

From Marginal to Meaningful: The Transformative Power of Deviance

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Research Motivation

We often observe cases in which deviance serves as a catalyst for innovation. For example, Spencer Silver, a researcher at the leading chemical company 3M, accidentally discovered a “weak adhesive” while attempting to develop a strong adhesive. Though removed from the official project in the company, he continued his own prototyping and experimentation. His colleague Art Fry then refined it into an unprecedented bookmark, resulting in the new product “Post-it Notes” and creating a new market (Petroski, 1992). This story exemplifies how activities deviating from dominant norms can catalyze unexpected creativity.

Having lived for many years in Japan's highly conformist society (Nishikawa, 2025), I have been led to believe that such successful stories are treated as exceptions not worth much attention. This perception prompted me to question whether this is indeed the case. While many people may intuitively assume that deviating from the norm may lead to innovation, they remain silent because deviating invites criticism and entails substantial social and personal costs. Moreover, there are many actors, practices, and ideas in the world who have been pushed to the margins of mainstream society and stigmatized forms of social deviance. These very elements may, in fact, possess significant potential. By academically clarifying the latent potential of deviance and broadening societal understanding of it, we can unlock overlooked value and create new markets and businesses in managerial contexts, as well as bring to light talents and cultural values that have long been marginalized by social prejudice. This is the key motivation driving this research.

1.2. Research Background

1.2.1. The Paradox of Social Deviance

Social deviance is typically treated as something negative or problematic. Behaviors and identities that deviate from dominant norms tend to be criticized, stigmatized, or excluded from legitimate social life (Goffman, 1963). However, tracing the history of research reveals a shift in perspective. Socially marginalized actors have disrupted established orders and, in doing so, generated new meanings, styles, and cultural values (Becker, 1963; Hebdige, 1979). Thus,

deviance is not always destructive, but it can sometimes be a source of creation. This paradox is at the center of this research.

As societies mature, institutions become increasingly rationalized. Order stabilizes, coordination improves, and uncertainty is reduced (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). At the same time, however, homogeneity and predictability intensify (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995). What once appeared distinctive or meaningful can gradually lose its force, and innovation becomes harder to sustain from within established systems (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Christensen, 1997). Under such conditions, practices and identities that are unconventional, excessive and seemingly inappropriate gain attention. It is not despite its deviance from dominant standards, but because of that very deviance. If such forms of deviance gain legitimacy without conforming to prevailing norms, they call into question the dominant assumptions that society takes for granted and bring value that existing systems cannot generate internally. Deviance may sound like a discordant note to society, but this noise becomes a driver for new aesthetics, meanings, and reinterpretations of values.

Deviance is not solely defined by opposition to dominant norms. Social critique and labeling can strengthen the cohesion and sense of identity of deviant groups (Becker, 1963), while also fostering the creation of distinct cultures, aesthetics, and practices (Hebdige, 1979). Through this, deviance becomes not only an object of criticism but also a catalyst for the emergence of new cultural resources and values. This illustrates the paradoxical power of deviance in society.

1.2.2. The Role of Deviance in Institutional Theory

Institutional theory has clarified how rules, norms, and beliefs in society shape actors' behavior and organizational structures (Scott, 1995). Institutions provide stability and order, yet this comes at the cost of limiting the actor's choices and narrowing the scope of possibilities. Consequently, institutional theory has long developed around the central question of how institutions are maintained through mechanisms of isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

However, in recent years, explaining the dynamic aspects of institutional change, disruption, and reorganization has emerged as an important focus of recent theoretical work (Greenwood et al., 2002; Dacin et al., 2002; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In doing so, it is useful to focus not on the core of institutions, but on the practices emerging at their periphery. Deviant actors operating outside prevailing norms not only violate existing rules but also expose the underlying contradictions within the institutional arrangements of those norms (Seo & Creed, 2002). By existing outside the norms, these actors can question what those embedded at the core of the institution cannot change.

Deviance is meaningful not because it is inherently oppositional, but because it can offer a different perspective that makes institutional premises visible. That is, it introduces new interpretations that existing institutions did not anticipate. While this does not automatically transform the institution, by demonstrating possibilities beyond existing belief, it provides an opportunity to reinterpret the institutional arrangements. As Battilana et al. (2009) note, “An ongoing experience of contradictory institutional arrangements is likely to trigger actors’ reflective capacity, enabling them to take some critical distance from existing institutional arrangements” (p. 75).

Based on these insights, this research focuses on the mechanism by which socially stigmatized deviance generates new forms of value. Rather than treating deviance merely as a problem, we examine it as a creative force that challenges institutional rigidity and expands the scope of what is considered legitimate. In other words, we clarify how deviance can function as an “institutional catalyst” for alternative institutional interpretations.

1.3. Research Objectives

With the above motivations and background, this study conducts empirical research using modified supercars in *Bosozoku* style as a case study to reveal the multifaceted power inherent in deviance. *Bosozoku* refers to a unique phenomenon that emerged in Japan during the 1970s, a collective term for so-called street gangs. They are groups of young people who cause public nuisance by speeding recklessly on public roads. Within Japanese society, they are widely recognized as a typical example of an antisocial identity (Kersten, 1993, Sato, 1984) and carry a strong stigma. Cars that mimic the *Bosozoku* style have been created by modifying high-end supercars, and they have recently gained attention and shown impressive growth in the automotive market. Regarding these modified supercars, opinions are sharply divided: some people hold criticism and aversion due to their deviant appearance and association with *Bosozoku* imagery, while others find them cool and are fascinated by them. From this standpoint, this empirical case serves as an ideal case study for exploring the “value of deviance” in society.

We adopted a mixed-methods research approach, in which we conducted qualitative analysis of interview data using the Grounded Theory Approach and complemented its results with quantitative survey results. This approach enabled a multifaceted examination of the complex phenomena studied.

1.4. Research Perspective: Three Analytical Lenses

This study aims to demonstrate how deviant concepts rejected by society come to be accepted and generate value, and to clarify how this can be sustained rather than being merely transient. To achieve this, it is necessary to simultaneously examine the processes by which deviance is legitimated, valued and institutionalized. Accordingly, this study introduces three analytical dimensions: a “cognitive” dimension capturing how deviance becomes legitimated, a “practical” dimension through which deviance generates value, and an “institutional” dimension that structures the conditions of its legitimacy. Since these three dimensions correspond to the micro, meso, and macro levels, examining the value of deviance requires analyzing each layer separately and through multiple complementary lenses.

First, for deviance to ultimately function as a source of value, it must gain social acceptance as the starting point of this process. Accordingly, at the micro level, this study examines how deviance is cognitively evaluated as meaningful or legitimate within society. To analyze this cognitive dimension, we draw on the field of stigma research which has extensively examined how stigmatized identities are socially evaluated and perceptions of them are managed. While the cognitive dimension itself is not reducible to stigma alone, we believe that we can examine how deviant identities can gain legitimacy by adopting stigma research as the primary analytical lens at the micro level.

Next, as the practice dimension, at the meso level, we examine how socially accepted deviance actually creates value through social practice. Because the subject of empirical research is a form of practice that generates value in opposition to rationalized industrial order by involving aesthetics, emotion and ethics, we have selected craft research among the many fields which study various practices. Specifically, we consider the role of deviance as a form of craft in re-enchanting the mature world. Craft research has primarily been situated within art studies and cultural sociology. However, Suddaby et al. (2017) argued that craft constitutes an organizational response to rationalization, bridging the gap to institutional theory. Consequently, craft research within organizational and institutional frameworks has increased. Against this backdrop, examining value creation through the lens of craft research, specifically through the concept of deviance, appears to make sense.

As described above, to sustain, in a reproducible manner, deviance that has been legitimately recognized at the micro level and confirmed to create value in practice at the meso level, we finally examine how deviance value can be institutionalized as a category at the macro level to make it meaningfully sustainable within the system. Accordingly, within institutional theory, we choose category research as our analytical lens. Category research is one of the key research

areas within the new institutional organization theory and has been regarded as a primary mechanism for an entity to gain social legitimacy. Since fitting into a category constitutes justification (Zuckerman, 1999; Hannan et al., 2007), deviants, those who deviate from categories already recognized as legitimate cannot form a category by definition. However, if a deviant can be recognized as legitimate and create value in practice, the challenge becomes whether it can be institutionalized as a category in any meaningful manner.

Accordingly, we will examine the three perspectives of cognition, practice, and institution across three layers: micro, meso, and macro. This will entail conducting analytical studies within the respective domains of stigma research, craft research, and category research. By drawing upon the accumulated wisdom of prior research within each discipline and extracting the academic contributions from each field, we will elucidate the power of deviance within society.

1.5. Dissertation Structure

Through chapters 2 to 6, we establish the theoretical foundation and empirical contribution of this thesis by examining how deviance becomes a source of value at the micro, meso, and macro levels of society.

In chapter 2, we trace the trajectory of deviance research and review prior studies within each analytical lens to establish the conceptual foundation of this thesis. Based on this foundation, it clarifies the three research questions for this study. Regarding deviance, it reveals a progression from early moral models that view deviance as norm violation, to constructivist and subcultural approaches emphasizing social reactions, and finally to contemporary perspectives highlighting deviance as a source of value creation and institutional change. Building on this trajectory, we identify research challenges evident in the prior studies of each domain for each of the three analytical lenses—stigma, craft, and category—corresponding to the perceptual, practical, and institutional dimensions through which deviance gains meaning in society.

In chapter 3, we outline the research design to address the research questions. It details the adoption of a constructivist mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative interviews, archival analysis, and large-scale surveys. Simultaneously, it explains the rationale for selecting *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars as a theoretically rich case study where antisocial identity, aesthetic practices, and institutional structures interact in a unique manner. Following that, we describe the data collection methods and the analysis approach using the Gioia methodology, one of the grounded theory approaches. Finally, we address research ethics and limitations.

Chapters 4 through 6 present findings from this empirical analysis. chapter 4 first examines, from a stigma perspective, how modified supercars—with their deviant identities carrying antisocial connotations—achieved societal acceptance. Based on interviews with internal actors, modified car owners and fans who bear the stigma, and external audiences, the general public and journalists who assign the stigma, along with quantitative surveys of the general public, we clarify the rationale behind the resolution of stigma directed at modified cars. We then extract three key elements and summarize the contribution to stigma research.

Next, chapter 5 examines, from a craft perspective, how modified supercars—possessing deviant identities—craft-wise re-enanted the de-enanted automobile market and supercar segment. Similar to the stigma analysis in chapter 4, by analyzing interview results with owners, fans, and the general public, along with quantitative surveys of the general public, we define three elements constituting a new form of craft centered on “excess” and demonstrate its contribution to craft studies.

Finally, chapter 6 analyses, from a category perspective, how modified supercars with deviant identities “complement” the eroded value of the existing mainstream supercar category through leveraging a subcategory. It first demonstrates how these modified supercars can form a legitimate category despite their deviant and negatively perceived identity. Next, through detailed analysis of archival data and fan social media, it analyzes the emergence and stagnation of the supercar category, revealing how the existing mainstream category fell into institutional contradictions. Building on this, interview results with modified car owners demonstrate how the subcategory supplements the eroded value of the mainstream category. Finally, it compares the category complement framework with existing concepts of category renewal to clarify its contribution to category research.

Chapter 7 synthesizes the overall implications derived from the three analyses presented in chapter 4 through 6. It focuses particularly on examining the multi-layered relationships between the macro, meso, and micro levels, the role of deviance as an “institutional catalyst,” and implications for institutional theory.

The concluding chapter 8 summarizes overall contributions to deviance studies, contributions to each research domain, namely, stigma, craft, and category research, implications for business and social practice, and finally, the study's limitations and future directions.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Background: Three Lenses on Deviance

2.1. Theoretical Trajectory of Deviance Studies

Throughout the history of deviance studies, deviance has been understood as behavior deviating from social norms, for a long time. However, its positioning has changed significantly over time. For analytical clarity, we organize the trajectory of deviance research into three broad phases, the moral deviance model, social constructionism/subculture theory, and value creation. This distinction serves as a heuristic to highlight shifts in dominant theoretical concerns. Below, we summarize the core assumptions and logical turning points of each phase to clarify the position of this study.

First, the initial phase is the moral deviance model, which became dominant in mid-twentieth-century sociology and conceptualized deviance primarily as norm violation. In early sociology, deviance was understood as problem behavior that disrupted social order, such as actions that violated institutionalized norms or undermined social integration, and therefore required mechanisms of control and correction (Parsons, 1951; Merton, 1938). Deviance was fundamentally viewed as problematic and needed correction, with the focus on the question “Why does deviance occur?” Overall, deviance in this era was positioned not as something potentially acceptable, but as a negative phenomenon threatening social order.

The second phase, emerging in the 1960s-1980s, was social constructionism and subculture studies, which argued that deviance is a product of social reactions (Becker, 1963). From the 1960s onward, deviance studies underwent a major theoretical shift. This shift was brought by labeling theory, centered on Becker (1963). Labeling theory emphasized that deviance is not inherent in the act itself but is created when society names specific acts as deviant, as Becker (1963) argued, “deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender.’” (p. 9). While labeling theory emphasizes how deviance is socially constructed through rule enforcement, Erikson (1966) showed that deviance also performs a constitutive social function by marking and reproducing the moral boundaries of the community itself, as he stated “deviant forms of behavior, by marking the outer edge of group life, supply the framework within which the people of the group develop an orderly sense of their own cultural identity”(p.13).

In this movement, the subculture studies (Birmingham School) of the 1970s and 80s emerged. Hebdige (1979) stated that “subculture represents ‘noise’ in the orderly chain leading from real events or phenomena to their representation in the media” (p. 90). Theoretically, this illustrated how deviance can disrupt existing social order. He also showed that youth

subcultures such as mods and punks articulated social critique through distinctive styles, using aesthetic practices to symbolically disrupt dominant norms and processes of normalization (p.18–19, 100–102). Their clothing, music, and behavior were not just rebellion but symbolic resistance against the dominant culture, creating new systems of meaning. This implied that deviance was portrayed not merely as norm violation but as a creative practice that generates new cultural meaning while forming a tension with social dominant values. In other words, deviance was reevaluated by shifting from a negative phenomenon to one that produces cultural reorganization and reinterpretation of meaning.

Then, in its third stage, deviance research shifted toward understanding deviance as a source of value creation and expanded substantially into psychology, marketing, organizational studies, and institutional theory. In psychology, Brewer's (1991) theory of "optimal distinctiveness" (p.477), together with earlier work by Snyder and Fromkin (1977), suggests that certain forms of deviance can be experienced as attractive. Marketing research has explored similar directions. Warren and Campbell (2014) stated that "consumers infer autonomy from behaviors that diverge from a norm" (p. 545) and further conceptualized coolness as arising from such norm divergence, identifying the conditions under which deviance is evaluated positively.

Organizational scholars also began to highlight the constructive potential of deviance. Research on "creative deviance" (Mainemelis, 2010) demonstrated that innovation can be sometimes stimulated by breaking the internal rule in the organization. He stated that "tolerating creative deviance up to a certain degree allows the organization to maintain motivation for creativity at high levels" (p.573). Another study on "positive deviance" (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004) argues that exceptional, norm-challenging behavior can generate broader outcomes, including "subjective well-being, long-term effectiveness, and the evolution of organizational and common business norms" (p.845), when such behavior is deviant yet honorable.

Institutional theory also incorporated this new understanding of the value of deviance. Prior research suggests that deviant practices can reshape how institutional boundaries and categories are understood and evaluated. For example, Vergne (2012) showed how the stigmatized categories optimize their boundaries to manage categorial stigma through category straddling, while Hampel and Tracey (2019) demonstrated how deviant organizations with stigma can shift audience evaluations and move from stigma to legitimacy. Drawing on institutional theory, deviant practices can be also understood as mechanisms through which institutional contradictions become visible, exposing the limits of existing arrangements and creating openings for institutional change (Seo & Creed, 2002).

Building on this third phase of deviance research, this study extends and systematizes the view of deviance as a source of value creation by examining it through three analytical lenses, its cognitive framing (stigma), its practical enactment (craft), and its institutional embedding (category). This multi-level framework explains how deviance operates as a consequential force across micro, meso, and macro levels of social organization.

2.2. Lens 1: Stigma Theory – Cognitive Framing and Legitimacy

Stigma research examines the process through which individuals, groups, practices, and products lose social legitimacy and are negatively evaluated for some reasons. This was originated from Goffman's (1963) foundational work, and has clarified how stigma is created, reproduced, and resolved through cultural meanings, social interactions, and institutional structures. Scholars have examined why specific attributes are labeled deviant, how stigma shapes identity and behavior, and how stigmatized subjects manage or recover from such loss of credibility.

2.2.1. Prior Research: Corrective Destigmatization

Goffman (1963) defines stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” (p. 3), arising when individuals are perceived as lacking attributes that are socially expected and valued. The issue lies not in the attribute itself, but in its social perception and impact on interaction.

Therefore, previous research has primarily examined how stigma can be legitimized by mitigating, eliminating or concealing deviance to manage its social perception (Lashley & Pollock, 2020; Vergne, 2012; Wolfe & Bitektine, 2015). Deviant identities are not often recognized as legitimate by society and are subjected to stigma. Through various efforts to reduce this stigma or public criticism, they may achieve a degree of legitimacy. Some identities are considered deviant due to misunderstandings, discrimination, or a lack of knowledge, within a specific historical and cultural context, despite having clear positive values that could contribute to society. Destigmatization efforts in such cases focus on correcting misconceptions by engaging with and influencing stakeholders, including the general public. On the other hand, some deviant identities are acknowledged even by those promoting them as being inherently associated to social harm or wrongdoing, but for political reasons or due to human greed, efforts are made to dilute their deviance and disapproval to reduce their stigma. We will review literatures on how these different types of stigma are managed and reduced.

Initially, we examine the former type of entities, which may have inherently positive value but are deemed deviant due to misunderstandings, discrimination, or a lack of knowledge.

First, some product categories begin in a lower status and seek to uplift themselves to a higher status, due to historical and cultural circumstances. For instance, Delmestri and Greenwood (2016) demonstrated how grappa, which historically held a low status in Italy as a liquor associated with peasants and soldiers, attained the status of a luxury product on par with whisky and cognac. According to Delmestri and Greenwood (2016), “the disapproval attached to grappa was deeply institutionalized” (p.19). In this uplifting, the new category is “detached from a lowly category” (p.31), uplifted through “emulation” (p.33) of the high-status practices, and then established through “sublimation” (p.34) that seeks to establish the category within the social context. Elimination of the deviant character and stigma of the category is key to this lifting in the status hierarchy.

Second, some other product categories are exposed to social discrimination. For instance, a category can be associated with the racial group subject to discrimination. A new category of Tex-Mex, the Mexican-American cuisine, was often discriminated against. Wheaton and Carroll (2017) wrote, “Racism and discrimination against Mexicans by Anglos within these borders lend the dispute a moral dimension on both sides. The concept of purity carries a strong weight in this long cultural conflict, with accusations of its violation on both sides and sensitivity to charges of impurity” (p.161). In this case, however, theorization was negative, degrading the Mexican-American food in general over the pure Mexican cuisine. It only gained positive images through later processes of reinterpretation as an experience of cross-cultural exchange. In this case, the structure that engenders the deviance, namely racism, persists, but the deviant nature is minimized so that the category gains legitimacy and popularity.

Third, other things are unjustly stigmatized due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of the society. Medical cannabis, despite its effectiveness being recognized by patients and its clear positive contributions to society, has been subjected to prejudice rooted in historical and cultural circumstances (Lashley and Pollock, 2020). Cannabis has been used as a treatment of women’s health issues since ancient times (Grinspoon, 2005) and is currently acknowledged for its effectiveness in pain management (Hoch, 2024). Yet, due to campaigns led by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) in the 1930s and the Controlled Substances Act of 1970, it was stigmatized as a dangerous substance. Lashley and Pollock (2020) noted, “The narrative that marijuana could be medicine had existed for more than 100 years, although it had been suppressed for most of the twentieth century” (p.471). Given the nature of such categories, efforts to gain legitimacy focused not on defending the prejudice itself but on fostering societal understanding of the intrinsic value of the category. They first initiated a moral agenda by highlighting patients’ right to use cannabis, then prototyped a moral identity to disassociate it

from recreational use and black-market activities, and finally infused the moral by projecting professionalism and aligning with the moral framework of healthcare. Through this process of moral reconstruction, the value of the category was redefined and integrated into society, enabling it to escape from social recognition as a deviant form.

These examples above collectively illustrate things that, despite possessing inherent positive value, were subjected to stigma for unreasonable reasons, initially labeled as deviant identities, but ultimately succeeded in achieving or restoring legitimacy. Conversely, we will examine others that, in contrast to the aforementioned ones, are stigmatized due to their apparent association with social harm and are subject to various efforts aimed at managing and controlling their deviance.

First, we examine the case of the arms industry. Although the arms industry develops and sells equipment for war—an unequivocal societal evil—individual companies have managed their stigma by employing a category straddle, using the same technology and assets for civilian purposes and engaging in civilian industries (Vergne, 2012). However, Vergne (2012) also notes that “The origins of the stigma of arms production can be traced to the cognitive association between weapons and death. Throughout history, death and bodily mutilation have been pervasive sources of stigmatization in human societies” (p.1034), implying that the inherent association with death, an absolute negative, makes the complete removal of this stigma nearly impossible.

Next, Wolfe and Bitektine (2015) researched how the brothels tried to manage their stigma. In the case of brothels in Nevada, the industry supporting prostitution—an activity viewed as socially harmful—manages stigma by concealing information to avoid external criticism while simultaneously partially disclosing certain aspects to demonstrate legality and enhance social acceptance. However, as they explain, “this industry is generally comingled with the illegal industry...So when you say ‘prostitution,’ that’s what everybody perceives. And that’s part of the communication challenge” (p.553), acknowledging that the association with the illegality of prostitution further complicates efforts toward destigmatization.

In such categories as above, the intrinsic association with absolute societal evils or illegality makes it difficult to transform or eliminate the deviant characteristics themselves. Instead, stigma management is often achieved through dilution or concealment of the deviant identity.

Overall, all the literature on stigmatized things, whether they are considered deviant due to misunderstandings or accurate understanding, has explored how efforts are made to correct or minimize the perception of deviance associated with identities that are socially recognized as deviant.

2.2.2. Challenge: Beyond Elimination and Mitigation of Deviance

Rather than just managing perception, a few studies showed that stigma can achieve a degree of legitimacy, by valorizing stigma (Helms & Patterson, 2014) or exposing stigma to society (Khessina et al., 2020), but cases where stigma gains legitimacy by reinforcing stigma as it is are rare.

Deviance from established categories is portrayed mainly as an obstacle to category emergence. The deviance needs to be either eliminated or mitigated. Yet, some evidence in the literature suggests that deviance has more nuanced roles. We conjecture that deviance is not simply an obstacle to eliminate but remains the core identity driving the category. We will highlight some cursory insights from the literature.

First, the deviance can be provoked to help articulate the boundary. A contrast is created when something deviates from an existing category. For instance, Wheaton and Carroll (2017) explained that advocates of pure Mexican food downplayed Mexican-American cuisine as something inauthentic. The new category of Mexican-American food is then produced as “collateral damage” (p.156) in this advocacy. The act “to exclude from the category ‘Mexican’ all Mexican-American food” (p.162) clarified the boundary of the derogatory category, which later became put in a positive light.

In more general terms, the explicit deviance helps to clarify what is in the new category and what is not. Negro et al. (2011) explained, in the context of Italian winemaking, the refusal to use the traditional casks (*botti grandi*) and the adoption of smaller *barrique* served as “a minimal test code for assessing membership in these categories” (p.1452). The clear act of deviance of the new “modern” type of winemakers who were “frustrated with the constraints of tradition” and were considered “crazy” makes the boundary more evident. Similarly, Rao, Monin and Durand (2003) wrote, “Nouvelle cuisine relied on the rules of transgression. Transgression consisted of using old cooking techniques with new ingredients, or using old cooking techniques with old ingredients in illegitimate ways” (p. 806). Transgression can accentuate the boundary. These cases can be interpreted as applying Erikson’s (1966) argument at the category level, originally developed in the context of communities.

Second, deviant practices may attract those inclined to such transgression and rebellion. As such, the deviant nature of the identity could help the category gain popularity. For instance, hip-hop music gained popularity not despite but because of its rebellious nature. The rebellious acts of confronting the repressive law enforcement allowed the protagonists to present the authenticity of their lifestyle. Karababa and Ger (2011) studied coffeehouses in the early modern Ottoman Empire, which were officially banned but flourished nonetheless. The

transgressive nature “constructs the coffeehouse as a site of transgressive escape from everyday life and as a site of ecstasy akin to the contemporary demand for prohibited things such as illicit raves” (p.751). Transgression can be a vital component of the category identity, not an obstacle to overcome or eliminate.

2.2.3. Potential value of Deviance

On the other hand, scholars have recognized the potential utility of deviance that causes stigma, noting that it can trigger social change (Durkheim, 1895/1982) and even inspire “deviance admiration”. (Heckert & Heckert, 2002).

Durkheim (1895/1982) argued, “crime is normal because it is completely impossible for any society entirely free of it to exist” (p.99). He contended that deviance serves important social functions, by stating “Thus crime is necessary. It is linked to the basic conditions of social life, but on this very account is useful, for the conditions to which it is bound are themselves indispensable to the normal evolution of morality and law” (p.101). In other words, crime, as a form of deviance, enables society to reaffirm moral boundaries and can play a constructive role in enabling social change. In this sense, deviance is not external to social order but an internal mechanism through which moral boundaries and social transformation are continually reproduced.

Heckert and Heckert (2002) studied the typology of deviance and pointed out that while deviance is usually negatively evaluated, there are actually forms of deviance that are praised, by mentioning “‘Deviance admiration’ denotes behavior or conditions that are nonconforming or underconforming to normative expectations, yet elicit positive evaluations from a social group” (p.462). For example, John Dillinger and Bonnie and Clyde, by committing crimes, opposed the corrupt powers in 1930s America and were admired by ordinary people despite being criminals.

Similarly, the French Impressionist painters were initially rejected and marginalized by the dominant art world, but were later reinterpreted positively and came to occupy a central position in the modern artistic canon (White & White, 1965/1993; Rewald, 1973). This shows that even socially deviant behavior can be positively evaluated depending on the characteristics of those who evaluate it and the social, economic, and cultural backgrounds at the time of evaluation.

2.2.4. Research Gap

Building on the above, this study examines the following question from a stigma perspective, ***RQ1: “how can a deviant identity that gives rise to stigma obtain legitimacy not by being mitigated, removed, or concealed, but rather by being actively reinforced?”*** With these

conjectures in mind, this study seeks to understand how the deviance can persist and affect category emergence and establishment. The key is to overcome the simplistic characterization of deviance. Organizations are hardly seen as entirely legitimate (or stigmatized) in the eye of all audiences (Hudson, 2008). As a result, the boundary between legitimacy and illegitimacy remains a gray area in organizational studies (Siraz et al., 2023), and the stigma associated with deviance varies depending on differences in audiences' perceptions of moral legitimacy (Hampel & Tracey, 2019). While we aim to reveal the constructive roles of deviance, we avoid romanticizing transgression and instead examine the subtle processes through which it is expressed and managed. We need to maintain the nuanced view that the effect of deviance is not simply positive or negative and explicate the complex processes by which deviance has consequences.

2.3. Lens 2: Craft Theory – Practice and Re-enchantment

Craft studies constitute an interdisciplinary field that goes beyond the analysis of mere manual work or skills, examining how humans understand and engage with the world through embodied actions, interactions with materials, emotions, and experiential knowledge (Sennett, 2008; Adamson, 2007; Polanyi, 1966). Craft integrates tacit and embodied knowledge, embodying a distinct cognitive mode alongside logical knowledge. Positioned between rational scientific inquiry and sensory, intuitive artistic creation, it also bridges art and science. Therefore, through craft-based practice, craft can be understood as a research methodology of “thinking through making” – thinking about relationships with materials, the body, thought, and society.

2.3.1. Prior Research on Definition of Craft

Craft emerged as a counter to mass production within capitalism. It represents a traditional framing through which craft has been positioned as the “other,” in opposition to industry and the modernist notion of progress (Bell et al., 2021). The Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century was a “reaction against the Industrial Revolution,” while the rise of counterculture in the 1960s and 1970s has been regarded as a revival of craft. Similarly, the craft movement following the 2008 financial crisis was intended as a “return to sustainability and local economies.” In other words, craft re-emerges in response to industrial failure and is revalued in times of social crisis and industrial decline (Luckman, 2015; Krugh, 2014).

Such conventional understandings of craft mainly refer to a return to manual labor, the use of natural materials, and the continuation of traditional techniques (Bell et al., 2019), and they are often romanticized as nostalgic ideals. In essence, the concept rests on a longing for, or a

positive affirmation of, a pre-industrial world and seeks to revive practices of that earlier era. However, as Bell et al. (2021) states that “to realize the potential of the craft imaginary, we need to move beyond an imaginary of craft-in-the-past that is characterized by nostalgia and romanticism”(p.2), if craft can be understood beyond this regressive nostalgia—as a positive and innovative force within contemporary society—then it may be advanced into an evolved form.

Over the past decade or so, various studies have examined the roles that craft play. These studies suggest that craft serves four major roles.

The first and most important role of craft is its critique of modern rationalism. Suddaby et al. (2017) state that “the resurgence of craft modes of production in Europe and North America offers a powerful illustration of the re-enchantment of work and economy” (p.290). Through mass production based on capitalism, many aspects of life have been de-encharnted; in response, craft functions as a counterforce to rationalization by re-encharnting modernity (Suddaby et al., 2017). As Nyfeler (2024) argues, “in the shadow of standardized products of the mass market, craft organizations create and inhabit niches which are not subject to open market competition” (p.312), craft businesses are reviving by leveraging niche markets that large corporations, focused on efficiency, overlook, using individuality, flexibility, and high quality as their weapons. Furthermore, through small-scale, specialized, and adaptive production systems, craft businesses can compete against mere mass production (Nyfeler, 2024). Rippin and Vachhani (2018) position craft not merely as a hobby or aesthetic practice, but as “sites of resistance” (p.2) against mass production and managerial rationality. Here, craft takes the form of relational and aesthetic resistance, operating as a gentle but firm critique, and is articulated through the concept of “craftivism,” which is “considered part of the gentle revolution away from mass production driven consumer culture” (p. 4). Furthermore, while science emphasizes objectivity and reproducibility, they point out that craft emphasizes recognition based on physicality, sensation, and intuition, constituting an intellectual resistance to rationalism.

The second one is the revaluation of the value of manual labor. Craft reappraises the worth of labor and restores respect for skills and workmanship. In other words, it recovers the value of skilled work as an alternative to mechanized labor (Holmes, 2014). Suddaby et al. (2017) point out that “the resurgence of craft modes of production has been accompanied by a growing cultural discourse about rediscovering the meaning and value of working with one's hands” (p.290). Concretely, professionals of handwork such as hairdressers, chefs, and watchmakers are increasingly recognized not merely as service providers but as “craftsmen.” Risatti (2007) states that “all man-made objects—simply because they are man-made—must have a purpose

for someone to spend time and energy to make them” (p. 24). In this way, he conceptualizes craft as a fundamental expression of human values and achievement, based on intentional making, purpose, and the integration of function and meaning. Krugh (2014) argues that craft production can function as a means through which individuals respond to concerns about alienated and exploitative labour conditions. Through craft, it thus becomes possible to assert the value of labor in resistance to the system constructed within capitalism.

The third is value creation through authenticity. As Thurnell-Read (2019) notes, “the desire for authenticity is seen as a symptom of dissatisfaction with modernity and modern configurations of social life” (p.1448). This pursuit of authenticity can also be interpreted as a critical response to modern rationalism. This desire stems from dissatisfaction with modernization and leads to consumer behavior that seeks value distinct from standardized and rationalized mass-produced goods. Craft satisfies this desire. For example, players in the craft beer industry provide value of the authenticity based on handmade quality and traditional production methods using craftsmanship and storytelling. (Thurnell-Read, 2019). Furthermore, as Kovács et al. (2014) notes, “consumers assign higher ratings to restaurants regarded as authentic, even after controlling for restaurant quality in several ways” (p.458). Thus, the authenticity achieved through craft directly impacts consumer satisfaction.

The fourth role of craft is the formation and expression of identity. Campbell (2005) proposed the concept of the craft consumer, as “someone who transforms ‘commodities’ into personalized objects” (p.148). This is a new type of consumer who not only uses products as they are, but also actively modifies them after purchase, utilizing them as part of a personal creative process. This creative involvement is opposite to the logic of modern rationalism which is efficiency-oriented but replaces calculability with personal meaning and emotional investment. As an expression of resistance to mass consumer society, these consumers seek uniqueness and individuality, by transforming products into personal crafts through their own creativity, then express their own identities. In this way, craft enables the formation and expression of consumer identity. At the same time, Fine (2023) draws attention to self-taught art, referring to artworks created by individuals who produce original creations through skills acquired outside formal training. Here again, authenticity and individuality replace institutionalized standards of legitimacy, exemplifying how craft challenges the rationalized systems that separate producers from their creations. This incident represents another example of how craft functions as a medium for expressing the identity of the producer.

2.3.2. Challenge: Beyond Traditional Definition of Craft

However, many scholars have raised concerns that its most fundamental role of craft—the critique of modern rationalism—has gradually weakened, building on these traditional definitions. In other words, the aspect of craft as a means of recovering humanity and authenticity lost through industrialization has been overemphasized, while its critical engagement with modern industry has been overshadowed by a nostalgic and harmonious return to the past. Adamson (2013) criticizes that craft has too often been romanticized as a nostalgic refuge from modernity and idealized as a return to pre-industrial authenticity and manual virtue. He argues that this nostalgic framing confines craft to a static, sentimental image of the past, and weakens its relevance to contemporary social and economic situations. As a result, craft is exposed to the risk in losing its critical engagement with modernity and becoming simply a symbol of anti-industrial nostalgia. Land and Taylor (2014) argue that despite historically embodying resistance to industrial capitalism, craft is being reframed within consumer culture in the name of harmony and authenticity. As a result, craft has lost much of its transformative potential, becoming reframed as a domestic and sentimental activity that provides comfort and personal fulfilment rather than social critique. Rippin and Vachhani (2018) criticize that craft has long been regarded as a non-political, domestic activity, linked more to femininity and private leisure than to collective and political expression. This framing, which they argue has downplayed craft's potential for social critique, reducing it to a gentle, non-political hobby activity isolated from broader institutional and cultural criticism.

In response to such critiques, several insights have emerged as possible directions for resolving this issue. Suddaby et al. (2017) argue that craft possesses critical potential not by nostalgically regressing to pre-modern ideals, but by re-enchanting from within modernity. This means it is necessary not to escape into the past, but to discover the “magic” within contemporary institutions and practices to regenerate them. To achieve this, we must reinterpret existing institutional theories using emotion and imagination, as they argue, “Institutional theory is in serious need of re-enchantment” (p.291). Specifically, this involves replacing legitimacy with authenticity, embeddedness with reflexivity, isomorphism with mimesis, and diffusion with incantation.

Holmes (2014) challenges the traditional conception of craft as nostalgic and object-oriented. Instead, she defines the value of modern craft in terms of “transience and instability”. She demonstrates that craftsmanship exists not only in traditional maker professions—fixed and enduring occupations such as artisans in a workshop, but also in modern service professions which are transient and fluid, such as hairdressers and care workers. By positioning crafts in the

fluid realities of modern labors, she shows that its vitality lies in instability. This perspective can be interpreted as a critique of being bound by fixed norms.

Holt and Yamauchi (2023) distinguish between “ethics” and “morals”, arguing that if the tradition becomes moralized—that is, codified as a fixed value system—it easily laps into nostalgic conservatism. To counter this, they emphasize an ethical force that continuously deviates from existing norms, such as “difference”, “contingency”, and “openness to the future.” Through a reinterpretation of *Mingei*, they demonstrate that tradition can only endure by surviving through deviance, coincidental encounters, diverse interpretations, and unexpected changes. In other words, craft is not the moral reproduction of the past, but an ethical practice that embraces deviance as a source of renewal. It is precisely the continuation of this “difference” and “accidental openness” that saves craft from nostalgic fixation and maintains its critical and transformative energy within modernity.

By integrating these perspectives, we can suggest that a new form of craft is built upon forces beyond normative stability and rationality—forces that enable craft to play a critical role in modernity by transcending nostalgic romanticism. These forces are not merely oppositional but productive, and function as forms of excess and deviance, which unsettle existing norms and generate new possibilities for meaning of creativity. By accepting such excessive, dynamic and transgressive energies, craft can avoid nostalgic domestication and reassert its transformative capacity within the rationalized world.

2.3.3. Research Gap

Yet, prior research has not clearly specified the concrete strategic elements for putting such directions into practice, in response to industrialization. Building on the above, this study will proceed with an examination to answer the following question from a craft perspective, ***RQ2: “how can a deviant identity, through alternative craft, restore value lost to the homogenizing efficiency of a capitalism-driven industry, beyond nostalgia?”***

2.4. Lens 3: Category Theory – Institutional renewal and Transformation

Category research is one of the key research areas within the new institutional theory of organizations. Within the framework of new institutional theory, organizations are said to become similar to one another by conforming to institutional norms and expectations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and this institutional isomorphism has been regarded as a primary mechanism for organizations to gain social legitimacy. In this context, Zuckerman (1999) demonstrates that an organization's very belonging to an institutionally established category renders its existence socially understandable and evaluable, thereby contributing to its

acquisition of legitimacy. Category research aims to theoretically elucidate how such categories, functioning as institutional frameworks, are formed, stabilized, and transformed.

2.4.1. Prior Research on Category Dynamics

A fixed prototype as traditional category definition: In such traditional category research, categories have long been treated as rigidly defined prototypes. These prototypes have defined the membership of categories that conform to the category, thereby providing legitimacy (Zuckerman, 1999). Consequently, prior research shows that products or organizations that deviate from established category boundaries often face audience penalties, such as lower evaluations or reduced market appeal (Hsu, 2006; Negro et al., 2010). These arguments were based on the prerequisite that categories are stable and fixed, and that maintaining clear boundaries keeps social order (Durand & Paoletta, 2013). Therefore, diversity within categories and spanning among different categories have been treated as disruptive “exceptions”, threatening the legitimacy of organizations and products (Zuckerman, 2016).

New trend of research towards category flexibility: However, in recent years, category research has been emphasizing that categories should be understood not merely as static tools for classification, but as institutional devices which enable flexible value creation and maintain legitimacy (Durand & Paoletta, 2013; Kennedy & Fiss, 2013). Durand and Paoletta (2013) proposed the idea of category spanning. They argue that categories do not have fixed boundaries but rather are purpose-driven institutional structures capable of expanding their boundaries alongside temporal and cultural contexts. This perspective implies that categories must stabilize their original meanings while maintaining enough flexibility to generate new value depending on environmental changes. Thus, categories are redefined not merely as mechanisms for maintaining isomorphism, but as dynamic processes that generate new forms of value (Pontikes & Barnett, 2017; Negro et al., 2010).

2.4.2. Challenge: Value Erosion in Institutional Contradictions

Erosion of category value: While prior research on the dynamic nature of categories has focused on managing their stability, ambiguity, and boundary work, such as category straddles (Vergne, 2012) and hybrid categories (Wry et al., 2014), little is known about how category value erosion can be addressed. In mature categories, imitation and diffusion can lead to a loss of distinctiveness, letting their original appeal and symbolic value fade (Kennedy et al., 2010; Rao et al., 2003). Due to this, the category's legitimacy itself is undermined, and traditional value criteria cease to function (Durand & Khair, 2017). Recently, scholars have started to find the potential of new markets and new labels to counter this erosion of value. Rosa et al. (1999)

show how new market segments emerge as meanings and evaluative criteria diverge within existing markets, using the emergence of the minivan submarket as an illustrative case. Granqvist et al. (2013) demonstrate that new market labels and categories emerging within and alongside existing ones function as mechanisms of differentiation that reshape category meanings and boundaries, using the empirical case of nanotechnology. These new categories and submarkets embody different values that the original ones cannot possess. In mature industries, peripheral submarkets may emerge that restore cultural and symbolic value eroded by large-scale standardization. The microbrewery movement in the U.S. brewing industry exemplifies this dynamic (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000). Thus, to address the erosion of category value, it is considered effective not merely to manage category boundaries, but to elucidate category dynamics, such as the emergence of new categories or submarkets that are distinct from the original yet closely related.

Institutional contradiction: On the other hand, institutional contradictions are deeply involved in the evolution of such categories. Seo & Creed (2002) point out that as institutions endure over the long term, an inherent contradiction, the dilemma between legitimacy and efficiency, can inevitably arise. Specifically, formalization and ritualization progress to maintain legitimacy, but this compromises efficiency. Conversely, an excessive pursuit of efficiency undermines social and symbolic legitimacy and the category's original value. When efficiency must be pursued within such a contradictory category, the original category's power alone becomes insufficient to maintain legitimacy. Under such circumstances, the category dynamics mentioned earlier, the emergence of new market categories and new labels, are considered effective. However, simply introducing a new external identity will not suffice. Wry et al. (2014) show that category spanning enhances legitimacy only when firms maintain a clear core identity; attempts to reposition entirely into unrelated external categories undermine audience evaluations and hinder legitimacy acquisition. Therefore, this new category must embody new values that the original category could not achieve, while at the same time it inherits original category's fundamental value, representing a revitalization from within.

2.4.3. Research Gap

After clarifying how deviant identities resolve their stigma to gain legitimacy, and further how legitimized deviance creates value through craftsmanship within industrial practice, the remaining question is how to institutionally ensure that such deviant practices can be carried out in a reproducible manner.

When an original category whose value has regressed finds itself institutionally unable to restore that value on its own, previous category studies have not paid sufficient attention to how it might reclaim that value. In other words, even if it is understood that value can be regained through deviant practices, it remains unclear what category dynamics should be generated when institutional contradictions prevent the incorporation of such deviance within the category.

Given these considerations, the examination from a category perspective in this study addresses the following question, ***RQ3: “How can deviance address category value erosion caused by institutional contradictions through category reconfiguration?”*** We hypothesize that introducing new categories or submarkets may serve as a plausible answer. However, as prior research indicates, such categories cannot simply diverge from the original ones; rather, they must function as mechanisms that resolve institutional contradictions and reconfigure the balance between legitimacy and efficiency. The central aim of this analysis is to clarify what form these mechanisms should take.

Chapter 3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Research Paradigm and Philosophical Position

This study is grounded in a constructivist and interpretivist paradigm, viewing social meaning as constructed through interaction and within context. Within this paradigm, it employs a mixed-methods approach using qualitative analysis while also incorporating quantitative data as a complementary element, as we treat very complicated processes and interactions characterized by this paradigm. As Creswell (2003) states, mixed methods are not tied to a specific epistemology. From a constructivist and interpretivist standpoint, it is appropriate to adopt quantitative methods complementarily when they serve to identify and confirm the breadth of meanings or patterns of trends.

3.2. Mixed-Methods Approach: Qualitative and Quantitative Integration

We adopt a mixed research method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses. Many scholars have already elucidated the advantages of such a method (Creswell, 2003). The primary advantage is that it allows us to confirm or disconfirm findings, cross-validate results, or reject hypotheses (Navis and Glynn, 2010).

Creswell (2003) identifies several conditions under which a mixed methods approach is appropriate. One such condition is the analysis of multidimensional social phenomena, and another is the need to both generalize findings and develop a detailed understanding of meaning.

This study meets these conditions. At the micro level, it qualitatively examines how individuals reinterpret and transform others' discriminatory perceptions of their deviance. At the macro level, it then quantitatively assesses the implications of these processes for institutionalization, for example by estimating the proportion of the general public that grants legitimacy to the deviant category. Such a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis is essential for capturing the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon under study.

To empirically uncover the mechanisms of unstructured cultural and social phenomena, a qualitative analysis is conducted using Gioia's methodology (Gioia, 2010) based on interviews and archival data. In combination with this method, we conduct a quantitative survey-based analysis. Furthermore, during this study, the first author became an owner of a vehicle within this category, offering deep insights from that unique perspective.

3.3. Case Selection: Liberty Walk as a *Bosozoku*-Inspired Modified Supercar

To study the complex and active role that deviance plays in destigmatization, the re-enchantment of craft, and the category restructuring, we selected as an empirical case an instance that is vilified but passionately loved, one whose evaluation is polarized. Specifically, we study the business of modified luxury supercars such as Ferrari and Lamborghini after the model of Japanese biker gangs, *Bosozoku*.

In the automotive industry, various modified vehicles have emerged in recent years. Human psychology includes a desire for differentiation, where individuals develop negative feelings when they perceive themselves as excessively similar to others (Fromkin, 1970; Snyder and Fromkin, 1980). While the intensity of such emotions varies significantly depending on the industry, this tendency is particularly pronounced in the automotive industry (Berger and Heath, 2007). Consequently, the automobile market has cultivated a culture of modifying existing vehicles to suit individual preferences, which has contributed to the creation of this transgressive product.

The leading players in this deviant modified supercars category include custom car builders such as Liberty Walk, RAUH-Welt Begriff (RWB), and Rocket Bunny (Figure 1). Although there are some differences in taste, they all specialize in customizing expensive supercars with a street-gang-inspired style. Since the early 2010s, Liberty Walk, RWB, and Rocket Bunny have begun attracting global attention (Stance, 2021), which is considered the beginning of the emergence of this product category. These modifications recreate extreme features of automobiles used by the *Kyōdō Kiken-Gata* (literally dangerous group type) car gangs, *Bosozoku*, that emerged in the 1970s (National Police Agency, 2001), such as extreme “lowered

ride height” and “widened body with bolt-on large fenders” on modern luxury supercars, thus subverting the image of modified cars as associated with violence, illegality, and criminality and creating new products and culture around it.



Liberty Walk



RAUH-Welt Begriff (RWB)



Rocket Bunny

FIGURE 1: *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars

While some audience members enthusiastically respect and embrace this product because of its distinctiveness, aggressiveness, and breathtaking beauty, the majority criticize and loathe it due to its antisocial images on *Bosozoku*, especially in Japan. To many, the luxurious supercars—e.g., Ferrari, Lamborghini and Porsche—are sacred; resolutely cutting the brand-new, perfectly finished bodies appears almost demonic, particularly in Western countries.

While loathed by many, this category has established itself in the automobile industry and created a new market. Notably, Liberty Walk was invited to prestigious international motor shows and events such as the Essen Motor Show (2016), Geneva Motor Show (2017, 2018), and Goodwood Festival of Speed (2023), not without controversy. International celebrities like Justin Bieber and Chris Brown have joined as owners, further increasing its profile. It has become a central exhibitor at the Tokyo Auto Salon, a motor show for modified cars, where many other small custom car builders exhibit modified cars with designs similar to Liberty Walk's and contribute to forming a new product category. As of 2023, it has produced over 2,500 units worldwide, thus budding as a new automotive category.

3.4. Data Collection

Initially, we conducted in-depth interviews with owners and fans representing key internal actors within this category. Although the number of owners in Japan is estimated to be in the thousands, their geographic dispersion across the country posed significant challenges to access. To address this, we recruited interviewees at several automobile events where owners congregate, specifically in Sapporo and Osaka. Consequently, we interviewed seventeen owners and two fans (Table 1). While the sample displayed no notable age bias, it consisted exclusively of men, reflecting the predominantly male ownership demographic. We conducted

the interviews in Japan, but the interviewees included some foreign nationals. The interviews were conducted in designated rest areas at the event venues, with each interview session averaging approximately thirty minutes. However, the time for two interviewees was insufficient; thus, follow-up interviews were subsequently conducted via telephone. Furthermore, additional interviews, each lasting approximately one hour, were performed with external audiences: two automotive industry journalists and one executive from a leading automobile manufacturer.

The interview guide used during the in-depth interviews was designed to objectively capture information on the actors' profiles, purchase circumstances, reasons for purchasing the cars, the social positioning of the category, and the actors' perspectives on it.

Interviewees	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interviewees	Age	Gender	Occupation
Owner 1	24	Male	Water supply, worker	Owner 13	50	Male	Construction, executive
Owner 2	24	Male	Office work, worker	Owner 14	50	Male	Food manufacturer, executive
Owner 3	52	Male	Real estate, executive	Owner 15	54	Male	Machine manufacture, executive
Owner 4	45	Male	Car dealer, store manager	Owner 16	50	Male	Office work, worker
Owner 5	38	Male	Airport ground staff, worker	Owner 17	35	Male	University office, worker
Owner 6	50	Male	Construction, executive	Fan 1	49	Male	Professional plastic model builder
Owner 7	32	Male	Electricity service, worker	Fan 2	32	Male	Professional plastic model builder
Owner 8	22	Male	Auto maintenance, worker	Journalist 1	59	Male	Professional automobile journalist
Owner 9	55	Male	Transportation, executive	Journalist 2	57	Male	Professional automobile journalist
Owner 10	47	Male	Cram school, executive	Executive of auto co.	65	Male	Executive senior director at design dept.
Owner 11	16	Male	High school, student				
Owner 12	50	Male	Transportation, executive				

TABLE 1: The List of Interviewees

Additionally, information about custom car builders that define this category, such as Liberty Walk and RWB, was obtained from articles in automotive magazines specializing in custom cars. Some magazines exclusively feature Liberty Walk. This trend is not limited to Japan but is also evident in major international magazines and media outlets. Notably, the custom car builders in this category do not engage in advertising or promotional activities; all media coverage consists solely of content produced by professional journalists. Consequently, these articles were deemed sufficiently objective and utilized as reliable sources of information for analysis.

Secondly, to understand how the broader public, or external audiences, perceives the category, a supplementary web-based survey was conducted with 619 members of the general public. Survey participants were recruited from a consumer panel of 40,000 individuals managed by a research firm, which closely reflects the demographic distribution of the entire Japanese population. As a result of recruitment, the demographic distribution of the survey

participants showed a lower representation of younger individuals with limited interest in automobiles. However, since the purpose of this survey is to capture societal perceptions of the category, the data were reweighted to align with the demographic distribution of the overall population for actual analysis (Table 2).

Age	Gender			Proportion	Natural distribution* used for weighting adjustment
	Number of persons				
	Male	Female	Total		
18-24	4	14	18	3%	8%
25-29	14	22	36	6%	9%
30-34	23	21	44	7%	8%
35-39	42	29	71	11%	9%
40-44	56	22	78	13%	10%
45-49	85	28	113	18%	12%
50-54	60	18	78	13%	13%
55-59	62	18	80	13%	11%
60-64	44	14	58	9%	10%
65-69	36	7	43	7%	10%
Total	426	193	619	100%	100%

* Derived based on Japan's population distribution as of December 1, 2024.

TABLE 2: Survey Respondents

In addition to these analyses of collected data, the author became an owner of a vehicle within this category one year after initiating the research, as a natural outcome of engaging with various forms of information during the progression of the study. The most valuable outcome from this was gaining deeper insights based on his experiences and emotional shifts as an owner. By doing so, he became a part of the party concerned itself, directly experiencing the requirements for destigmatization and craft re-enchantment that this research aims to elucidate. These personal experiences served as a critical source of information, providing a means to validate and complement insights obtained from other actors.

3.5. Data Analysis

To empirically elucidate the mechanisms of unstructured cultural and social phenomena, we conducted a qualitative analysis using Gioia's methodology (Gioia, 2010), based on interviews and archival data. Data from the interviews were analyzed by using the grounded theory approach (Locke, 2001), identifying common themes across actors' responses to each question, categorizing them into clusters, and coding them as first-order concepts. We then synthesized these into second-order themes, addressing the research question of how and why the category

came to be formed, ultimately leading to the construction of aggregate dimensions. For each aggregate dimension summarizing owners' behavior as internal actors, the corresponding reaction of the general public as external audiences was analyzed based on open-ended survey responses regarding impressions of the category. Specifically, we examined the interactions between actors and audiences, code quotes from interviews and open-ended surveys into first-order concepts, integrate them into second-order themes distill them into dimensions and finally identify several elements necessary for destigmatization and the re-enchantment of craft at chapter 4 and 5. The analysis using the Gioia methodology based on the interview results and archival materials was conducted in chapter 4: Stigma perspective and chapter 5: Craft perspective. In chapter 6: Category perspective, insights were constructed through archival analysis and quotations from the interviews. In this process, extensive revisions and iterative refinements were made through discussions with the co-author.

Finally, in conducting the quantitative analysis of the survey data, I used the statistic functions available in Microsoft excel to examine the correlation between multiple variables, as the dataset was relatively small. Furthermore, by comparing insights from quantitative analysis with those from qualitative analysis, we repeatedly verified and falsified hypotheses. This process not only enhanced the precision of our interpretations but also enabled us to successfully delve deeper into the critical aspects of the qualitative findings.

3.6. Research Ethics and Limitations

This study adheres to established ethical standards for research involving human participants. All procedures for data collection were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Kyoto University. Ethical considerations were particularly important given that the study engages with communities connected, directly or indirectly, to socially deviant cultural practices, such as *Bosozoku*. Interview participants were informed by written document about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time before providing consent. All information that could fully identify an individual has been removed and anonymity is ensured by numbering interview respondents, among other measures. Data were stored securely on password-protected devices and will be retained for five years and securely deleted thereafter.

This study provides deep insights into *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars, but we must acknowledge several research limitations. We focus on empirical research in Japan, concentrating on specific communities surrounding Liberty Walk, RWB, and Rocket Bunny. While this constitutes an appropriate sample for theory building, it cannot fully represent the

diversity of the global modified supercar community. Thus, the findings of this study should not be interpreted as statistically generalizable, but rather as analytically generalizable. Specifically, they can be generalized within contexts sharing similar cultural, industrial, and aesthetic features. This study analyzes data and information mainly between 2021 and 2024. The modified-supercar scene evolves rapidly. Moreover, new aesthetic trends or regulatory changes may reshape this phenomenon in the near future. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting the cultural and industrial landscape of a specific temporal moment.

Chapter 4. Stigma: Reinforcing Deviance for Legitimacy

4.1. Empirical Context: Societal Reactions to *Bosozoku* Culture

The *Bosozoku* were youth groups which emerged in 1970s Japan and notorious for driving illegally modified vehicles in large formations on public roads, often causing public disturbances. At their peak, more than 40,000 youths participated in these rides. Liberty Walk's custom designs originate from the vehicles driven by these *Bosozoku*, officially referred to by the National Police Agency (2001) as “*Kyōdō Kiken-Gata*” (literally dangerous group type) cars.

Bosozoku emerged as a cultural response to social problems arising from the postwar period of high economic growth. Japan's high industrial growth led to the large-scale population migration from rural areas to metropolitan areas. The concentration in the urban areas weakened the bonds of traditional local communities and exposed young generations to a more intensely competitive social environment (Gordon, 1993; Sugimoto, 2010). This phenomenon accelerated social homogenization and adherence to normative conformity. Amidst these circumstances, *Bosozoku* emerged as an anti-establishment, anti-authoritarian phenomenon, representing “rebellion” and “self-assertion” among youth against these pressures (Kersten, 1993, Sato, 1984).

In Japan, *Bosozoku* have been criticized and shunned by society, historically. When they first emerged in the 1970s, they were understood as a cultural symbol of youth rebellion against society. However, their illegal street racing escalated into causing public nuisance, and their activities expanded into vandalism and violence, eventually escalating into riots. In some cases, they were even positioned as a reserve force for antisocial groups like organized crime syndicates. Consequently, Riessland (2013) pointed out that almost all members of the public seemed to agree that *Bosozoku* are an altogether undesirable part of society, criminal, violent and dangerous, leading to their classification as antisocial and the stigma imposed upon them

by society. Furthermore, newspapers, television, and magazines have for many years reported on *Bosozoku* alongside keywords such as arrests, crime, violence, violations, and injury. Particularly in media coverage during the 1970s and 1980s, emphasis was placed on the violent disturbances and dangerous acts caused by *Bosozoku*, linking the everyday image of these groups to “juvenile delinquency” and “violent gangs.” This further entrenched the image of *Bosozoku* as dangerous criminal groups within society. This phenomenon can be described as a typical case of “stigma amplification.”

4.2. Findings from Analysis

These *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars have established their position in the automobile industry, despite receiving criticism and discrimination from some members of the general public. They have done so while openly maintaining their deviant identity as a salient feature, without making any attempt to mitigate or conceal the stigma attached to their deviant identity. The puzzle, therefore, is how the products associated with stigmatized identity such as *Bosozoku* can be legitimized precisely when that deviant identity is emphasized rather than disguised. The analysis reveals three elements that help explain this outcome.

4.2.1. Element A – Committed deviance against normative resistance

First, our analysis revealed a fundamental antagonism between these modified cars and surrounding public audiences. Specifically, we describe how the audience perceives these cars’ most distinctive features, namely deviant identities, and how owners of these cars have responded to these perceptions (Figure 2). The detailed coding results are summarized in Table 3.

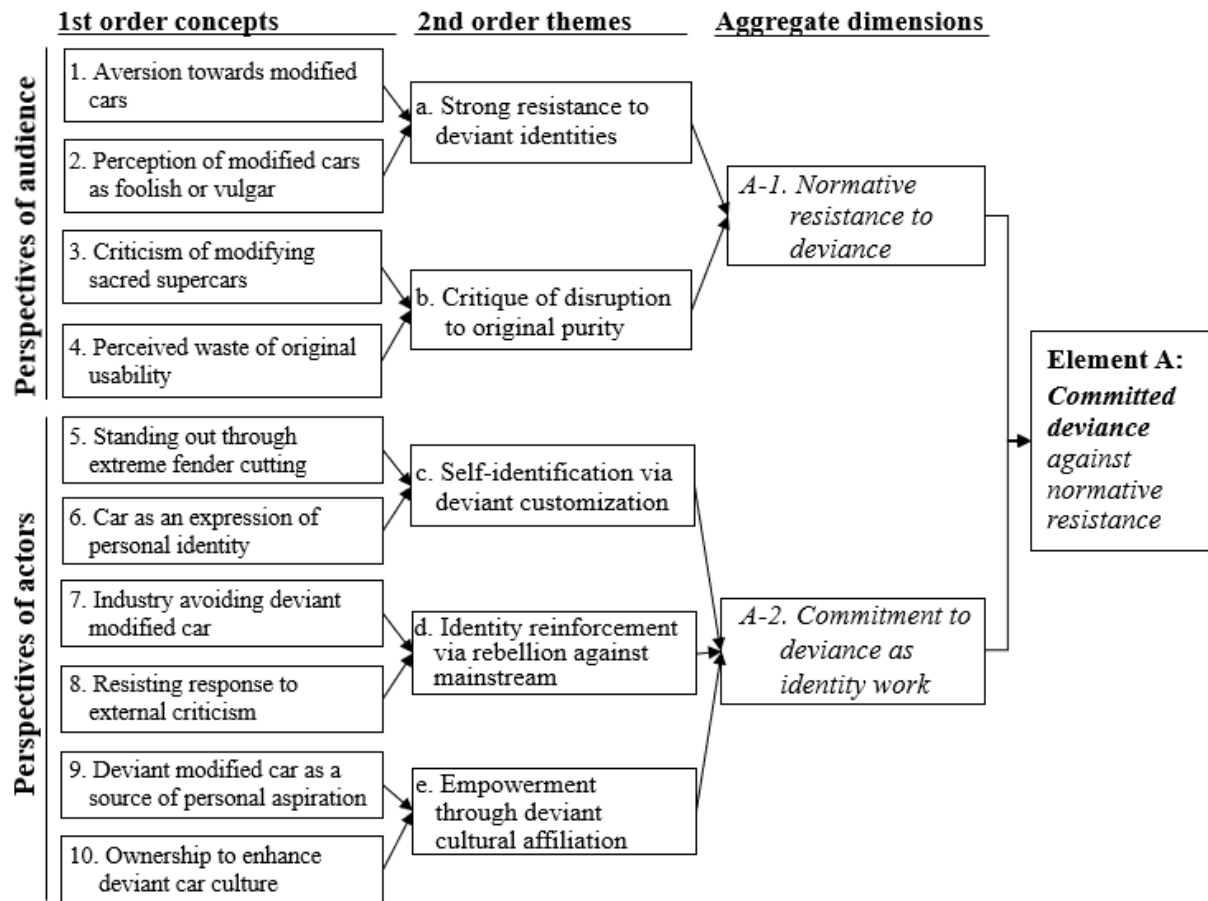


FIGURE 2: Data Structuring – Element A

A-1. Normative resistance to deviance. Every Liberty Walk car embodies the distinctive characteristics and design elements of *Bosozoku* vehicles. Many public audiences, including the general public and automotive industry insiders, adopt a highly negative attitude, expressing strong disdain, contempt, and criticism, viewing these cars as desecration. There are two aspects:

A-a. Strong resistance to deviant identity: The concept of *Bosozoku* is loathed in Japan. *Bosozoku* cars, associated with practices such as illegal street racing and excessive noise on public roads, emerged as a major social problem in Japan during the 1970s. They continue to be widely perceived as symbols of antisocial behavior and are avoided by much of the general public. The qualitative survey results corroborate this social perception. As shown in Figure 3, 83% of respondents regarded *Bosozoku* cars as antisocial, compared to only 17% who viewed normal cars in the same way. We tested whether this difference was statistically significant. To do so, given that the same respondents evaluated both car types, we compared paired proportions using McNemar's test. Here, b denotes cases in which respondents perceived the normal car as antisocial but not the *Bosozoku* car, whereas c denotes the reverse pattern. The

results indicate that respondents were significantly more likely to describe *Boso-zoku* cars as antisocial than normal cars (discordant pairs: b = 28 vs. c = 440; McNemar's $\chi^2(1) = 361.10$, continuity-corrected, $p < .001$). The matched odds ratio was 0.06 (95% CI [0.04, 0.09]).

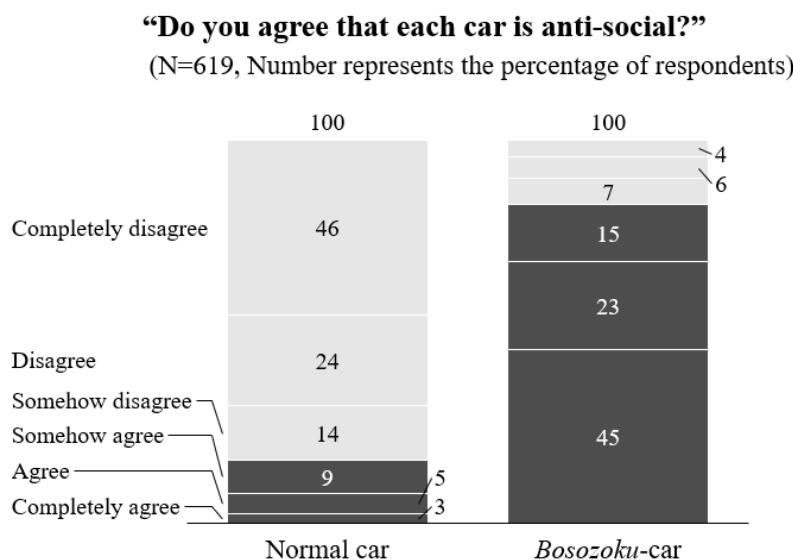


FIGURE 3: Comparison of Perception towards Normal and *Boso-zoku* Car

Consequently, cars embodying this *Boso-zoku* concept are naturally subject to criticism and disdain. A general public member said, “Because it's a '*Boso-zoku*-inspired car design,' it carries an antisocial image and a sense of nonconformity with society, which I dislike.” In addition, major Japanese automobile manufacturers and automotive journalists are also critical of cars from this category and are reluctant to associate with them. An executive member of a major Japanese automobile manufacturer confessed, “Automobile manufacturers are likely to disregard this sort of cars entirely and may, in fact, be intentionally distancing themselves from them.” A journalist strongly mentioned, “It is likely that few journalists actively engage with this car category,” because they feel that even being perceived as having a connection with these entities threatens their own brand and reputation.

Many specific comments from the general public in the survey are harsh, often delving into criticisms of the car owners' character. Examples include remarks such as, “It doesn't seem like a car driven by an intelligent person. It's embarrassing to look at,” or “It simply gives off a stupid and vulgar impression.” Some of these comments go so far as to express outright contempt and even vilification.

A-b. Critique of disruption to original purity: On the other hand, there is criticism from an entirely different perspective in Western countries. Supercars like Ferraris and Lamborghinis are imbued with an aura of reverence. Cutting and modifying these revered cars with a bandsaw

elicits intense indignation, immorality, and a feeling of sacrilege. Marriage (2017), an automotive journalist for *Top Gear*, one of the world's most renowned car magazines, descriptively expressed people's reactions upon seeing this modified car as follows, "Some stare at the ground and hurry past, others stare and never say a word, some look positively offended, shoulders twitching they bristle with indignation, almost desperate to take offense." Similarly, many individuals within the Japanese public express comparable reactions, with some even claiming that modifying supercars constitutes an insult to the cars themselves and a sign of disrespect toward their designers. For instance, one gentleman criticized, "It seems that unnecessary modifications have been made to a car that the manufacturer painstakingly and artistically perfected, ultimately making it look unattractive."

Furthermore, widespread criticism suggests that modifying high-performance cars to lower their height excessively wastes their original performance and efficiency. A typical comment is, "Cars with excessively low ground clearance have low practicality. It is completely wasteful."

A-2. Commitment to deviance as identity work. In response to such external audience's rejection, internal actors, such as owners and fans, align their identities with a deviant identity, use external criticism to strengthen their beliefs, and further enhance their sense of ownership, viewing the category's growth as their personal goal. Throughout this process, the external audience's hatred and criticism accelerated the internal actors' commitment to cement the category. We observed two aspects.

A-c. Self-identification via radical customization: Some of the owners of these cars feel a sense of social inferiority or marginalization. For instance, some of them used to be part of a delinquent youth subculture. A Liberty Walk car owner expressed, "I used to be a member of the *Bosozoku* group, so I considered myself a deviant from society. Liberty Walk perfectly reflects that aspect of my identity. It truly represents who I am." I have also encountered some individuals with physical disabilities (e.g., polio survivors, wheelchair users) and racial minorities (e.g., Black, Hispanic, Asian) among the customers of this product. They recognize that the identity they have developed through their divergent life experiences differs from that of the majority in society. As people use their products to construct and express their desired identities (Belk 1988; Escalas & Bettman 2003, 2005; Kleine & Kernan 1993), boldly modified supercars involve the significant risk of cutting the body with a saw, which could ruin an expensive car—something few would dare to attempt. This product can express a deviant identity shaped by experiences of being treated as minor within society. As a result of this recognition, a desire for the deviant identity represented by these products has emerged, leading

individuals to reflect this identity onto themselves. According to Kei Miura, the founder and CEO of Rocket Bunny, "A significant proportion of our customers in the United States are affluent Asians. This is because they seek to demonstrate that, despite being a minority subject to discrimination, they can surpass white individuals through ownership of our cars." This observation highlights how minority groups actively embody this identity.

A-d. Identity reinforcement via rebellion against mainstream: After documenting that the internal actors identified with the deviant identity inherent in the category, we observed that this identity was reinforced, not mitigated, by negative evaluation from the external audience. The more negatively evaluated, the stronger the identity. An owner of this car insisted, "Being criticized is what makes it cool. Just ignore the critics." Another stated, "I'm happier when criticized—it means they care enough to notice."

The survey result confirms the positive correlation between the perception that this product is immoral and unethical and the liking of this product among the segment of individuals who are familiar with this product, including the detailed specifications of the products and the background behind their creation, namely whom we define as the internal actors like owners and fans (Figure 4). It suggests that the more one perceives the product as immoral and unethical, the more likely they will like it.

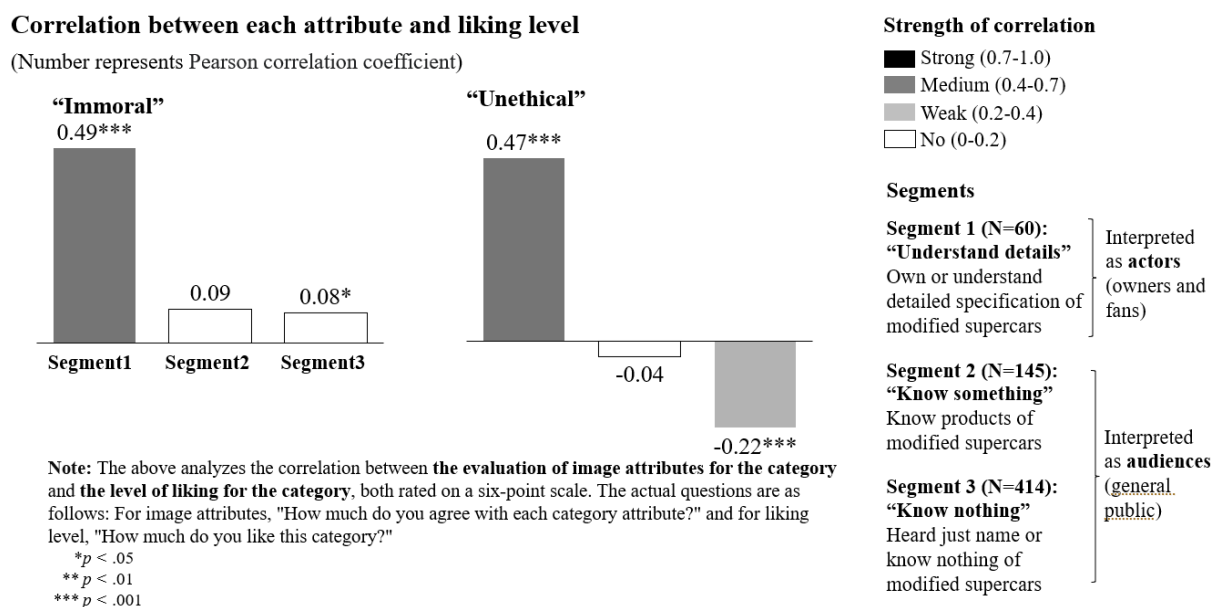


FIGURE 4: Correlation between the Image Attribute and the Liking to Category

A-e. Empowerment through deviant cultural affiliation: Once owners commit to their identity, they develop a strong sense of ownership over the product, almost as if each were its steward. This is clearly exemplified by the statement from an owner: "Each owner carries the

‘brand’ on their shoulder.” We observed that the transgressive identity engendered a sense of ownership of the product and motivation to advocate it, fostering a unique culture. They began considering how to preserve and develop this culture around the product, making it their life's mission. In other words, the community of owners and fans of this product is not merely a collection of actors but also a unique group where the community actors play a crucial role in sustaining and growing it, with a deviant identity at its core.

<i>A-1. Normative resistance to deviance</i>		
2 nd order themes	1 st order codes	Quotes
a. Resistance to deviant identities	1. Aversion towards modified cars	“It’s impossible to have a positive impression of cars that evoke the image of illegal modifications.” (General public) “I believe that such vulgar vehicles should be eliminated from society on a global scale” (General public)
	2. Perception of modified cars as foolish or vulgar	“It simply gives off a foolish and vulgar impression.” (General public) “This doesn’t seem like a car that a smart person would drive.” (General public)
b. Critique of disruption to original purity	3. Criticism of modifying sacred supercars	“It’s a blasphemy against the original supercar.” (General public) “It’s disrespectful to the design and craftsmanship of the original supercar.” (General public) “It has become notorious for <u>bandsawing</u> the arches off a multitude of exotic supercars.” (Horncastle of Top gear)
	4. Perceived waste of original usability	“This sort of cars are inefficient, and above all, I think it’s inconvenient.” (General public) “If these cars were to be used as everyday means of transportation, they would be highly inefficient and, above all, inconvenient. (General public)
<i>A-2. Commitment to deviance as identity work</i>		
c. Self-identification via radical customization	5. Standing out through extreme fender cutting	“There are people who modify Ferraris, but they usually just add carbon parts. A Ferrari with cut and modified fenders is simply special and stands out.” (Owner 5) “A normal person wouldn’t cut the fenders even for coolness. But without cutting them, you can’t achieve that look.” (Owner 1)
	6. Car as an expression of personal identity	“This car shows me. Liberty Walk stands for myself.” (Owner 2) “I project myself onto this car. I feel as if the car’s identity is my own.” (Owner 6) “When I drive it, anyone can recognize me. It’s the ultimate identity.” (Owner 9)
d. Reinforcing deviant identity through resistance	7. Industry avoiding deviant modified car	“Automobile manufacturers don’t pay attention to Liberty Walk and the like. In fact, they are likely avoiding them..” (Manufacturer executive) “No journalists would engage with this. I myself have no intention of doing so either.” (Journalist 1)
	8. Resisting response to external criticism	“What is wrong with having critics? I prefer to stay positive. Criticism often stems from “interest” or jealousy.” (Owner 2) “I used to be part of a biker gang myself, so I have a rebellious spirit, and it doesn’t bother me at all.” (Owner 6) “It’s important to stick to it even if criticized. I won’t back down.” (Owner 10)
e. Empowerment through deviant cultural affiliation	9. Deviant car as a source of personal aspiration	“Seeing Liberty Walk strive for greater heights despite the criticism makes me feel motivated to do my best as well.” (Owner 13) “I’ve been working hard to own Liberty Walk cars as my objective of life.” (Owner 12)
	10. Ownership to enhance deviant car culture	“We desire to realize what Liberty Walk wants to achieve.” (Owner 14) “Liberty Walk is a culture. We want to pass it down to future generations.” (Owner 8)

TABLE 3: Supporting Quotes for Element A

Based on A-1 and A-2, the first element can be summarized as the actor's paradoxical strengthening of commitment to a deviant identity in response to adverse normative reactions from the audience. In particular, this dynamic is aligned with Becker's (1966) labeling theory, which shows how such reactions can promote the emergence of deviant subcultures.

4.2.2. Element B – Aesthetic appeal suspending moral judgment towards deviance

Next, we discovered that the modification was not simply deviant but achieved a certain level of aesthetics. Despite the negative evaluation by the audience, the aesthetic aspect of the design gave an impression that transcends moral judgment. We describe this from the internal actors' and the audience's perspectives (Figure 5). The detailed coding results are summarized in Table 4.

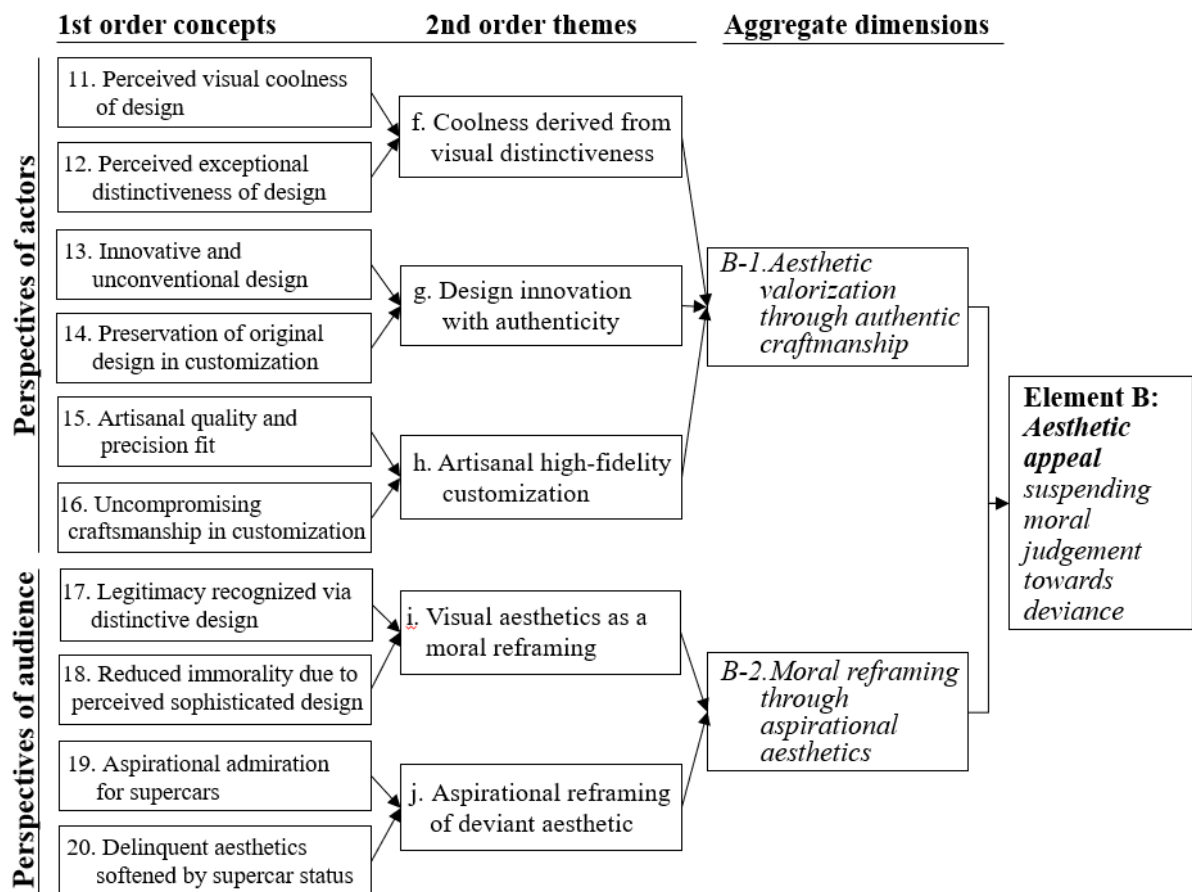


FIGURE 5: Data Structuring - Element B

B-1. Aesthetic valorization through authentic craftsmanship. The base car for this product is often a luxury car, such as a supercar, featuring designs by renowned design firms (e.g., Carrozzeria) that already possess a high level of artistic value in appearance. While custom car builders introduce the unique style of *Bosozoku* cars into the already revered design, they add a layer of aesthetic value with skillful design and advanced craftsmanship. We revealed three aspects.

B-f. Coolness derived from visual distinctiveness: The cars in this category, characterized by low ground clearance and wide fenders, possess the identity of the *Bosozoku* subculture, a style derived initially from racing cars. Lowering the car's height lowers its center of gravity, and wide fenders accommodate wider tires, increasing the contact area with the ground to enhance driving performance. *Bosozoku* cars do not aim to improve driving performance, but they merely imitate the racing car style and take it to the extreme. As a result, many owners appreciate the "cool appearance". They commonly acknowledged its aesthetic appeal, saying, for example, "Visual impact is incredible. Even people who aren't interested, and anyone who sees it, say it's cool." Mr. Miura of Rocket Bunny, mentioned, "Rocket Bunny cars are inspired by 1970s *Bosozoku* cars, which imitated racing cars, embodying functional beauty. Functional beauty is something that anyone can perceive as beautiful. That is human instinct." Alex Kierstein (2014), a senior editor of *Road & Track*, also described its aesthetic appeal, "This is no mech, but it is perhaps the best-looking modified Aventador I've ever seen. And you can thank the very Japanese aesthetic of Liberty Walk for the result."

B-g. Design innovation with authenticity: While the *Bosozoku* subculture inspires the basic style, the designs of individual cars are highly creative. They incorporate bold and imaginative ideas, such as paint jobs inspired by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces or U.S. Air Force fighter jets. Additionally, instead of simply adding wide fenders, some designs cut off the rear part of the fenders to more closely resemble racing cars, making the tires visible from the back. A senior designer from a major automobile company commented, 'I would love to create such designs, but it's impossible for major companies to be that creative,' highlighting the respect these designs garner.

Despite the bold modification, the design achieves a high level of sophistication. Cutting the fenders or modifying multiple parts of the car would disrupt the balance of the original overall design concept, but there is no design breakdown in this category. A fan of Liberty Walk, who is also a professional modeler of plastic car models, explained, "Normally, modifying a car like that would ruin its design, but the fact that it doesn't is truly remarkable." Additionally, the essence of the original design is fully preserved, making it recognizable as the original car

despite the significant modifications, which astonishes people. A globally recognized Japanese automotive journalist remarked, "What is remarkable is that it preserves the original design while incorporating a slightly 'old-school' aesthetic. It maintains the silhouette of the Lamborghini, ensuring it remains easily identifiable as such."

B-h. Artisanal high-fidelity customization: While aftermarket parts typically have slight dimensional discrepancies during installation and require adjustments by the user, there is no such issue. The precision of their craftsmanship is unparalleled. These companies have specialized their manufacturing department as a separate organization, LB Lab for Liberty Walk, where they hire and train experts (Nakasangawa, 2017). Additionally, the fender angles are not simple but complicated, and weathering paint techniques are deliberately used in some areas to create a worn effect. Even the hidden parts, like the back of the components, are meticulously crafted, demonstrating their high attention to detail.

The founder and owner of RWB which is another modified car builder, Akira Nakai modifies by himself the cars by using a bandsaw in front of customers, showcasing his meticulous approach, even in seemingly simple tasks like applying masking tape. He immerses himself in the meticulous adjustment of every car detail, sometimes spending up to 13 hours a day in the workshop (Gaisha Guide, 2020). He strongly insisted, "Since I am the most skilled at this kind of modification work, I handle the modifications myself, though I am CEO of the company." He exemplifies the essence of craftsmanship.

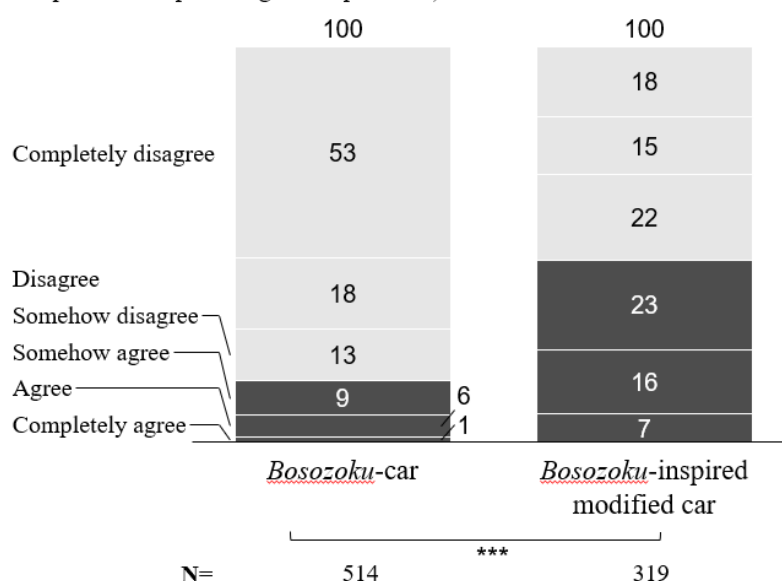
B-2. Moral reframing through aspirational aesthetics. As the audience, the general public acknowledges the *Bosozoku* image associated with the product but appreciates its high-quality design and craftsmanship. As a result, the initial aversion is softened for some. Despite its deviant identity, the product's aesthetic value is appreciated, allowing it to transcend conventional moral judgments of right and wrong. We identified two aspects.

B-i. Visual aesthetics as a moral reframing: Among the general public who responded to the survey, 46% of those who perceived this modified car as socially deviant still considered it artistic. In contrast, only 16% expressed a similar view toward *Bosozoku* cars, reflecting a significantly higher appreciation for this *Bosozoku*-inspired modified car (Figure 6). In other words, nearly half of those who recognize this modified car's deviant nature still acknowledge its artistic value. We examined whether this difference was statistically significant. Among respondents who perceived each car as socially deviant, the proportion rating modified supercars as artistic ($147/319 = 46.1\%$) was significantly higher than that for *Bosozoku* cars ($82/514 = 15.9\%$; $z = 9.47$, one-sided $p < .001$; $\chi^2(1) = 89.63$, $p < .001$). The difference in proportions was 30.1 percentage points (95% CI [23.8, 36.4]).

According to survey comments, many audience members from the general public expressed appreciation for the high-quality craftsmanship and the stylish form of the body. Furthermore, some reported that their initial aversion softened as they came to appreciate its artistic qualities, stating, “When presented with a sophisticated design, feelings of aversion are significantly reduced,” and adding, “Although there is ethical criticism, the sleek design continues to be an object of admiration for many people.”

“Do you agree that each car is artistic (while it is socially deviant) ?”

(Number represents the percentage of respondents)



Notes. Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who perceived the target as artistic among those who perceived it as socially deviant. Sample sizes are N = 319 for *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars and N = 514 for *Bosozoku* cars. Differences in proportions were tested using a one-sided two-proportion z-test (**p < .01).

FIGURE 6: Comparison of Artistic Perception

B-j. Aspirational reframing of deviant aesthetic: Liberty Walk has chosen supercars as the target for its modifications, and this serves as a key factor underpinning the unconditional aesthetic appreciation of the design within this vehicle category. In the 1970s, Japan saw a social phenomenon centered on cars called the “supercar boom.” This period coincided with the rise of *Bosozoku* street gangs. Inspired by the manga *Circuit no Ookami* (Ikezawa, 1975), Italian exotic cars like Ferraris and Lamborghinis became icons of admiration for children. A general public confessed, “Supercars have been my admiration since childhood and look cool.” Exhibitions were held across Japan almost every week, and related merchandise flew off the shelves. Japan was the first country to coin the term “Supercar,” well before the rest of the world. Although not many supercars were sold, they left an indelible impression on the younger generation as symbols of aspiration.

Because of this background, a significant group in Japan remains with an unwavering admiration for supercar design. For this group, even the association with the rebellious image of *Bosozoku* is of no concern; they hold an unreservedly positive view of these vehicles. They insisted, for instance, “Having experienced the supercar boom era, I have a strongly positive impression of supercars and do not associate them with *Bosozoku* designs.” Interestingly, the impact of the supercars is significant enough to render modification as a secondary concern—perhaps because the modification did not undermine the original design, as we discussed above.

B-1. Aesthetic valorization through authentic craftsmanship

2nd order themes	1st order codes	Quotes
f. Coolness derived from visual distinctiveness	11 Visual coolness of design	“I think the appearance of real <i>Bosozoku</i> is vulgar and I don’t like it, but LB’s design, while inspired by <i>Bosozoku</i> , is different and looks cool.” (Modeler 2) “The cars are just incredibly cool. The aero parts have unique designs that you won’t find anywhere else.” (Owner 10)
	12. Exceptional distinctiveness of design	“There are many other <i>brands</i> but it is very different...” “Extra mile” image.” (Owner 5) “The design of silhouette racer type is so unique and unlike anything else.” (Owner 11)
g. Design innovation with authenticity	13. Innovative and unconventional design	“The design sense is excellent. Using the Self-Defense Forces as a theme is a brilliant idea. This is something that car companies can’t do.” (Major automaker design director) “Even people who don’t know about <i>Bousou-zoku</i> , especially foreigners, and young people, find its design innovative.” (Modeler 1)
	14. Preservation of original design in customization	“Normally, modifying a car like that would ruin its design, but the fact that it doesn’t is amazing.” (Modeler 2) “The design expertise is evident in the way the basic original concept is preserved.” (Modeler 2)
h. Artisanal high-fidelity customization	15. Artisanal quality and precision fit	“With other tuners’ modification parts, adjustments are necessary, but with these, they are not needed.” (Owner 1) “Each piece is handcrafted by artisans. It feels more like traditional craftsmanship than an industrial product.” (Liberty Walk perfect book)
	16. Uncompromising craftsmanship in customization	“It’s not just about cutting the fenders; the detailed craftsmanship sets it apart from others.” (Owner 12) “ <i>Mr. Nakai</i> of RWB shows no compromise in building machines. He thoroughly engages with each car to ensure it meets his own strict standards” (<i>Gaisha</i> Guide)

B-2. Moral reframing through aspirational aesthetics

i. Visual aesthetics as a moral reframing	17. Legitimacy recognized via distinctive design	“It was very well crafted, and I felt it could be recognized as one of the categories of automobiles.” (General public) “This radical styling of RWB, born from its CEO’s unique sensibilities, naturally divides opinions. However, it is also true that for those it resonates with, its appearance strikes deeply” (Gaish-oh)
	18. Reduced immorality due to perceived sophistication in appearance	“The term ‘<i>Boso-zoku</i>’ usually evokes immoral impressions, but when presented with such a sophisticated design, feelings of aversion to immorality are significantly reduced..” (General public) ”Although the sense of discomfort is undeniable, it’s still an artistic supercar.” (General public)
j. Aspirational reframing of deviant aesthetic	19. Aspirational admiration for supercars	“Supercars has been universally cool, and they’ve been a source of admiration since childhood” (General public) “Supercars are something to admire — a dream to experience someday.” (General public)
	20. Delinquent aesthetics softened by supercar status	“No matter what, I would never think of supercars as having a gang-like design.” (General public) “Lowered car height’ of modified cars is often associated with a bad or delinquent image, but when it’s done with supercars, that image is softened.” (General public)

TABLE 4: Supporting Quotes for Element B

Combining B-1 and B-2, we suggest that the aesthetic value with design integrity and craftsmanship transcends the moral judgment that otherwise burdens the category. While the audience’s negative evaluation fostered a stronger identity and commitment within internal actors in A-1 and A-2, the aesthetic value gives more nuance to the deviance.

4.2.3. Element C – Unexpected positive values prompting a reframing of legitimacy criteria

Finally, we will analyze the interactions in which the audience shifts its perception, prompted by the positive behaviors of the actors that counteract the deviant identity (Figure 7). The detailed coding results are summarized in Table 5.

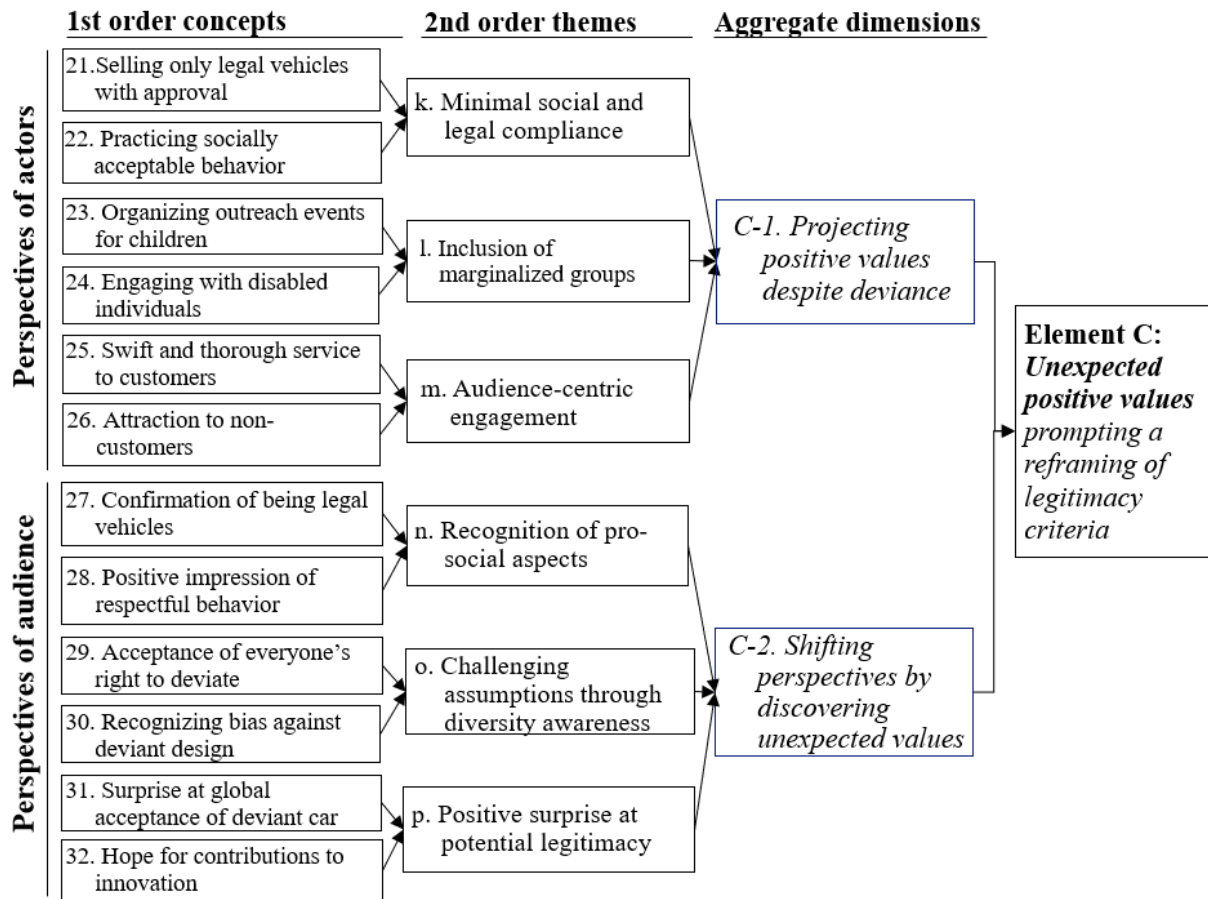


FIGURE 7: Data Structuring – Element C

C-1. Projecting positive values despite deviance. Although the actors, such as custom car builders, owners, and fans, center around a deviant identity embodied by *Bosozoku* design, they are not engaging in reckless driving or causing any disturbance to others. Their behavior naturally contradicts the deviant concept, exhibiting positive actions instead. We identified three aspects.

C-k. Minimal social and legal compliance: Major custom car builders Liberty Walk and RWB sell only street-legal cars in the countries where the vehicles are purchased. In other words, they fully comply with the authorities' regulations. Despite their deviant identities, their products adhere to the necessary standards, achieving a baseline level of “cognitive legitimacy” (Suchman, 1995).

As previously noted, many owners are engaged in industries that are socially regarded as lower-ranked, and some have a history of deviant behaviors, such as reckless driving, especially in their youth. However, they now refrain from illegal activities and exhibit consideration for others in their surroundings. To avoid unnecessary accusations, these owners interact with the general public humbly and respectfully, cautiously saying, “We should communicate with

people outside of Liberty Walk humbly. Moreover, causing an accident is absolutely unacceptable.” These actors strive to maintain a minimum level of legitimacy as a category through these efforts.

C-1. Inclusion of marginalized groups: Liberty Walk operates under the belief that “to get people to understand our identity, we have to make them fall in love with us from a young age.” Whether at events or on regular streets, if children show interest in Liberty Walk, they readily engage with them and even allow them to sit in their supercars without hesitation. Based on our observations at the event, when children were seated and allowed to hold the steering wheel, they consistently displayed exhilaration and excitement. Additionally, they regularly host events featuring plastic models called "My Liberty Walk," enthusiastically working to expand their fan base among children. According to some automobile journalists, it is rare for custom car builders to undertake such special initiatives exclusively for children.

In addition, Wataru Kato, the founder of Liberty Walk, emphasizes the diversity. He prioritizes providing car experiences for individuals with physical disabilities or those who have found a passion for cars after struggling with social withdrawal. The company also celebrates the birthdays of disabled car owners with full corporate support, creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.

C-m. Audience-centric engagement: Liberty Walk places great importance on customer care. Given the unique nature of their vehicles, they provide swift and comprehensive support that surpasses that of regular car dealerships, not only during the sale but also in subsequent maintenance. For instance, due to the extremely low height of the cars, they are equipped with air suspension to raise the height during driving, but the compressors sometimes malfunction. If a compressor malfunctions and new parts needed for its repair take time to arrive, Liberty Walk promptly removes a compressor from another car on their lot. It is installed in that customer’s car without waiting for new parts to arrive at the factory. A young owner said, “I’ve never seen a car shop that responds so quickly. Since it’s a special type of car, it gives me great peace of mind.”

Furthermore, Liberty Walk actively engages with a wide range of potential customers beyond its existing owners and is dedicated to fostering a diverse and extensive fan base. The company hosts numerous fan events in Japan and elsewhere, allowing potential customers to interact with and experience their luxury vehicles freely. Due to this approach, a wide audience can understand more of modified car's identity. The company’s headquarters lounge in Nagoya is always open, warmly welcoming potential customers without distinction and serving as a gathering place for fans.

C-2. Shifting perspectives through discovering unexpected values. For audiences who presume that individuals with deviant identities are bound to engage in deviant activities, the positive behaviors demonstrated, as illustrated in C-1, come as a surprise. Accordingly, the audiences become aware of the actors' diversity, leading to a shift to a more favorable perspective. We discovered three aspects.

C-n. Recognition of pro-social aspects: Many members of the general public, as the audience, initially assume that these cars, with an appearance reminiscent of *Bosozoku* style, are illegal. However, they are uniformly surprised to discover that the vehicles are, in fact, fully compliant with legal regulations. Once their assumptions are overturned, some people no longer hold a negative impression, saying, "As long as it can pass legal inspection and is road-legal, it is no longer problematic." Even journalists are impressed: One journalist emphasized, "I marveled at the unparalleled approach of Liberty Walk. No other car manufacturer or tuning company in the world prioritizes children to such an extent." Another highlighted "The surprising fact that Liberty Walk owners are ordinary people who do not engage in reckless driving." They inherently possess a certain level of sociality, independent of the image of *Bosozoku*.

C-o. Challenging assumptions through diversity awareness: We learned that many within the audience believe that, as long as the owners do not disturb others, owning such vehicles is a matter of personal freedom and should not be condemned. Upon learning that there are owners who genuinely appreciate these cars, some individuals said, "I was reminded of the diversity of human values."

Furthermore, some audience members reflect on their own bias in assuming that cars with a *Bosozoku* image could not be positive, saying, "I realized that assuming a luxury car can't have *Bosozoku* image is simply a prejudice." This change in opinion could suggest that these vehicles should be met with greater tolerance, demonstrating a genuine shift in values and standards of judgment regarding legitimacy.

C-p. Positive surprise at potential legitimacy: While in Japan, cars with *Bosozoku* style designs face significant challenges in gaining legitimacy due to their association with antisocial imagery, this is not necessarily the case abroad. Although some people criticize the sacrilege of cutting into the sacred bodies of supercars, their innovative design and distinctive presence have received high praise and respect from authoritative events and associations in the global automotive industry. For example, Liberty Walk was invited to several prestigious automotive events such as the Essen Motor Show (2016), the Geneva Motor Show (2017, 2018), and the Goodwood Festival of Speed (2023). Most notably, in 2024, the Fédération Internationale de

l'Automobile (FIA; the International Automobile Federation) asked Liberty Walk to create a demonstration car to showcase its next-generation Formula E design.

Based on these achievements, audiences in Japan are both surprised by the unexpected recognition and feel proud that this car culture from Japan has gained global acknowledgment. Some people even suggest, “Past biases from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the police in Japan against *Bosozoku* may have prevented these cars from gaining social acceptance domestically.”

Beyond the current category, there are voices expressing hope that this new automotive culture will inspire fresh ideas and identities that will drive future developments in the automotive industry. A journalist pointed out, “Until now, Japan has not had its own unique automotive culture and has relied solely on admiration for Western automotive culture. However, I believe that Japan may now be developing its first globally recognized automotive culture.” Furthermore, he continued, “The emergence of this category may be rooted in the fact that cars have become too refined and, as a result, somewhat boring. In the future, electric vehicles would be able to differentiate themselves only through their exterior design and aesthetics. In this context, differentiation through such deviance may become increasingly important.” Perspectives on these cars are finally being profoundly shaken, prompting a shift in people’s perception.

<i>C-1. Projecting positive values despite deviance</i>		
2nd order themes	1st order concepts	Quotes
k. Minimal social and legal compliance	21. Selling only legal vehicles with approval	“Of course, cars gain the legal approval, otherwise we can not sell them at all.” (Liberty Walk CEO) “Even if criticized, there’s no problem as cars pass legal inspection.” (Owner 13)
	22. Practicing socially acceptable behavior	“In reality, we don’t engage in reckless driving or revving the engine. On the contrary, we are very considerate.” (Owner 8) “Communication with public people should be done humbly. Moreover, causing an accident is absolutely unacceptable.” (Owner 9)
l. Inclusion of marginalized groups	23. Organizing outreach events for children	“We invite children in wheelchairs and those who are withdrawn to ride in their cars and attend parties.” (Liberty Walk CEO) “We host events for children featuring plastic models called ‘My Liberty Walk’.” (Liberty Walk CEO)
	24. Engaging with disabled individuals	“We hold every year the special birthday party for one user who is disable.” (Liberty Walk CEO) “My son, who had polio and barely walked or spoke to anyone, started walking and socializing after discovering LB.” (Owner)
m. Audience-centric engagement	25. Swift and thorough service to customers	“The service and staff at the shop are exceptional. Their response time is incredibly fast.” (Owner 2) “They conduct meticulous maintenance before delivery, even replacing parts that the customer might overlook.” (Owner 2)
	26. Attraction to non- customers	“At the flagship store in Nagoya, they cater to many fans, not just the owners.” (Owner 7) “It is important to invite those who are not interested in modified cars. Therefore, we hold fire work event.” (Liberty Walk CEO)

C-2. Shifting perspectives through discovering unexpected positive values

n. Recognition of pro-social aspects	27. Confirmation of being legal vehicles	"As long as it can pass legal inspection and is road-legal, there is no longer particular problem." (General public) "Since it complies with laws, it doesn't leave a particularly bad impression." (General public)
	28. Positive impression of respectful behavior	"At events worldwide, they prioritize seating children in the car, a focus that clearly sets them apart from other players." (Journalist) "While owners may appear tough, most of them are, in fact, quite respectable." (Journalist)
o. Challenging bias through diversity awareness	29. Acceptance of everyone's right to deviate	"Regardless of a car's association with <i>Boso-zoku</i> , individuals should feel free to own it as they choose. I may not empathize but don't oppose it." (General public) "I don't like the design of this car, but everyone has their own preferences, so I think it's a good that some people like it." (General public)
	30. Recognizing bias against deviant design	"I reflected on my bias: I used to see <i>Bosozoku</i> -style cars as antisocial, but didn't feel the same when the style was applied to luxury cars" (General public) "It should be accepted with greater openness." (General public)
p. Positive surprise at emerging legitimacy	31. Surprise at global acceptance of deviant car	"I am surprised to see it's more accepted by global than I had imagined." (General public) "It's wonderful to have it recognized globally as a car culture originating from Japan" (General public)
	32. Hope for contributions to innovation	"It would be great if more cars like this emerge in the future, contributing to advancement of automotive industry." (General public) "I hope they take on challenges, expanding the possibilities." (General public)

TABLE 5: Supporting Quotes for Element C

This relationship between C-1 and C-2 clarifies that some pro-social behaviors counteract deviance. Yet, this does not simply mitigate the negative evaluation but disrupts the moral criteria that the audience has held, sometimes reflecting on and altering one's prejudice. We suggest that the contrast between the deviance and the pro-social behavior is essential, not the mitigation.

4.3. Discussion: From Corrective Stigma to Reinforced Stigma

This study sought to address the question: What roles do deviance play in destigmatization? Prior studies have treated deviance as something that must be eliminated or mitigated in order to reduce stigma and secure social acceptance. However, some hints in the literature suggest that deviance is not merely something negative to overcome but has a more active role to play. The analysis has revealed three mechanisms that explain how deviance enables destigmatization. Importantly, deviance is not reduced, compensated and neutralized by aesthetic appeal or prosocial behavior. Rather, these elements operate by shifting the evaluative register through which deviance is judged, while the deviant identity itself remains intact.

First, the deviant identity held by actors involved with the modified cars, such as custom car builders, owners and products, provokes a strong adverse reaction from the broader social audience (Element A). The negative evaluation stems from the perceived immorality associated

with the *Bosozoku* and the sacrilegious act of modifying an art piece. This negative evaluation conversely strengthens the identity of owners who are marginalized and stigmatized by society. As a result, they deepen their loyalty to fellow owners and heighten their motivation to advance their cause. This deviant identity becomes more firmly established as a shared belief within the group, attracting new supporters who resonate with it. They eventually join as members, thereby sustaining the group's growth. In other words, the deviance is not reduced; rather, it reinforces the identity of the modified vehicles and lays the groundwork for countering stigma. Even identities widely perceived as socially deviant can foster a coherent and resilient sense of identity when a critical mass of committed members strongly embraces such identities, paradoxically enhancing their value through a rebellious force.

This insight into paradoxical value creation challenges the traditional definition of what counts as socially appropriate. Following Suchman (1995), a product can be considered normatively illegitimate when it is widely perceived as violating prevailing social norms and values, and is therefore judged as socially inappropriate. However, this study suggests that a product or concept that is not widely accepted, or even is substantially rejected, can leverage such rejection as a driving force for gaining legitimacy. Snyder and Fromkin (1977) similarly argue in psychology that deviance must be interpreted positively. While studies such as Karababa and Ger (2011) have noted that transgression itself can be an attractive feature of a cultural form, this positive dimension of socially deviant identities has remained underexplored in the stigma literature.

Second, the analysis identified aesthetic value as a critical factor in gaining acceptance (Element B). Custom car builders enhanced the aesthetic value of products by applying designs based on their unique ideas and achieving an exceptionally high level of craftsmanship. The modification was more than a simple imitation of the *Bosozoku* style; it was a sophisticated design that could match the already revered design of supercars. This design also required high-level craftsmanship with meticulous attention to detail and dedication to the art of modification. In response, the audience tends to lessen their aversion despite the socially deviant identity of these products. The excellence of the design and style and their historical admiration for supercars ultimately lead these audience members to reassess the cars more positively.

Aesthetic value can transcend the usual moral judgment. Immanuel Kant formulated aesthetic judgment, distinct from moral reason, as a judgment devoid of interest. Specifically, he emphasized that aesthetic judgment is free of moral ideas: If we downgrade the value of a palace because it was a result of the exploitation of subjects—based on a moral idea, it is not an aesthetic judgment. We aesthetically judge the palace to be beautiful without any moral

reasoning. Based on this formulation, Jacques Rancière (2004) advanced the notion of aesthetics by highlighting the suspension of any hierarchical order of value. Morality is meaningful precisely because it has no basis and disrupts existing moral principles, not because it is based on the morally right idea. Art often disrupts existing values and produces confusion for this reason. In the same way, the aesthetic value of the modified supercar solicits aesthetic judgment that is devoid of moral reasoning based on prior criteria. It disrupts such criteria.

Third, the stakeholders involved with modified supercars demonstrated socially positive behaviors contradicting their deviant identity, overturning audience expectations (Element C). Liberty Walk engages with children and supports socially vulnerable individuals, such as people with physical disabilities. Their owners do not engage in deviant behaviors; all cars they own are street-legal and their behavior while driving is in no way disruptive to society or antisocial. This surprises the audience because they would expect the opposite based on the *Bosozoku* image.

Prior research includes similar cases aimed at changing the audience's perception of deviant identities, such as aircraft manufacturing companies in the defense industry entering the civilian aircraft market to mitigate their negative public image (Vergne, 2012). When a stigmatized entity performs socially positive behaviors, such behaviors are often interpreted as attempts to offset or manage its negative image. However, entities involved with these modified supercars have no intention to minimize the deviant identity. They do not deviate first and try to justify it. They do not intend to seek approval through socially positive behaviors. Their engagement with children and their support for disadvantaged people is in line with their positioning as somebody deviant and marginal. Young people who engaged in *Bosozoku* activity in the 1970s had a strong sense that the adults did not understand them. They found themselves in the marginalized and lower status. Adopting such a *Bosozoku* style was a statement of rebellion against the hypocrisy of mainstream morality.

In response, some in the general public perceived these unexpected positive values demonstrated by the stakeholders involved with modified cars, prompting surprise and a shift away from their negative stance. They reconsidered their previously one-sided negative perceptions as prejudiced and adjusted their judgment criteria for legitimacy to a more fundamental and meaningful basis. In other words, they “reframed” the evaluation of the deviant entity. We argue that this would not happen if socially positive behavior were strategically deployed to mitigate the deviant image. Rather, the shift occurs because stakeholders involved with modified supercars enact a genuine critique of mainstream moral criteria by consistently embracing the deviant identity.

If this deviance induced acceptance, it is distinct from the acceptance discussed in the literature. Suchman (1995) points out that in society, entities may maintain their legitimacy despite deviating dramatically from norms simply because such deviance goes unrecognized. In this characterization, deviance can be acceptable if it disguises itself. In contrast, this study revealed that acceptance can result from the heightening of deviance. To be sure, the fact that the modified cars are street-legal would relieve some people because few want them to be illegal. Yet, the more positive assessments we observed among some audience members were not a result of reduced deviance but of the deviant identity itself being reinterpreted in a different light.

4.4. Contribution to Stigma Research

This chapter reframes stigma research in three complementary ways. At the broader level, it reconsiders the meaning for deviant identities to move toward acceptance, in a context where they are neither mitigated nor concealed but instead foregrounded and even celebrated.

1. Destigmatization through reinforced deviance: First, the chapter challenges the dominant premise that stigma must be reduced, neutralized, or concealed in order to gain acceptance. Most prior studies conceptualize destigmatization as a process in which stigmatized actors gradually distance themselves from negative associations, correct misunderstandings, or conform more closely to prevailing moral expectations (Lashley & Pollock, 2020; Wolfe & Bitektine, 2015; Vergne, 2012). In such accounts, deviance is a problem to be managed, and the outcome of destigmatization is typically described as a cleaner or less controversial identity. The analysis here suggests a different pattern. Owners, builders, and fans do not try to tone down the *Bosozoku* image; they embrace it openly and, if anything, amplify it. Negative reactions from external audiences do not weaken this commitment. On the contrary, criticism strengthens in-group solidarity, deepen members' identification with the deviant identity, and motivate them to sustain and grow the community. In this sense, deviance is not the residue left over after destigmatization; it is the very basis on which a more resilient and cohesive identity is built. This mechanism of "reinforcement through rejection" has been suggested in studies on the glorification of subcultures and deviant behavior (Becker, 1963; Hebdige, 1979; Heckert & Heckert, 2002), but it has rarely been theorized as a pathway for stigma reduction by using this mechanism within organizations or markets.

2. Aesthetic suspension of moral judgment as a pathway to destigmatization: Second, we highlight the impact of aesthetic values which have been overlooked in the reevaluation of stigmatized identities. Stigma research has traditionally considered moral judgments as

evaluation criteria, namely distinctions between what is right or wrong, pure or impure, appropriate or inappropriate (Goffman, 1963; Hampel & Tracey, 2019). However, these empirical findings show that audiences evaluate *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars not merely from a moral standpoint, but rather from an aesthetic perspective. Many survey respondents simultaneously describe the cars as “antisocial” and “beautiful” or “cool.” Survey data indicate that a significant proportion of those who view modified cars as deviant also regard them as artistic and high-quality products. In this situation we handle in the research, moral disapproval exists together with aesthetic admiration, thus it suggests the possibility that aesthetic judgment can at least temporarily suspend moral judgment, at least partially. Drawing on Kant and Rancière, this study interprets this as a shift toward evaluation based on form, technique, and emotional impact, rather than norms or sanctions. This perspective provides new arguments in stigma research. It helps us consider how beauty, style, and design can complicate or soften stigmatized perceptions, even when the underlying deviance remains unresolved (Kovács et al., 2014).

3. Prosocial dissonance and legitimacy reframing in destigmatization: Third, the chapter shows that unexpected pro-social behavior can trigger a reframing of legitimacy criteria without requiring the stigmatized actors to deny their deviant identity. Previous work on stigmatized industries—such as arms manufacturing or gambling—has often treated charitable activities or “good citizenship” as strategic moves to offset a negative image (Vergne, 2012; Cederström & Fleming, 2016). In such cases, positive behavior is interpreted as a kind of moral compensation. In the Liberty Walk case, however, the pro-social practices are not framed by actors as image repair. Initiatives aimed at children, support for people with disabilities or social withdrawal, and careful attention to legal compliance are described by participants as a natural extension of their own ethos as marginal, misunderstood actors. For outside observers, this creates a sharp dissonance: those who look “dangerous” or “antisocial” act in ways that are considerate, inclusive, and norm-abiding. This mismatch between appearance and behavior provokes surprise and reflection among some members of the public. Several respondents explicitly tell that they rethink their earlier assumptions and recognizing their own prejudice. The shift in judgment is not simply that the cars are “less bad,” but that the criteria by which they are judged become more nuanced and tolerant. This mechanism suggests that destigmatization can proceed not only through strategic impression management, but also through a deeper reconsideration of moral standards when the actions of deviant actors expose the narrowness of those standards. In this way, these contributions reposition deviance within stigma theory.

These research findings suggest that the concept of deviance within stigma theory can evolve. That is, rather than treating deviance merely as a burden to be managed, deviant identities can become a source of group cohesion, an aesthetic appeal, and an opportunity for ethical reconsideration. The empirical analysis of *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars reveals a process where negative reactions strengthen identity, aesthetic value destabilizes simple moral condemnation, and socially contributory practices prompt audiences to question their own dominant assumptions. By illuminating this complex process, this chapter extends stigma research to a perspective where deviance becomes transparent and even reinforced while simultaneously generating new forms of acceptance and legitimacy (Heckert & Heckert, 2002; Hampel & Tracey, 2019), beyond the familiar narrative of “from stigma to respectability.”

Chapter 5. Craft: Re-enchanting Rationalized Industry

5.1. Empirical Context: Deviance as a Reaction to De-enchantment

We explore the role of deviance in changing and creating something by extending the scope of craft studies. To achieve this, we will examine a new form of craft through the case of modified supercars that embody the deviant identity of *Bosozoku*. This case illustrates how a new form of craft can reclaim what mature industries have lost by adhering to capitalism, without lapsing into nostalgia. Since the Industrial Revolution, the automobile industry has been among the greatest beneficiaries of mass production under capitalism. Built upon successive innovations, it has flourished as a driver of modern progress. However, in recent years, under productive industrialization, the pursuit of highly efficient body designs emphasizing aerodynamics has led to a tendency for car designs to become standardized (Gartman, 1994), making it difficult to distinguish one model from another and leaving little sense of surprise (Bayley, 2011). As a world-renowned Japanese automotive journalist Jun Nishikawa has boldly pointed out, “Cars have become boring.” This homogenizing trend has even extended to supercars—vehicles once celebrated as artistic or craft-like creations within the automotive industry, whose very essence lay in their distinctiveness. In this context, customized supercars embodying socially deviant identities emerged.

Against this backdrop, we argue that craft can revitalize a rationalized supercar industry by re-enchanting it through excess—operationalized as provocative deviant identity, paradoxical value from celebrated irrationality, and authentic aesthetic innovation. We explore this theoretical proposition through the case of *Bosozoku*-inspired supercar modification, which

illustrates how deviant identity and aesthetic excess can reintroduce enchantment into a rationalized category

5.1.1. De-enchantment of Automotive and Supercar Industry

As Gartman (2004) has argued, “the automobile is more than a utilitarian object; it is a personal consumption item imbued with meaning and identity”. Berger and Heath (2007) similarly point out that identity-driven desires for differentiation are especially prominent in the automobile category. Nevertheless, the industry’s constant search for efficiency, relying heavily on repeated wind tunnel testing, has resulted in increasingly homogenized body designs (Cogotti, 2008), eroding individual identity. Consequently, as Kershner (2017) asks, “Is your car boring? Many people candidly answer ‘yes,’” and as Berk (2024) remarks, “We are all bored to death; cars need more individuality and excitement.”

A similar tendency has emerged even within the supercar segment in the automobile industry, which is regarded as a distinctive and differentiated domain. By definition, a “supercar,” as its name suggests, refers to a vehicle that embodies design values surpassing those of ordinary sports cars (Matsunaka, 2021). The supercar category has maintained its *raison d'être* by demonstrating unique *excess* qualities such as “outrageousness” (Scheidl, 2025), “artistic beauty” (Clarke, 2024; Forest, 2024), and “innovativeness” (Jacobs, 2025; Gillett, 2024), all of which appear to be elements inherent to craft. From this perspective, supercars may be regarded as works of craft.

For example, the Lamborghini Countach, introduced in the 1970s and designed by the renowned car designer Marcello Gandini at Bertone, is often regarded as the progenitor of the supercar and established the fundamental design concept that has defined all subsequent Lamborghini supercars to this day. The Countach embodied such “excess” qualities. Notably, the radical and abnormal design of its body structure included the now-iconic *scissor doors*, which swung upward above the roofline. This extraordinary door design became one of the key features that defined the car as a true supercar. Moreover, because of its extremely low height and the massive engine mounted in the midship position, “This ‘sill-sitting’ technique later became *de rigueur* for reversing a Countach as well—since rear visibility was basically nil, drivers would park with the door up and half out of the car, looking back over the rear haunch” (Scheidl, 2025). In contemporary commentary, major automotive magazines positioned the Countach as a radical departure from conventional automotive design, characterizing it as a space-age or otherworldly entity that transcended the norms of automotive form. Reviews in several automotive magazines emphasized its sharply angular wedge silhouette and futuristic

stance, which appeared to depart from all previously established stylistic conventions (Car and Driver, 2023; Octane, 2021; Road & Track, 2022).

However, since the 1990s, the major supercar manufacturers, Lamborghini and Ferrari, have realized managerial rationalization following their integration into major corporate groups, such as Volkswagen and Fiat (Bigbee et al., 2006; Dattée, 2022). In this context, the design process, which had traditionally been entrusted to external *carrozzeria*—the artisanal Italian coachbuilders such as Bertone and Pininfarina that had flourished since the pre-war period—was transferred to in-house departments in pursuit of efficiency and cost optimization. This shift resulted in more rational and conservative styling. (Walton, 2019; Wendler, 2024). Consequently, the outrageousness and distinctiveness have weakened, leading to a decline in the sense of surprise and emotional impact that originally stemmed from supercars’ defining quality—namely, their excess (Shimizu, 2023). Chilton (2023) mentioned, when he described Revuelto, a new model of Lamborghini, “No one is going to spit their coffee out when they see it for the first time like they did when the Countach was new” and “You might argue that no Lamborghini since the Countach has had the effect it had.” Supercars have lost their craft nature, becoming nothing more than luxury goods.

5.1.2. Emergence of modified supercars

In the midst of this situation, Liberty Walk emerged as a brand that modifies such supercars. According to Wataru Kato, the founder of Liberty Walk, “The idea for modification came when a customer who had purchased a Lamborghini Murciélago complained that the design was boring and asked me to make it more radically distinctive. That was when the *Bosozoku* concept came to mind.” It is hardly a coincidence that this Murciélago, developed soon after Lamborghini was acquired by Volkswagen in 1998 and placed under the Audi brand, became the company’s flagship model. In stark contrast to the previous model, the Diablo designed by Marcello Gandini, the Murciélago lost its outrageous aesthetic and became de-encharmed in its styling. It was precisely as a craft-based response to this rationalized design that Liberty Walk’s *Bosozoku*-inspired modification was born.

Jun Nishikawa, an automotive journalist, observes that Liberty Walk has emerged as “a reaction to cars that have become too finished as products, and therefore boring.” Prior studies often frame craft as an alternative that emerges when industrial production and consumption are perceived to have failed to deliver promised societal benefits (Luckman, 2015; Krugh, 2014). These modified vehicles exemplify such craft, appearing in opposition to the rationality of modern industry. Their irrational qualities, such as excessively low ride heights and overly wide

bodies that make them impractical on public roads, constitute precisely the kind of value that Suddaby et al. (2017) describe as part of the “re-enchantment of craft.” This perspective allows us to reconsider craft not as a nostalgic return to tradition, but as a critical and creative force operating within industrial modernity. By examining these modified vehicles, we seek to clarify how unprecedentedly deviant products and their communities have created concepts capable of challenging the mainstream, thereby exploring an alternative mode of craft.

5.2. Findings from Analysis

We conducted interviews with owners and industry professionals, along with a survey of the general public, to clarify the craft-based role of *Bosozoku*-style modified supercars in the automotive industry. We summarize the findings derived from a comprehensive analysis of the collected data. The automobile industry, as a child of mass production that prioritizes efficiency, has, through a process of de-enchantment, lost both identity and design. In contrast, modified cars that embody deviant identities have paradoxically achieved re-enchantment through excessive and unconventional value. The analysis reveals that the craft value embodied in these modified vehicles consists of three key elements. Please refer to Figure 8.

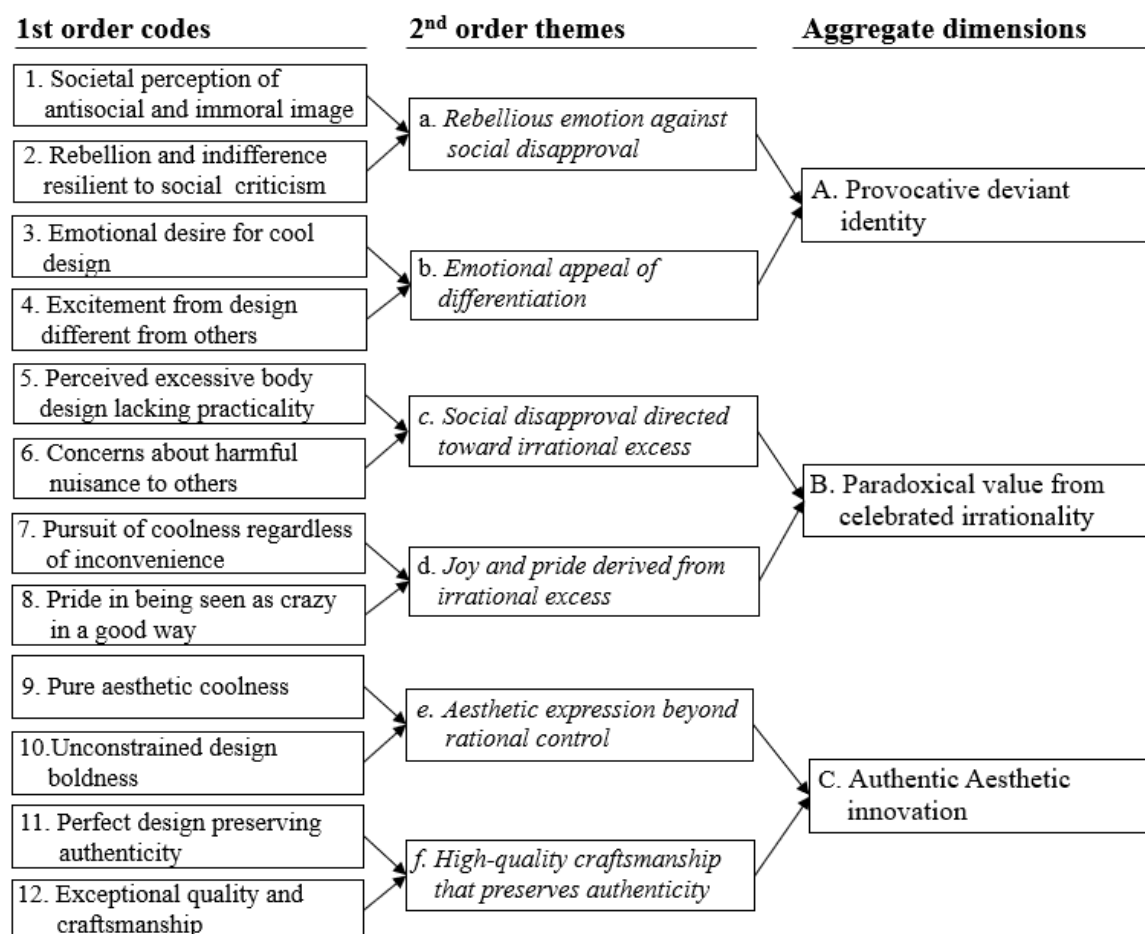


FIGURE 8: Data Structuring

5.2.1. Element A: Provocative deviant identity

These customized cars deliberately emphasize *Bosozoku* concepts, fully aware of the social backlash they provoke. This allows users to find value in provocatively asserting their difference from others. Human psychology contains a “need for uniqueness,” such that when people perceive themselves as excessively similar to others, they tend to experience negative emotions (Fromkin, 1970; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). By embodying designs that achieve differentiation through rebellious and provocative deviance, these vehicles offer an identity unavailable in existing automobiles. Even if that identity is antisocial, as long as it enables differentiation, it is strongly embraced. This reflects a glimpse of the essence of craft. This constitutes the first element, which is supported by two perspectives. (Table 6)

a. *The rebellious emotion against social disapproval.* A major characteristic of these customized cars is that their body design evokes the imagery of *Bosozoku*, which in Japanese society is strongly criticized due to its antisocial associations. One owner of this modified car openly confessed, “In Japan, these cars have the *Bosozoku* image, so there are a lot of haters.” Similarly, many members of the general public expressed strong exclusionary perceptions, stating that they “cannot have a positive impression of cars that remind them of illegal modifications” and that “such cars should disappear from the world.” In Western contexts, supercars are often regarded as sacred, and cutting into their bodies to install modification parts is considered almost immoral. The renowned British magazine *Top Gear* described Liberty Walk as having “become notorious for sawing the fenders off a host of luxury supercars.” Yet such criticism does not trouble the owners. On the contrary, they often welcomed such criticism. As one owner stated, “I don’t care at all about criticism from society. There are always different opinions, and that’s inevitable,” while another remarked, “What’s wrong with having haters? I want to stay positive. Criticism simply means that people are interested in us.” Other owners even demonstrated a more provocative attitude, emphasizing that “it is important to stick to it even when criticized.” Warren and Campbell (2014) note that “coolness is achieved by following one’s own motives rather than the expectations and norms of others.” Marketing research likewise shows that perceptions of cool brands often include an element of rebelliousness (Warren et al., 2019). There is value in persisting in one’s identity and adopting a rebellious stance. Thus, the owners of these customized cars show no hesitation toward the negative perceptions from society; instead, they embrace them with a provocative attitude.

b. *The emotional appeal of differentiation.* Being rejected by society simultaneously means being different from the majority. The owners of these customized cars find great value in opposing the mainstream through their distinctiveness. For example, one owner says, “I’m happy to have something different from others. Being different is definitely cool”, while the others mention, “The greatest value is that I can assert an identity different from others” and “A Ferrari that’s been modified by cutting its original fenders is just special and different”. These statements indicate a strong sense of satisfaction derived from customization-based differentiation.

A. Provocative deviant identity		
2nd order themes	1st order codes	Quotes
a. <i>Rebellious design identity despite societal criticism</i>	1. Societal perception of antisocial and immoral image	“It’s a desecration of the original car.” (general public) “I can’t have a good impression of cars that remind me of illegal modifications.” (general public) “Since the design comes from <i>Bosozoku</i> cars, it carries an image of being antisocial and not fitting into society.” (general public) “Lowering the original specs feels like a desecration of the car.” (general public)
	2. Rebellion and indifference resilient to social criticism	“It’s consistent with <i>Bosozoku</i> culture. There’s a wild aesthetic inspired by <i>Bosozoku</i>, a feeling of always pushing the limits.” (owner) “I don’t care at all about criticism from society. People will always have different opinions.” (owner) “What’s wrong with having critics? I want to stay positive. Maybe criticism just means they’re actually interested in us.” (owner) “I was originally a <i>Bosozoku</i> myself, so I have a rebellious spirit and it doesn’t bother me.” (owner)
b. <i>Affective appeal from being different in design</i>	3. Emotional desire for cool design	“I dislike <i>Bosozoku</i> cars because they’re vulgar, but this is not—I simply think it looks cool.” (professional modeler) “This car is just undeniably cool. The aero parts have shapes you can’t find anywhere else.” (owner) “It looks so cool. I’d love to own one at least once in my life. It’s not about logic—I just want to touch it, ride it, experience it.” (general public)
	4. Excitement from design different from others	“I’m happy to have something different from others. Being different is what I think is really cool.” (owner) “The greatest value is being able to assert an identity that is different from others.” (owner) “This is something different, not a typical body kit, which is the reason why I love it. There are many other custom parts in the market, but Liberty Walk is very different. In other words, an ‘extra mile’ image.” (owner)

TABLE 6: Supporting quotes for Element A

5.2.2. Element B: Paradoxical value from celebrated irrationality

These customized cars are designed with ride heights so low and bodies so wide that they cannot be driven on public roads in their natural state. To enable street use, they are equipped with expensive compressor systems to raise and lower the height, yet owners pay no attention to such extravagance. This excessive and transcendent stance constitutes a powerful opposition

to an established industry that prioritizes efficiency and rationality. This is the second element, which can be explained in two aspects. (Table 7)

The first aspect is *the social disapproval directed toward irrational excess*. As one member of the public remarked, “Cars with excessively low ride heights lack practicality, so I have no interest in them.” Among those who regard automobiles solely as efficient means of transportation, without expecting any design or artistic value, harsh criticism often arises regarding the social nuisance caused by such cars. Comments such as “When cars like these are on public roads, they inconvenience other drivers,” and “I hate them—I don’t even want to see them around me,” exemplify the severity of the disapproval they provoke.

On the other hand, *joy and pride are derived from irrational excess*. Despite such criticism, many owners are entirely unconcerned with the inconvenience or inefficiency that comes from the lowered ride height and widened body design. As one owner declared, “I don’t care if the car scrapes the ground—as long as it looks cool.” This stance reflects an awareness that ride comfort is compromised, yet owners paradoxically find joy in the inconvenience itself, viewing the car from a perspective entirely different from that of the general public. “People around me say, ‘You’re amazing,’ and it stirs up excitement among them”; “There’s no other car pushed this far—people around me say so, and that makes me happy”. In other words, they receive admiration precisely for choosing artistic expression over practicality, fully aware of its irrationality. From the perspective of cognitive science, Norman (2004) suggests that irrational designs that appeal to emotions on an instinctive level may be more readily accepted than functional designs. This joy of prioritizing artistry over efficiency and practicality resonates with Bourdieu's (1984) theory of differentiation which states the differentiation can be achieved by valuing refinement detached from necessity or practicality.

B. Paradoxical value from irrationality		
2nd order themes	1st order codes	Quotes
c. <i>Disapproval of excessive extreme design</i>	5. Perceived excessive body design lacking practicality	“Cars with extremely low ride height are unusable. Completely useless.” (general public) “They’re inconvenient for daily life—poor maneuverability, limited parking options, hard to get in and out of, and I find no appeal at all.” (general public) “With the ride height being so low, the front bumper looks like it could crack right away.” (general public)
	6. Concerns about harmful nuisance to others	“When these kinds of cars run on public roads, they bother other drivers.” (general public) “I hate them because they seem so noisy, and I don’t even want to see them around me.” (general public) “They give the impression of being noisy and a nuisance.” (general public) “Driving them on public roads is a completely annoying—I think they’re very bothersome, illegally modified cars.” (general public)
d. <i>Joy and pride in excessive distinctiveness</i>	8. Pursuit of coolness regardless of inconvenience	“I don’t care if it scrapes the ground—as long as it looks cool, that’s all that matters.” (owner) “Some people criticize that it ruins Ferrari’s original ride quality and design, but of course I already know that. It doesn’t bother me at all.” (owner)
	9. Pride in being seen as crazy in a good way	“People around me say, ‘You’re amazing.’ Everyone was astonished. It’s like, ‘You’re crazy—in a good way.’” (owner) “People react by saying, ‘There’s no other car that goes this far,’ and owning it makes me happy.” (owner)

TABLE 7: Supporting quotes for Element B

5.2.3. Element C: Authentic Aesthetic innovation

In the conventional automobile industry, the pursuit of fuel efficiency through extensive wind tunnel testing has led manufacturers to converge on increasingly similar and rationalized body designs (Cogotti, 2008). These modified cars stand in direct opposition to this trend with the kind of irrational design discussed earlier embodying innovative and highly artistic designs. According to survey data, 52% of respondents recognized these cars as artistic, while 60% perceived them as high-quality products. This constitutes the third element, which can be further divided into two aspects. (Table 8)

The first one is *aesthetic expression beyond rational control*. According to the survey data, 87% of respondents who expressed a favorable attitude toward these customized cars cited their style as the main reason. Many emphasized the pure aesthetic attractiveness of the body design. While the source of a car’s “coolness” is generally attributed to its low ride height and wide body (Shimizu et al., 2024), these customized cars lower the height even further and add large fenders to make the body even wider. In addition, their design is aesthetically distinctive. For example, one of design executives working at Japanese major automakers confessed, “By boldly cutting the rear fender ends, the design brings the car closer to a race car, exposing the

tires when viewed from the rear. I would like to create such a design, but at a major manufacturer it's impossible to do something that bold." Even a design professional from another company acknowledges its unconstrained aesthetic boldness. As a result, most owners pointed out the excellence of the body styling, saying, for instance, "This car is simply cool. The shape of the aero parts is unlike anything else," and "I see it as something entirely different from *Bosozoku* vehicles, but an artwork infused with the coach builder's design expertise." Similarly, members of the general public also expressed admiration, stating, "It's cool. I want to own one at least once in my lifetime. It's not about logic. I just want to touch it and drive it."

Lastly, *the high-quality craftsmanship maintaining authenticity* contributes to aesthetic innovation. Although Liberty Walk modifies existing automobiles, it carefully preserves the design identity of the base cars. This is particularly significant for supercars, many of which were originally designed by renowned designers, and it is meaningful to modify cars so as not to compromise their authenticity. As one professional scale modeler observed, "What's remarkable is that the modifications do not distort the original silhouette—you can still immediately recognize it as a Lamborghini." Moreover, whereas many aftermarket parts require adjustments to fit properly during installation, Liberty Walk does not outsource production. Instead, skilled artisans at its in-house workshop, LB Lab, manufacture the parts, thereby ensuring exceptionally high product quality. One owner remarked, "The workmanship is on another level compared to other tuners. I was surprised by how meticulously the hidden details are finished."

C. Authentic aesthetic innovation		
2nd order themes	1st order codes	Quotes
e. <i>Aesthetic expression beyond rational control</i>	5. Pure aesthetic coolness	“This car is simply cool. The shape of the aero parts is unlike anything else.” (owner) “It’s cool. I want to own one at least once in my lifetime. It’s not about logic. I just want to touch it and drive it.” (general public) “I see it as something entirely different from <i>Bosozoku</i> vehicles, but an artwork infused with car builder’s design expertise.” (general public)
	6. Un-constrained design boldness	“By cutting part of the rear fender, the design makes the car closer to a racing car, exposing the tires from behind. I would like to create such a design, but at a major manufacturer it’s impossible to do something that bold.” (executive in charge of design at a major automobile company) “It’s not that they are designing freely as if making a plastic model. The founder, Kato-san, probably just wants to shape the car into his own ideal form, just like us modelers.” (professional scale modeler)
h. <i>High-quality craftsmanship maintaining authenticity</i>	7. Perfect design preserving authenticity	“Normally, when you do such modifications, the design falls apart, but the fact that it doesn’t is truly astonishing.” (professional scale modeler) “The basic original form is preserved.” (professional scale modeler) “What’s amazing is that even with that much modification, the original Lamborghini silhouette is not lost—you can still recognize it as a Lamborghini.” (professional scale modeler)
	8. Exceptional quality and craftsmanship	“Liberty Walk has their own <u>work shop</u> and the quality is high. They uses a 3D scanner to measure the actual car, then machines the parts on a lathe.” (professional modeler) “The product quality is incomparably better than other tuners. What’s surprising is that even the parts you can’t see are well made.” (owner) “Product quality is very high... good fit. With other custom kits, you usually need to adjust the fitting, but with this you don’t.” (owner)

TABLE 8: Supporting quotes for Element C

5.3. Discussion: From Nostalgic Craft to Deviant Re-enchanting Craft

We clarified the role of deviance in a new form of craft by examining how *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars re-enchanted the mature automotive industry. These phenomena make us reconsider the role craft plays in modern society. In a form distinct from the world of traditional artisans, excess and deviance are giving rise to new creativity.

Concretely, we empirically analyzed the emergence of these customized cars and identified three essential elements that enable products with socially deviant identities to create new value in opposition to the mainstream of the mature automobile industry: namely, provocative deviant identity, paradoxical value from celebrated irrationality, and authentic aesthetic innovation. These three elements constitute an alternative form of craft. This finding provides a novel contribution to craft research by showing how deviant practices can generate new value within mature industries.

The three elements we identified—Deviance, Irrationality, and Aesthetics—are all bound together by a single principle: “excess”. Excess is the emotional logic through which craft regains vitality in a de-enchanted, efficiency-centered world. Deviance embodies “social excess”

that transcends norms, irrationality embodies “cognitive excess” that prioritizes emotion over function, and aesthetic innovation embodies “visual excess” that transforms utility into enchantment. These demonstrate that this form of craft is realized not through harmony, but through the acceptance of conflict and contradiction.

The excess of the *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars signifies that the spirit of craft exists within the pursuit of meaning beyond logic—that is, within humanity's fundamental desire to re-enchant the rationalized world. At first glance, *Bosozoku* may seem to have nothing to do with craft, but in reality, they might be craft itself. Supercars have long embodied an excess that transcends the confines of capitalism and been often treated as crafts or works of art. Yet that excess has been lost, with many supercars degenerating into mere luxury status symbols. The deviance of *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars has revived that lost excess by supplementing it with emotional value from within.

As Heckert and Heckert (2002) suggest, negative deviance—although initially condemned—can, under certain conditions, generate meaningful social value. Although it cannot be conclusively determined that social deviance was a necessary condition for this re-crafting, the fact that an antisocial and negatively perceived identity effectively fulfilled a valid craft role is theoretically significant. The finding that the concept of social deviance—vastly different from traditional notions of craft emphasizing harmony—can serve as a generative element of new craft provides important implications for craft studies.

5.4. Contribution to Craft Research

This chapter advances craft research by providing an empirical and theoretical response to ongoing questions about whether craft's value primarily derives from tradition, continuity and moral harmony. Based on the empirical analysis of *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars, we demonstrate that craft's value can emerge through deviance, excess, irrationality, and aesthetic innovation.

1. Reframing craft beyond nostalgia through deviance: First, this chapter questions the conventional view that craft is fundamentally tied to continuity, tradition, and artisanal practice which are often treated as nostalgic. Much of the craft literature, from famous Adamson's *Thinking Through Craft* (2007) to Dormer's (1995) work on the moral defense of skilled handwork, assumes that craft derives its value from authentic techniques preserved across generations to resist the rationalized modern production. Even contemporary research including Luckman's (2015) analysis of the “craft economy” and Bell et al.'s (2019) work on craft

organizations continues to frame craft as restorative or nostalgic, emphasizing a return to authenticity, locality, or pre-industrial ideals.

On the other hand, the empirical cases in this study point in the opposite direction. Rather than emerging from continuity and authenticity, the craft practices surrounding supercar modifications inspired by *Bosozoku* develop from deviance, provocative stances, norm-breaking, and deliberate confrontation with the automotive industry's aesthetic and moral expectations. Positioning itself as an antidote to industrial modernity and unlike traditional craft that emphasizes harmony, this form of craft emerges from the friction within modernity itself. Consequently, craft is redefined not as the guardian of historical techniques, but as a creative mode that can be generated through dissent, subcultural identity, and norm-breaking. This chapter guides us toward developing craft theory beyond traditional constraints and toward a more dynamic understanding of how new craft forms emerge through such discussions.

Furthermore, this chapter broadens the moral and cultural premises of craft theory by showing that deviant practices can also contribute to craft value creation. Much of the craft literature still assumes, often implicitly, that craft's moral authority stems from authenticity, attentiveness, patience, and artisan virtues (Sennett, 2008; Risatti, 2007; Dormer, 1995; Adamson, 2007; Greenhalgh, 1997). Even when scholars examine subcultural craft practices, the focus tends to fall on identity expression or community creativity, not on forms that are socially stigmatized. However, the cases in this chapter suggest something more complicated: craft can arise even from identities that many people view as morally questionable. *Bosozoku*-inspired modifications reveal a setting in which deviance and aesthetic expression feed into each other. Deviance brings the emotional energy, what we call "excess", and craft becomes the channel that turns that energy into a cultural form. Seen this way, craft is not sustained only by harmony or ethical purity, but it can also be energized by conflict, provocation, and marginality. This leads craft researchers to reconsider the moral boundaries of craft and to take seriously the generative potential of practices that sit outside socially approved norms.

2. "Excess" as an alternative logic of craft re-enchantment: Second, this chapter introduces excess as an emotional logic to change the status quo and shows how it re-enchants a rationalized industry. Scholars such as Sennett (2008) and Malafouris (2013) have emphasized material engagement and embodied skill as the core of craft's cultural force, while Suddaby, Ganzin, and Minkus (2017) argue that craft enables the re-enchantment to modernity by appealing to sensory richness and imagination. However, much of this work still treats craft as something grounded in intimacy and delicate attentiveness with a fundamentally gentle, domestic, harmonious aesthetic. Sennett (2008) emphasizes patient, careful engagement with

materials as an ethical practice. Dormer (1995) stresses discipline and moral virtue. Risatti (2007) highlights the meditative qualities of craft, and Greenhalgh (1997) underlines its humble, nurturing dimensions. In these accounts, the value of craft emerges through slowness, precision, thoughtfulness, and emotional warmth rather than intensity or spectacle.

In contrast, what this research's findings show is a rather different route: excess—composed of deviance, irrationality, and aesthetic exaggeration—acts as another mechanism of enchantment. It brings back surprise, emotion, and excitement into a domain that has otherwise been streamlined by rationalized design processes. Although prior research occasionally gestures toward enchantment, it seldom considers how deliberately provocative or seemingly irrational aesthetics might become central to craft's value creation. By identifying excess as a distinct pathway through which craft resists rationalization, this chapter complicates and deepens existing craft theory.

3. Expanding the empirical domain of craft: Third, this chapter expands the scope of research by empirically analyzing the value of craft. Much craft research—covering ceramics, textiles, woodworking, micro-enterprises, and food artisans—has focused on small-scale production, locality, and manual labor. Even when contemporary practices are examined (e.g., Holmes's (2014) study of barbering as “temporary craft”), the focus remains on service labor, emotional labor, or embodied care.

However, the case of modified supercars demonstrates that craft can emerge even within technologically advanced, globally mediated, and commercialized industrial contexts. In this study, the value of craft is not about returning to manual production but about allowing practitioners to imbue highly rationalized objects with new meanings. This chapter expands the implications of craft studies by showing that craft can still operate in domains shaped by wind tunnel testing, computational modeling, and corporate design governance. This suggests that craft does not need to just rely on traditional techniques or material simplicity, rather it can exist in hybrid spaces where advanced engineering and aesthetic innovation intersect.

These findings propose a new form of craft, distinct from conventional accounts, as a generative practice that can arise from deviance, excess, and confrontation with rationalized systems rather than from nostalgic continuity and domestic harmony. They show that the craft role for re-enchantment extends beyond gentle attentiveness and moral harmony to include intensity, provocation, and marginality. By demonstrating that such a form of craft can operate in technologically advanced and commercialized industries, this chapter broadens both the craft and the empirical scope of craft theory.

Chapter 6. Category: Institutional Renewal through Deviant Subcategories

6.1. Empirical Context: Erosion of Category Value in the Supercar Industry

As mentioned earlier in Section 5.1 during the analysis of craft research, the automotive industry, and further within it the supercar category, has lost its inherent value within the logic of pursuing the absolute profit-seeking of supercar manufacturers as corporations, based on capitalist mass production and efficiency. Supercars inherently possess meaning as a supercar category and are justified as such because they embody the characteristics of outrageousness, artistic beauty, and innovativeness. When these unique characteristics are compromised, the category loses its legitimacy, and its value as a category is diminished. As stated in Section 2.4, while prior research on categories increasingly emphasizes the importance of dynamic change, it remains fundamental that the value guardrails defined by strict boundaries determine a category's value (Hsu et al., 2009; Zuckerman, 1999).

However, amid various societal and market changes, categories sometimes inevitably expand their boundaries to incorporate diverse values, leading to value diffusion. This causes the category's value to diminish. While the context of craft research in chapter 5 interpreted this phenomenon as the “de-enchantment of craft,” within the context of category research in this chapter, it is interpreted as the “erosion of category value.” Within the supercar category, manufacturers pursuing profits shifted design from external aggressive designers to in-house production. This eliminated excessive waste in design while transforming the product away from “extremely distinctive designs that repel most ordinary people” toward something accessible to any affluent individual capable of paying the price. As a result, while short-term performance has improved, some products have lost their outrageousness, leading to what appears to be an erosion of category value.

6.2. Findings from Analysis

Amidst this erosion of category value, we clarify how social deviance restores value by reconstructing categories. To this end, we empirically analyze how *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars create categories and what role they play towards the supercar category within the industry. Reiterating the research questions: RQ3:” How can deviance address category value erosion caused by institutional contradictions through category reconfiguration?

6.2.1. Overview of *Bosozoku*-Inspired Modified Supercar Category

First, we examine the path through which this modified supercar category emerged. As mentioned in Section 5.1.2, this form of modification was prompted by the dissatisfaction of a single Liberty Walk customer—at a time when Liberty Walk was still operating solely as a supercar dealership. The story began in 2008, when an owner of a Lamborghini Murciélago, feeling that existing supercars lacked the level of extremeness he desired, asked the shop owner to modify his car. Following dissemination at events like Japan's Tokyo Auto Salon and the U.S. SEMA Show, its public recognition gradually increased (Stance, 2021). Invitations to the 2016 Essen Motor Show and the 2017 Geneva Motor Show became the catalyst for its subsequent steady rise in prominence. Major brands in this category, similar to Liberty Walk, include RAUH-Welt Begriff (RWB) and Rocket Bunny/Pandem. Each has a slightly different flavor: Liberty Walk primarily modifies Italian supercars like Ferrari, Lamborghini, and Maserati; RAUH-Welt Begriff focuses exclusively on the Porsche 911, specifically air-cooled models; and Rocket Bunny/Pandem targets BMW and Lexus.

Figure 9 shows data on global website search volume trends extracted from Google Trends. Search volume for the top three brands in the *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercar category has consistently exceeded that of the original supercar category since 2016. This indicates that the modified supercar category has sufficiently gained cognitive legitimacy from society and can be considered firmly established.

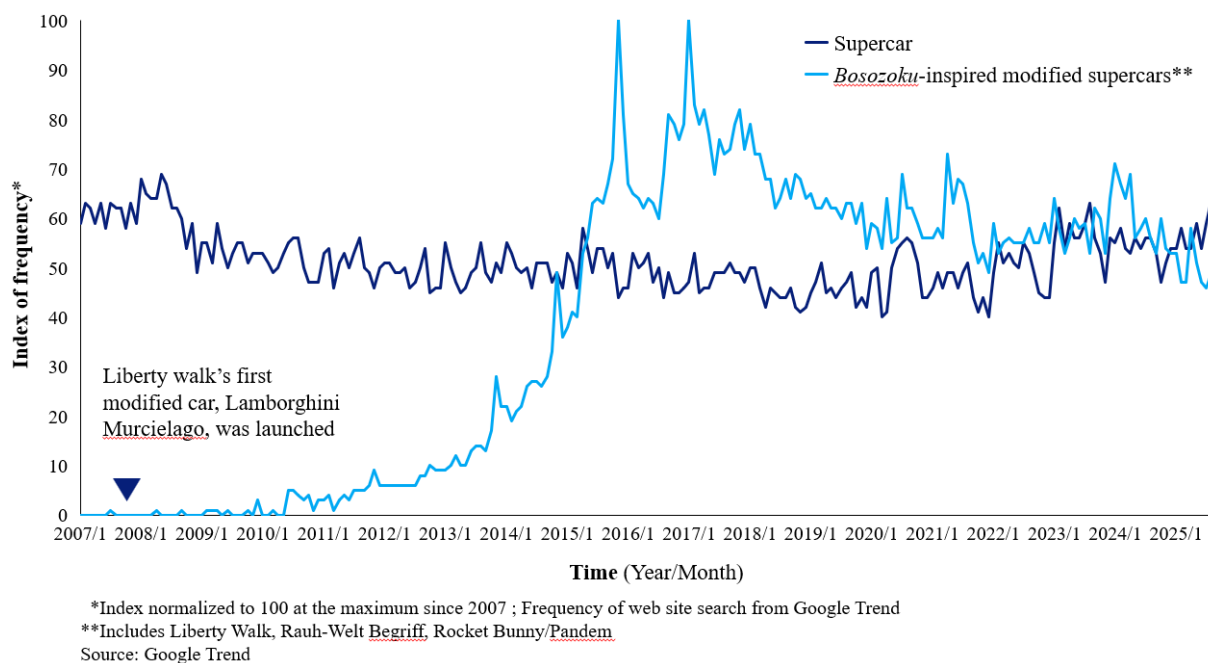
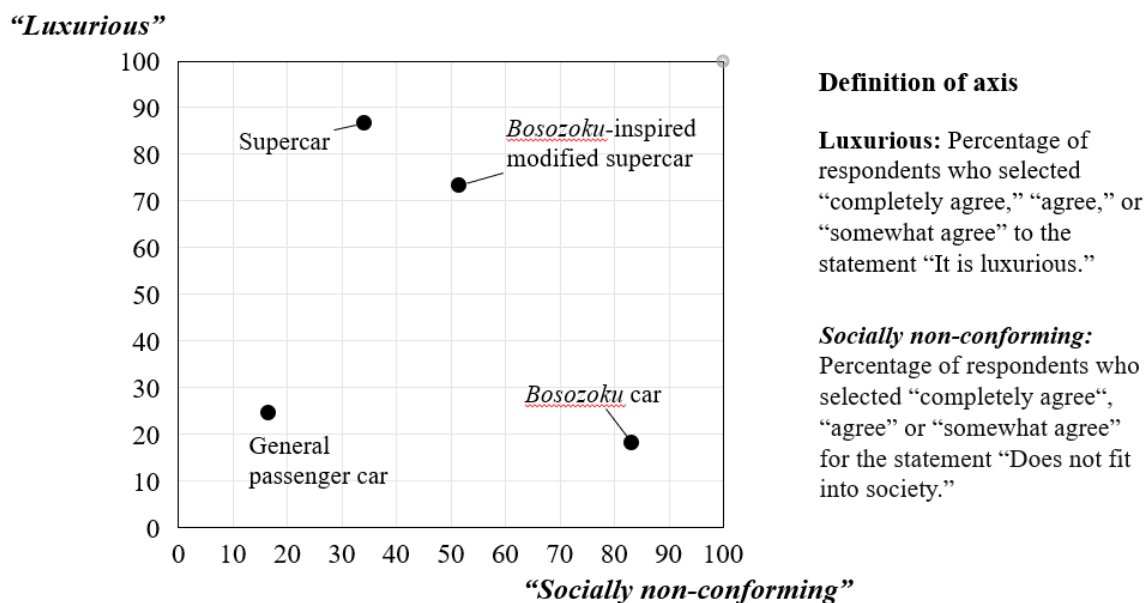


FIGURE 9: Trend of Web Search Volume

Next, we analyze the perceived categorical positioning of modified cars. Figure 10 summarizes survey results from the general public, plotting respondents' perceptions of various automotive categories along axes of social nonconformity and luxury. *Bosozone*-inspired modified supercars have become recognized as occupying a distinct position, neither purely supercars nor *Bosozone* cars, as a result of establishing themselves as a category. We analyzed the statistical significance of this analysis result. Because the same respondents evaluated all car types, we conducted paired-samples t-tests focusing on theoretically relevant comparisons across both dimensions. The results indicate that *Bosozone*-inspired modified supercars occupy an intermediate position between supercars and *Bosozone* cars: they were perceived as significantly less luxurious than supercars but more luxurious than *Bosozone* cars, and at the same time as significantly more socially non-conforming than supercars but less socially non-conforming than *Bosozone* cars (all p-values < .001, two-tailed, see Table 9 for results of paired samples t-tests)



Note: Number represents the percentage of respondents at survey

FIGURE 10: Perception mapping of automobile categories

Dimension	Comparison	Mean difference	T(618)	p(two-tailed)
Luxurious	SC – <u>ModSC</u>	- 0.68	- 10.68	< .001
Luxurious	<u>ModSC</u> – Boso	- 2.24	- 27.79	< .001
Socially non-conforming	SC – <u>ModSC</u>	0.57	8.34	< .001
Socially non-conforming	<u>ModSC</u> – Boso	1.25	16.76	< .001

Note: Abbreviations used in the *Comparison* column are as follows: SC = supercars; ModSC = *Boso-zoku*-inspired modified supercars; Boso = *Boso-zoku* cars.

TABLE 9: Results of Paired Samples t-tests

6.2.2. Category Formation Driven by Socially Deviant Identity

The research question in this chapter is: “How can deviance address category value erosion caused by institutional contradictions by enabling category renewal?” This question asks what role deviance plays from a category-theoretical perspective. However, before addressing this question, a fundamental issue arises: Can entities associated with deviance even form legitimate categories?

According to prior research, deviating from socially legitimized categories produces social and economic penalties—so-called “legitimacy discounts”—imposed through “categorical imperatives” (Zuckerman, 1999). Following this logic, category studies have generally assumed that categories are fundamentally positive, provide social benefits, and should be recognized as legitimate and desirable. In contrast, the *Boso-zoku*-inspired modified supercars examined in this study embody a socially deviant concept that attracts criticism and aversion from the general public. As such, they would seem inherently unlikely to attain recognition as a legitimate category.

The formation of a category typically requires a cooperative interaction between external audiences and internal actors. Navis and Glynn (2010), for example, showed that the satellite radio category emerged because entrepreneurial firms as internal actors responded to the expectations of stock market investors as external audiences. In many cases, the emergence of a new category also depends on activists who advocate its value to broader society. Rao et al. (2003) documented how social movement entrepreneurs championed and shaped the *nouvelle cuisine* category. Delmestri et al. (2016), in their analysis of how grappa transformed from a low-status to a high-status product, highlighted the importance of activists such as industry

journalists in driving this “status change.” Similarly, Humphreys (2010) argued that, for socially deviant entertainment such as casinos to gain legitimacy, not only consumer acceptance but also structural changes in legal regulation, enabled by cultural and normative support from activists, are required.

However, in this study, unlike prior research, the category appears to have formed as internal actors responded to criticism and aversion from external audiences. This reaction fostered a rebellious group identity that defined the category’s core and sharpened its boundaries with the outside world (Figure 11). In other words, the category emerged not through collaboration but through antagonism between internal and external actors. Moreover, because the identity associated with this category is imbued with social deviance, the usual incentives for external activists to promote category change do not apply. The analysis that follows examines this process in detail.

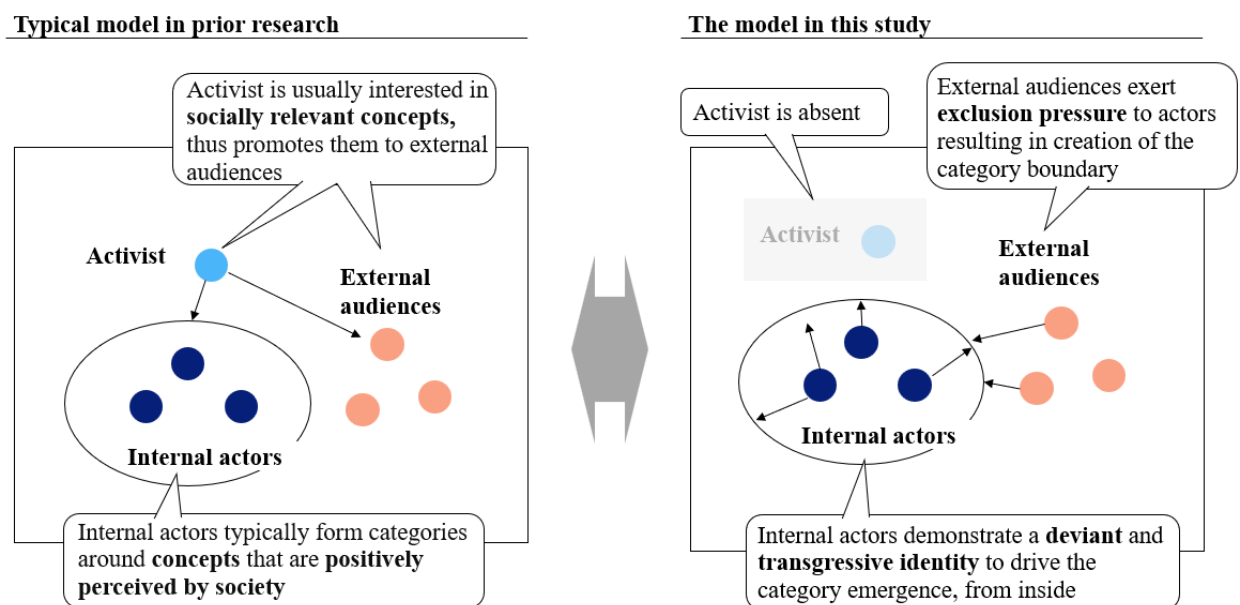


FIGURE 11: Conflict between Internal Actors and External Audience

Interviews with external audiences revealed a strong sense of rejection and criticism toward this category.

“Internally, we don't even consider this category of vehicles; we actively avoid them.

We won't officially accept them.”

(Major Automaker Executive)

“The general public might muster some curiosity, but they won't accept it as legitimate.”

(Automotive Journalist)

“I doubt many journalists would engage with this car and try to promote it. Every major automaker hesitates to get close to it.”

(Automotive Journalist)

“Bosozoku-inspired designs” carry an image of antisocial groups and a sense of being out of step with society, making people feel uneasy or fearful toward those who ride them.”

(General public)

On the other hand, modified car owners—internal actors—pay no heed whatsoever to external criticism. Rather, they are spurred by it to purify their identity and solidify their category.

“I don't care about criticism from external people at all. So what? I think they criticize out of curiosity or jealousy.”

(Owner)

“I couldn't care less about criticism from the public. It's inevitable that opinions vary.”

(Owner)

“While I believe we should maintain a humble attitude toward society, we must not change ourselves. We must all cooperate to see our vision through.”

(Owner)

Based on these observations, it is suggested that a mechanism exists in which negative pressure from external audiences intensifies resistance among internal actors, thereby increasing the category's rigidity and sharpening its boundaries. This dynamic enables a category to form even without the support of external activists. Such a mechanism has not been discussed in prior category research and thus represents a substantive academic contribution.

6.2.3. Category Complement: How Deviant Subcategories Supplement Mainstream

As noted earlier, the reason this modified supercar category—characterized by a deviant identity—came into existence was that the value of the existing supercar category had been eroded. But why was the supercar category itself unable to reclaim its sense of outrageousness? This was due to institutional contradictions (Seo & Creed, 2002). This refers to the paradox that attempting to maintain an institution's legitimacy causes it to lose efficiency or rationality, or conversely, that pursuing rationality too aggressively causes it to lose legitimacy. Supercar manufacturers, operating within capitalist logic, have relaxed the excessiveness in their designs to appeal to a broader audience. This is an institutional contradiction: by pursuing rationality, they have lost the excessiveness that demonstrates their legitimacy as supercars.

Take Ferrari as an example. In 1969, Ferrari sold 50 percent of its shares to Fiat, marking the first phase of its modernization. This represented a departure from the business model established by Enzo Ferrari, which relied on selling highly exclusive handcrafted road cars to finance the racing program. Subsequently, in 1988, Fiat increased its shareholding to 90 percent, further consolidated its control and accelerated Ferrari's modernization. This constituted the

second phase. Then, in 2015, Fiat carried out Ferrari's IPO and spin-off, which marked the third phase and fully embedded the company within capitalist market logics. As a result, although the former chairman had imposed strict production volume limits to preserve the brand's exclusivity and scarcity, the new president lifted these restrictions in order to meet the expanded market expectations created by the IPO.

Former Chairman Luca di Montezemolo sought to limit annual production at about 7,000 cars, no doubt to the ire of current owners. The 7,000-car limit was instigated by di Montezemolo as a way to maintain Ferrari's exclusivity when most rivals are racing to break sales record after sales record, but with Sergio Marchionne running the show and a share market listing looming the desire to meet growing demand for Ferrari cars appears too strong to resist."

(Vijayenthiran, V., Motor Authority, 2015, October 14)

Furthermore, beyond merely lifting production volume limits, the company rapidly expanded its customer base and product portfolio, including the introduction of hybrid models and SUV models that are conceptually distant from the supercar category.

"...our current growth strategy contemplates a measured but significant increase in car sales above current levels as we target a larger customer base and modes of use ... and our product portfolio evolves with a broader product range".

(Ferrari N.V. annual report, 2022)

As a result, sales volume increased at a CAGR of 6.7% (Figure 12), and stock prices also rose significantly at a CAGR of 32.5% (Figure 13).

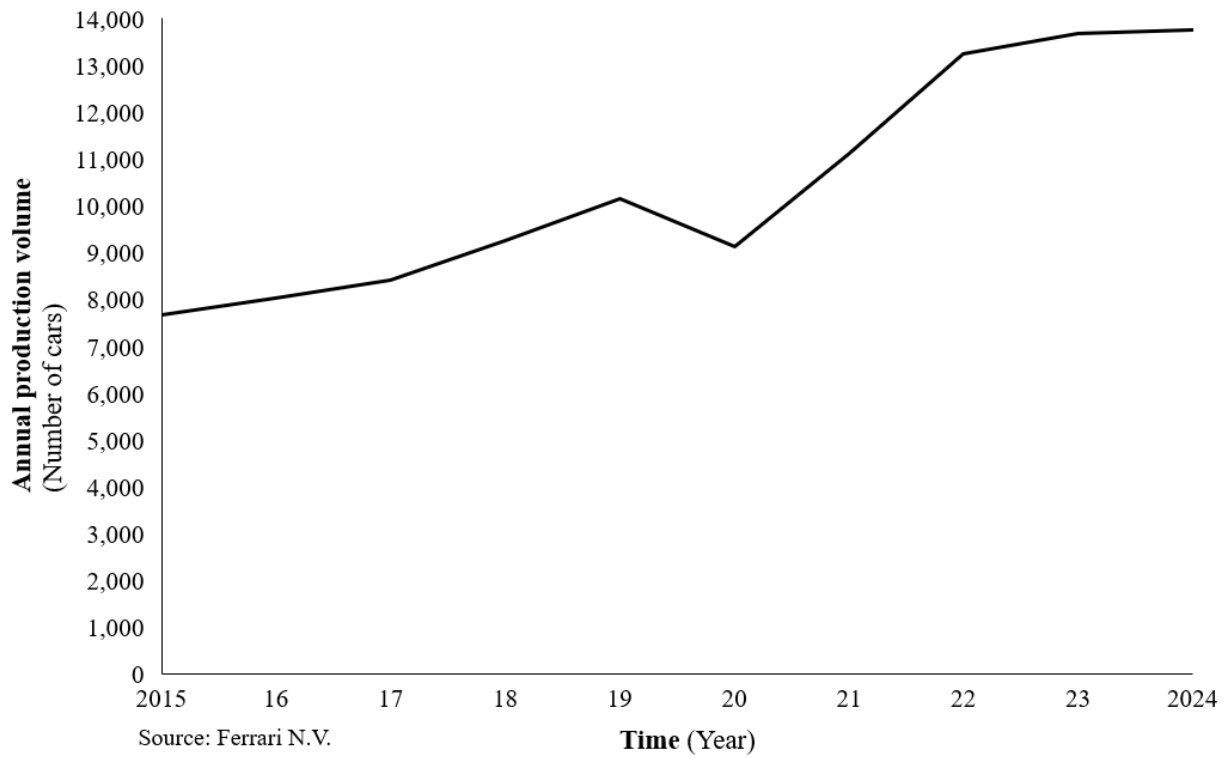


FIGURE 12: Trend of Number of Cars Produced by Ferrari N.V.

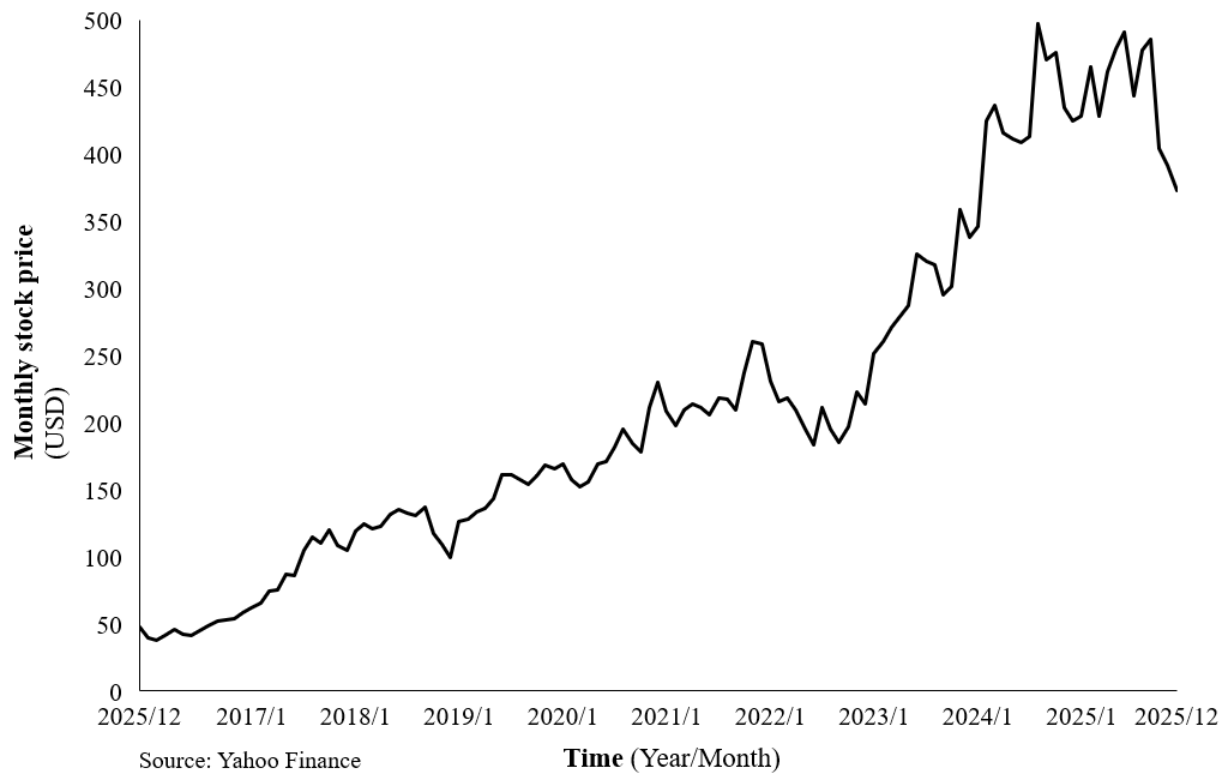


FIGURE 13: Trend of Stock Price of Ferrari N.V.

However, the company's relentless pursuit of growth to meet stock market expectations sparked fierce criticism among Ferrari enthusiasts.

"With the Roma I kind of see the opposite... I see a car that plays it safe – a very digestible design. I see a car that mimics a somewhat 'generic' sports GT design for the masses. To me that is not very Ferrari... It could be anything really, which I find boring."
(Fun A at FerrariChat, 2020, May 15)

"The front fascia has a design that feels too subdued and lacks impact, and it ends up looking like a car Sony once unveiled."
(Fun B at Carview, 2023, July 12)

Furthermore, when Ferrari launched the *Ferrari Purosangue* in 2024—an SUV, an unusual move for a supercar manufacturer—it was met with a whirlwind of criticism and warnings from journalists. This was also an attempt to expand the delivery of its supercar brand value to a broader customer base, including people who had not previously been Ferrari customers.

"It seemed to undermine the very thing Ferrari's success has been built upon."
(Bovingdon at Top Gear, 2024)

"The Ferrari Purosangue is one of the company's most important – and controversial – launches of recent memory. It asks "whether Ferrari can broaden its identity without diluting what makes it unique."
(Autocar, 2024)

Ferrari sought to expand its category beyond supercars into a more mainstream automotive segment with milder designs as part of its growth strategy to meet capital market demands. However, such "category spanning" leads to penalties for the producer, as audiences perceive a poorer fit to category expectations (Hsu et al., 2009).

Constrained by these institutional contradictions, supercars themselves have been unable to reclaim their outrageousness. Amidst this, *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars emerged, satisfying customers' latent dissatisfaction. Many Liberty Walk owners praise this distinctiveness and outrageousness.

"Its design is unlike anything else, something ordinary supercar manufacturers could never produce."
(Owner of modified supercar)

"When you drive this car, people see you as someone who really stands out."
(Owner of modified supercar)

“A Ferrari with its fenders cut is just special and different—there’s nothing else like it.”

(Owner of modified supercar)

“Being different is what truly makes it cool.” (Owner of modified supercar)

The *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars complemented the value of the supercar category, which had reached a state of institutional deadlock. I refer to this phenomenon as a “category complement.” Its role is to fulfill, in a complementary manner, what the mainstream category can no longer accomplish on its own due to institutional contradictions.

A category that emerges entirely from outside, without meaningful ties to the original category, is unlikely to function as a complement. The category which can be complementary to the original must retain some inherent value which the original category has; only on that basis can a complementary category express the value that the original category can no longer realize due to its institutional constraints. One of Liberty Walk's design characteristics is that despite the bold modifications, the authenticity of the original design remains intact. A professional scale modeler familiar with Liberty Walk's designs marvels, “What's amazing is that even with that much modification, the original Lamborghini silhouette is not lost—you can still recognize it as a Lamborghini.” This precisely demonstrates how Liberty Walk creates new value while possessing the design of the original category, complementing the original category.

We define the category that achieves this complementarity as a “subcategory” relative to the original category of the main entity. In the field of branding research, there is a definition for sub-brands, and this is a similar concept. A sub-brand is a child brand created when a company wants to expand a brand by leveraging part of the parent brand's value while appealing to a value distinct from the parent brand's original value. According to Aaker (2000), “sub-brands allow brands to stretch across products and markets, address conflicting brand strategy needs,...and protect brands from being diluted by over-stretching.” In other words, sub-brands inherit some of the parent brand's value while promoting values that conflict with the parent brand. However, because they are separate brands, they do not cause conflicts and do not dilute the parent brand's value. For example, when a luxury brand wants to sell a new product that carries part of its image while being more affordable to a broader customer base, it often creates a sub-brand. In this way, the parent brand can avoid being associated with a lower-price image and thus prevent brand dilution, while the sub-brand is still able to communicate a selected portion of the high-end parent brand's value.

Applying this concept to our research, a sub-brand can be understood as analogous to a subcategory. As the parent category of supercars was increasingly pressured by economic forces

to produce more conservative designs, *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercars emerged as a subcategory. This subcategory supplied the sense of outrageousness that the supercar category had lost, thereby effectively “supplementing” it.

6.3. Discussion: From Category Stretching to Category Complement

In the previous chapter, we proposed the concept of category complement: within categories whose values have been eroded, subcategories that inherit the category's values while also possessing different values can complementarily restore the eroded values. We examine whether any alternative forms of category renewal could have enabled the supercar category to recover its eroded value (Figure 14).

Categories sometimes expand their boundaries to incorporate attributes or meanings from adjacent categories, thereby generating new forms of value or enabling new forms of purpose. This is referred to as “category stretching” (Durand & Paoletta, 2013). In the case examined in this study, one might ask whether the supercar category could have stretched its own boundaries to incorporate deviant identities and thereby reclaim its sense of excess. In reality, however, institutional contradictions prevented it from stretching those boundaries of its own volition.

Another typical form of category dynamics is “category straddling.” This occurs when a product or organization that belongs to one category simultaneously claims membership in another, in order to access value that cannot be obtained within a single category. This mechanism is often effective when members of a stigmatized category straddle additional categories in order to dilute their stigma (Vergne, 2012). However, this mechanism does not apply to the cases in this study. As Hsu et al.,(2009) states, adopting multiple memberships lowers audience evaluation and incurs penalties. Therefore, it would be extremely difficult to regain the value lost by the supercar category by belonging to other categories with deviant identities.

Thus, to institutionalize the cases arising in this study, the existing category dynamics approach demonstrated in prior research appear unlikely to function. Therefore, the concept of category complement was introduced for the cases in this study. This concept involves a subcategory—a separate entity that inherits the characteristics of the original category while possessing traits of other categories—complementarily fulfilling roles that the original category cannot achieve. It functions regardless of any institutional contradictions arising within the original category. The introduction of the concept of subcategories and the approach of category complement utilizing it represents a contribution to category dynamics research that has continued since Zuckerman (1999) introduced prototypes.

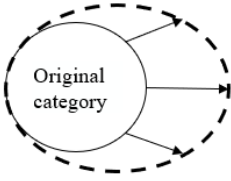
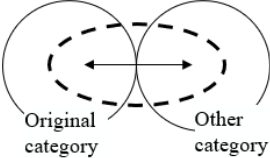
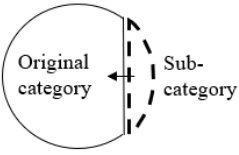
		Explanation	Assessment of model
Category stretching		The original category stretches the boundary according to purpose (Durand & Paoletta, 2013)	It does not work when categories cannot stretch due to institutional constraints
Category straddling		Category members belonging to the original category gain different values by straddling over other categories (Vergne, 2012)	It can dilute the stigma of the original category but cannot go so far as to restore its eroded value
Category complement		The original category is complemented by its sub-category that retains its traits but adds deviant values it cannot have	Even when stretching is blocked by institutional constraints, a separated subcategory can supplement eroded value

FIGURE 14: Comparison of alternative forms of category renewal

6.4. Contribution to Category Research

This chapter contributes to category research by revisiting core assumptions about how categories with deviant identities emerge and how mature categories can draw on such deviant forms to restore value. In doing so, we extend theoretical perspectives on how institutional contradictions are managed across interconnected categorical layers. Ultimately, the chapter offers a broader understanding of how deviance can serve as a source of renewal within mature and rationalized category systems.

1. Category emergence through opposition instead of conformity: First, we challenge the rooted assumption that category emergence is a cooperative accomplishment between internal actors and external audiences. Studies of *nouvelle cuisine* (Rao, Monin & Durand, 2003), grappa (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016), or satellite radio (Navis & Glynn, 2010) all portray category creation as a joint project between internal actors and external audiences: entrepreneurs introduce new prototypes, activists and journalists champion them, and external audiences gradually come to see the new form as legitimate. In other words, category growth is usually described as requiring at least some degree of endorsement from outside the focal community.

The process observed in this study diverges sharply from that model. The *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercar category emerged in a context driven by criticism, reputational distancing and broad social aversion. External audiences, including major automakers, journalists, and the

general public, not only view it unfavorably but actively rejected the identity (Zuckerman, 1999). Yet instead of suppressing the nascent category, these negative reactions galvanized internal actors. Owners and builders became more committed, more unified, and more explicit in their embrace of deviance. The boundaries of the category were sharpened not through cognitive alignment but through antagonism. No activists intervened on behalf of the category, nor did any cultural intermediaries strategically elevate it. The very absence of such figures and the presence of hostility helped define the category's identity.

By showing that categories can be formed through opposition rather than conformity, this chapter extends category theory beyond consensus-oriented models of category emergence and highlights "boundary formation through conflict" as a unique mechanism deserving greater attention.

2. "Category Complement" as a mechanism of value restoration: Second, we introduce "category complement" as a mechanism for restoring value to a parent category affected by institutional contradictions. Previous research has portrayed category evolution in terms of stretching, straddling, or founding entirely new categories adjacent to existing ones (Durand & Paolella, 2013; Hsu et al., 2009; Granqvist, Grodal & Woolley, 2013). These mechanisms assume that value is recovered by altering boundaries or incorporating new elements directly into the original category.

However, when institutional contradictions constrain a category's ability to evolve, these mechanisms break down (Seo & Creed, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2010). The supercar category, pressured by corporate rationalization, investor expectations and growing customer bases, could not stretch toward more outrageous designs without alienating its expanded audience or harming sales. Nor could it straddle deviant identities without incurring penalties associated with poor categorical fit (Hsu et al., 2009).

The *Bosozoku*-inspired modified supercar subcategory demonstrates a different form of renewal. It retains the symbolic core of the parent category, especially the recognizable silhouettes and design heritage of supercars, yet it reinfuses the excess, risk, and aesthetic boldness that the mainstream category abandoned. This subcategory does not compete with the parent category, nor does it threaten to replace it. Instead, it fills in the essential value that rationalization has depleted.

By conceptualizing this dynamic as "category complement," we expand theoretical accounts of how mature categories can regain meaning not by transforming internally, but by being complemented by adjacent deviant forms that express values the original mature category can no longer articulate.

3. Multi-level category systems under institutional contradictions: Third, this chapter suggests how category systems are transformed into multi-level structures in response to institutional contradictions. While prior research highlights how contradictions destabilize categories (Seo & Creed, 2002; Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002), less attention has been given to how adjacent categories or subcategories might help resolve them. The analysis here demonstrates that deviant subcategories can address contradictions indirectly by playing roles that the mainstream category cannot fulfill under its institutional constraints.

In the case of supercar category, pressures for efficiency, expanded production, and shareholder value narrowed the range of choices of design representing the category's value. The deviant subcategory, unconstrained by these institutional logics, preserved and amplified the "outrageousness" that originally justified the supercar category's existence (Gartman, 2004; Scheidl, 2025). It helped preserve values that the mainstream category could no longer provide, allowing the overall category system to maintain the original category's values despite the increasing rationalization of the mainstream category. This provides a more systemic and multi-level view of category systems: stability in the center may depend on deviance at the margins (Pontikes & Barnett, 2017).

In summary, these findings contribute to a reconsideration of how categories with deviant identities emerge and how mature categories sustain value under conditions of institutional contradiction. Rather than treating deviance as a threat to categorical order, this chapter shows that deviant forms can play a constructive role by sharpening boundaries, supplementing eroded values, and enabling renewal across interconnected categorical layers, which significantly differs from prevailing theories regarding category dynamics. In this sense, deviance is an integral resource through which mature and rationalized categories can maintain meaning and vitality over time, though it is situated marginally.

Chapter 7. Integrated Discussion: Deviance as an Institutional Catalyst

7.1. Synthesis across the Three Lenses: Integral Process through Micro, Meso and Macro

Chapters 4 through 6 examined deviance through distinct analytical lenses, namely stigma (cognition), craft (practice), and category (institution), to elucidate how deviant identities negatively perceived by society paradoxically generate positive value. While each chapter addressed a different analytical level, we identified a sequential valorization process by

synthesizing their implications: Deviance transitions from a negatively labeled stigmatized state to gaining cognitive legitimacy, creates value through practice, and finally institutionalizes the framework that realizes it. (Figure 15)

At the micro level (chapter 4), deviant acts drew strong moral condemnation from external audiences. It was negatively labeled. However, far from weakening the deviant identity, this condemnation actually strengthened it. The negative external reaction hardened the identity of the internal actors who are the stigmatized parties themselves, resulting in the stigmatized deviant identity gaining legitimate “recognition” from society, under conditions where that deviant practice possesses aesthetic appeal and offers unexpected positive values.

At the meso level (chapter 5), this legitimized deviant identity was expressed through “excessive” practices, which practitioners mobilized to inject new appeal into a rationalized industry. Elements like deviance, irrationality, and aesthetic innovation formed craft-like values that countered the homogenization and massification of modern supercar design. In this sense, deviance provided the emotional and symbolic resources to catalyze a new form of craft capable of restoring meaning within an industry constrained by efficiency-driven design norms. In other words, it created value through “practice.”

At the macro level (chapter 6), deviant craft practices did not merely form isolated cultural niches. Rather, they emerged as complementary subcategories supplying symbolic value for categories the parent supercar category could no longer provide due to institutional contradictions. While the mainstream category rationalized design to appeal to broader segments and respond to market pressures, the deviant subcategory preserved and amplified the “excess” that defined the supercar category. Consequently, deviance acquired institutional function by supplementing the value lost by the parent category, it contributed to stabilizing the broader category system.

Given these findings, we suggest that deviance functions through three sequential layers by synthesizing findings. Deviance is not merely a label imposed by society, but a dynamic resource shaping legitimacy recognition, practical values, and institutional structures. It transitions from being an object of social critique to a driving force of creative production, and ultimately to a mechanism of institutional renewal. Based on this multi-layered dynamism, we must reconceptualize the role of deviance in organizational and institutional research.

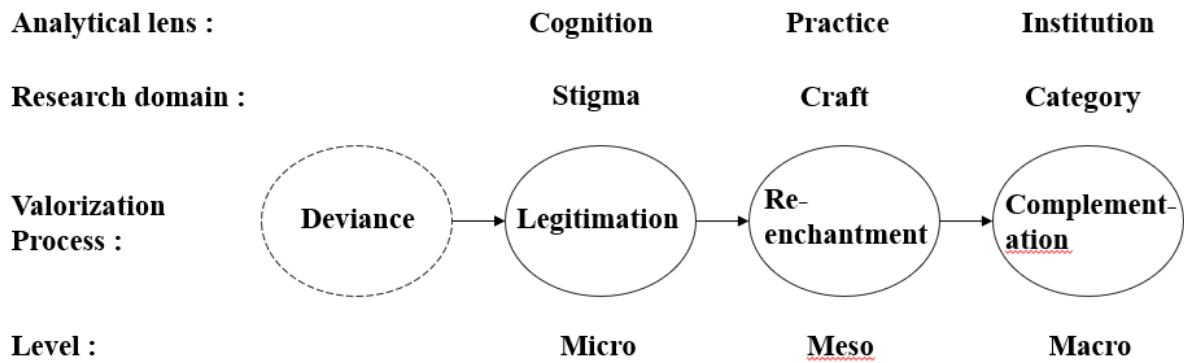


FIGURE 15: Three-layered process of deviance valorization

7.2. Impacts of Deviance within the Valorization Process

One of the distinctive contributions of this paper is that it explicitly theorizes the three impacts that deviance facilitates within the valorization process. These impacts are analytically distinct, yet they form a conceptually connected sequence that unfolds across the empirical chapters.

Cognitive legitimization (stigma perspective): As a first impact, deviance acquires meaning at the cognitive layer. External stakeholders condemn and exclude deviant identities using dominant moral and rational standards. However, this condemnation triggers an unexpected paradoxical reaction among internal stakeholders: identity reinforcement. Internal actors perceive deviant identities not as something to manage or mitigate stigma, but as proof of difference and authenticity. Social criticism sharpens boundaries, strengthens cohesion, and imbues deviant identities with emotional significance. This process provides a foundation for further value creation by instilling a strong collective sense of purpose in the subjects. However, this alone does not justify it. When aesthetic appeal is added, appealing to the emotional layer and suspending moral judgment, and when pro-social value is unexpectedly presented, triggering a reframing of legitimacy criteria, the concept of deviance centered on a strong identity paradoxically achieves justification. This completes the preparation for value creation through deviance.

Re-enchantment in practice (craft perspective): The second impact lies in enabling value creation in practice that move beyond de-enchantment through industrial rationalization. Deviant identities are translated into aesthetic and material forms that resist the expectations on standardization of the mainstream industry. Despite their appearance underpinned by deviant identities and deliberate irrationality, they maintain authenticity through innovation. Through this process, practitioners restore a sense of magic, wonder, and emotional immediacy to

industries that have grown flat and predictable, thereby generating craft-based value. Craft practice becomes the medium through which deviance is given tangible form, turning the emotional charge of rebellion into aesthetic and experiential innovation. Through this dynamic, deviance creates value through re-enchantment in practice.

Institutional complementation (category perspective): The third impact consists in performing an institutional function that the mainstream category can no longer fulfill. Deviant craft practices become institutionally embedded through the emergence of complementary subcategories. These subcategories neither replace nor directly compete with the mainstream category but rather perform a complementary function. They express the symbolic value that the parent category can no longer provide due to the institutional contradiction that compels it to pursue efficiency, expand its customer base, and seek market legitimacy, by using the excess inherent in deviant identities. This is achievable precisely because they are separate subcategories distinct from the parent category. In other words, by complementing from outside the system rather than attempting to conform to its core, they ultimately maintain the value of the entire institutional system. Thus, deviance complements the value of existing institutional categories.

These three impacts illustrate how deviance assumes a distinct value within society and becomes entrenched. Deviance begins as a state branded by external labeling. First, the deviant concept is reinforced through one's own efforts to gain cognitive legitimacy from society. Then, by adding craft-based value to this legitimized deviant concept, it demonstrates the ability to counter capitalist rationalism in industry through practice and create new values. Finally, it institutionalizes the legitimized, craft-valued deviant concept to allow it to operate more broadly within society. This is the valorization process driven by deviance.

7.3. Roles of Deviance as an Institutional Catalyst

Deviance is inherently negative and excessive, and cannot actually create meaning on its own. However, much like spices or seasonings that enhance delicious food, it generates significant value by reacting with others, even if it doesn't function by itself. Tabasco sauce that adds a “spicy kick” to pizza or wasabi on sushi are rarely consumed alone, yet they are often indispensable to the experience of the dish. These are not producers that create value themselves, but catalysts that act upon others or, through their relationship with others, trigger new reactions in them.

Section 7.2 showed that deviance operates through a three-layered valorization process at the micro, meso, and macro levels, resulting in outcomes associated with legitimation, re-

enchantment, and complementation respectively. These outcomes clarify “what” occurs as deviance transitions from stigma to institutional significance. However, the question remains: “how” could deviance facilitate that value creation despite persistent stigma, normative resistance, and institutional constraints? To answer this, this section theorizes deviance as an institutional mechanism, specifically, as **an institutional catalyst**.

Institutional catalysis is the institutional mechanism through which three forms of value are realized. As an institutional catalyst, deviance operates in three analytically distinguishable yet closely interlinked modes. (Figure 16)

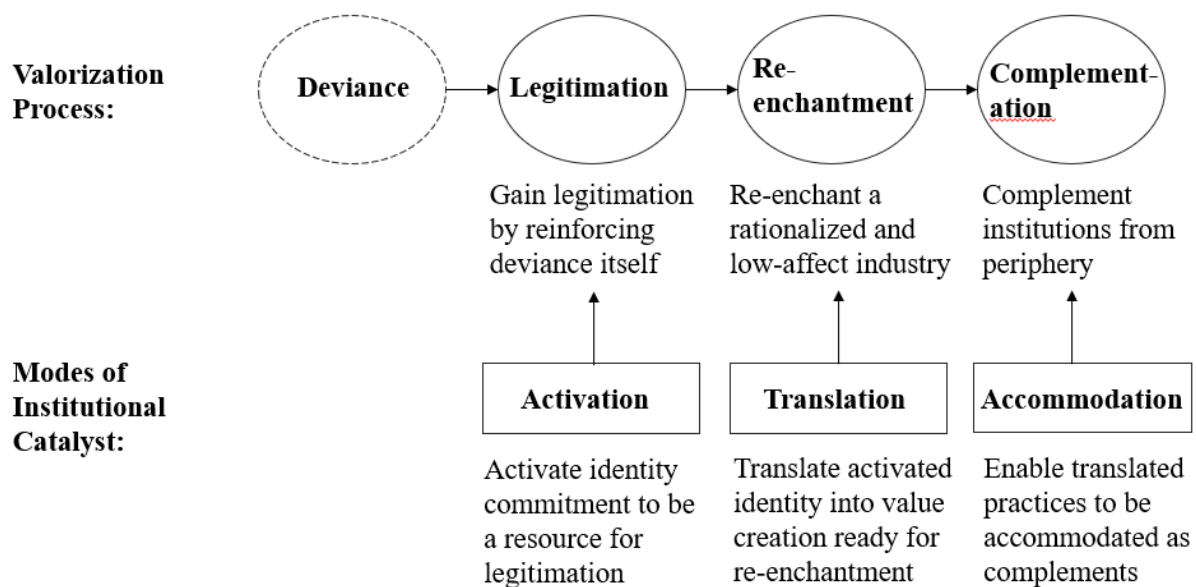


FIGURE 16: Institutional Catalysis as a Mechanism of Valorization

First, **Activation**. Deviance activates stigmatized identities. At the micro level, negative labeling and moral condemnation do not simply suppress deviant actors. Instead, they intensify identity commitment, sharpen boundaries, and generate emotional energy among those who embrace the stigmatized identity. This “activation” does not amount to full legitimacy in itself; rather, it provides the motivational and symbolic resources that make legitimation possible. In other words, legitimation is not achieved despite stigma but is catalyzed by the “activation” of deviant identity in response to stigma.

Second, **Translation**. Deviance translates identities which have been activated into value-creating practices. The emotional and symbolic energy generated through identity activation at the micro level is not left at the level of resistance or protest at the meso level. It is translated into aesthetic, material, and craft-based practices that challenge the rationalized logic of mature

industries. Through this “translation”, deviance becomes a source of re-enchantment: it reintroduces excess, surprise, and affective intensity into domains that have been flattened by efficiency, standardization, and managerial rationality. “Translation” thus explains how re-enchantment emerges not as a nostalgic return to tradition, but as a creative reworking of modern industrial contexts through deviant practice.

Third, **Accommodation**. Deviance enables the institutional accommodation of translated practices without normalization. At the macro level, the values produced through deviant craft practices are neither fully absorbed into the mainstream category nor rejected as illegitimate. Instead, to complement the functions of the mainstream category, they are accommodated into the institutional system through subcategories that preserve the symbolic core of the mainstream category while expressing values it can no longer realize. “Accommodation”, in this sense, does not imply assimilation or dilution of deviance. Rather, it denotes a structural adjustment whereby institutions come to rely on deviant forms at their periphery to sustain their overall value and coherence. This mechanism explains how the complementation process discussed in chapter 6 operates.

These three catalytic functions, activation, translation, and accommodation, drive the valorization process. Legitimation, re-enchantment, and complementation describe “what” happens as deviance generates value through this process, while the concept of an institutional catalyst, together with the mechanisms of activation, translation, and accommodation, explains “how” that process unfolds. Deviance appears neither as an external shock nor as a temporary anomaly. Rather, it functions as a catalyst, exposing institutional limitations, mobilizing alternative values, and enabling institutional systems to adapt without abandoning their core structures.

7.4. Theoretical Implications for Institutional Theory

Based on the above examination of the valorization process driven by an institutional catalyst across the three layers, we offer several theoretical implications for institutional theory.

1. Beyond conformity-based legitimacy: Much legitimacy research has basically assumed that actors gain acceptance by conforming to existing moral and normative expectations (Suchman, 1995; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Bitektine & Haack, 2015). From this perspective, deviance is understood as something to be eliminated, mitigated, or concealed.

Our findings reveal an alternative pathway. Namely, actors can gain acceptance while maintaining a deviant state by reconstructing the evaluative criteria themselves, without conforming to existing norms. Aesthetic value, emotional resonance, and unexpected altruistic

actions can transform audiences' judgment frameworks without requiring conformity to normative expectations.

This finding reinforces recent discussions (Scherer, Palazzo & Seidl, 2013; Überbacher, 2014) that view legitimacy not as fixed conformity to norms but as a dynamic process of renegotiating evaluative criteria. It extends legitimacy theory by demonstrating that deviant practices can destabilize the very premises of legitimacy judgments.

2. Deviance as a generative institutional force: Institutional studies have generally defined deviance as a threat to institutional stability or as a condition requiring adaptation to dominant norms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 1995). Deviance is thus typically conceptualized as a disruptive force or an obstacle to institutional order.

In contrast, this study demonstrates that deviance can become an institutionally generative force. Deviance is not merely noise or anomaly, but also can function as a source generating meaning, identity and differentiation. This differs from prior arguments attributing institutional change to intentional action or institutional entrepreneurs (Battilana et al., 2009), and suggests that deviance itself can become a condition triggering institutional dynamism.

This perspective challenges the dichotomy of “stability and change” in institutional theory by demonstrating that even in highly rationalized institutional contexts, cultural resonance and symbolic meaning can be maintained through deviant practices at the margins.

3. Institutional contradictions as a trigger for category complementation: Seo and Creed (2002) theorized that institutional contradictions generate transformative pressures driving institutional change. Instead, this study develops this insight, showing that institutional contradictions not only disrupt institutional systems but can also help the systems by serving as opportunities to generate complementary subcategories.

When mainstream categories become constrained by market pressures or rationalization demands, deviant subcategories absorb and alternatively embody the symbolic values that the mainstream category can no longer express (Zuckerman, 1999; Durand & Paoletta, 2013). This complementary mechanism suggests that value creation may happen not only through the replacement or internal modification of existing institutions, but indirectly through adjacent experimental forms.

This finding broadens institutional perspectives that emphasize change through replacement or transformation by highlighting complementation as a distinct mechanism of institutional persistence.

4. Linking micro–meso–macro dynamics through institutional catalysis: Understanding how institutions function across multiple levels remains one of the longstanding challenges in

institutional theory. Over time, this challenge has been increasingly articulated as the problem of linking micro-level cognition and action, meso-level practices and organizational fields, and macro-level institutional structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012).

This study contributes to defining this multi-level linkage by conceptualizing deviance as an institutional catalyst. Deviance activates emotional and identity-based energies at the micro level, translates these into practices at the meso level, and is institutionally accommodated as a category structure at the macro level. These are not fragmented phenomena but are linked by a consistent mechanism. This idea challenges institutional theory by showing how micro-level subjective experiences and emotions mediate practices and propagate to the reorganization of institutional structures. As a result, it pushes our understanding of institutional change toward a more dynamic and integrated framework.

Thus, these implications reposition deviant behavior, previously underestimated, as a crucial driving force behind institutional evolution.

Chapter 8. Conclusion: Theoretical Contributions and Future Research

8.1 Contribution to Deviance Research: Advancing the Third Phase

This paper contributes to deviance research by advancing the third phase of deviance studies toward a processual understanding of how socially rejected deviance becomes meaningful, valuable, and legitimate.

8.1.1. Prior Research in the Third Phase of Deviance Research

In the third phase of deviant research, a direction has emerged to reinterpret deviance not merely as problematic behavior or a threat to social order, but as a source of value creation.

For example, Brewer (1991) introduced the concept of “optimal distinctiveness”. He argued that individuals simultaneously possess both a desire to conform to a group and a desire to differentiate themselves from others. Accordingly, while excessive deviance will be excluded, moderate deviance can be positively accepted as a signal of uniqueness. That is, deviance generates psychological and social value as far as it remains within the boundaries of social norms.

Another concept of deviance contributing to value creation which emerged was positive deviance, proposed by Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004). They defined positive deviance as “intentional behaviors that depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways.”

Examples include a pharmaceutical company that developed and provided free medication for a rare disease with few patients, and a factory that continued employing and paying wages to its workers after the facility was struck by fire. This refers to intentionally departing from norms to perform morally correct actions. In each case, the behavior deviates from the norm but is not negative.

On the other hand, “creative deviance” is also a representative form of deviance studied in the third stage of deviance research. This research examines cases where individuals persist in pursuing ideas that have already been formally rejected within the organization. Criscuolo et al. (2014), based on a large-scale survey of research and development scientists, demonstrate that persistently pursuing desired research (often directly contrary to management directives) correlates with higher innovative outcomes, particularly in exploratory work. Their analysis suggests that deviance is not simply a violation that needs to be corrected, but a way for individuals to continue their research beyond formal evaluation processes.

These research trends brought a significant shift to deviance studies by redefining it from an “anomaly to be controlled” to an “action that can generate value under certain conditions.” However, these studies have primarily focused on deviance that was socially acceptable, morally affirmable, or tacitly tolerated. Consequently, the question of how widely labeled antisocial or negative deviance can generate value and gain legitimacy remains insufficiently explored.

8.1.2. This Research’s Contributions

This study directly addresses this point, by reconceptualizing the third phase of deviance research from three perspectives. First, it demonstrates that even socially negatively evaluated deviance can acquire legitimacy without undergoing mitigation or correction. Second, it reframed deviance not as a single act but as a process of valorization unfolding over time which is “deviance valorization process”. Third, it clarified that deviance not only alters the meaning of the evaluated object but also can transform the evaluation criteria themselves.

1. Legitimization of socially negative deviance: The most significant contribution of this study is its empirical demonstration that socially negative deviance can gain legitimation without losing its deviant nature. Much previous research on positive deviance or creative deviance has focused on forms of deviance that does not comply with local rules, such as organizational policies, but is socially acceptable (Criscuolo et al., 2014; Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004). These deviances are often “unusual but not problematic” behaviors that do not typically provoke strong rejection.

In contrast, the deviances examined in this study are widely recognized as antisocial and undesirable, receiving clear negative evaluations. Crucially, the individuals involved do not distance themselves from this deviance. Rather than hiding it or moderating it for legitimization, they openly continue to embrace it.

Analysis revealed that social rejection does not necessarily suppress deviance. Rather, negative reactions serve to strengthen the individual's commitment and identity and clarify internal and external boundaries. In other words, deviance gains meaning precisely because it is negative. Building on insights from classical deviance studies by Becker (1963), Goffman (1963), and Hebdige (1979), this research concretely demonstrates that strong social condemnation and legitimacy can coexist.

2. From valuable deviance to deviance valorization process: The second contribution lies in shifting the focus of deviance research from individual deviant acts to the entire process by which deviance becomes valuable. Third-phase deviance research has revealed the potential for deviance to generate value through concepts such as optimal distinctiveness, positive deviance and creative deviance. However, in these studies, deviance has often been treated as a “temporary exceptional act.” That is, the temporal and processual aspects, how deviance is rejected, how it is given meaning, and how it becomes established as enduring value, have not been sufficiently addressed.

This study complements this gap by conceptualizing deviance as a multi-layered valorization process. According to our analysis, deviance first faces strong moral condemnation, but then strengthens identity formation among internal actors. Next, through expressive and aesthetic practices, deviance is reinterpreted as meaningful for specific audiences. Through this process of meaning-making, deviance becomes established as a sustained source of value, not as a transient phenomenon. By explicitly theorizing this sequential process, this study positions deviance as a dynamic force rather than a static condition.

3. Deviance as a driver of reorienting valuation: A third contribution concerns how deviance reshapes the conditions under which it is judged. Much of deviance research focuses on identities, communities, or practices that deviate from norms. Acceptance is often described as a process of moving closer to existing moral or normative expectations. The findings of this study suggest a different pattern. Deviance does not simply seek approval within existing evaluative frameworks. Instead, it serves as a trigger that destabilizes those frameworks. For instance, unexpected prosocial behavior, in turn, further alters assumptions about what deviant actors are like.

As a result, audiences begin to question not only the deviance itself but also the criteria by which they judge it. What counts as acceptable, legitimate, or valuable is no longer taken for granted. In this way, deviance does more than change how people think; it triggers changing how things are judged. This insight deepens deviance research by showing that deviance can operate at the level of valuation, not just behavior.

These three contributions together suggest a shift in how deviance should be understood. Deviance is not simply a problem to be corrected, nor is it merely an exception that occasionally produces positive effects. Instead, this study shows that deviance can function as a generative mechanism that gains meaning through rejection, reinterpretation, and repetition. By focusing on process rather than isolated acts, and by taking seriously forms of deviance that are strongly stigmatized, this research reframes what can be understood as a third phase of deviance studies. It highlights how marginal and contested practices can become central to processes of meaning-making and value creation, without ceasing to be deviant.

8.2. Contributions to Individual Research Domains

The previous section summarizes the overall contributions to deviant research. Next, we will restate the contributions in each research domain examined through the three lenses of this study.

8.2.1. Contribution to Stigma Research: From Corrective Stigma to Reinforced Stigma

This work challenges the dominant premise in stigma research that legitimacy is restored by mitigating, eliminating, or concealing deviance. Previous research has held that for stigmatized subjects to gain social acceptance, it is essential to either reduce their deviance or distance themselves from problematic aspects. However, this study shows that stigma can be resolved not by diminishing deviance, but rather by reinforcing it.

We demonstrate through analysis that three elements are necessary for this paradoxical destigmatization to occur. First, strengthening **commitment to the deviant identity** without compromise in the face of external normative resistance. Second, **aesthetic appeal** suspending moral judgment and shifting the evaluation of deviance to a different axis. Third, **unexpected positive value** reconfiguring the criteria used to judge legitimacy.

By systematically organizing these elements, this study transcends the understanding that views stigma solely as a “defect to be corrected,” presenting a new mechanism for deviance to gain legitimacy within stigma research.

8.2.2. Contribution to Craft Research : From Nostalgic Craft to Deviant-Driven Craft

We question the prevailing but increasingly contested assumption in craft research that craft primarily offers a gentle critique of rationalized modernity and derives its value from nostalgic returns to tradition. Although a growing number of studies have begun to offer alternative perspectives against this assumption, other studies continue to portray craft as a harmonious and ethically grounded practice, while paying little attention to deviant, excessive, or confrontational forms of craft. By contrast, this study demonstrates that deviant creativity itself can critique rationalized modernity and fulfill the role of craft.

According to our analysis, what is essential for craft is not necessarily a return to tradition but rather practices that intentionally deviate from rationality and efficiency. More concretely, we organize a new theory of craft around three forms of “excess.” First, **deviance**, understood as social excess, emerges through the active embrace of deviant identities. Second, **irrationality** refers to the paradoxical value generated by the deliberate choice of inefficiency and irrationality. Third, in addition to these, **aesthetic** excess of high perfection brings about innovation.

By articulating these elements, this study introduces a new perspective to craft research, positioning deviance as a driving force behind the emergence of craft.

8.2.3. Contribution to Category Research: From Category Stretching to Category Complement

The contribution of this study to category research is to revise the common understanding that categories are formed through conformity to existing norms and renewed through internal category stretching.

First, prior research has assumed that category formation requires gaining social legitimacy, and that conflict with dominant norms leads to categorical penalties. In contrast, this study empirically shows that, under certain conditions, categories can also be formed through deviance with opposition to existing norms serving as a driving force.

Second, a common perspective in recent category research holds that categories renew themselves by stretching their boundaries, redefining their scope to capture new values from adjacent categories, particularly when they face declining legitimacy. This study shows, however, that under conditions of institutional contradiction, categories may be constrained from engaging in such internal stretching. In these cases, subcategories emerging adjacent to the original category can compensate for values eroded by institutional contradictions. By doing so, they help maintain or restore the core values that the original category was meant to deliver. We conceptualize this dynamic as a “**category complement.**” Rather than framing category

dynamics in terms of replacement or internal stretching, this concept highlights complementary relationships across categorical layers. It thus offers a new perspective for understanding the institutional constraints faced by mature categories.

8.3. Managerial and Practical Implications

The perspectives developed in this study provide several implications for a wide range of management practices concerning innovation, branding, and value creation in mature and rationalized industries. By defining deviance not as a liability to be managed but as an institutional catalyst that can be leveraged for value creation, this study challenges assumptions deeply embedded in business practice regarding legitimacy, control, and strategic coherence.

First, *reframing deviance as a beacon of strategic potential rather than a risk*. We suggest that a common managerial approach that treats deviance primarily as a reputational risk may overlook the possibility that the emergence of deviance signals the presence of emerging strategic values. In most established industries, deviance from dominant norms is immediately interpreted as noise, inefficiency, or inconsistency with the existing business model and brand concept. However, the dynamics observed in this research indicate that such deviant phenomena tend to emerge precisely when the dominant business and category values have become eroded and are constrained by institutional contradictions.

From a managerial perspective, deviant practices should be interpreted as beacons of emerging strategic business potential. Persistent dissatisfaction with social rejection stemming from deviance may be understood as a signal of an emerging new identity—one that is currently rejected by society but may gain broader acceptance over time. When a group of actors persistently argues that something has value precisely because it is irrational—even in the face of social criticism—this may signal the potential to re-enchant markets dulled by rationalized capitalism and to give rise to new market forms. Rather than immediately suppressing such deviant practices, managers need to examine why relevant actors, such as customers, employees, and members of the general public, express dissatisfaction or raise emotionally charged objections. In this sense, deviance functions less as a threat to norms and institutional order and more as a signal of potential strategic opportunities for competitive advantage.

Second, *excess with irrationality and aesthetics as a management lever*. In many established industries, practices that bring aesthetic value or emotional appeal but appear irrational are typically dismissed as wasteful or unmanageable, prioritizing functional efficiency over such elements. However, this study shows that such excessive practices would emerge in the market

suffering from institutional contradictions where its inherent value and legitimacy are lost due to the pursuit of rationality and efficiency.

From the perspective of exploring new businesses, the existence of seemingly irrational practices driven by emotional and aesthetic excess may indicate an opportunity to inject new appeal into the market. Mature markets often face the contradiction of being dragged down by the need to maintain the current satisfaction of existing core customers, preventing the innovation that should occur. In such cases, managers can interpret these seemingly irrational practices as a source of differentiation, rather than forcing them to conform to existing efficiency-oriented logic. They possess the power to restore meaning, excitement, and symbolic value to a dull, commoditized market. In other words, irrationality and aesthetic excess function as alternative strategic means for market transformation and new value creation.

Third, *innovation through marginal practices by peripheral actors*. We articulate the role of peripheral actors, like subcultural producers, fringe communities, and non-mainstream users, in triggering innovation that established organizations struggle to promote internally. Unlike conventional innovation strategies centered on own existing R&D functions in the organization, marginal practices that deliberately oppose dominant industry logics of efficiency, standardization and optimization, help create alternative forms of value. In short, precisely because they remain distant from the mainstream, peripheral actors maintain their deviant nature and can play the role of a catalyst for change.

This study also introduces the concept of a subcategory to allow peripheral actors with deviant identities to play the role of a catalyst outside the parent category. In business practice, managers can use a subcategory or establish a new organization separated from the core in order to enable deviance to give rise to innovation. Attempts for the main body of organization to fully absorb, sanitize, or normalize deviant practices risk neutralizing the very excess and emotional intensity that make them valuable. Allowing peripheral practices to persist as autonomous forms may therefore be a more effective strategy than direct integration.

Fourth, *broader societal implications: reaffirming the power of diversity and tolerance*. Beyond management practice, perspectives derived from this study also hold significance for the broader societal discussions on diversity, tolerance, and cultural vitality. The observed processes demonstrate that practices initially rejected as antisocial, irrational, or excessive can contribute to institutional renewal by challenging society's existing evaluation criteria and norms. In essence, this reaffirms the potential for those currently marginalized by society, such as individuals with deviant identities, those of minority ethnic origins, people unable to conform to societal norms, and those facing gender discrimination, to continue residing on the periphery

while still impacting society as a whole. This suggests that deviance can serve not only as a driver of value creation in the business world, but also as a catalyst for the emergence of different social systems and new cultures.

8.4. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As demonstrated thus far, while this study offers various contributions, it also has several limitations that point to important directions for future research.

First, regarding *contextual specificity and the generalizability of the analysis*. The empirical analysis in this study is based primarily on a single, detailed case rooted in Japan's supercar market. While this context provides a theoretically rich setting for examining stigma, craft, and category dynamics, it depends on the cultural specificity of Japanese *Bosozoku*, the unique positioning of supercars in Japanese society, and the specific historical trajectory of the automotive industry. Future research should examine whether similar deviance-driven valorization processes emerge in other industries and categories, such as fashion, music, entertainment, food, technology, and digital platforms, where stigma, excess, and aesthetic differentiation similarly function. We can clarify the boundary conditions of the proposed mechanism by conducting such research transcending cultural and industrial contexts. Ultimately, the boundary conditions should be whether the three elements enabling reinforced stigma, as shown in chapter 4, can be realized. However, possessing attributes equivalent to these may still align with the theory of this study. Luxury and aesthetic appeal may be related, and high functionality may trigger recognition of unexpected positive value. Further examination is warranted.

Second, it concerns *temporal dynamics and the persistence of deviant values*. While this analysis conceptualizes deviance as a process unfolding along a temporal axis, it actually examines only specific historical moments. How deviant subcategories evolve after gaining widespread recognition remains unclear. Over time, these practices themselves may become normalized after commercialization and institutionalization and lose their catalytic capacity. By conducting longitudinal research, we can deepen our understanding of whether deviant forms function as temporary catalysts or as recurring institutional mechanisms.

Third, it involves *careful attention to ethical boundaries and deviant destructiveness*. This study does not seek to celebrate deviance. Not all forms of deviance generate value, but some involve harm, exclusion, and exploitation. This analysis does not definitively specify the boundary between valorizing deviance and destructive deviance. In future research, scholars should more explicitly address the ethical dimensions of value creation driven by deviance. By

doing so, we should examine how the social harms that may persist even when value is created, and the inequalities and unjust exercises with power stemming from excessive deviance are related to the value creation process. This would enable more refined exploration of the normative implications of treating deviance as a potential institutional resource.

Fourth, this study suggests *opportunities to expand the institutional catalyst framework*. While we focus on stigma, craft, and category as primary analytical lenses in this study, future research can explore the extent to which deviance conflicts with and can transform existing institutions, including various regulations, governance structures, technological infrastructures, and political systems. Moreover, research can advance into whether the identified catalytic functions, consisting of activation, translation and accommodation, can also operate in other forms of marginality, including gendered deviance, racial deviance, and organizational deviance. Extending this framework across domains will further illuminate how institutional systems paradoxically depend on elements they initially excluded.

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