidence of increased isomorphism in these areas. For example, all six of the schools in this study are voluntarily SACS accredited. The schools' membership and participation in the SACS accreditation process is evidence that SACS is the standard of legitimacy for distance learning programs.

In answering Research Question 2, normative values were measured through organizational membership, emotive participation, on-the-job socialization, and professional and academic journals. Findings showed that all six schools are members of SACS and FDLC and five of the six were also members of SREB. This common list of professional association memberships among the institutions in this study indicates institutional isomorphism. Regular professional association meetings, ad hoc committees, and conferences are just a few of the ways in which members of professional associations interact. All the schools in this study, as communicated through the interviews, showed a true sense of commitment to the professional associations to which they belonged and agreed that their commitment and involvement with these groups had increased over the years considered in this study. Interviewees told of shared resources, partnerships, and networks that emerged from their participation in these professional associations. While it is not within the scope of this study to venture a statement that says the professional values of the schools in this study are the same (isomorphic) with regard to distance learning as this would be a separate study for future research, it is safe to say that the interviewees in this study

showed evidence that they had institutionalized some shared common professional values.

One example of on-the-job socialization that a majority of interview respondents described is an e-learning faculty mentor program. This program was collectively characterized as a process of acclimating faculty members to teaching distance learning courses. Through the process of this program faculty members are introduced to the culture of distance learning and the norms and values of this culture. Therefore, any professional values instilled in the program through interaction with professional associations are isomorphically institutionalized into the organizational culture of the school as well. Again, this research does not provide evidence of exact similarity among normative values of the schools in this study, but common participation in professional associations supported by evidence of a shared concept for managing organizational culture through on-the-job socialization mentor programs does indicate a level of institutional isomorphism. This program was more prevalent and developed in Time Period 2 of this study so it is safe to say that institutional isomorphism caused by this variable measurement has increased.

Finally, in answering Research Question 3, mimetic reinforcement was measured through standardized program formats, one-best-approach formats, common symbols and phrases, and common organizational structures. In addition to the mentor program discussed under normative values, this program can also be considered a standardized program format or one-best approach format under this heading. Also, half of the schools in this study use the Quality Matters as standardized program format and best practice model. All respondents noted the non-existence of

standardized program formats and one-best-approach formats during the first time period of this study. Evidence of institutional isomorphism is seen in the increase of collective adoption of formats like Quality Matters, and e-learning mentor programs. Also, all schools in this study used either the Blackboard or WebCt Learning Management System for delivery of distance learning programs at one point or another during this study. This is evidence of institutional isomorphism with regard to common organizational structures. Finally, all institutions used common terminology in distance learning discussions which also indicates the presence of institutional isomorphism.

This evidence indicates that at the institutional level, the isomorphic change model used in this study proved useful in illustrating institutional isomorphism over time in certain areas including program structure and common professional values. There are still problems with this analysis. While evidence of similar or isomorphically institutionalized organizational practices among the six schools in this study can be seen in each of the areas of force, coercive pressures, normative values of professionalism, and mimetic reinforcement, this does not mean that the structure of each institution's distance learning program is identical, but, rather, that the overriding principles upon which the programs were designed have become similar among the institutions studied through the influence of the independent variables. This realization illustrates some weaknesses in the model which can be explored in future research studies.

### Limitations:

As in all scholarly research studies, the theoretical framework utilized in this study has several limitations. The first is the lack of focus that the model places on organizational heterogeneity. This is a common criticism of the new institutional stream upheld by several neo-institutionalists seeking to account for organizational change and heterogeneity. It is this author's contention that there is an overemphasis of the isomorphic nature of change which has been misrepresented and exaggerated but is in essence the natural process of change or routinization among social organizations.

Simply put not all institutionalized practices are isomorphic in nature and on the contrary maintain a high degree of heterogeneity within the general scope of the institutionalized practice.

Even the challenges of the isomorphic change model in this area are slightly skewed in that they consider change and heterogeneity as co-dependent of one another when in essence aspects of both homogeneity and heterogeneity are found in the natural process of organizational change and the institutionalization of social action. For example, in this study while evidence of isomorphism was found on some dimensions the schools in the study were not necessarily more isomorphic. In other words, the general acceptance in the organizational field of distance learning as an organizational practice does not imply that schools have become more isomorphic organizations. This is the exaggeration of the isomorphic change model that has led to its criticism. The institutionalization of organizational practices into regularized, taken-for-granted practices involves organizational change at all levels and while this

institutionalization toward distance learning may be homogenous to similar organizations in the field, it does not necessarily mean that the institutionalization is isomorphic. What is considered isomorphism is really just a practice establishing itself, or the normal order of change where practices become habitualized, putting in question the importance of isomorphism in discussions of institutionalism.

In essence, there are periods of isomorphism and periods of institutionalism. Every time there is organizational change a period of heterogeneity occurs in the organizational field. An example of this can be seen in this case study when distance learning first appeared and was described as a mixed bag of approaches. If the organizational trend catches on and persists then there is institutionalization of the practice both at the organization and organizational field levels. If the institutionalization process is allowed to continue there is greater likelihood that isomorphism, or homogeneity, will be found among organizations and throughout the organizational field. During the institutionalization period, short, fleeting moments or brief periods of isomorphism occur as the institutionalization persists but quickly vanish as they are replaced by new practices as a result of ongoing organizational change.

Based on the fact that a majority of the indicators considered produced evidence of institutional isomorphism, theoretically the claim can be made that these organizations should look very similar but this claim should be qualified to distance learning. And, while on a broad level the schools in this study look similar with regard to distance learning a quick glance at the individual schools' distance learning web portals shows immediate evidence of a startling amount of organizational

heterogeneity. Distance learning becomes its own institution but evidence does not necessarily support isomorphism.

In addition, DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) framework does not account for the interaction among the three areas of force, coercive, normative, and mimetic and lacks the ability to predict which forces are more influential in producing isomorphic change. In studies utilizing this model forces have been considered of equal influence in the organizational field. Studies that expand the DiMaggio and Powell model to determine the relationship among these three forces can provide a deeper understanding of organizational dynamics such as power and influence in the organizational field.

#### Implications of Research:

In Ashworth, Boyne, and Delbridge's (2005) study to capture aspects of organizational change with regard to their influence on four organizational characteristics, process, strategy, culture, and structure in light of the implementation of a new organizational policy, they found that organizational characteristics were affected differently by the three isomorphic forces. Of the three isomorphic forces, coercive was found to have the greatest presence based on the indicators measured in their study in the educational organizational field.

This study finds that coercive force, although having the most indicators present in the field, was not necessarily of greater influence than mimetic or normative force. Both coercive force variable measures and mimetic variable measures increased in all areas between the two time periods in this study. Only normative

value variable measures showed static or decline influence from Time Period 1 to Time Period 2 and as discussed in the normative section, the indicators do not necessarily represent an overall decrease in normative force.

Another interesting finding is the evidence of buffering or resistance strategies as described by Meyer and Rowan (1977) by schools in this study. At an organizational level, schools experienced internal resistance to the institutionalization of distance learning from various stakeholders including faculty and administrators. In addition at a macro, or organizational field level, the adherence to external accreditation standards may be seen as buffer strategy to ensure legitimacy of the newly adopted teaching method to external stakeholders. Organizations use accreditation as a strategy for legitimacy that masks shortcomings of distance learning at the practical level and curbs criticism against its use.

In area that has been neglected in isomorphic institutional studies another interesting discovery was found with regard to evidence of the overlapping and intermingling of the three forces with one another theorized by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). For example the intermingling between normative and coercive forces was seen between the DOE and SACS. Here there is a clear connection between these forces in that DOE has legislative authority over schools through financial awards and through SACS it is able to enforce policy and program development as well as normative values of professionalism including best practices and quality standards. Without the enforceability of financial awards self accreditation programs like the one administered by SACS would hold less value for schools. In addition, without the authority as provided by through the DOE to enforce accrediting standards, SACS also

would not have the legitimatizing effect that it currently has for the schools considered in this study. These forces manifested by these two agencies act together to create institutional isomorphism in the organizational field.

Also, it is interesting to note the evidence in this study that shows the significance of prescriptive policy language for colleges and universities whether they are public or private. If a practice becomes accepted by government agencies that have oversight of their operations, both public and private institutions can be assured that funding for these activities will continue. This inevitably will influence the organizational decisions made by these institutions with regard to the future and development of distance learning and predictably create a competitive situation for those funds. It seems logical to assume that if a college or university perceives acceptance of a practice that it will be more likely to zestfully pursue that activity in hopes of obtaining funding. Since it is related to monetary gain, coercive pressures might from a purely economic perspective, after all, be the strongest overriding influence in the field.

Another powerful influence and common theme throughout the interviews was that of the continued improvements in technology itself and its influence on the institutionalization of distance learning. All respondents noted that the increased usability (user friendly technology), increased internet capabilities, and cheaper technology were major driving factors in the development of distance learning. One respondent said that “user friendly technology itself has enabled us to engage in less hand holding” of faculty as they learn to teach online. In addition, several respondents noted that increased digital literacy and comfortability with technology was the

number one driving factor in reducing the number of institutional “resisters” to distance learning. More than half of the interview respondents noted that the support staff for faculty had changed due to the changes in technology whereas once schools employed “programmers” and “engineers” (or “hardware specialists”) today they employed “media specialists,” “graphic designers” and instructional technology designers.” It is worth noting that there exists a vast literature on the spread of technology in organizations. Such frameworks as diffusion of innovations (see Rogers, 1995) and structural models of technology (see Orlikowski, 2000) can provide more insight into this phenomenon but are beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) note that isomorphic institutionalization and the homogenization of an organizational field occurs when the diverse streams of individual organizations are incorporated into an overriding policy that becomes legitimized by state and professional structures and associations and becomes a model for new entrants and existing entities in the organizational field. It is clear from the evidence in this study that a degree of homogenization with regard to the acceptance of distance learning as a practice has occurred with regard to the schools in this study. While this finding is not to be generalized across the higher education field, it does speak to the power of the model used to predict homogenization, or isomorphic institutionalization. As noted, distance learning emerged as a hodge podge of ideas, formats and techniques. But there is some evidence that today distance learning is delivered in a more homogenized way that has emerged from a diverse set of pioneer endeavors.

### Future Directions for Research:

Future institutional studies that limit focus on isomorphism might provide a more accurate depiction of organizational change and institutionalized practices. While this study did show evidence of isomorphism on a broad, macro level, this evidence of isomorphism should not be confused with mere institutionalization. One way to avoid this might be to change the unit of analysis from the organizations to the practice that is being institutionalized, or distance learning in this study, to avoid the tautology and over-exaggeration of isomorphism.

Schmidt (2010) discusses sociological institutionalism studies rooted in discourse analysis. For example, in this study evidence of institutional isomorphism was found in several key areas of organizational practices including professional values, common structures and program formats, and language. Any one of these organizational practices associated with distance learning can be explored as discourse using the isomorphic institutional framework. As such, DiMaggio & Powell's (1983) isomorphic change model might be used to explore the background of the institutional context and the DI framework to discover and examine the ideas and discourse.

Specifically for distance learning studies, future research also might include a more detailed investigation of the scope of distance learning professional and academic journals, or the interactions of professional associations, or the inclusion and content of distance learning terms and provisions in employment and union contracts. As stated, this might be best achieved by treating these interactions and texts as discourse and using in combination with one of the old new institutional approaches. In this case, the journals, the interactions of professional associations, and union and

employment contracts would be the discourse to be analyzed. This discourse could then be used to show empirically how, when, where, and why ideas and discourse matter for institutional isomorphic change.

Another approach to improve on DiMaggio and Powell's framework would be to run parallel analyses for both homogeneity and heterogeneity along the constructs of coercive, normative, and mimetic forces. Studies like this would aid in the discussion of fragmentation of ideas as well as allow for the appearance of organizational heterogeneity. Future studies might explore the level of homogeneity that is expected to substantiate the presence of true institutional isomorphism as opposed to the natural process of institutionalization.

APPENDIX A: MIMETIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<b>MIMETIC FORCE QUESTIONS</b>	<b>INDICATOR</b>
How was the ritual of distance learning established?	Symbols, signs, language
What is the institutional definition of distance learning at your organization? In the field?	Language/symbols
Has the institutional definition changed over the years? In what ways?	Language/symbols
Which groups of stakeholders were the biggest drivers of change with regard to distance learning? In the beginning? Today?	Firsts
Is there a belief system about distance learning at your organization? If so, when did the belief system emerge?	Norms and Values
Why did distance learning become desirable? Why is it desirable today? Are the reasons for desirability the same as they were in early days or different?	Uncertainty
What were the risks you considered when implementing distance learning (negative dialogue, pessimism or criticism)? Were the realized? Were they overcome?	Uncertainty
As a decision maker, did you ever feel compelled to utilize, implement, or advocate distance learning?	Firsts
How did you advocate distance learning?	Firsts
Did you introduce any “firsts” in distance learning at your institution? Were any of them later copied by other institutions or groups?	Firsts
Is distance learning required for legitimacy today for successful higher education organizations?	Mimicking
Do you see traditional learning methods as a thing of the past?	Mimicking

Which is more legitimate – traditional or distance learning?	Mimicking
When did distance learning gain legitimacy? Which phrases and words were used to legitimize distance learning?	Symbols, signs, language
What helped your organization communicate the legitimacy of distance learning?	Symbols, signs, language
How was distance learning legitimized at your organization?	Legitimacy
Who was the hardest sell in legitimacy and why?	Legitimacy
How important is accreditation in legitimizing distance learning?	Legitimacy
What do you consider the most important aspects in establishing legitimacy of distance learning?	Legitimacy
Would you say that distance learning is a legitimate teaching mode today? Was it 10 years ago?	Legitimacy
Are there any distance learning model organizations that you admire? Why? Is it performance based?	Mimicking
Is there a distance learning award or goal you want to achieve for your organization?	One best format/Mimicking
Would you say that there are best practices for distance learning?	One best format/Mimicking
Who are the leaders setting the model for distance learning? Has this make up changed over the years?	One best format/Mimicking
Would you say that higher education organizations are required to offer distance learning programs and courses today?	Mimicking
If yes, when did you feel that you “had” to offer distance learning at your organization?	Mimicking
Would you say that the higher education field as a whole has converged on the idea of distance learning? If so, when would you say that this happened?	Mimicking

Which systems and techniques were the first to take hold in distance learning at your organization that was copied by other organizations later?	Convergence
Which professional communities led the distance learning charge? What symbols, phrases, or stories were used in these communities?	Language/symbols
How did they help to normalize distance learning?	Language/symbols
Was standardizing language used to promote distance learning? If yes, how did they do this?	Language/symbols
Is there a distance learning standard today? When did the standard come to be? What language is used to convey this standard?	Standards of professionalism

## APPENDIX B: NORMATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How has training for faculty/administrators changed over the last 10-15 years (1995-2009)?

Follow up:

Has it improved, stayed the same, gotten worse?

Are there any licenses and credentials that you feel are required for distance learning educators and administrators today?

Follow up:

Was this the case when distance learning started?

Are there any certification processes for learning to teach distance learning?

Follow up:

If so, which groups are responsible for enforcing/governing this certification?

When did this certification process begin?

Describe the resources available to faculty/administrators.

Follow up:

How would you compare this to the resources available 10-15 years ago?

Would you say there is a sophisticated resource system available today?

Do you think there should be an institutional or state standard minimum requirement (or education requirement) for teaching distance learning?

What do you think of standardized distance learning course and program formatting resources?

Follow up:

How has the availability of these resources changed distance learning over the last 10-15 years?

Has your institution used standardized course and program formatting?

How sophisticated are distance learning policies at your institution?

Follow up:

Explain the development of policy and procedures over the last 10-15 years

What spurred or influenced the development of such policies and procedures?

Who was responsible for policy formation at your institution?

What guidelines (or resources) were used followed?

## APPENDIX C: IRB STUDY PARTICIPATION FORM

### Distance Learning Development and Organizational Change Study

#### Interview Participant Consent Form

Introduction: You are being invited to participate in a research study. Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this study.

1. Title of Research Study: Distance Learning Development and Organizational Change Study
2. Investigator: Kristi D. Caravella, Doctoral Candidate, School of Public Administration, College of Architecture, Urban and Public Affairs, Florida Atlantic University (FAU)
3. Supervised by: Dr. Hugh Miller, Director, School of Public Administration, Florida Atlantic University; Dr. Khi Thai, Professor, and Dr. Floydette Corey Scruggs, School of Public Administration, Florida Atlantic University
4. Purpose: To gain information about the development of distance learning programs and policy and organizational change theories in higher education. Additionally, this study contributes to the body of knowledge with respect to organizational change and development theory.
5. Procedures: Participation in this project will require you to answer open and closed ended questions in an unstructured interview format that will take place at a neutral location of your choice that is convenient for you to attend. The format of the interview will be a discussion between you and I; I will lead the interview, but this interview should reflect first and foremost your thoughts and beliefs in the development of distance learning in higher education.

INITIAL

\_\_\_\_\_

The interview will take approximately one and one half hours (1.5) to complete the interview. I will ask questions about your experiences in the development of distance learning programs at your university or college. With your permission, I will record and take notes during the interview. The taping is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only and stored on a password protected computer. If you choose not to be recorded, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being recorded but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the tape recorder at your request. I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you individually by mail/phone to request this. The format of any follow-up interviews will be in the same format described above.

6. Risks: There are risks involved with participation in any research project but the risks associated with this study are minimal. Although, for this study, it is not anticipated that there will be any direct risks or discomfort to you from being in this study. Questions will be asked about the development of distance learning policy and programs and it is possible that others might disagree with your views and feelings of distance learning policies which may result in professional harm in some way. With that said, the name of your institution and your identity will remain confidential and unnamed in this study. Again it may be possible for readers of the final study to deduce the university and/or yourself as discussed in the study, but all answers will be kept private and confidential. Only the professors associated with this research project will see your answers.

7. Benefits: There is no direct benefit or costs to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research will serve to benefit organizational and public administration theory. One benefit of this study is that it helps us to better understand distance learning as an educational tool which benefits society at large as it affects the education of this society. A benefit from being part of the project is that you will have the opportunity to provide your insight, experiences, and suggestions that potentially can affect the development of distance learning programs and can benefit the entire higher education community, as your input may be used by other organizations making distance learning decisions. In addition, this study contributes to the body of knowledge with respect to organizational change and development theory.

8. Compensation: You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

9. Confidentiality: Data gathered for this study will be handled as confidentially as possible. Notes or transcripts will be accessible only to the researcher and the supervising faculty members for this study. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be included. Your answers may be reported by position, but individual names will not be included.

INITIAL

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Data Collection and Storage: All of the results of this interview will be kept confidential and secure. Only the FAU faculty members associated with this research project will have access to your information, unless required by law. When the research is completed, I may save the tapes and notes for use in future research done by myself or others. I will retain these records in a locked cabinet for up to two (2) years after the study is completed. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data.

11. Contact Information: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Florida Atlantic University. For related problems or questions regarding your rights as a subject the Office of Sponsored Research of Florida Atlantic University can be contacted at 561.297.0777. For other questions about the study, please contact Kristi Caravella at 561.717.9207.

12. Rights: **Participation in research is completely voluntary.** You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer a question or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. As a participant in our research, a copy of the final project will be available to you if you request one.

13. Withdrawal of participation: If at any time you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you.

14. Consent Statement: I have read or had read to me the preceding information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any question. I confirm that no coercion of any kind was used in seeking my participation in this research project.

INITIAL

\_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this interview. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

The participant agrees to be audio-taped: YES/NO Initial\_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

In my judgment the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Thank you for your assistance in this research project.

## APPENDIX D: LIST OF PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC JOURNALS

### WEB SEARCH RESULTS

#### **International Journal on E-Learning (IJEL) - Corporate, Government, Healthcare, & Higher Education**

(Formerly International Journal of Educational Telecommunications and the WebNet Journal)

Advances in technology and the growth of e-learning to provide educators and trainers with unique opportunities to enhance learning and teaching in corporate, government, healthcare, and higher education. IJEL serves as a forum to facilitate the international exchange of information on the current research, development, and practice of e-learning in these sectors.

Led by an Editorial Review Board of leaders in the field of e-Learning, the Journal is designed for the following audiences: researchers, developers, and practitioners in corporate, government, healthcare, and higher education. IJEL is a peer-reviewed journal.

(2002- Present)

#### **Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching (JCMST)**

JCMST is a highly respected scholarly journal which offers an in-depth forum for the interchange of information in the fields of science, mathematics, and computer science. JCMST is the only periodical devoted specifically to using information technology in the teaching of mathematics and science.

(1995-Present)

## **The Journal of Interactive Learning Research**

The Journal of Interactive Learning Research (JILR) publishes papers related to the underlying theory, design, implementation, effectiveness, and impact of interactive learning environments in education and training. Each of the terms in the title of this publication deserves some additional explanation.

Published by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), the Journal of Interactive Learning Research contains papers and reports about the theory, design, effectiveness, and impact that interactive learning has on education in general.

(1997-Present)

## **Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia (JEMH)**

JEMH is designed to provide a multi-disciplinary forum to present and discuss research, development and applications of multimedia and hypermedia in education.

The main goal of the Journal is to contribute to the advancement of the theory and practice of learning and teaching using these powerful and promising technological tools that allow the integration of images, sound, text, and data.

Published by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), the Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia provides a venue for the presentation and discussion of the use of multimedia and hypermedia in education.

(1996-Present)

## **AACE Journal (AACEJ)**

(Electronic Journal)

AACE's member journal is the focal point for AACE members to exchange information between disciplines, educational levels, and information technologies. Its purpose is to stimulate the growth of ideas and practical solutions which can contribute toward the improvement of education through information technology.

(1999-present)

**Contemporary Issues in Technology & Teacher Education (CITE)**  
(Electronic Journal)

An electronic publication of the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education (SITE), established as a multimedia, interactive counterpart of the Journal of Technology and Teacher Education. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education Preparing Tomorrow's Teacher to Use Technology (PT3) catalyst grant, CITE makes possible the inclusion of sound, animated images, and simulation, as well as allowing for ongoing, immediate dialog about theoretical issues. The CITE Journal is an online, peer-reviewed journal, established and jointly sponsored by five professional associations (AMTE, ASTE, NCSS-CUFA, CEE, and SITE). This is the only joint venture of this kind in the field of teacher education.  
(Summer 2000 – present)

**American Journal of Distance Education (AJDE)**

Designed for many kinds of readers including teachers, workplace trainers, adult educators, and researchers, the American Journal of Distance Education is a journal containing scholarship and research pertaining to the field of distance education in America. The journal is recognized on an international level.  
(1987-present)

**Journal of Technology and Teacher Education (JTATE)**

Published by the Association for the Advancement in Computing in Education, the Journal of Technology and Teacher Education provides a venue for the exchange of information and knowledge related to the use of technology in teacher education practices. The content covered by the journal includes curriculum, instruction, administration, educational computing, instructional technology, and staff development.  
(1997-Present)

**The Internet and Higher Education**

This is a quarterly journal with a readership of faculty, staff, and administrators who are working to improve instructional practices in the field of education and to promote greater productivity using Information Technology and the Internet.  
(1998-present)

**Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN)**

A publication of Sloan Consortium, the Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks strives to provide descriptions of asynchronous learning networks that include experimental practices and results.  
(1997-present)

### **Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia (JEMH)**

Published by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), the Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia provides a venue for the presentation and discussion of the use of multimedia and hypermedia in education. (1996-present)

### **Journal of Interactive Media in Education (JIME)**

Published by the Knowledge Media Institute of the Open University, the Journal of Interactive Media in Education contains articles and an open peer review in an integrated presentation. (1996-present)

### **The Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning at Virginia Tech**

Available online, Virginia Tech's Report of the Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning addresses the Institute's overall goal of strengthening "the University's role as a recognized leader in distance and distributed teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and outreach." (Annual report since 2005-present)

### **Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration**

The Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration is a peer-reviewed electronic journal offered free each quarter over the World Wide Web. The journal welcomes manuscripts based on original work of practitioners and researchers with specific focus or implications for the management of distance education programs. (Spring 1998 – present)

### **International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning**

The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning ([www.irrodl.org](http://www.irrodl.org)) is a refereed, open access e-journal that disseminates original research, theory, and best practice in open and distance learning worldwide. IRRODL is available free-of-charge to anyone with access to the Internet. (2005 – Present)

### **Innovate**

Innovate is an online, peer reviewed e-journal dedicated to disseminating and facilitating interactive debate on cutting-edge research and practice in the field of information technology published by Nova Southeastern University's Fischler School of Education and Human Services. (October 2004 through August 2009)

### **The Online Chronicle of Distance Education & Communication**

The Online Chronicle of Distance Education & Communication is an electronic source for information about distance education produced by Nova Southeastern University. The Chronicle appears semi-annually and includes abstracts, short articles, announcements, conference listings, and an information exchange all related to distance education and communication.  
(Through Spring 1998)

### **The Technology Source**

Published from 1997 to 2003, *The Technology Source* (ISSN 1532-0030) was a peer-reviewed bimonthly periodical whose purpose was to provide thoughtful, illuminating articles that would assist educators as they face the challenge of integrating information technology tools into teaching and into managing educational organizations.  
(1997 – 2003)

### **Journal of Library Services for Distance Education**

Published by State University of West Georgia, the Journal of Library Services for Distance Education is a peer-reviewed e-journal. International in scope, this scholarly e-journal will publish refereed articles focusing on the issues and challenges of providing research/information services to students enrolled in formal post-secondary distance education. It will particularly strive to meet the continuing education needs of practitioners by providing a forum for the discussion of extended learning policies and practices, and trends in information technology as they impact the delivery of library services for distance learners and faculty. Articles may be philosophical and/or quantitative analyses of off-campus library issues, and may take the form of case studies, research studies, or general interest reports. Sample topics: role/history of library services to distance education, standards for such services, organization/planning of new services, library instruction for remote users, document delivery, inter-library cooperation, providing/creating access to bibliographic and other library resources, costs of such services, research on remote users' information-seeking behaviors, etc. Book reviews, conference reports, literature reviews, news items, URLs for homepages of off-campus library services worldwide, announcements of conferences and publications, and letters to the editor are also invited.  
(Through 1999)

## **SUS SEARCH RESULTS**

### **Distance Education**

Distance Education is a peer-reviewed international journal. It publishes research and scholarly material in the fields of distance, open and flexible education. Distance Education was one of the first journals published to focus exclusively on this area of educational practice and today it remains a primary source of original and scholarly work in the field for practitioners, teachers and students. Distance Education is owned by the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia, Inc.  
(1980 – Present)

### **Distance Education Report**

Higher Education newsletter that focuses on specific aspects of teaching or administration.  
(2001 – Present)

### **Technology & Learning**

Reports news and information for educators regarding the integration of computers and information technologies into K-12 classrooms. The intended audience includes teachers, technology coordinators, and school administrators.

(1990 – Present)

### **Technology Teacher**

Refereed professional articles, selected association activities and reports and invited articles of ideas relating to technology education for members of the International Technology Education Association.

(1984- Present)

## **Technology, Pedagogy and Education**

**(Previously published as: Journal of Information Technology for Teacher Education until 2002)**

This journal seeks to serve the international education community by supporting educators in the integration of information and communications technology in teaching and learning. It focuses on research evidence and critical analysis on all aspects of ICT and its relation to teacher education and professional development in all phases of education.

The journal aims to promote the advance of research and scholarship in its field; to provide a vehicle for the exchange and dissemination of reports of good practice and research; to offer a forum for the debate of major issues; to create an international arena for discussion of the role of ICT in education and professional development; and to develop greater awareness, understanding and cooperation between educators.

(1992 – Present)

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