

## 9 *Falling stars: celebrity, infamy, and the fall from (and return to) grace*

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Celebrity firms are firms that attract a high level of public attention and generate positive affective<sup>1</sup> responses from stakeholder audiences (Rindova, Pollock, and Hayward 2006). Recent research has explored how and why firms become celebrities (Rindova et al. 2006; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015) and how celebrity creates value for firms (Pfarrer, Pollock, and Rindova 2010). Celebrity firms are more likely to have unexpectedly high performance – and gain additional benefits when they do so – while suffering fewer penalties when their performance is lower than expected (Pfarrer et al. 2010).

Rindova and colleagues have also argued that firms can engender “infamy,” which results from generating a high level of public attention and negative affective responses from stakeholder audiences. Central to both celebrity and infamy is that firms must engage in “deviant” or non-conforming behaviors. When viewed positively, these behaviors create a “rebel” celebrity persona attractive to at least some stakeholders; however, if the non-conforming behaviors are viewed negatively they can lead to an “outlaw” persona that at a minimum results in a loss of celebrity and possibly increases infamy.

Although researchers have begun to explore the causes and consequences of firm celebrity, little research (for a recent exception, see

<sup>1</sup> The original definition uses the word “emotion” rather than “affect.” However, throughout this paper we use the term affect because affect is defined as “‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ (1) experienced as a feeling state (with or without consciousness) and (2) demarcating a positive or negative quality of a specific stimulus” (Finucane, Peters, and Slovic 2003: 328). We prefer this term because as Finucane and colleagues note, like emotion and mood, affect can vary in valence and intensity, but unlike these other constructs, it can be subtle and does not require elaborate appraisal properties, and it directly (rather than indirectly) affects motivation.

Zavyalova and Pfarrer [2015]) has considered how firms become infamous. Building on Rindova and colleagues (2006), Zavyalova and Pfarrer (2015) argued that celebrity occurs through audience members' identification with a firm's values and beliefs as presented in media-created narratives, and that infamy results from dis-identification with the organization's values and beliefs. Because firms face a plethora of stakeholder audiences with differing priorities and values, they further argued that the same firm can possess both celebrity and infamy simultaneously, as the same set of organizational values and beliefs can be the cause for identification with the firm by one stakeholder audience and dis-identification by another. Consequently, firms can lose celebrity in their quest to maintain it by eventually engaging in behaviors or revealing information that is inconsistent with audience members' bases for identification.

Fundamental to the process of becoming infamous is the belief by a stakeholder group or groups that the firm is engaging in deviant behaviors that they consider wrongdoing. That is, in their judgment the firm is violating some norms or understandings of appropriate behaviors that are strongly held by the stakeholder group, and that provoke these "social control agents" (Black 1993; Greve, Palmer, and Posner 2010; Palmer 2012) to take actions that reduce or completely eliminate the social approval enjoyed by the celebrity firm, replacing the "social approval" asset (Pfarrer et al. 2010) celebrity with a "social disapproval" liability – infamy.

We build on the celebrity (Pfarrer et al. 2010; Rindova et al. 2006; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015) and wrongdoing (Greve et al. 2010; Palmer 2012; Treviño, den Nieuwenboer, and Kish-Gephart 2014; Vaughan 1999) literatures to develop a more complex understanding of the dynamics of celebrity, infamy, and wrongdoing. Specifically, we examine how celebrity and infamy influence a firm's activities and how those activities might be assessed by multiple audiences. We do not consider the more common case of how a firm loses its celebrity; instead, we focus on how celebrities become infamous. In doing so we develop an expanded typology of celebrity and infamy, considering "clear" and "mixed" forms of each construct, explore how and why firms may move from celebrity to infamy, and identify actions they can take to recover from their "fall from grace." In doing so, we contribute to both the wrongdoing and celebrity literatures.

We extend the wrongdoing literature by emphasizing that wrongdoing is constructed by social control agents, that there are a wider variety of social control agents than the wrongdoing literature has typically considered, and that a wider variety of behaviors can be considered wrongdoing than has been considered previously. We thus recognize that a firm's wrongdoing can be contested, and that different stakeholders can have different perceptions of the same behaviors. Another important consideration that has received limited attention in the wrongdoing literature is whether and how firms recover from their wrongdoing. We consider how these "fallen stars" can find their way back to their former celebrity, highlighting that what is considered wrongdoing is also dynamic, and that wrongdoing can be determined and sanctioned even in the absence of a centralized authority.

We contribute to the literature on celebrity and infamy by dimensionalizing the multiple audiences that celebrities address, considering how the audience configuration influences the type of celebrity and/or infamy a firm possesses, and exploring not only how and why a firm may become infamous by changing its behaviors, but also how it may end up becoming infamous by not changing its behaviors at all. We also develop a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of celebrity creation and loss.

### **What is wrongdoing?**

Before discussing different types of celebrity and infamy and how they come about, it is first important to define wrongdoing. Wrongdoing has been defined in a variety of ways, often by applying narrow criteria to characterize a negative behavior. For example, corporate illegality or corporate crimes include actions committed by one or more individuals that violate legal norms in order to benefit a firm (McKendall and Wagner 1997; Mishina et al. 2010). However, constructs such as wrongdoing, misconduct, unethical behavior, corruption, and deviance also encompass behaviors that breach broader criteria; they include not just violating laws but also violating ethical and social principles (Ashforth and Anand 2003; Greve et al. 2010; Heckert and Heckert 2002; Palmer 2012; Treviño et al. 2014; Vaughan 1999).

Palmer (2012) identified these three normative categories – the law, ethical principles, and social responsibility doctrines – as the general criteria used to judge a behavior as right or wrong. The law

is the most formal category, where law enforcement professionals such as federal and state government agencies and judicial systems evaluate whether organizations run afoul of written guidelines or prohibitions. The sanctions for violating the law are often severe, and can include seizure of property, paying fines and compensation, and incarceration.

Ethical principles include both written and unwritten guidelines and prohibitions that are monitored and policed by self-organized governing bodies (e.g., National Collegiate Athletic Association, American Medical Association [AMA], Food and Drug Administration, state bar associations, and organized religions) and more informally by community members who have a tacit understanding of what the community's norms are and when they are being violated. While they can be less severe than legal sanctions, failing to conform to professional societies' codes of ethics could result in official sanctions such as loss of licensure or membership.

Social responsibility doctrines involve the most informal unwritten guidelines and prohibitions, and include actions that are believed to damage society in a material way. For instance, organizations that mainly use non-renewable energy sources, or that produce tobacco or alcohol could be viewed as socially irresponsible since they undermine future generations by depleting resources or threatening human health. Although these standards are the most informal they can still result in significant sanctions, from public criticism or humiliation to expulsion from a social group or community.

While these three general categories can be used to evaluate wrongdoing in the abstract, it is often difficult to apply them to specific behaviors. This limitation can be overcome by taking a sociological approach to defining wrongdoing that involves understanding the law, ethics, and social responsibility as they are used in society (Palmer 2012; Vaughan 1999). Heckert and Heckert (2002: 452–453) called this approach “reactivist” or “subjectivist” because “the reactions and values of a social group seem crucial” in identifying a behavior as deviant or as an act of wrongdoing. This approach is distinguished from an “exegetical” approach that analyzes works in philosophy and theology to derive an “objective,” universal definition of wrongdoing that all researchers can embrace (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe 2008). The exegetical approach can benefit scholars by providing a definition that is temporally and spatially invariant; however, as a practical

matter it is difficult to achieve a single, widely accepted definition applicable in all cases.

We adopt the sociological or reactivist perspective and define wrongdoing as any behavior that social control agents judge transgresses the legal, ethical, and/or socially responsible line that separates right from wrong (Greve et al. 2010; Palmer 2012). By defining wrongdoing as the behavior that social control agents demarcate as acceptable and unacceptable, we take a social constructionist or a relativistic approach and assume that social dynamics determine what is right and wrong in a particular time and place (Greve et al. 2010; Heckert and Heckert 2002; Palmer 2012).

Our approach is also congruent with Black's (1993) approach to social control. He defined social control as including "any process by which people define and respond to deviant behavior" (Black 1993: 4). Black embraced expanding the definition of wrongdoing beyond violating the law to include anything that people express grievances about that activates social control. Any form of punishment, from incarceration to forced compensation, humiliation, gossip, or even a scowl, can be a means of social control by a particular social group if it influences perceptions of what is thought of as right or wrong. Thus, Black also argued that definitions of wrongdoing are relativistic and socially constructed by the actors and the context. Along with viewing wrongdoing as a dynamic phenomenon, this approach implicitly recognizes that social control agents, by sanctioning particular behaviors, are also responsible for creating wrongdoing (Palmer 2012).

The sociology of deviance literature (e.g., Erickson 1962; Kitsuse 1962) takes a similar approach. Kitsuse stated, for example, that "[f]orms of behavior per se do not differentiate deviants from non-deviants; it is the responses of the conventional and conforming members of the society who identify and interpret behavior as deviant which sociologically transform persons into deviants" (1962: 253), and that "the critical feature of the deviant-defining process is not the behavior of individuals who are defined as deviants, but rather the interpretations others make of their behaviors, whatever those behaviors may be" (1962: 255). Thus, in defining wrongdoing and understanding how it can lead celebrities to become infamous, it is important to understand in whose eyes a behavior may be considered wrongdoing.

### **Multiple stakeholder audiences and the assessment of wrongdoing**

As noted above, social control agents play a crucial role in determining wrongdoing. Palmer and colleagues (Greve et al. 2010; Palmer 2012) identified a social control agent as an actor who represents a collectivity that can impose sanctions on the collectivity's behalf. Social control agents include various entities that differ in the formality of their constitution, the breadth of their jurisdiction, and the severity of the punishments that they can administer. For instance, governmental bodies are social control agents that can apply severe sanctions to organizations through judicial and regulatory proceedings. Although they possess less formality and may not be able to levy as severe punishments, associations that set professional standards, like the AMA or state bar associations, also qualify as social control agents. The norms they enforce can take the form of explicitly stated regulations and rules of conduct, or they can be more informally recognized. Either way, their norm violations are socially reinforced through negative reactions, sanctioning, and/or excommunication from the group.

However, even collectives with no formal authority (i.e., the media, collectives of which the organization is not a member, or collectives that are not identifiable as a formal group but have a collective identity, such as liberals, conservatives, environmentalists, or the "twitterati") can act as social control agents. In this sense, "[w]henver and wherever people express grievances against their fellows" (Black 1993: 4) through various mechanisms and attempt to bring changes to what they think is wrong (Black 1993) they are acting as social control agents and can be a powerful entity in deciding wrongdoing. For example, social protest groups often act collectively to sanction organizations they believe are engaging in wrongdoing. Occupy Wall Street and other offshoot "occupy" groups (e.g., the "occupy" protests in Hong Kong over free and fair elections) offer recent examples. A study of the British MP expense scandal (Graffin et al. 2013) offers another example, showing how the media were more likely to target high-status actors than low-status actors for sanctioning following similar acts of wrongdoing.

Zavyalova and Pfarrer (2015) noted that organizations have multiple stakeholder audiences, and a firm can be a celebrity with one audience and be infamous with another audience. Further, although

the media controls the flow of information about a firm (Carroll and McCombs 2003; Graffin et al. 2013; Pollock and Rindova 2003), Zavyalova and Pfarrer noted that the same information – and even the same information provided by the same media outlet – can be interpreted by and reacted to positively or negatively by different stakeholder audiences who have different values and beliefs. Thus, in order to understand the effect of wrongdoing on celebrity and infamy, like Black (1993) we expand the definition of social control agents to include the collective reactions of stakeholder groups or audiences. That is, even if the actions an organization takes do not violate any formal laws, regulations, or association by-laws, organizations can still be convicted in the “court of public opinion” (Rindova et al. 2006; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015). We further argue that these reactions can be from society at large (Bundy and Pfarrer 2015; Graffin et al. 2013), or from a vocal sub-group with a shared identity (Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015). We call these latter groups “constituencies” and differentiate them from “society,” which encompasses more widely-held beliefs and norms agreed on by the larger social collective (i.e., that generally have widely held “concurrence” among most individuals and groups within a social collective [Bundy and Pfarrer 2015]).<sup>2</sup> However, we argue that society can also engage in the same kinds of collective actions as a constituency, and both can have more formal means of sanctioning they can employ, depending on who the constituency is.

A particularly important social control agent for celebrity firms is the constituency (or set of constituencies) that has conferred celebrity on the organization via their high level of attention and positive affective responses (Rindova et al. 2006). Because the firm’s celebrity is dependent on continuing to attract their attention and positive affect, the top management team of the celebrity firm may be particularly sensitive to how they are viewed by this constituency. At the same time, this constituency may have values and beliefs that are at odds with broader societal values. Even if their values are not at odds with larger societal values, the constituency may place greater or lesser weight on certain actions or values than the broader public.

<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that society is merely the sum of its constituencies. Rather, as Bundy and Pfarrer (2015: 349) noted, “While an organization with higher or lower levels of social approval can have defectors, the concurring perception among most evaluators will be consistent.” Thus a constituency within the society can disagree in their assessment with society at large.

In this regard celebrity organizations walk a slippery slope, as their actions could be viewed as acceptable or unacceptable depending on the group. Warren (2003) also acknowledged that wrongdoing can be defined by considering reference group norms, and that “hyper-norms” which are widely held can be seen as global standards. We argue that in order to understand why celebrity firms might engage in wrongdoing and become infamous, and to identify the type of celebrity and/or infamy we are talking about, the reactions of multiple social control agents have to be considered together. In developing our theory we argue that society and constituents represent two different sets of social control agents and that the amount of alignment between their values and beliefs determines the kind of celebrity and/or infamy a firm experiences.

### Types of celebrity and infamy

Figure 9.1 is the figure Rindova et al. (2006) used to describe different kinds of deviance – behaviors that under- and over-conform to existing norms. They discussed these behaviors with respect to a single

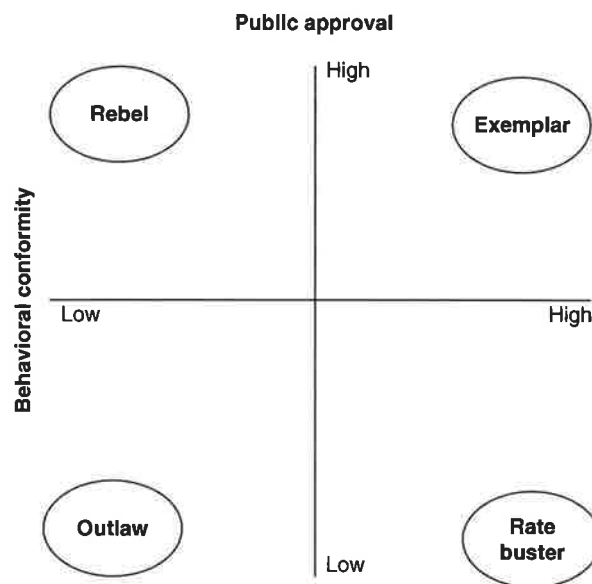


Figure 9.1 The Rindova et al. (2006) typology of deviant behaviors



audience's norms and focused on whether the behavior was viewed positively or negatively. Rebels are celebrities who engage in under-conforming behaviors that are viewed positively. These behaviors may include engaging in fewer or none of the behaviors that are viewed negatively by stakeholders, but that are nonetheless considered "normal" (e.g., Southwest not charging a checked-bag fee, which has become an industry norm), and/or engaging in behaviors that are not considered the norm (e.g., Uber's policy of drivers and passengers rating each other). Exemplars, on the other hand, are celebrities that over-conform to existing norms and engage in expected behaviors at a higher than typical level (e.g., Apple's focus on simplicity and quality in design). They further argued that these behaviors could be taken to extremes such that they become negatively viewed, leading to two types of infamy: rebels could become "outlaws" and "exemplars" could become "rate busters." They also noted that the norms line could shift, such that behaviors that were once considered over- or under-conforming become the "new normal," in which case celebrity would be lost, but the firm would not become infamous.

Implicit in Rindova and colleagues' (2006) discussion is that there can be more than one audience, although they did not elaborate on this point. Zavyalova and Pfarrer (2015) acknowledged the existence of multiple audiences with different values and beliefs in developing their argument that the *same* behaviors can lead to both celebrity and infamy if they lead some stakeholder audiences to identify and others to dis-identify with the organization. However, they were not specific about who these stakeholder audiences were. Firms may be celebrities in the eyes of society at large, but there may also be a sub-segment or sub-segments of the broader society that hold different values or expectations, which is why under-conforming to societal values results in "rebel" celebrities – while they are *under*-conforming to societal norms, they are *over*-conforming to the norms and values of the constituency. Viewed from this perspective, then, celebrity only arises from over-conforming to norms, and infamy only arises from under-conforming to norms in ways defined as wrongdoing. The key is recognizing whose norms they are over- or under-conforming to.

We argue that in order to understand how and why celebrities engage in wrongdoing and how it leads to different types of infamy, two sets of norms have to be considered: (1) the norms of the constituents among whom the organization is a celebrity, and (2) broader

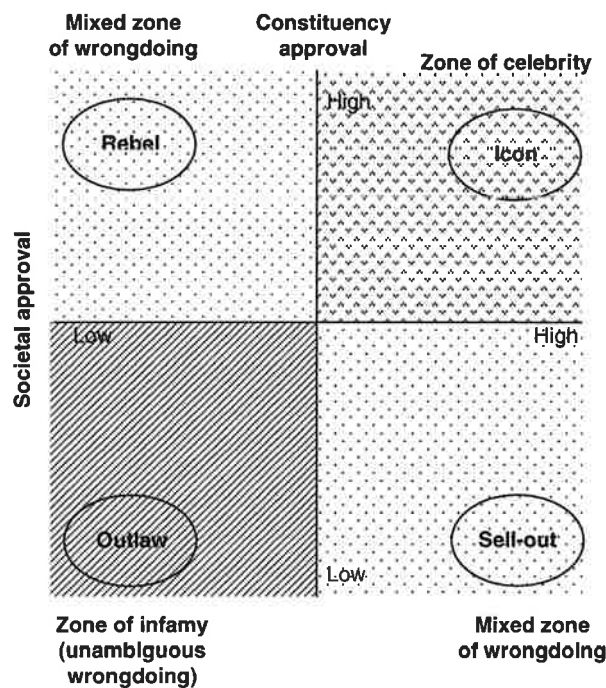


Figure 9.2 A typology of celebrity and infamy

societal norms.<sup>3</sup> Figure 9.2 illustrates this alternative model. The vertical axis represents the norms of the constituents among whom the organization is a celebrity. The firm's personification of the constituents' values and beliefs, and thus their identification with and/or level of positive or negative affective resonance with the firm, can range from low (i.e., completely incongruent) to high (i.e., completely congruent). Low congruence would lead the constituency to view the organization's behavior as wrongdoing. The midpoint can be thought of as a situation where the firm's behaviors are congruent with the norms of the constituents and society, but not at a level that will generate either positive or negative affect. The horizontal axis represents the norms of society more generally and can similarly range

<sup>3</sup> We focus on these two sets of norms in order to provide a simple and parsimonious way to discuss this issue. However, the same model can be used to compare the norms from any two sets of constituencies that a celebrity firm may face by substituting the other constituency's norms in place of societal norms.

from low to high. The farther a firm's behaviors lie away from the intersection of constituent and societal norms and toward an endpoint for each group, the stronger that group's affective response to that firm will be. If they move toward the high end, the response will be positive and increase celebrity with that audience; if they move toward the low end, the response will be negative and increase their infamy.

Thus, we are explicitly considering two different sets of norms and beliefs. Further, as Figure 9.2 shows, it is possible that the norms of the constituency and society may be congruent, or they may be in conflict. Thus our celebrity/infamy typology overlaps with those presented by Rindova and colleagues (2006) and Zavyalova and Pfarrer (2015), but also differs from each.

We argue that celebrity and infamy can be "clear" or "mixed." "Icons" are clear celebrities in that they are more universally approved of; they appeal to the values and beliefs of society and the constituents granting them celebrity. This may be because they over-conform to societal values and beliefs that are more highly valued by the constituency than other groups, or because there is no specific sub-group and they are more universally approved of within the broader society.<sup>4</sup> For example, Apple has long been a celebrity with specific constituencies that appreciated their products' elegance and ease-of-use. However, since the introduction of the iPod Apple has become widely hailed for its attractive, innovative, high-quality, and easy to use products that function on both Apple and Microsoft platforms, and a wide range of individuals line up to purchase each new version of its phones, tablets, and music players.

Conversely, "outlaws" are a clear form of infamy. They display low conformity to both constituent and societal norms and generate negative affective responses from both groups who treat their behaviors as wrongdoing. The low-cost airline Ryanair is an example of an outlaw. Ryanair is a no-frills airline that charges additional fees for just about everything, such that there have been persistent rumors they may begin to charge fees for using the lavatory. Indeed, they have taken cost-cutting to such an extreme that they have been named the world's least

<sup>4</sup> Of course, different societies can hold different values, so an organization could be universally loved in one society and reviled in another. However, to avoid infinite regression, we bound our theory within the confines of a single society and its constituent sub-groups.

favorite airline on sites such as TripAdvisor for many years in a row (Daily Mail Online 2008). Ryanair generates negative affective responses not only from frequent air travelers but also from the general public.

However, as there are multiple stakeholders that hold different sets of norms and beliefs, firms may be viewed as a celebrity by one group and as infamous by another. We call these firms “mixed” because they possess both celebrity and infamy. “Rebels” have low conformity to societal norms but high conformity to constituent norms. This is the mixed form Zavyalova and Pfarrer (2015) specifically focused on. For example, AirBnB is a celebrity among those who consider themselves members of the “sharing” economy but is infamous among government regulators and the hospitality industry, who believe those renting rooms in their homes through the service are violating health, safety, and tax regulations on hoteliers (Disser 2015).

Another mixed form is when the firm has low conformity to constituent norms but high conformity to societal norms. Actors in this category usually conformed highly to a constituent group’s norms at one time, but now engage in behaviors and/or reveal identity-relevant information that society views favourably but that the constituency considers wrongdoing. We label these celebrity firms “sell-outs,” because they traded what is often a more intense level of celebrity with the smaller constituency for a broader but perhaps more weakly held celebrity among a larger audience. Sell-outs may migrate from either the rebel or icon zones, but they probably are most often rebels who go “mainstream” and take actions that violate the constituencies’ norms of conduct.

An example of a firm that moved from rebel to sell-out is Starbucks. In its early days Starbucks tapped into the ethos of small, independent coffee houses serving high-quality coffee and coffee-based drinks such as lattes and cappuccinos – a passionate sub-culture within the US at the time. Starbucks became a celebrity among this constituency for “elevating the coffee experience” in the US by using higher-quality coffee, darker roasts, and baristas who hand-pulled espresso shots and crafted various coffee drinks (Schultz and Yang 1997). However, as it became bigger and more popular with the mass market, its early constituents began to see Starbucks as another large, generic chain like McDonalds and developed negative perceptions of the firm’s activities, criticizing Starbucks’s coffee-buying practices, de-skilling of baristas,

increasingly generic and undistinguished décor, and “a store on every corner” business model, even as Starbucks has become more popular with the general public and substantially changed Americans’ perceptions of what “good” coffee is.

Google is an example of a firm that moved from icon to sell-out. Google has long been the dominant search tool on the Internet and generates positive affect among the population at large. However, it also had special popularity among a constituency that was concerned with technology company over-reach due to its stated dictum “Don’t be evil.” As Google grew, this group became concerned that Google was no longer living up to this credo, and felt betrayed when Google acquiesced to requests from the Chinese government to censor certain websites in Chinese citizens’ search results (Halliday 2013). Thus, Google went from being an icon to a sell-out, as its celebrity with the constituency turned to infamy, even though its celebrity with society was generally unaffected.

Based on these arguments we therefore propose:

**Proposition 1a:** *Firms with high (low) conformity to both constituent and societal norms exhibit pure forms of celebrity (infamy) and become icons (outlaws).*

**Proposition 1b:** *Firms with high conformity to constituent or societal norms but low conformity to the other audience’s norms exhibit mixed forms of celebrity and infamy and become either rebels or sell-outs.*

Prior theorizing and empirical research also suggests that celebrity tends to be more fleeting than other social approval assets (Pfarrer et al. 2010; Rindova et al. 2006; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015). Zavyalova and Pfarrer (2015) argued that this is because of the asymmetric influence that positive and negative information have on perceptions (Haack, Pfarrer, and Scherer 2014; Rozin and Royzman 2001); whereas new positive information has diminishing marginal benefits, the effects of new negative information tends to accumulate without diminishing. Along with Rindova and colleagues (2006), they also argued that changes in stakeholder audiences’ affective responses can result from celebrities taking different actions and/or engaging in more extreme versions of actions that led to their celebrity. Moving from one category to another can happen either because the firm’s behaviors

change and they violate existing norms or because either society's or constituents' norms change, but the celebrity's behavior does not change along with the changing norms and values. The question becomes, why do they do it?

### **Falling from grace: moving from celebrity to infamy**

#### *Behavioral changes*

One way that celebrities become infamous is by changing the behaviors that led to their celebrity, leading the constituency and/or society to deem their behaviors wrongdoing. These changes can either be (1) engaging in more extreme versions of the behaviors that led to their celebrity (Adler and Adler 1989; Rindova et al. 2006); or (2) engaging in different behaviors. In either case, these behaviors violate the norms and expectations of their constituency and/or society and create negative affect among their audience (Heckert and Heckert 2002; Pfarrer et al. 2010; Rindova et al. 2006; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015).

Engaging in more extreme actions is most likely to occur when organizational members internalize the values underlying the firm's celebrity and try to live up to what they feel is expected of them (e.g., Adler and Adler 1989; Heckert and Heckert 2002; Rindova et al. 2006). In order to maintain or enhance their celebrity, firms may extrapolate from the behaviors that earned them celebrity in the first place, taking a "more is better" approach that leads to non-conforming actions which are increasingly incongruent with societal norms, and are potentially inconsistent with constituents' norms (Heckert and Heckert 2002). Celebrity firms feel increased pressure to engage in more extreme behaviors of the same type because they believe it is necessary to continue stimulating the same affective response from their audience. Continually generating strong positive affective responses is difficult to do over time because the firm's past actions begin to seem less radical and more commonplace; thus, the positive incremental benefits of its actions begin to diminish (Rozin and Royzman 2001; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015). At the extreme, this could result in crossing the boundary between legal and illegal behavior in an effort to continue stimulating positive affective responses (Mishina et al. 2010).

Engaging in different behaviors considered wrongdoing also often results from the celebrity firm and its leaders becoming hubristic and taking the positive affect generated by the firm's celebrity as a signal that they have *carte blanche* to behave in ways that they feel is consistent with the celebrity persona of the firm (e.g., Hayward and Hambrick 1997; Li and Tang 2010). In doing so, they engage in behaviors that cross ethical boundaries or violate expectations of social responsibility or propriety (Treviño et al. 2014).

Adler and Adler (1989) argued that both types of behaviors can result when celebrity creates a new type of identity, which they called the "gloried self." They argued that the media creates and the public adopts and reinforces "public" personas for celebrities that are different from and less complex than their "private" personas, and that this creates a period of alienation and conflict within celebrities that is resolved by revising their self-conception to be more in line with their public persona. They argued, "Characteristically, the gloried self is a greedy self, seeking to ascend in importance and to cast aside other self-dimensions as it grows. It is an intoxicating and riveting self, which overpowers other aspects of the individual and seeks increasing reinforcement to fuel its growth" (Adler and Adler 1989: 300). They also noted that embracing the gloried self results in self-diminishment, or the restriction of personal characteristics considered other than those related to their glory; a reduction in the capacity to consider the potential future consequences of actions; and a lack of self-reflectiveness that can lead to detachment from their former selves. The need for self-aggrandizement and continued social approval, the entitlement that accompanies the gloried self, and the inability to consider other issues or future consequences thus motivate behaviors that can lead to infamy.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 9.3 illustrates the different directions that a celebrity can fall. If a celebrity firm engages in behaviors that are not congruent with constituent norms but that are not specifically in conflict with them, they may merely lose their celebrity with respect to that constituency. More problematic, however, is if their actions are considered wrongdoing that specifically violates constituents' norms. Icons and rebels can

<sup>5</sup> A similar process has been identified in the sociology of deviance literature: in an act of self-fulfilling prophecy, individuals labeled deviants internalize the label as part of their identity and begin engaging in behaviors consistent with the label. This is referred to as "secondary deviance" (e.g., Gibbs and Erickson 1975).

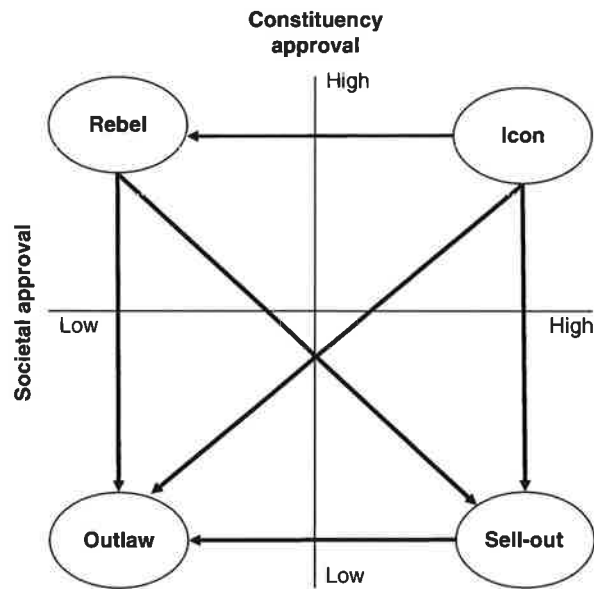


Figure 9.3 Directions celebrities fall

become sell-outs if they violate constituents' norms but their behaviors are congruent with the norms of society at large; for example, when Starbucks grew into a large restaurant chain and the uniqueness of its stores began to suffer, even as it became more popular with the masses. These kinds of behavioral changes result in a perceived loss of the authenticity or edginess that initially appealed to the constituent group while making them more palatable and accessible to a broader audience.

For example, when bands like Green Day, the Offspring, or Blink 182 moved from traditional punk to pop punk, their former core punk rock audiences turned their backs on them. Similarly, when corporations with strong social responsibility credentials adopt practices or make statements associated with more conventional companies (e.g., conducting layoffs for the first time, adopting less than green practices due to scale and cost considerations), or change their products to have more mass appeal (e.g., increasing the sweetness of food products or reducing product quality in order to lower the product's cost and price), their core constituency may see these behaviors as wrongdoing that violates their norms and principles even as the firm increases its celebrity, more generally.



A recent example of this latter shift is Timberland. As a recent article in the *Washington Post* (Halzack 2015) noted, “Here in the United States it [Timberland] had become something of a hip-hop brand as rappers name-checked ‘Timbs’ in countless songs . . . Still more customers perceived Timberland as gear for the rugged outdoorsman, the kind of guy who hikes in the woods for days with nothing but his backpack and his Eagle Scout skills.” Thus, Timberland has been a celebrity with two very different constituencies – the urban hip-hop community and serious outdoor enthusiasts. The article goes on to discuss how Timberland has reconceived its product lines and advertising to broaden the brand’s appeal and focus instead on the “outdoor lifestyle,” whom they describe as an urban dweller with a more casual interest in the outdoors, and who is more interested in style than the technical capabilities of the apparel. While this shift is calculated to broaden Timberland’s appeal with the general market, it is likely to result in a deterioration of their appeal with their traditional constituencies, neither of whom would want to be associated with the newly targeted demographic group.

Alternatively, firms can become rebels if they take actions that make them infamous with their current constituency or society, but increase their celebrity with a new constituency. For example, although Chick-Fil-A was not previously a celebrity or infamous, by making public statements opposing gay marriage it increased its celebrity among religious conservatives, who flocked to their stores in support when protesters called for a boycott. These same actions also increased its infamy with the general public, as gay marriage is becoming increasingly accepted by mainstream America and intolerance of gay marriage is increasingly viewed negatively (O’Connor 2014).

Further, icons, rebels, and sell-outs can all become outlaws if they violate both their constituents’ and society’s norms. By now classic examples are firms such as Enron and Worldcom, who engaged in fraud and other illegal actions in order to maintain their otherwise unsustainable financial performance (Mishina et al. 2010). Those firms that already mix celebrity and infamy – rebels and sell-outs – are especially susceptible to becoming outlaws, as they are already infamous with either a constituency or society. Rebels display behaviors that are congruent with constituent norms and incongruent with societal norms. Thus, they are particularly liable to become outlaws if they take their behaviors to extremes in order to continue maintaining their celebrity with the constituency (Mishina et al. 2010).

For example, many forms of risky financial trading are an integral part of how financial capitalism generates high returns. Nonetheless, such “financial edgework” (Knorr-Cetina and Bruegger 2002; Wexler 2010) is generally viewed negatively by society, even as it is valorized within the financial community of traders. Risky investments made by star traders of financial institutions like Barings Bank and Société Générale show how a rebel can become an outlaw. In the case of Nick Leeson and Jerome Kerviel, risk-taking was encouraged as long as it generated profits for their firm. Although their excessive risk-taking initially yielded high returns, it became more and more reckless and they took actions to cover up for their mounting losses, eventually causing their employer to file for bankruptcy (Brown 2005; Gilligan 2011).

Sell-outs generate celebrity with society at large and infamy with one or more constituencies, and are susceptible to becoming outlaws if they take actions that violate society’s norms. For example, organic brands such as Kashi, Odwalla, Stonyfield, and Naked Juice were all known for small-scale, environmentally friendly production that emphasized the use of organic ingredients and sustainable manufacturing practices in their production. Once they were acquired by large conventional food companies these firms became infamous to many in the organic industry, who saw them as greedy sell-outs that traded their social consciousness for profits. They also viewed such acquisitions as attempts by food conglomerates to water down organic standards and quality while seeking to reap larger profits from the organic label and image (Howard 2009). As *Forbes* (Hoffman 2013) noted, “It’s very common that when an organic food brand is acquired, that the new parent corporation reduces its commitment to organic ingredients and seeks out cheaper substitutes.” In the eyes of broader society, though, the increased visibility and popularity of organic brands facilitated by the large firms’ marketing, public relations, and distribution efforts could increase their celebrity with the general populace. However, this increased attention also makes any violations of organic norms more visible, and risks alienating the buying public (Pfarrer et al. 2010).

For example, Silk Soymilk started to use conventional instead of organic soybeans after it was acquired by Dean Foods, and PepsiCo was sued for using phrases like “All Natural” in marketing Naked Juice when the product contained genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Moreover, these firms use their profits from the sales of organic brands to support legislation that could harm society in general; for instance, by opposing Proposition 37 in California, which required firms to label GMO foods (Hoffman 2013).

However, although all types of celebrities can become more infamous, it will likely be more difficult for icons to become outlaws than rebels or sell-outs. This is because they have to engage in actions that are incongruent with both their constituency and society at large. Such actions will have to be of significant magnitude, and thus are relatively rare. Rebels and sell-outs, on the other hand, are already infamous with either society or a constituency. Thus, they may be more likely to fall from celebrity to infamy, particularly since additional information that leads to celebrity has a decreasing effect, while negative information that increases infamy is cumulative (Rozin and Roysman 2001; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015), making it increasingly figural and likely to stand out, and garnering more attention. It is also possible that the infamy creates an “interpretive frame” (Pfarrer et al. 2010) that affects how information that would normally enhance celebrity is interpreted.

**Proposition 2a:** *Celebrities are more likely to become infamous if they engage in different actions and/or more extreme versions of the actions that generated their celebrity.*

**Proposition 2b:** *Rebels and sell-outs, who already possess infamy with either society or a constituency are more likely to become outlaws than icons, who would have to lose celebrity and gain infamy with both society and their constituencies. Icons are thus more likely to become rebels or sell-outs than outlaws.*

### *Normative changes*

Celebrities may also fall not because they change their behavior in any significant way, but because constituents and/or society’s norms and expectations change while the celebrity’s behavior does not (Heckert and Heckert 2002). This can again take two forms: (1) What was once seen as under- or over-conforming to norms changes; and (2) Congruence between constituents’ and societal norms increases or decreases. Constituent and societal norms are not static and unchanging; rather, they can shift and evolve over time (e.g., Earle, Spicer, and

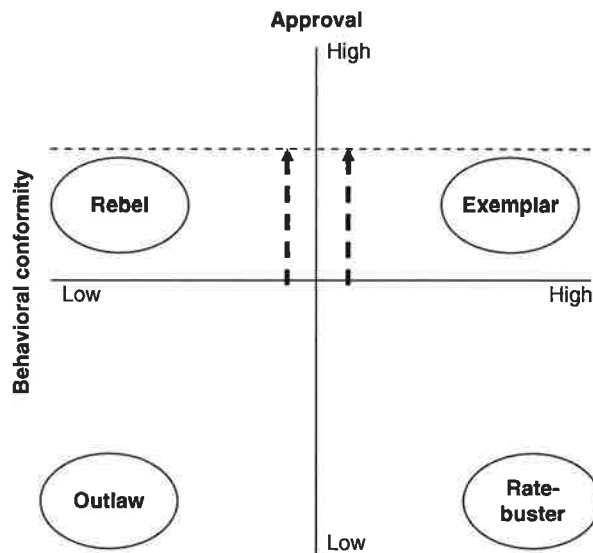


Figure 9.4 How stakeholders' perceptions of deviance change

Peter 2010). Thus, behaviors that are approved of and that generate positive affective responses at one point in time may generate negative affective responses at a different point in time (Heckert and Heckert 2002).

For example, both literature (e.g., the works of Ernest Hemingway) and Hollywood films (e.g., James Bond films) of the twentieth century often portrayed conspicuous womanizing and copious consumption of alcohol as desirable traits that symbolized masculinity. More recently, however, these traits have begun to be viewed more negatively, or at least in a less positive light than before (e.g., Bilmes 2014; Lotz 2014). Similarly, whereas the pursuit of profit without concern for other stakeholders was valorized through much of the 1980s and 1990s, it is now viewed more negatively, particularly by millennials who prefer that companies also provide social and environmental benefits (Sharp 2014).

Figure 9.4 illustrates the first circumstance with respect to a single stakeholder audience. As you will recall, Figure 9.1 illustrates that a celebrity is an actor that either over-conforms to a given group's norms or under-conforms to other norms in a way that generates positive affective responses with the focal audience. These processes

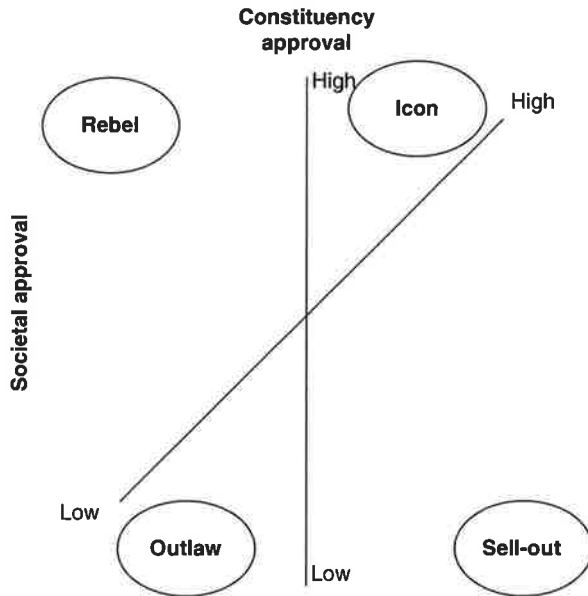


Figure 9.5 Less congruence

can be simultaneous; that is, a constituency or sub-group may approve if their norms are over-conformed to but societal norms with which they disagree are under-conformed to, and society may approve if their norms are over-conformed to and the sub-group's norms are under-conformed to. Figure 9.4 illustrates a shift in the intersection between over/under-conforming behaviors and approval. Behaviors that previously led an actor to be a rebel now make it an outlaw and/or behaviors that led a celebrity to be an exemplar now make it a rate-buster.

Figures 9.5 and 9.6 illustrate the second kind of normative shift. Here, the norms of society and the constituency become more or less similar to each other, as reflected by the rotation in the X-axis. As Figure 9.5 illustrates, if there is less congruence the range of behaviors they both agree and disagree on becomes small, thus compressing the range of behaviors that make an actor an icon or an outlaw and increasing the range of behaviors that make firms both celebrated and infamous – that is, make them either a rebel or a sell-out. In other words, there is less consensus about what is considered wrongdoing,

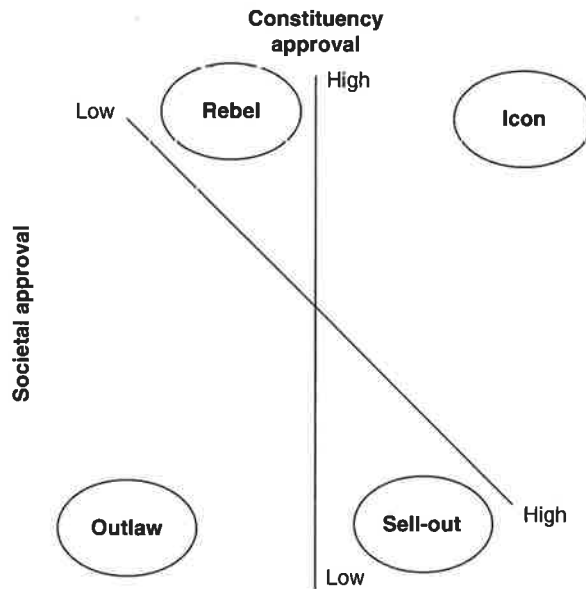


Figure 9.6 More congruence

and deviations from the constituent's or society's orthodoxy are not tolerated. Conversely, as Figure 9.6 illustrates, if there is more congruence, then the constituency's and society's norms are largely aligned; hence, celebrities are more likely to be icons and infamous firms are more likely to be outlaws since there is more consensus on what is considered wrongdoing, and thus behaviors are more likely to meet or violate both groups' norms and expectations. The range of behaviors that are approved of by both society and the constituency grows, and the range of behaviors disapproved of by one or the other shrinks – thus shrinking the zones for rebels and sell-outs.

Sociologists have provided examples of when a constituency's norms became more similar to those of society at large. Adut (2005), for example, examined the case of Oscar Wilde and found that although Victorian society viewed homosexuality as repulsive, Oscar Wilde's sexual orientation was an open secret that was initially tolerated among the elites of the day. Once scandals regarding his sexuality broke publicly, however, the elites who had tolerated or even protected him had to act in a punitive manner to protect their own reputations and the sanctity of the existing status structures.

Similarly, Fine (1997) examined how the Fatty Arbuckle case precipitated a scandal that led the norms of Hollywood and broader society to grow a little closer together. Fatty Arbuckle, one of the most popular comedians of the 1920s and 1930s, was accused of rape and murder when a young model and actress died after attending a party he hosted. Although prohibition had recently been enacted, the party was “generously lubricated with bootleg whiskey and gin,” and during the party one of the attendees “became ill, started to scream, and tore off her clothing,” eventually dying from “complications of a ruptured bladder from peritonitis” a few days later (Fine 1997: 300). Although many in Hollywood initially supported Arbuckle and he was acquitted of the charges, the Hollywood elite (i.e., the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association) took symbolic social control efforts against previously tolerated activities (e.g., parties, “loose” morals) in order to protect itself from attack by the broader public, who viewed Hollywood as a hotbed of sin synonymous with moral decay.

In both the Oscar Wilde and Fatty Arbuckle cases, a constituency’s norms were in conflict with broader societal norms, but there was no move to resolve the conflict until the constituency’s existing institutional structures were threatened by society at large due to negative attention and the efforts of moral entrepreneurs. In order to counter the threat, the elites in each constituency acted as social control agents, shifting the constituency’s norms to more closely align with broader societal norms – or they at least made symbolic concessions to make it seem that way (Adut 2005; Fine 1997).

For corporations, crisis events have led industry norms to change in ways that make them more similar to societal norms. For example, following the toxic chemical spill from a Union Carbide facility in Bhopal, India, that killed thousands of people, chemical companies were eager to create a self-regulatory institution that would prevent such accidents in the future (Barnett and King 2008). The Responsible Care program was launched and adopted by many chemical associations, who made association membership conditional on adopting the program (American Chemistry Council 2013). The chemical industry’s norms regarding prioritizing worker safety and the prevention of hazardous chemical releases over cost-cutting changed and became closer to societal norms.

Changes can also occur as a result of sustained activism, rather than a precipitating event. For example, the Sustainable Slopes Program was

launched by the National Ski Areas Association (NSAA) in 2000 as a response to increasing scrutiny from environmentalists. The program led 75 percent of US ski resorts to adopt Sustainable Slope Principles promoting compliance with twenty-one aspects of environmental management (e.g., construction of slopes, water usage for snowmaking, conserving fish and wildlife, etc.) (NSAA 2014; Rivera and de Leon 2004). By becoming more environmentally conscious in their operations, the ski industry's norms changed to accommodate social norms that opposed landscape destruction, deforestation, and damaging wildlife habitats.

Alternatively, the social movement literature suggests that broader societal norms may become more similar to those of a particular constituency if the constituency is successful in its efforts to change societal norms. For example, Haines (1984) examined major black movement organizations between 1952 and 1970 and identified a positive radical "flank" effect, where the presence of radical black activist organizations convinced societal elites of the need to pacify the African-American population. This resulted in support for more moderate groups whose aims and methods seemed more reasonable in comparison, thereby moving societal norms closer to those of black movement organizations in general. More recently, the rapid changes in societal attitudes toward same-sex marriage (Briscoe and Safford 2008) and the medical use of marijuana (Dickinson 2015) illustrate how societal values and beliefs can change to align more with those of vocal subgroups that were previously seen as outside societal norms.

**Proposition 3a:** *Normative changes that lead to less congruence between constituents' and society's norms increase the likelihood that firms will possess mixed forms (rebel and sell-out) of celebrity and infamy.*

**Proposition 3b:** *Normative changes that lead to a greater congruence between constituents' and societal norms increase the likelihood that firms will possess pure forms of celebrity (icon) and infamy (outlaw).*

### **Redemption, or the "Behind the Music effect"**

In the 1990s and early 2000s the US music television channel VH1 ran a popular show called "Behind the Music" that profiled different rock bands. These episodes followed a predictable arc that roughly mirrored



Freytag's pyramid (1863[1900]) articulating the structure of a drama: inciting moment and exposition (the band members meet), rising action (they perform early gigs and achieve success and celebrity), complication and climax (the band reaches the peak of its fame, but bad behaviors, jealousy, and other stressors also reach their peak), reversal (band members fight, quit, or have drug overdoses), falling action (the band breaks up, or nearly breaks up as their celebrity fades), and denouement (sometimes the band members go their separate ways, but sometimes they overcome their challenges and mount a comeback, even if they never achieve their prior level of celebrity).

This pattern of positive and negative behaviors accompanied by the rise and fall of a band's celebrity was so ubiquitous that it has been dubbed by some the "Behind the Music effect" as shorthand for describing other types of actors who experience similar rises and falls. The Behind the Music effect can also be used to describe the arc of celebrity firms that become infamous. The question becomes, what happens in the denouement, and how can some firms that go from celebrity to infamy regain at least some of their celebrity?

We have detailed some of the reasons why a rebel may become an outlaw or a sell-out, how a sell-out can become an outlaw, and how an icon can become a rebel, sell-out, or outlaw. As Zavyalova and Pfarrer (2015) discussed, it is easier to lose celebrity and become infamous than it is to move from infamy to celebrity. We believe that shifts in norms and/or changes in behavior are necessary conditions for moving from one of the mixed forms of celebrity to another. But, because negative information tends to have stronger and more persistent effects than positive information (e.g., Baumeister et al. 2001; Rozin and Royzman 2001), particularly when audiences are making judgments about a target's values and beliefs (e.g., Birnbaum 1972, 1973; Skowronski and Carlston, 1987; Mishina, Block, and Mannor 2012), these factors alone may not be sufficient to redeem an outlaw, or change from one of the mixed forms into an icon. In this regard, the work that Fine and his colleagues (Bromberg and Fine 2002; Fine 1999) have done at the individual level on problematic, or "difficult," reputations may provide some insight.

In looking at figures such as the folk singer Pete Seeger, whose reputation shifted from vilified communist to national hero during his lifetime (Bromberg and Fine 2002), and abolitionist John Brown, who has been recast as a civil war hero even though he attacked the federal

government (Fine 1999), Fine and colleagues suggested that in order to purify a once-tainted reputation a new narrative must be advanced, and this narrative must ultimately become reified as the “true” account about the subject. They also suggested that this may require changes in beliefs and value systems; redefinition of actions, events, and/or meanings; allies to advance the new narrative; and a lack of powerful critics or enemies (e.g., Fine 1999; Bromberg and Fine 2002). From the standpoint of an outlaw, this implies that in addition to the potential change in norms (such that the firm’s behaviors would generate positive rather than negative affective responses from constituencies), and/or changes in behavior to those that are highly congruent with those of constituencies, three additional factors are necessary.

First, the firm’s previously objectionable activities need to be recast in a more positive light (Bromberg and Fine 2002; Fine 1999). If the norms have changed so that those activities are now acceptable, or even desirable, then this step could potentially be skipped. If not, then this step will entail redefining what the firm did, why the firm took the actions, and otherwise providing accounts and justifications that lead the prior actions to now be viewed as reasonable and acceptable (e.g., Scott and Lyman 1969; Blumstein et al. 1974; Elsbach 1994; Massey, Freeman, and Zelditch 1997).

Second, the firm requires allies to advance the more positive narrative (Bromberg and Fine 2002; Fine 1999). Since the media plays a large part in the construction of firm celebrity (Carroll and McCombs 2003; Rindova et al. 2006; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015), it stands to reason that their assistance may be required in order to advance the new narrative and have it accepted as reality by audiences (e.g., Gamson et al. 1992). Additionally, unless at least one powerful constituency accepts this new narrative and reacts positively, the focal firm is unlikely to regain celebrity. There is no guarantee, however, that it will be the same constituency with whom the firm had celebrity before its fall.

Finally, Fine and colleagues (Bromberg and Fine 2002; Fine 1999) suggested that the presence of powerful critics or enemies could derail the new narrative and make it difficult or impossible to rehabilitate a problematic reputation. Since constituencies who dis-identify with the firm (and thus to whom the firm is infamous) have a vested interest in maintaining an outlaw’s infamy (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001; see also Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015), the firm needs to either eliminate the infamy vis-à-vis this constituency

and/or hope that the constituency lacks sufficient power to act as a social control agent and continue enforcing sanctions that reinforce their infamy. For the former to occur, either changing norms and/or redefinition of actions, events, and meanings will help weaken or erase the infamy, but it is not clear what the focal firm would necessarily be able to do to ensure the latter (i.e., weaken the power of those reinforcing the firm's infamy). Some options may include actively attempting to discredit those trying to discredit them, and encouraging the media not to legitimate their claims by covering and reporting them, or by giving them equal weight in their articles and stories when they do cover them. Thus, we propose:

**Proposition 4:** *To regain celebrity, a firm that has fallen from grace should (1) redefine its activities so they are now viewed positively, (2) find and seek the support of powerful allies who can advance a new narrative about the firm, and (3) co-opt or otherwise neutralize critics or other social control agents reinforcing the firm's infamy.*

### Discussion and implications for research

In this chapter we have examined the dynamic interplay among celebrity, infamy, and wrongdoing by discussing the nature of different audiences and developing a typology of different forms of celebrity and infamy, exploring how and why a celebrity firm may engage in wrongdoing, how that wrongdoing may increase a firm's infamy and/or diminish its celebrity, and how an infamous firm may be able to reform itself and regain lost celebrity. In doing so, we make several contributions to the literature on celebrity and wrongdoing.

First, we provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of celebrity creation and loss and develop a greater theoretical understanding of infamy – a social construct based on assessments of wrongdoing that has received limited attention. By considering the constituency to whom the firm is a celebrity or infamous, as well as society in general, we further dimensionalize the multiple audiences that create celebrities and infamous firms, highlighting that celebrity arises from over-conforming to a particular constituency's and/or society's values and beliefs, while infamy arises from under-conforming to the constituency's and/or society's values and beliefs.

This perspective allowed us to derive an expanded typology of different celebrity/infamy combinations that accommodates both mixed and clear forms of celebrity and infamy. It also allows us to consider the differential susceptibility firms may have to losing their celebrity and becoming infamous. For example, because an icon has celebrity with both its core constituency and broader society, it is likely to be in a better position than a rebel who must rely on staying in the good graces of its constituency (since it has infamy with broader society) or a sell-out which may have celebrity with society in general but is infamous with respect to its (former) core constituency. We also theorize about how and why a firm may engage in wrongdoing by changing its behaviors or because the norms of the constituency and/or society change even if it does not change its behaviors. We then consider what would be required for these “fallen” stars to find their way back to their former celebrity.

Second, we contribute to the literature on wrongdoing by highlighting that what is considered wrongdoing is dynamic, and that wrongdoing can be determined and sanctioned even in the absence of a centralized authority. We discussed both the evolving nature of what behaviors are considered wrongdoing, as well as how those definitions may be audience-specific. Consequently what is considered wrongdoing by one audience may be celebrated by another audience. This can create problems for firms as they have to carefully consider their behaviors and navigate a potentially treacherous set of contrasting (and often conflicting) values and beliefs that their multiple audiences may hold. At the same time, we suggest that the focus should specifically be on who the social control agents are, since they are the ones who have the ability to impose sanctions upon the organization. In contributing to these literatures, our theorizing suggests several implications for future research.

First, it suggests that rather than focusing on celebrity in the abstract, greater insight may be gained regarding the role of firm celebrity and infamy if we consider exactly what type of celebrity or infamy a firm has (i.e., icon, rebel, sell-out, outlaw) and who the constituency(ies) are (e.g., industry association, activist group, customer group) granting the celebrity and/or infamy. By doing so, researchers will be able to identify the differential pressures that the firm may face, as well as the types of rewards that they may enjoy. Relatedly, it may be possible to trace the different types of paths that firms may take in their journey as they gain and lose celebrity and infamy.

Second, our theorizing suggests that celebrity may indeed be a mixed blessing; although it may bring some tangible benefits (Pfarrer et al. 2010), it can also induce firms to behave in problematic ways because its members feel pressure to live up to these heightened expectations (e.g., Adler and Adler 1989; Heckert and Heckert 2002; Rindova et al. 2006). Indeed, even if the firm does not alter its actions, it may still face problems as celebrity may heighten the expectations of the firm's constituencies (Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015) and norms shift over time (Earle et al. 2010). Future research could continue to explore the double-edged nature of celebrity, the costs of infamy, and how firms can manage or influence these normative shifts.

Finally, an additional direction for future research would be to examine the relationship between infamy and other social evaluation constructs. The relationship between infamy and stigma might be particularly interesting to examine, especially since they both include a negative affective component, they both arise from being defined as deviant, and both infamous and stigmatized firms are likely to be viewed as symbols of the types of behaviors that are considered unacceptable by particular audiences (e.g., Erickson 1962).

At the same time, we do not believe the two constructs are equivalent. Devers and colleagues (2009), for example, stated that stigma and celebrity differ along a number of dimensions. Even though celebrity and infamy are likely to be distinct from one another in the same manner as positive and negative affect (Watson and Tellegen 1999) or identification and dis-identification (Elsbach and Bhattacharya 2001; Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015), infamy and celebrity are similar enough that infamy is also likely to differ from stigma in terms of its theoretical basis, social basis, and whether or not it is individuating (e.g., Devers et al. 2009). In particular, whereas stigma paints firms as being an undifferentiated member of a devalued category (Devers et al. 2009), infamy tends to set a firm apart from others based on the degree of prominence and negative affect that constituents feel (Zavyalova and Pfarrer 2015). To the extent that future research can elaborate on the "dark side" of social approval and distinguish among different forms of negative social approval, our theoretical understanding of social approval assets and liabilities will be enhanced.

One possibility is that, over time, infamous firms may shift from being viewed as unique entities and instead begin to be viewed as merely an exemplar that embodies a set of undesirable behaviors and

characteristics of a larger group. If so, this may further clarify the manner in which a new stigmatized category might arise (cf., Devers et al. 2009). Another possibility is to consider whether stigma and infamy are specific to different types of constituencies or audiences. Although both lead to negative perceptions, stigma is de-individuating (i.e., class distinctions override individual differences within the group, and all firms in the group are viewed negatively), whereas celebrity and infamy are individuating (i.e., they enhance individual distinctiveness within a group). Thus, one constituency may view the focal firm as being a member of a stigmatized category in which all firms are negatively viewed, while a different constituency may merely view the individual firm as infamous, while viewing the broader category of firms more neutrally, or even positively. Since the stigmatizing constituency may not even notice or pay attention to the idiosyncratic actions or characteristics of individual firms, the processes necessary for destigmatization may be very different than those used to eliminate infamy, where individual firm actions receive more attention. Such linkages only represent a couple of the many possible relationships that celebrity and infamy may have with stigma, and we encourage scholars to explore these various dynamics.

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