

# **Unpacking Stigma in Family Business**

## **Abstract**

Family business research increasingly acknowledges non-economic dimensions. We introduce the psycho-social construct of stigma into this context, defining it as a power-laden process involving labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination. While stigma has been widely examined in sociology and psychology, its relevance to family firms remains under theorised. Our study introduces stigma to family business literature by exploring how stigma emerges within family business settings and identifying critical contexts where it occurs. By integrating stigma into family business literature, we aim to heighten awareness of its interrelated elements and implications for strategy and well-being. This work reveals overlooked dynamics that shape family business decisions and addresses the social realities influencing family business sustainability while offering a foundation for future research on mitigating stigma's adverse effects.

## **Topics/Keywords:**

Family firm; stigma; power dynamics; labelling; stereotyping; separation; status loss; discrimination; emotion; identity; well-being; reputation, family dynamics

## **Introduction**

Stigma positions a person, community, or family as an outsider in the society in which they live because of being perceived as deviating from accepted norms of conduct or characteristics (Falk, 2001). Families must have the collective emotional capability to recover from difficult situations (Shepherd, 2009). Stigmatisation is a difficult situation that a family business may face. It can take

the form of shaming, silencing, ostracising, covering up, suppressing and withholding recognition, erasing memories and fracturing relationships. Stigma is therefore often an “unseen and accretive form of social violence” and even though stigma may be slow and insidious, it can be “felt and managed within families across generations” (Barnwell, 2019, p.1111). Others’ negative perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours towards a family (or its member) due to the unusualness of the family situation, uncommon family characteristics or structure (Park and Park, 2014) means that families fear the loss of public face and are forced to protect themselves in response to social sanctions and judgements (Barnwell, 2019). Acts of secrecy, for example, as a defensive measure against the risk of being discredited can hurt not only individual members and their families but can also have repercussions for how the family as a group conducts its business. Often the collective family stance of sanctions or practices that may appear as a protective function for everyone in the family can end up causing more damage over time (Goffman, 1963). For example, younger generations may end up carrying the burden of ethos and practices for presenting a sanitised, perfect image of the family even though they may not understand the underlying stigma around an issue that was shameful for the prior generation (Barnwell, 2019). Family can also be a painful source of stigma if members ridicule each other due to traits, expressions, or lifestyles (Mirabito et al., 2016).

### **Theoretical background**

Although research on stigma is predominantly located in health and psychology literature, its role in business is growing in recognition. For example, entrepreneurship scholars have studied stigma about failure, and such studies point to the impact of stigma reflected as personal, economic, social, and professional costs (Singh et al., 2015, Begley and Tan, 2001, Efrat, 2006). Family business literature suggests several examples of stigma-activating situations for individuals and family

business as a group, such as failure (Thomas, 2002), inability to meet family expectations (Calabrò et al., 2018; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007), unsuccessful development of innovativeness (Filser et al., 2018), rejection or hoarding of knowledge between generations (Woodfield and Husted, 2017), the difference in goal orientation of non-family CEOs vs. family CEOs (Williams et al., 2018), failure to repay or access debt (Freel et al., 2012), disruption of traditional family values being played out in public such as the shunned black sheep of the family engaging in crime (Smith, 2016), going against the expected norms of gender such as business leadership handed to women in some cultures (Vera and Dean, 2005) and selling out to larger competitors (Akhter et al., 2016). How stigma impacts family businesses and which interventions can effectively aid in complex decisions while also addressing the negative challenges of stigma are concerns that can be better addressed by gaining awareness of stigma in family businesses. Thus, we ask: How is "stigma" defined and conceptualised in the context of family businesses? What is the evidence base about stigma concerning family business, and how can this inform theory and practice in the family business?

## **Methodology**

Systematic literature reviews are increasingly used by family business scholars (Calabrò et al. 2019) however there are various approaches to a systematic literature review. We used a narrative synthesis approach to review the literature on stigma in family businesses. The narrative synthesis approach acknowledged as a viable methodology in many studies (Bailey et al., 2019; Lorenzo-Afable et al., 2023), differs from the narrative review. Narrative review as a phrase is often used to describe traditional literature reviews. On the other hand, narrative synthesis review refers to a specific part of the systematic review process focused on combining the findings of multiple studies. Lorenzo-Afable et al. (2023, p. 3) summarise the strength of a narrative synthesis review:

“The synthesis involves selecting studies that focus on different aspects of the same phenomenon to construct a ‘bigger picture, map, or mosaic’ (Briner and Denyer 2012, p. 112) to ‘tell the story’ (Popay et al. 2006, p. 5) of the studies in a way that, for example, depicts their place within a theoretical framework or the size and direction of their effects (Briner and Denyer 2012; Snyder 2019). Narrative synthesis offers a flexible and ‘fit for purpose’ method of integrating findings from individual studies “into a new or different arrangement and developing knowledge that is not apparent from reading the individual studies in isolation” (Denyer and Tranfield 2009, p. 685).

The search and selection process to review stigma in the family business literature was based on key recommendations outlined by Calabro et al. (2019). See Tables 1, 2 & 3. We identified a final data set comprising 60 relevant peer-reviewed journal articles. We then entered the PDF version of these articles in the NVivo software. The ‘query results’ and ‘code’ functions in NVivo helped us with the first analytical step of getting up from the raw data that we had with us in the form of the full text of articles and creating a more manageable data set of parent codes, child codes and related text excerpts that mentioned stigma, its synonyms, and its interrelated elements. Next, we moved into the second analysis stage, theming the data (Saldana, 2013). The preliminary parent and child codes were re-examined and abstracted into themes for this step. We used the research questions to guide the theming and subsequent pattern coding process (Lorenzo-Afable et al., 2023). Patterns were tighter, more meaningful units of analysis that allowed us to identify and explain the connections and configurations of themes.

**TABLE 1 Systematic literature review procedure**

| Filter | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Scopus | Web of Science | Total    |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------|----------|
| Step 1 | <b>Deciding on the scope of research and search keywords</b><br>We focused on English, peer-reviewed journal articles only.<br>SCOPUS: we searched under 'all fields' and 'all years' option. We searched for "family business" OR "Family firm" OR "family enterprise" AND selected the 'Article title, abstract and keywords' option to search for "stigma" OR "shame" OR "humiliation" OR "labelling" OR "stereotype" OR "discrimination" OR "separation" OR "status loss". We limited our search to "English" under the 'language' option and "article" under the 'document type' option.<br>We refined our search by selecting "English" under the 'languages' option and "article" under the 'document type' option. Repeated process for Web of Science | 76     | 47             | 123      |
| Step 2 | <b>Managing literature search: removing duplicates.</b><br>We entered the list of 123 articles from the two databases into an Excel sheet. We copied and pasted each article's full reference, keywords, abstract, and Google citation count into this Excel sheet. Next, we closely read articles as we examined each article in the Excel sheet for the theoretical frameworks and methodologies (Aliaga-Isla and Rialp 2013). We searched for duplicates and removed one copy of any article that was relevant but appeared in both databases.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |        |                | 88       |
| Step 3 | <b>Managing literature search: removing articles that couldn't be accessed via library and interloans</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |        |                | 80       |
| Step 4 | <b>Managing literature search: removing irrelevant articles</b><br>When stigma or its interrelated elements were not relevant to the research focus.<br>E.g., we eliminated an article from the Journal of Transcultural Psychiatry that was captured through our database search but was focused on an empirical study that discussed the "stigma" of mental health, and the issue of mental health is described as a "family business" by one of the sample participants.<br>Similarly, we excluded a study on family firms that referred to 'price discrimination' because this didn't reflect discrimination in the sense of being associated with stigma in a family business.                                                                            |        |                | 80-17=63 |
| Step 5 | <b>Managing literature search: removing review articles</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |        |                | 63-3=60  |
| Step 6 | <b>Assigning colour codes</b> to articles in Excel sheet for subsequent analysis<br>Green for excluded irrelevant studies.<br>Blue for excluded reviews<br>Yellow for articles that couldn't be accessed.<br>Orange for conceptual articles<br>Pink for empirical articles                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |        |                |          |
| Step 7 | <b>Entering final set of articles in NVivo for coding, theming, and forming pattern</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |        |                | 60       |

**TABLE 2 Overview of the articles in narrative synthesis**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Excluded</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| We refined our initial search to exclude any review articles, editorials, and commentaries and stay consistent with our focus of analysis on empirical and conceptual peer-reviewed journal articles.                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Additional not relevant through manual text reading                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 17                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Can't access through library/interloans                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 8                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Review articles                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Included</b> We first searched for scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles because these are considered to have knowledge validated by experts and are likely to have the highest impact in the field (Podsakoff et al., 2005). Our search also concentrated on stigma terms known and anchored in literature. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Conceptual studies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 8 (13%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Empirical qualitative studies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 17 (32%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Empirical quantitative studies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 33 (60%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Studies using mixed methods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Geographic scope of data</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Single country sample                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Spain (n=2), Ghana (n=1), US (n=4), Japan (n=1), Italy (n=3), France (n=2), Lebanon (n=2), Sweden (n=1), Australia (n=1), Hong Kong (n=1), Portugal (n=1), China (n=3), United Kingdom (n=3), Korea (n=1), Taiwan (n=3), Canada (n=1), Finland (n=1), Slovenia (n=1), Israel (n=1) and Belgium (n=1). |
| Comparative country sample:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | n=2<br><br>For e.g., Czech Republic and United States<br>For e.g., France and Switzerland                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Multinational data                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | n=3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| European:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | For e.g., A group of several European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland                                                                                                                                |
| Asia:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | For e.g., A group of countries such as Hong Kong Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

**TABLE 3 Distribution of articles by publication outlet**

| <b>Academic Journal</b>                                     | <b>Number of Published Articles</b> | <b>Author citation</b>                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Review of Managerial Science                             | 1                                   | Acero & Alcalde, 2016                                                                           |
| 2. Journal of Family Business Management                    | 3                                   | Acheampong, 2018<br>Bjursell, Auml, & Ckvall, 2011<br>Sonfield & Lussier, 2012                  |
| 3. Journal of Accounting and Economics                      | 1                                   | Ali, Chen, & Radhakrishnan, 2007                                                                |
| 4. Journal of Finance                                       | 2                                   | Almeida & Wolfenzon, 2006<br>Burkart, Panunzi, & Shleifer, 2003                                 |
| 5. Journal of Corporate Finance                             | 1                                   | Caprio, Croci & Giudice, 2011                                                                   |
| 6. Asia Pacific Business Review                             | 1                                   | Amann & Jaussaud, 2012                                                                          |
| 7. Journal of Business Ethics                               | 3                                   | Bajo, Bigelli, Hillier, & Petracci, 2009<br>Nekhili, Chakroun, & Chtioui, 2018<br>Wijaya, 2008; |
| 8. Journal of Management and Governance                     | 1                                   | Barontini & Bozzi, 2011                                                                         |
| 9. History of the Family                                    | 3                                   | Bessière, 2014<br>Cesaroni & Sentuti, 2014<br>Kuhn, 2010                                        |
| 10. Entrepreneurship and Regional Development               | 1                                   | Bizri, 2017                                                                                     |
| 11. Family Business Review                                  | 3                                   | Bjuggren & Palmberg, 2010<br>Braun & Sharma, 2007<br>Rothstein, 1992                            |
| 12. Small Business Economics                                | 3                                   | Bopaiah, 1998<br>Chrisman, Chua, De Massis, Minola, & Vismara, 2016<br>Fairlie & Robb, 2009     |
| 13. Journal of Management Studies                           | 2                                   | Carney & Gedajlovic, 2002<br>Vandekerckhof et al., 2018                                         |
| 14. Corporate Governance - An International Review          | 3                                   | Chen & Nowland, 2010<br>Jin & Park, 2015<br>Pindado, Requejo, & de la Torre, 2012b              |
| 15. Gender in Management                                    | 3                                   | Cho, Moon, & Bounkhong, 2019<br>Fernandes & Mota-Ribeiro, 2017<br>Ferrari, 2019                 |
| 16. Asia Pacific Journal of Management                      | 2                                   | Chung, 2013<br>Verbeke, Yuan, & Kano, 2019                                                      |
| 17. International Business Review                           | 1                                   | Chung, 2014                                                                                     |
| 18. International Journal of Human Resource Management      | 2                                   | Chung & Dahms, 2019<br>Mínguez-Vera & Martin, 2011                                              |
| 19. International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics | 1                                   | Coulson-Thomas, 2007                                                                            |
| 20. International Small Business Journal                    | 2                                   | Janjuha-Jivraj & Woods, 2002<br>Jurik, Křížková, Pospíšilová, & Cavender, 2019                  |
| 21. Journal of Contemporary Asia                            | 1                                   | Loveband, 2004                                                                                  |
| 22. Human Resource Development International                | 1                                   | Mustafa, Elliott, & Zhou, 2019                                                                  |
| 23. Career Development Quarterly                            | 1                                   | Pekerti, 2008                                                                                   |

|                                                           |   |                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 24. European Review of History                            | 1 | Rigó, 2017                                                 |
| 25. Investment Management and Financial Innovations       | 1 | Salloum, Schmitt, & Bouri, 2012                            |
| 26. European Countryside                                  | 1 | Sposito, 2015                                              |
| 27. Sociologia Rurals                                     | 1 | Symes & Marsden, 1983                                      |
| 28. Journal of Family Business Strategy                   | 1 | Steijvers & Niskanen, 2014                                 |
| 29. South East European Journal of Economics and Business | 1 | Vadnjal & Zupan, 2011                                      |
| 30. China Finance Review International                    | 1 | Xu'nan, 2011                                               |
| 31. Review of Accounting and Finance                      | 1 | Liang, Yu-Thompson, & Lu-Andrews, 2016                     |
| 32. Journal of Practice and Theory                        | 1 | Carey, Simnett, & Tanewski, 2000                           |
| 33. Ethnic and Racial Studies                             | 1 | Estrada, 2016                                              |
| 34. Journal of Labor Economics                            | 1 | Fairlie & Robb, 2007                                       |
| 35. Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice                  | 1 | Fang, Siau, Memili, & Dou, 2019                            |
| 36. Chinese Management Studies                            | 1 | Gao, Li, & Huang, 2017                                     |
| 37. British Journal of Management                         | 1 | Harris & Ogbonna, 2007                                     |
| 38. Corporate Governance: An International Review         | 2 | Jin & Park, 2015<br>Pindado, Requejo, & de la Torre, 2012b |
| 39. Ethnic and Racial Studies                             | 1 | Estrada, 2016                                              |
| 40. Corporate Ownership and Control                       | 1 | Vaz Ferreira, 2008                                         |

## Preliminary findings

We present some advanced preliminary findings including key contexts of Stigma and themes derived from the surveyed articles. Our search for the specific term ‘stigma’ concerning family business led to only two articles. This almost non-existent use of the term stigma in selected family business studies from two prominent databases not only indicates the lesser focused, fragmented manner of investigation of stigma but also confirms that the conceptualisation of stigma and its discussion in the family business literature is relatively underexplored as compared to what we can see, for example, in the entrepreneurship literature. While closely scrutinising the family business studies to select the ones for subsequent analysis, we also identified and noted other terms commonly associated with the stigma that surfaced in how scholars discussed their research in various family business contexts.

The most surfaced terms were bias, rejection, marginalisation, invisible, other, exclusion, undermine, shame, guilt, ostracism, dejection, and disadvantage. Even though we adhered to specific search terms for determining the suitability of articles for analysis, the surfacing of the above-mentioned additional terms highlights that the use of ‘stigma’ as a term is not adopted in family business research. Its examination as a multi-dimensional concept also does not appear in a mainstream manner in family business research compared to entrepreneurship or organisational theory literature. Several contexts also emerged about stigma in family business literature. Table 4 presents more fine-grained information on elements of stigma and the contexts in which these different stigma elements occur or are perceived as being most concerning in those contexts. Moreover, ten themes emerged from our narrative synthesis review of stigma in the final data set of the family business literature. Table 5 presents these emergent themes and the articles associated with them.

**TABLE 4 Key Contexts of Stigma in the Family Business Literature**

| <b>Stigma and its interrelated elements</b> | <b>Key Contexts</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stigma                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street vending as family enterprise and stigma associated with immigrant work, perceived illegal or unauthorized status of enterprise founders, informal enterprise work</li> <li>• Constructing a specific and shared business identity and stigma of being a businesswoman in family business group</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Stereotype                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stereotype related to leadership ability, succession, ethnicity and family business</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Status loss                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of loss of personal and family business status (in the form of damaged reputation) due to mismanagement of customer relationships and non-recovery of debt from personal relations</li> <li>• Separation of ownership and management for status (reputational) benefits through customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Reputation damage (loss of status) due to tax aggressive behavior</li> <li>• Decisions regarding cash dividend payments to mitigate the risk of reputation damage due to appearing unfriendly to investors</li> <li>• Decisions around regulatory compliance to avoid the loss of reputation linked with family business ethos</li> <li>• Family business leaders, owners, other family members such as children, successors, spouses perceived as having low or high status depending on factors such as citizenship, immigration, legal category, status within family such as gender, birth and order</li> </ul> |
| Discrimination                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender discrimination in the selection of family head and its implications on access to microcredit for family business</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal discrimination to restrict economic power of family businesses such as citizenship laws, permission to work in another country, marital code, or laws omitting ethnic and religious categories</li> <li>• Racial and ethnic discrimination such as in lending for start-up capital, underrepresentation of certain family businesses in industries due to racial prejudice</li> <li>• Consumer discrimination due to race, ethnicity and gender</li> </ul> |
| Labelling  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Derogatory xenophobic names</li> <li>• Labelling family business owners, heads and their children based on gender, sex, work, immigration and legal status.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Separation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separation of ownership and management to convey positive reputation among investors as a long standing, stable, family brand and business</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

**TABLE 5 Emergent themes**

| <b>First-order themes</b>                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Second-order themes</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ethnicity; gender; harassment; informal; norms; precarious; values; status; xenophobic                                                                                        | <p><i>Affiliation</i></p> <p>Being part of a group that is who's being stigmatized who's the target of stigma. This could even mean that through affiliation people may be unknowingly or knowingly stigmatizing. Or through affiliation they might be destigmatizing or it could be that they are navigating stigma.</p>                                                                                                  |
| Image; reputation; respectability                                                                                                                                             | <p><i>Character</i></p> <p>Refers to how the family business and the family owning the business want to be perceived by its key stakeholders or relevant audiences. This theme concerns reputation, image, and respectability.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Behaviour; governance; transparency; trustworthiness; performance; abandonment; corruption; crime; financial; fraud; negligence; pollution; practices; transgression          | <p><i>Conduct</i></p> <p>Conduct means the actions or behaviours of those who are stigmatized, i.e., the receiving end of stigmatization.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Demotivation; disinterest; reputation; embarrassed; fear; frustration; grief; guilt; resentment; shame; negativity; governance; preservation; pursuit; stress; distress; loss | <p><i>Emotion</i></p> <p>Refers to how stigma is felt or experienced. It includes guilt, anger and resentment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Negativity; nepotism                                                                                                                                                          | <p><i>Favouritism</i></p> <p>Means how being or not being part of a group like a family can lead to certain consequences. For example, outcomes for a family business. This could also include personal career implications, the image, reputation and performance of a family business and their ability to acquire legitimacy or secure funding or get licensing.</p>                                                    |
| Competence; negativity; failure; discrimination; decision; devalued; perception; skills; suspicion; taint; disclosure; failure                                                | <p><i>Judgement</i></p> <p>Judgment includes how one doesn't want to be perceived or treated. For example, being perceived as a failure. This includes any transgressions. Judgment may also include silence or lack of action on the part of the audience, the institutions, or the family. It would be worthwhile checking if unwillingness to act or choosing to be silent is captured in any articles on judgment.</p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Association; attribution; awareness; coping; disassociation; financial; formalize; governance; maintenance; monitoring; representation; respond; sanctions; shareholders; support | <i>Managing</i><br>Managing refers to attempts to navigate stigma. This is when stigma has happened. So, this is from the point of view of the target of stigma. This may include attempts to transfer or challenge stigma or disidentify with stigma. Managing stigma is different in terms of dealing with stigma because this is a reactive approach, that is when stigma has occurred. |
| Avoidance; mitigation; protect; disassociation; careers; prevention                                                                                                               | <i>Mitigate</i><br>Mitigating stigma is about a proactive approach or pre-empting stigma. In other words, stigma hasn't happened yet. Certain steps are taken to avoid being stigmatized. This could include examples like career implications, losing funding, not getting certifications, or losing legitimacy from the community.                                                       |
| Betrayal; succession; embeddedness; familiness; deterioration; inherited; long term; members; repercussions; scandal; tension                                                     | <i>Stickiness</i><br>Stickiness refers to the quality of stigma or the attribute of stigma. This is to do with the long-term implications of stigma. In other words, stigmatization isn't easily forgotten or erased. An important aspect of it is the intergenerational or historic continuity of stigma.                                                                                 |
| Disability; education; mental illness; risk; suicide; connectedness; coping; normalizing; support; trauma                                                                         | <i>Wellbeing</i><br>Well-being is about how stigma is felt or experienced. This could include aspects like support from the community, or the family, or the individual, or the family as a whole. This could include awareness, or lack thereof.                                                                                                                                          |

## Discussion

Our narrative synthesis shows how porous our understanding of stigma is in the family business context. By presenting the contours of the psycho-social construct of stigma concerning family business, we offer new awareness and a more nuanced understanding that can be applied to complex decisions and processes that have prominence in a family business. For example, there is a limited understanding of how stigma could affect individuals or the family business in the succession process.

Consultants and advisors must be aware of the implications of stigma in family firms. For example, advice given through the succession process could be informed with a better understanding of what provokes a certain form of stigmatisation or exacerbates its risk. Or what is the intergenerational legacy that may continue to shape the relational configurations of a family, upholding certain

structures, practices, conventions, policies, and moral attitudes that defend, challenge, or perpetuate certain forms of stigma? What could be the public or private ramifications for a family business that chooses to question, seek closure, and combat or depart from its position and attitude towards discriminatory policies and practices fostering inequality? By paying attention to secrets, silences, and the tendency to hide or censor, strategies often used to manage stigma; family businesses can learn to make better decisions for individuals and the business itself, attending to injustices instead of allowing these to slip under the radar, or be dismissed, thereby perpetuating the negative effects of stigma.

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