UNDER THE RADAR:

INSTITUTIONAL DRIFT AND NON-STRATEGIC INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract

Although researchers have acknowledged that not all institutional change results from the intentional efforts of relatively reflexive actors, we lack an explanation of how mundane interactions between actors can result in non-strategic institutional change. To address this, we advance the theory of institutional drift that reveals how the practice deviation(s) that occur between interaction partners in an institutional order, transformed into tolerable deviations by the self and others, can lead to the non-strategic transformation of that institutional order. Our framework extends the interactionist perspective in organizational institutionalism by showing how interpersonal interactions are animated and constrained by people's passionate attachment to the fundamental sacred ideals, or ethos, underlying institutional orders. It is this connection with ethos that animates the interactional processes tied to both maintaining and disrupting institutions.

Keywords: institutional change, institutions, interactions, practice

Institutional orders locate people in constellations of typified identities, expectations, and frames which guide their actions and interactions with others (Weber and Glynn, 2006). Institutional orders embed latent tensions between stability and change (Farjoun, 2010) because interaction practices, i.e., the routine activities that are largely unconscious and automatic (Swidler, 2001b), "hold in place" institutional orders (Goffman, 1983), even as the people performing these roles change (Barley and Tolbert, 1997; Dacin et al., 2010; McPherson and Sauder, 2013). Thus, "stability is often a tenuous social accomplishment" (Lounsbury, 2008, p. 357). Mundane interactions open possibilities for institutional change (Gray et al., 2015; Islam and Sferrazzo, in press; Lok and de Rond, 2013), because people inevitably enact their institutional expectations imperfectly, and "seemingly minor variations (purposeful or not) may accumulate to generate institutional change" (Micelotta et al., 2017, p. 1886).

We investigate how institutional change can arise from people's routine performance of their institutional roles. Although prior research has shown that mundane interactions between interactants can generate macro-level institutional change (Gondo and Amis, 2013; Smets et al., 2017; Smets et al., 2012), we lack a process theory of how such change results. Thus, there is an irony that leads to a question: *How can social interactions aimed at reproducing an institutional order instead lead to unintentional institutional change?*

In answer, we advance the theory of *institutional drift*, which describes a process of practice deviation-driven expansion of an existing behavioral repertoire associated with actor roles in an institutional order. It encapsulates non-strategic change that results from people's unintentional deviations in enacting their roles in an institutional order. Importantly, however, such deviations leave intact the institutional ethos which defines the institutional order. Ethos refers to the fundamental sacred ideals underlying the institutional order (Voronov and Weber, 2016), which furnishes a moral force, making the institution experientially real – even sacred – to the interactants (Geertz, 1957). It is the basis of social solidarity in the institutional order. We theorize that deviations from the institutional order are judged to be tolerable when interactants render them allowable (e.g., Steele, 2021; Vaughan, 1996) and then re-integrate them into the ongoing flow of social interactions (Lok and de Rond, 2013; Yamauchi and Hiramoto, 2020). This, in turn, creates the perpetual

possibility of institutional drift. Our theory illuminates how the non-strategic transformation of an institutional order arises from interactants' practice deviations from their typified actor roles, accompanied by their tolerance of these deviations.

We make the following contributions. First, we reveal how mundane occurrences may, counter-intuitively, bring about change without effortful or intentional work by actors. Thus, our contribution to the institutional change literature highlights the process whereby an alternative, non-strategic model of change – institutional drift – occurs. More specifically, we show how tolerance of deviations, by interactants, can transform the defining practices of an institutional order without altering its underlying institutional ethos. Our reasoning pivots on the recognition that, although the ongoing flow of interactional practices is the key to institutional durability, the disruption of this flow, through tolerable practice deviations, along with the restoration of the flow, is key to institutional change. We advance a model that delineates these processes and accompanying mechanisms.

Second, our theory foregrounds the role of the symbolic and the sacred (Ashforth and Vaidyanath, 2002; Geertz, 1957; Hazan and Zilber, 2019) with its emphasis on ethos. As such, institutional drift occurs, in large part, due to people's attachment to the abstract and unfalsifiable ethos, or ideals that are only loosely materialized in day-to-day practice, enabling potentially significant transformation of practices without altering these underlying ideals.

Third, we enrich the interactionist perspectives on institutions that emphasize practice (Gondo and Amis, 2013; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Smets et al., 2017) and local social interaction (Gray et al., 2015; Leibel et al., 2018; McPherson and Sauder, 2013) and extend these to explain institutional change. We highlight how interpersonal interactions – or what people do together by virtue of their institutional actor roles – are embedded in prescribed relationships; in turn, these relationships have relatively durable effects within institutional orders and for the people who enact them by shaping a sense of self that is formed in the course of these interactions (e.g., Toubiana, 2020). Moreover, we acknowledge how social dynamics of inequality and access to the institutional order shape change.

We proceed as follows. We first position our work within extant research on institutional change by emphasizing the centrality of local social interactions in explaining institutional change. As well, we highlight the importance of the symbolic components of the institutional order in

influencing these interactional dynamics. We then explicate the theory of institutional drift and use it to theorize the relationship between local interaction practices and institutional change; we propose that this can yield non-strategic change or its complement – institutional doubt – that may lead to more strategic change. We conclude with a discussion of implications of the theory for future institutional research.

THE DYNAMICS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The interest in how and why institutional change happens has been at the heart of a variety of research streams in institutional theory (e.g., Dacin et al., 2002; Lawrence et al., 2013; Micelotta et al., 2017). As well, there has been increasing recognition that not all institutional change is driven by actors who intentionally alter extant institutional arrangements. Scholars have begun to attend to the roles of emergent activities and mundane social interactions in contributing to institutional change (Gondo and Amis, 2013; Lok and de Rond, 2013). Yet, as Micelotta et al. (2017) point out, "little is known about *how* micro-level, day-to-day changes scale up and the trajectories through which 'improvisations' may aggregate, concatenate, accumulate, and/or escalate…. Critically, the implications of such differences for our understanding of the way change processes unfold have not been systematically theorized" (p. 1895, italics ours). Indeed, although we know that micro-level local interactions can contribute to institutional change, we lack a theory that explains *when, why, and how* these interactions may lead to change.

To address this gap, we advance the theory of institutional drift to explain how mundane interactions can lead to instititional change in the absence of strategic action to that end. In fact, the foundation of our theorizing is that institutional change is imminent in those social interactions intended to reproduce and maintain the institutional order. We begin by recognizing that the tension between the disintegrating forces of change and the reintegrating forces of stability (Farjoun, 2010) inheres in the very flow of social interactions by which institutions are inhabited (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006); building on this, we next examine how these mundane interactions may contribute to institutional change.

Local Interactions and Typified Actor Roles

Institutional research has evidenced an interactionist turn, as researchers have increasingly focused on social interaction as the basis of both institutional stability and change.[1] For example, inhabited institutionalism (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006), drawing on symbolic interactionist theory, emphasizes "what people do together" (Fine and Hallett, 2014; Leibel et al., 2018) as the foundation of institutions. In a similar vein, practice-driven institutionalists (Smets et al., 2017) emphasize the reciprocal constitution of the broader meaning systems and the situated local activities that are informed by those meaning systems (Lounsbury, 2008; Lounsbury and Crumley, 2007; Smets et al., 2012). Scholars have also shown how rituals, as a "social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation" (Alexander, 2004, p. 529), collectively produce and reproduce institutional orders (Collins, 2004; Dacin et al., 2010; Gray et al., 2015; Islam and Sferrazzo, in press).

This body of work recognizes that social interactions encapsulate the dynamics through which institutional orders come into being and are maintained. The reciprocal typifications of actor roles and associated typified actions (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) constitute the interaction orders (Collins, 2004; Goffman, 1983), that seemingly appear permanent but, in reality, are fluid and fragile (Steele, 2021). Their ongoing flow is essential to institutional durability, and the disruption/repair of this flow is an essential element of institutional change.

Yet, utilizing the flow of social interactions as the basis of explaining institutional stability and change requires making a distinction between situational interactions and their more durable trans-situational effects. In other words, social interactions do not occur in a social vacuum, and their rules are not renegotiated de-novo each time. Rather, the ongoing flows of social interactions require the development of a relatively durable, institution-specific sense of self among institutional order inhabitants (Voronov and Weber, 2020). As people learn to think, feel, and act as competent participants in the social interactions that constitute an institutional order, they develop institution specific sense of self (Toubiana, 2020; Voronov and Weber, 2016). As Zimbardo's (2007) classic prison study illustrated, not only did the occupants of the "prisoner" and of the "guard" roles quickly set up a reciprocal typification of actor roles and associated behaviors, but via these interactions they

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[1] We do not imply that all work under the interactional umbrella focuses exclusively on non-strategic change. Rather, what holds this work together is the close attention to local – often mundane – interactions, and these have received less attention in the context of other research streams. We rely on this interactional work to build a theory of non-strategic institutional change.

also developed different senses of the self, corresponding to their respective actor roles. A similar institution-specific sense of self among prison inmates was found empirically by Toubiana (2020), and the reciprocal typification between interactants was apparent in Dacin et al's (2010) study of the dining rituals that shows the commitment of the occupants of different actor roles to the enactment of the rituals.

Furthermore, authorization as a competent and legitimated participant in an institutional order requires recognition and approval from other inhabitants. Thus, aligning one's sense of self with the demands of an institutional order is both effortful and provisional (Voronov and Weber, 2016). It also allows for a degree of flexibility and of artful action from participants, while requiring reinforcement and re-stabilization to repair breaches and disruptions, lest the status quo is transformed.

The Symbolic Dimension of Practice Deviation

Inevitable slippages that occur in the reproduction of the institutional order in everyday practice can result in interpretive ambiguity and variation in the performance of institutional actor roles. Further, they can raise questions about the institutional order itself, or about its ethos, which provides personally relevant meaning and an emotionally-laden moral force (Siebert et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2017). The term "ethos" refers to the "the tone, character, and quality of a people's life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects" (Geertz, 1957, p. 421). The concept connects institutional theory with pragmatic phenomenology (Patriotta, 2020). It acts as an "idealized representation of what it means to be a participant in a particular institutional order, and it prescribes particular kinds of aspirations, ideals, values, and moral judgments" (Voronov and Weber, 2016, p. 461).

In essence, institutional ethos is a sacred (Durkheim, 1965[1915]), shared fantasy which makes the mundane local interactions meaningful, fulfilling, and mostly fluid. For example, "care and respect for patients" (de Rond and Lok, 2016, p. 1979) is part of the ethos of the medical profession. From this point of view, institutional arrangements are not an end in themselves but are inevitably imperfect operationalizations or concretizations of institutional ethos (Voronov and Weber, 2020). These imperfect operationalizations open up the possibility of multiple interpretations, as well as slippages, and misunderstandings (Steele, 2021). This shared commitment to institutional ethos is the basis of social solidarity, which in turn, motivates institutional order inhabitants to keep their social

interactions fluid and smooth and to try to render any deviations invisible, or at least, non-disruptive. As we theorize below, institutions are de-stabilized, as inhabitants pursue alternative actor roles, and re-stabilized, as inhabitants collectively maintain the extant order of actor roles (Steele, 2021).

THE THEORY OF INSTITUTIONAL DRIFT

Our theory of institutional drift offers a processual explanation of how institutional change can result from tolerable practice deviations between institutional actors. There are two interrelated mechanisms that are drivers: 1) initially, *practice deviation*, by a person acting in a manner that is inconsistent with the expectations of their institutional actor role, and 2) then, *tolerance of the practice deviation* by the local interaction partner(s). Although we treat practice deviations and tolerance as analytically distinct for theoretical parsimony, we recognize that, in actuality, they are socially constructed and necessarily closely interlinked. Our model of institutional drift is depicted in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The process begins with interpersonal interactions in an institutional order which generate practice deviations. These practice deviations are co-produced by interactants – and judged by them as tolerable (or not) -- in one of three ways, which in turn has implications for the type of institutional change that occurs: 1) the deviation is unnoticed due to its apparent irrelevance to the institutional ethos, resulting in trivial or no change; 2) the deviation is ignored because it seems compatible with the ethos, leading to institutional drift; or 3) the deviation feels threatening and is normalized as compatible with ethos, leading to institutional drift; alternatively, however, if the deviation is not normalized, it leads to institutional doubt. It is paths 2 and 3 that generate institutional drift because they marginally expand the prescribed behavioral toolkit (Swidler, 1986) of actor role occupants in an institutional order and thus defines the realm of what is tolerable for interactants. As such, the production of tolerable deviations that yields institutional drift does not necessarily lead to radical institutional change, but instead can lead to gradual yet significant institutional transformation by expanding the set of acceptable practices associated with the institutional order.

Tolerance is an interactant's reaction to the perceived practice deviation; it ranges from an automatic, unconscious response to an effortful theorization intended to reestablish the social interactions characteristic of the institutional order. Thus, tolerance does not have to be deliberate or calculated – and much of the time it is not. Rather, it is accomplished through local interaction rituals (Collins, 2004) and predicated on the cooperation of the role performer and the interaction partner(s); it does not prompt a questioning and re-evaluation of the institutional ethos, even as social practices and relationships may change. However, when tolerance of practice deviations fails to normalize them, it can lead to *institutional doubt*, which refers to the questioning of the efficacy of institutional arrangements.

Practice Deviation

Despite their best efforts, people are prone to slip-ups in local interactions in their prescribed actor roles. These slippages may involve blunders, awkward or poorly thought-out verbal and non-verbal behaviors that depart from what is normal or taken-for-granted for their specific actor role. Even for people who are comfortable in their institutional actor roles, degrees of incompetence, misunderstanding, apathy and superficiality are inevitable (Voronov and Weber, 2016), and the resulting slippages threaten the taken-for-granted nature of the social interactions that constitute institutional arrangements (Steele, 2021).

These practice deviations can range from minor modifications to more substantive – and even radical – departures. Key, however, is the interactional nature of the deviation: behavior by an Actor A, an interpretation or reaction by Actor B, and a follow-up reaction by Actor A. Essentially, it is what Weick (1979) describes as a "double interact," i.e., a set of dyadic, interlocked behaviors in a three-part exchange: act, response, and adjustment. Whether these deviations constitute minor oddities or full-blown breaches of taken-for-granted social interaction expectations (Tavory and Fine, 2020), they disrupt the flow of normal social relations, and if left unattended, may threaten institutional stability (Heaphy, 2013; Steele, 2021).

Although deviations may result from social awkwardness or misreading social cues (Steele, 2021), deviations may also result from incomplete penetration of institutions into a person's life (Voronov and Weber, 2020). This leaves a realm of idiosyncratic personal situations where feeling and action are driven, at least partially, by private pragmatic concerns, rather than fully, by

institutional actor role prescriptions (Thévenot, 2001). Despite their attempts to colonize the entirety of a person's sense of self (Coser, 1974), most institutions typically fail to do so. Thus, private spheres, i.e., parts of the self that are not governed by a focal institutional order, result from incomplete socialization into an institutional order (Voronov and Weber, 2020). As a result, there is always space for a sense of self that is not entirely tied to a particular institutional actor role. This opens the possibility of deviation from ascribed actor roles.

Prior research has acknowledged that persons not feeling oneness with their ascribed actor role are likely to become change agents (Creed, 2003; Kellogg, 2011b). Yet, such lack of oneness with an ascribed actor-role can also lead to practice deviations for two other reasons that do not involve active rejection of, or rebellion against, the ascribed actor role: conflicting institutional claims to the self and over identification with an institution by a person.

Conflicting Institutional Claims. People traverse a variety of institutional orders in the course of their day-to-day life, in professional, family, religious, community or work sites; as a result, they occupy a variety of actor roles, a point emphasized in the burgeoning research on institutional complexity (Bertels and Lawrence, 2016; Greenwood et al., 2011; McPherson and Sauder, 2013; Smets and Jarzabkowski, 2013), and institutional pluralism (Kraatz and Block, 2008, 2017). People experience the different logics governing different domains of life (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Schutz and Luckmann, 1974; Thornton et al., 2012) such that the associated institutions provide symbolic material that facilitates and constrains human action (Lockwood and Glynn, 2016). The enactment of ascribed actor roles is a provisional accomplishment, whereby people are transformed, at least temporarily or situationally, into particular kinds of actors that are needed for the reproduction of a particular institutional order (Creed et al., 2014; Voronov and Weber, 2016).

At the inter-institutional level, some institutional orders may also enjoy greater centrality or prestige relative to others in a person's life (Gray et al., 2015). For example, when corporations enjoy higher prestige in society than governments (Oakes et al., 1998; Perren and Jennings, 2005), government workers, facing pressure to be "more like private sector," may deviate from the practices associated with their ascribed actor roles in public service, by borrowing (McPherson and Sauder, 2013) from the business logic.

In all, a person's sense of self is an important constraint on their ability to engage in the normal behavior associated with their ascribed actor roles in a particular institutional order. As a result of a person's occupying different actor roles traversing different institutional orders, deviations also arise from the "tainting" of a role by values and ideas of another institutional order (Toubiana, 2020). Thus, as people bring practices associated with another institutional order into a focal institutional order, they may deviate from normal behavior in the focal institutional order. For instance, Japanese housewives formed a social enterprise for the purpose of procuring better food for their families (Leung et al., 2014); initially, it was consistent with the societal "dutiful wife" ideal and did not attempt to transform the typified roles or social norms affiliated with the roles for husbands and wives. Eventually, however, the housewives claimed more expanded roles within the family as they routinely borrowed from the business logic, which they used to effectively operate the social enterprise.

Another example of the juxtaposition of different logics, with sometimes contrasting value systems and inequalities, is that of work and family in many people's everyday experiences (Ladge et al., 2012; Ramarajan and Reid, 2013). Role relationships in a commercial organization and in a household family unit take very different forms – typically valuing self-interest, and detachment (along with aggressiveness at times) in the former and devotion, compassion and loyalty in the latter. Although boundaries between work and family are often supported by strong social conventions and symbolic markers, such as location and dress (Perlow, 1998), they are ultimately tenuous (Kunda, 1992), as people carry their work selves into the family sphere and vice versa (Hochschild and Machung, 2012; Ramarajan and Reid, 2013). In turn, these multiple selves are likely to affect how they enact their institutional role in the focal institutional order. For instance, when confronted by a misbehaving child, a parent may "slip-up" and respond to the misbehavior as a manager, rather than as a parent, thus allowing the manager actor role to "taint" the parent actor role.

Overidentification with an Institution. People derive their sense of self from enacting actor roles in various institutional orders (Curchod et al., 2014; Kellogg, 2011a; Mead, 1934). The self that develops not only goes beyond a single actor role that they experience, but also entails possible ideal selves that project desired future states based on identifications with an institution's ideals and principles (Joas, 1996[1992]; Markus and Nurius, 1986; Schütz, 1967[1932]). People learn to value

themselves as human beings drawing from the roles, they occupy in an institutional order (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014; Rogers et al., 2017). For example, an accountant may develop a sense of self based on whether s/he can expect to become a partner at a large accounting firm (Covaleski et al., 1998); this sense of self is likely to extend beyond work to impact how the person values herself or himself more generally. Thus, attempting to attain a prestigious actor role in an institutional order that one values highly is an important life project for many people, whose life aspirations might be driven by the desire to occupy a particular actor role (Thornborrow and Brown, 2009). Behavior aimed at self-actualization in an aspirationally valued institutional order can lead people to deviate from behavioral expectations in less valued roles, as for example, in sacrificing family obligations while trying to attain superior performance in one's work-based actor role.

In addition, overidentification with an institutional order and the desire for high achievement in that institutional order can also prompt practice deviation by doing more than what is deemed appropriate. Thus, in Kellogg's (2011a) study of surgical residents, the "supermen" residents that viewed their self-actualization as top surgeons in terms of macho toughness and extremely long hours, sometimes deviated from institutionalized patient safety protocols by insisting on longer hours on-call and pursuing other opportunities to showcase their skills. In other words, deviations might be driven by people's zealousness in pursuing their ideal selves through jokeying for higher status actor roles in an institutional order.

Finally, institutional change can erode the clarity about the appropriate toolkits of behaviors associated with actor roles, making it more likely that role occupants might misread a given situation and, consequently, deviate from the practices associated with their ascribed roles. Toolkits consist of skills, habits, and styles that people mix and match freely (McPherson and Sauder, 2013; Weber, 2005), translating these behaviors into practices that guide action (Swidler, 1986, 2001a). The potency of these toolkits, or cultural resources, depends upon the situational circumstances in which they are deployed. Swidler (1986) distinguishes between two types of situations: settled and unsettled. In "settled" or more stable times, cultural resources tend to be concretized, almost automatic, and relatively unexamined and unseen (Swidler, 2001a); conversely, in "unsettled" times, characteristic of social upheaval (Swidler, 1986), toolkits become more visible and used more deliberately because the status quo is contested and existing strategies of action are called into question (Giorgi et al., 2015).

More generally, institutions have a significant effect on the cultural resources available and their use; as Pedersen and Dobbin (2006) contend, culture and institutions are two sides of the same theoretical coin.

Creating Tolerable Deviations

Although deviations can incur sanctions (Crawford and Dacin, 2020; Creed et al., 2014; Dacin et al., 2010; DeJordy and Barrett, 2014), they may not; in fact, deviations can be deemed tolerable by interactants for several reasons. First, the mutual responsibility that interactants face ensures that social interactions are fluid, with reciprocal courtesy, politeness and face preservation (Goffman, 1959; Steele, 2021). Second, the need to maintain the legitimacy of the institutional order itself is important. Sanctioning disruptions, while effective in ensuring immediate conformity (Crawford and Dacin, 2020), may be counterproductive for institutional stability. For example, shaming deviating persons may prompt them to question the extant institutional arrangements, thereby motivating them to act as change agents (Creed et al., 2014; Gould, 2009).

Tolerance is an interactive accomplishment – reliant on both the deviating person(s) and their interactants – that downplays and excuses the deviations while reconfirming the viability and desirability of the extant institutional arrangements. There are three questions that determine the respective tolerance response from other institutional order inhabitants: 1) Is the deviation relevant to the institutional ethos? 2) Is the deviation compatible with the institutional ethos? And 3) Is the deviation threatening to the institutional ethos? Each of these has implications for noticing, ignoring, and normalizing the deviation, respectively. It is important to note that these questions are theoretical, rather than phenomenological. In other words, we are not suggesting that interactants reflectively ask these questions or respond to them in a deliberate manner (though normalization may involve a deliberate choice, as we explain below). Rather, these questions and responses to these questions, as visualized in the figure, should be seen as analytical categories of interactant responses to the deviations. The responses themselves are likely to be automatic, visceral and non-conscious (Bitektine et al., 2020).

Tolerance can be more or less reflective or intentional, but it is nonetheless, significant for the transformation of an institutional order – transforming the practices, without necessarily altering the ethos that the practices operationalize and concretize. In explaining the Challenger disaster, for

instance, Vaughan (1996) suggests that the "dirty hands" ethos of NASA engineers that helped them ensure safety was never explicitly disavowed. Rather, employees gradually came to accept progressively higher levels of risk, resulting in the less noticeable erosion of material practices pertaining to safety. Thus, institutional inhabitants may tolerate a very high level of deviation – even when the stakes are very high, as in the life-or-death decision of a space shuttle launch.

Noticing the Deviation: Ethos Relevance. Given the artful action required to carry out ongoing social interactions (Goffman, 1983), it is not surprising that many actions can deviate from the prescribed actions for a particular actor role and go unnoticed. Such common occurrences are unlikely to seem relevant to ethos, but are likely to be deemed as oddities or personal "quirks" that either go entirely undetected, or require only "quotidian efforts" (Steele, 2021) among interactants. For instance, in their study of a Japanese sushi bar, Yamauchi and Hiramoto (2020) offer several examples of a sushi chef deviating from prescribed behavior while interacting with customers. However, these deviations largely go unnoticed by the customers, and none of the interactions result in a breakdown of the social order due to the ability of both the chef and the customers to adapt and improvise in a way that maintains mutual intelligibility. Such oddities are unlikely to lead to institutional transformation. Neither the deviations themselves nor the minor – and largely unconscious – corrective effort required to restore the normal flow of social interactions (Steele, 2021) are enough to institutionalize new practices. As such, we do not expect tolerable deviations of this nature to trigger institutional drift.

Ignoring the Deviation: Ethos Compatibility. When the deviation is experienced by interactants as significant and yet compatible with the institutional ethos, the deviation is likely to be ignored, overlooked or forgiven. To the extent that it is deemed as an unusual action that is consistent with ethos, it is likely to be treated as harmless or even beneficial. In this case, the ignored deviations can lead to institutional drift. There are several reasons why practice deviations might be transformed into ignorable and tolerable deviations.

First, when institutional order inhabitants experience the institutional order as stable, the deviations are less likely to be seen as threatening to the ethos because they tend to be unexamined in such "settled" periods (Swidler, 2001a). For instance, senior managers might see line employees' efforts to use work equipment to produce objects for their own non-work use (Anteby, 2008) as a non-

threatening way to assert autonomy or to let off some steam, that is unlikely to hurt the institutional status quo. Ignoring such deviations might then seem like a harmless indulgence. Further, the ignoring response is more likely when there are no perceived overt challenges or "unsettledness" to the institutional order by those deviating (such as in the Japanese housewives example above), which increases the likelihood that the deviation is not experienced by the interactants as a threat to the ethos, but as a purely pragmatic issue of making everyday life work.

Another reason interactants may ignore a deviation is when their level of attachment to a particular institutional order is relatively lower than to another institutional order that they inhabit. For instance, if a person is devoted to her or his family but sees their work as "just a job," they are more likely to overlook other employees' deviations from normal actor-role behaviors at work. Also, a deviation is likely to be ignored when its perceived utility to the institutional order is higher. For example, managers may ignore the deviating behavior of front-line employees because it might be a harmless way for the employees to make their jobs more satisfying and motivating for themselves. This is exemplified by job crafting, a term that refers to "the physical and cognitive changes people make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001, p. 179), and managers are often encouraged to permit or even embrace such efforts. In another example, Lok and De Rond (2013) report how Cambridge rowers sometimes ignored their teammates' deviations that did not seem threatening to the ethos because they felt the deviations might enhance the team's performance. This formation of tolerable deviations of this type is likely to be more deliberate, as interactants actively reflect on the deviation, its drawbacks and benefits, and decide to let it continue.

Ignoring practice deviations has significant implications for institutional change because these tolerable deviations expand the behavioral repertoire, which over time, can lead to substantive institutional transformation. As well, the source of those deviations likely matters: peripheral actors' deviations are more likely to be ignored than those of central actors. The study by Leung and colleagues (Leung et al., 2014) about the Japanese housewives (mentioned above) is instructive on this point. The business-like deviations by the wives, who were perceived to be subordinate and peripheral to their husbands, were largely seen as nonthreatening and ignored by their husbands. However, over time, the business skills acquired by the women, along with their increased influence

outside the home, altered their domestic role expectations relative to their husbands, transforming the institutional order that constituted the marriage.

Normalizing the Deviation Leading to Institutional Drift: Ethos Threat. When the deviation is experienced by interactants as threatening to the institutional ethos, the likely response is normalization, however counterintuitive this might seem. Normalization is a form of distributed theorization (Strang and Meyer, 1993; Svejenova et al., 2007), i.e., a process of constructing and elaborating institutional categories and patterned inter-institutional causal relationships by abstracting general solutions from specific practices (Greenwood et al., 2002; Reay et al., 2013).

The theorizing is done both by the deviating person and by their interactants to reconstitute the deviation as being consistent with, and morally justifiable by, the ethos – even though it violates the institutional norms. For the deviating person, normalization involves an adjustment process that reduces the dissonance felt in response to one's awareness that a deviation has taken place – likely triggered by other inhabitants' reactions (Creed et al., 2014). It also involves theorization of one's actions as acceptable, even if they may seem deviant. In other words, the person needs to feel "OK" and comfortable about what they have done.

Other inhabitants play a role in normalization by deploying rhetoric in a manner that has moral and emotive force (Brown et al., 2012; Gray et al., 2015). Rituals that are grounded in the institutional ethos, and enhance institutional-order inhabitants' sense of belonging, are other levers that can be deployed (Dacin et al., 2010). Whether for self- or other-normalization, the focus is less on the "accuracy" of actor-role enactment and more on the "plausibility" of classifying certain behaviors as fitting within the repertoire of behaviors associated with the actor role (Alexander, 2004). To the extent that deviations become more widespread and public, the imperative to normalize them increases, and they are likely to be theorized as an appropriate – or even desirable – way of doing things (Compagni et al., 2014).

It is noteworthy that when an institutional order feels less stable to the interactants, deviations are more likely to be experienced as threatening to the institutional ethos and need to be either sanctioned or normalized. Such "unsettling" times tend to make behavioral repertoires more visible and therefore called into question (Giorgi et al., 2015). Yet, sanctioning, when done frequently or applied to many inhabitants, is dangerous because it can expose the inequities enshrined in extant

institutional arrangements and prompt questioning of the status quo (Crawford and Dacin, 2020; Creed, 2003; Creed et al., 2014). Thus, at times of instability, the imperative for normalization increases. For example, when there appears to be widespread concern about unfair treatment of employees in an organization, raising question about a fundamental ideal of meritocracy, some employees who deviate from the typified actor role behaviors, might be promoted or rewarded despite, or even because of, their deviating behavior. This helps to reduce the perception that the deviating behavior was threatening to the institutional order and enhances the moral standing of the institutional arrangements, making them appear consistent with institutional ethos.

Normalization, when successful, reinforces the status quo by shifting the attention from the efficacy of institutional arrangements to the competence of actor role occupants. For example, benevolent actions of higher status-role occupants that facilitate the ascendancy of lower status role occupants in the hierarchy play an important normalizing function. These actions help lower status role occupants conclude that the institutional arrangements meritocratic, and that (with hard work) there is room for them to improve their experience without overthrowing the institutional arrangements (Kellogg, 2011c).

Yet, normalization not only restores the flow of social interaction among specific inhabitants, but also signals the acceptability of the deviation; it does this by gradually reframing the deviation as a non-deviation, and perhaps replacing what used to be considered normal practices. As a result, normalization is likely to lead to significant institutional change. Returning to Vaughan's (1996) Challenger disaster study, for instance, it is apparent that moving away from institutionalized safety protocols was accomplished not through strategic de-institutionalization, but through normalization of ever-greater deviations from typified practices. In other words, normalization leads to institutional change by altering the repertoire of practices associated with certain actor-roles in the institutional order, and thus redefining the repertoire.

We recognize that practice deviations and tolerance are closely intertwined. We noted, for instance, that deviation is not objective but is socially constructed by the interactants. These interactive dynamics, contextualized in settings characterized by double-interacts (Weick, 1979), also impact how tolerance manifests. And, we have theorized how deviations that are noticed can, instead of being punished, be ignored and lead to institutional drift either directly, or indirectly, by being

normalized, in spite of a threat to the institutional ethos. However, normalizing the deviation, can fail, and instead, lead to institutional doubt.

Failure to Normalize the Deviations Leading to Institutional Doubt. Failure to normalize the deviation and restore fluidity to social interactions is likely to trigger explicit questioning of whether the institutional arrangements are a valid materialization of the institutional ethos. In this case, it is not institutional drift that ensues, but institutional doubt. We use the term "doubt," in the sense of pragmatist sociology, to refer to the process whereby actors interrogate and critique the status quo in a deliberate vs. habitual form (Boltanski, 2011; Camic, 1986; Joas, 1996[1992]). Doubt about the efficacy of institutional arrangements in terms of operationalizing ethos is often experienced as a form of dissonance or breakdown (e.g., Creed et al., 2010), and arises from the disparity between ethos and the inhabitants' lived experience in the institutional order, making it feel subjectively less settled to the inhabitants.

Doubt refers only to the questioning of the efficacy of institutional arrangements, not the institutional ethos. For example, the Catholic Church's persistent failure to address the sexual abuse of minor boys by ordained priests motivated Church members to organize to reform institutional arrangements they saw as a poor reflection of the Church's ethos, which was still cherished in spite of the scandal (Gutierrez et al., 2010). Doubt is the trigger for the more effortful transformation of institutional arrangements that have been studied under the rubrics of institutional entrepreneurship and institutional work (Lawrence et al., 2011). It represents a fundamentally different orientation toward the institutional order. Rather than seeing it as the plausible materialization of a cherished institutional ethos, it starts to be seen as a collection of arbitrary arrangements that are hollow and lacking a necessary moral basis (Wright et al., 2017).

Doubt does not necessarily lead to mobilization against injustices. Rather, as many examples of reactionary mobilization efforts illustrate, doubt can lead people to mobilize against institutional arrangements they experience as being inconsistent with their internalized societal or institutional ethos. This might pertain to people defending the institution of marriage being conceptualized in heterosexual terms, opposing affirmative action, or other efforts to "restore the good old days" (Coontz, 2000). Doubt involves a reorientation of action from pragmatic concerns toward reflection upon the efficacy of institutional arrangements. We conceptualize doubt as arising from the persistent

failure of the tolerance response to produce tolerable deviations. If ritual performance breaks down, participants experience the institution as not coming alive in concrete interactions (Dacin et al., 2010; Islam and Sferrazzo, in press).

A persistent failure to normalize egregious deviations can lead to ethos being perceived to be insufficiently embodied in practices. Institutional ethos has to be personified visibly in prototypical persons (Voronov and Weber, 2020), especially those occupying powerful actor roles (e.g., Andreas, 2007; Raffaelli and Glynn, 2015). Doubt is likely to result in the erosion of trust in leaders and others elite actor role occupants. This can be the outcome of revelations of wrongdoing and scandals affecting those who previously enjoyed privileged public positions, such as politicians or religious leaders, coupled with efforts by other inhabitants to normalize these failures but failing to do so (Gutierrez et al., 2010).

In sum, doubt results from the loss of the experiential "realness" in the institutional order to inhabitants. Thus, practice deviations are not readily normalized, but are instead taken as "data" that extant institutional arrangements may not be optimal operationalization of the institutional ethos and may be worth changing.

Institutional Drift, Institutional Doubt and Restoration of the Institutional Order

As we have emphasized throughout, institutional orders are grounded not only in their cultural cognitive, normative and regulative foundations (Scott, 2001), but perhaps more significantly, in an institutional ethos that can be neither falsified nor confirmed (Voronov and Weber, 2016, 2017; Wright et al., 2017). Institutional arrangements are imperfect materializations of ethos, and as such, require plausible personifications (Voronov and Weber, 2020). Thus, the processes of institutional drift and institutional doubt may – over time – impact institutional ethos itself, rather than just the material institutional arrangements.

In our theory of institutional drift, we propose that drift is likely to impact only the interactions in the institutional order, while either reinforcing or not affecting the ethos. Institutional doubt, while primarily impacting the agentic orientation of institutional order inhabitants toward the institutional order, may also prompt inhabitants to reflect on the ethos itself. Thus, inhabitants may start to feel not only that the institutional arrangements are a poor materialization of the institutional ethos, but also

questioning the ethos itself, as ethos feels more and more detached from the lived reality (e.g., Hochschild, 2016).

DISCUSSION

We began with a puzzle – How can social interactions aimed at reproducing an institutional order instead lead to unintentional institutional change? – and sought to solve it with our theory of *institutional drift.* Institutional drift describes a process of practice deviation-driven expansion of an existing behavioral repertoire associated with actor roles in an institutional order. An important aspect of drift, as opposed to the more intentional, strategic process of institutional doubt, is that it leaves unquestioned and intact the underlying institutional ethos, itself a moral force, integrating and energizing adherence to the institutional order. Our theory of institutional drift illuminates how the non-strategic transformation of an institutional order arises from practice deviations emerging organically from typified actor role enactments, accompanied by tolerance of these deviations by the self and other interactants. This results in the perpetual possibility of institutional drift.

We sought to make contributions in several areas of organizational scholarship. First, we inform current dialogue on the inherent tension between institutional stability and change. We show how the ongoing flow of interactional practices is key to institutional durability, while the disruption of this flow, through tolerable practice deviations, is key to institutional change. Second, in highlighting the critical role of the institutional ethos in institutional change, we foreground the role of the symbolic, as both the foundation of the institutional order and of people's connection to it. Finally, we enrich the interactionist perspectives on institutions that emphasize practice and local social interaction by revealing their relationship to the dynamics of institutional change. We discuss each of these contributions, drawing out implications for future theorizing.

Implications for Institutional Change and Stability

A classic fulcrum in institutional theory rests on the attention given to institutional stability versus institutional change. Originating as an explanation for resilience, institutional theory has long highlighted the durability of institutions (Hughes, 1936) and the stabilizing effects of normative, cultural, and cognitive rules and routines (e.g., DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Scott, 2001). More recent research, notably that investigating institutional entrepreneurship (e.g., Battilana et al., 2009) and institutional work (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2013), has attested to the possibility of change within the

institutional paradigm. To wit, these perspectives on institutional change clearly take as a "point of departure" the focus on the antecedents of deliberate and intentional institutional change, as "the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 215). And, although institutional researchers acknowledge the importance of social interactions (e.g., Fan and Zietsma, 2017), they aim to understand "the efforts of individuals and collective actors to cope with, keep up with, shore up, tear down, tinker with, transform, or create anew the institutional structures within which they live, work, and play, and which give them their roles, relationships, resources, and routines" (Lawrence et al., 2011, p. 53).

Generally speaking, institutional researchers have emphasized how it takes effortful work to transform institutional arrangements; this seems most evident in work that emphasizes how institutional contradictions enable agency (e.g., Rao et al., 2003; Seo and Creed, 2002) that, in turn, can drive change. And yet, this approach has been criticized for overestimating the extent to which opportunities for change are likely to be recognized as a function of these contradictions (Lupu et al., in press; Voronov and Yorks, 2015), and for confounding agency with reflexivity (Cardinale, 2018).

Our theory of institutional drift sensitizes researchers to a class of activities that were previously unacknowledged. As shown in Figure 1, practice deviations are an inevitable part of institutional actors' role performance (Gondo and Amis, 2013; Yamauchi and Hiramoto, 2020) because their enactment of their ascribed-actor roles is artful, yet also flawed (Steele, 2021). Imperfect enactments are thus inescapable and sometimes are rendered tolerable; this tolerance is necessary to restore the fluidity of social interactions. As a result, institutions are inevitably in flux. Thus, change is not only possible without strategic action, but it is seeded in ongoing enactments of the institutional order, where such enactments may go unnoticed, ignored or normalized, with the latter two resulting in institutional drift. And yet, when a deviation is deemed threatening to the institutional ethos, but efforts to normalize it fail, it can trigger institutional change via institutional doubt.

The notion of institutional doubt is the "meeting point" between non-strategic institutional change (or drift) and strategic institutional change. For example, Wright and colleagues' (2017) study of Australian hospital emergency rooms showed that some of the triggers of physicians' institutional

work, aimed at affirming the cardinal values of the public healthcare system, were brought about by emergent processes where failure of normalization of deviations occurred. These deviations were not intended to undermine or challenge the institutional ethos but nonetheless triggered doubt among some inhabitants, motivating them to engage in more effortful work to alter practices that seemed to be failing to uphold the ethos. And yet, the likelihood that inhabitants will direct their efforts toward transforming the institutional arrangements is curbed because it would limit their capacity to act.

Our theory of institutional drift offers implications not only for *what type* of change is likely, but for *when* change is likely to occur. Strategic theories attribute institutional stability to vigilant institutional maintenance and attribute institutional change to effective mobilization against the status quo (Hampel et al., 2017; Lawrence et al., 2011; Rao et al., 2003). In contrast, we suggest an alternative path of institutional change, when practice deviations are ignored or normalized, rather than sanctioned. In times of stability interactants are likely to ignore deviations, experiencing them as nonthreatening, and the resulting drift implies that institutional change can occur even in the absence of overt contestation. Moreover, we propose that this process is heightened under conditions Swidler (1986) described as "unsettled times," i.e. when social disruptions or environmental change is heightened. As we argued, even in these unsettled times, interactants are motivated to normalize – rather than sanction – practice deviations. This is necessary to maintain the legitimacy of the extant institutional arrangements.

Thus, our theorization of institutional drift paints a different picture of the ontology of institutional change. We view the strategic view of institutional change as rooted in the ontology of institutions as contested terrain, in which some actors try to uphold the status quo, while others try to overthrow it. By contrast, our model is rooted in a more consensus-based ontology, whereby social solidarity, mutual obligations, and even politeness (Collins, 2019; Fan and Zietsma, 2017; Steele, 2021), rooted in a shared investment in institutional ethos, motivate people to try to maintain the integrity of the flow of interactions that constitute the institutional order, in spite of mundane deviations.

Yet, we would not want to imply that our theory of institutional drift is incompatible with the strategic views of institutional change. There are multiple pathways to change (Micelotta et al., 2017), and our theory explains an intermediate space between stability and strategic change.

Our theory recognizes that people might attempt to mitigate the effects of the relational obligations that institutions place upon their interactions with others (Steele, 2021). In other words, they might spend little time reflecting on institutions, but rather simply be trying to gain pragmatic benefit for themselves or reduce the chances of breakdowns or punishments. Watson (2003), for example, sees people as typically concerned with pragmatic rather than institutional projects, "continually striving to make sense of the world and achieve an identity through processes of negotiation, exchange and rhetorical dialogue with others" (p. 1319).

As a result, we open up promising opportunities for empirical investigation. For instance, one such opportunity would be to investigate the organizational and personal factors that make it more likely for tolerable deviations to escalate to a point that motivates some inhabitants to engage in more effortful work aimed at either buttressing or reforming institutional arrangements. Additionally, tolerance is likely to manifest differently in different contexts. Thus, it would be important to investigate the personal and the situational factors that influence different forms of tolerance response on behalf of interactants either directly or indirectly exposed to deviations. This centrality of interpretation and situated experience both defining what are deviations and the interactants different responses to them points to the need for further incorporation of phenomenology (Gill, 2015, 2018; Patriotta, 2020) into institutional analysis.

Implications for the Role of the Symbolic

Our second contribution is to extend interaction-focused research by highlighting the importance of the symbolic and the self (Voronov and Weber, 2016, 2017, 2020) in people's efforts to competently occupy and perform their respective actor roles in various institutional orders. Institutional typifications are an important part of negotiation of the self (Glynn, 2008; Muzio et al., 2013; Patriotta, 2020; Weber and Glynn, 2006) because they serve as resources for people to get on with their life in a practical orientation. Much of what happens to institutions is thus done not as deliberate projects directed at institutions but, rather by institutions harnessing people's pragmatic and seemingly personal motivations in the service of institutional maintenance and change.

We suspect that these processes of subjectification and enactment have been overlooked, in part, because researchers have tended to look at people instrumentally – as "individuals" or "actors" – to try to explain "what they do to institutions," without examining the processes of how the person

and their ascribed actor role aligns and how it can break down. This may have also made researchers more sensitive to the structures that facilitate and hinder agency (Rao et al., 2003; Seo and Creed, 2002) but less sensitive to the people's subjective experience of these structures, and "their personal, tacit 'feel'" (Smets et al., 2017, p. 380) for how to navigate them. Placing institutional ethos at the center of our theorizing makes these processes of interpretation and meaning making central to our theorizing.

As people traverse different institutional orders, they cannot simply take institutional roles on and off like hats. Thus, the effects of being socialized into an actor role in one institutional order shapes – and often limits – how a person can partake in other institutional orders (e.g., Toubiana, 2020). Accordingly, we would expect that, to the extent that a person learns and internalizes the institutional ethos and acquires the capacity to act as a competent actor in an institutional order (Hazan and Zilber, 2019), the possibility of their acting as a change agent—at least strategically—is reduced. Thus, future researchers might explore how and why people do or do not internalize institutional ethos, and how they may prioritize the different institutional orders that they traverse on an ongoing basis.

Another research direction would involve examining how the dynamics of ethos personification is critical to understanding how the ethos feels experientially real to institutional order inhabitants (Voronov and Weber, 2020). Some inhabitants, for instance, are normally given greater attention and authority for personifying institutional ethos, as exemplified by the notion that leaders infuse organizations with values (Raffaelli and Glynn, 2015). Thus, their actions help to clarify for others what are appropriate practices within the institutional order. Accordingly, it would be valuable to explore how greater authority to personify institutional ethos is conferred on some people. This may not always be related to formal "leadership" roles, as exemplified in Kellogg's (2011a) "supermen" surgical residents who were seen as being particularly visible personification of the institutional ethos; in turn, however, this constrained change efforts.

Implications for the Role of Institutional Theory in Society

Telescoping out, we draw several implications for how institutional theory can function to explain, to draw attention to, and to research, broader dynamics of institutional change in society. Institutional processes can be complicit in both exacerbating and mitigating societal problems via

creation and alteration of particular actor roles; this is evident in the labels we apply, such as "migrant" versus "refugee" (e.g., Klein and Amis, in press). The interactional practices through which these actor roles are inhabited and made meaningful, for both interactants and others, have consequences for society.

One promising area for future research is the investigation of how people may not have equal access to, or be equally able to participate in, the institutional orders they inhabit. Actor roles in an institutional order tend to be stratified; as such, there are differential repertoires of practices that are associated with different actor roles that vary in equality. Higher status role occupants (Gill and Burrow, 2018; Magee and Galinsky, 2008) tend to have fewer restrictions than lower status role occupants. Moreover, people are not automatically treated as competent actors by others (Buchanan et al., 2017), but rather must be validated by them as competent (Creed et al., 2014; Voronov and Weber, 2016, 2017). Future researchers might examine how people's biographies and experiences, as well as identity or personal characteristics such as gender, race or age, may make it easier (or harder) for them to access certain institutional orders and/or be channeled toward certain actor roles within an institutional order.

Bell and Nkomo's (2003) study, for instance, shows how female managers (and especially black female managers) had to learn to internalize white male behavioral patterns in order to be deemed credible and professional. The differential status of those occupying the roles of the managers and the managed are constructed not only through the discourse of organizational hierarchy, but also that of race and gender. This implicates race and gender inequality in the construction and reconstruction of institutionalized status differences in a given organization as well as in the society, at large. We believe it would be worthwhile to investigate how actor role stratification and relative centrality of the actor roles in an institutional order can impact the form tolerance takes, be it noticing, ignoring or normalizing or not.

For example, a person may take on a higher status role in one institutional order (e.g., a senior manager at work) but a lower status one in another (e.g., a "partner" in the family). The effect is to create a more desirable sense of self in some institutional orders than in others, or conversely, to increase the difficulty to inhabit or adjust to one's different roles in an effortless and deviation-free way. Thus, family units may be seen as more akin to organizations that are "managed" through the

institutional norms of a professional organizing, and family members are evaluated and valued according to business-like role relationships. This further enables people to translate their higher status role from the work into the family. Accordingly, to the extent that a person infuses the values, ideas and practices that govern their work life into their family life, they are likely to increase their status within the family; this was seen, for example, in the greater emancipation of women in the family when they took on more managerial roles in the workforce. Those without access to such roles, as for example, in societies that exclude women from the workforce and other participation outside family (Zhao and Wry, 2016), they would be less likely to claim more advantaged roles. We would expect that the self-reinforcing effect of institutional processes of the self (Muzio et al., 2013) on stratified actor roles is thus most pronounced and least tempered in institutional systems where a single institutional order is dominant or encompassing. This is because people do not have access to roles of different status in other institutional realms that may otherwise contaminate or challenge the dominance order of the focal institution.

Relatedly, it is worth exploring the differences between central and peripheral actors, as well as central and peripheral practices. Prior research has acknowledged the impact of these differences in a variety of contexts, primarily focused on the context of more effortful and strategic change initiatives and on the actors, rather than on the practices (Cliff et al., 2006; Nigam et al., in press; Wright and Zammuto, 2013). We would expect that practice deviations are more likely to be unnoticed or ignored, when they are more peripheral – that is less obviously related to the institutional ethos; an example of this occurred when housewives' business pursuits did not seem to threaten the "dutiful housewife" ethos (Leung et al., 2014). Yet, when a substantial number of actors engage in such deviations, the associated institutional drift is more likely to lead to substantial institutional change.

CONCLUSION

With our theory of institutional drift, we sought to expand the scope of understanding institutional change. We built on the interactionist turn to explicate how people inhabit institutions, emphasizing the relationship of their lived experience and social interaction to the ethos (Hallett and Ventresca, 2006; Smets et al., 2017), as well as the deviations that arise from the performance of their actor roles. Our theorizing acknowledges the inherent indeterminacy of institutional orders,

originating from the fantasmic yet inherently moral fundamental institutional ideals, or ethos (Voronov and Weber, 2020) that are only partly and imperfectly translated into concrete institutional arrangements by people inhabiting them. This, in turn, makes deviations and slippages inevitable, requiring ongoing stabilization of the institutional arrangements and institutional change, particularly non-intentional change, a likely outcome.

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Figure 1: The Theory of Institutional Drift

Interactions within an Institutional Order

Creating Tolerable Deviations

Institutional Change Implications

Institutional Arrangements

Actor A

1. Action
2. Interpretation
3. Reaction

Actor B

Institutional Ethos

Practice Deviation

Tolerable Deviation

Noticed
[relevant to ethos?]

Yes

Ignored
[compatible with ethos?]

No

Normalized
[threatening to ethos?]

Trivial/no Change

No

Yes

Yes

Institutional Drift

No

Institutional Doubt