

## Key Concepts in Institutional/Cultural Models

- emphasis on similarities and uniquenesses of individual organizations
  - similarities across organizations, organizational “fields” (e.g., liberal arts colleges)
  - yet each organization maintains uniqueness (e.g., Spelman, Mt. Holyoke, Berry, Reed)
- emphasis on the significance of external environments and history in shaping individual organizations
- emphasis on holistic analysis of organizations/units as coherent systems
- both institutional and cultural models use certain variables as tools for understanding
- core explanatory ideas and variables in institutional analysis:
  - goals - manifest and/or latent
  - functions - manifest and/or latent
  - forces constraining/shaping organizational change: mimetic, coercive, normative isomorphism
  - production mode(s): key products and services and how are they produced?
  - “slack”
  - centralization: where is authority (formal power) centered?
  - informal power: who or what has influence beyond formal structures?
  - stratification: how “tall” is the organizational chart, and what are the status/prestige differentials in the organization?
  - differentiation: how “wide” is the organizational chart?
  - specialization: specific vs. holistic structures, responsibilities, roles for units and individuals
  - horizontal and/or vertical couplings: loose/tight nature of the organization
  - formalization: degree to which standards, rules, expectations, positions, etc. are established, written down, publicized, etc.
  - control mechanisms
  - decision making styles, information systems
  - demography/composition – gender, race/ethnicity, age/seniority, etc.
  - professionalization: extent of reliance on professional authority, norms,
  - legitimation: what is expected/appropriate/valued?
  - environmental “niche,” dependencies
  - key resource flows
  - socialization
  - values, norms
  - historical artifacts, vestiges in the organization
- core explanatory ideas and variables in cultural analysis:
  - an approach to institutional theory emphasizing the making of meaning and thus unique local organizational values, norms, and socialization
  - significance of history, key episodes/events
  - taboos
  - symbols
  - heroes/heroines, other key figures
  - myths/legends/stories
  - images and imagery
  - rituals/ceremonies/rites
  - working language
  - humor
  - superstitions
  - saga –a collective, emotionally tinged understanding of unique historical accomplishment in a formally established group