

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 distinctively positive, historically imbued culture