Stigma Resistance through Body-in-Practice

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Stigma Resistance through Body-in-Practice: Embodying Pride through Creative Mastery

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Stigma, as a process of shame, fosters social exclusion and diminishes bodily competences. Thus, stigmatized consumers often turn to the marketplace for respite. Based on an ethnographic study of drag artists, this study proposes a new understanding of the body that emerges from the mastery of creative consumption practices to combat shame. We theorize a novel "body-in-practice" framework to examine how consumers transform from an imagined persona to an accomplished body to embody pride. Six novel stigma resistance strategies emerged—experimenting, guarding, risk-taking, spatial reconfiguring, self-affirming, and integrating. Body-in-practice thus explains how shame weakens, pride strengthens, emotions stabilize, and self-confidence grows. This research contributes by explaining the hard work of identity repair, exploring stigma resistance across safe and hostile social spaces, and highlighting the emancipatory potential of embodied mastery.

Keywords: body-in-practice, practice theory, stigma, shame, pride, creative practices, drag, teleological frames, mastery, gender

Drag is a fantasy. It's not real. It's like an illusion. But it's how we envision ourselves to be outside of all these structures of oppression.

(Robin, M, 27)

Many consumers experience marginalization by virtue of possessing a characteristic or identity that is socially discredited and stigmatized (Goffman 1963). Stigma is a mechanism of control that perpetuates social hierarchies through the repeated shaming of individuals and groups (Goffman 1963; Scambler 2018; Tyler and Slater 2018). Stigma operates within marketplaces in myriad ways, structuring how consumers act and even what marketplace resources are available to them (Eichert and Luedicke 2022; Scheff 2014).

Fundamentally, stigma operates through a process of shame (Ahmed 2014; Goffman 1963; Munt 2008; Tyler 2020). Shame fosters social exclusion and, when it is deeply embodied, it can even result in a fragmented identity (Adkins and Ozanne 2005; Üstüner and Holt 2007). Consumer researchers have long examined how stigma

shapes consumption, and indeed how stigmatized consumers fight back through consumption practices. From black consumers asserting their respectability (Crockett 2017) to low-literate consumers reclaiming their dignity (Adkins and Ozanne 2005), how consumers resist stigmas continues to be an important research topic (Eichert and Luedicke 2022; Kates 2002; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013).

We offer a novel perspective on stigma resistance. We argue that consumers can master creative practices to resist the shame of stigma. In the opening quote, informant Robin argues that the creative practices of drag offer stigmatized consumers the possibility of imagining themselves differently. Creativity is a social and embodied process that resists by enacting "the mythic power of divine creation" (Pang 2012, 35). Moreover, mastery of creative practices can enroll the body into new prideful accomplishments, which might help neutralize the shame of stigma.

Thus, we build on and extend research on resistance to stigmas by focusing on how stigmatized consumers use mastery of creative consumption practices in this struggle. Through an ethnography of drag performers, we explore how creative practices help consumers transform shame into pride, an emotional embodiment that is oppositional to shame (Scheff 2006, 2014). We draw on past research that theorizes stigma as a process of shame, but we show how pride becomes a lever of change through the mastery of creative practices (Gaut 2010; Schatzki 2010, 2014; Scheff 2014; Zembylas 2014). We thus ask: how do stigmatized consumers master creative practices to embody pride and resist shame?

Building upon Schatzki's (2014) practice theory of art to explore the anatomy of creative practices, we offer a novel theorization of how mastered practices can change emotional dynamics through what we term *body-in-practice*. We theorize shame and pride as social and embodied and thus explain how consumers' mastery of creative practices helps them embody pride and resist stigmatization. We explore body-in-practice as an iterative process that highlights the centrality of the body in mastering creative practices and stabilizing pride through six stigma resistance strategies. Thus, we contribute to consumer research on identity repair, stigma resistance, and the emancipatory potential of mastery.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Stigma: Social Exclusion and Embodiment

Stigma, a feature of a person that is socially constructed as "deeply discrediting," is fundamentally a mechanism of shame (Goffman 1963, 13). Stigma creates social hierarchies by establishing a diminished subject position, one that is degraded in contrast with a normal subject; thus, stigma orders relationships both socially and emotionally (Goffman 1963; Scambler 2018, Tyler and Slater 2018).

Since Goffman's seminal work, researchers have broadly examined stigma as functioning at two levels—social and embodied.

Stigma is inherently social as individuals are discursively and socially subordinated (Goffman 1963). Scambler (2004) terms this "enacted stigma," drawing attention to how people are repeatedly diminished, and this can result in social exclusion (Aranda et al. 2023; Eichert and Luedicke 2022; Kates 2002). For example, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) document plus-sized consumers' experiences of frustration and social isolation when the marketplace marks their large bodies as unworthy and ignores their needs. Young Turkish women are shamed for their failure to urbanize, isolating them from economic opportunities (Üstüner and Holt 2007). Through repeated stigmatization, consumers can become so socially excluded that they question their basic humanity (Adkins and Ozanne 2005; Ahmed 2014).

Stigma is also embodied; the body is stigmatized and experiences shame (Goffman 1963; Scambler 2004, 2018). As Turner (1980, 112) notes, the body is both the physical and symbolic "stage" in which the "dramas of society are enacted." When shame is internalized through repeated experiences of marginalization, bodily competences can diminish and increase social exclusion (Scambler 2004, 2018). For example, Adkins and Ozanne (2005) note that the stigma of low literacy is deeply felt in the bodies of low-literate consumers, leading to a cycle of shame and increasing vulnerability. Consumers who deeply experience shame often avoid spaces that reinforce stigmatizing experiences, thus influencing where certain bodies are permitted (Kates 2002).

Although stigmatization often increases social exclusion, it can inspire resistance and new forms of social integration. Consumer researchers document different forms of resistance from leveraging supportive communities (Eichert and Luedicke 2022) and taking collective market actions (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013), to negotiating the politics of race, gender, and class through consumption strategies that offer legitimacy (Crockett 2017; Kates 2002; Sandikci and Ger 2010; Thompson and Üstüner 2015). Importantly, the body is central to many strategies of resistance (Courpasson and Monties 2017; Elidrissi and Courpasson 2021). For example, the racialized bodies of black consumers are sites to enact the politics of respectability through strategic consumption practices, such as wearing "respectable" hairstyles (Crockett 2017).

Despite the centrality of the body in both the experience of stigma and its resistance, consumer researchers offer few avenues for eliminating stigma. Most consumer research on stigma resistance focuses on what Goffman (1963, 15) terms "benevolent social action"—managing stigma through consumption strategies that "soften and ameliorate" the shame of stigma. However, stigmatized bodies often carry deep wounds that persist across time and

social settings (Moran 2012; Tyler and Slater 2018). Consumer researchers nod to the importance of healing the wounds of stigma but stop short at offering solutions that use the body to resist (Adkins and Ozanne 2005; Crockett 2017; Eichert and Luedicke 2022; Kates 2002). We contend that a remedy to shame might emerge from a new understanding of the body—one that emerges as consumers master creative practices.

Creativity: Transforming the Body

Creativity is an "everyday phenomenon resulting in continual processes of 'making the world'" and offers individuals the opportunity to transform socially and bodily (Tanggaard 2012, 21). Consumer researchers examine how consumers use creativity to reinforce specific identity positions (Carrington and Ozanne 2022; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Kozinets 2002), socially connect with other consumers (Seregina and Weijo 2016), command their body (Roux and Belk 2019), and resist the market (Maciel and Wallendorf 2021; Weijo, Martin, and Arnould 2018). But consumer research largely theorizes creativity as a social force, allowing consumers to communicate socially desirable identities.

Drawing from the humanities, however, we argue for the embodied potential of creativity (Gaut 2010; Pang 2012; Tutenges 2023). The body is crucial for many creative actions—from dancing and pottery, to knitting pink hats in protest (Bassetti 2013; Maciel and Wallendorf 2021; Shepard 2012). Creative action often requires artists to develop new competences that may transform fundamental bodily understandings, such as learning how to stand tall in ballet (Bassetti 2013). Bodies may also transform through specific practices that render them anomalous, such as costuming (Seregina and Weijo 2016), tattooing (Roux and Belk 2019), or body modification (Pitts 2000). Thus, creative practices can turn bodies into "potential sites of opposition" (Pitts 2000, 443), suggesting potential for ameliorating stigma.

Consumer researchers are increasingly exploring the body within creative practices. In cosplay, consumers use their bodies as sites of ludic agency (Seregina and Weijo 2016). Creative practices can also foster change at both the individual and collective levels (Weijo et al. 2018). In Carrington and Ozanne's (2022) study on celebrity watchers, in which they interpret the body using assemblage theory as a line of flight, consumers enhance bodily competences by wearing designer clothing, working out, and using fitness products. Thompson and Üstüner (2015, 243) show how women learn to embody the aggression and masculinity of roller derby and how novel embodiments make women even resist expectations of "coquettish femininity." Orazi and van Laer (2023) show how the embodiment of role-playing bleeds into the everyday lives of consumers following these extraordinary experiences.

While previous studies explore how creativity inspires new bodily competences, the application to stigma resistance is unclear. We argue that the generative potential of creativity offers an expansive understanding of the self and the world (Tutenges 2023). Stigmatization diminishes, but creativity expands (Fox 2015). Creativity offers a means of imagining a novel self (Fox 2015; Monaghan 2001), and mastery of creative practices might stabilize bodily competences (Maciel and Wallendorf 2017). Importantly, for our work, creativity offers individuals a way to reimagining themselves as free of shame—a prideful, rather than shameful, self. Scheff (2014, 115) defines pride, in opposition to shame, as a "favorable view of self, but one that has been earned." We contend that pride that emerges from mastery of creative practices could mitigate stigmatization.

Although past consumer research nods to the importance of healing the embodied wounds of stigma, it stops short of explaining how to do so. In parallel, while consumer researchers are beginning to unpack the role of creativity in social resistance, how this resistance is embodied and endures is still unclear. Thompson and Üstüner (2015) hint that some resistance to gender roles occurs beyond the roller rink but do not theorize the role of creativity or exactly how this happens. Orazi and van Laer (2023) theorize emergent embodiments, but in their theorization, bleed is incidental, and they do not examine the emancipatory potential of new creative embodiments. We turn to practice theory to explain how stigmatized consumers master creative practices to resist shame.

A Practice Theory of Creativity

Practice theory explains how practices order social life and offers a systematic way to theorize how individuals and social structures are recursively shaped (Schatzki 1996, 2001; Warde 2005). We draw on Schatzki's (2014) conceptualization of artistic practices to theorize the anatomy of creative practices performed before audiences.

Consumer researchers commonly use a tripartite model of materials, competences, and meanings to understand practices (Arsel and Bean 2013; Shove, Pantzar, and Watson 2012). Schatzki (2014) similarly uses *materials*, or the objects embedded into a practice, and *bodily competences*, or the embodied understandings that animate a practice. Social meanings, however, are reframed as sense experiences—the intersubjective and social understandings of a practice that emerge when it is performed in front of an audience—which is an important distinction for consumption practices involving audiences. We relabel this as *sensate relations* to emphasize intersubjectivity and avoid confusion with more common uses of this term that describe sensory experiences (Maciel and Wallendorf 2017).

Finally, Schatzki's (2014) practice theory of art emphasizes a novel understanding of *teleology*—an understanding

of the overarching "ends" of a practice (Arsel and Bean 2013; Woermann and Rokka 2015). Creative practices are animated by overlapping short and long teleological frames. In a symphony performance, every bodily competency—from playing instruments to following the conductor—achieves an immediate aim (short teleology), such as signaling the start of a new movement. Practices are also guided by longer frames (long teleology), which include emotionally complex aspirations, such as living one's life dream. This distinction is important when theorizing complex practices like art and creativity (Schatzki 2014). This approach also does not treat the body as an object in a practice like many approaches (Shove et al. 2012). Instead, the body is theorized as the carrier of competences and where emotions arise and stabilize (Schatzki 1996, 2014; Schatzki and Natter 1996).

Moreover, creative practices are not singular but are closely constituted interrelationships among many simple practices organized through and around the body (Schatzki 2014). These simple practices form "practice bundles" that are socially oriented by the teleological frames of the practice. For example, roller derby is a creative practice organized around the body (Thompson and Üstüner 2015). The women wear costumes and skates (i.e., materials) and develop skills such as skating and being aggressive (i.e., bodily competences). These materials and bodily competences are performed by roller derby grrrls as energetic displays before an audience (i.e., sensate relations) through a love of competition and desire to be an athlete (i.e., short and long teleologies). Thus, the body is an integrated part of the practice bundle rather than a discrete part.

We chose Schatzki's (2014) practice theory of art for two important reasons. First, he theorizes the teleology of complex practices that often span years. This approach is well suited to studying consumers resisting stigmatization, given the difficulty of resisting deeply embedded feelings of shame. Stigma, as a mechanism of shame, orients bodies and practices through social exclusion (Ahmed 2014; Scheff 2014). Indeed, Goffman (1959, 243) argues that shame plays a central role in structuring all social interactions, in which everyone risks "being slightly embarrassed or a slight chance of being deeply humiliated." As such, preserving dignity by avoiding shame is a key teleological frame for stigma resistance practices when bodies deviate from perceived norms (Crockett 2017; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). The art of drag uses creative practices that make visible those bodies that are often stigmatized for their deeply embodied gender and sexual identities. Therefore, we need to conceptualize the overlapping short and long teleologies that drive stigmatized consumers to perform creative practices over time.

Second, we extend Schatzki's (2014) focus on teleologies, bodies, and sensate relations to explain the embodiment of social emotions of shame and pride. Although many practice theorists underplay emotions (Shove et al.

2012), others highlight the power of emotions as "states of physical arousal, of pleasure and displeasure, directed at some definite person, object, or idea" (Reckwitz 2017, 119), such as the role of emotions in timeflows (Woermann and Rokka 2015). Vitally, we conceptualize emotions in practices as social and embodied, emerging and stabilizing as consumers interact with others (Molander and Hartmann 2018; Schatzki 2010; Zembylas 2014). In creativity, emotions suffuse practices—as part of the teleology, as inescapably tied to bodily competences, and as arising in the social responses produced during sensate relations.

Optimistically, we suggest that the emotion of pride iteratively performed might grow and even replace shame as the body is recalibrated through creative practices. Emotions orient and help calibrate practices in real time by drawing attention to the "state of affairs" and how to react (Schatzki 2010, 121), thus linking internal emotions to the social responses produced. The conceptualization of sensate relations draws attention to the inherent sociality and emotionality of creative practices and more concretely situates the body within creative practices. Wetherell (2012, 24) explains that emotions make bodies permeable to social forces that are constantly arising in a "relational pattern . . . automatically distributed and located . . . always intersecting and interacting." Thus, we explore the mastery of creative practices to explain the embodiment of pride and the resulting dynamics of stigma resistance.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DRAG

Drag is a fitting context in which to study creative practices of resistance. Performing as another gender has a long artistic history, from pantomime dames in England and Kathakali in India to kabuki in Japan (Gabrovska 2009; Hall 2020). Some historians argue that drag originated in Ancient Greece, when men played women on stage adorned in elaborate makeup and clothing, a tradition continued and popularized by Shakespeare (Baker, Burton, and Smith 1994). Modern drag, however, developed as an underground art form (Baker et al. 1994; Fitzgerald and Marquez 2020). Although men openly dressed as women in both pantomime and vaudeville, these performances were derisive of gender nonconformity (Baker et al. 1994; Le Freak 2020). By contrast, modern drag was a way for queer and gender-nonconforming individuals to freely express themselves, even though these performances were illicit and stigmatized (Greaf 2016; Hopkins 2004), as were queer individuals and identities. Drag continues today as an art form that is both creative and resistant.

In the 1960s, drag dramatically gained mainstream attention in the United States. Drag queens and transgender women of color, most notably Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, led the Stonewall Riots, a watershed event signaling the beginning of the modern queer liberation movement (Fitzgerald and Marquez 2020; Taylor and

Rupp 2004). The political nature of drag—as both a gender-bending art form and an expression of unfettered joy—continues today, with drag queens publicly celebrating in pride parades and marching in Black Lives Matter protests, along with other forms of volunteerism, such as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and the Drag Queen Story Hour at public libraries.

In contrast with the stigmatization by popular media of earlier eras, contemporary media more often popularizes the art of drag. Andy Warhol featured drag queen Mario Montez in 13 short films in the late 1960s, honoring drag as an expressive art form (Hall 2020). Drag was also celebrated in the cult classic *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Unlike portrayals of drag as strange and comedic, the documentary *Paris Is Burning* (1990) humanized the artistic lives of queer black and brown men participating in New York's 1980s drag and ballroom scene (Lanzieri and Hildebrandt 2011). More recently, drag played a focal role in classic movies, such as *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1996) and *To Wong Foo* (1995), and in television shows, such as *Glee* (Fox, 2009–2015) and *Pose* (FX, 2018–2021) (Feldman and Hakim 2020). Along with growing political mobilization for inclusion and marriage equality, these productions helped normalize drag as an art form.

Modern drag once again became an international sensation with the launch of *RuPaul's Drag Race* (*RPDR*) in 2009, a television show in which drag artists compete to be the "Next Drag Superstar." The global franchise has expanded to many countries, including Chile, Thailand, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Australia; 1.5 million viewers watched the show's 2022 premiere of the 14th season in the United States alone (Del Rosario 2022). As a result, *RPDR*'s contestants often become celebrities, gaining increased subcultural visibility as queer icons and, in some cases, garnering mainstream appreciation for their performance art (Vulture 2019).

Despite the growing acceptance of drag as art, *RPDR* and the broader queer media highlight the lingering stigma surrounding drag, given historical associations with perversion, sexual fetish, or moral failings (Berkowitz and Belgrave 2010). This position is further made complex by the contemporary political and cultural battles over drag (Gabbatt 2023). In the United States alone, legislators are attempting to pass hundreds of anti-LGBTQ+ state laws and many target drag shows as obscene and prurient; but as drag artist Flamy Grant states, "If you've seen Mrs. Doubtfire, you've seen drag, to no negative impact on anyone" (Gabbatt 2023). Thus, drag artists occupy a complex and conflicting social position in which they are simultaneously valorized and stigmatized (Berkowitz and Belgrave 2010).

ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

We conducted our study of drag in Melbourne, Australia, which enjoys a vibrant queer nightlife and arts scene, making it a relatively safe setting for drag artists to work. The lead author researched the drag subculture, conducting an ethnography over 2 years and collecting participant observations, interviews, photo diaries, and autoethnographic insights.

Researcher Positionality and Ethnographic Strategy

The lead author trained professionally as a dancer and choreographer and had arranged drag performances for two friends. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, he identified informants using personal connections and shared knowledge in the drag community. He contacted drag artists through private messaging on Instagram, first using personal contacts and then interviewing more diverse artists. Few informants are professional drag artists; most have other jobs and drag is a passion. We called our informants "drag artists" to respect their significant investments in this art form.

Participant observation occurred at three venues that feature regular weekly drag performances. Fieldwork centered on the Pearl, a popular drag venue in the city where all the Australian informants performed. Observations at two other venues provided insights into informants in other social settings and positions. For example, interviewee Vic performed at the Pearl but was a host and master of ceremonies at the Diamond.

As a drag enthusiast, the first author's knowledge allowed him to use insights to build rapport, such as in this example with informant Adam:

> *Adam*: My biggest influence has definitely been Naomi Smalls. Uhm, just the way that she looks, like, fishy but drag, and so feminine … I don't know, I can't explain it, I'm just obsessed with her (laughs).
>
> *Interviewer*: I got that! On your Instagram, your nose contour, I was like, "That is Naomi Smalls' nose, I see it. I love it."
>
> *Adam*: Yeeeees! (smiling) Ugh, I love her so much!

Although the lead author often understood specific drag cultural references that underpinned the informants' aesthetics, he began with far less understanding of the full range of drag practices that emerged in the findings. In terms of reflexivity, he was also challenged to create distance and avoid imposing preconceived ideas due to his familiarity with the drag context. His background and expertise in costumes, choreography, and performance, however, gave him an understanding of drag as an art form. As such, he balanced his insider status by foregrounding himself as a researcher when doing fieldwork and using his connection with the subculture to establish trust in interviews. The second and third authors offered outsider perspectives; one researcher was unfamiliar with

drag but worked with stigmatized groups, and the other researcher worked in a related area (i.e., rave culture).

Sampling Strategy

We first used convenience sampling when friends provided introductions to three known drag artists. We then used purposeful sampling (Noy 2008), seeking diversity across factors, including the level of drag experience, intensity of performing, and drag style (table 1). We interviewed three drag kings to challenge our interpretations (artists who perform as entertainers in male drag) and two drag artists from other urban centers. Data included interviews with 24 informants ranging from 35 minutes to 2 hours, with an average of 1 hour.

Data Collection

The semistructured interviews with drag artists formed the primary data for this research. We employed an open-ended interview protocol, first exploring personal history, with topics including upbringing, family, and education. We then explored informants' drag careers, such as their interest in drag, the origin of their drag persona, the evolution and mastery of their practices, and the relationship between drag and their offstage lives. Interview data were

situated within the wider ethnography as the lead author conducted fieldwork at three drag venues (table 2). As an observer, he took field notes of the drag artists' performances and audiences' reactions. Over time, he was invited backstage for informal interviews and photographs as drag artists prepared to take the stage.

During the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, when drag performances were shuttered, drag artists performed in digital drag shows. The lead author attended 23 digital drag shows, also taking field notes. In addition, we used a look-book method, with the first author inviting artists to photographically document the transformation from their everyday look into their drag persona. These look books helped identify patterns across the elaborate makeup and costuming practices of drag. Twelve artists participated in this method, resulting in 209 photos and a widening of our sample; nine interviewees plus three non-interviewees participated in the look books.

Finally, the lead author carried out autoethnography by creating a drag persona, developing basic bodily competences in makeup and costuming, and performing twice in drag clubs. He spent 2 months practicing applying makeup and took 10 weekly sewing lessons to understand garment construction, given that artists typically create their costumes. Informants Ben, Carl, Frey, and James offered occasional guidance and mentorship. This experience provided

TABLE 1

INFORMANTS

Pseudonym[a] and age		Gender[b]	Past practices	Years	Intensity[c]	Drag styles
Hamish	18	M	None	0.5	Medium	Glamorous, hyperfeminine
Frey†	19	NB	Visual arts	1	High	Genderfu*k (blending masculine and feminine)
Gabriel	27	M	Cosplay	1	Low	Horror
Lucas	26	M	Fashion	1	High	Burlesque-inspired feminine
Nate	22	M	Theater	2	Medium	Fashion oriented, feminine
Oli	24	NB	Dance, martial arts	2	Medium	Horror, drag king
Wanda	27	NB	Fashion, cosplay	2	Low	Drag king, camp
Xay†	22	NB	Fashion, cosplay	2	High	Drag king, club kid
Adam†	29	M	Makeup	3	High	Glamorous, hyperfeminine
Matthew	22	M	Makeup	3	High	Glamorous, hyperfeminine
Quentin	29	M	None	3	High	Glamorous
Samantha†	24	W	Graphic design	3	High	Hyperfeminine, cartoon/anime-inspired
Usher†	22	NB	Fashion	3	High	Glamorous, anime-inspired
Carl†	22	M	Visual arts	4	Medium	Glamorous, camp
James†	30	M	Makeup	4	Medium	Camp
Peter	29	M	None	4	Low	Glamorous, bearded queen
Robin	27	M	Music	4	Low	Camp
Vic	23	NB → W	Fashion	4	High	Glamorous, pageant
Ben†	26	M	Music, singing	5	Medium	Glamorous
Evan	30	M	None	8	Medium	Glamorous
Damien	26	M	Makeup	10	High	Glamorous, feminine
Ivan†	28	NB	Theater	11	High	Camp, genderfu*k
Thomas	38	M	Theater	19	High	Glamorous
Kieran	47	M	Visual arts	21	High	Glamorous, pageant

[a]Names marked with † are the nine informants who participated in the look books, as well as three others not interviewed.
[b]Self-reported gender identity. M = man ("he/him"); W = woman ("she/her"); NB = nonbinary ("they/them"). One informant transitioned during our research, marked by an arrow. We use pronouns and terminology that reflect our informants' self-descriptions.
[c]High = more than once a week; medium = once a week; low = less than once a week (most commonly twice a month).

TABLE 2

INFORMAL AND FORMAL DATA SOURCES

Informal interest	The lead author became interested in drag after discovering *RPDR* in 2011. Since 2014, this hobbyist interest intensified.	~10 years
Books	Review of books authored by RuPaul and other *RPDR* queens (e.g., Willam Belli, Bianca Del Rio), as well as academic books and practitioner work around drag history and culture (Fitzgerald and Marquez 2020; Hall 2020)	8 books
Interviews	Semistructured interviews with drag artists	24 interviews
Formal fieldwork (January 2019–March 2020; July 2020; February–March 2021)	Pearl (venue hosting 6 drag events per week)	70 visits
	Diamond (venue hosting 3 drag events per week)	13 visits
	Ruby (venue hosting 2 drag events per week)	10 visits
Live events	Farmers market-style drag sale	2 days
	Emerald Cabaret bar (one-off drag performance)	1 event
Digital fieldwork (April 2020–January 2021)	The lead author attended digital drag shows, by both informants and artists from *RPDR*	23 shows
Social media participation (2014–ongoing)	The lead author regularly visited and participated in the *RPDR* Reddit community and became an administrator and moderator for the page from 2021 to 2022, managing and interacting with a community of more than 420K consumers and fans of the show.	
Look books	Informant-created photo diaries of transformations	12 books; 209 photographs
Autoethnography	Creating a drag persona, learning makeup, costuming, and sewing, being mentored by drag artists	6 months; 2 performances

a deeper understanding of the difficulty of integrating different drag practices into a convincing performance.

Analytical Procedures

The lead author transcribed all interviews and field notes, with analysis jointly conducted by the research team. While the lead author carried out the initial coding and theorizing, the coauthors refined, challenged, and offered alternative interpretations. We used Nvivo to manage these data. We began our analysis by reading each interview, allowing data-driven codes to emerge from the intratextual analysis. We then moved up a level of abstraction and began an intertextual analysis by looking for patterns, commonalities, and differences in themes across our informants, moving iteratively from emic understandings to the nascent theoretical model (Thompson 1997). As the emerging theoretical framework solidified, we recoded the data using more theory-driven codes, allowing for a more refined interpretation of the findings. University ethics approved the study and the informed consent procedures. When referring to our informants' drag personas, we use drag pseudonyms that reflect the spirit of their original names.

We next present our empirical findings. First, we explore how consumers animate body-in-practice, highlighting the iterative work of mastering creative practices. We introduce six stigma resistance strategies that participants used across supportive and unsupportive social spaces.

DEVELOPING BODY-IN-PRACTICE THROUGH CREATIVE PRACTICES

The Allure of Drag: Challenging Shame and Embodying Pride

Goffman (1959) argues that many social interactions are influenced by a desire to avoid shame. We found that many drag artists experienced varying intensities of stigmatization around sexuality, gender, race, and/or body size. These feelings of shame were called "feeling different" (Carl, Vic) or "hiding myself" (Robin, Evan). Some felt tremendous shame after years of being socially humiliated. This "spoiled identity" recursively creates and is reinforced by social exclusions, and shame becomes embodied (Ahmed 2014; Munt 2008). Individuals who deviate from social expectations, such as queer people, immigrants, or any group defined in opposition to what is considered normal, may then iteratively experience shame as they struggle to reconcile differing internal expectations and social evaluations (Butler 1990; Munt 2008).

Participants experienced tensions from an external push to conform while experiencing an internal and embodied rejection of this normativity (Ahmed 2014). For example, Ben (M, 26) highlights how attendance at an all-boys school made him question his identity:

> Just being in that kind of macho-dominated environment and realizing that I was gay . . . it just brought up all the shame and like second-guessing of my mannerisms and my interests and everything like that . . . who I was and like

what I was interested in, what I wanted to do before that pubescent shame, um, kind of came into things.

While Ben describes how stigma made him question his masculinity and mannerisms, Xay (NB, 22) describes feeling a more visceral experience of shame and social exclusion: "I was the kid in drama who just sat in the corner and didn't do shit." Xay and Ben highlight that stigma evokes different intensities of shame, from feeling uncomfortable about mannerisms to feeling social alienation. Thus, drag was an appealing way to manage these feelings of difference that were shared by all informants to varying degrees. As an expressive art form, drag offered daring embodiments through which they might learn to manage shame.

Informants found drag alluring for its potential for freedom, which spoke to a long teleology of escaping shame. This was often expressed in terms of overlapping short teleologies including finding a supportive community, exploring gender, and/or exploring artistic expressions. For example, Matthew (M, 22) grew up in a South Asian household and lacked social support or a queer community: "I had no gay culture . . . . When I got [to Melbourne], I was like, 'Oh, this is gay culture. This is me. I want to be a part of it.'" Gabriel (M, 27) shared this short teleology— drag made him feel more accepted by a gay community that had previously ignored him or fetishized his Asianness.

Many informants also used drag as a safe way to play with gender. Quentin (M, 29) describes how drag gave him license to be confident in his masculinity by exploring his femininity:

> I use drag as my way to channel and focus the femininity and more female aspects of my life. Prior to drag, I was a bit more gender fluid [and] would kind of walk the spectrum [of gender] but wasn't really happy. And then finding drag was a way for me to fully channel that, and that's when she [his drag persona] really took up space in my life . . . . She's the embodiment of everything that I find is feminine and beautiful and womanly.

This finding resonates with Butler's (1990, 1993) view that drag challenges the traditional binary assumptions of gender as natural, parodies normative forms of gender expression, and reveals the fundamentally performative nature of gender.

Finally, some informants entered drag for artistic expression. As a child, Carl (M, 22) was hospitalized for a chronic illness and felt shame from his disability. Drag offered him a way to live out his childhood dream of being a performing artist:

> I've always had this passion for performing. Like, as a little kid, I would go down to this play area in the hospital where they have a big stage. And I would go up there and sing, put on performances, and it was fun, entertaining everybody. I loved that idea of making people laugh and entertaining

them just with what I naturally have . . . . [Through drag] I could look like Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth, and Anjelica Huston . . . I could channel that old Hollywood glamour.

Carl used drag to move from feeling "incredibly vulnerable" as a sick child to feeling "gorgeous" as a drag artist.

For all informants, their drag persona gave them social license to temporarily embody a creation that was both shame-free and shameless. Nate (M, 22) explains this as "becoming another person . . . putting aside the insecurities that you have . . . and intentionally and visibly breaking rules." As Nate embodies his drag persona Lumina, he is confident and, by putting on "at least four layers," he is "full of light." Informants called this experience of being a confident persona as "drag power" or "drag energy"—a first recognition and experience of pride. For all informants, their first awareness of this pride was a poignant memory—an understanding that the spectacle of drag and its rule breaking generated social attention too long denied to them. Ivan (NB, 28) describes this feeling of social command:

> I will never forget it, because it was, even knowing that I looked awful, I felt incredible. There's something about the power of drag. But just the first time you do it, you just realize, holy crap, I can walk into a room, and everyone will look. Good, bad, or otherwise, everyone's going to look. It's very addictive.

Over time, this social command and approval of an audience is earned through hard work and constant practice that eventually becomes a source of pride. The new drag persona must be practiced, mastered, and approved by an audience. Intriguingly, unlike cosplayers, who embody prefabricated characters (Seregina and Weijo 2016), drag artists create their own persona, a feat that requires months and years of practice. Convincing performances before audiences produce pride, as their efforts are socially approved through smiles, laughter, and applause. But the new drag persona and pride require iterative work for a stable embodiment. We conceptualize this process as emerging through body-in-practice, in which emotions iteratively intersect and overlap through the body and audiences. But, first, artists must create their drag persona.

Creating the Imagined Persona

The success of a drag performance relies on artists socially connecting with their audiences through a dramatic live performance; that is, it depends on the successful alignment of sensate relations (i.e., the intersubjective sense experiences). Drag artists create a drag persona—the invented character animating their creative practices. RuPaul Charles (2020) waxes lyrically that "Coming up with a drag persona is a spiritual exercise as much as it is

an aesthetic one and finding the perfect drag performer name [is] essential to that process." Drag artists create a unique drag persona that is both backward looking, drawing on important personal and cultural meanings, and forward looking, as the persona holds the promise of social approval and inclusion.

Drag artists use different inspirations to create a unique drag persona. After all, the very point of a drag performance is to stand out. For example, James (M, 30) explains how Divine, a legendary drag artist, inspired his makeup bundle (i.e., set of simple cosmetic practices): "If you can't see my eyes from the back of the room, they're not big enough!" James uses aesthetic creative practices to visually connect with a drag icon, a reference instantly understood and appreciated by audiences in the LGBTQ+ community as sensate relations align. The Australian drag film *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* was another common inspiration: Kieran (M, 47) describes his glamorous, pageant drag aesthetic as "a product of Priscilla." Inspirations for drag artists are as diverse as the artists themselves. Adam (M, 29) loves Storm, an *X-Men* character, who inspired his use of colored contact lenses—a visual connection that makes his drag persona "otherworldly." Peter's (M, 29) Bollywood-inspired aesthetic celebrates his South Asian heritage and cultural upbringing, while Robin's (M, 27) aesthetic reflects his heritage drawing inspiration from Caribbean performers.

Drag artists combine these various influences to create their persona. This is difficult, as evidenced by Hamish's (M, 18) lack of bodily competences to create his imagined persona: "I really like Shea Coulee. I wish I could do like a fierce mug like her, but I just don't have the skill at this stage." Similarly, these challenges were apparent in the lead author's autoethnographic creation of a drag persona. He documented this struggle: "Okay. I know my [drag] name. I know what I want to look like. But I have no idea how to do the damn thing. Does she even really exist if I can't bring her to life" (field note 7/22/2019)?

Body-in-Practice

We conceptualize body-in-practice as the iterative progression from an imagined persona to an accomplished body that emerges across years—as practice bundles are refined, mastered, and combined until eventually cohering into a socially convincing performance. In drag, artists take their imagined drag persona and quite literally layer it onto their body through makeup, costume, and acting. We identified three bundles—makeup, costume, and entertainment—that constitute the challenging art of drag, and each must be aligned and mastered to bring forth an accomplished body. Figure 1 offers a visual representation of body-in-practice, and table 3 depicts the 23 individual drag practices identified.

In table 3, we organized the purpose of these practices as either hiding or heightening the body or a combination. Hiding practices often conceal the underlying stigmatized gendered body, including blocking eyebrows, binding breasts, tucking the penis, and removing hair. Heightening practices create an aestheticized body, including accenting eyes, creating shadows using makeup to create breast cleavage, curating a fashionable costume, and exaggerating a walk. Hiding and heightening practices both conceal and alter gender. These practices are critical to translating the personal meanings of the drag persona into the sensate relations that emerge when interacting with the audience. Some of these practices comprise simple bodily competences, such as when drag kings bind their breasts or drag queens peek coquettishly from behind a fluttering fan. Other practices, such as blocking eyebrows, involve difficult bodily competences and uses of materials that require significant trial and error. Ben (M, 26) describes his initial cosmetic practices as "just so rough," but now he has mastered the bodily competences needed to create his imagined drag persona, which he attributes to weekly practice and "lots of YouTube." In figure 2, Ben demonstrates his mastery of key steps of the makeup bundle (after his eyebrows were blocked and new brows were drawn). Ben uses heightening practices of shadowing eyes, and then he extends fake eyelashes, contours the face, and outlines and fills in the lips to create his drag face.

Bodily competences are vital to body-in-practice as artists work to align their physical body with their imagined drag persona. Wanda (NB, 27), for example, is a competent costumier from past cosplay experiences. Wanda makes intricate costumes with voluminous sleeves that express their imagined fantastical masculinity, incorporating bodily competences of draping and sewing to create costumes that are socially distinctive when compared with those typically worn by drag kings. Wanda's breasts bind easily because "I have small boobs," so the masculine costume aligns with a feminine body. Oli (NB, 24), however, struggles with large breasts and a body misaligned with the materials that can shatter the sensate relations of masculinity, such as when a corset came undone as "the hook just refused to sit straight" (fieldnotes 9/12/2019).

Misaligned practices force artists to reexamine their bodily competences, challenging them to develop their competences or change their imagined persona. For example, Ivan (NB, 28) was admonished by peers who said their makeup "didn't make sense" as it violated social expectations of drag aesthetics. Ivan created a unique style of makeup that expresses sensate relations that are singularly "weird" but are clearly appreciated and affirmed by audiences.

Practices of hiding and heightening first misalign, but after iteratively aligning and refining them based on informal feedback and sensate relations, body-in-practice integrates them into performances that are increasingly convincing. Carl's (M, 22) look book offers a good

FIGURE 1

DEVELOPING BODY-IN-PRACTICE

AQ1
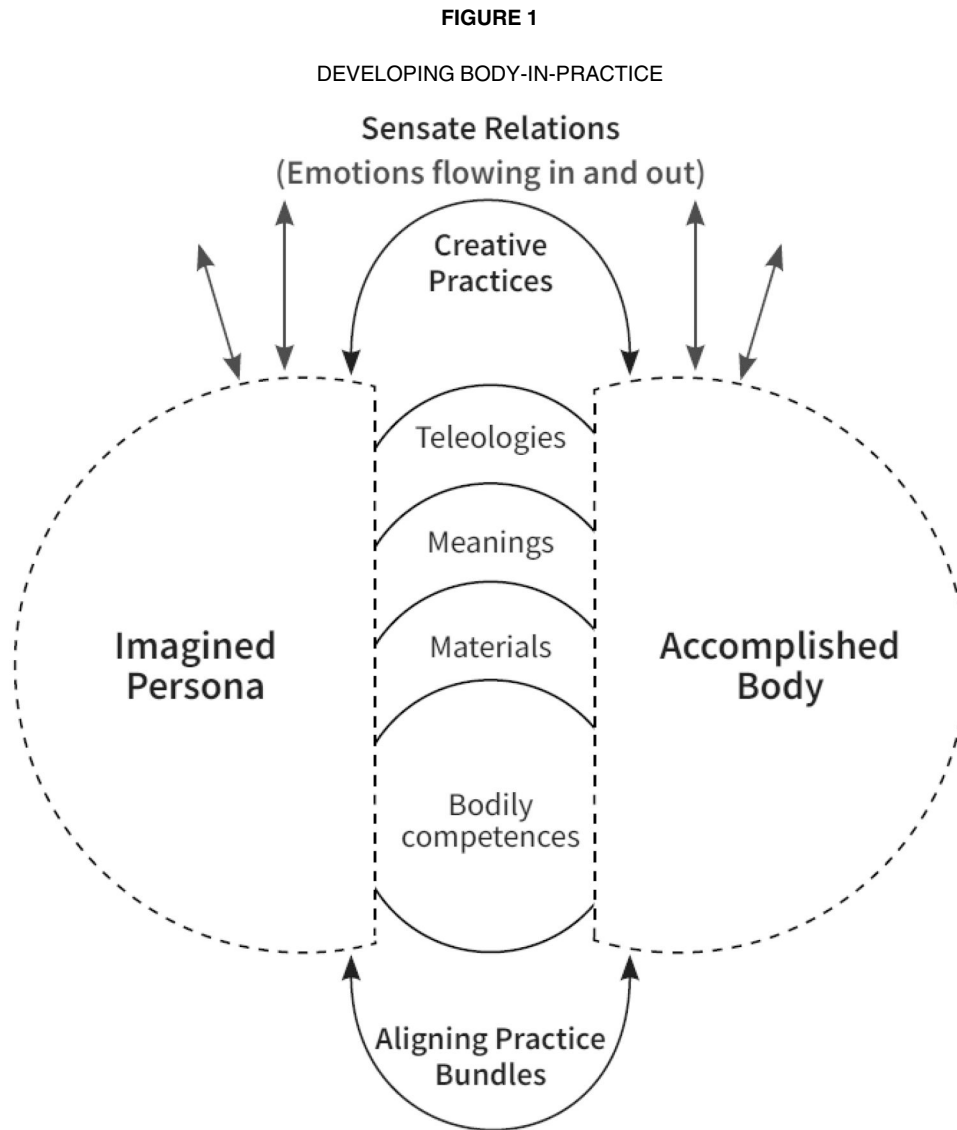
example of his proficiencies in hiding and heightening practices. These practices coalesce within the makeup, costume, and entertainment bundles to animate a gorgeous and sassy vixen—a physical and embodied realization of his imagined persona of "old Hollywood glamour" (figure 3).

The entertainment bundle of drag can be as simple as an affected voice and confident strut or as challenging as a full dance with lip-sync. Developing a convincing entertainment bundle depends on the alignment of vocalizing, walking, expressing, and captivating, a challenge even for experienced artists. "Giving a good performance" (Adam, M, 29) is often the hardest practice bundle to master. Oli (NB, 24) offers an example demonstrating the considerable effort of aligning the entertainment bundle:

[My drag character is] a very particular mindset when I'm performing, and it takes a lot of energy to be like that, that level of intensity, without being over the top, if that makes sense. So, I don't know if you've seen me when I'm not performing, but I've been at this venue before when I've just sat quietly in the corner because I'm alone. The personas are so different . . . . I practiced at home, in my mirror, with the songs that I do now ... for six months. Practicing being more masculine. The way I move.

In summary, drag artists draw from their personal histories and cultural imaginaries to invent an imagined persona, and they invest significant effort in developing the bodily competences and materials necessary to align practice bundles to deliver a convincing performance. Next, we explore

TABLE 3

BODY-AS-PRACTICE AS ALIGNING CREATIVE PRACTICE BUNDLES

Creative practice	Body	Practice bundle	Materials	Bodily competences
Practices of hiding				
Blocking	Eyebrows	Makeup	Glue, Pros-Aide, foundation, hairdryers, brushes	Eyebrows are covered in layers of glue/Pros-Aide, then brushed down; foundation covers the flattened brow, blending it into the forehead and rendering the area clean
Binding	Breasts	Costume	Chest binders, ace bandages	Breasts are compressed using binders/ace bandages
Tucking	Penis	Costume	Duct tape, tights, underwear	Penis is folded back between butt cheeks, underwear is worn, then duct tape and tights are used to hold everything in place
Removing	Hair	Makeup and costume	Razors, hair removal cream, hot wax	Visible hair is shaved, removed, or waxed
Practices of heightening				
Drawing	Eyebrows	Makeup	Brushes, color, pencils	Fake eyebrows are drawn on using pencils and eyeshadow on blocked brows
Accenting	Eyes	Makeup	Brushes, eyeshadow, eyeliner, eye pencils, wipes (for errors)	Eyes are made larger by creating dimension and blending
Extending	Eyelashes	Makeup	False eyelashes, eyelash glue, myriad materials (e.g., glitter, cardboard)	Eyelashes are attached to eyelids with care
Outlining	Lips	Makeup	Lip stick, lip liner, lip gloss, brushes	Lipliner outlines the shape of the lip, lipstick colors the lip; lips are often overdrawn to give the impression of a larger mouth (useful for lip-syncing)
Distorting	Skins, body	Makeup	Prosthetic makeup (e.g., liquid latex, fake blood, fake bugs, metal wiring, trash bags, glue/adhesive)	Face and body are altered by layering prosthetic products and liquid latex to resemble skin, deformities, otherworldly, and so on
Creating abs/cleavage	Chest and breasts	Makeup and costume	Foundation, powders, brushes	Abs and cleavage are created using dark and light powders to create dimensionality using tricks of light
Masculinizing	Hair	Makeup	Brushes, face paint	Beards, moustaches, and body hair are painted using black and brown paints and powders strategically layered to simulate hair
Curating	Body	Costume	Clothing (e.g., dresses, jumpsuits, swimsuits, pants, shirts), shoes	Body is animated through fashion and accessories
Creating and customizing	Body	Costume	Fabric, patterns, sewing machines, hot glue, rhinestones, glitter, accessories	Body is animated through unique amendments and tailored pieces to fit the body
Styling	Hair	Costume	Wigs, wig caps, tape, bobby/hair pins, wig heads, brushes, dry shampoo, conditioner	Wigs are secured, styled, and blended into natural hair
Captivating	Body	Entertainment	Props, microphones, music tracks, stages	Body amuses and captivates audiences by dancing, singing, and/or lip-syncing
Vocalizing	Voice	Entertainment	Microphones, catch phrases	Voice embodies the drag persona's personality and wit
Re-gendering walk	Body	Entertainment	High heels, heavy boots	Body balances, struts, sashays, catwalk
Expressing	Hands	Entertainment	Props, including fans and artificial nails	Soft movements to allure, sharp movements to command
Improvising	Body	Entertainment	Practicing with friends, thinking of jokes and "burns" for future use (depending on the artist)	Commanding attention by sparring with audiences (also through nonverbal communications), using humor, throwing shade, engaging in physical comedy
Practices of hiding and heightening				
Contouring and highlighting	Face	Makeup	Brushes, shades of powder	Face is sculpted using dark and light powders to create cheekbones and jawlines and to remove curves using tricks of light
Reshaping	Body	Costume	Corsets, waist trainers, shapewear, binders (for drag kings)	Body is laced into corsets, and shapewear is fitted; natural breasts are bound with a binder
Curving	Body	Costume	Pads, tights	Body is padded and made curvaceous and held in place with tights
Feminizing	Breasts	Costume	Silicone breastplates, chicken cutlets, socks, sponges	Breastplates are worn around the neck; materials are stuffed into a bra

FIGURE 2

CREATIVE PRACTICES OF THE MAKEUP BUNDLE

AQ1

how body-in-practice allows consumers to deeply lodge pride and replace shame to varying degrees.

STABILIZING PRIDE THROUGH BODY-IN-PRACTICE

As explained previously, body-in-practice theorizes the iterative work that consumers tackle to align practice bundles and move toward an accomplished body, resulting in a convincing performance. This iterative work and the responses of an appreciative audience evoke pride, but not in a boastful sense; rather, it is the earned pride of mastery achieved after hard work. Body-in-practice first stabilizes pride within the safety of supportive artistic venues, but eventually this prideful embodiment moves into a social world where stigmatization persists. These embodiments of pride—earned through mastery—exist alongside feelings of past shame. In this section, we explore how consumers

affirm pride and negotiate shame as body-in-practice moves between supportive and unsupportive spaces.

Our body-in-practice framework depicts the iterative relationship between the imagined persona and the accomplished body. Figure 4 is a didactic representation of how body-in-practice navigates the emergent embodiments of pride, as tensions between overlapping emotions of pride and shame are iteratively experienced over time and across supportive and unsupportive social spaces (horizontal axis). Our framework explores six stigma resistance strategies drag artists use for affirming pride and negotiating shame that occurs as body-in-practice moves beyond drag venues. We trace how pride over time becomes increasingly embodied and stabilized (vertical axis).

The first four dynamics often occur in the early stages of body-in-practice, in which the imagined persona and the accomplished body are largely distinct. The dynamic of experimenting—which is how body-in-practice first emerges—occurs within socially supportive settings,

FIGURE 3

ALIGNING PRACTICE BUNDLES
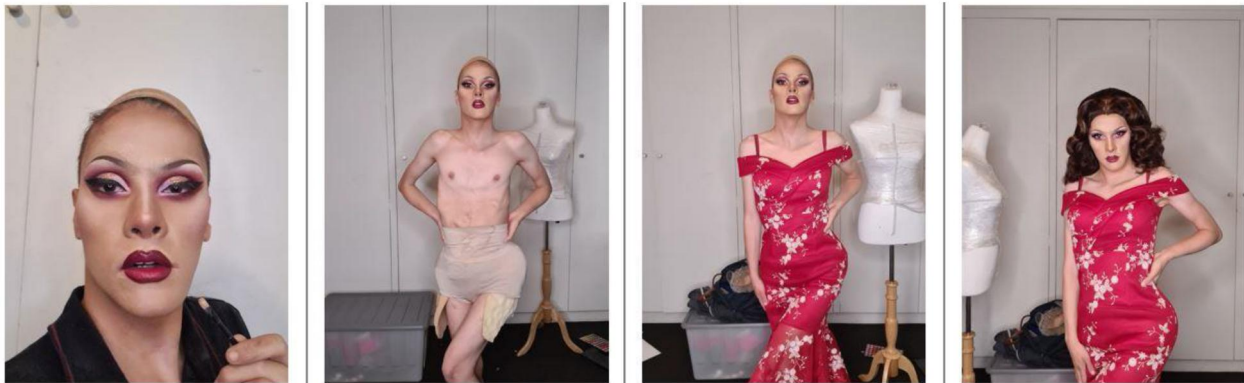
AQ1

whereas the dynamics of guarding and risk-taking occur within socially unsupportive settings when pride is not fully stable, and shame still arises when others seek to discredit consumers through stigmatization. Some artists also manage shame through spatial reconfiguring for safety. The final two dynamics emerge as the accomplished body stabilizes. Self-affirming and integrating occur across both supportive and unsupportive social spaces and represent the increasing stabilization of pride and attenuation of shame. The thickness of the six boxes visually represents the permeability of body-in-practice to shame—being first porous and then becoming more impermeable as pride stabilizes.

Table 4 summarizes the new stigma resistance strategies that emerged as consumers animate body-in-practice. We explore these strategies across: (1) the type of social space, (2) the dominant emotion arising, and (3) the stability of emotions in body-in-practice.

Early Embodiment of Pride

Experimenting in Safety. Body Is Permeable to Pride. Drag is a subversive challenge of conventional concepts of gender and sexuality (Butler 1990, 1993). It transgresses social boundaries by rejecting fixed categories of identity or biological determinism and, instead, focuses on the agency of individuals when freed from social norms (Greaf 2016). As such, it is a creative practice that is emotionally charged and invites attention, both positive and negative. Artists' early drag practices first develop within safe, supportive spaces. Unsurprisingly, drag artists are celebrated for experimenting with aesthetic and social practices within drag venues.

As their creations are celebrated, artists are increasingly admired and socially integrated into the drag and broader queer community. For example, Gabriel (M, 27) feels

socially invisible out of drag. In drag, Donna Darko attracts attention through her exaggerated, horror-inspired drag performance, garnering community acceptance. She is *present* in a way that Gabriel does not feel he can be because of his Asian identity; that is, Donna Darko commands social space in a way that Gabriel cannot. Over time, Gabriel increasingly takes pride in his creative practices, and feels Donna, his creation, earns this attention: "She [Donna] gets more people talking to her. [Gabriel] is *very* not talked to in the clubs. I like that attention that she gets (interviewee emphasis)."

As Hamish (M, 18) explains, drag demands that artists make significant investments of time, money, and effort in mastering creative practices. However, he considers this a worthwhile investment because his efforts are rewarded with social attention—a contrast to his past experiences of social exclusion from bullying:

> A lot of my time, just as an individual human being, is taken up by drag, because not only is it three hours to paint, but it's also the two hours I spent yesterday on the hair. It's buying things online that takes time and money. There's so much, like, I've got to go wash my tights. I've got to make my padding. It's all these things that take a lot of time to go into one four-hour night . . . . Sometimes I question [it], I'm like, "It would be so much easier if I literally just chucked on some jeans and a T-shirt and went for a night out." But I think to myself and was like, "No." Because I like being the center of attention and I like free drinks. And also, I'm just still in love with drag.

Similarly, James (M, 30) shares: "When you're in drag, everyone's looking at you and giving you all this attention, and you're like, 'Damn, yeah. You're right. I deserve this fucking attention.'" Artists like Hamish and James are socially rewarded—an early experience of sensate relations that evokes pride and social acceptance—and thus they

FIGURE 4

BODY-IN-PRACTICE STABILIZES PRIDE OVER TIME
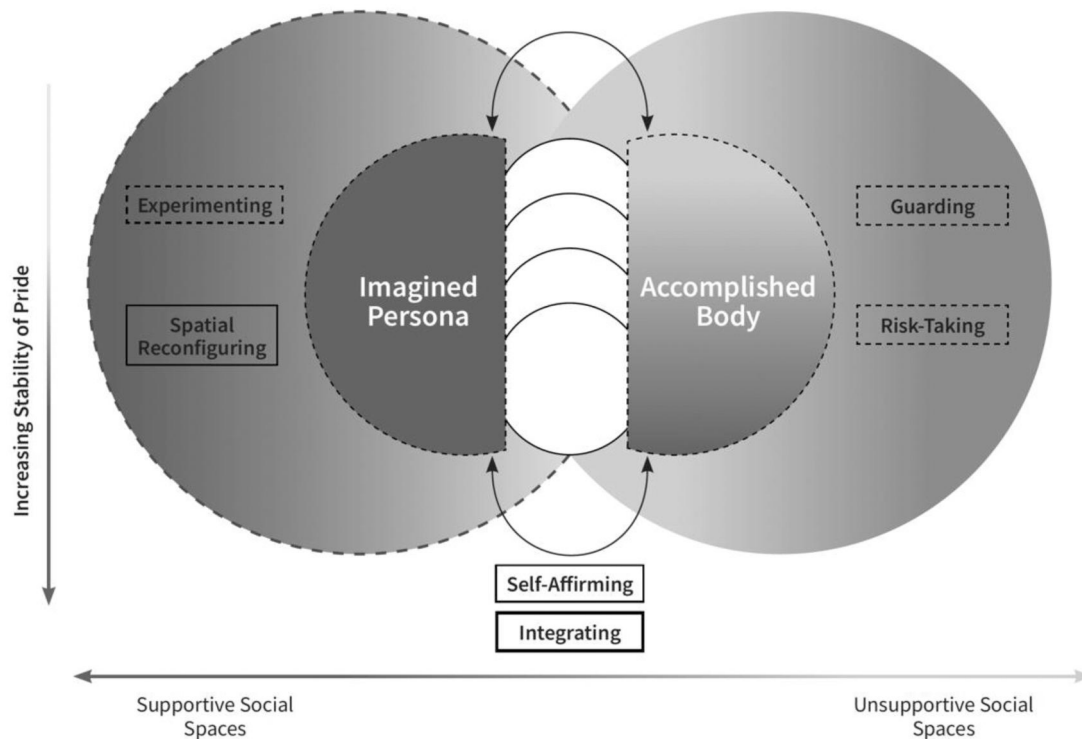
increase their investments in drag as ownership and pride in their creation grows.

Over time, body-in-practice generates greater confidence within these supportive social spaces. Vic (W, 23, transitioned after interview) jokingly self-identifies as the "world's tallest drag queen," towering at nearly 7 feet in platform shoes. Vic has a "quiet" everyday voice, but Poison Ivy (her drag persona) is loud and commanding. Vic begins experimenting with her confident voice offstage, in drag, but within the safety of the club:

> First time I felt really powerful in drag was when this guy at the [gay] club was just being an absolute dickhead. And I'm not a confrontational person, but he was just being rude. And I just had enough, and so I basically yelled at him. And he didn't know what to do . . . . Yeah, [Poison Ivy] gave me a voice.

This new voice and confrontational practice are a marked departure from Vic's nonconfrontational primary identity. But the success of this experimentation is clearly a source of pride, as Vic feels "really powerful" as she challenges the inappropriate actions of a homophobic man in an ostensibly safe space for queer people.

It is worth noting that the potential for shame still exists even within these supportive spaces, but it is less intense and more easily negotiated in supportive social spaces where most attention is positive. For example, as artists master their craft, some practices inevitably misalign, inviting social judgment from other artists or the audience. As Hamish (M, 18) notes, social feedback is often appreciated:

> When I went out on my first night, the skirt that I made was sitting really low and so [another queen] came and she pulled it up to my actual waist, it was sitting on my hips and she's like, "A drag queen's skirt should never sit on their hips," or something dumb like that. And she put a safety pin in it and [I] felt much cuter. She was right.

These small moments of embarrassment are easily managed, especially when social assistance is readily available to support the mastery of their creative practices.

Guarding. Body Is Permeable to Shame. Giving birth to the drag persona risks exposing the artist to a new source of social exclusion. Family and friends may find drag threatening and reject its legitimacy as an art form, which can reinforce shame. When drag artists feel stigmatized,

TABLE 4

STIGMA RESISTANCE THROUGH BODY-IN-PRACTICE

Stigma resistance strategies	Social space	Dominant emotion	Stability of emotion
Early embodiment of pride			
Experimenting	Supportive	Drag practices evoke pride with little shame.	Body is temporarily permeable to pride with low levels of shame.
Guarding	Unsupportive	Daily practices require negotiating shame through avoidance.	Body is permeable to shame and pride is not stabilized.
Risk-taking	Unsupportive	Consumption practices evoke pride with some shame negotiation.	Body is permeable to both pride and shame, but continuity of creative practices helps stabilize pride.
Spatial reconfiguring	Supportive	Spatial practices defend pride and avoid shame.	Body is permeable to both pride and shame, but spatial separation helps stabilize pride.
Stabilization of pride			
Self-affirming	All social spaces	Creative and daily practices evoke pride as deeply held with some shame negotiation.	Pride stabilizes in the body and is increasingly impermeable to shame, and some unsupportive ties become supportive.
Integrating	All social spaces	Creative and daily practices evoke pride as dominant emotion with little shame.	Pride stabilizes the body and is now resistant to shame.

they may have trouble managing social judgments that reinforce shame. Moreover, shame is not a monolithic emotion; rather, it is a broad term that can span intensities that range from embarrassment to humiliation (Munt 2008; Scheff 2014). Thus, drag artists may guard their emerging body-in-practice, lest they be judged harshly.

For example, in gay male dating, the gender-blurring nature of drag invites negative judgments of drag artist when stereotypically masculine traits are privileged, and femininity is disparaged. Ben (M, 26) dramatically calls drag "a dating death sentence." Vic (W, 23, speaking about her experiences pre-transition) adds that, much like the dual stigmatization and valorization that drag artists experience, when dating, they are both devalued and fetishized as "exotic." Thus, some drag artists guard their emerging body-in-practice when dating to avoid these reactions.

However, the drag artist may experience more intense rejection. When Lucas (M, 26) revealed his drag artistry to his mother, she viewed him as "disgusting—deep down, she freaked out." Lucas' prior shame around his sexuality was compounded by his mother's revulsion, causing him additional distress. Peter's (M, 29) parents rejected him after they saw a video of him; they "basically disowned me" and "that feeling was really isolating." This amplification of shame is common for artists from communities of color, rural towns, conservative countries, or anywhere that rigid interpretations of gender dominate. With ethnic origins in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean, respectively, Evan, Gabriel, and Robin have families that rejected them because of their sexuality—a shame that is deeply embodied and intensely felt even after living apart from their families for years.

Guarding can be proactive. Artists may simply choose not to reveal their drag practices to protect their burgeoning pride in body-in-practice. For example, Ben (M, 26) does not reveal his drag when he dates a new partner, dressing conservatively and only strategically reveals his drag as a "third date thing" when he feels safe. However, guarding can also be reactive to avoid condemnation. For example, Evan (M, 30) draws a digital divide between what he posts on his "boy" Facebook and drag Instagram account to avoid family disapproval. Robin (M, 27) actively guards that he is a drag artist from his Caribbean family, stating: "They would just lose their minds."

Risk-Taking: Continuity of Creative Practices Secures Pride. Despite these potential challenges, artists find the drag body-in-practice is a tremendous source of joy and pride, providing them with social attention and inclusion. Moreover, informants create unique drag personas and entertain audiences who appreciate these original performances. Thus, many drag artists grow in confidence and begin taking risks beyond the entertainment stage.

Risk-taking most often begins with drag artists migrating creative consumption practices to daily life. For example, Samantha (W, 24), who previously only wore flannel and leather, developed a self-proclaimed "girly" aesthetic in her anime-inspired drag:

> I was getting purples, and pinks, and girly colors. And people would be like, "This doesn't work. You're dressed in a leather jacket, and a flannel, and you've got pink nails. What's going on?" . . . And it was funny because it was coming from queer people, which I think is really rich, really fucking rich. And that made me really upset, but I kept

doing it anyway because biting my nails is a bad habit I've had, and I felt proud of my hands for the first time in a long time. And that was the one part of myself that I loved, in and out of drag.

Samantha takes risks wearing her drag-inspired painted nails embracing what "I loved in and out of drag." Despite negative evaluations, she persists by choosing to wear more "chiffon, flowy tops. Still, in darker colors. And I started being a little bit more femme presenting at work, as Samantha. And that made me happy." Rather than guarding, Samantha negotiates potential shame through an injection of pride as she takes small aesthetic risks.

This process first occurs on stage, as drag artists' performances are approved and reinforced by sensate relations from a supportive audience. Ben (M, 26) created his drag persona, Sheeza Knowitall, who is the center of attention when wearing, most memorably, an orange velvet dress. Sheeza's bold couture migrated over time to Ben's daily wear, and he now confidently dons "fabulous velvet blazers," drawing attention that once he would have avoided. Xay (NB, 22) even incorporates creative practices of bondage into everyday attire, such as wearing metal chokers, because it "makes me feel the way I want to be seen." As Roxxy Tocin, Xay also blurs gender boundaries with androgenous punk creative practices that are now part of their daily attire.

For some, risk-taking expands as drag artists embrace consumption practices that were once shameful. Significantly, this marks the point at which pride is no longer tied to the materials of creative practices but stabilizes in the body. Usher's (NB, 22) consumption of anime was ridiculed in the past, which they describe as "not fun." However, anime forms the foundation of their drag persona's exaggerated and colorful visual aesthetic:

> I had a girl who was visiting from Japan come to me and she walked up to me directly, I was washing my hands in the bathroom in full drag, and she walked up to me and was like, "Hi, I love the way you look . . . . I don't know if you're trying, but it's very *decora kei*."[1] And I was like, "That's exactly what I'm going for. That's exactly what I'm going for. And you, with no hesitation or fear, said that to me out loud." And that's kind of like how I knew I was . . . on the right track. [Drag name] made me realize that I'm surrounded by people that aren't going to make fun of me because of things that I like. And I think, in turn, as Usher, I've been able to be like, "I actually really like Star Wars. And I really like anime. Cartoons are my favorite thing!"

This positive social affirmation is a poignant memory for Usher because it reinforces the short teleology of artistic expression that was driving their creative practices. In the past, passive Usher guarded their interests from shame,

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1   *Decora kei* is a Japanese aesthetic of visual excess achieved through bold colors, layered garments, and many accessories.

which alienated them from their passions. Usher now proudly declares their love for anime both in and out of drag.

This interplay of shame and pride when taking risks also appears in the first author's autoethnographic notes, after spending a day in public wearing high heels:

> It was terrifying, but Christ, it was fun. I don't know if I'm always going to be able to do this, but there was something about riding the tram to [Ruby] in the heels, that was incredible. I looked good, I felt strong, and NO ONE could tell me otherwise. I was "**that** bit*h"! Could I have done this five years ago? Absolutely not. The queens at [Ruby] loved them [the heels], which also really helped! (field notes 9/09/2019)

The first author learned to walk in heels for his drag persona and, through body-in-practice, was socially affirmed in the safety of drag venues. Without this support and practice, it is unlikely he would have risked wearing heels on a public tram.

Spatial Reconfiguring: Spatial Discontinuity Stabilizes Pride. Some artists chose to manage potential negative evaluations by separating drag spatially, often creating new supportive spaces. Thus, they both protect their pride in their creative practices and minimize social judgments of unsupportive people. Unlike guarding in which drag is hidden, spatial reconfiguring involves striking a healthy balance across different life domains, somewhat akin to achieving work–life balance.

Spatial reconfiguring occurs when informants publicly embrace their body-in-practice but decide to separate drag and ordinary life by establishing spaces where pride in creative practices can flourish. For example, Adam (M, 29) faced familial tensions around risk-taking with his drag creative practices. He wanted to wear cosmetics in everyday life, but his family disapproved as this clashed with deeply held cultural meanings. Adam separated his drag practices from his family by leaving their home and moving into a new apartment. Adam's pride in his drag collided with the shame that his family associated with the materials of drag—shame to which he was once permeable but now resists. Thus, through spatial reconfiguration, his apartment is a haven for his creative practices. Adam's makeup practices are on display, with "cosmetics . . . scattered across his dining table" (field notes 7/15/2019). This reconfiguring of space means that he can take additional risks with his creative practices in daily life while still maintaining good familial relationships.

Unlike guarding, spatial reconfiguring avoids shame because it is more focused on strengthening pride. Kieran (M, 47) has a workshop where he creates magnificent drag headpieces that he sells. This workshop keeps his work and personal life separate—a separation that is appreciated by his partner:

This is why I have [my workshop]. I have a home life and I have this life. I love it when I can close that door and she's [his drag persona] here and she stays here. At home, there's nothing. It used to be [everything together], and I was driving myself and my partner mad. He didn't like it, there was no escape.

During the interview, Kieran took great pride in showing the first author around his creative workshop, which also served as a showroom: "As you can see, there's a small celebration of [my drag creations]. If you look around, you'll see some artifacts there from my career." Kieran beautifully displays his designed headpieces and exhibits the dresses of his drag persona's "50's aesthetic." This workshop-turned showroom is a testament to how Kieran's pride in his drag career is stable. Kieran agentically recreates the supportive environment of the drag clubs in his workshop giving space for his pride to grow unimpeded.

Xay (NB, 22) moved out of their family home to a new city, in part, to avoid stigmatization around queerness. Xay also turned their garage into a drag workshop where they design and sell custom drag and fetish wear. The shelves are lined with materials and fabrics for drag costumes, and a sewing station is featured prominently. Xay has turned their previously stigmatized passion into a for-profit business evoking considerable pride.

Stabilization of Pride

Self-Affirming: Pride Is Secured. As drag artists expand their investments and develop an accomplished body, they start affirming their pride in all social spaces. For example, Lucas (M, 26) came to drag in search of a supportive community and learned to resist the shame and social exclusion he experienced within his family. Sissy Hissyfit, his drag persona, is gregarious, outgoing, and so stunningly attractive that people "keep coming up and asking for photographs" even in a crowded club (figure 5). Lucas embodies this same confidence and pride at work to challenge a manager who did not adequately value his work:

[Manager] literally sent me a message being like, "We want you to come into drag every day into this venue, I will pay you monthly extra." And I said, "How much are you going to pay me?" [And he said,] "$20 extra per month." And I was like, "My TV Paint Stick is $50 already, that doesn't even cover the price of my foundation."

Lucus is full of pride and radiates confidence; thus, he is less permeable to shame. "I'm meeting strange people all the time. You need to be self-confident. I've grown a lot as a person." Several artists echoed this pattern of self-affirmation by first being prideful of body-in-practice in drag and then manifesting pride in daily life.

Drag, with its creative practices and elaborate disguise, gives artists social license to explore facets of themselves

they would normally moderate. Over time, and by repeatedly being socially affirmed through positive sensate relations, artists embody the confidence of their drag personas to demand respect across all life domains. As Nate (M, 22) explains:

Being Lumina [his drag persona] has really, I think, improved my confidence and my confidence within the queer community. As soon as people start to know who you are out of drag as well, and that's friends or whatever, you get to take some of that power with you. Even being out of drag you can kind of be like, "Well, I'm in incognito mode at the moment, but I am a drag queen, so you should respect me."

Nate embodies pride, both in and out of drag, to claim the social acceptance that he now believes he has earned and deserves. For example, he leverages the confidence learned in drag to feel accepted at venues that were once sources of embarrassment:

Part of my development and journey has been getting more comfortable being myself at queer events and venues. The fact that I am happy going to queer nights and events as myself ... I think, part of going to places as myself more often is a sign of me trying to take that confidence that I've gotten in drag.

Some artists grow in self-assurance by successfully managing stigma with unsupportive family members. These artists want their families to share their pride in being celebrated artists. For example, Carl (M, 22), whose "very conservative" father disapproved of his being both gay and a drag artist, shows how his successful creative practices generate positive sensate relations within the audience of his family:

At the last minute, [father's girlfriend] had called me up and said, "Yeah, we're coming to your show." I'm like, "Wait,

who's we?" And she goes, "Your Dad and I" . . . I was kind of panicking. Um, when I got there [to his performance], one of the songs I performed, my first performance was "Never Enough" from the *Greatest Showman*. It was an emotional song. And plus my Dad was there. So, you can imagine how I was feeling at the time while performing that song. I remember looking at him for a split second and for like thinking, "Oh, this is really nice, this is amazing." And I was almost going to cry, but I thought, do not cry, focus on the song, be professional. And I did it. And after I got off stage, my Dad . . . . My Dad likes to play it off, like, oh yeah, like keep that masculine persona going, like, "Yeah, you did good mate." He doesn't like showing emotion that much. But what I didn't realize behind my back, he was saying to [his girlfriend] and a lot, a lot of other people going, "He's so good. I'm so proud of him."

Carl is very permeable to his father's pride—in contrast to the shame that he originally felt around his father's initial disapproval. This pride is lodged in his accomplished body, and he was brought to tears in the interview when recalling this event—this remains potent long after the experience as pride replaces shame. Frey (NB, 19), whose mother cried when they first revealed their drag, echoed a similar story. After she attended a drag show and saw Frey's accomplished body, she became an avid supporter and even taught Frey how to sew, an experience that suffuses Frey with pride.

Integrating: Pride Is Secured and Shame Resisted. Many artists deviated from social expectations and were often stigmatized and excluded (Ahmed 2014; Butler 1990). Through drag, they create an imagined persona that is self-determined and eventually transforms into an accomplished body. This accomplished body is socially affirmed and more potent—a body that is free of shame in all social spaces. Some artists, especially those who are deeply invested in body-in-practice, fully integrate their accomplished body into daily life.

This dynamic emerges most clearly among the experienced drag artists interviewed. Ivan (NB, 28) has performed for over 10 years and reflects that among "my original drag family, I stopped being known as [Ivan], and it was just Kruella." Ivan notes how Kruella's mannerisms, most notably the "vocal cadence, physical gestures, and integration of Kruella's signature green into Ivan's wardrobe," are now part of their everyday life (field notes 9/18/2019). Ivan first took risks with creative consumption practices, but after years of social affirmation and developing bodily competences, Ivan embodies Kruella's extraversion and confidence outside the supportive drag community. As Ivan expounds, "I can talk about the things that are important to [Ivan] with the confidence of Kruella."

Thomas (M, 38), a drag artist of 19 years, explains how integration is a natural end point as the imagined persona and accomplished body recursively shape one another:

She [drag character] used to be very caricatured and stuff like that. When I was younger, she was a lot, I'd say sassier, but it was all very put on . . . . But, over time, you [would] talk differently, you'd sit differently . . . and the pretense just drops away . . . . At the moment, she's a bit of a mother. I'm not a spring chicken, where no matter what happens, I've had an incredible career. I've lasted longer than most people can ever dream of. So, I don't feel like I have anything to prove or anything to lose. So, looking after the kids and the up-and-coming performers . . . it seems like second nature.

Over time, Thomas's drag persona became less distinct and instead is just, "Thomas in a dress." As an integrated body-in-practice, Thomas is deeply prideful of his successful career. He also notes that his motherly role of "looking after the kids" as a veteran drag artist has integrated across other life domains, such as being a mentor in his day job as a marketing manager. Even when faced with a positive HIV diagnosis that initially triggered shame, he quickly reintegrated, drawing on his earned pride and the social support that comes from being a valued member of a community.

Interestingly, artists who turned to drag with a short teleology of exploring gender safely often experienced gender integration more quickly than some of the artists just discussed. Drag offered them the opportunity to explore gender with the support of a community. Both Usher (NB, 22) and Xay (NB, 22) used their imagined drag persona to practice novel gender expressions in the safety of drag venues. As their creative expressions of gender were praised as an accomplished body, they soon realized and accepted that they were nonbinary. In everyday life, Xay, who was assigned female at birth, was alienated from their gender identity and felt they were "playing" at being feminine. Roxxy Tocin, their imagined persona, incorporates facial hair and heavy metal aesthetics with softer makeup to "break that mask" they once felt forced to wear. As their accomplished body and imagined persona recursively shaped one another, they integrated their gender across all life domains. Xay now confidently presents and identifies as nonbinary. As evidence of this deeply embodied pride, Xay is now politically active and a voice for queer political agency, leading campaigns in local government for queer inclusion.

Similarly, Oli (NB, 24) initially practiced very feminine drag but did not find it "authentic." When they creatively practiced being a drag king, they were self and socially affirmed and began to socially integrate. They changed their real name to better reflect their nonbinary gender identity, and their consumption practices are more conventionally masculine. In just over 2 years, Oli's new gender has stabilized. Vic (W, 23) has physically transitioned by taking hormones and is planning gender-affirming surgery to better reflect her integration. Thus, as artists stabilized an accomplished body that is socially affirmed, they also stabilized their gender as nonbinary or transgender (Ivan,

Frey, Xay, Wanda, Vic, Oli, and Usher) and integrated their consumption practices across all domains—healing deeply felt shame through pride.

For other artists, however, this gender exploration reaffirmed their assigned-at-birth gender. For example, Quentin (M, 29) used drag to explore his femininity safely and was "a bit gender-fluid" questioning his masculinity before drag. As his accomplished body was affirmed in a supportive environment, he now accepts his feminine side. He is integrating the confidence of his accomplished body by performing drag as a woman but also by confidently inhabiting his masculinity in daily life. His body is now one that he "loves so much," and thus, this pride of his new integration is less prone to social exclusion and shame; as he says, "I can't get enough [of] myself. I love myself so much . . . . Confidence through the roof!"

DISCUSSION

We extend past research that independently theorizes how both stigma and creativity operate at social and embodied levels. As such, we examine how stigmatized consumers master creative practices to resist shame and embody pride. We introduced the concept of body-in-practice to explain how creative practices iteratively shift the social and embodied emotions of shame to pride. In the context of drag, consumers created an imagined persona that was animated iteratively through body-in-practice. Over time, the imagined persona became an accomplished body setting in motion new social dynamics. Body-in-practice theorizes the body as a site of negotiation among an imagined persona, accomplished body, sensate relations with social others, and emergent social dynamics. We offer implications of body-in-practice for explaining the hard work of identity repair, proactive strategies for stigma resistance, and the emancipatory potential of mastery.

Body-in-Practice and the Hard Work of Identity Repair

Consumer researchers often study the liberatory potential of creative consumption. Past research suggests that it is fun and easy for consumers to experiment by donning different identities (Kozinets 2001, 2002; Seregina and Weijo 2016). But the drag queens in this study did not transform merely by wearing costumes and cosmetics, such as celebrity watchers who become confident by adopting star-powered consumption (Carrington and Ozanne 2022). Possessing flawed identities, participants' transformation required altering the relational structure of shame and pride—an inherently social process. Our body-in-practice framework theorizes that this identity repair is hard work. This process centers on the body and pivots by reworking the social and emotional dynamics turning shame into pride. Thus, our findings offer a novel perspective on how stigmatized consumers repair identity.

Past research does highlight how consumers resist gender roles, such as when roller derby women temporarily embody rough physicality when performing on the rink (Thompson and Üstüner 2015). Some of these performances seep into the women's daily life, but we do not fully understand when or how this happens. Moreover, embodied changes prove surprisingly difficult to stabilize and maintain when consumers return to daily life (Husemann and Eckhardt 2019). Body-in-practice captures the iterative work needed for consumers to master difficult creative practices and move to an accomplished body potentially across all life domains. Initially propelled by shame, this process involves many small practices that often misalign but, through iterative trials, align to become relatively stable, resulting in an accomplished body propelled by pride.

The body-in-practice explanation likely extends across different intensities of embodied shame—from the small moments of embarrassment that everyone manages and the malaise of white-collar workers to the intense ontological insecurity of transgender individuals. In their study of Tough Mudder competitors, Scott, Cayla, and Cova (2017) argue that office workers are alienated from their bodies by social pressures and the daily grind of work; they use pain to reaffirm their corporeality. We argue that consumers who are exercise enthusiasts likely have an imagined persona, such as becoming an athlete, as a long teleological frame. Like drag performers, they train their bodies to run and jump through adversity to become an accomplished body. Imagining a new persona—a new embodied identity—is not enough as this process also requires the accumulation of sedimentary competences in the accomplished body. Our theorization of body-in-practice thus explains how the body is crucial in stabilizing new identities through permanent physical and emotional transformations.

Body-in-Practice and New Strategies for Stigma Resistance

Goffman (1959, 1963) focused on how individuals manage the shame of stigmatization through strategies of hiding and passing, ignoring the potential power of pride as an antidote (Scheff 2014). We explicate a process of body-in-practice by which pride is embodied and then used to mitigate shame. New strategies of experimenting and spatial reconfiguring offer consumers ways of managing these emotional dynamics in safe spaces. The strategies of guarding and risk-taking provide consumers greater maneuverability by learning to manage emotional dynamics in hostile spaces in which the dangers of social exclusion loom. We also identify consumers who proactively use self-affirming and integrative strategies across all life domains. Next, we explore extensions of our findings to

other complex forms of identity repair, such as when major life transitions are stalled by stigma and shame.

Identity Recreation during Life Transitions. Our theorization of body-in-practice explains the centrality of the emotional and social body in identity repair during life transitions. In their study of ex-Mormons, McAlexander et al. (2014, 870) discuss how members who leave the Mormon church experience a "state of suffering and identity ambiguity." They theorize this as a process of identity repair in which ex-Mormons seek "connection in alternative (and often oppositional) fields" (871) as they separate from a collective Mormon habitus. For example, their informant Nancy describes leaving as painful because she was forced to severe ties with family and friends. As ex-Mormons leave the once supportive church, they are socially excluded and feel shame.

However, we can theorize this life transition using body-in-practice; that is, consumers create an imagined persona—one who is free from restrictions and able to "express my true feelings" (McAlexander et al. 2014, 870). They can then use strategies of experimenting and risk-taking to manage shame and foster pride. For example, informant Jesse begins to experiment by drinking coffee in private—a once shameful consumption practice that he first explores in the safety of his home.

We theorize that as ex-Mormons expand risk-taking into hostile spaces, they can develop an accomplished body that is more prideful. They self-affirm and integrate into new communities and learn that they will be "okay" (McAlexander et al. 2014, 870). For example, informant Marta found that publicly risk-taking with immodest fashion was stressful, but she gained confidence following social approval, once again implicating the importance of sensate relations in restructuring shame into pride. For Marta and Jesse, body-in-practice helps explain how the dynamics of moving from safe to hostile spaces strengthens and stabilizes pride in their transition to a new integrated identity.

Identity Repair Threats in the Marketplace. Our framework also offers a novel explanation of how consumers navigate continuous stigmatization *because* of their interaction in the marketplace. In a study of Pentecostal Christians in Ghana, Appau, Ozanne, and Klein (2020) show how religious shame is embodied through consumers' interactions with a profane marketplace. As consumers move between the safety of the church and the danger of the market, they are trapped in permanent liminality caught between divine and profane social forces. The authors theorize consumers' search for ontological security as a search for incorporation, which is like the ontological security our informants achieved through the strategy of integration.

Our theorization of body-in-practice highlights how emotional transformation is central to achieving integration. The Pentecostal churchgoers are frequently charged with an unattainable persona of becoming an ideal Christian—a long teleology that is constantly challenged by the presence of dangerous products and places in the profane marketplace. Like our informants, avoiding shame structures much of their market interactions (Appau et al. 2020). Thus, the Pentecostal body-in-practice strives for an accomplished body by using blessed products to affirm their religious pride.

However, these Pentecostal Christians never fully accomplish the ideal Christian body—they never experience integration. Instead, they iteratively move between pride and shame. Some even self-affirm by celebrating their religious commitments and have moments of religious integration. But temptations from the profane market prevent complete integration and thus trap them in permanent liminality (Appau et al. 2020). We theorize the state of permanent liminality is partially explained as an unresolved tension between shame and pride, and demonstrate how these emotional dynamics are not only embodied but are also spatial and temporal experiences. Theorizing liminality as an iterative experience of shame and pride might also explain the ongoing chronic liminality of flexible workers, as the disorienting shame of a disrupted millennial life project clashes with the pride of flexibility in their work life (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022).

Emancipatory Potential of Mastering Creative Practices

Finally, our research demonstrates the emancipatory potential of creative practices, as well as how creative practice can affect more enduring changes. Boden (2010, 56) contends that creativity is an "impulse to action," and we argue that these actions can be emancipatory as consumers assert greater agency. Social movements can harness creativity as an impulse to action, as consumers use creativity to escape the marketplace (Kozinets 2002), fight unethical practices (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), or resist marketplace regulations (Weijo et al. 2018). Our theorization of creative practices helps explain the emotional dynamics of consumers' increasing commitment to social movements.

Weijo et al. (2018) examine how creativity works in social movements that transform marketplaces through collective resistance. They show how consumers use creative tactics to alter their relationship to the marketplace. Consumers' initial interest in social movements can begin with feelings of powerlessness, a potent manifestation of shame, propelling them to organize to fight against injustices, such as Finland's restricted food marketplace (Weijo et al. 2018) or the exclusionary fashion marketplace (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). However, as the creators of Restaurant Day discovered, creating social and embodied change is difficult, especially if consumers are not masters in the practices of protest.

Just as the creative art of drag allows artists to imagine themselves in a new world of possibilities, Shepard (2012) highlights how creative play works in activism. He contends that "activists have borrowed from and sustained themselves by incorporating ludic elements into their efforts" and highlights that "play serves as an embodiment of an alternative way of being . . . of creating space and energy, thereby helping activists to stay engaged" (Shepard 2012, 261). Creative play generates positive emotions and can help consumers form initial commitments to social movements. Creative practices focus emotional energy into action, such as making t-shirts to show disapproval (i.e., Restaurant Day), creating stand-out personas (i.e., drag), or building a temporary community in the desert (i.e., Burning Man) (Kozinets 2002; Weijo et al. 2018). These creative practices generate emotions that can drive action—every t-shirt made and every pop-up restaurant created serve to both solidify the emotions of the social movement and also propel it forward. The emotional potential of creativity might explain why drag queens are often at the forefront of many queer protests—their creativity emotionally propels the crowd.

This generative power of creativity is critical for explaining the persistence of drag, despite concerted efforts of contemporary politicians to demonize it. In drag, as artists become more emotionally committed to the practice, they also become more emotionally committed to the community. We contend that creativity gets its power in social movements through emotion that is both embodied and socially orchestrating hundreds of pop-up restaurants, for example. As one of the founders of Restaurant Day notes, "It's like this social glue that you're huffing together . . . You provide a positive example through action rather than point fingers" (Weijo et al. 2018, 261). Similarly, creative practices drive consumers' ongoing participation in other communities, such as the Burning Man festival (Kozinets 2002) and the world of cosplay (Seregina and Weijo 2016). We thus contend that creative practices can mitigate shame around challenging the status quo encouraging more consumers to participate.

Directions for Future Research

Future research might investigate how body-in-practice varies across differing ontologies of the body. Our study largely focused on healthy and young bodies. Future research might explore body-in-practice when it is disrupted, such as when confronting chronic illness, sudden injury, an aging body, or virtual bodies. For example, Gibson and Kierans (2017) studied men with Parkinson's disease experiencing a flawed body; these men must reorient their understanding of their bodies as a "visceral embodiment" (534) of diminished competences. In this case, an unimaginable persona forecasts a diminished body, rather than an accomplished one. The Parkinson's body-in-practice is in decline and is painful. Future research might examine whether support groups of people with Parkinson's can help new members learn how to align everyday practices (e.g., using material props), shift short and long teleologies to be more realistic, and manage sensate relations when daily performances inevitably falter.

Future research might also interrogate the role of supportive communities in the stabilization of pride. Our findings emphasized the role of audiences and showed the importance of a supportive community in helping artists develop and stabilize their practices. The role of audiences would be interesting to study in other contexts, such as high school sports, in which audience size and enthusiasm vary widely across different sports and the gender of athletes. Future research might interrogate the intersubjective dynamics and sensate relations that unfold within communities and how those dynamics either stabilize or dissipate pride.

CONCLUSIONS

We asked how stigmatized consumers might use creative practices to resist shame and social exclusion. We showed how consumers create an imagined persona and use it to identify and animate an accomplished and prideful body. We also identified six stigma resistance strategies that consumers use to embody pride in an accomplished body that resists shame. This research tells the stories of a group of creative, passionate, complex individuals whose stories are not often told and whose knowledge is often deemed marginal. Our findings reveal that many groups considered nonnormative are varied and heterogeneous. It is our hope that this research shows that power exists in mastery and that there is power in the nonnormative.

DATA COLLECTION STATEMENT

The first author collected all of the data in this ethnography from January 2019 to March 2021 in Melbourne, Australia. The second and third authors acted as confidantes throughout the process. Data were discussed and analyzed on multiple occasions by all authors using the first author's interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, and autoethnographic reflections. Data are currently stored in password-protected folders at the University of Birmingham, managed by the first author.

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