Shame On You! Unpacking the Individual and Organizational Implications of Engaging with a Stigmatized Organization

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ABSTRACT   How and when does engagement with a stigmatized organization lead to the transfer of its stigma to organizations and individuals associating with it? To answer this question, we conduct an inductive study of the process of stigma transfer and the conditions determining social actors' susceptibility to such courtesy stigma. We build our process model using interview and archival data on two art exhibitions engaging with Hells Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC) Norway. Our study identifies purposeful shaming as a key element in the stigma transfer process, and shows that shaming attempts take on different forms at the individual and organizational levels. We also illustrate that contestation of shaming attempts through impression management tactics is conditional upon the status of the stigma 'target'. This provides novel insights into when and how status moderates the stigma transfer process.

Keywords: courtesy stigma, episodic shaming, social evaluation, status, stigma-by-association

INTRODUCTION

Erving Goffman's (1963, p. 3) canonical conceptualization of stigma describes it as an 'attribute that is deeply discrediting'. Applying this conceptualization to an organizational setting, Devers et al. (2009, p. 155) define organizational stigma as 'a label that evokes a collective stakeholder group-specific perception that an organization possesses a fundamental, deep-seated flaw that deindividuates and discredits the organization'. This label is assigned when an organization's perceived violation of prevailing norms and values triggers a moral and negative emotional judgment (Hudson, 2008; Paetzold

et al., 2008; Pollock et al., 2019). Since being stigmatized in this way can have major consequences, academic interest in organizational stigma(tization) has grown rapidly in recent years.

A first area of interest in this literature concerns the strategic practices employed by organizations to manage the effects of stigma. These practices include shielding stakeholders (Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009), constructing narrative distinctions (Anteby, 2010; Reuber and Morgan-Thomas, 2019), reframing meanings (Carberry and King, 2012; Tracey and Phillips, 2016) or coopting the negative labels (Helms and Patterson, 2014; Wolfe and Blithe, 2015). Although a deeply engrained stigma is difficult to remove, recent work also investigates organizational practices aimed at achieving just that (Hampel and Tracey, 2017; Lashley and Pollock, 2020). A smaller second strand of literature directs attention instead to the role of evaluators *outside* stigmatized organizations. These studies aim to assess how opposing evaluations by multiple social audiences interact to define what is normal and what is stigmatized (Ertug et al., 2016; Kvåle and Murdoch, 2021; Shadnam et al., 2020).

This article contributes to the third and final strand of literature examining the transfer of stigma from a tainted organization to other social actors – known as 'courtesy stigma' or 'stigma-by-association'. Previous research documents courtesy stigma in various organizational settings: i.e., within professions and organizational categories (Barlow et al., 2018; Lashley and Pollock, 2020; Piazza and Perretti, 2015; Roulet, 2015), between organizations and individuals (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Helms and Patterson, 2014; Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009; Wiesenfeld et al., 2008), and within organizations from one individual to another (Kulik et al., 2008). Yet, we still require a deeper understanding of the *processes* through which stigma transfers at the individual and organizational levels, as well as the *conditions* determining social actors' (in)vulnerability to such courtesy stigma (Devers et al., 2009; Mishina and Devers, 2012). Without in-depth understanding of the nature, conditions and implications of stigma transfer, we cannot develop organizational interventions and/or managerial strategies aimed at *either* minimizing spillovers (among targets) *or* maximizing their success (among instigators) (Kostova and Zaheer, 1999; Kulik et al., 2008; Yu et al., 2008). More generally, examining the discourse and practices of individual as well as organizational participants in the stigma transfer process can uncover cross-level (inter)actions taking place at sites of contestation (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Elsbach, 1994; Hudson and Okhuysen, 2014; Kim et al., 2016). This provides insights into how societal values are enforced and reinforced (Creed et al., 2014), as well as how actors use their positions to stigmatize and/or resist stigma (Hudson and Okhuysen, 2014). The key question thus becomes: *How and when does engagement with a stigmatized organization lead to courtesy stigma at the organizational and individual levels?*

To address this question, we conduct an inductive case study of two events linked to the photography project 'Helvetes Engler [Angels from Hell]: Hells Angels MC Norway' by Norwegian photographer Marcel Leliënhof. The first event was the April 2013 Nordic Light International Festival of Photography in Kristiansund (Norway), and the second was the May 2014 exhibition 'For the Love of Freedom' at the University of Oslo's Museum of Cultural History. Both events included voluntary and direct engagement with Hells Angels MC (e.g., exhibition of photographs and planned public debates with Hells Angels members), which, as discussed below, can be viewed as a quintessentially

stigmatized organization. Yet, both events differed in terms of social settings and actor characteristics. As such, they provide an excellent framework to address our research question.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stigma and Stigma Transfer

Stigma reflects the deeply discredited and spoiled identity of the tainted actors, and signals others to keep their distance. Failure to do so may put one at risk of stigma transfer (Goffman, 1963; Kulik et al., 2008), as illustrated by a large empirical literature in sociology and psychology. This body of research shows, for instance, that primary care-givers and relatives of people with HIV/AIDS, schizophrenia, or Alzheimer's disease often experience stigmatization themselves. Such stigma transfer is found to affect close family members, partners as well as friends (for reviews, see Corrigan and Miller, 2004; Pescosolido and Martin, 2015). Overall, this literature provides extensive confirmation that stigma travels between individuals.

In organizational settings, similar stigma transfer effects may arise when 'an employee maintains a relationship with someone who is stigmatized' (Kulik et al., 2008, p. 216). Pontikes et al. (2010), for example, illustrate that (former) colleagues of artists black-listed during Hollywood's Red Scare became substantially less likely to find employment. Stigma has furthermore been shown to travel from firms to their managers and employees. Early examples include Sutton and Callahan (1987) and Wiesenfeld et al. (2008), who find that the stigma of corporate failure causes the professional devaluation of its managerial elite. More recent evidence extends these findings by showing that organizational stigma also transfers to, among others, customers, suppliers and even regulators (e.g., Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009; Wolfe and Blithe, 2015). Finally, stigma has been observed to spread also between organizations in the same industry category (Lashley and Pollock, 2020; Piazza and Perretti, 2015; Vergne, 2012), or offering particular product types (Barlow et al., 2018). Roulet (2015, p. 389), for instance, shows how public knowledge of 'deviant organizational behaviors' induced a diffusion of 'stigma over the finance industry' following the 2007/8 subprime crisis.

The existence and prevalence of stigma transfers raise important questions about its drivers, conditions and implications (Devers et al., 2009; Hudson, 2008; Paetzold et al., 2008). What processes and mechanisms induce or inhibit transfer effects? Are such transfers conditional upon the characteristics of evaluating audience(s), their 'targets', and the institutional environment? What determines actors' susceptibility or immunity to stigma transfer, and are these determinants comparable at the individual and organizational levels? Addressing these questions allows insight into when, why and how public endorsement may be withdrawn due to engagement with a stigma source. Since opinions about individuals and organizations are socially constructed – and thereby inherently contested – understanding the involved 'prosecutorial incentives' (Warren, 2007) requires an over-arching perspective encompassing mechanisms, conditions, and levels of analysis.

Cognitive-Psychological Mechanisms and the Role of Emotions

Spillovers in social evaluations are not unique to stigma. Similar spillover effects have likewise been documented for other social evaluations including legitimacy, reputation and celebrity (Bitektine, 2011; Dobrev et al., 2006; Haack et al., 2014; Jonsson et al., 2009; Kostova and Zaheer, 1999; Rindova et al., 2006; Yu et al., 2008; Zavyalova et al., 2012). Much like the literature on organizational stigma, this adjacent literature commonly focuses on close professional relationships (e.g., co-workers, customers, corporate elites or firms in the same industry) and implicitly invokes this proximity to explain spillover effects. The underlying theoretical argument builds on the cognitive-psychological mechanism of 'generalization' – or 'relatedness' – based on similarity or availability heuristics (Bitektine, 2011; Dobrev et al., 2006; Haack et al., 2014; Jonsson et al., 2009; Kostova and Zaheer, 1999). In our view, this notion of spillovers arising because of social proximity is certainly a very useful starting point. Yet, it is likely to constitute only one of many possible mechanisms through which spillovers – of stigma as well as other social evaluations – occur (Mishina and Devers, 2012).

Kulik et al.'s (2008) theoretical model takes a first step in this direction. Focusing on individual-level stigma-by-association in the workplace, they argue that, in a first stage, association with a stigma source triggers a 'kneejerk reaction' based on 'immediately accessible heuristics' (Kulik et al., 2008, p. 219–20). This is followed, however, by a second stage of more controlled cognitive processing. Depending on the effort exerted in this second stage, the initial impression formed in the first stage may – but need not – be modified. Stigma-by-association in their model thus is not an inevitable outcome, but can be induced or inhibited by *cognitive processes*. This is an important insight that bears relevance not just to stigma and its transfer. Indeed, studies on the development and spillover of other types of social evaluations have likewise started to distinguish between 'automatic' (based on heuristics) and 'active' (based on analytical information processing) pathways (Bitektine, 2011; Haack et al., 2014; Pfarrer et al., 2010).

We argue that the current focus on *cognitive* processes is overly restrictive. Recent work on affect and emotions in organizational settings suggests that emotions are likely to play a critical part as well (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack et al., 2014; Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009; Wright et al., 2017). Yet, their role within the stigma transfer process has not been developed.[[1]] Our analysis explores this issue by integrating insights from the literature on the emotion of shame – and the activity of shaming – in organizational settings (Creed et al., 2014; Daniels and Robinson, 2019; Murphy and Kiffin-Petersen, 2017). We define the *emotion* of shame as a painful emotion that arises when falling short of an important moral standard, and the *activity* of shaming as any action by an individual and/or group intended to elicit shame, regardless of whether it is successful in doing so (Creed et al., 2014; Daniels and Robinson, 2019; Murphy and Kiffin-Petersen, 2017).

In our view, shame is a particularly useful lens to study (the transfer of) organizational stigma for three reasons. First, shame as a moral emotion is closely tied to 'moral transgressions and social norm violations', and involves 'attribution of that deviation to a faulty self' (Daniels and Robinson, 2019, p. 2453). Both stigma and shame thus relate to violations of prevailing moral norms and values. Moreover, in both cases these violations are interpreted as reflecting fundamental deficiencies in the involved social

actors. Second, shaming as an activity is often motivated by a desire to restore 'social conformity and compliance with moral standards' (Murphy and Kiffin-Petersen, 2017, p. 658). Similar to stigma(tization), shaming thus involves a strong element of social control (Creed et al., 2014; Shadnam et al., 2020). This can make shaming an important tool to spoil organizational identities (in the sense of Goffman, 1963), particularly in settings where social actors hold 'differing views of appropriate organizational action based in different logics' (Toubiana and Zietsma, 2017, p. 923; Sadeh and Zilber, 2019). Finally, in his study on how homosexuality scandals in Victorian England tainted actors beyond the offender, Adut (2010, p. 221) hypothesizes that 'the logic of [such] contamination derives largely from that of shame'. This proposition suggests that shame and shaming can play a key role in the stigma transfer process.

Scope Conditions for Transfer of Stigma

Beyond understanding the role of emotions in stigma transfer *processes*, it is important to also address the *conditions* determining social actors' susceptibility to courtesy stigma. That is, why are some social actors 'stigmatized while others are not' (Devers et al., 2009, p. 155)? Pioneering work by Kulik et al. (2008) focuses on the characteristics of the stigmatizing actor – including her opinions about the stigma source, her relationship with the involved individual(s), and her beliefs about the (in)voluntary nature of the interaction with the stigma source. Nonetheless, extending the analysis to include the 'targets' characteristics would be required to obtain a more complete picture of the conditions determining courtesy stigma.

One important set of characteristics thereby relates to social actor's status, reputation or celebrity (Ertug et al., 2016; Pollock et al., 2019).[[2]] Previous research documents that higher status, reputation or celebrity can insulate actors from legitimacy loss (Deephouse and Carter, 2005; Jonsson et al., 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2010; Philips and Zuckerman, 2001). High-status actors often get the benefit of the doubt due to their 'more conspicuous and favourable organization-specific identity' (Yu et al., 2008, p. 461), which allows them to deviate unpunished from group norms. Such status effects raise key questions about the role of other social evaluations within the stigma transfer process. What happens, for instance, when social actors engaging with a stigma source have high or low status? Can high status provide immunity to stigma transfer or make actors more vulnerable to it? Could higher status actors sometimes actually benefit from their engagement with a stigma source? As organizational stigma scholarship thus far concentrates on (the consequences of) a single social evaluation (i.e., stigma), the interplay between different social evaluations remains an 'important area for future research' (Bitektine, 2011; Mishina and Devers, 2012; Pollock et al., 2019, p. 466). We maintain therefore that analyzing the interplay of stigma and status allows a crucial step towards understanding the conditions under which courtesy stigma arises (or not).

Attention to Macro, Meso and Micro Levels

Finally, understanding mechanisms and conditions cannot easily be separated from the level of analysis. Thus far, social evaluation spillovers are studied using conceptual frameworks where a macro-level 'construal of appropriateness' that 'exists objectively as a

social fact' is assumed to have micro-level implications (Haack and Sieweke, 2018, p. 491). The focus thereby lies on spillovers at the micro-level (Barlow et al., 2018; Lashley and Pollock, 2020; Piazza and Perretti, 2015; Roulet, 2015; Vergne, 2012), and feedback loops to the macro-level are rarely addressed (for exceptions, see Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack and Sieweke, 2018). Moreover, as is common across management studies (Kim et al., 2016; Klein and Kozlowski, 2000), the 'micro' level is thought of as either individuals or organizations.

   In the analysis below, we build on Harmon et al.'s (2019, p. 465) reminder that 'there are more than two levels of analysis beyond the social system and the individual'. Specifically, we follow Kim et al. (2016, p. 273) in using 'macro' for the level of institutional norms and collective beliefs, 'micro' for the individual level, and 'meso' for (in) formal 'social groups, associations and other collectives'. The meso level thus reflects 'a third, intermediate level of analysis' and can include the workplace, teams, regions or, in our case, formal organizations (Kim et al., 2016, p. 274; Klein and Kozlowski, 2000, p. 232). Separating micro and meso levels is critical to add analytical precision, and to enable the exploration of thus far neglected cross-level aspects of the stigma transfer process. It allows observing, for instance, whether individuals (organizations) engage in distinct shaming behaviours aimed at organizations rather than individuals, or whether the transfer of stigma at one level subsequently spills over to another level. Omitting one level of analysis by focusing on *either* individuals *or* organizations is vulnerable to – at best – incomplete or – at worst – biased inferences.

EMPIRICAL APPROACH AND METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Research Context: Stigma of Hells Angels Motorcycle Club

The starting point of our analysis is a photography project by Norwegian photographer Marcel Leliënhof, who spent five years photographing HAMC Norway (HAMC). These pictures – and HAMC itself – were a key feature of the April 2013 Nordic Light photography festival in Kristiansund (henceforth Nordic Light) and the May 2014 exhibition 'For the Love of Freedom' at the University of Oslo's Museum of Cultural History (henceforth KHM). Nordic Light was established in 2006 and is Norway's most important photography festival, while the KHM exhibition was part of the Bicentenary celebrations of the Norwegian Constitution (formally organized by the President of the Norwegian Parliament; Innst. S. nr.162, 2008–9). Our analysis exploits the societal debates triggered by these events' engagement with HAMC – both indirectly through exhibited photographs, and directly through the scheduled participation of HAMC members in public debates. Two elements of this research context require further discussion.

   First, researchers must 'establish that the phenomena they are studying are stigmatized' (Pollock et al., 2019, p. 461). Hence, we here document that HAMC can be considered a stigmatized organization. Representations of HAMC in popular culture (e.g., Thompson, 1966), media (e.g., Shanahan and Rashbaum, 2020), criminological research (e.g., von Lampe, 2019) as well as police and government reports (e.g., Europol, 2019) depict a close-knit community characterized by violence, lawlessness and extreme hostility

to outsiders. The organization is habitually connected with organized crime, especially arms and drug trafficking, prostitution, extortion and money laundering. HAMC thus possesses a set of deeply engrained and morally objectionable traits that violate accepted norms and values – consistent with it being a stigmatized organization (Hudson, 2008; Pollock et al., 2019). A similar representation exists in Norway, where HAMC established its first chapter in 1992 and currently has eight chapters. References to the organization's illegal, criminal and violent activities abound in Norwegian government documents (Document no.8, 2010–11; Report to Parliament no.7, 2010–11), police reports (KRIPOS, 2012; National Police Directorate, 2010), and the media (Olsen, 2015).

Naturally, this does not mean that there is no variation in opinions about HAMC and its members. For instance, the Norwegian police is internally divided about how to deal with HAMC (Jonassen, 2012), and the bishop and dean of Oslo Cathedral sanctioned the Cathedral's use for the funeral of a prominent HAMC member (Lofstad, 2013). Still, although some acknowledge that not all HAMC *members* are 'dangerous and deviant' (Devers et al., 2009), the negative opinion of HAMC *as an organization* has reached a 'taken-for-granted, normatively codified social standing' (Dobrev et al., 2006, p. 583). This macro-level 'construal of appropriateness' serves as an important context characteristic in our analysis (Haack and Sieweke, 2018, p. 491; Bitektine and Haack, 2015), and allows studying how stigma transfers from the macro-level to the individual and organizational levels.

Second, we study a case where social actors engage with a stigmatized organization in the context of specific, time-limited events (i.e., art exhibitions). This does not entail the proximity and durability of the relationships customarily analyzed in the organizational stigma literature (such as employees, customers and suppliers). Nonetheless, we take this 'mere engagement' as a potential trigger of courtesy stigma, because any lack of purposeful distancing from a stigma source implies a breach of social norms. As such, it might be sufficient for stigma to transfer onto other actors. From this perspective, Kulik et al.'s (2008) theoretical framework suggests that our setting carries high potential for stigma transfer since i) most people have strong negative opinions about HAMC, and ii) interactions with this stigma source were predominantly voluntary.
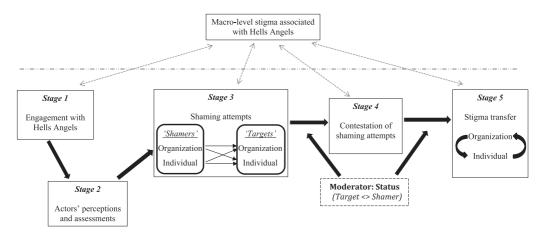

Figure 1. A process model of organizational stigma transfer

Data Sources

Media reports. We systematically compiled newspaper items, magazine articles, and television footage covering the two events, as well as general media coverage of HAMC. Our 99 media items include local and (inter)national printed and online news, as well as specialized publications on photography, musea and ethics (Table I). They cover descriptions of, interviews with, and commentary from, participants in both events, and portray what happened when as well as the positions taken by various actors. This data source also includes a recorded panel debate accompanying the May 2014 exhibition in Oslo (University of Oslo, 2014).

Public discussion fora. Since we study events several years after the fact, we had no possibility of contacting and interviewing attendees. Yet, we were able to retrieve opinions of some attendees and members of the public via discussion fora, blogposts, newspaper contributions, etc. In total, we uncovered two blogposts related to the KHM exhibition and 11 Letters to the Editor (nine related to Nordic Light and two related to KHM). In addition, four discussion fora addressed the presence of HAMC at Nordic Light. These

Table I. Overview data sources

	Nordic Light	*KHM*	*Other*
Media reports			
Local	19	11	3
(Inter)National	8	13	8
Journals on photography, musea and ethics	7	5	1
Broadcasting	7	3	2
Other web publications	6	6	-
Public discussion for a			
Letter to Editor	9	2	-
Blogposts	-	2	-
Contributors public discussion fora	44	-	-
Contributions public discussion fora	88	-	-
	Nordic Light	***KHM***	***Both***
Interviews	Managing director	Curator I	Photographer
	Creative director	Curator II	Spokesperson HAMC
	Chairman of board	Project coordinator	Leader of Payback
	Member of board	Director of KHM	Book publisher
	County administrator		Managing director Protestfestivalen
	Chief of Police		
	Newspaper editor		

featured 88 contributions from 44 unique participants (with a minimum of one and a maximum of nine contributions per participant; Table I).

Official documents. We collected official documents related to HAMC, including white papers from the Norwegian ministries of Justice and Culture, Parliamentary decisions on organized crime, and formal statements by the Norwegian police as well as politicians. These documents set out official positions towards HAMC. A non-exhaustive list is provided in the Online Appendix. We also accessed official documents including committee appointments and parliamentary questions (and answers) regarding the May 2014 exhibition in Oslo. Finally, we make use of both events' website discourse. As an official communication tool, websites show 'how organizations publicly legitimize their activities' (Reuber and Morgan-Thomas, 2019, p. 52).

Interviews. We conducted, recorded and transcribed several rounds of interviews with 16 participants across both events (Table I). The photographer, his publisher, the spokesperson of HAMC Norway and the leader of 'Payback' (the interest organization for motorcycle clubs in Norway) were involved in both cases, and our interviews with them covered both events. With respect to Nordic Light, our interviews included the festival's managing and creative directors, the festival board's chairman and one other board member, the chief of police, the local newspaper's news editor and the county chief administrator. Regarding the KHM exhibition, we interviewed both (co-)curators, the project coordinator, as well as the museum director.

Face-to-face interviews took place between April 2016 and April 2018, lasted between 30 and 95 minutes, and used a broad topics-driven interview guide. We structured interviews to extract coherent narratives about respondents' experiences and perceptions of the events, and to find out more about what lay behind the controversies that arose. We thereby adjusted our follow-up questions depending on interviewees' roles and position. With the photographer and events organizers, we probed particularly into motivations to work with HAMC and the reactions encountered (e.g., who they perceived as opponents or supporters, what influence distinct audiences had, how they experienced their (re) actions). With police, political and media representatives, we probed into their reactions to the events as well as the motivations and argumentation for their expressed opinions and actions.

After a first round of analysis, we returned to the field for additional interviews with (local) politicians, police representatives and both events' organizers. These second and third interview rounds were important to reach the stage where additional data no longer generated new evidence. We should note that actors' status was not part of our initial research design and interview guide. Yet, unprompted references in our first three interviews to involved actors' status made us extend the interview guide with an additional topic (i.e., perceptions of actors' social rank). We also began paying careful attention to social rankings in documentary evidence (more details on our coding and operationalization of status in the next section).

How did these data sources allow us to extract information about stigma transfer? Stigma is known to induce cognitive disidentification, and leads others to withdraw from the stigma source (Devers et al., 2009; Mishina and Devers, 2012; Wiesenfeld et al.,

2008). Hence, we coded concrete instances of changes over time in the nature of social interactions. Following previous work by, for instance, Sutton and Callahan (1987), Wiesenfeld et al. (2008) and Pontikes et al. (2010), we thereby focused on identifying avoidance behaviours due to social actors' decisions (e.g., loss of friendships, weakening of professional community, reduced contacts and networks, threat of boycott, volunteers resigning). Such appearance of social sanctions (e.g., retraction of funding) and rejection (e.g., loss of income opportunities) illustrates that interaction with HAMC imposed a considerable cost on otherwise respectable and respected individual and organizational actors. As discussed in more detail below, we therefore regard such instances as indications that stigma transfer took place from HAMC to those (perceived to be) associating with it.

Quotations from documentary evidence and interviews are italicized (translated from Norwegian original). Although maintaining anonymity is difficult given the public nature of both events, we include only the photographer by name. All other individuals are referred to by their position. Contributions to public discussion fora are referenced via the article commented upon, while for Letters to the Editor we provide numbered references.
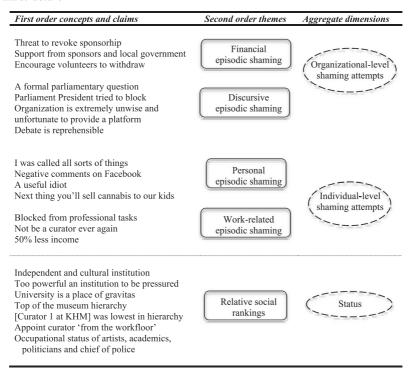
Research Design and Data Analysis

Our study is best characterized as a reconstructive process research since we 'seek to account for the process that led to [a particular outcome] from within' (Langley and Tsoukas, 2017, p. 9). As is common in process studies, we 'take the meanings or interpretations of individuals as both raw material and primary object' (Langley, 2010, p. 419), and study the 'motors' determining how issues and actions affect the temporal progression of cognitive categories (Langley, 2010). Given the timing of our data collection, we thereby study the events under analysis 'after the fact' rather than 'in the flow' (Langley and Tsoukas, 2017).

Our analytic strategy builds on an iterative and recursive process (Eisenhardt, 1989). In a first step, we coded all media materials with respect to the timeline for each event as well as the individuals and organizations involved. This allowed a deeper understanding of protagonists, developments, (re)actions and overall dynamics. It also offered a first opportunity to identify commonalities across both events. The second step involved a detailed coding and categorization of each information source (i.e., media, discussion fora, documents, and interview transcripts). This was done independently by both authors, and initially followed an open coding process focused on i) descriptions of HAMC and other involved actors, ii) opinions and evaluations regarding each event and its context, iii) description and motivation of actors' own actions, and iv) experiences linked to actors' contact with HAMC. The structured set of information arising from this process allowed us to extract broad patterns and common themes. The importance of shaming in both settings and the recurrent interplay of stigma and status came prominently to the fore at this point. These observations were then verified and extended in a third step of the analysis.

In this third step, we reexamined all data sources in light of initial findings – thus moving back and forth between data and developing theoretical insights. Since we also overlapped data analysis with additional data collection, we retained flexibility to incorporate

Table II. Data structure

First order concepts and claims	Second order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Threat to revoke sponsorhip Support from sponsors and local government Encourage volunteers to withdraw	Financial episodic shaming	Organizational-level shaming attempts
A formal parliamentary question Parliament President tried to block Organization is extremely unwise and unfortunate to provide a platform Debate is reprehensible	Discursive episodic shaming	
I was called all sorts of things Negative comments on Facebook A useful idiot Next thing you'll sell cannabis to our kids	Personal episodic shaming	Individual-level shaming attempts
Blocked from professional tasks Not be a curator ever again 50% less income	Work-related episodic shaming	
Independent and cultural institution Too powerful an institution to be pressured University is a place of gravitas Top of the museum hierarchy [Curator 1 at KHM] was lowest in hierarchy Appoint curator 'from the workfloor' Occupational status of artists, academics, politicians and chief of police	Relative social rankings	Status

emerging themes and make adjustments aimed at better capturing explanations of underlying dynamics (Eisenhardt, 1989). To strengthen the analyses further, an independent coder went through all empirical materials after we completed the majority of the initial analysis and data collection ('peer debriefing'). Strong overlap in our independent assessments increases the reliability of inferences drawn from the material, while subsequent discussions with the peer debriefer further crystallized the insights obtained. Table II illustrates the resulting data structure.

As mentioned, unprompted references were made during our first interviews to involved actors' status, and it is important to clarify how we operationalized and coded this concept in the remainder of the project. Since status reflects an 'agreed-upon social rank' (Devers et al., 2009, p. 155), our coding specifies this ranking across all involved audiences. At the individual level, we thereby relied on Ganzeboom and Treiman's (1996) occupational status scores, which define 'artists' (e.g., Curator 1 KHM, event organizers at Nordic Light) as having lower status than 'scientists' (Curator 2 KHM, University rector, professors), or 'politicians' (county chief administrator, national politicians). We verified and confirmed this ranking in our setting. At the organizational level, we built on Washington and Zajac's (2005, p. 284) conceptualisation of status as the 'intersubjectively agreed-upon and accepted ordering' of organizations in a social system. We therefore coded all references to organizations' position in the social hierarchy (e.g., *'top of the hierarchy'*, Marcel Leliënhof, Interview) as well as their (lack of) administrative and

financial autonomy. Full details provided in the section 'Status as Moderator – Interplay of Stigma and Status'.

A PROCESS MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL STIGMA TRANSFER

Figure 1 provides a graphical overview of the process model that arose from our analysis. The model describes the five stages through which HAMC's stigma (located at the macro level above the horizontal dashed line) was transferred to both events' organizers at individual and organizational levels (below the horizontal dashed line). The stigma transfer process starts when social actors voluntarily engage with a stigma source (Stage 1). This action triggers immediate assessments of this challenge to established norms by internal and external stakeholders (e.g., co-workers, media, policy-makers) (Stage 2), which, in turn, set the stage for shaming attempts as a strategic means to induce renewed conformity (Stage 3). The targets of such attempts often contest them through boundary and impression management strategies aimed at reframing their engagement with the stigma source (Stage 4). Such contestation efforts are moderated by the targets' status and affect whether or not the stigma transfers (Stage 5). Stigma transfer following the voluntarily engagement with a stigma source (Stage 1) thus requires interaction and negotiation by means of concrete social evaluations (Stage 2) that form the basis for shaming attempts (Stage 3). If not averted via counterclaims (Stage 4), these shaming attempts lead to the attachment of a stigmatizing label (Stage 5). In the remainder of this section, we spell out these five stages along with the empirical evidence that guided the model's development.

Stage 1: Engagement with HAMC

Kulik et al. (2008, p. 218) state that 'before any stigma-by-association effects can occur, a connection must be established' between a stigma source and another social actor. Hence, the first stage in our process model relates to actors' engagement with a stigmatized organization (Figure 1). There is considerable evidence across all our data sources that the photographer and the events' organizers voluntarily engaged with HAMC (Table III). Marcel Leliënhof, for instance, repeatedly stated that:

> '*When I decided to do a book on motorcycle culture, I wanted to start with the Hells Angels chapter that is the biggest and most difficult to approach*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Nordic Light website)

He also remarked that his HAMC project should be viewed as '*a little bridge between the biker world and the "man in the street", because that is why it was made*' (Marcel Leliënhof, public debate at KHM). Such intentionality is important since theoretical arguments (Devers et al., 2009; Kulik et al., 2008) and experimental evidence (Sigelman et al., 1991) hold that courtesy stigma is more likely to arise from voluntary interactions.

At Nordic Light, the managing director considered the festival's ability to be the first to exhibit the HAMC photographs:

> '*a f***ing scoop; if we now manage to handle it properly (…) then this is just entirely fantastic*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)

Table III. Actors' engagement with HAMC (Stage 1)

Photographer	'*When I decided to do a book on motorcycle culture, I wanted to start with the Hells Angels chapter that is the biggest and most difficult to approach*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Nordic Light website)
	'*I want to illuminate everything about HAMC. What people want to see are guys running around with guns and drugs. The reality is unfortunately a bit more boring than that*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, cited in NA24, 12 November 2013)
	'*I hope this book can be a little bridge between the biker world and the 'man in the street', because that is why it was made*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, public debate at KHM)
Organizers	'*And I thought, this is a real scoop. This is a f***ing scoop; if we now manage to handle it properly and bring all elements into the debate, then this is just entirely fantastic*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*[This project on HAMC] is interesting because it has something to do with biker culture and getting into an arena we have not been to before. And then we should get it first, because we were always looking for novelty, and I thought that now we can be controversial, generate debate, not sweep anything under the rug*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*I am extremely skeptical about anything that can signal HAMC has been taken into the fold – and here they were actually **invited**'*. (Hesjedal, 2013, readers comments, our boldface)
	'*It is one thing to exhibit pictures of Hells Angels, but to **invite** those who are in the pictures is quite another thing*'. (Member of Parliament, cited in Botten, 2013b, our boldface)
	'*The Rector of the University of Oslo was summoned to the Norwegian Parliament. I introduced myself to the leader of the official celebrations for the Norwegian Constitution as the curator of the exhibition, and he went completely crazy*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
	'*The director [of KHM] said that he wanted an exhibition that was so groundbreaking that it should appear on the national news at least twice. And then I thought: what can it be? And then I saw on the national news – just when I had been commissioned – that they had given Marcel six minutes, I think in prime time, on a started project. [I said to myself:] This is worth gold*'. (Curator 1 KHM, interview)
	'*The curators should have free reign, and the only constraint I imposed was that it should shake up the museum and be provocative*'. (KHM director, Interview)

A strategic decision was also made to extend the festival's programme with two additional elements directly involving HAMC members: i.e., an onstage interview with HAMC's spokesperson, and a debate between HAMC Norway, the local police chief and a Norwegian professor specializing in white-collar crime. The interview and the debate were later cancelled due to severe public pressure. Yet, their initial inclusion signaled the organizers' intention to approach HAMC as a social actor with the same rights and duties as everyone else (Managing and creative directors Nordic Light, Interviews). This was widely perceived as a deliberate and voluntary engagement with HAMC. As one commentator put it:

> '*I am extremely skeptical about anything that can signal HAMC has been taken into the fold – and here **they were actually invited**'*. (Hesjedal, 2013, readers' comments, our boldface)

In similar vein, the curators of KHM's exhibition – one photographer (henceforth Curator 1 KHM) and one professor in archaeology (Curator 2 KHM) – were given '*carte*

blanche' to develop '*an exhibition examining and prying into the heart of freedom, as seen in the cross-light of art and science*' (KHM, 2014a). The museum director confirmed to us that:

> '*The curators should have free reign, and the only constraint I imposed was that it should shake up the museum and be provocative*'. (KHM director, Interview)

The decision to include Leliënhof's HAMC project – as well as additional events involving HAMC members such as a public debate on '*Freedom and the boundaries of freedom*' (hosting the rector of the University of Oslo, a professor of social anthropology, HAMC's spokesperson, the photographer, and his co-author) – was made by Curator 1.

> '*I saw on the national news – just when I had been commissioned – that they had given Marcel six minutes, I think in prime time, on a started project. [I said to myself:] This is worth gold*'. (Curator 1 KHM, interview)

The inclusion of HAMC in an exhibition celebrating Norway's Constitution was again highly controversial, and widely interpreted as voluntary engagement with a stigmatized organization:

> '*The Rector of the University of Oslo was summoned to the Norwegian Parliament. I introduced myself to the leader of the official celebrations for the Norwegian Constitution as the curator of the exhibition, and he went completely crazy*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)

Although any cultural institution must as a matter of principle be '*allowed to manage its own exhibitions*' (Sandsmark, 2014; also Letter to Editor 4), including HAMC and inviting its members signalled the acceptance of something morally unacceptable and violated a social norm:

> '*In principle, politicians or bureaucrats should not give consent for artistic or cultural content, but it is a dilemma and there is a limit*'. (Chief county administrator, Interview)

Hence, much like in Elsbach and Sutton's (1992) analysis of how illegitimate actions affect organizational legitimacy, the process of stigma transfer starts with a morally questionable action by a social actor (see also Kulik et al., 2008). The photographer and the organizers were perceived to deliberately defy the societal norm that warns against contact with a stigmatized actor, which raised doubts about their moral judgment and competence. We next describe how such voluntary engagement challenged core values in society and triggered 'staunch resistance and immutable stances' (Pollock et al., 2019, p. 450).

Stage 2: Actors' Perceptions and Assessment

Figure 1 illustrates that actors' engagement with a stigma source (Stage 1) leads to an automatic initial assessment of this engagement as well as the actors involved (Stage 2). Our empirical evidence in Table IV demonstrates that while negative assessments were

Table IV. Actors' perceptions and assessments (Stage 2)

Actors	Positive perceptions and assessments	Negative perceptions and assessments
Internal	'We are entirely impartial. We only relate to the photographs'. (Spokesperson Nordic Light, cited in Tidens Krav, 22 January 2013)	'I must admit that I was very sceptical of the project. (…) It was this marketing of HAMC that I was worried about'. (Chairman Nordic Light board, Interview)
	'But precisely because HAMC are (…) outsiders, outcasts and different (…), I think it is necessary to confront them with how the rest of us look at them and think about them'. (Board member Nordic Light, Letter to Editor 1)	'The photographs were not the key focus. Rather, it was that one should have a debate about HAMC, and thereby lift them up in that way. That is not part of the artistic expression'. (Chairman Nordic Light board, Interview)
		'I don't think it was right that a public, cultural organization as we are should portray a criminal organization as something ordinary and normal'. (Curator 2 KHM, Interview)
		'This invitation [of HAMC] is taking things way too far'. (Volunteer at Nordic Light, NRK Møre og Romsdal 23 January 2013)
		'Letting loose a criminal organization could undermine the museum's credibility' (KHM director, Interview)
Police		'I do not think it is appropriate that someone who has been a member of Hells Angels for 16 years comes here.' (Chief of police, NRK Møre og Romsdal)
		'Under no circumstances would I engage in a debate with criminals' (Chief of police, cited in Botten, 2013a)
		'It is extremely unwise for Nordic Light to help them gain legitimacy' (Chief of police, cited in Botten, 2013a)
Politicians	'We want their activities to be put under the spotlight. If HAMC members were allowed to participate in the debate, they would have to answer critical questions about their activities'. (Local politicians, Letter to Editor 4)	'When the case with HAMC came up, we used our hierarchical position; as a representative of the owner of the festival I contacted the chairman of the board and said that we did not like this and he agreed with me'. (Chief county administrator, Interview)
		'It is very unfortunate that a serious festival like Nordic Light invites a criminal organization like Hells Angels to participate in debate..' (Member of Parliament, cited in Botten, 2013b)
Media		'HAMC engage in image building. They need a stage. That does not mean we should give them one.' (News editor Tidens Krav)
		'This is like inviting ISIS terrorists to a debate'. (News editor Tidens Krav)
Academia		'It is totally unacceptable that they [HAMC] were invited'. (Expert in white-collar crime, cited in Joakimsen, 2013)

Table IV.   *Continued*

Actors	Positive perceptions and assessments	Negative perceptions and assessments
		'*It is entirely unacceptable to me to be part of something that can shine a positive light on a criminal organization*'. (Expert in white-collar crime, cited in Joakimsen, 2013)
		'*It is reprehensible that Nordic Light invites a criminal organization*'. (Expert in white-collar crime, cited in Lillegård, 2013)
		'*The exhibition has been the subject of meetings between [Curator 1 at KHM], the museum's management and at the rector's office at the University of Oslo. Both cancelling and changing the exhibition would have been a topic at the meetings*'. (Sandsmark, 2014, p. 12)
		'*It was probably easier for Leliënhof to get into the Hells Angels environment than it has been for [Curator 1 at KHM] to get the pictures into the traditional museum*'. (Sandsmark, 2014, p. 12)
Public	'*But talking to one of them is not the same as accepting those actions, right?*'. (Båfjord, 2013, readers comments)	'*Here the festival risks being perceived as WANTING these types within their circle*'. (Hesjedal, 2013, readers comments)
	'*For critics this would have been an excellent opportunity to nail HAMC to the wall? In any case, I think it would have been an interesting debate.*' (Båfjord, 2013, readers comments)	'*When HAMC, Al Qaida, neo-Nazis, closed religious communities engage in marketing, it will become very pathetic and dull*'. (Hesjedal, 2013, readers comments)
	'*They are then legally free people, and should be treated accordingly in a state governed by the rule of law. (…) I cannot see that this would be anything other than enlightening to the audience, at the same time as it would have added a deeper perspective to the photographs in the exhibition*'. (Båfjord, 2013, readers comments)	'*There was even someone that had thrown wine on one of the photographs at Nordic Light, out of anger*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Interview)
	'*Pretty petty I think. Could have been exciting, and it is definitely a societal issue / societal problem*'. (Tolpinrud, 2013, readers comments)	
	'*No one reacted [when visiting the HAMC exhibition]. I think one underestimates people. One believes in protecting them, but I believe that, if you are going to use the awful word "most people", I believe they are better than their reputation*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)	
	'*There were many different nationalities [visiting the KHM exhibition], and there were some from the USA who maybe stumbled over HAMC. It was probably mostly foreigners when someone thought negatively*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)	

Table IV. *Continued*

Actors	Positive perceptions and assessments	Negative perceptions and assessments
General	*'I want to illuminate everything about HAMC. What people want to see are guys running around with guns and drugs. The reality is unfortunately a bit more boring than that'.* (Marcel Leliënhof, cited in Ekeland, 2013)	*'I have to say that it has been a wondrous journey, with all that pressure from outside'.* (Marcel Leliënhof, Interview) *'That they [HAMC] should get a public platform … that is, without… and this is very important that I say without comparison otherwise… So that would be as if Breivik were to get a public platform'.* (Creative director Nordic Light, Interview)

not universal, criticism was expressed by a broad range of evaluators – even within the organizing institutions.

Starting with internal opposition, the chairman of Nordic Light's board was very sceptical about any elements in the festival's programme involving HAMC:

> *'I must admit that I was very sceptical about this project. (…) It was this marketing of HAMC that I was worried about'.* (chairman Nordic Light board, Interview)

Likewise, Curator 2 at KHM was scathing about the museum's involvement with HAMC:

> *'I did not think it was right that a public, cultural organization as we are should portray a criminal organization as something ordinary and normal'.* (Curator 2 KHM, Interview)

The director of KHM confirmed that similar sentiments were commonplace in the museum, where many feared that '*letting loose a criminal organization could undermine the museum's credibility*' (Interview). Media sources show that the leadership of the University of Oslo had equally strong reservations when the inclusion of HAMC in KHM's exhibition first become known:

> *'The exhibition has been the subject of meetings between [Curator 1 at KHM] and the museum's management at the rector's office of the University of Oslo. Both cancelling and changing the exhibition would have been a topic at the meetings'.* (Sandsmark, 2014, p. 12)

Immediate negative assessments of actors' engagement with HAMC were likewise observed within various segments of Norwegian society. For instance, following the publication of Nordic Light's initial programme in January 2013, local media bore witness to a heated exchange between the newspaper's editor and the professor invited for the public debate – both strongly opposed to the invitation of HAMC – and a member of the festival's board (Botten, 2013a, 2013b). The professor turned down the debate invitation because he found it '*reprehensible to enter into a debate with HAMC*' (Joakimsen, 2013;

Lillegård, 2013).[[3]] The newspaper's editor compared a debate with HAMC members to engaging with '*ISIS terrorists*' (Interview). Other commentators offered similar comparisons, including references to the perpetrator of the 22 July 2011 terrorist attack in Norway (Creative director Nordic Light, Interview; Letter to Editor 5; Båfjord, 2013, readers' comments) and the Balkan mafia (Letter to Editor 9). The events also triggered strong reactions from the police. The local chief of police in Kristiansund stated that '*it is extremely unwise for Nordic Light to help them gain legitimacy*' (Botten, 2013a), while the chief of police in Oslo declined to participate in the public debate at KHM. Finally, several national politicians asserted:

> '*It is very unfortunate for a serious festival such as Nordic Light to invite a criminal organization like Hells Angels to participate in debates*'. (Member of Parliament, cited in Botten, 2013b)

> '*This is so ignorant and naive that I feel I get provoked just by talking about it*'. (Member of Parliament, cited in Mjaaland and Helsingeng, 2013)

Interestingly, at least part of the broader public was open to a critical debate with HAMC members:

> '*For critics this would have been an excellent opportunity to crucify HAMC, right?*'. (Båfjord, 2013, readers' comments)

> '*No one reacted* [when attending the KHM exhibition]. *I think one underestimates people. One believes in protecting them, but I believe that if you are going to use the awful word "most people", I believe they are better than their reputation*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)

These evaluators often stressed the distinction between engaging in discussion with undesirable groups and accepting their actions (Letter to Editor 4; Båfjord, 2013, readers' comments). Nonetheless, the proposed participation of HAMC at Nordic Light took on extra significance because several HAMC members were just then on trial in one of Norway's biggest ever drug cases. This trial featured prominently in national and local media reports (Nilsen, 2013; Rise, 2013). Since the media acts as a 'barometer of how logics are perceived and comprehended' (Roulet, 2015, p. 380; Carberry and King, 2012), it linked HAMC's stigma very closely to the festival.

Overall, the predominantly negative initial assessments of actors' engagement with HAMC confirm the idea that early responses to perceived norm violations 'commonly contain criticisms of the organizations associated with an event' (Elsbach and Sutton, 1992, p. 708; Bitektine, 2011; Haack et al., 2014; Kulik et al., 2008; Pfarrer et al., 2010). More importantly, they highlight that any (perceived) support for a dangerous deviant can provide evaluators with ammunition to attack the involved social actors. This stage of our process model thus reflects a dynamic *from* evaluators' perceptions of a given action *to* their appraisal of social actors' moral integrity. Voluntary contact with a stigma source is perceived as 'reprehensible' regardless of the intentions, and signals a lack of judgment as well as involved actors' dubious attitudes towards established norms. This sets the stage for the use of purposeful shaming behaviours to condemn and denounce any engagement with a stigmatized organization.

Stage 3: Shaming Attempts

Engaging with a stigmatized organization threatens to disturb a previously established and institutionalized order. In response, institutional guardians – defined as actors entrusted to 'enforce and reinforce community prescriptions' (Creed et al., 2014, p. 284) – may feel compelled to intervene and ensure renewed conformity. Figure 1 indicates that such interventions take the form of purposive shaming attempts. As shown in Figure 1 and Table V, actors at different levels – i.e., individuals and organizations – are present among the 'targets' as well as those shaming them ('shamers'). These cross-level interactions are critical to take into account, since shaming attempts take distinct forms at the individual and organizational levels. This variety is linked to differences in the way audiences categorize and make sense of actors at multiple levels (as discussed in the previous section), and reflects the complexity with which social evaluation processes are enacted across levels.

Before proceeding, two issues require attention. First, although organizations cannot 'feel' shame, they can be – and often are – 'named and shamed' to provoke a change in their activities (e.g., Bartley and Child, 2014; Toubiana and Zietsma, 2017; Wolfsteiner et al., 2021). As pointed out by Bartley and Child (2014, p. 662), the 'strategy of naming and shaming corporations is made possible by firms becoming shamable' because their identity 'can quickly be tarnished in the media spotlight' (see also Shadnam et al., 2020). Hence, shaming as an activity can be used against both individuals and organizations. Second, shaming attempts need not trigger 'felt shame' in the targeted actors. Extant research indicates that felt shame is often displaced by anger or indignation, particularly when condemnation is public and perceived as unjust (Daniels and Robinson, 2019; Murphy and Kiffin-Petersen, 2017). Hence, a wide range of responses – in terms of 'constructive, withdrawing, or even aggressive behaviors' (Daniels and Robinson, 2019, p. 2449) – may be expected to follow shaming attempts.

Individual level targets. At the individual level, we observe that shaming attempts were directed at targets' private as well as professional lives. Starting with the former, the photographer and the organizers of both events were subjected to personal attacks on social media and the internet. This often involved references to being '*head-shakingly naïve*' (Holøien, 2014; Werp, 2014) and '*a useful idiot*' (e.g., Curator 1 KHM, Interview; Marcel Leliënhof, Interview; Løberg, 2013a, readers' comments; Tolpinrud, 2013, readers' comments), or instances of personal ridicule. As one commentator stated with regard to the planned debate at Nordic Light:

> '*You think highly of yourself, [Nordic Light board member], and many think you are a nice guy but, honestly, here you are missing the plot. You probably envisioned asking HAMC some intricate questions and maybe hoped to manage to make fun of them as well. (…) But did you really believe that you could pierce their armour? That the HAMC representative would collapse crying and promise atonement?*'. (Letter to Editor 9)

Beyond online criticism, our informants also reported being scorned in their private lives: '*It was like "next thing you'll be selling cannabis to our kids"'*. (Managing director Northern Light, Interview).

Table V. Shaming behaviours (Stage 3)

'Shamers'		Organization	'Targets' Individual	
			Personal	Professional
Organization		'They [HAMC] are a criminal organization. It is directly unwise of Nordic Light to help them gain legitimacy among the people'. (Chief of police, cited in Botten, 2013a)		'It was apparently in Drammen that they [HAMC] had had a war with the Bandidos. When I got off the train I was enticed into a NRK car and driven around with the microphone up my face and asked if 'this was where shots were fired' and 'this is where it happened' and blah-blah-blah and why I shouldn't make an exhibition about this.' (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
		'Does the Minister believe that it puts the anniversary of the Constitution in the right context, when the 1% MC club Hells Angels is used in an art exhibition to shed light on the Constitution's ideal of freedom, at the same time as the very Parliament and judicial authorities implement measures to counteract these criminal networks?'. (Document no. 15:93 (2013–14) Formal written question from Anders B. Werp to the minister of education and science)	'[The managing director of Nordic Light] and his/her entourage were not allowed to enter the hotel bar'. (Sagmo, 2013)	
		'Then Tidens Krav [the local newspaper in Kristiansand] had decided what kind of story this should be. (...) He [the editor of Tidens Krav] had decided everything and first went to the chief of police and asked what he thought and made a hell of a racket without allowing us to respond'. (managing director of Nordic Light, Interview)	'The doorman was of the determined kind – and he took hold around [the managing director of Nordic Light] and threw him/her resolutely out of the hotel bar, before the doors were then closed'. (Lange, 2013)	'I have to say that it goes quite far for when the President of the Parliament calls and scolds [Curator 1 at KHM]. I think that that went too far; that's kind of … I'd say that that is going way too far, even for Oslo.' (spokesperson HAMC, Interview)
		'Based on Nordic Light's own press release, Tidens Krav believed there could be grounds for raising a debate about whether it is wise to invite HAMC to this town. We took that stand, and had that debate'. (Editorial, Tidens Krav, 1 February 2013)		

Table V. (Continued)

		'Targets'	
	Organization	*Individual* *Personal*	*Professional*
Individual	'It is thought-provoking that Nordic Light has said yes to that exhibition. And even worse is that several HAMC members have been invited to Kristiansand'. (expert in white-collar crime, cited in Joakimsen, 2013)	'You think highly of yourself, [Nordic Light board member], and many think you are a nice guy, but, honestly, here you are missing the plot. You probably envisioned asking HAMC some intricate questions and maybe hoped to manage to ridicule them as well. (…) But do you really believe that you could pierce their armor? That the HAMC representative would fall over crying and promise atonement?'. (Letter to Editor 9)	'That this Leliënhof has managed to get a book published with mediocre photographs and act as a useful idiot for a criminal organization, it's just how it is. But he should not be embraced for that reason – on the contrary'. (Tolpinrud, 2013, readers comments)
	'I was asked to [be a volunteer at Nordic Light] and I agreed. Not because I am particularly interested in photography, but because the festival represents an activity in the town that is important to take care of. But now that is over for me, and I want to encourage other volunteers to draw the same conclusion. I would also encourage sponsors to terminate their agreements with Nordic Light'. (Volunteer at Nordic Light, cited in Myhre, 2013)	'The people in and around Nordic Light appear to start thinking the sun should and must orbit around them as a naturally given beauty'. (Lange, 2013, readers comments)	'It later emerged that he [Marcel Leliënhof] had an agreement, that he had no freedom as a photographer in the project. That was of very high importance to me.' (chairman Nordic Light board, Interview)
	'Now he is resigning as a volunteer from the festival, and encourages other volunteers and sponsors to do the same'. (Myhre, 2013)	'People said I was a useful idiot'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)	
	'Locally there are some individuals calling for a boycott of the exhibition.' (Båljord, 2013)	'That HAMC was chosen as the subject for such an exhibition is probably more about the photographer's ability to blow his own horn and create buzz around himself'. (Båljord, 2013, readers comments)	
	'Nordic Light has become an advertising campaign for HAMC'. (Letter to Editor 3)		

Table V. *Continued*

	'*Targets*'	
	Organization	*Individual*
	'*That I was some sort of useful idiot for HAMC, to in some way brush up their image*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Interview) '*We now risk that the exhibition [at KHM] takes a route where it trivializes a social environment that limits the freedom of many people, based on some exotic notion that only highlights the freedom of the few*'. (Member of Parliament, Letter to Editor 11) '*I don't believe that Nordic Light will manage to make that meeting into something other than a mouthpiece for HAMC's splendidness. In other words a vote of no confidence to the organizers*'. (Bålfjord, 2013, readers comments)	'*[Inviting HAMC] is head-shakingly naïve and frighteningly ignorant!*'. (Werp, 2014)

Turning to individuals' professional life, we find that both sets of organizers were actively resisted in the exercise of their functions. A striking similarity across both cases saw Curator 1 at KHM being banned from the exhibition area (Curator 1 KHM, Interview), while Nordic Light's managing director was refused access to a reception in the official festival hotel's bar (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview; Sagmo, 2013):

> '*The doorman was of the determined kind – and he took hold of [the managing director of Nordic Light] and threw him/her resolutely out of the hotel bar, before the doors closed*'. (Lange, 2013)

Those engaging with HAMC furthermore perceived threats of professional marginalization during, and after, the events. The managing director of Nordic Light resigned shortly after the festival and was '*never asked to come back after this*' (Interview), while Curator 1 at KHM feels that '*I'll never be curator for any exhibition at KHM ever again*' (Interview). Rumours also circulated about the photographer's artistic freedom in the HAMC project:

> '*It later emerged that Marcel Leliënhof had an agreement* [with HAMC], *that he had no freedom as a photographer in the project. That was of very high importance to me*'. (chairman Nordic Light board, Interview)

These doubts about the photographer's relationship with HAMC not only undermined his professional and artistic integrity, but also cast a further shadow on the organizers for allowing 'biased' artwork to be exhibited.

Shaming attempts targeting individual actors thus are characterized by threats of social as well as professional exclusion or marginalization. Moreover, the use of negative labels casting doubt on individuals' abilities, integrity and morality emphasizes that shaming attempts not only aim to re-impose established macro-level systems of meaning on micro-level actors (Creed et al., 2014). They also intend to impose a stigma by attributing the deviancy from established community norms to a faulty self (see also Stage 5). Interestingly, our data thereby show little evidence of felt shame among the targets. Immediate responses were more likely to reflect anger and indignation at the perceived injustice and public nature of the condemnation:

> '*And then they placed it [the HAMC exhibition] in front of the toilets. That I as a curator and responsible for the artistic content could not decide this! They wanted to disempower me as much as possible*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)

> '*That was not OK really, since it was the 10-year anniversary of the festival last year and I was not even invited*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)

Organizational level targets. Shaming attempts at the organizational level first of all occurred through threats of financial retribution, which constitute an effective tool to communicate moral indignation (Helms et al., 2019). Individual actors, for instance, called for volunteers and sponsors to pull out, and for the public to boycott the exhibition.

'*[Nordic Light] represents an activity in the town that is important to take care of. But now that's over for me, and I want to encourage other volunteers to draw the same conclusion. I would also encourage sponsors to terminate their agreements with Nordic Light*'. (Volunteer at Nordic Light, cited in Myhre, 2013)

Organizations likewise engaged in financial shaming, albeit on a greater scale. The county government, for instance, threatened to pull out as one of the main sponsors (and co-owner) of Nordic Light if a debate with HAMC members went ahead:

'*I received a phone call from* [the county chief administrator] *that was quite special, which said that I will withdraw 250.000NOK a year if you hold this debate*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)

The county chief administrator told us that the county as a public institution has a responsibility to take a stand when someone has crossed a line. Explicit reference was thereby made to the county's ownership of, and provision of grants to, Nordic Light as a means to '*pull rank*' and achieve influence (County chief administrator, Interview).

Besides threats of financial retribution, shaming attempts at the organizational level also target what can and cannot be part of a public discourse. Both exhibitions faced severe pressure to cancel their planned public debates with HAMC members. As the chairman of Nordic Light's board argued:

'*The photographs were not the key focus. Rather, it was that one should have a debate about HAMC, and thereby lift them up in that way*'. (Interview)

Similarly, the President of the Norwegian Parliament tried to block HAMC's participation at KHM (confirmed by several informants), and the Vice-Chairman of the Parliament's Justice Committee posed a formal question to the Minister of Education and Science about the appropriateness of Leliënhof's HAMC project within the context of the celebration of the Constitution (Document no.15 15:93, 2013–14). As a concluding remark, he stated:

'*there is reason to question the use of a "freedom" perspective to justify HAMC as an organization having a place in the Constitution jubilee*' (Document no.15 15:93, 2013–14).

These interventions were based on strongly institutionalized norms against offering a public platform to deviants. Despite the different forms of shaming attempts at the organizational and individual levels, reliance on threats of marginalization surfaces also at the organizational level (in terms of rank, finances and discourse). Yet, in contrast to the anger and indignation expressed by individual targets, the festival responded by opting for less provocative topics in subsequent years (managing director Nordic Light, Interview). Shaming attempts thus triggered 'withdrawal' behaviours aimed at protecting the organization from further harm (Daniels and Robinson, 2019). As such, our findings provide empirical support for Carberry and King's (2012, p. 1159) argument that firms engage in 'defensive practice adoption' to 'buffer themselves against emerging stigma'.

Seen together, our findings are consistent with Creed et al.'s (2014) theoretical predictions about shame in institutional processes. While they study neither stigma nor its transfer, their model predicts that shaming attempts materialize when actors cross 'the line into a level of transgression that appears to threaten the institutional order' (Creed et al., 2014, p. 284). Such shaming attempts – conceptualized as 'episodic shaming' – are predicted to rely on 'implicit or explicit threats of temporary ostracism' (Creed et al., 2014, p. 284). Our data confirm these predictions. Yet, the behavioural dynamics at this stage of our process model also extend these predictions in two ways. First, we show that episodic shaming matters not just for institutional reproduction and change, but is also central to the transfer of organizational stigma at individual *and* organizational levels. Second, we empirically specify distinct forms of shaming attempts of (and by) individuals and organizations, which attests to the importance of cross-level interactions in institutional processes (Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Harmon et al., 2019). Shaming attempts targeting actors' private life thereby derive predominantly from evaluators at the individual level (either via social media or in person), while shaming of actors' professional life originates at both individual (e.g., colleagues) and organizational levels. This empirical characterization of the behavioural dynamics underlying distinct shaming attempts constitutes an important extension to Creed et al.'s (2014) theoretical arguments.

Stage 4: Contestation of Shaming Attempts

While engagement with stigmatized organizations triggers episodic shaming, the 'targets' of such activities do not remain passive receptors. Shaming attempts were actively contested at both the individual and organizational levels (Figure 1). These contestation efforts reflect a form of impression management whereby actors bring forward (non)verbal accounts to defend themselves against challenges setting out their deviance (Carberry and King, 2012; Elsbach, 1994; Elsbach and Sutton, 1992; Goffman, 1959; McDonnell and King, 2013; Zavyalova et al., 2012). The aim is to 'minimize the apparent severity of the predicament' (Schlenker, 1980, p. 136), and, in our setting, avoid the transfer of HAMC's stigma.

We find that contestation efforts took two main forms (Table VI). First, targets of shaming attempts argued that engaging with tainted organizations is not the same as condoning these organizations' activities, nor an expression of support for them:

> '*I'm not for HAMC, Nordic Light is not for HAMC, but we think it's important to instigate a debate with Marcel Leliënhof's photographs as a point of departure – even though this is controversial*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, cited in Myhre, 2013)

> '*I am not interested in what HAMC stands for. That was not what was important to me, it was the right to exhibit these photographs. I know HAMC and I don't want to know all they are up to*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)

These arguments – likewise brought forward by supportive commentators (see above) – intend to create distance from the most tainted or controversial aspects of the stigma source through the demarcation of boundaries. Such demarcation is conceptually distinct from the five types of boundary management described in Hudson and Okhuysen

Table VI. Contestation of shaming behaviours (Stage 4)

Actors	Positive reactions	Negative reactions
General	'I am not for HAMC, Nordic Light is not for HAMC, but we think it is important to instigate a debate taking Marcel Leliënhof's photographs as a point of departure – even though this is controversial'. (Managing director Nordic Light, cited in Myhre, 2013)	'As a result of the Friday night's events, Nordic Light chose to move the scheduled "Wrap-up Party' to another location.' (Tidens Krav, 4 May 2013)
	'It goes without saying that we do not sympathize with criminal organizations. It would have been interesting to hear what HAMC themselves think about their role and position, and especially include the highly critical voices that regularly mean something about them. It could have been an exciting and rare discussion about something we need to understand'. (Managing director Nordic Light, cited in Lillegård, 2013)	'If it's so that we don't have the freedom to put what we want on the agenda, I won't work here anymore'. (Managing director Nordic Light, cited in Løberg, 2013b)
	'But precisely because HAMC are (…) outsiders, outcasts and different (…), I think it is necessary to confront them with how the rest of us look at them and think about them'. (Board member Nordic Light, Letter to Editor 1)	'It was a pity that we were censored, and it is a pity that we do not dare to be particularly controversial now either.' (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'I am not interested in what HAMC stands for. That was not what was important to me, it was the right to exhibit these photographs. I know HAMC and I don't want to know all they are up to'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)	
Artistic freedom	'Being censored should not happen in such a forum, we must have artistic freedom'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)	'He scoffs at the photo festival's artistic justification for inviting HA: "It's just rubbish, a smokescreen".' (Volunteer Nordic Light, cited in Myhre, 2013)
	'It is absolutely clear that the festival must have artistic freedom. The plan was presented to the board in advance and the board stands united behind the managing director in this matter'. (Editor, Fotografi 12 April 2013)	
	'What I have, on the other hand, tried to get a debate about, is how we in the open, public space should meet the frightening, the unpleasant, repulsive, and criminal. And just as importantly: a debate about who sets the limits for the activities of free arts and culture, who decides what is to be discussed, in what way and by whom'. (Board member Nordic Light, Letter to Editor 1)	
	'Nordic Light event AS as an independent and cultural institution on principle cannot accept that media, sponsors or public institutions unduly attempt to influence its artistic and cultural activities' .(Chairman of the board, Nordic Light, Interview)	
	'It was the most positive thing that came out of that exhibition, that the museum can be a safe meeting place for people who otherwise don't meet each other. It's one of my great ideals'. (Project coordinator KHM, Interview)	

Table VI.   *Continued*

Actors	Positive reactions	Negative reactions
Freedom of expression	'The attention this exhibition received in the media is due to the fact that some parts of it were deemed provocative. Maybe it is necessary to provoke when the aim is to generate debate and stimulate reflection on freedom and the boundaries of freedom'. (University of Olso Rector blog, undated)	'Transformed from an event to a case of principle, and the drawing of the freedom-of-expression card.' (Curator 2 KHM, Interview)
	'Good that someone points to freedom and puts focus on §100 of the Constitution – that is something many countries are envious about'. (readers comments, NA24 12 November 2013)	'And then they drew the freedom-of-expression card, and there is almost nothing that can top that at a university'. (Curator 2 KHM, Interview)
	'The celebration of the Constitution is a celebration of freedom of expression, and I think it is very positive that universities – including their musea – and university colleges participate in this celebration. At the same time I believe it is critical that both politicians and citizens participate in the debate on freedom of expression, and I think that the best starting point for such debates are free institutions and free citizens'. (Document no. 15 15:93, 2013–14)	'But no two people agree on what freedom is. I have a background in arts and my co-curator is an academic. What was supposed to be a merger of art and science, became a struggle for power'. (Curator 1 KHM, cited in Jakobsen, 2014)
	'Freedom of expression has a central position [in Norwegian society] and it would have been very unfortunate if the university leadership, or, even worse, a ministry or the Parliament, had intervened to stop such an exhibition'. (Professor of political science, cited in Sandsmark, 2014)	
	'Art should stimulate debate, freedom of expression, and democracy, as well as being a source of entertainment'. (Letter to Editor 4)	
	'What all of you know is that this [KHM exhibition] was the subject of a hefty debate in the Parliament, with a Høyre politician asking the question whether the University was right to include HAMC in an exhibition. And I just have to say, I defended that right vigorously, because if there is one thing that is certain, it is that the academic freedom we as a university have, it also incorporates artistic freedom'. (Rector University of Oslo, public debate at KHM)	

(2009, p. 241) – each of which 'configures the organizational boundary'. In our setting, demarcation instead (re)configures the outer limits of engagement with the stigma source by highlighting what is 'out-of-bounds'.

Second, organizers of both events explicitly resisted what was perceived as unwarranted attempts at censorship and the limitation of artistic freedom. Contestation thereby relied on references to 'normative and socially endorsed organizational practices' (Elsbach, 1994, p. 65; Elsbach and Sutton, 1992). While the managing director of Nordic Light threatened to resign should the festival face censorship (Løberg, 2013b), the festival's board argued that:

'*Nordic Light event AS as an independent and cultural institution on principle cannot accept that media, sponsors or public institutions unduly attempt to influence its artistic and cultural activities*'. (Chairman Nordic Light board, Interview)

In similar vein, the museum director at KHM told us that he answered the University's initial reservations by warning that any censorship would be included in the exhibition. The project coordinator at KHM argued that musea require freedom to provide a space where diverging opinions meet:

'*The most positive thing arising from this exhibition was that musea can be a safe meeting place for people that otherwise never meet*'. (Project coordinator KHM, Interview)

These arguments reflect a strong belief in the value of artistic freedom, which is guaranteed by Norwegian legislation (Report to Parliament no. 49, 2008–09; Svåsand, 2018) and broadly accepted in Norwegian society (Sandsmark, 2014; Letter to Editor 4).

Likewise, the 'freedom' discourse central to the Constitution jubilee provided an opportunity to present KHM's engagement with HAMC as something rightfully belonging to discussions on freedom of speech and democracy. For instance, participants at the public debate at KHM argued that bikers call attention to '*the freedom not to be put in a box*' (rector of the University, public debate at KHM), and that people should not be forced into conformity by the exercise of authority (professor of social anthropology, public debate at KHM). Abstract ideals of freedom thus were argued to require inclusion of, and tolerance for, 'deviants'. The same point was made by other commentators (Sandsmark, 2014; Letter to Editor 1; Letter to Editor 4), including in the response by the minister of Education and Science to the parliamentary question mentioned previously. The minister stated that the value of freedom of expression – as guaranteed by §100 of the Constitution – ensured the University's right to proceed with its plans:

'*It is critical that both politicians and citizens participate in the debate on freedom of expression, and I think that the best starting point for such debates are free institutions and free citizens*'. (Document no.15 15:93, 2013–14)

As summarized by Curator 2, the inclusion of HAMC '*was transformed from an event to a case of principle, and the drawing of the freedom-of-expression card*'. KHM's website for the exhibition highlighted this by explicitly referring to the '*attempt at prohibiting*' inclusion of Leliënhof's pictures at Nordic Light (KHM, 2014b).

In sum, contestation efforts entail distinct forms of 'justifications' (Elsbach and Sutton, 1992; Gardner and Martinko, 1988) aimed at reframing engagement with the stigmatized organization as less harmful. Since evaluators must select 'the appropriate set of social norms to be applied in the evaluation of [social actors]' (Bitektine and Haack, 2015, p. 53), reframing aims to influence this selection process and to manage stakeholders' evaluative frames (Rindova et al., 2006). The behavioural dynamics at this stage of our process model thus emphasize intentional and strategic 'meaning-making' by social actors (Entman, 1993). This speaks to a larger question about how social actors defend

themselves against normative challenges (Elsbach, 1994; Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009; McDonnell and King, 2013; Wiesenfeld et al., 2008) and the associated identity threats (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996). Our findings specifically suggest a relationship between the use of emotions (i.e., shaming) and the type of impression management strategies triggered. While requiring further investigation, this raises an intriguing possibility that actors' impression management strategies might also respond to emotions' content and/or intensity.

Status as Moderator – Interplay of Stigma and Status

Status reflects an 'agreed-upon social rank' (Devers et al., 2009, p. 155), and Table VII illustrates this ranking for all audiences in our setting. At the individual level, we find that 'artists' are positioned below 'scientists' and 'politicians' – consistent with Ganzeboom and Treiman's (1996) occupational status scores. For instance, one commentator explicitly places '*a chief of police and a professor*' above the creative director at Nordic Light (Letter to Editor 9), while another argues that a university professor participating in a debate can, in itself, '*shine a positive light on a criminal organization*' (Joakimsen, 2013). Moreover, the appointment of Curator 1 at KHM was explicitly intended to turn things '*upside down*' (KHM director, Interview):

> '*The director appointed a photographer as curator – that was literally taking someone "from the workfloor". (…) It was nice for a brief period to be able to say I was a curator rather than artist and photographer*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)

At the organizational level, Table VII indicates that Nordic Light is a small-scale festival lacking financial autonomy despite its global outreach, whereas KHM is a prestigious museum with considerable autonomy within the institutional structure of the University of Oslo:

> '*The Museum of Cultural History is too powerful an institution to be pressured. One can try, but they are at the top of the hierarchy*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Interview)

In light of Washington and Zajac's (2005, p. 284) conceptualization of status as an 'intersubjectively agreed-upon and accepted ordering', this implies that KHM has a higher status than Nordic Light. This higher rank of KHM is also encoded in Norwegian legislation, which holds that an important task of musea is to generate societal debates (Document no. 15 15:93, 2013–14; Report to Parliament no. 49, 2008–09; Svåsand, 2018). The University of Oslo's identity as a leading national depository of institutionalized features such as academic freedom, autonomy, tolerance and Socratic debate, further empowers KHM even in relation to other public authorities:

> '*[The University] is a place with gravitas, a place where opinions are voiced, and a place where all should be included*'. (Professor of social anthropology, public debate at KHM)

> '*This is after all a public institution, this is the University of Oslo*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)

Table VII. Involved social actors' status

Individual	'*And he [the creative director at Nordic Light] wipes the floor with a chief of police and a professor*'. (Letter to Editor 9)
	The chief of police in Kristiansund came from long tradition of local police (5th generation) and had been in office since 2002. (Tidens Krav, 29 March 2017)
	'*Much of what I do would have been seen very differently if I were a man. As soon as I bang on the table I become a bitch.*' (Managing Director, Nordic Light, interview)
	'*[Curator 1 KHM] was at the bottom of the hierarchy*'. (Director, KHM, interview)
	'*The director appointed a photographer as curator – that was literally taking someone "from the workfloor"*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
	'*It was nice for a brief period to be able to say I was a curator rather than artist and photographer*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
	'*I have a background in arts and my co-curator is an academic. What was supposed to be a merger of art and science, became a struggle for power*'. (Curator 1 KHM, cited in Jakobsen, 2014)
	'*I [i.e., a photographer] was to be reporting directly to the director, and suddenly I was supposed to be in charge of scientific staff, my own colleagues and those who worked on exhibition-related publications. Do you think that went well? No!*'. (Curator 1, KHM, interview)
	'*As long as I did my usual job of photographing coins and such, it was fine. But then I was lifted up – and the director's idea was that we [Curators 1 and 2] should bring up the ideas and the exhibition department should implement it. They did not fully agree, understandably enough*'. (Curator 1, KHM, interview)
	'*They like to have male bosses and are able to take orders from a man, but from a woman? Neither men nor women take a woman in a position of power seriously*'. (Curator 1, KHM, interview)
Organization	'*As an owner, the chances of pursuing community development are stronger. (…) We wanted to be part of Nordic Light as an owner to be able to control it*'. (County administrator, interview)
	'*Nordic Light is important, but it should look in the mirror and accept the fact that the world survives without it when its attitude becomes such that it should rise above everything and everyone*'. (Lange, 2013, readers comments)
	'*It is inconceivable that this [Nordic Light] happens in little Kristiansund. It is of invaluable importance to the city. I believe this festival has the highest quality of all cultural festivals in the country. In addition, the festival is gaining an ever better reputation internationally. Nordic Light has become so important*'. (Culture and business manager Kristiansund, cited in Nationen 3 May 2013)
	'*The festival represents an activity that is important for the municipality to take care of*'. (volunteer Nordic Light, cited in Tidens Krav, 23 January 2013)
	'*You can imagine the University, and not least KHM, is like Downton Abbey [i.e., with a strict hierarchy]*'. (Curator 1, KHM, interview)
	'*[The University] is a place with gravitas, a place where opinions are voiced, and a place where all should be included*'. (professor of social anthropology, public debate at KHM)
	'*This is after all a public institution, this is the University of Oslo*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
	'*I believe that the Museum of Cultural History is too powerful an institution to be pressured. One can try, but they are at the top of the hierarchy*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, photographer, interview)
	'*The museum is a separate faculty and thus its own kingdom. One can be creative within this decentralized structure*'. (Director KHM, Interview)
	'*I do not think it was appropriate for a public, cultural institution such as KHM to portray a criminal organization as something ordinary*'. (Curator 2, KHM, interview)
	'*I defended that right vigorously, because if there is one thing that is certain, it is that the academic freedom we as a university have, it also incorporates artistic freedom*'. (Rector University of Oslo, public debate at KHM)
	'*It is part of KHM's mission to instigate public debate*'. (Minister of Education and Science, Document no.15 15:93, 2013–14)

From a theoretical perspective, status can affect social actors' susceptibility to stigma in two ways. First, high status may offer leeway 'to deviate from conventional behavior' (Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001, p. 379). It might also bolster one's defence options by increasing 'the variety of positive attributes an [actor] can claim' (Gardner and Martinko, 1988, p. 326). High status can thereby provide immunity from the stigmatizing consequences of norm violations (Goffman, 1963; Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001; Pontikes et al., 2010). Second, high status could increase the symbolic value of a target by amplifying the potential for dramatic conflict (Mishina and Devers, 2012). Prominent actors additionally attract more scrutiny for their choices (Sgourev and Althuizen, 2014). These contradicting arguments make the direction of status' role as a moderator in the stigma transfer process an empirical question. Moreover, Figure 1 specifies that status effects can influence *both* the contestation of shaming attempts (moderation effect from Stage 3 to Stage 4) *and* the outcome of the stigma transfer process (moderation effect from Stage 4 to Stage 5).

To start with the former, Table VII shows that KHM and key players within the university hierarchy actively presented their engagement with HAMC in light of their role as advocates of society's tolerance, Socratic debate and liberal freedom. Shaming attempts thus were countered by direct expressions of KHM's and the university's self-awareness of their elevated position and role in society. These counterclaims were reinforced by political affirmation that the university constitutes an appropriate place for debates about prevailing norms and interests (Document no. 15 15:93, 2013–14; Report to Parliament no. 49, 2008–09; Svåsand, 2018). Such observations are consistent with high status increasing one's defence options and room for manoeuvre.

Yet, counterclaims about tolerance, debate and freedom were closely tied to the perceived violation of institutionalized norms against offering a public forum to deviants. This domain-specific nature of counterclaims is important since it may affect their credibility in the eyes of evaluators. For instance, while Nordic Light and KHM also offered counterclaims based on the principle of artistic freedom, these fell outside the immediate domain of the shaming attempts targeting both institutions. That is, shamers did not contest the value and importance of artistic freedom. As a result, counterclaims based on artistic freedom were deemed to lack relevance (e.g., Letter to Editor 2), particularly when brought forward by a lower-status actor:

> '[A volunteer at Nordic Light] *scoffs at the festival's artistic justification for inviting HAMC. "That's just rubbish, a smokescreen"*. (Myhre, 2013)

This finding highlights that focusing only on the form and content of actors' accounts may be insufficient (Elsbach, 1994). Rather, accounts 'should be meaningfully connected to the perceived deviance' (Carberry and King, 2012, p. 1146). This increases their authenticity and effectiveness, which may be particularly important for lower-status actors. Our findings thus provide empirical support for the significance of 'fit' between image-threatening claims and impression management strategies, as conjectured by Mishima and Devers (2012) and McDonnell and King (2013).

Turning to the outcome of the stigma transfer process – discussed in detail in the next section – we find that high status, perhaps unsurprisingly, helps to withstand shaming

attempts (i.e., moderation effect from Stage 4 to Stage 5). For instance, even though Nordic Light is empowered by the freedom of artistic expression (much like KHM), its lack of administrative and financial autonomy implied a restricted ability to withstand threats to limit its access to funding. KHM was less sensitive to such financial shaming attempts since it has substantial administrative and financial autonomy as a faculty within the University of Oslo's organizational structure:

> '*The museum is a separate faculty and thus its own kingdom. One can be creative within this decentralized structure*'. (Director KHM, Interview)

Financial sanctions thus appear most powerful as shaming attempts when used against lower-status actors (as in the case of Nordic Light, relative to KHM).

More remarkable is that contestation of shaming attempts appears to have worked as a fortifier of KHM's status, and a further validation of its social standing. While Creed et al. (2014, p. 276) hypothesize that episodic shaming 'can have the opposite effect', such 'backfiring' has to the best of our knowledge not been documented empirically before. Counterclaims by high-status actors – particularly when domain-relevant – thus may do more than simply bolster immunity to stigma transfer. Reminiscent of Elsbach and Sutton's (1992) distinction between arguments levied by crucial and non-crucial *audiences*, impression management within stigma transfer processes depends on the (non-)crucial *nature of the accounts* brought forward by high- and low-status actors.

Stage 5: Stigma Tranfer

The final stage of our process model relates to the transfer of stigma. Previous conceptual and theoretical contributions to the stigma literature argue that 'avoidance (…) is a culturally typical reaction to stigmatization' (Goffman, 1963; Jonsson et al., 2009, p. 198; Pontikes et al., 2010). Stakeholders cognitively disidentify with stigmatized organizations (Devers et al., 2009; Mishina and Devers, 2012) and visibly withdraw from them (Pontikes et al., 2010; Wiesenfeld et al., 2008). Building on these insights, we interpret the *emergence* of avoidance behaviours as evidence that stigma transfer took place (see also the 'Data Sources' section above). Our data provide extensive confirmation of such occurrences (Table VIII).

At the individual level, we find evidence that several protagonists faced reduced social and professional contacts during, and following, the events under analysis. The managing director of Nordic Light and Marcel Leliënhof both observed that their engagement with HAMC induced people to withdraw from them:

> '*In the wake of this a lot of shit came along, and I feel like I made a lot of enemies because of it*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)

> '*During this time, as I could see within my own profession, I started getting many fewer assignments and we started talking a lot less (…) because people had opinions about this*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Interview)

Table VIII. Evidence of stigma transfer (Stage 5)

Stigma transfer from HAMC to individuals	'*I have to say, though, that during this period, as I could see within my own profession, I started getting many fewer assignments and we started talking a lot less. I think I went down maybe 50% in terms of income, because people had opinions about this*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Interview)
	'*I have never been asked to return [to Nordic Light] after this*'. (Marcel Leliënhof, Interview)
	'*All this created also a negative atmosphere towards me*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*I thought it was really cool that we could show we were controversial, that we dared, that we are the festival that sets the agenda… but in the wake of this a lot of shit came along, and I feel like I made a lot of enemies because of it*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*There was so much online trolling that I could not face to read, but people told me about: "you have no idea what people write about you". And then it suddenly becomes personal, right?*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*What happened was that I had to take leave for health reasons, because I became really ill because of it. I have never been so far down and hit a wall. (…) I was on sick leave for a year*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*I do not believe that I will be curator to another exhibition at the Museum ever again*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*We [Curators 1 and 2 KHM] had been friends for years, but when I proposed HAMC our friendship ended*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
	'*I was called all sorts of things*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
	'*This was all about putting the spotlight on Marcel and his photographs, so I was shocked when the media went after me*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
	'*[Question: What keywords would you use to describe the entire process?] Revenge, murder.* .(Curator 1 KHM, Interview)
Stigma transfer from HAMC to organizations	'*I had never previously experienced that they [the media] take on the festival like this, because they have always been very pro us. We always got what we wanted in and from the newspaper*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*In the aftermath of this, the county council came on the scene (…). I got a call from [the chief county administrator] which was quite special, saying that "I will withdraw 250,000 a year if you have this debate"*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*Afterwards, it became more difficult to get sponsorship funds for the festival.*' (Board member Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*Then the following year was much harder to get support. Both from sponsors and from the municipality and such. That was a bit harder*'. (Creative director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*That's definitely a good enough reason for me and mine to steer clear of Nordic Light*'. (Hesjedal, 2013, reader comments)
Spillovers: Stigma transfer from individuals to organizations (and vice versa)	'*I'm afraid that more publicity around this case will be damaging for the festival and the town. (…) After all, it is she [the managing director of Nordic Light] who **is** the festival*'. (Sagmo, 2013, stress in original)
	'*She [the managing director of Nordic Light] has brought Nordic Light to the lowest possible level*'. (Lange, 2013, readers comments)
	'*She who worked for me as marketing manager, when she had to pick up her children in the kindergarten, the staff didn't want to look her in the eye and she felt very uncomfortable. (…) And she asked straight out why they didn't want to look her in the eye, and it was because she worked for Nordic Light*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*There was a bloody bad atmosphere in the town and proper stigmatization of everyone*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)
	'*Yes, there were other employees of the festival who also received negative comments on Facebook, etc., that's for sure*'. (Chairman Nordic Light board, interview)
	'*A person connected to Nordic Light noticed suddenly that the staff in the kindergarten were being extremely reserved when she came to pick up her kid. When this happened again – the person in question guessed already why – the staff confirmed that their sudden brusque attitude was due to her, through Nordic Light, "support" of HAMC coming to town*'. (Lead article, Fotografi, 18 April 2013)

Curator 1 at KHM likewise saw her social relations with colleagues suffer, including her long-standing friendship with Curator 2:

'*We had been friends for years, but when I proposed HAMC our friendship ended*'. (Curator 1 KHM, Interview)

This withdrawal and cognitive disidentification indicates that the stigma of HAMC transferred onto those violating the norm that prohibits association with this organization (Devers et al., 2009; Mishina and Devers, 2012; Wiesenfeld et al., 2008).

At the organizational level, stakeholders visibly distanced themselves from Nordic Light (no similar change was observed for KHM). Local sponsors and volunteers were available prior to the 2013 edition of the festival, but afterwards it became '*much harder to obtain support (…) from sponsors and the local government and such*' (Creative director Nordic Light, Interview; Board member Nordic Light, Interview). This shows that engagement with HAMC was instrumental in casting doubt on the festival's (and main organizers') moral integrity, and resulted in the transfer of stigma from HAMC onto the festival. Nordic Light's stigmatization thus arose directly from its norm-violating engagement with HAMC.

A key conceptual observation deriving from our analysis at this point is that *within* organizations or organizational categories the content of stigma generally does not change during its transfer. The stigma of organizational wrongdoing affects organizations' employees and elites in much the same way (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Helms and Patterson, 2014; Sutton and Callahan, 1987; Wiesenfeld et al., 2008). The same is true when stigma travels between organizations within an industry category (Barlow et al., 2018; Lashley and Pollock, 2020; Piazza and Perretti, 2015; Pollock et al., 2019). In sharp contrast, stigma content is *not* transmitted in our setting. Actors engaging with HAMC do not become labelled as criminals. Rather, they are discredited for the engagement itself ('useful idiot'), which is viewed as a reflection of a deep-seated flaw in their integrity and judgment ('naïve'). Although a stigma is applied, it changes in terms of its moral specificity. One potential explanation is that the type of stigma transfer observed in the top two rows of Table VIII is linked to a norm violation, rather than similarity within demographic or organizational categories (Dobrev et al., 2006; Haack et al., 2014; Kostova and Zaheer, 1999; Zvayalova et al., 2012). This raises interesting questions about when, why and how the moral nature of stigma shifts during transfer, which we consider an important avenue for further research.

Finally, our findings indicate that the transfer of stigma from the macro-level (i.e., the stigma associated with HAMC) down to organizations and individuals is *not* the end of the story. In fact, we observe that the newly transferred stigma subsequently spills over across organizational and individual levels (bottom row of Table VIII). This arises irrespective of a norm violation, and purely as a result of social proximity to the newly stigmatized actors. As indicated by the circular arrows in Figure 1, cross-level spillovers arising after the initial transfer of stigma run in both directions: i.e., from organizations to individuals, and from individuals to organizations. With respect to the latter, our media sources indicate that the decisions of the managing director of Nordic Light had serious repercussions for the festival as a whole:

'*I'm afraid that more publicity around this case will be damaging for the festival and the town. (…) After all, it is she* [managing director of Nordic Light] *who **is** the festival*'. (Sagmo, 2013, stress in original)

With respect to the former, Nordic Light's engagement with HAMC affected festival employees that had no role in the decision-making process. Working for the festival was enough to attract negative commentary on social media (chairman Nordic Light board, Interview) and face increased social exclusion in one's private life:

'*She asked straight out why they would no longer look her in the eyes, and it was because she was working for Nordic Light*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)

'*There developed a bloody bad atmosphere in the town and proper stigmatization of everyone*'. (Managing director Nordic Light, Interview)

Taken together, our findings in this section highlight that our case involves both stigmatization due to a norm violation (i.e., engagement with a stigma source; the macro-to-meso/micro transfer in the top two rows of Table VIII) and stigma traveling across actors irrespective of a norm violation (the meso-micro transfers in the bottom row of Table VIII). Both of these types have been identified independently in previous work. The former commonly arises when organizations violate a norm by entering a tainted industry category (Lashley and Pollock, 2020; Roulet, 2015), while the latter is reflected in the courtesy stigma faced by family members and friends of stigmatized individuals (Corrigan and Miller, 2004; Pescosolido and Martin, 2015). Our data enable us to establish their presence within the same setting. This not only clarifies conceptual distinctions between both types of transfer. As both types arise in a particular (i.e., sequential) temporal order in setting, our analysis also raises new questions about the potential influence of this temporal ordering (e.g., sequential vs. simultaneous) on the nature, characteristics and interaction between both types of stigma transfer. While these questions cannot be tackled with our data, they would be critical to address in future work.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND GENERALIZABILITY

Our study contributes to the organizational stigma literature in four main ways. First, we identify shaming attempts as central to the stigma transfer process. This extends recent research on emotions and affect in organizational life (e.g., Bitektine and Haack, 2015; Haack et al., 2014; Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009; Wright et al., 2017) by drawing attention to the role of action-oriented concepts such as shaming attempts and their contestation. As such, we contribute to a better understanding of how emotions are mobilized within discursive and contested spaces, and how they allow audiences to exercize power during social evaluation processes. Second, extending earlier work on stigma transfer 'targets' at either individual (e.g., Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009; Sutton and Callahan, 1987) or organizational level (e.g., Barlow et al., 2018; Roulet, 2015), we isolate distinct shaming behaviours at the individual and organizational levels. The former are focused on social or professional marginalization, while the latter rely on threats of financial

retribution and institutionalized norms on discourse. These differences reflect distinctions in the way audiences categorize and make sense of actors at multiple levels, and thus raise our awareness of the complexity with which social evaluation processes are enacted across micro and meso levels. Third, we document (bi-directional) cross-level stigma spillovers between organizations and individuals, and show that these may arise even in the absence of norm violations. This provides new insights into two conceptually distinct types of stigma transfer (while also suggesting new research avenues into the influence of their specific temporal ordering). By taking into account multiple levels, we thus take one important step towards a more comprehensive and accurate portrayal of social evaluation processes. While this adds analytical precision, more work is needed to assess whether or not transfers *across* levels work the same way as transfers *within* levels (we return to this below). Finally, we highlight how other social evaluations moderate the stigma transfer process. This contributes to our understanding of the dynamics and interplay of emotions, status and stigma, which has long remained a pressing research need (Bitektine, 2011; Mishina and Devers, 2012; Pollock et al., 2019).

Yet, an inductive study based on one set of cases naturally raises questions regarding its more general theoretical or conceptual applicability. To address this, we examined data reported in recent work on organizational stigma (and its transfer) in other settings. This first of all substantiates the key role of shame for stigma(ization). Hudson and Okhuysen (2009), for instance, find that customers, suppliers and regulators of men's bathhouses all express feelings of shame. While shame is not actively used to transfer stigma in their study, Sutton and Callahan's (1987) work on the stigma of bankruptcy shows various stakeholders actively spreading malicious rumours and directing insults to the organization and its managers. Similarly, Shadnam et al. (2020) describe how 'shaming rituals' are used in the legal profession in response to individuals' violation of professional norms. This is consistent with our argument that stigma can be imposed and transferred via shaming attempts, and corroborates that the role of purposeful shaming generalizes beyond our setting.

We also find confirmation that shaming is targeted at individuals' private and professional lives in other settings. For instance, Frandsen and Morsing's (2019, p. 27) work on the stigma of a money laundering scandal includes interviews where bank employees are shamed privately 'at football (…); same with family parties', and related to their profession: 'it is this 'you do money laundering in the basement' and all those kinds of things' (Frandsen and Morsing, 2019, p. 27). Organization-level shaming takes on a financial character also in other settings. Toubiana and Zietsma (2017), for instance, show how a Canadian non-profit organization that violated its members' expectations of support was faced with members calling for boycotts of its fundraising efforts or encouraging people to direct donations elsewhere. This corroborates similar shaming tactics observed at Nordic Light.

Finally, Sgourev and Althuizen (2014) argue that in the art market stylistic inconsistency violates the institutionalized norm of conformity. Using an experiment, they show that violation of this norm induces punishment for low-status artists (interpreted as 'incompetence' or 'confusion'), while it is rewarded for high-status artists (interpreted as 'creativity' and 'innovation'). This is consistent with our finding that high-status actors may not only escape punishment for norm violations, but could *benefit* from them.

In terms of our theoretical argument, Sgourev and Althuizen's (2014) results suggest that high-status artists can offer stakeholders a credible and domain-relevant counter-argument (i.e., creativity) to allay suspicions triggered by stylistic inconsistency.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

Based on our work, several directions for further research appear particularly fruitful. First, our findings on the role of emotions in stigma transfer processes raise important questions about the presence, level and determinants of any mental and behavioural thresholds. How much shaming is required to tip the balance towards the transfer of stigma? At which point do actors engage in – or refrain from – the contestation of shaming attempts? A closely related issue concerns the relation, if any, between the intensity of emotions and the form as well as content of impression management strategies (Elsbach, 1994). Furthermore, the potential influence of moderators on the position and significance of such thresholds deserves scrutiny: e.g., do thresholds for stigma transfer and/or the contestation of shaming differ depending on actors' sensitivity to negative feedback (Gamache and McNamara, 2019) or the perceived importance of social relationships (Rudolph and Conley, 2005)?

Second, our work focuses on the stigma transfer process, but does not address the extent and scope of such effects. As such, future research should consider how far and wide stigma travels, as well as the conditions under which this travel distance grows or declines. Especially in settings where spillovers arise due to similarity or social proximity, a useful approach to this question might lie in the development of a measure of distance in a multidimensional trait space. Closely related, our study does not address whether and how social actors can 'recover' from transferred stigma, which relates to the scope of stigma transfer in a temporal rather than spatial dimension. In light of recent work studying the removal of organizational stigma (Hampel and Tracey, 2017; Lashley and Pollock, 2020) or the recovery from a bad reputation (Rhee and Valdez, 2009), this leaves the door open to research on the processes driving courtesy stigma recovery. One critical question here is whether activities aimed at preventing stigma – such as decoupling (Elsbach and Sutton, 1992), reframing (Tracey and Phillips, 2016) and cooptation (Helms and Patterson, 2014) – remain prominent and effective for the recovery from stigma transfer. Another question relates to what factors help/impede this recovery process. Based on our findings and previous research, we suspect key roles for the nature and intensity of emotions in the stigma transfer process, as well as for actors' level of control over their engagement with the stigma source (Devers et al., 2009; Kulik et al., 2008; Pfarrer et al., 2010; Sigelman et al., 1991).

Third, our empirical setting did not allow evaluating potential feedback loops from the micro and meso levels to the macro level. In line with Bitektine and Haack (2015) and Haack and Sieweke (2018), we consider exploration of such feedback loops an essential next step. Of particular interest is a characterization of conditions and mechanisms that make macro-level norms either so institutionalized as to become immune to lower-level pressures, or so open to change that they become deinstitutionalized and replaced. A natural starting point for such studies lies in Oliver's (1992) analysis of

functional necessity, technical instrumentality and cultural consensus as key antecedents of de-institutionization processes. Closely related, while our data reveal stigma transfers between individuals and organizations (and vice versa), they did not enable in-depth analysis of the potentially distinct drivers of stigma transfer *across* levels (i.e., from individuals to organizations or vice versa) and *within* levels. Developing additional analytical layers for each of these cases represents a critical avenue for further research (we are grateful to an anonymous referee for this insight).

Finally, our analysis takes one step towards addressing the lack of 'theory or empirical research on shaming in organizations' (Daniels and Robinson, 2019, p. 2475). While we found distinct shaming attempts employed against actors *outside* the stigmatized organization, future work should consider whether and how shaming matters *within* organizations. Our data offers preliminary evidence that this involves strategies comparable to those observed in our analysis. Media sources indicate, for instance, that police officers favouring a strategy based on dialogue with motorcycle clubs are subjected to personal ('*dirty*', '*quislings*', '*naive*') and professional shaming by colleagues preferring a more confrontational approach:

> '*Police officers who work as mediators with motorcycle and other gangs are often distrusted and accused of supporting "a socially harmful development", according to the Oslo Police's report*'. (Jonassen, 2012)

Yet, it remains unclear whether such shaming attempts vary depending on, say, differences in hierarchical levels between shamer and target, individuals' organizational identification or targets' shame-proneness. By developing a typology of shaming within organizations as well as documenting their distinct implications for individual- and organizational-level outcomes (including stigma), this line of research can push forward the emerging literature on shame within organizational settings (Daniels et al., 2020; Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2020).

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NOTES

[1] Haack et al. (2014) develop a theoretical framework for the perceptual process that leads to positive or negative legitimacy transfers, and address the role of emotions by contrasting traditional similarity-based spillovers with affect-based attribute substitution. Our analysis differs from theirs in several ways. First, as discussed in a 2019 Special Issue of the *Journal of Management Inquiry*, (il)legitimacy is not same as stigma (Patterson et al., 2019). Second, we focus on the emotion of shame rather than the broader category of affect, which allows integrating more action-oriented concepts such as shaming attempts

and their contestation. Finally, Haack et al. (2014) provide a theoretical study, whereas we offer a first empirical evaluation of the involved processes.

[2] While reputation relates to stakeholders' judgement of an actor based on its 'perceptions and past experiences', status captures 'differences in the actors' social rank' (Bitektine, 2011, p. 162–3), and celebrity refers to actors that 'attract a high level of public attention and generate positive emotional responses' (Deephouse and Carter, 2005; Devers et al., 2009; Pfarrer et al., 2010; Rindova et al., 2006, p. 51).

[3] Interestingly, the same professor had in 2010 expressed an intention to invite convicted smugglers and fraudsters as guest lecturers in his course at a Norwegian business school (Buan, 2009; Skotheim, 2020). While the university hierarchy initially left this to his own '*professional assessment*', the plans were dropped when the school's '*corporate customers threatened to withdraw their collaboration*' (Skotheim, 2020, p. 13).

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