Since the turn of the millennium, research on ethical judgment has taken a new turn. The traditional perspective on such judgments, best captured by Rest,¹ held that they resulted from a process of rational deliberation. Starting with work begun by Haidt,² we now see that most ethical judgment relies more on emotionally laden intuition, often unconscious, rather than conscious rational deliberation. In the last decade new models have emerged to describe how the intuitive process might work, and how it differs from the traditional deliberative process.³⁴ This realization raises a range of new questions about if and how such intuitions may be influenced, many of which concern how ethically relevant intuitions form.⁵

In particular, the institutional conditions under which ethical decisions are made is likely to have a profound impact. Institutional conditions are the resilient social structures that provide stability and meaning to social life.⁶ They shape decisions regarding practice adoption,⁷ CEO pay,⁸ and even the resolution of negotiations,⁹ by shaping behavior through taken for granted notions of appropriateness.¹⁰ Exploring the institutional underpinnings of ethical decision making is likely to provide insight into the context of those decisions, which has largely been distilled to the notion of “bad barrels” poisoning a the decisions of actors¹¹

Our presentation explores how the institutional logics that characterize an organization may be related to the ethically relevant intuitions of organizational members. We combine theory on the formation of intuition with notions of appropriateness to address how the institutional context of organizations shapes the ethical judgments made by its members.


