UC Irvine

Title

A Place in the World: Vulnerability, Well-Being, and the Ubiquitous Evaluation That Animates Participation in Institutional Processes

Permalink

Journal

ISSN

Authors

Creed, WE Douglas
Hudson, Bryant A
Okhuysen, Gerardo A
et al.

Publication Date

DOI

A PLACE IN THE WORLD:

VULNERABILITY, WELLBEING, AND THE UBIQUITOUS EVALUATION

THAT ANIMATES PARTICIPATION IN INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES

W. E. Douglas Creed
University of Rhode Island

Bryant A. Hudson
IESEG School of Management, Paris

Gerardo A. Okhuysen
University of California, Irvine

Kristin Smith-Crowe
Boston University

1

A PLACE IN THE WORLD:

VULNERABILITY, WELLBEING, AND THE UBIQUITOUS EVALUATION THAT ANIMATES PARTICIPATION IN INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES

We explain how and why people become motivated to participate in institutional processes. Responding to recent efforts to address the micro and meso in institutional analysis, we introduce two interrelated constructs, a person's *embodied world of concern* and a community's *shared world of concern,* which shape how people experience, evaluate, and participate in institutional arrangements. The world of concern, which is the product of people's sedimented experiences of thriving and suffering, becomes the basis for their commitments to antagonisms towards certain social arrangements. The *world of concern*, as a lens, sheds light on the complex ways the macro, meso, and micro levels are co-implicated in constructing commitments and attachments that animate action in institutional arenas by providing a new metaphor, one that links the realism of participant concerns to the micro dynamics that underpin institutions. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of these ideas for future research.

2

INTRODUCTION

Many institutionalists criticize institutional theory for inadequately

accounting for people's motivations for constructing, supporting, or

disrupting institutions (DiMaggio, 1988; Friedland, 2018; Lawrence &

Suddaby, 2006; Lounsbury & Ventresca, 2003). Hallett and Ventresca (2006:

214) attribute this deficiency to the fact that for much of its development,

institutional theory has assumed a macro level, structuralist perspective –

one that emphasizes the ways in which "supra-organizational" symbolic

systems constitute and direct action. This has both reified social structures

and sacrificed the phenomenological focus on the human interactions that

are the "beating heart of institutions" (2006:215). In other words, the

trajectory of institutional theory has allowed scholars to populate institutions

with disembodied people, untethered from their sedimented histories of

living in actual communities and unaffected by aspirations for their own and

important others' futures. If we are ever to find the institutional pulse, we

need a new conceptual lens for understanding how people's histories and

aspirations animate their participation in diverse institutional processes. We

argue that getting to "the beating heart of institutions" requires attending to

people's inescapable vulnerability (Sayer, 2011) and ubiquitous concerns

over wellbeing (Selznick, 2008) as these play out within institutional

arrangements. We argue such a lens must bring together the insights of the

macro-structuralist perspective with richer understandings of meso- and

micro-level concerns that are rooted in personal histories of interactions,

3

relationships, social arrangements, and wellbeing or its absence.

In this paper, we develop such a conceptual lens, the *world of concern*, for viewing these animating forces and complex mechanisms. We argue that each person experiences the institutional world, in all its complexity, in terms of what we call one's *embodied world of concern* – a collection of sedimented experiences, evaluations, commitments, and aspirations. While each person has an embodied world of concern, its construction always draws on the concerns of important others. Consequently, a mutually-constituted *shared world of concern* emerges from people's embeddedness in systems of social relationships, bonding them to important others. In essence, our goal is to explain how persons' concerns are implicated in how they individually and collectively participate in institutional processes and arrangements.

Below we review work that speaks to current challenges in institutional theory, situating our theoretical objectives squarely within this tradition. We then describe the *embodied* world of concern and explicitly foreground that it always encompasses a *shared* world of concern. We explore the implications of the embodied and shared worlds of concern for how persons encounter and engage each other and institutional arrangements. By doing so, we shed light on the complex ways the macro, meso, and micro levels are co-implicated in constructing the evaluations, emotional commitments, and aspirations that animate action in institutional arenas. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of these ideas for future research.

Our presentation of the world of concern offers theoretical and

4

empirical leverage for examining institutional phenomena across levels of analysis. Micro and meso scholars will see how, methodologically, the world of concern provides an analytical lens for linking histories of interactions at the meso level to micro-level commitments and motivations. Theoretically, the world of concern provides a new language and a new metaphor that links the realism of participant concerns to the micro dynamics that underpin institutions, allowing for a richer conceptual understanding of action formation. For macro-oriented institutional scholars, the world of concern offers a different way of examining institutional contestation, persistence, and change.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The remarkable growth of institutional theory over the past 40 years (Greenwood, Oliver, Lawrence, & Meyer, 2017; Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008b) is celebrated by many (Friedland, 2018; Voronov & Weber, 2016) and lamented by others (Alvesson & Spicer, 2019). New institutionalism, initiated by the works of Meyer and Rowan (1977), Zucker (1977), and DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991) shifted attention from elite managerialist interests and notions of action as rational and self-interested to perspectives that emphasize phenomenological processes involving broader cultural and institutional forces (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin, & Suddaby, 2008a). This shift highlighted the importance of the symbolic in the quotidian life of people and of cultural influences on institutionalized patterns of collective action.

5

Yet many scholars argue that the new institutionalism still fails to adequately explain the dynamic, nested, and recursive processes involved in institutional reproduction and change (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006; Hirsh & Lounsbury, 1997; Selznick, 1996; Stinchcombe, 1997). The common diagnosis is that, due to its focus on taken-for-granted rule following, institutionalism omits essential micro- and meso-level processes that underpin institutions. By focusing primarily on macro-level systems of meaning that constitute and constrain persons' cognition and action, the new institutionalism at one time or another leaves by the wayside cardinal features of individual and social life that could help explain human participation in social arrangements. Such omissions include: biology and biography (Berger & Luckmann, 1967); interaction rituals (Goffman, 1967); the emotions and evaluations that are part of practical action (Creed, Taylor, & Hudson, 2020; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991); kinship, social bonds, and community dynamics (Fine & Hallett, 2014; Hallett & Ventresca, 2006); processes of collective action and organizing (Bakken & Hernes, 2006; Meyer, 1998; Weick, 1979); persons' emotional commitments to institutional arrangements (Voronov & Vince, 2012); and people's lived experience of complex and contradictory institutional contexts (Creed, Hudson, Okhuysen, & Smith-Crowe, 2014; Scheff, 2000).

Cue the Burgeoning Interest in the Micro Dynamics of Institutions

In response to this deficiency, there has been a burgeoning interest in what is often referred to as the microfoundations or micro dynamics of

6

institutions (Haack, Sieweke, & Wessel, 2019). Work in this diverse domain wrestles with how people participate in institutional processes at the micro and meso levels. Its common impetus is the idea that because "institutions are sustained, altered, and extinguished as they are enacted by collections of individuals in everyday situations" (Powell & Rerup, 2017: 311), we need to attend to *how* and *why* people participate in these institutional processes (ibid.). We will briefly summarize and describe each of three streams that, within microfoundations, speak to the question of how people participate in the micro dynamics that underpin institutions and explain how these approaches are helpful but suffer important shortcomings.

    Institutional work. In introducing the institutional work perspective, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) fault institutional theory for downplaying individual and collective agency in meso-level processes. This stream of research argues that institutions are not easily or automatically self-perpetuating and instead require individual and collective work for sustained reproduction (Hampel, Lawrence, & Tracey, 2017). Consequently, institutional processes entail "the purposive actions of individuals and organizations" (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006: 216). For example, in their study of contestation over the clearcutting of ancient forests, Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) find that opponents exerted direct and indirect pressure on logging firms regarding their established practices and in the process changed higher orders of meaning in the industry. Specifically, new practices of consultation with first peoples and environmentalists resulted in a shift

7

away from the clear cutting of forests to the selective harvesting of trees. This case shows how challengers can subject institutionalized ways of being and doing to scrutiny, evaluating their effects, and contesting their continued use. Thus, the work of institutional change reflects people's awareness, their desires to alter institutional arrangements, and their marshaling of skills and resources to achieve those desires. At the same time, while this paper documents a beautifully lyrical statement of what motivates people's activism – the immeasurable value of an old-growth forest found in "the very oxygen that we breathe, uncountable fish, fowl and land animal species, fresh water supplies, and the indescribably lovely, magical, mystical, irreplaceable expression of nature that is an intact old-growth rain forest" (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010: 202) – it does not offer a way of conceptualizing such interrelated concerns as drivers of institutional work. Institutional theory does not have the language to capture how life-giving elements, the lovely, the magical and the mystical suffuse persons' motivations to act. In our view, the closest the institutional work perspective comes to grasping such complex motivations is the proposal to use a biographical lens to explore how persons' experiences of successes and failures in shaping their world informs their subsequent institutional work (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2011). Thus, while the institutional work perspective provides an important view, it only hints at the importance of understanding how people's personal experience of the world animates their participation in institutional processes.

8

Emotions in institutions. Another stream of micro- and meso-level studies has sought to explain people's motivations for engaging in institutional processes and institutional work by examining the role of emotions, particularly social and moral emotions. Lok, Creed, DeJordy, and Voronov (2017) note that the study of emotions allows us to understand how persons feel about institutional arrangements, the people, events, practices, and rules in their lives. For example, Toubiana and Zietsma (2017) and Jakob-Sadeh and Zilber (2019) show how conflict arises when people have strong attachments to social arrangements and institutional practices. In one case, the conflict at the Degenerative Disease Foundation is over a controversial medical treatment (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017) where some, primarily sufferers and their supporters, want to adopt a new and untested treatment rapidly while others, primarily medical professionals, want to wait for evidence of its safety and effectiveness. Toubiana and Zietsma's (2017) explanation speaks to the role of emotional registers associated with specific logics – the passion of a care logic versus the dispassion of a research logic. In the second case, the conflict at Together (Jakob-Sadeh & Zilber, 2019) is among people committed to advancing notions of peaceful co-existence in Israel while living with legacies of ethno-nationalistic wars and enmities. Jakob-Sadeh and Zilber's explanation speaks to how emotions are implicated in the management of logics within the organization and the role of power asymmetries between Jewish and Arab organizational members in demanding differential levels of emotional work.

9

The emotions in institutions perspective alerts us to neglected aspects of action by showing that while people do indeed navigate institutions through processes of thinking and understanding (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), they also engage them emotionally. People are drawn to participate in institutional processes, including institutional work, because they have feelings about particular institutional arrangements (Friedland, 2018), they find hope in them (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017), and they experience attachment to or alienation from them (Creed et al., 2014). Such research brings emotions to the fore and highlights their impact in institutional processes. However, to the extent it views emotions through existing institutional lenses such as logics, this work renders emotions epiphenomena. By subordinating them to established institutionalist notions that privilege cognition, the emotions in institutions perspective risks obscuring, if not distorting, the fundamentals of emotions in their own right.

Inhabited institutions. Finally, the inhabited institutions perspective attempts to deliberately reconnect institutional theory and symbolic interactionism. The focus is on people's lived experience of interactions in the context of systems of relationships that give contour to institutional arrangements (see also Everitt & Levinson, 2016; Hallett, 2010; Hallett & Meanwell, 2016; Hallett, Shulman, & Fine, 2009). For instance, Hallett and Ventresca (2006: 226) elaborated on the idea of inhabited institutional processes (Scully & Creed, 1997) to capture how institutions are populated "by people whose social interactions suffuse institutions with force" (226)

and produce locally negotiated meanings. Through reinterpreting how workers in Gouldner's (1954) study of a gypsum works made sense of changes in the workplace using meanings they derived through interactions in communities outside the workplace, Hallett and Ventresca (2006) highlight the importance of *what people do together* – negotiate practices and meanings and enact institutionalized forms of behavior. What stands out for our purposes is their use of Gouldner's evocative words regarding the new manager's lack of social "connective tissue" and his "ignoran[ce] of the magic words of condolence and congratulation" (Gouldner, 1954: 84, as cited in Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). They explain how the manager's efforts at introducing and attempting to institutionalize new work arrangements, such as attention to absenteeism, were made difficult by his ignorance. This work highlights that is it essential that institutionalists think of people's actions as doubly embedded in systems of meaning and kinship networks. Yet, Gouldner's (1954) attention to those "magic words" challenges institutionalists to conceptualize how the human experiences of sorrow and joy affect persons' participation in institutional processes as well.

Taking these three streams together, we see a mix of interconnected problems having to do with institutionalism's impoverished conceptual language. It begins with an overreliance on a few metaphors, such as logics. This is coupled with the absence of a language for dealing with fundamental human experiences – of the life-giving and the mortal, of joy and sorrow, of congratulation and condolence, of caring about something – of so much of

11

what suffuses persons' motivations to act. In other words, institutional theory needs a better way of speaking about what is "at stake in social life" (Selznick, 2008:23), otherwise it will lack the capacity to explore the "ideals, strivings, failures, and fulfillments of everyday life" (p. 23).

Institutions Existing Apart From and Beyond People?

Across these streams, we see hints of how persons' experience of institutional arrangements shapes action. At the same time, a close look also reveals that our field still lacks a conceptual vocabulary for fully representing peoples' participation in institutional processes. Here we argue that an underlying reason for this gap is that all of this fruitful work shares the same a point of departure, that is, paradigmatic definitions of institutions that obscure the drivers of human participation in social arrangements. Thus, the dominant images of institutions explicitly set aside "affective commitments" and "moral allegiances" in favor of "rationalized and impersonal prescriptions" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991: 15) and focus on routine patterns of social practices "as existing apart from and beyond" people (Lok & De Rond, 2013: 186).

In our review of prevailing definitions of institutions, summarized in Table 1, we find they generally privilege the macro aspects of social arrangements, focusing on a settled regularity (e.g., Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010; Farjoun, Ansell, & Boin, 2015; Lok & De Rond, 2013) and presenting stability and automatic reproduction as the defaults in social life. Despite the fact that symbolic interaction and social construction underpin these

12

paradigmatic definitions, human interaction sneaks into these definitions most often in abstract ways (e.g., Jepperson, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Unlike real people, the implied actors in these definitions have no concrete commitments, emotions, attachments, or aspirations. The communities in which people live their lives are also largely absent, such that there is little attention to how humans' preoccupation with belonging shapes self-regulation and behavior (Creed et al., 2014). In rejecting the atomized rational actor, these dominant definitions seem to have thrown the baby out with the bath water, reducing people to actors without relational moorings.

_____

Insert Table 1 about here.

_____

It is important to note, however, that there are competing definitions of institutions. The one that comes closest to the understanding of institutions that animates our theorizing is that of Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1991: 40), which emphasizes how institutions shape meso-level interaction and guide human experience "by making possible or impossible certain ways of behaving and relating to others." By this definition institutions shape "character by assigning responsibility, demanding accountability, and providing the standards in terms of which each person recognizes the excellence of his or her achievements." But definitions that incorporate such notions of relationship, mutual concern, aspiration, and obligation in this manner have not gained favor in the field.

13

We argue that, weighted down by the macro sensibilities of impersonal prescriptions operating across time and place in a more or less ahistorical manner, none of these emergent microdynamics streams has been able to use people – embodied, relational, and emotional people who live complex and uncertain lives filled with condolence and congratulation – as their point of departure. An essential step toward overcoming the obstacles posed by existing definitions entails granting primacy to fundamental aspects of the human experience so the institutional inhabitants of our theories become flesh and blood. To be clear, we are not calling for the integration into institutional theory of actors as "autonomous rational egoists" even as we contend, contrary to Jepperson's view, that human beings need to be considered as "foundational elements of social structure" (Jepperson, 1991: 158). We argue below for the need to focus on people's persistent vulnerability, their preoccupation with securing the wellbeing of themselves and of important others, their persistent evaluation of how social arrangements foster or undermine wellbeing, and the implications of these fundamentals of human experience for how and why people participate in institutional arrangements. Thus, our interpretation of current efforts within the institutional literature is that they provide hints of these elements and their importance – most frequently in efforts to better understand the motivations behind institutional enactments – but what has remained elusive is a better lens to capture what animates people and moves them to take action to defend or disrupt institutional arrangements.

14

Learning from Pragmatism and Critical Realism

While there are likely many reasons why a better lens has eluded us, in this section we will outline two serious challenges that keep institutional theorists from making people the point of departure: inadequate attention to values in institutional analysis and the tendency to adopt a spectator's view of action within social science.

Values Then, Evaluation Now. Parsonian conceptions of institutions positioned "common value patterns" and persons' internalization of those patterns as the "'core phenomena' at the 'base of social order'" (Parsons, 1951: 42 cited in DiMaggio & Powell, 1991:17). This view influenced the early trajectory of institutional theory, particularly Selznick's (1953) foundational work, such that values came to be seen as important facets of institutional theorizing (Kraatz & Block, 2017). Later, however, new institutionalism came to critique value-centered theories like Parsons' where "[a]ction remain[ed] rational in the sense that it comprises the quasi-intentional pursuit of gratification by reasoning humans who balance complex and multifaceted evaluative criteria" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991:17).

The cognitive turn in institutional theory did not just reject people as rational actors in favor of practical action (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Overcorrecting, new institutionalist scholars inadvertently advanced theories that painted people as all but automatons following cultural prescriptions. Another unintended consequence of the new emphasis on practical action, unfolding under the influence of institutionalized scripts, was the relative

15

eclipsing of values. Explicit discussion of values become rarer, despite the continuing recognition that institutions have normative, as well as cognitive and regulative, elements (Scott, 2007). According to Kraatz and Block (2017: 542), increasingly dominant framings seemed "to assign a preeminent role to cognition and to subsume the other elements within the cultural-cognitive realm." This implicit hierarchy of the cognitive over the normative (and regulative) seems to have left scholars "uncomfortable with this dimension" (Kraatz & Block, 2017: 541), to the point that "values have largely dropped off the map" (Kraatz & Flores, 2015).

In short, the cognitive turn came at a cost. Stinchcombe claimed that the "trouble with new institutionalism is that it does not have the guts of institutions in it […] that somebody somewhere really cares" (1997: 17). According to Stinchcombe, without people's adherence to the "essential values" underlying the symbolic and material practices of an institution, it loses authority and becomes formulaic action, ultimately precluding its reproduction and leading to its demise (Stinchcombe, 1997: 6). By extension, if we do not understand why and how people care, we cannot understand why people participate in institutional processes. We suggest Stinchcombe's words capture one important reason for the growing interest in institutional micro dynamics: understanding what motivates values-oriented, institutionally embedded action. As it has become clearer what has been lost, more recent explorations of institutionalism have sought to reclaim values as integral to institutional thinking (Friedland, 2014; Kraatz & Block,

16

2017; Kraatz, Flores, & Chandler, 2020; Kraatz; Selznick, 1996; Selznick, 2008).

Here we join the effort to give values the attention they deserve. In so doing, however, we advise making two shifts drawing on pragmatist perspectives (Dewey, 1913; Lorino, 2018) and critical realism (Sayer, 2011). Our first move is away from an emphasis on institutionalized organizations to people "as the real bearers of values – and as the ultimate constituents of the social world" (Kraatz & Flores, 2015). Second, we embrace Dewey's (1913: 268-9) pragmatist "flank movement" of changing the "subject matter from value (or values) to *valuation*." Put simply, values animate persons' action by providing direction, meaning, and purpose (Kraatz & Block, 2017), with evaluation (or valuation[1]) as one of most important forms of action (Lorino, 2018). In other words, we urge focusing on the ultimate constituents of the social world, people, who are capable of appraising and reacting to messy real-life situations in rich, complex, and value-laden ways. While these pragmatist perspectives have always been a part of institutionalist thinking (Farjoun et al., 2015; Kraatz et al., 2020; Selznick, 1953), institutionalists' ambivalent attention to values has diverted attention away from evaluation as a ubiquitous process. Consequently, to realize the benefits of these shifts, we advocate adopting Sayer's (2011: 25-26) definition of values:

> as 'sedimented' [e]valuations that have become attitudes or dispositions, which we come to regard as justified. [Values] merge into emotional dispositions and inform the evaluations we make of

---

[1] Across these authors, evaluation and valuation appear to be interchangeable. For clarity's sake, we use evaluation from this point forward.

17

particular things, as part of our conceptual and affective apparatus. [Values] are more abstract than the particular concrete evaluations from which they derive and which they in turn influence.

Embedded in this definition is a complex recursive process that entails evaluations of concrete encounters and experiences that become sedimented attitudes and dispositions. The appeal of Dewey's flank movement, which entails "abandoning value as a substantive feature and considering valuation as an empirical act" (Muniesa, 2014, as cited in Lorino, 2018: 232), is that it gives institutionalists traction on that recursive process. Attending to evaluation opens our eyes to neglected institutional microprocesses in which people apply values and from which their sedimented values are derived. In other words, we suggest this move positions us to re-engage with earlier conceptions of institutions as value-laden while avoiding the pitfalls of characterizing people either as overly rational in pursuing values or as cultural automatons. Indeed, we will argue that persons' persistent and ubiquitous evaluation of institutional arrangements animates their participation in institutional processes.

Shifting attention to evaluation is important because it helps explain how abstract or institutional values can guide personal and collective action in the here and now. Lorino (2018) characterizes evaluation as an essential navigational act, because action requires that we assess where we are, where we are going, and how we are going to get there. Further, he argues, pragmatist understandings of action see the shift from values to evaluation as necessary because while action may have "distant and general purposes"

– such as the authoritative institutional values seen in Stinchcombe's comments – "action here and now" entails "adjust[ing] to an end-in-view rather than to some intangible final end" (Lorino, 2018: 233-234). In other words, while people may pose navigational questions mindful of a final end or value, they evaluate what they should do next, in the here and now, in terms of a more immediate end-in-view. In essence, an *end-in-view* "guides action by translating final ends into present orientations" (ibid.) and connecting the two. This suggests that although participation in institutional processes may be guided by abstract values, resolving the equivocality and establishing the relevance of values for immediate situations is an ongoing task.

Sayer's (2011) definition of values undeniably resonates with pragmatist understanding of values and evaluation. Values are the sedimented product of past evaluations, derived through social interactions within which others' evaluations become evident (Lorino, 2018), and unfolding in the course of action. In other words, people learn values from their interactions with others and their own experiences in society. While an accreted and particularistic product of historical experience (Selznick, 1953), values are also future-oriented through their role in navigation. Lorino (2018: 239) argues that evaluation "must appraise past action and imagine future consequences." The consideration of future consequences speaks to both the desirability of broader or more distant aspirations and the relevance of proximate ends-in-view. Thus, evaluation "does not passively forecast the

19

next events but actively *enacts* the future" (Lorino, 2018: 238). At the same time, "the enactment of the future leads to [re-evaluating] past action" (ibid.). For us, this facet of evaluation prevents values from appearing as absolute or unimpeachable imperatives. In other words, because of their sedimented nature and situated application, values are themselves subject to evaluation and possible change as a consequence of ongoing experience and social interaction. Evaluation always involves a cautionary and provisional stance vis-à-vis the future (Lorino, 2018). We argue that focusing on evaluation as a navigational act is critical for understanding the why and how of value-laden participation in institutional processes.

Getting to the same side of the fence. In addition to inadequate attention to values, a second possible reason why a better lens for understanding people's participation in institutions has remained elusive is what critics decry as a tendency within social science to favor a spectator's view of action. The spectator's stance leads scholars to describe other people using terms and assumptions that they would never apply to themselves. The stance entails, according to Sayer (2011: 6), adopting a "distanced relation to social life, perhaps so as to be more objective, as if we could become more objective by ignoring part of the object".[2] Sayer's critical realist assessment of the social sciences resonates with our own concerns about definitions and analyses that implicitly populate institutional processes

---

[2] We include ourselves here, taking to heart the risk of becoming third person spectators, but noting with irony our preferences, for the sake of clarity. We use "they" and "their" as we describe the phenomena and people within it and "we" and "our" to note our own role as authors.

with disembodied minds enacting cultural scripts. For Sayer, if social science is to "counter various kinds of 'irrealism'… which tend to dissociate people from their relationship to the world … and renders [people's] successes and difficulties in coping with the world unintelligible" (2011: 247), it must attend to some of the fundamentals of lived experience. Here we hear an echo of the pragmatist concern for "putting scholars and organizational participants on the same side of the fence (as fellow humans trying to understand and live in an ambiguous and unfolding world)" (Kraatz and Block, 2008:265, parentheses in the original).

In his analysis of why things matter to people, Sayer insists that we keep front and center the reality that people exist as "vulnerable beings, suspended between things as they are and as they might be, for better or worse, and as we need or want them to be" (2011: 4). He argues that social science has a tendency to examine the observable social world, sometimes ignoring people's aspirations about that world. This limits scholars' view of the people they study, particularly of the hopes and fears that animate their lives. Recognizing people's awareness of their vulnerability as ever present, even if not always at the front of their minds, means we need to view them as perpetually vigilant (Sayer, 2011), evaluatively attending to threats and to opportunities for advancing their wellbeing. In other words, he argues that we need not fall into the traps of treating people either as fundamentally rational or as automatons. Instead, we need to treat people as people, capable of and inclined to evaluate real-life situations through the lenses of

21

vulnerability and wellbeing. We argue that bringing Sayer's notion of human vulnerability to the foreground in institutional analysis, viewing it in terms of ubiquitous evaluation of wellbeing and the conditions that foster it, is an important step to understand people's motivations, aspirations, and complex obligations as they participate in institutional processes.

With these points in mind – namely, the tension between emergent streams on micro dynamics, the lack of a language to capture flesh and blood humans, and the long shadow of dominant definitions of institutions – we develop our own answer to the question of what animates persons' participation in institutional processes. Below, using the insights and tools from pragmatism and critical realism, we develop our idea of a person's *embodied world of concern* – a collection of sedimented evaluations of experiences, attachments, and commitments acquired through a personal history of social interactions with others. We then present our complementary notion of a community's *shared world of concern*. Together, these concepts allow us to examine how people experience and evaluate institutional arrangements and what animates their participation in institutional processes.

THE WORLD OF CONCERN

In the sections below, we develop the world of concern as an analytical construct. Throughout our discussion we use *concern* to mean "matters that engage a person's attention, interest, or care, or that affect a person's welfare or happiness" (Dictionary.com). In this section, our ultimate goal is to

22

explain how, like all understandings of reality, a shared world of concern is constructed intersubjectively in and through interactions unfolding in communities of important others. However, we begin our explanation at the individual level by developing our notion of the *embodied world of concern* as a lens for understanding how people evaluate institutional arrangements and for explaining their participation in institutional processes. While for the sake of clarity we present the embodied and shared world of concern separately, they should be understood as inseparable and mutually constitutive. As an example to illustrate our arguments, we introduce Chris Picciolini. In his memoir, Picciolini (2017) reconstructs how he came to lead one of the most violent white-supremacist hate groups in the US and shares his understanding of how and why he turned away from that movement to become an anti-racism activist. His memoir, in our view, shows how action in the present is rooted in sensemaking of one's past. He presents a rich and compelling picture of human vulnerability, concerns for thriving and suffering, and the role of sedimented experiences in shaping one's concerns. In other words, we find in it clear examples of the different elements that underpin the conceptual lens we are proposing, the embodied world of concern. While for many readers we expect his story to ring true, for our purposes it does not have to be an unequivocally factual account of the past because we do not use it as primary data, as an empirical paper focused on narratives might. We use it to illustrate how people's participation in institutional processes can be understood in terms of their sensemaking

23

regarding their embodied concerns.

The Embodied World of Concern

According to Sayer (2011), things matter to people because of their insistent and visceral awareness of vulnerability. This reality means people are always evaluating phenomena in terms of their relevance to flourishing and suffering and their effect on wellbeing. He encapsulates the argument in this way:

> [Our] lives can go well or badly, and [our] sense of well-being depends at least in part on how these other things that [we] care about – significant others, practices, objects, political causes – are faring, and on how others are treating them. ... we are social beings – dependent on others and necessarily involved in social practices. ... we are sentient, *evaluative beings*: we don't just think and interact but evaluate things, including the past and the future (Archer, 2000). We do so because, while we are capable and can flourish, we are also vulnerable and susceptible to various kinds of loss or harm; we can suffer. (Sayer, 2011: 1, italics in the original)

We draw from his words three ideas that we believe are particularly relevant for understanding persons' lived experience and their capability for participation within communities and other important social arrangements. First, echoing pragmatist perspectives, Sayer emphasizes people's capacity for wide-ranging and ubiquitous evaluation. Here we find the building blocks for a clear alternative to arguments that rely on cognitive taken-for-grantedness and institutional rule following. We build on this image of persons as embodied, vulnerable beings, embedded in patterns of social interdependence, who evaluatively engage a complex world with all of its human, social, and material attributes. Second, his highlighting of sentience,

24

which refers to the human capacity to feel, perceive, and experience, bespeaks a more complex evaluative apparatus than either cognition or emotion alone, one that has also been put forward for use in institutional analysis (Creed et al., 2020). Third, we embrace his focus on shared human vulnerability – a lens that incorporates flourishing, suffering and the goal of enhancing wellbeing – as essential for understanding why particular social arrangements, symbols, and systems of meaning matter to people.

For institutional theorizing, it is especially important to identify the implied mechanisms that link people's consciousness of vulnerability to their commitment to particular institutional arrangements and values. According to Sayer (2011) all people develop understandings about what conditions foster wellbeing based on experiences of thriving and suffering, their own or that of others. Importantly, he argues that people's experience and understandings cannot be seen as either cognitive or physical, sensory or emotional, but rather are a mix of them all. Simply put, people experience suffering and thriving with their whole being. Hence, we frame the construct of a person's *embodied world of concern* to capture this complexity. We argue that the embodied world of concern is a personal collection of sedimented evaluations of one's experiences of thriving and suffering, nurture and neglect, attachment and alienation, commitments and antagonisms, and regrets and aspirations.

The sedimentation process begins very early in people's lives, perhaps with their earliest experiences of the social arrangements that nurtured or

25

harmed them, and ultimately includes their evaluations of those

arrangements' merits and flaws (Sayer, 2011; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Once persons come to understand themselves as being separate objects of

care or neglect, they begin to learn that they too can affect others' wellbeing

through their own actions and responses (Erickson, 1950). We argue that this

inkling of their personal capacity to affect outcomes in systems of important

social bonds may be one of the first fruits of subjectification. People's

subjectivity – including a rudimentary sense of having an impact on the

conditions for their own or others' wellbeing – arises out of a personal history

with particular social practices and arrangements. For us these experiences

are the first strata in the person's sedimented world of concern –

vulnerability, dependence, embodied connection, nurture and/or neglect, and

thriving and/or suffering – all of which are written into each person's

biography (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Lawrence et al., 2011). We believe

this sedimentation process, through which people become the sentient,

evaluative beings that Sayer describes, is essential for human participation

in all manner of institutional processes, ranging from infusing arrangements

with value to defending or opposing them. The sedimentation process does

not happen in isolation, of course, and not only because it starts with nurture

or neglect at the hands of others. Through ongoing social interactions and

enactments, people continually learn about the conditions and arrangements

that contribute to or undermine personal and collective wellbeing.

 In his memoir, Chris Picciolini (2017) recounts early childhood

26

experiences of loneliness and alienation in both his family and school settings. While he was still young, his immigrant parents moved him from their working-class Italian community to a more affluent suburb. Because they worked long hours to afford their new life, Picciolini reports feeling abandoned and, ultimately, alienated from the two communities he straddled: the Italian community, where he would play alone at his grandparents' home while his parents worked, watching the neighborhood kids through the window, and the more affluent suburb, where he was bullied in school and his Italian last name was the butt of jokes. We view his experience of irregular nurture, neglect, and increasing disaffection as shaping his embodied world of concern. Thinking back, he believes these experiences set him up for participation in the world of white supremacy, hate, and violence. In making sense of this period, Picciolini highlights an eighth-grade schoolyard fight. In his account, as schoolmates watched, Picciolini landed the first punch, stunning himself and his long-time tormentor. Once his opponent was on the ground, Picciolini pummeled him. He recalls this as a pivotal experience due to the mix of popularity and infamy he enjoyed in its aftermath.

Picciolini's example provides an unsavory illustration of what we see as the most micro of institutional microprocesses: people infuse ways of being (e.g., threatening or enacting violence) and the associated social arrangements (e.g., domination in a schoolyard hierarchy) with positive or negative value based on how they evaluate them as contributing to or

27

undermining wellbeing (e.g., fists are "the ticket to respect and power" (2017:13)). His recollection of a distant family, a persistent sense of alienation, a yawning disaffection, a violent schoolyard fight, and the subsequent notoriety all contributed to Picciolini's understanding of how violence could enhance his own wellbeing. Developing such understandings leads people to come to see themselves as capable of action regarding those arrangements that they associate with advancing or undermining wellbeing (Unger, 2007). Consequently, we argue that the aspiration to foster wellbeing can become a fundamental driver of people's efforts either to sustain or to change social arrangements and the institutional processes that underpin them. Picciolini's narrative illustrates how, through the accumulation of personal experiences and ongoing socialization, persons come to know the effects of different social arrangements and to appreciate those that they believe contribute to wellbeing and depreciate those they believe do not.

Another experience in the sediment of Picciolini's (2017) account, one that looms large in his sensemaking of what led him to become involved in the white supremacy movement, was a chance meeting with a notorious racist. While he was loitering with a friend in a back alley, a stranger marched up and snatched a marijuana joint from him, saying, "Don't you know that's *exactly* what the Communists and Jews want you to do, so they can keep you docile?" (Picciolini, 2017: 3). Picciolini recalls initially resisting, saying "You're not my father" but also recalls how, as if on cue, the man

assumed just that role: he "gripped my shoulder firmly, drawing me in toward him. 'What's your name, son?'" (2017: 3). Unlike classmates who mocked his Italian name, this stranger tells him "You should be proud of your name because your ancestors were warriors and leaders of men" (p. 3). Only at the end of this interaction does Picciolini learn the stranger's name: "I'm Clark Martell, and I'm going to save your fucking life" (p. 6). Reflecting back on his early interactions with Martell, Picciolini does not recall ever having met a Jew or knowing what a communist was up to that point in time. He believes that his family had never inculcated in him antisemitic or racist beliefs and that he was unfamiliar with the prejudices, arguments and concerns that animated white supremacists. Instead, his account suggests that what drew him to Martell was his authoritative and immaculate manner and presence, and his seemingly genuine concern and respect for Picciolini, which in retrospect he believes he saw as offering a chance for community and acceptance. In his view, it was his visceral experience of being cared about that led him to embrace Martell's alien prejudices as his own, and Martell's actions as congruent with his own and – ultimately – others' wellbeing.

To reiterate, we argue that as people evaluate their interactions and experiences they come – rightly or wrongly – to link particular understandings, concrete practices, and social arrangements to wellbeing. Over time, as evaluations of interactions become sedimented, people come to embrace or reject, to varying degrees, interactants and their associated

29

abstract values. This recursive process is also how future evaluations regarding wellbeing take shape. As Sayer (2011: 26) notes, any abstract value that endures is "based on repeated particular experiences and [e]valuations of actions, but it also tends, recursively, to shape subsequent particular [e]valuations of people and their actions and guide [the evaluator's] own actions." Of course, we recognize there is no single set of values at work in this recursive process; even between just two people, social interactions may encompass many values and reflect diverse understandings of those values that must be negotiated (Collins, 2004). Thus, throughout life, peoples' embodied lives unfold in a complex milieu of experiences, reflecting diverse values and institutional arrangements.

Consequently, we theorize that to the degree people come to associate particular interactions and social arrangements with wellbeing, they incorporate "significant others, practices, objects, political causes" (Sayer, 2011: 1) in their embodied worlds of concern. Critically, we argue that it is through this incorporation that some social arrangements and practices come to be and remain infused with value. In other words, as people accept significant others, practices, objects, and causes as deserving of concern, the values these embody come to be accepted as well. This means a person's embodied world of concern may be narrowly focused and close to home or capacious and expansive, or perhaps both. More importantly for our purposes, the embodied world of concern may remain relatively stable or be continuously reshaped, influencing and being influenced through new

evaluations of interactions with others in the multiple communities in which persons are embedded. The social construction of living persons' embodied worlds of concern is always ongoing.

Indeed, Picciolini's (2017) story provides illustrations of this dynamic. Following the imprisonment of Clark Martell and other leaders of the Chicago Area Skinheads (CASH), he stepped into this leadership vacuum: "I turned my attention fully to skinhead activities. […] There was no World Wide Web then, but the opportunity to build a real-life social network was there if you played it right and were willing to put in the work." As he expresses in his memoir, due to his attachment to – and need for the approval of – Martell and other imprisoned leaders of CASH, Picciolini takes on the responsibilities of leadership. Their concerns become his concerns. In the process, his world of concern expands to incorporate the extended network of "other skinheads with post office boxes halfway across the world" (2017: 81).

We argue that trying to understand instances of participation in institutional arrangements, such as Picciolini's (2017) increasing involvement in the skinhead movement, is made easier through the lens of the world of concern. By accounting for embodied and palpable experiences – such as Picciolini's loneliness, resentment, emotional connection to Martell and embrace of his worldview – the lens explicitly helps us move beyond abstract notions of institutional inhabitants to the embodied, sentient people who take on "*stewardship* for the wellbeing of a person or project" (Selznick, 2008: 63). In terms of institutional participation, Selznick understands

31

stewardship as the virtuous combination of rights and duties, rooted in connectedness and interdependence, for example, "as when parental rights of possession and supervision are combined with duties of support and nurture" (ibid.). We argue that in taking on stewardship for the wellbeing of a person or project and accepting responsibility for advancing their wellbeing, people also take on the responsibility for promoting arrangements that support that wellbeing and for opposing ones that detract from it. They can do so because they have the capacity to see beyond particulars to the reasons behind them (Selznick, 2008). While we view his efforts as misguided and morally abhorrent, Picciolini's stewardship of CASH illustrates the ways sentient persons not only care about the wellbeing of "significant others, practices, objects, [and] political causes" (Sayer, 2011:1), but also promote valued arrangements. We suggest that the sense of duty that underpins stewardship is a critical impetus for institutional work and that stewardship may be a valuable analytical lens for understanding people's efforts to sustain or change social arrangements, including institutional ones.

In sum, we argue that the embodied world of concern is each person's lens for evaluating institutional arrangements as worthy of embracing, resisting, or rejecting. Consequently, the embodied world of concern animates their choices to comply with or distance themselves from particular institutional processes and social arrangements. This means that the sedimented evaluations of the links between particular institutional arrangements and wellbeing are the root explanation for why and how

32

particular institutions come to matter to people such that they become

committed and attached to them and why they may come to feel obligated

to defend, critique, or challenge them. This is the basis for people becoming,

in institutional language, institutional stewards (Selznick, 2008), or

institutional guardians or challengers (DeJordy, 2010). A question that

requires further exploration pertains to the connection between a particular

person's embodied world of concern and the shared values of the person's

many communities, to which we now turn.

The Shared World of Concern

We conceive of the shared world of concern as comprising intersections

among community members' embodied worlds of concern. We argue that it

is through social interactions that persons come to recognize how their

concerns either overlap and resonate with or clash with and diverge from

others' concerns. This is the foundation for the shared world of concern.

Following Goffman (1967), we argue that a key impetus for ongoing

interactions is each person's need for ratification of the self (Berger &

Luckmann, 1967; Goffman, 1959; Scheff, 1990). Indeed, Leary coins the term

"sociometer" to capture people's ongoing efforts to understand their socio-

relational standing, particularly their vigilance for "indications that others do

not regard their relationship with the individual to be as important, close, or

valuable as the individual desires" (2000: 336). Winning reciprocal

ratification is critical because it is central to maintaining important social

bonds, an ongoing preoccupation for all people (Scheff, 2000, 2005; Turner &

33

Stets, 2005; Creed et al., 2014: 281).

For us, the self (Cooley, 1922/2004; Mead, 1934) that is presented for ratification (Goffman, 1959) incorporates the person's sedimented histories of evaluations and understandings, values, and even aspirations for stewardship of valued institutions. In other words, persons present their embodied world of concern for ratification. This therefore suggests that reciprocal ratification of the self hinges, at least in part, on whether persons' embodied worlds of concern incorporate at least some agreed-upon evaluations of social arrangements and practices. This is because interactions that affirm, create, transform, or cast aside shared understandings of social phenomena can reproduce or undermine important social bonds (Creed et al., 2014). As Goffman (1959) reminds us, communities are typically made of people who share the belief that, for the most part, everyone cares about the same "right" things.

Of course, in mundane daily experience, many concerns remain in the background because institutionalized practices and understandings seem to be working as expected and, for our purposes, some level of wellbeing appears secure. Unless events run afoul of people's concerns and sensibilities (Creed et al., 2020), they can go along in a "daze of mild indifference" (Burke, 1767/2014 as quoted in Kofinas, 2018: 205), periodically interrupted by greater alertness. Nonetheless, even when all seems right with the world, the quest for reciprocal ratification persists, albeit not at the front of the mind, and will entail searching for resonance

and overlaps with each other's concerns. We propose that since the shared world of concern incorporates socially derived understandings of particular social arrangements, if others in an important community support, advocate, disparage, or deride a particular social arrangement or practice, the persistent quest for reciprocal ratification opens the door for the incorporation of such new evaluations into one's own embodied world of concern. People make others' subjective concerns their own to some greater or lesser degree. Agreement on these socially derived, collective understandings reifies the intersubjectively constructed shared world of concern. In other words, in such a community, persons often come to love what others love and to hate what they hate.

Returning to Picciolini's (2017) account, white supremacy represents a vicious set of values, part of Martell's and other supremacists' embodied worlds of concern, that Picciolini eventually incorporated into his own embodied world of concern. For years, the white supremacist movement and its shared beliefs and symbols, including clothes, grooming, music, and language, provided ratification for Picciolini's espousals and action, giving him a strong sense of community, identity, and purpose. He recalls how, during this time, his increasingly horrified family could not dislodge the repulsive beliefs that had taken him over, his embrace of his new-found friends, and his rejection of his familial community. Yet, as we noted above, the very process of continually incorporating others' concerns alters one's embodied world of concern.

35

At 19, Picciolini entered another domain of institutionalized beliefs and practices by marrying Lisa, who was not a white supremacist. He recounts his determination to make her proud to be his wife: "I began to see my actions through that lens, and before long they appeared very different" (2017: 186). For example, at a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) rally, as the assembled racists spewed hate speech and an even larger group of counter-demonstrators yelled right back, Picciolini recalls how his thoughts turned to his wife: "I ached for Lisa more than anything, more than I wanted a white homeland even. [...] Why was I here and not at home with my pregnant wife whom I adored, with my hand on her belly, taking in every moment with her?" (2017: 209). Not long after, his son was born and Picciolini recalls beginning "to imagine the world through his eyes, still unsullied by any prejudice" (2017: 215). In our view, Picciolini's recollections of interactions, his alertness to thriving and suffering, his evaluations of new experiences with regards to wellbeing, and the manner in which he describes his radical transformation from white supremacist to anti-racism activist *all* contribute to reshape his embodied world of concern.

Importance of The World of Concern for Institutional Theory

We now develop arguments as to how the shared world of concern offers new traction on several issues of importance in institutional theory: the link between the macro order and the person, the micro mechanisms of institutional reproduction, and the lived experience of institutional pluralism and contradiction.

36

The shared world of concern and the macro order. Theoretically,

one of the most important things about the shared world of concern is its

implications for our understanding of the institutional macro order. We argue

that people experience the macro order not as an abstract set of cultural

prescriptions and rules but as the shared world of concern, including the

shared history of the "failures that plague and the fulfillments that enrich

human activities" (Selznick, 2008: 41). Through this reframing of the macro

order, we reinforce that it is an intersubjectively produced amalgam – that

people experience through sentient evaluation – rooted in a shared

awareness of human vulnerability and the concern for wellbeing. This

challenges the idea of taken-for-grantedness and invites instead attention to

people's capacity for "discernment, creativity and knowledge of the reasons"

behind particular prescriptions (Selznick, 2008: 63). We suggest that it is

when institutions fail to deliver the goods in terms of fostering wellbeing that

the haze of mild indifference gives way to increased scrutiny. If what we

argue is correct, it means institutional arrangements and practices cannot

simply prescribe or coerce compliance, because they themselves are always

at risk of evaluation based on their perceived capacity to foster flourishing or

forestall suffering. If, upon such evaluation, they do not earn the

commitment and stewardship required for their ongoing reproduction, they

either become irrelevant and impotent, as Stinchcombe (1997) argued, or

they risk becoming the object of active institutional work directed towards

their disruption or change.

37

In his account, at the KKK rally, Picciolini's own evaluation of how white

supremacy contributed – or not – to wellbeing began to change:

> When the march came to an end and my comrades were celebrating
> by getting hammered with booze, I was hit by the disturbing thought:
> how would I know if this whole thing was simply an endless cycle of
> excuses to fight and drink and commiserate? […] The life of a violent
> white supremacist was all I'd known through nearly every single one of
> my teen years. Who would I be otherwise? […] Along with my breath,
> my commitment was knocked out of me for the first time, and for a
> brief moment I clearly saw there was a serious problem with my
> reality. (Picciolini, 2017: 209-211)

In our assessment, his experiences of his marriage, the KKK rally, and a

variety of others led to evaluations that accumulated in the sediment and

further altered the composition of Picciolini's embodied world of concern.

Because day-to-day interactions always pose new challenges for people,

they require ongoing problem solving (Berk & Galvan, 2009) and also prompt

ongoing evaluation (Lorino, 2018). For example, to support his young family,

Picciolini, who was also the lead singer and lyricist for a skinhead punk band,

founded a record store that catered to a white supremacist clientele.

However, it drew a diverse customer base because of its location and

broader inventory. He reports that this led to extensive interactions with gay

and African-American customers and even anti-racist skinheads – all of

whom treated him with respect and acceptance in spite of the beliefs

reflected in his songs and his hate-mongering activism. His surprise at what

he came to recognize as their common joys and pains eventually led him to

being ashamed of the white supremacist music on his shelves. He attributes

the demise of his store to removing material that accounted for a significant

38

portion of his revenue. In its wake, he was labeled a race traitor by his erstwhile comrades. This example shows how day-to-day interactions with others, and the requirement for ongoing problem solving, is one way others' concerns are incorporated into and alter one's embodied world of concern. Clearly, his adolescent understandings of how white supremacy, a facet of the macro order, ostensibly contributed to the wellbeing of his family and his community changed through his embodied experience of empathy and shame.

Stewardship of the shared world of concern. We have argued that for most if not all community members, the animating force in their institutional enactments can be a sense of responsibility for the beliefs, practices, and institutions that foster the wellbeing of themselves and important others. Consequently, building on Selznick (2008), we see stewardship as a common form of institutional participation – entailing responsible vigilance and, when needed, increased attention and deliberate promotion of some social arrangements or concerted opposition to others. Such stewardship can emerge from many places and take many forms and, like the embodied world of concern, one's sense of stewardship can be transformed through experience. In particular, concrete interpersonal experiences are embedded in – and give rise to – higher levels of mutual obligation. For example, years after abandoning the white supremacist movement, while on a mundane job as a computer network administrator, Picciolini found himself back at a high school he had attended. He

reconstructs the moment in this manner:

> [a]nd who should I run into on my first week on the job but Mr. Johnny Holmes, the African American security guard at whom I had spewed all my racist bitterness on the day I was escorted out in handcuffs. […] I tore after my former nemesis…. He turned, his smile abruptly fading as he recognized me. "Excuse me. Do you remember me, Mr. Holmes?" "You're hard to forget," he said. […] "All those terrible things I said. What I did. My hatred. I made your life miserable when I attended school here. I'd take it back if I could, though I understand that I can't —those memories are stuck with each of us and I just want to apologize. Thank you for helping to show me what it means to live a life of dignity even when I didn't deserve it." […] After a short time, he held out his hand and gave a slight nod. "I'm glad to hear it, Mr. Picciolini. […] It's your responsibility now to tell the world what healed you. Welcome home." […] The only hope I had of trying to wash away the evil I'd paid tribute to was by exposing it to the light. (Picciolini, 2017: 248-250)

Mr. Holmes' charge to "tell the world" provides the pivot for Picciolini's sensemaking of how he became an anti-racism activist. In our conceptual language, he became a steward of this new shared world of concern. This example also shows how a shared world of concern can animate participation in institutional processes. We argue these emergent mutual obligations, such as Picciolini's sense that he is beholden to Mr. Holmes for his forgiveness and so must actively oppose white supremacy, constitute one of the ways that people experience the macro order as concrete relational concerns and duties rather than simply as abstract systems of meaning. Picciolini makes sense of his turn to anti-racism activism in ways that show that for him, this activism does not have to do with abstract notions of racial justice. Indeed, like the stories of leaders in many domains, his story of participation in institutional change employs a narrative structure known as

40

the "redemptive sequence" (McAdams, 1993) in ways that link concrete experiences of forgiveness to generative agency and giving back (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010; Lok, Creed, & DeJordy, 2019).

While we suggest that stewardship becomes collective when members of a community share understandings of what leads to wellbeing and act on the belief that virtuous members of the community work together to advance it, a collective sense of stewardship does not imply uniform involvement. Communities delegate stewardship for different aspects of wellbeing, for example, designating medical care as the domain of health care professionals (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017) or sustainable forestry as the domain for environmentalists and socially responsible lumber companies (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). This delegation process means people can take on, as their own, those duties they truly care about, and they can primarily attend to a narrow set of obligations, making their world of concern manageable. However, when community members come to evaluate designated stewards' performance of their duties as inadequate, they may contest such stewardship. Returning to Toubiana & Zietsma (2017), they found that committed volunteers and donors challenged the leadership of the Degenerative Disease Foundation because their rejection of a new, but unproven therapy ran afoul of the volunteers' sense of what would advance the wellbeing of disease sufferers (i.e., trying the new therapy). The volunteers' commitment to alleviating suffering led to a preferred course of action that was at odds with the medical professionals' oath to, first, do no

41

harm.

These patterns of delegation and persons' associated sense of having a particular role or place in the world of concern do not look like taken-for-granted, scripted behavior. Instead, we see behind such enactments what the pragmatists describe as ongoing problem solving (Berk & Galvan, 2009), filtered through evaluation about how best to be stewards of their shared worlds of concern (Archer, 2000; Creed et al., 2020). This illustrates how the world of concern, as a lens that draws attention to diverse understandings of stewardship and the felt duties to foster wellbeing, may help explain persons' participation in the processes that contribute to institutional persistence, conflict, and change (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009).

Institutional pluralism and contradiction in the shared world of concern. As we noted earlier, there is no singular shared world of concern. In modern societies, people can be members of many communities at once. Moreover, people's memberships in communities may also overlap. Thus, for instance, family members often belong to the same religious community, co-workers who are close in age often socialize with each other, and children in a neighborhood often attend the same schools. In other words, people live in multiplex systems of social relationships, as members of multiple communities, and sometimes share several types of bonds with others. We argue that such broad opportunities for different types of interactions imply that people have the opportunity to engage with and internalize different

42

shared worlds of concern. With community as a key facet of the shared world of concern, this dimension harkens to the idea of institutional pluralism (Kraatz & Block, 2017). In other words, it is people's membership in multiple communities – family, church, workplace – that puts them at risk of facing contradictions, in the form of different obligations, as they navigate their worlds of concerns. This also means that it is unlikely that people experience their many shared worlds of concern as institutional contradictions that are potentially reconcilable through a choice between logics or competing prescriptions, as has been suggested to be the case for organizations (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Instead, we argue that people are more likely to experience and evaluate what are often framed as institutional contradictions as a mix of stewardship duties that are sometimes complementary and sometimes incommensurable.

The example of the Degenerative Disease Foundation (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017) illustrates how optimizing alternatives and choices among duties may not exist. In this case, we see that the warring factions had different understandings of what makes for sufferers' wellbeing and therefore saw different duties to them. In terms of promoting wellbeing in a complex world, the "right" way forward is often unclear, as pragmatists suggest, and people are not always able to do what they would like to do or achieve unambiguous successes. As the quotidian problem solvers described in pragmatism (Berk & Galvan, 2009), people face an ongoing task of navigating the sometimes incommensurable systems of values and

43

institutional arrangements that intersect in their own embodied world of concern. In our assessment, Picciolini's (2017) trajectory – alienation, participation in communities of racists and communities of antiracists, love and marriage, and fatherhood – are all part of the institutional milieu in which he has lived; together, they constitute his experience of institutional contradiction. Importantly, although contradictions sometimes lead people to work for change, at other times it can lead them to abandon some social groups or communities in favor of other, more highly valued ones (Creed et al., 2014), even when there are costs. For Picciolini, resolving the contradictions in favor of anti-racism made him a targeted "race traitor" among his former compatriots. We argue that the threats posed by contradictions mean that personal and collective stewardship in the shared world of concern can grow in scope and difficulty. We see the very focus of Picciolini's new, anti-racism activism – reaching vulnerable young people before they join hate groups – as conceivable only because, over time, his lived experience unfolded in a complex mix of institutionalized systems of neglect and marginalization: he was a disaffected target of anti-immigrant hostility and an effective skinhead leader, racist punk rocker, and converted extremist in a country where systemic racism persists. Here, the world of concern as a lens prevents viewing his life simply as a story of personal redemption and heroic agency by attending to how human experience entails complex, shifting patterns of participation in institutional processes, all animated by persons' evolving concerns.

44

Summary. To conclude, we argue that in terms of participation in institutional processes, the animating forces behind action are personal and collective feelings of responsibility. Stewardship arises from people's felt responsibility for maintaining the conditions they associate with wellbeing of the self and of important others, however narrowly or widely that circle may be drawn. We argue that the sedimented content of their embodied world of concern determines which institutions people are moved to protect and follow, disregard and abandon, or reject and fight.

DISCUSSION

The interpenetrating nature of the embodied and shared worlds of concern implies that each person can be seen as a microcosm, an embodied encapsulation of the meso and macro orders rather than being separate from them. Such an embodied conceptualization undermines several common practices in institutional analysis: treating levels of analysis as isolated and distinct; treating persons' cognitions, emotions, and motivations as separable; masking the lived experiences of holding different commitments across professions, communities, or organizations; and focusing on an observable present that is untethered from a sedimented past and unaffected by future aspirations. Instead, our conceptualization persistently invokes people's sociality, historical embeddedness, evaluative natures, and animating concerns for the social arrangements that make for wellbeing. In this way, the embodied and shared worlds of concern can help address the irrealisms that have plagued institutional theory and begin to make better

45

use of the insights from microfoundations to enhance institutional theory (Zucker & Schilke, 2019).

Below we discuss the scope of the world of concern, articulating the circumstances under which scholars will find it to be an especially useful conceptual lens. In particular, because we are not expecting institutional scholars to drop their tools (Weick, 1993), such as abandoning levels of analysis, anytime soon, we discuss specific insights our theorizing generates for different scholarly communities. For scholars working in the microdynamics realm, we offer a much-needed conceptual coherence and metaphorical reframing of some critical concepts for institutional analysis. For scholars attending to larger societal shifts, we offer different ways of examining contestation and commitment. For both, we conclude by articulating how our theorizing of the world of concern helps push institutional theory toward "mattering more" (Hampel et al., 2017), an end that is critical at the onset of great upheaval.

The Scope of the World of Concern as a Conceptual Lens

In considering the possible boundaries for its application, we argue that the world of concern will be useful for examining institutions implicated in the complex processes of allocating benefits or costs or establishing societal hierarches and systems of inequality. In other words, researchers can use this lens wherever an institutionalized social arrangement affects oppression or emancipation, suffering or thriving, and exclusion or inclusion. In general, institutions that deal with human rights, safety of the body,

46

health, nourishment, education, spirituality, liberty, or the environment immediately come to mind. For instance, this lens can inform researchers on people's motivations to engage in institutional work such as contesting approaches to counseling (Zilber, 2002), reforming churches (Gutierrez, Howard-Grenville, & Scully, 2010), shutting down men's bathhouses (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009), or changing environmental practices in forestry (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010).

To decide whether and how to use the world of concern, we propose scholars start with two questions: How are particular social arrangements believed to enhance wellbeing, either by promoting thriving or forestalling suffering, and for whom? How are social arrangements believed to cause or exacerbate suffering, perhaps particularly through marginalization or stratification? Whether the lens is useful vis-à-vis a particular institutional analysis may not be immediately apparent without answering these questions because in many domains we can recognize social arrangements and practices that protect and promote wellbeing of some parties but also ones that create inequities or exclude with punishing effects for other parties. Researchers need to know what is at stake and for whom.

Methodologically, this means researchers must focus their inquiry on aspects of the phenomena that reflect such vulnerability. Qualitatively this could mean data from interviews of people engaged in contestation while quantitatively it could rely on variables that account for disparate and unequal outcomes among populations. For example, in the contemporary

47

conflict over policing as an institution in the United States, we cannot understand Black Americans' shared world of concern without attending to how sedimented experiences of brutality against themselves and their brothers and sisters, shape their visceral distrust of policing. Conversely, we cannot understand White Americans' shared world of concern without attending to two facets of their sedimented experience. First, as the numbers suggest, few White Americans have a parallel experience of police brutality. Second, their sedimented experience is also infused with a manufactured fear of Blackness that is the product of socialization and systemic racism which, for many White people, positions police as protectors. The pernicious effects of systemic racism are sedimented into all Americans' embodied and shared worlds of concern, with different groups seeing the stakes quite differently.

More broadly, this example suggests that for researchers seeking to understand institutional contestation, including at the macro level, the world of concern can be a valuable lens. It shifts the gaze away from the merely cognitive dimensions of institutional processes to how people's sedimented experiences shape what they see as the conditions for wellbeing that shape their participation in institutional processes. In addition, in assessing the lens' potential usefulness, researchers will need to determine what parts of the empirical phenomena are object and what parts are field and which they want to foreground in their explanations. Even studies of ostensibly purely technical diffusion entail this choice, for example, to focus on the patterns of

adoption of smart phone applications or to focus on the perceived threats that widespread use of such applications or platforms pose in the "age of surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2019).

Recasting Existing Conceptions in Institutional Theory

Haack and colleagues (2019) have recently called for work strengthening the coherence of research on the micro dynamics of institutions. Our theorizing advances such coherence in several ways. First, by populating social arrangements with evaluative people it brings attention to evaluation as one of the fundamental ways people engage with institutions, one that threads through all other micro dynamics. In so doing, we offer a uniquely integrative cross-level understanding. In essence, the embodied and shared worlds of concern highlight how socially embedded evaluations accumulate in sedimented understandings of the conditions that make for wellbeing, thereby giving rise to the attitudes, dispositions, values and aspirations that animate action. These shared understandings ultimately infuse social arrangements with value according to how they affect wellbeing and, in turn, guide ongoing evaluations. In short, intersubjective evaluations, unfolding at the meso level, underpin macro-level systems of meaning, while also accumulating in each person's sedimented embodied world of concern at the micro level.

Every person's embodied world of concern is composed of a mix of others' understandings and concerns, some of which they have made their own. This internalization might typically be framed as a microlevel

49

phenomenon, yet we highlight its cross-level nature by showing that each person's embodied world of concern is populated with important others and furnished with shared understandings of valued social arrangements. Empirically, the embodied and shared worlds of concern position the embodied person as the point of departure for exploring participation in institutional processes. Empirical inquiry can begin with questions on what things matter to an informant – commitments, social bonds, important others, personal histories, hopes and aspirations. In this manner the world of concern allows micro and meso researchers to embrace social complexity and avoid many common simplifications.

However, beyond establishing conceptual coherence, the world of concern offers institutional theory a different conceptual metaphor to complement those in use. Organizational theorists (Cornelissen, 2006; Morgan, 1980; Tsoukas, 1991) articulate how our day-to-day reasoning and our scholarly theorizing rely on our use of metaphors. For instance, the common metaphor that "love is a journey" (Lakoff & Wehling, 2016) positions us to reason that a good relationship can take us to places we have never been and so perhaps we should be in it for the long haul. On the other hand, it also positions us to reason that a bad relationship is a bumpy ride, coming to a crossroads, going nowhere or hitting a dead end. Consequently, we may conclude that we need to hit the road, jump ship, or take the next exit.

Organizational theory generally, and institutional theory in particular,

50

also relies on metaphors that affect what we attend to (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Early metaphors describing an "iron cage" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), for instance, were useful in drawing attention to conceptualizations of prison-like structures that constrain behavior and dictate compliance. But as Kraatz and Block (2008:266) warn, "[b]ad metaphors can have frightening consequences for people and institutions." The iron cage is far from a bad metaphor, but it nonetheless has the limitations of all metaphors. And while there are many other metaphors shaping institutional theory, the world of concern, with its emphasis on vulnerability and precarious wellbeing, enables different directions for reasoning about institutions. For instance, institutional arrangements could be conceptualized as means of buffering humans from the realities of their vulnerability. In a similar vein, using the world of concern as a metaphor also allows researchers to theorize how the sedimented evaluations that give rise to values and dispositions are defense mechanisms that enable people to navigate life without being overwhelmed. Institutions then appear not as prescriptions but as the source of the "vital lies" that provide people with the "armor of character" (Becker, 1973: 53) and sense of purpose that we have framed as stewardship and a place in the world of concern.

At the outset, we argued that research on institutional micro dynamics has yet to lead to the recasting of dominant conceptions of institutions. How should our arguments alter those conceptualizations? Here we present five examples of how our theoretical perspective can recast existing institutional

51

constructs and identify implications for empirical analysis. We make tangible

the usefulness of this exercise by focusing on how research questions in

these areas shift given the conceptual lens of the world of concern (see

Table 2 for a summary).

Precarious wellbeing as the lived experience of institutional

inhabitants. Institutional phenomenologists have focused greater attention

on how institutional inhabitants are doubly embedded in systems of meaning

and systems of relationships (Hallett & Ventresca, 2006). But the words

"institutional inhabitants" evoke, to a degree, an image of persons with their

feet on the ground and an abode (or cage) to live in, rather than of

vulnerable people "suspended between things as they are and as they might

be, for better or worse, and as we need or want them to be" (Sayer, 2011:

4). By using human vulnerability and the precariousness of wellbeing as the

point of departure, we enable institutionalists to better capture the complex

uncertainties and hopes that shape peoples' lives and animate their actions.

Metaphorically, it creates the space for the missing languages of thriving and

suffering, joy and sorrow, congratulations and condolence and of the lovely,

the magical and the mystical. Only when our point of departure is the

embodied human can we explain the why and how of participation in

institutional processes -- evaluation, vigilance against suffering, aspirations

for thriving, and stewardship of the conditions for wellbeing.

Institutional pluralism as incommensurate duties. Previous

thinking on the institutional pluralism that is characteristic of life in modern

52

societies has highlighted the navigating of complexity and reconciling of competing prescriptions (Kraatz & Block, 2017; Seo & Creed, 2002). Our conceptualization of stewardship suggests that the metaphor of competing prescriptions can be misleading because it implicitly describes the situation as entailing rational choice among settled options (Whitford, 2002) in contrast to dynamic problem solving and making do (Berk & Galvan, 2009). We argue that to the extent people take on stewardship of different social arrangements, pluralism is not about competing prescriptions and narrowing choice. Instead, pluralism implies membership in different communities and expands the scope of stewardship to responsibility for diverse social arrangements. This also suggests that when there are multiple allegiances and incommensurable duties to navigate, there may be no optimizing options. For meso scholars, we propose that inquiries into pluralism focus on people's incommensurable commitments, obligations, and stewardship duties to others and their communities rather than on clashes between prescriptions emanating from the macro level. More broadly, the concept of incommensurable duties suggests examining individual level participation in institutional processes in terms of concerns, empathy, identification, and compassion, as well as problem solving (Berk & Galvan, 2009; Lorino, 2018), and a fair amount of muddling through (Lindblom, 1959).

__Ubiquitous evaluation and the changeability of values.__ Our argument suggests that when institutional scholars wittingly or unwittingly reify values, they lose sight of people's lived experience and the implications

53

for how they actually participate in social arrangements and institutional

processes. In lieu of focusing on values, we have highlighted evaluation as a

central activity in institutional processes. This shift, and our argument that

evaluation is core to all institutional micro dynamics, holds special promise

for meso scholars. By repositioning final values as the stars by which people

plot their course, it brings attention to how people navigate by way of their

ends-in-view. We argue that ends-in-view (not just final values) should be

critical foci of work examining institutional micro dynamics. At the same

time, the process of trans-navigating a succession of ends-in-view further

contributes to people's accretion of sedimented evaluations, thereby

potentially reshaping commitments, dispositions and, ultimately, values. By

treating values as the product of ubiquitous evaluations and navigation, we

extend conversations on values in institutions (Kraatz & Flores, 2015;

Parsons, 1935; Selznick, 1953) by inviting inquiry into the institutional

processes in which values are contestable, changeable (even if slowly), and

the stuff of persons' internal deliberation (Creed et al., 2020).

Legitimation as local and heterogeneous. Institutionalists

routinely use legitimacy to explain action (Bitektine & Nason, 2019;

Deephouse, Bundy, Tost, & Suchman, 2017; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby,

Bitektine, & Haack, 2017). Our conceptualization of the embodied world of

concern, with its emphasis on ongoing encounters with others' worlds of

concern, inevitably challenges dominant conceptions of legitimacy. Our

emphasis on ubiquitous evaluation of contribution to wellbeing, in lieu of

54

values per se, suggests that meso-level institutional scholars could focus not on legitimacy as an outcome, but on legitimation as a locally based and heterogeneous process. We argue that local construction of a shared world of concern is likely the antecedent of any ostensibly higher-level notion of legitimacy. This implies the need for more fine-grained empirical examinations of legitimation as a process that embraces greater variation, perhaps using mid-range constructs like social acceptance (Fast, 2013), social approval (Bundy & Pfarrer, 2015), social stigma (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009), social authorization (Humphries, 2017), and systemic denial (Delmestri & Goodrick, 2016).

Latent stewardship as a mechanism of persistence. Many authors have already made the point that institutional persistence is not automatic (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014; Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016; Hampel et al., 2017; Jarvis, Goodrick, & Hudson, 2019), arguing that what normally passes for taken-for-grantedness may be no such thing. By theorizing stewardship, we shine a light on heretofore unexplored aspects of institutional persistence. For instance, earlier we suggested that stewardship is sometimes delegated, such as when concerns for health are made the remit of healthcare providers. But this does not imply that those who have delegated their responsibility have rejected it. Instead, we speculate that whenever stewardship of a particular institutional arrangement comes under scrutiny and is found wanting, new dynamics of participation unfold as previously inactive – but still quite interested – parties step into the breach

55

as active stewards. This implies that it is not merely a "haze of indifference" that sustains institutional arrangements, but rather a form of latent stewardship, always present but not necessarily at the front of mind. This invites research into when and how negative evaluations – or perceived threats to the world of concern – awaken this latent stewardship.

_____

Insert Table 2 about here.

_____

The World of Concern, Institutional Disruption and Living Forward

In this final section, we outline how our theorizing responds to calls to make institutional theory "matter" more (Hampel et al., 2017) as a theory that can "narrow the gap between understanding and living" (Weick, 1999: 135). In an epoch of institutional disruption, Hoffman and Jennings (2015) ask through what processes an as yet unimagined new social order will emerge. They see humanity's coming core challenges as adapting or replacing the institutional infrastructure, meaning systems, and values disrupted by environmental and social changes. We hold that if institutional theory is to be a theory that matters, it needs to address living forward under these dire conditions of enormous institutional upheaval.

We argue that the concepts of the embodied and shared world of concern alert us to a number of particularly salient issues. First, to greater or lesser degrees, all peoples' sedimented experiences of wellbeing and their understanding of the conditions for wellbeing – that is, their embodied worlds

56

of concern – will be abruptly or chronically mismatched with the new epoch of sudden and ongoing disruption. This mismatch is problematic because, as our theorizing suggests, under normal circumstances persons and communities carry their worlds of concern into their participation in institutional processes. Yet, their participation is possible only because their worlds of concern are rooted in relatively stable experience and there is a degree of institutional stability that allows for action, the one by providing a star by which to navigate and the other by providing a rock on which to build. But if rock turns to sand or the star is obscured, people will be less and less certain what to do and what institutional work to engage in. This is our future.

Second, most if not all institutions will come under increasing scrutiny. During periods of disruption, there will be ubiquitous, distributed evaluation of social practices and arrangements, tying them to thriving or suffering. This points to the likelihood of growing conflict over the value of particular institutional arrangements, calls for increasing experimentation with alternatives, and increasing resistance to change. Again, the current debate over defunding and re-imagining policing in the US augurs this sort of process. As Jakob-Sadeh and Zilber's (2019) work shows, even when the broader institutional conditions of civil society are relatively stable, the presence of overlapping but partially incompatible worlds of concern can make difficult even the most good-willed efforts at creating the new arrangements people want or need. In conditions of radical disruption –

57

resulting from climate change, new attention to systemic racism, global pandemic, or radical economic displacement – whatever overlaps may have existed will become more tenuous, as diverse communities' shared worlds of concern erode and there is less consensus on what contributes to wellbeing and less tolerance for patterns of inequity.

Third, to foster wellbeing in an era of institutional calamity, institutional scholars will not only need to understand but also cultivate those processes and arrangements that facilitate adaptation and foster thriving and forestall suffering. To these ends, they will need to assure that the building blocks of organizations and institutions that lie scattered about the landscape are made available for those seeking to build anew. Institutional scholars, through their own evaluative stance, can be in a good position to help initiatives avoid unrealistic utopianism that is destined to fail in favor of pragmatically minded, but still aspirational approaches. This will be scholars' own institutional work and their place in the world. For this, however, rather than taking the spectator stance, scholars will need to put themselves on the same side of the fence as their fellow human beings (Kraatz and Block, 2008).

References

Alvesson, M., & Spicer, A. 2019. Neo-Institutional Theory and Organization Studies: A Mid-Life Crisis? *Organization Studies*, 40(2): 199-218.

Archer, M. S. 2000. *Being Human*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bakken, T., & Hernes, T. 2006. Organizing is Both a Verb and a Noun: Weick Meets Whitehead. *Organization Studies*, 27(11): 1599.

Becker, E. 1973. *The denial of death*. New York: The Free Press.

Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. 1991. *The good society*: New York: Knopf.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. 1967. *The Social Construction Of Reality*. New York: Doubleday.

Berk, G., & Galvan, D. 2009. How people experience and change institutions: a field guide to creative syncretism. *Theory and Society*, 38(6): 543.

Bitektine, A., & Nason, R. 2019. Toward a Multi-Level Theory of Institutional Contestation: Exploring Category Legitimation Across Domains of Institutional Action. In H. Patrick, S. Jost, & W. Lauri (Eds.), *Microfoundations of Institutions*, Vol. 65A: 43-65: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Bundy, J., & Pfarrer, M. D. 2015. A Burden of Responsibility: The Role of Social Approval at the Onset of a Crisis. *Academy of Management Review*, 40(3): 345-369.

Burke, E. 1767/2014. *A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*: Cambridge University Press.

Collins, R. 2004. *Interaction ritual chains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Cooley, C. H. 1922/2004. Society and Individual. In M. J. Hatch, & M. Schultz (Eds.), *Organizational Identity: A Reader*: 16-30. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cornelissen, J. P. 2006. Making Sense of Theory Construction: Metaphor and Disciplined Imagination. *Organization Studies*, 27(11): 1579.

Creed, W. E. D., DeJordy, R., & Lok, J. 2010. Being the Change: Resolving

59

Institutional Contradiction through Identity Work. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 53(6): 1336–1364.

Creed, W. E. D., Hudson, B. A., Okhuysen, G. A., & Smith-Crowe, K. 2014. Swimming in a Sea of Shame: Incorporating Emotion into Explanations of Institutional Reproduction and Change. ***Academy of Management Review***, 39(3): 275-301.

Creed, W. E. D., Taylor, S. S., & Hudson, B. A. 2020. Institutional Aesthetics: Embodied Ways of Encountering, Evaluating, and Enacting Institutions. ***Organization Studies***, 41(3): 415-435.

Dacin, M. T., Munir, K. A., & Tracey, P. 2010. Formal Dining at Cambridge Colleges: Linking Ritual Performance and Institutional Maintenance. ***Academy of Management Journal***, 53(6): 1393–1418.

de Vaujany, F.-X., & Vaast, E. 2014. If These Walls Could Talk: The Mutual Construction of Organizational Space and Legitimacy. ***Organization Science***, 25(3): 713-731.

Deephouse, D. L., Bundy, J., Tost, L. P., & Suchman, M. C. 2017. Organizational legitimacy: Six key questions. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. Lawrence, & R. Meyer (Eds.), ***The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism***, Vol. 4: 27-54. London: Sage.

DeJordy, R. 2010. Institutional Guardianship: The Role of Agency in Preserving Threatened Institutional Arrangements. Unpublished Dissertation: Boston College.

Delmestri, G., & Goodrick, E. 2016. Looking Away: Denial and Emotions in Institutional Stability and Change. In J. Gehman, M. Lounsbury, & R. Greenwood (Eds.), ***How Institutions Matter!***, Vol. 48A: 233-271: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Dewey, J. 1913. ***Interest and effort in education***. Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Houghton Mifflin.

DiMaggio, P. J. 1988. Interest and agency in institutional theory. In L. Zucker (Ed.), ***Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment***. Cambridge: Ballinger.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. 1983. The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. ***American Sociological Review***, 48: 147-160.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. 1991. The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. In P. J. DiMaggio, & W. W. Powell (Eds.), **The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis**: 41-62: University Of Chicago Press.

Erickson, E. 1950. **Childhood and Society** NY: WW Norton & Company. Inc.

Everitt, J. G., & Levinson, B. A. 2016. Inhabited institutions in new destinations: Local sense-making and institutional work in community response to new immigration. **Journal of Contemporary Ethnography**, 45(2): 115-142.

Farjoun, M., Ansell, C., & Boin, A. 2015. PERSPECTIVE—Pragmatism in organization studies: Meeting the challenges of a dynamic and complex world. **Organization Science**, 26(6): 1787-1804.

Fast, S. 2013. Social acceptance of renewable energy: Trends, concepts, and geographies. **Geography Compass**, 7(12): 853-866.

Fine, G. A., & Hallett, T. 2014. Group Cultures and the Everyday Life of Organizations: Interaction Orders and Meso-Analysis. **Organization Studies**, 35(12): 1773-1792.

Friedland, R. 2014. Divine institution: Max Weber's value spheres and institutional theory, **Religion and Organization Theory**: 217-258: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Friedland, R. 2018. Moving institutional logics forward: Emotion and meaningful material practice. **Organization Studies**, 39(4): 515-542.

Goffman, E. 1959. **The presentation of self in everyday life**. New York: Anchor Books.

Goffman, E. 1967. **Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face interaction**. Oxford, England: Aldine.

Gouldner, A. W. 1954. **Patterns of industrial bureaucracy**. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Granqvist, N., & Gustafsson, R. 2016. Temporal Institutional Work. **Academy of Management Journal**, 59(3): 1009-1035.

Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Lawrence, T. B., & Meyer, R. E. 2017. The Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism. In R. Greenood, C. Oliver, T. B. Lawrence, & R. E. Meyer (Eds.), **The new institutionalism in**

organizational analysis. London: Sage.

Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Sahlin, K., & Suddaby, R. 2008a. Introduction. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of organizational institutionalism*: 1-47. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Greenwood, R., Oliver, C., Sahlin, K., & Suddaby, R. (Eds.). 2008b. *The SAGE handbook of organizational institutionalism*. Los Angeles, London: Sage.

Gutierrez, B., Howard-Grenville, J., & Scully, M. A. 2010. The Faithful Rise Up: Split Identification and an Unlikely Change Effort. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(4): 673-699.

Haack, P., Sieweke, J., & Wessel, L. 2019. Microfoundations and Multi-Level Research on Institutions. In H. Patrick, S. Jost, & W. Lauri (Eds.), *Microfoundations of Institutions*, Vol. 65A: 11-40: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Hallett, T. 2010. The Myth Incarnate. *American Sociological Review*, 75(1): 52-74.

Hallett, T., & Meanwell, E. 2016. Accountability as an inhabited institution: Contested meanings and the symbolic politics of reform. *Symbolic Interaction*, 39(3): 374-396.

Hallett, T., Shulman, D., & Fine, G. A. 2009. Peopling organizations: The promise of classic symbolic interactionism for an inhabited institutionalism. *The Oxford handbook of sociology and organization studies: Classical foundations*: 486-510.

Hallett, T., & Ventresca, M. J. 2006. Inhabited institutions: Social interaction and organizational forms in Gouldner's patterns of industrial bureaucracy. *Theory and Society*, 35: 213-236.

Hampel, C., Lawrence, T., & Tracey, P. 2017. Institutional work: taking stock and making it matter. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. B. Lawrence, & R. E. Meyer (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, 2nd ed.: 558-590. London: Sage.

Hirsh, P. M., & Lounsbury, M. 1997. Ending the family quarrel: toward a reconciliation of old and new institutionalism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40(4): 406-418.

Hoffman, A. J., & Jennings, P. D. 2015. Institutional theory and the natural environment: Research in (and on) the Anthropocene. **Organization & Environment**, 28(1): 8-31.

Hudson, B. A., & Okhuysen, G. A. 2009. Not with a Ten-Foot Pole: Core Stigma, Stigma Transfer, and Improbable Persistence of Men's Bathhouses. **Organization Science**, 20(1): 134-153.

Humphries, C. 2017. The Populist Challenge to Political Legitimacy: A Crisis of Social Validation and Grounding. **Principia**(64): 5-45.

Jakob-Sadeh, L., & Zilber, T. B. 2019. Bringing 'Together': Emotions and Power in Organizational Responses to Institutional Complexity. **Academy of Management Journal**, Forthcoming.

Jarvis, L. C., Goodrick, E., & Hudson, B. A. 2019. Where the Heart Functions Best: Reactive–Affective Conflict and the Disruptive Work of Animal Rights Organizations. **Academy of Management Journal**, 62(5): 1358-1387.

Jepperson, R. 1991. Institutions, institutional effects, and institutionalism. In W. Powell, & P. DiMaggio (Eds.), **The new institutionalism in organizational analysis**: 143-163. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kraatz, M., & Block, E. 2017. Institutional pluralism revisited. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. B. Lawrence, & R. E. Meyer (Eds.), **The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism**, 2nd ed.: 532-557. London: Sage.

Kraatz, M., Flores, R., & Chandler, D. 2020. The Value of Values for Institutional Analysis. **Academy of Management Annals**, In Press.

Kraatz, M. S. Two Cheers for Institutional Work. **Journal of Management Inquiry**.

Kraatz, M. S., & Block, E. S. 2008. Organizational Implications of Institutional Pluralism. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), **The Sage Handbook of organizational institutionalism**: 243-275. London: Sage.

Kraatz, M. S., & Flores, R. 2015. Reinfusing values, **Institutions and ideals: Philip Selznick's legacy for organizational studies**: 353-381: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Lakoff, G., & Wehling, E. 2016. *Your brain's politics: How the science of mind explains the political divide*: Andrews UK Limited.

Lawrence, T., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. 2011. Institutional work: Refocusing institutional studies of organization. *Journal of management inquiry*, 20(1): 52-58.

Lawrence, T. B., & Suddaby, R. 2006. Institutions and Institutional Work. In S. Clegg, C. Hardy, T. Lawrence, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Organization Studies*, 2nd ed.: 215-254: Sage Publications Ltd.

Lawrence, T. B., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. 2009. Introduction: theorizing and studying institutional work. In T. B. Lawrence, R. Suddaby, & B. Leca (Eds.), *Institutional Work: Actors and Agency in Institutional Studies of Organizations*: 1-28: Cambridge University Press.

Leary, M. R. 2000. Affect, cognition, and the social emotions. In J. P. Forgas (Ed.), *Feeling and thinking: The role of affect in social cognition*: 331-356. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lindblom, C. E. 1959. The science of" muddling through". *Public administration review*, 19(2): 79-88.

Lok, J., Creed, W. D., DeJordy, R., & Voronov, M. 2017. Living Institutions: Bringing Emotions into Organizational Institutionalism, *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*: 591-620: SAGE.

Lok, J., Creed, W. E. D., & DeJordy, R. 2019. From Cruise Director to Rabbi: Authoring the Agentic Self through Conventions of Narrative Necessity. In H. Patrick, S. Jost, & W. Lauri (Eds.), *Microfoundations of Institutions*, Vol. 65B: 63-83: Emerald Publishing Limited.

Lok, J., & De Rond, M. 2013. On the plasticity of institutions: Containing and restoring practice breakdowns at the Cambridge University Boat Club. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1): 185-207.

Lorino, P. 2018. *Pragmatism and organization studies*: Oxford University Press.

Lounsbury, M. C., & Ventresca, M. V. 2003. The new structuralism in organizational theory. *Organization*, 10: 457-480.

McAdams, D. 1993. *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making*: New York. William Morrell.

Mead, G. H. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Meyer, A., Peter J. Frost, Karl E. Weick 1998. The Organization Science Jazz Festival: Improvisation as a Metaphor for Organizing: Overture. *Organization Science*, 9(5): 540-542.

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. 1977. Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83: 340-363.

Morgan, G. 1980. Paradigms, Metaphors, and Puzzle Solving in Organization Theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(4): 605-622.

Muniesa, F. 2014. *The provoked economy: Economic reality and the performative turn*: Routledge.

Parsons, T. 1935. The place of ultimate values in sociological theory. *The International Journal of Ethics*, 45(3): 282-316.

Picciolini, C. 2017. *White American Youth: My Descent into America's Most Violent Hate Movement--and How I Got Out*: Hachette Books.

Powell, W. W., & Rerup, C. 2017. Opening the black box: The microfoundations of institutions. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T. Lawrence, & R. Meyer (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism*, 2nd ed.: 311-337.

Sayer, A. 2011. *Why things matter to people: Social science, values and ethical life*: Cambridge University Press.

Scheff, T. J. 1990. Socializaion of emotion: Pride and Shame as causal agents. In T. D. Kemper (Ed.), *Research Agendas in the sociology of emotions*: 281-304. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Scheff, T. J. 2000. Shame and the Social Bond: A Sociological Theory. *Sociological Theory*, 18(1): 84-99.

Scheff, T. J. 2005. Looking-Glass Self: Goffman as Symbolic Interactionist. *Symbolic Interaction*, 28(2): 147-166.

Scott, W. R. 2007. *Institutions and Organizations* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Scully, M., & Creed, W. E. D. 1997. Stealth legitimacy: employee activism and corporate response during the diffusion of domestic partner benefits, *Academy of Management Meetings*. Boston, MA, August.

Selznick, P. 1953. *TVA and the grass roots: A study in the sociology of formal organization*: United States: University of California Press.

Selznick, P. 1996. Institutionalism 'old' and 'new.'. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41: 270-277.

Selznick, P. 2008. *A humanist science: Values and ideals in social inquiry*: Stanford University Press.

Seo, M.-G., & Creed, W. D. 2002. Institutional contradictions, praxis, and institutional change: A dialectical perspective. *Academy of management review*, 27(2): 222-247.

Stinchcombe, A. L. 1997. On the virtues of the old institutionalism. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23: 1-18.

Suchman, M. C. 1995. Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3): 571-610.

Suddaby, R., Bitektine, A., & Haack, P. 2017. Legitimacy. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1): 451-478.

Toubiana, M., & Zietsma, C. 2017. The message is on the wall? Emotions, social media and the dynamics of institutional complexity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(3): 922-953.

Tsoukas, H. 1991. The Missing Link: A Transformational View of Metaphors in Organizational Science. *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review*, 16(3): 566.

Turner, J. H., & Stets, J. E. 2005. *The sociology of emotions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Unger, R. M. 2007. *The self awakened: Pragmatism unbound*: Harvard University Press.

Voronov, M., & Vince, R. 2012. Integrating emotions into the analysis of institutional work. *Academy of Management Review*, 37(1): 58-81.

Voronov, M., & Weber, K. 2016. The heart of institutions: Emotional

competence and institutional actorhood. *Academy of Management Review*, 41(3): 456-478.

Weick, K. E. 1979. *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Weick, K. E. 1993. The collapse of sensemaking in organizations: The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(4): 628-652.

Weick, K. E. 1999. That's moving: Theories that matter. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 8(2): 134-142.

Whitford, J. 2002. Pragmatism and the untenable dualism of means and ends: Why rational choice theory does not deserve paradigmatic privilege. *Theory and Society*, 31(3): 325-363.

Zietsma, C., & Lawrence, T. B. 2010. Institutional Work in the Transformation of an Organizational Field: The Interplay of Boundary Work and Practice Work. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55(2): 189-221.

Zilber, T. B. 2002. Institutionalization as an interplay between actions, meanings, and actors: The case of a rape crisis center in Israel. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(1): 234-254.

Zuboff, S. 2019. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power: Barack Obama's Books of 2019*: Profile Books.

Zucker, L. G. 1977. The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence. *American Sociological Review*, 42(5): 726-743.

Zucker, L. G., & Schilke, O. 2019. Towards a Theory of Micro-Institutional Processes: Forgotten Roots, Links to Social-Psychological Research, and New Ideas. In H. Patrick, S. Jost, & W. Lauri (Eds.), *Microfoundations of Institutions*, Vol. 65B: 371-389: Emerald Publishing Limited.

TABLE 1

Definitions of Institutions

Work Cited	Definition	Primary images and metaphors
Meyer & Rowan (1977:341)	"Institutionalized rules are classifications built into society as reciprocated typifications or interpretations (Berger and Luckmann 1967, p. 54). Such rules may be simply taken for granted or may be supported by public opinion or the force of law (Starbuck 1976). Institutions inevitably involve normative obligations but often enter into social life primarily as facts which must be taken into account by actors. Institutionalization involves the processes by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to take on a rule-like status in social thought and action."	Primary image: Rules. Action: Guided by obligations to comply with rules. People: Actors, who take into account normative obligations primarily as social facts.
DiMaggio & Powell (1991:15)	"Not norms and values, but taken-for-granted scripts, rules and classification are the stuff of which institutions are made. Rather than concrete organizations eliciting affective commitments, institutions are macrolevel abstractions, rationalized and impersonal prescriptions (Meyer and Rowan, chapter 2), 'shared typifications,' independent of any particular entity to which moral allegiance might be owed."	Primary image: Scripts, macro level abstractions, and explicitly not norms and values. Action: Guided by impersonal prescriptions without regard to affective commitment or moral concerns. People: Actors are largely not accounted for.
Jepperson (1991:143)	An institution is "an organized, established, procedure. These special procedures are often represented as the constituent rules of society (the 'rules of the game'). They are then experienced and analyzable as external to the consciousness of individuals (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973: 11)."	Primary image: Rules of the game. Action: Guided by established procedure. People: Individuals who experience rules as external to their own concerns.

68

Friedland & Alford (1991:243)	Institutions are "supra-organizational patterns of human activity by which individuals and organizations produce and reproduce their material substance and organize time and space."	Primary image: Supra-organizational patterns of human activity. Action: Guided by established patterns. People: Individuals who participate in the reproduction of institutions through enactment of patterns.
Bellah et al. (1991: 40)	"Institutions are patterns of social activity that give shape to collective and individual experience. An institution is a complex whole that guides and sustains individual identity. ... Institutions form individuals by making possible or impossible certain ways of behaving and relating to others. They shape character by assigning responsibility, demanding accountability, and providing the standards in terms of which each person recognizes the excellence of his or her achievements."	Primary image: Individual and collective patterns of activity. Action: Ways of being are animated by a desire for recognition of excellence by others. People: Aspirational actors who are accountable and responsible to others.
Barley & Tolbert (1997: 94)	"[W]e define institutions as shared rules and typifications that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relationships."	Primary image: Rules and typifications. Action: Appropriate activities subject to actor category. People: Actors, defined by their social categories.
Greenwood et al. (2008: 5)	Institutions are "more-or-less taken-for-granted repetitive social behaviour that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning to social exchange and thus enable self-reproducing social order."	Primary image: Repetitive social behavior. Action: Meaningful social exchange underpinned by normative and cognitive factors. People: Implicitly, actors who participate in meaningful social

70

		exchange.

Suddaby et al. (2010: 1234)	"Institutions, in this view, involve collectively shared scripts, frames, and taken-for-granted assumptions (Boli & Thomas, 1999), and actors (individuals, organizations, or states) attain their agency substantially as a result of their embeddedness in culture (Meyer & Jepperson, 2000)."	Primary image: Scripts, frames, and assumptions. Action: Culturally embedded enactments. People: Actors whose agency hinges on cultural embeddedness.
Lok & De Rond (2013: 186)	"We define institutions as patterns both of and for particular types of social practices, namely those that are distributed across time and space, routinized and taken-for-granted, 'objectivated' as existing apart from and beyond the people who embody them and legitimated in terms of an overarching institutional logic (Barley, 2008; Berger & Luckmann, 1991)."	Primary image: Patterns of social practices apart from and beyond people. Action: Social practices constrained by logics. People: Implicitly, actors who embody social practices.

TABLE 2

New Questions Enabled by the World of Concern Perspective

Topic	Current Question	New Question
Institutional Inhabitants	How does people's experience of double-embeddedness in communities and institutions shape their participation in institutional processes?	How do people's sedimented experiences in communities shape the world of concern? How do shared beliefs about the conditions for thriving and suffering affect people's participation in institutional processes?
Institutional Pluralism	How do people and organizations manage competing prescriptions?	How do people manage incommensurate duties? How do competing obligations shape people's enactment of stewardship to others and their communities?
Values	How do values guide action?	How do sedimented evaluations give rise to and modify values over time? How does ubiquitous evaluation thread through institutional micro processes? How do sedimented evaluations help people navigate across ends-in-view?
Legitimation	How does legitimacy explain action?	How do experiences of thriving and suffering shape legitimation? How do positive or negative evaluations of social arrangements unfold motivated by perceptions of wellbeing? How does legitimation unfold as a locally based and heterogeneous process informed by

73

		human vulnerability?
Institutional Persistence	How does taken-for-grantedness lead to institutional persistence?	How does stewardship underpin institutional persistence? When and how do perceived threats to the world of concern awaken latent stewardship?