



Call it What You Want, Just Not an Institution

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Abstract

Nigam, Amis and Logue use the case of Taylor Swift to argue that “individual people can become institutions” (p. 2). Although we share their admiration of Taylor Swift and agree that much can be learned through serious research on Swift, she is not an institution, nor should individuals be conceptualized as institutions. Institutions are, by definition, larger social entities, and the benefits of viewing individuals as institutions are outweighed by negative conceptual costs. Our counter argument draws from inhabited institutionalism and is threefold. First, instead of depicting individuals as institutions, we make the case that such people are key participants in broader institutional mythologies which, although tethered to individuals, are greater than them. Second, and relatedly, this is because institutional mythologies develop, exist, and persist through the collective interactions of people—their inhabitants. Third, and somewhat separate to inhabited institutionalism, depicting individuals as institutions disattends to and diminishes other valuable, sociological means of theorizing influential persons, and we outline the alternative benefits of viewing them as leaders, totems, and cultural creators.

Keywords

culture, diffusion, inhabited institutionalism, institutional theory, organizational development and change

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My castle crumbled overnight
 They took the crown, but it's alright
 All the liars are calling me one. . .
 So call it what you want, yeah, call it what you
 want to.¹

Taylor Swift's music and persona have great importance for her fans, for the economy, and for society at large, and we join the chorus chanting for deep scholarly analysis of all things Taylor (Donovan, 2024; Pope & Rose, 2024). As Nigam et al. (2025) argue in their compelling essay, Taylor Swift is many things, including a "focal point around which a distinctive and enduring set of roles, and a recognizable repertoire of interactions, emerges" (p. 2). In what follows we will add that she is a leader, a totem, and a cultural creator. However, Nigam et al. go further to argue that "people, as individuals rather than as representatives of an office, can become institutions" (Nigam et al., 2025, abstract). We disagree. To make our case we draw from an approach that, at first blush, might seem to accord with Nigam et al.'s argument—inhabited institutionalism. Certainly, Taylor Swift is a key inhabitant in the social world she has helped to create, and inhabited institutionalism takes people seriously. Nevertheless, inhabited institutionalism, as with other forms of sociological institutionalism, eschews methodological individualism (Jepperson & Meyer, 2011) to emphasize how institutions are inhabited by people doing things *together* (Becker, 1986).

To unpack the importance of people doing things together for an inhabited institutional understanding of the Swift phenomenon (which we will call, contra Nigam et al., an "institutional Swiftology"), the latter grant us a micro-sociological preface that outlines why no one is an island unto themselves, why social interaction is supra-individual, and why institutions are likewise larger than individuals. As with inhabited institutionalism, microsociology—properly understood—focuses not on individuals, but rather *social interaction*. Take the foundational work of Goffman, work that precedes *The*

Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Goffman, 1959). In "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor," Goffman (1956) argues that people are deference-seeking creatures; in essence, we seek a modicum of social respect. However, we cannot give ourselves respect; it must come from others, and to acquire deference we must exhibit an appropriate demeanor towards others. This relational link compels social interaction: because we cannot give ourselves deference, we "must hold hands in a chain of ceremony, each giving deferentially with proper demeanor to the one on the right what will be received deferentially from the one on the left" (Goffman, 1956, p. 85). As consequential as Taylor Swift is, even she cannot give herself deference. If she (or we) could, society "might disintegrate into islands inhabited by solitary, cultish men, each in continuous worship at his own shrine" (Goffman, 1967, p. 58).

What Goffman's work and the work of other microsociologists tells us is that social interactions, while they include "individuals," are *not* individualistic. By definition, social interactions include two or more people, and as a result they are larger wholes with their own distinctive properties (Goffman, 1983). Just as social interactions are supra-individual, so too are institutions. From this preface we move into the core of our counterargument: no individual is an institution. Rather, Taylor Swift is a key interactant in a larger "institutional Swiftology." Although some may argue that "Swifties" are a cult (we would not), in no way are they solitary: their shrine is collective. Whereas Nigam et al. (2025) view Swift as a "person-institution" (p. 7), we emphasize a larger "institutional Swiftology" that emerges from, changes through, and persists with the interactions of many inhabitants, including but not limited to Taylor Swift.

To make our case we begin by revisiting key definitions and situating our notion of "institutional Swiftology," while arguing that treating individuals as institutions comes at the cost of definitional clarity. Next, we examine how this institutional Swiftology is inhabited via social interactions through which it

continually develops, changes, and grows, becoming a cultural ideal for how people ought to act, one that is far more expansive than Taylor Swift as an individual. To do so, we draw from Nigam et al.'s own examples, demonstrating how their material sustains our argument. Instead of viewing individuals as institutions, and to provide alternative ways to conceptualize individuals, we outline how Taylor Swift can be analyzed as a leader, a totem, and a cultural creator. She is all these things and more. Call her what you want, just not an institution.

Definitional Clarity

As Nigam et al. note, Taylor Swift's enormously successful and influential Eras Tour coincided with the 70th anniversary of Selznick's (1949) *TVA and the Grass Roots*, and we begin with definitions that hark back to the "old" institutionalism of Selznick et al. (Clark, 1956; Messinger, 1955; Stinchcombe, 1997; Zald & Denton, 1963). As early as 1948, Selznick (1948) defined formal organizations as "rationally ordered instruments for the achievement of stated goals" (p. 25). The Eras Tour fits this definition, as would any of Swift's previous and future tours: carefully planned, mobile organizations that repeatedly pick up, unpack, set up, tear down, and move on over and over again, reaping enormous profits and popularity. In his later work, Selznick (1957) defined organizations as "technical instruments for mobilizing human energies and directing them towards set aims," emphasizing that they are an "expendable tool" that can be set aside when the job is complete (p. 5). However much fans wanted it to endure, as an organization the Eras Tour completed its (extended) run and ended. On to the next. Yet the process is more complicated than that because "to institutionalize is to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand" (Selznick, 1957, p. 17). Although the tour ended, it endures because it was infused with value by legions of fans, and in the process the seemingly temporary organization changed organically, becoming an institution with a history and a

distinctive character. No matter how exhausting each performance was for Taylor Swift,² as well as the backup singers, backup dancers, musicians, technicians, and army of roadies and more, the value infusion emerging from the institutionalization of the Eras Tour led it, like other similar organizations, to take on a "life of [its] own" (Selznick, 1949). Those concerts are over, but the institution endures. Taylor Swift is vital here, but none of this is exclusive to her. Indeed, it drains credit from this organizational army to label Taylor Swift as the institution.³

We will return to Selznick later when discussing leadership, but in our own research we are partial to Barley's (2008) somewhat more expansive definition: institutions are social forms "that script behavior to varying degrees in given contexts . . . [they] are socially constructed and are subsequently maintained or changed by people who act and interact with each other" (pp. 495–496). This is not distinctly different from the definition Nigam et al. (2025) initially start from, viewing institutions as 'a taken-for-granted, organized system of roles and interactions' that offers a 'blueprint' that is infused with values for some aspect of social life" (p. 3). We will argue that according to both definitions, an individual cannot be an institution precisely because institutions require human *interactions*. People (with an emphasis on the plural) can help create institutions. A single person can represent an institution. But an individual cannot *be* an institution. Arguing otherwise creates conceptual havoc at the expense of clarity. Nigam et al. (2025) "develop theory for conceptualizing people as institutions" (p. 2). Yet if institutions are individuals, by substitution, they "develop theory for conceptualizing people as individuals." Likewise, they argue that their theorizing differs from other approaches in that they "see Taylor Swift as an institution in and of herself" (p. 4). Yet, if institutions are individuals, they "see Taylor Swift as an individual in and of herself." Near the end of their essay they begin to refer to "person-institutions" (p. 7). Though again, if institutions are individuals, then they are referring to "person-individuals." The logic is problematic.

Defining institutions as social forms that script behavior to varying degrees and/or as a “blueprint” for some aspect of social life provides far more solid ground. These social forms and blueprints can include what Meyer and Rowan (1977) called “institutional myths,” the widespread cultural ideals that provide a “rational theory of how” organizations ought to operate (p. 342). Consideration of “institutional myths” brings both organizations and the broader cultural environment back into consideration.

How, then, do these definitions provide us with less tautological ways to think about Taylor Swift? If we expand the definition to think about “institutional mythologies” more broadly as cultural ideals that provide an account of how people ought to operate, then we can begin to understand an “institutional Swiftology,” one that is tethered (Menchik, 2019) to Taylor Swift as a key inhabitant, yet is far more than Taylor Swift as an individual. This “institutional Swiftology” has become a widespread cultural account not only for how organizations such as the Eras Tour (and future tours) ought to operate, but also for how teams of singers, musicians, dancers, and technicians ought to act, and how fans (Swifties) ought to operate. Due to their institutionalization, mythologies are “beyond the discretion of any *individual* participant or organization” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 344, emphasis added). We consider Taylor Swift, and other, similar, key interactants, as central actors around which new mythologies develop, but they are not the institutional mythologies—or institutions—themselves.

Collective Co-Creation and Change

This “institutional Swiftology” is inhabited by *social interactions*, by the legions of people doing things together. Nigam et al. themselves suggest that “institutions are established and subsequently reproduced through interactions that occur across different geographic communities” that can be located “around the world, resulting in a reach and typification of roles and interactions that become successively

objectivated and sedimented (Ocasio, 2023)” (p. 3). On this we agree. Indeed, this focus on interactions as central to the development of institutions highlights the impossibility of individuals as institutions.

How can an individual person become an institution if that *becoming* demands the constant, repeated, and routine interactions of a social world? They cannot, because the institution evaporates without the interactions. Nigam et al. (2025) seem to recognize this when they state, “key is the *reciprocity in the interaction and engagement between the focal person and the network of role practitioners*, especially in the objectification and sedimentation phases” (p. 9, emphasis added). Our contention is with the “what” that has been institutionalized. It is a mythology, rather than an individual. The mythology of Taylor Swift—the Swiftology—emerging throughout Swift’s career and solidified during the Eras Tour has been co-created by Swift, her producers, and her fans. Examining Swift alone, as a singular and “standalone [phenomenon]” (Zilber, 2025, p. 173) isolated from the wealth of human activity involved in her success, misses the “residues or echoes of prior social interactions” (Leibel et al., 2018, p. 154). Indeed, roles, role-relations, practices, and rules governing appropriate behavior are central to the institutional Swiftology and are separate from Taylor the individual.

Focusing on Swift, Nigam et al. describe a process of typification, objectivation, and sedimentation similar to Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) three-phased institutionalization process involving externalization, objectivation, and internalization. However, the material they use to connect this process to Swift is more suggestive of interactions and institutional mythology than individual institutionalization. Take the following examples in Table 1, bolded to emphasize social interaction.

In each of these cases, it is the social interaction that generates the institutionalization of a mythology. These examples align closely with Meyer and Rowan’s (1977) description of institutionalization, the means “by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in

Table 1. Interactional Examples from Nigam et al. (2025).

<p>“The emergence of a specialized language among fans” (p. 2, emphasis added)</p> <p>“globally recognized rituals and practices (such as the exchange of friendship bracelets...)” (p. 2, emphasis added)</p> <p>“the institution of Taylor Swift, including her words and lyrics – along with the roles, words and actions of Swifties and other actors affiliated with her – signal the importance of authenticity, embracing difference and belonging as key norms and values that guide how people can live their lives” (p. 3, emphasis added)</p>
<p>“Over several years, Taylor Swift and her fans have cultivated a set of practices, both online and offline, that create and project a sense of belonging and often result in shared experiences.. These can range from making and trading friendship bracelets (signalling community and belonging), to publishing letters to Taylor Swift about the impact of her music on their personal lives (signalling authenticity in their navigation of life’s challenges).” (p. 4, emphasis added)</p> <p>“Taylor Swift’s fans, and their engagement around the values of the institution, have impacted Swift and her music. It was after her fans, through social media, pushed her to take a stand on inclusivity that she responded with the video for ‘You Need to Calm Down’, which celebrated LGBTQ+ pride and inclusivity.” (p. 4, emphasis added)</p> <p>“Fans also add lyrics and actions to specific songs that they sing and enact together, a sense of collective contribution to the musical experience.” (p. 4, emphasis added)</p>
<p>“The scale of the tour, 152 shows across five continents, led to Swifties around the world educating non-Swifties on concert etiquette and other expectations, widening engagement and understanding of what it means to be a Swiftie.” (p. 5, emphasis added)</p> <p>“Many fans identify with the sense of support and understanding in Taylor Swift’s music and connect with others who feel the same. This forms a community with members who uplift and empower each other in a way that is creative, expressive, and welcoming.” (p. 5, emphasis added)</p> <p>“there is cultural imprinting and reciprocity through establish practices... powered by a strong emotional connection between Swift and her fans. This connection plays out in multiple ways, such as sharing personal stories and dressing up in ways that are simultaneously inspired by her fashion (e.g. sequins, boots) but also expressive of her fans’ idiosyncratic interpretations. Swifties ‘engage in scripted interactions’ as prescribed by the institution (Bitektine et al., 2020, p. 893), exemplified by shared and very precise actions...such as making and exchanging friendship bracelets to dressing up for concerts to engage in communal events.” (p. 6, emphasis added)</p>

social thought and action” (p. 341). We amend one of Nigam et al.’s claims to instead read: “[fans] are not passive recipients but co-creators of the *institutional mythology*.” Why? Because institutions are populated with *people*, with an emphasis on the plural and not the individual. The globalization of rituals and practices represents the process of norms, values, and behaviors taking on a rule-like status across the social spheres in with the Eras Tour operated, and beyond. The institutional Swiftology emerged, in part from: (1) fans’ engagement around the values inherent in Swift’s songs, (2) collective contributions to the musical experience, and (3) education by Swifties to others outside the Eras sphere about concert etiquette and other expectations. That the social spheres impacted by Taylor Swift’s music and Eras Tour are so globally and culturally diverse offers a stronger indication that it is a Swiftology, not person, that has been institutionalized. Swiftology has become institutionalized and thereby beyond the discretion of any one person—including Swift herself.

We turn again to inhabited institutionalism, one among several theories useful in this exercise (Foster & Suddaby, 2015; Lawrence & Phillips, 2019; Zilber, 2021), to demonstrate the utility of examining the impact of social interaction in the creation, maintenance, and change of institutional mythologies. The creation of Swiftology was accomplished through Swift, the Eras Tour organization, her management team, her family, musicians, singers, dancers, technicians, fans, and more. Indeed, Nigam et al., citing Ocasio (2023, p. 3), argue the same, institutionalization is: “generated and reproduced through the activities of a social network of role practitioners” (Nigam et al., 2025, p. 3). The bolded texts in Table 1 signal the interactional spaces in which Swiftology has been developed through Swift’s interactions with her fans, among fans themselves, and among fans and the social milieu outside the Swiftie community. Interactions are tightly coupled with Swiftology and the Eras Tour organization—through the exchange of friendship bracelets, the practice and widespread education of concert etiquette, and concert-specific attire inspired by Swift’s 16 separate Eras Tour outfits (Glover, 2024).

These interactions are at once practiced and at times prescriptive, while also being creative and unexpected. Examining social interactions *sui generis* demonstrates that behaviors tightly coupled to an institution—Swiftology—can still retain elements of autonomy that allow for a recursive reshaping of organizational conduct and the shape of institutions. Fans attending concerts with “idiosyncratic” (that is, distinctive or individual) style interpretations, and pressure from her fans to support the LGBTQ+ community, are two instances of the creative and perhaps unexpected outcomes of a shared interactional space. Swiftology was changed by the music video accompanying the song “You Need to Calm Down”—which featured several LGBTQ+ celebrities, like the cast of the widely popular US television show *Queer Eye* (Nolfi, 2022)—by her fans and the (decidedly mixed) public reactions to the video (Kirkland, 2019).

Leaders, Totems, and Cultural Creators

We have argued, contra Nigam et al., that individual people do not become institutions. What, then, are distinct people such as Taylor Swift? Moving past inhabited institutionalism, and as a starting point, we return to Selznick (1957). We applaud Nigam et al. for drawing from Selznick (1949) to discuss institutionalization as value infusion, yet we find it odd that they do not discuss his capstone work *Leadership in Administration* (Selznick, 1957) to conceptualize the place of individuals in this process. Selznick (1957) conceptualizes figures such as Taylor Swift not as institutions themselves, but rather as institutional leaders who oversee the process of value infusion and protect those values from being displaced: “the leader is an agent of institutionalization, offering a guiding hand to a process that would otherwise occur more haphazardly, more readily subject to the accidents of circumstance and history” (p. 27). Taylor Swift is the institutional leader who steers Swiftology, but she herself is not the institution, because the institution entails much more than her as an individual.

In addition to being a Selznickian leader, Taylor Swift can be interpreted as a totem (yet this too is an interactional process). Drawing from Durkheim (1912/1995) and Goffman (1967), Randall Collins (2005) compellingly dissects how concerts, such as the Eras Tour, can have the feel of a religious revival: they are large, intense interactive settings with a shared focus and ritual entrainment—in the case of concerts there is a literal rhythm. Through bodily co-presence, these interaction ritual chains generate a tremendous amount of emotional energy. Importantly, this emotional energy does not completely disappear when the concert ends, because it gets attached to a totem: a symbol representing the collective experience. Here, Taylor Swift is not only the performer; she is also the totem representing the experience. There are even Taylor Swift prayer candles that wink to the “religiosity” of this process,⁴ and references throughout the year to “Merry Swiftmas” on days associated with Swift, including her birthday, dates of her album releases, and more generally in reference to themed gifts given during the Christmas season (Abram, 2024). Although this sacredness gets attached to Swift as a totem, she herself is not the religion, because the very feeling of collective effervescence requires not an individual, but the full interaction ritual chain. The creation of the celebrations emerging through Swiftology are only possible through the collective interactions of the participants, and totems lose their power when the interaction rituals that supply emotional energy wither away.

Taylor Swift can also be seen as a type of cultural creator central to the formation of cultural objects (Griswold, 2013). Here there may seem to be more sympathy for Nigam et al.’s argument, as cultural objects are “shared significance embodied in form” (Griswold, 2013, p. 11). On the surface this might describe Taylor Swift, as she is literally embodied. However, Griswold (2013) emphasizes that objects only gain significance when they “enter the circuit of human discourse” (p. 14). This, rather than representing Swift as an individual, represents the emergence of Swiftology. Cultural objects are

necessarily social, hence Griswold’s innovation of the “cultural diamond” (Figure 1) depicting the linkages among cultural creators (Swift the artist, and to a lesser extent her producers, fellow musicians, and record company), receivers (Swifties and critics alike), the broader social world (economic, political, and cultural), and the object itself (Swiftology as an institutionalized form).

People can be cultural creators whose work, efforts, and energies become cultural objects (e.g., institutional mythologies) around which attention is focused, but that does not make them institutions unto themselves. We compare this to another globally popular phenomenon: Harry Potter. J.K. Rowling, the author of the internationally best-selling book series, later adapted into a movie series and media franchise, has come under major public scrutiny for her statements relating to gender and transgender people (Davies, 2025). Yet the Harry Potter series remains the best-selling book series of all time (Scholastic Inc., 2023). Harry Potter is an institution—or an institutional mythology—within which J.K. Rowling is a central creator, though a somewhat more infamous one than Taylor Swift. Without Rowling, there would be no Potter. Yet without Rowling, a Potterology still exists. Fans, critics, media and entertainment organizations, actors, writers, and the general public collectively inhabit the mythology of Harry Potter, less J.K. Rowling. This collective inhabitation led to a widespread public revolt. As one example, a 2021 article published through BuzzFeed, a popular media outlet in the US and UK, declared: “*Harry Potter*” Fans to J.K. Rowling: “*I Am the Captain Now*” (BuzzFeed Daily, 2021). Disgusted by Rowling’s politics, the fans took control, prioritizing the art over the artist. Or, to put it into the terms expressed in Swift’s song “Call it You Want,” “they took the crown.” Similar comparisons might be made to The Grateful Dead and their “Deadhead” followers (Grubb, 2016), and Beyoncé and the Beyhive (Coleman, 2018). Although “Deadheads” and “The Beyhive” have not fomented such revolts, the case of J.K. Rowling and Potterology demonstrates the possibility. This is precisely

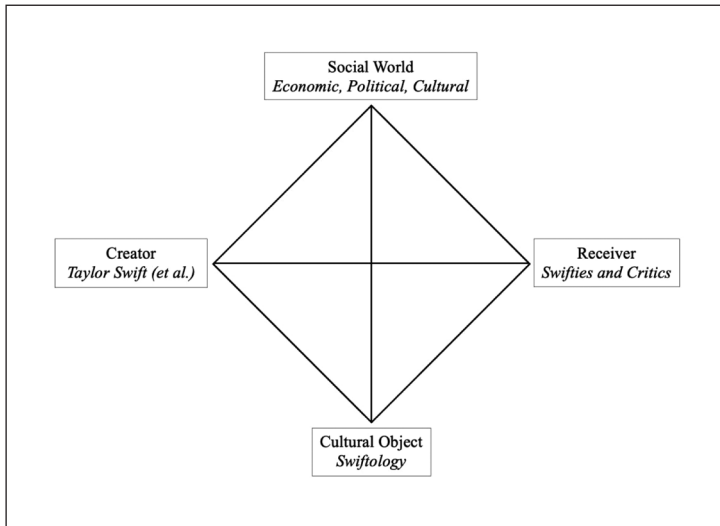


Figure 1. A Swiftology reoriented cultural diamond.^a

^aAdapted from Griswold (2013)

because, although individuals can be institutional leaders, totems, or cultural creators, they are not institutions.

Institutional theory is at its best when it interfaces with additional approaches, and when it does so without subsuming those approaches. Theorizing individuals as institutions discredits the value of other sociological approaches that usefully examine individuals as leaders, totems, cultural creators or other entities. Nigam et al. contend that viewing individuals as institutions creates a “powerful opportunity for developing insight into the emergence and spread of institutions” (p. 2), but the cost of subsuming individuals into the analysis is to diminish other plausible explanations, explanations which, when treated as separate and distinct, create the opportunity for interface and dialogue with institutional theory, instead of subsummation.

Discussion

We agree with Nigam et al. (2025) that Taylor Swift is a “focal point around which a distinctive and enduring set of roles and a recognizable repertoire of interactions across roles emerges” (p. 1). What we disagree with is the

assertion that, as an individual, being that focal point makes her an “institution.” Institutions are important, large, and powerful, yet they are not everything. If they are (or if we, as scholars try to define them as everything) they lose their explanatory power. Totalizing definitions of institutions are logically problematic: if institutions are (also) individuals, institutions can no longer explain the actions of individuals, because individuals are endogenous to the definition, creating confusion about the explanans and explanandum (Liska, 1969).

Our argument in this dialogue was threefold. First, people may be active participants and creators in institutional mythologies initiated by their public personas, but an institutional mythology (in this case an institutional “Swiftology”) is larger than and different from Taylor Swift as an individual. Second, institutionalization as a process, institutions, and institutional mythologies are only possible through and by the collective interactions of people—inhabitants doing things together. Third, instead of theorizing individuals as institutions, we instead conceptualize popular and influential persons as leaders, totems, and cultural creators. Nigam et al. masterfully detail the ways that

institutionalization occurs, showing that the person becomes inseparable from the other actors, even if they are central. However, they do not go far enough in their theorizing—or perhaps go too far—in suggesting that it is an individual, not a mythology, that becomes institutionalized.


We love Taylor Swift. She is much of what Nigam et al. say she is, but she is not an institution. What Nigam et al. successfully do in their theorizing is emphasize how powerful people can shape institutions and direct organizational concerns toward shared cultural concerns, and shape cultural moments. Nevertheless, this remains an entirely interactive process. Centering an institution within a person fits the tendency within some older types of institutional and management theory to valorize individuals and create hero narratives that sanitize the collective work of people in acting together to (re)create institutions (Barley, 2019; Mutch, 2007). Everything, and everyone, cannot be an institution. If we can identify individuals as something other than institutions we can more cogently examine the relationships between those things and institutions, without making every(one) an institution. We argue that we can identify individuals as key interactants that are crucial to the creation of institutional mythologies, but without whom mythologies can continue to exist. We extend this to include the other examples Nigam et al. offer of people as institutions, including Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, and Muhammad Ali. These are key players in more complex institution mythologies that live on, and *change*, in their absence. Without the person, the institution changes, but it does not disappear—they persist precisely because they are not one “person,” but rather because they are institutional mythologies collectively constructed by communities of people.

We welcome further theorizing about the impact of key institutional interactants, and the contexts and social dimensions that allow some people to leverage interactions to co-create mythologies. We are especially wary of characterizing a white American woman as ruler of the world, when most of her concerts and fandom

are based in Western countries and Oceania. In the case of Taylor Swift, it is difficult to dismiss that her public image is that of a straight, white female who exemplifies many Western beauty ideals (Dubrofsky, 2016). Race, gender, class, and geography are heavily implicated in the creation of institutional mythologies. While Swift has enjoyed success across the globe, it is an overstatement to suggest that her songs have equal resonance across all continents. This is another example of how Swiftology, which is coupled differently depending on setting and interactants, is more accurate for describing Swift’s popularity and impact than characterizing individuals as institutions. Institutions require *people*, not *person*.

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Notes

1. Selected lyrics, “Call It What You Want”, *reputation*, Taylor Swift (2017).
2. It is public knowledge, and we repeat it here because of the intensity of the preparation, that Taylor Swift trained for the Eras Tour by spending 6 months in advance of the tour running on a treadmill for 3+ hours daily while singing her full setlist, and simultaneously in the three months before her tour, also taking dance lessons, as well as strength training and conditioning (McCluskey, 2023)
3. If money speaks, Taylor is talking. Following the Eras Tour Taylor Swift offered US\$100k bonuses to her crew, a signal that they are integral to the success of the institution, not merely accessories (Bhatnagar, 2023).

4. The Luminary and Co. (2025) is one of many retail outlets with Taylor Swift prayer candles on offer.

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Tim Hallett is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame. His research sits at the intersections of culture, organizations, and social psychology. He is currently developing an inhabited institutional approach to understanding professional socialization. Tim does not identify as a Swiftie per se, though after being forced to listen to her music, he now acknowledges Swift’s artistic mastery.