



**From Mother’s Ruin to Ginaissance. Emergence, Settlement, and Resettlement of the Gin Category**

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Abstract:	This article provides a historically grounded explanation of category emergence and change by using the gin category as an example. Formerly a standardized spirit produced by a narrow group of large England-based producers, gin has become a premium craft spirit made by thousands of big and small producers in every corner of the world – a categorical shift that commentators have dubbed the ‘ginaissance.’ We

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	<p>approach product categories as socially constructed entities and make informed use of history to explain the successive categorical dynamics. Strategic action field theory is applied to explain how internal and external category actors interact to create and change product meanings and affect categorical configurations. Our results show how the intricate, complex, and historically embedded processes that the product category underwent first triggered stigmatization and then put conditions in place that led to concentration and made the current ginaissance possible. Findings drawn from this study of gin contribute to research on product categories by revealing some peculiar dynamics of concentration and partitioning, status recategorization, and categorical stigma, which are summarized in an empirically grounded process model of category emergence and change.</p>



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9 **FROM MOTHER'S RUIN TO GINAISSANCE. EMERGENCE, SETTLEMENT,**  
10 **AND RESETTLEMENT OF THE GIN CATEGORY**  
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16 **Abstract**  
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18 This article provides a historically grounded explanation of category emergence and  
19 change by using the gin category as an example. Formerly a standardized spirit  
20 produced by a narrow group of large England-based producers, gin has become a  
21 premium craft spirit made by thousands of big and small producers in every corner of  
22 the world – a categorical shift that commentators have dubbed the ‘ginaissance.’ We  
23 approach product categories as socially constructed entities and make informed use of  
24 history to explain the successive categorical dynamics. Strategic action field theory is  
25 applied to explain how internal and external category actors interact to create and  
26 change product meanings and affect categorical configurations. Our results show how  
27 the intricate, complex, and historically embedded processes that the product category  
28 underwent first triggered stigmatization and then put conditions in place that led to  
29 concentration and made the current ginaissance possible. Findings drawn from this  
30 study of gin contribute to research on product categories by revealing some peculiar  
31 dynamics of concentration and partitioning, status recategorization, and categorical  
32 stigma, which are summarized in an empirically grounded process model of category  
33 emergence and change.  
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14 **Keywords:** Categories, strategic action field, history, stigma, concentration,  
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16 partitioning, taste regime, status, gin, ginaissance  
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## 20 **Introduction**

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23 Gin is a neutral grain alcoholic spirit with a minimum alcohol by volume of 37.5%  
24 (40% in the US) and a predominantly juniper flavor. There are no other restrictions or  
25 production standards. Unlike with other spirits such as Scotch or Tequila, no precise  
26 territorial provenance is imposed on gin makers.  
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32 Once dominated by a few global players producing undifferentiated, low-priced  
33 products, it is now the domain of innumerable handcrafting distillers making highly  
34 differentiated premium (i.e., priced largely above the average) products (Knoll, 2015).  
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36 This process has been labeled a ‘ginaissance’ (Knoll, 2015; Atkins, 2017). The current  
37 picture of the gin category reveals an unstoppable trend of growth: In the UK alone,  
38 there are currently 361 gin distilleries, three times the number recorded in 2012 (Mann,  
39 2019). Sales of gin in the UK totaled £1.9 billion in 2017 and are expected to grow  
40 around 37.2% by 2021 (French, 2018).  
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50 The aim of this paper is to provide socio-historically grounded explanations for how this  
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9 economic, and technological forces – and the interaction between them – affected  
10 successive configurations of the gin category from its origins to the present?  
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12 Owing to its tumultuous historical development, the gin category is a particularly  
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14 interesting case to study in order to answer the research question.  
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18 “Gin’s story is rife with contradiction. It has been the drink of both kings and  
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20 commoners. It inspired the first modern drug craze in eighteenth-century London, yet  
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22 London dry gin went on to become the embodiment of sophistication (...). And, while  
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24 gin is enshrined in modern bar culture, it still battles the remnants of a negative  
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26 reputation (...). Of all the spirits, gin is quite possibly the most beloved and the most  
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28 berated” (Solmonson, 2012, pp. 7–9).  
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32 From a theoretical perspective, the gin story allows us to disentangle the complex net of  
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34 political, social, economic, and technological forces that make it possible for an entire  
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36 product category – in this case, one with controversial associations at its inception – to  
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38 rise in status to the top of the taste hierarchy.  
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41 We consider product categories as socially constructed (Rosa, Porac, Runser-Spanjol, &  
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43 Saxonet, 1999; Khaire & Wadhvani 2010) and historically situated entities (Leblebici,  
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45 Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991) shaped by an intricate nexus of meaning-making  
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47 practices (Glynn & Navis, 2013). We integrate extant debate about product categories  
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49 with strategic action field (SAF) theory (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) to give account of  
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51 the dense network of actors engaged in the process of creating and changing product  
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9 categories. We adopt an in-depth socio-historical approach (Negro, Koçak & Hsu, 2010;  
10 Khaire & Wadhvani 2010; Durand & Paoella, 2013; Glynn & Navis, 2013) and use  
11 history as the main driver behind the successive configurations of categorical dynamics,  
12 and use it to inform a theoretical conceptualization of these dynamics, an approach  
13 called “history *in theory*” (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014; Maclean, Harvey, & Clegg,  
14 2016). Our work contributes to research on product categories, especially within the  
15 context of resource partitioning theory (e.g., Carroll, 1985), by showing that the process  
16 leading to concentration and the subsequent proliferation of players may be far more  
17 complex than the theory postulates. In addition, we contribute to discussions on status  
18 recategorization (e.g., Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016) by shedding new light on the role  
19 that historically situated, place-bounded, and class-dependent mechanisms and  
20 processes play in producing and modifying a product’s status. Finally, with regard to  
21 categorical stigma (e.g., Piazza & Perretti, 2015), we lay out a dynamic process of de-  
22 stigmatization that is only partly explained by organizational stigma management and  
23 primarily motivated by the product category’s gradual transition from one social class to  
24 another. Taken together, these contributions reveal a unified and empirically grounded  
25 process model of category emergence and change.

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48 In the following, we first review the literature on product categories and provide the  
49 basic tenets of SAF theory. This review is followed by a thorough historical  
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9 reconstruction of the gin category and by a general discussion that also includes  
10 contributions, implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research.  
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## 15 16 **Literature review**

### 17 18 *Product categories as socially constructed entities*

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20 Product categories are cognitive infrastructures that underpin markets (Lounsbury &  
21 Rao, 2004) as they form the primary ground to allow interaction between supply and  
22 demand (Rosa et al., 1999).  
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27 Product categories define the boundaries for organizational membership (Zuckerman,  
28 1999; Durand & Paoletta, 2013), are the primary element that firms apply to manifest  
29 their identity (Carrol & Swaminathan, 2000), and are the most visible element that  
30 consumers use to form their expectations (Sujan, 1985) and consider alternatives as  
31 members of a common set (Cattani, Porac, & Thomas, 2017).  
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38 Because of their relevance to codifying organizational and market dynamics, product  
39 categories are a major focus of analysis in category studies. While adopting different  
40 theoretical lenses (see Vergne & Wry, 2014 for a review), these studies share a common  
41 view of product categories as dynamic entities.  
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47 Such dynamism can stem from firms' natural inclination toward strategic  
48 differentiation, but categorical changes at the product level extend firms' conduct to  
49 encompass the broader social context(s) in which product categories are nested (Glynn  
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9 & Navis, 2013). Research has shown that product categories are in continuous flux:  
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11 Audiences, from consumers (Kjeldgaard, Askegaard, Rasmussen, & Østergaard, 2017),  
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13 trade intermediaries (Khaire & Wadhvani, 2010), and the media (Rosa et al., 1999) to  
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15 the advertising and the fashion system (McCracken, 1986) or social movements (Rao,  
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17 Monin, & Durand, 2003), can change established interpretations of the product category  
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19 and the criteria through which category membership is assessed.  
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23 Product categories are now framed as socio-cultural (Glynn & Navis, 2013), historically  
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25 embedded (Khaire & Wadhvani, 2010) entities that carry meanings created and  
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27 modified through a complex net of social, political, and cultural forces (Rao et al., 2003;  
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29 Lounsbury & Rao, 2004). Such forces may prompt the emergence of new product  
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31 categories (Glynn & Navis, 2013), favor their legitimization (Kennedy, Lo, &  
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33 Lounsbury, 2010), preserve their stability (Lounsbury & Rao, 2004), or even  
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35 delegitimize the very structure underpinning them (McKendrick & Hannan, 2014). For  
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37 example, research has shown that delegitimizing practices enacted by consumers to  
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39 contest the dominance of industrial over craft firms in specific product categories  
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41 (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; McKendrick & Hannan, 2014; Kjeldgaard et al., 2017)  
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43 triggered category partitioning, that is, the proliferation of small specialized players in  
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45 markets dominated by large generalist firms (Carroll, 1985). Other studies have shown  
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47 that audiences can contribute to shaping a negative social identity for an entire product  
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9 category that extends to all member organizations, a phenomenon known as categorical  
10 stigma (Vergne, 2012; Durand & Verge, 2015; Piazza & Perretti, 2015).

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13 Regardless of the specific meanings associated with a product category, their creation  
14 and acceptance depend on a set of mechanisms that affect how individuals judge,  
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16 classify, and relate to objects, assess categorical membership, and evaluate differences  
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18 (Barlow, Verhaal, & Hoskins, 2018). That is, they depend on ‘taste regimes’ (Arsel &  
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20 Bean, 2013). Taste regimes are practice-based mechanisms and processes that regulate  
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22 distinctions between economic and social strata throughout the hierarchical ordering of  
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24 products and product categories (Arsel & Bean, 2013; Kravets & Sandikci, 2014) in  
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26 socially, historically, and culturally bounded contexts (McQuarrie, Miller, & Phillips,  
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28 2012). The concept of a taste regime goes beyond that of a product status. It is not  
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30 limited to the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of a product through which producers and  
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32 consumers signal their relative position in the social hierarchy (Sauder, Lynn, &  
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34 Podolny, 2012) but extends to the processes and mechanisms through which audiences  
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36 create and perpetuate a system of meanings, including status ordering. In other words,  
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38 while the concept of a status settles the specific identity that a product or a product  
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40 category comes to assume, the notion of a taste regime makes it possible to explain how  
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42 such a categorical identity comes to be crystallized (Maciel & Wallendorf, 2016). By  
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44 way of example, the presence and perpetuation of a taste regime regulating the  
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46 commensuration and valuation of modern art contributed to shaping the categorical  
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9 identity of Indian art as one that, for a long time, was regarded as having a low status  
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11 (Khaire and Wadhvani, 2010).  
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13 Owing to the socially constructed nature of product categories, studies addressing their  
14 emergence and change have often merged two or more theoretical approaches into a  
15 unified framework. As Negro et al. (2010) and Durand and Thornton (2018) claim, the  
16 complexity of socially constructing categories can hardly be understood through a  
17 single approach, unless the latter simultaneously takes into account the agency that  
18 actors have, the structural conditions in which this agency is deployed, and the  
19 multitude of market and nonmarket forces that are jointly at play to shape or change  
20 them. Researchers have blended the socio-cognitive approach to category dynamics  
21 (Rosa et al., 1999) with institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio &  
22 Powell, 1983) to make sense of some product categories' stability (Lounsbury & Rao,  
23 2004) or of the emergence of valuation criteria in other product categories (Khaire &  
24 Wadhvani, 2010). Some have combined partitioning theory (Carroll, 1985) with tenets  
25 from social movement theory (Morris & Mueller, 1992; Swaminathan & Wade, 2001)  
26 to make sense of de-concentration trends in identity-resonant product categories  
27 (McKendrick & Hannan, 2014). Others have jointly used tenets from organizational  
28 ecology, as well as institutional and social movement theory, to provide a compelling  
29 explanation of how the institutional logic governing categorization can shift (Rao et al.,  
30 2003). In line with these calls for theoretical pluralism, this research relies on strategic  
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9 action field (SAF) theory, a general social theory that condenses and integrates many of  
10 the aforementioned theoretical approaches into a single theoretical anchorage  
11 (Goldstone & Useem, 2012) and takes into equal account the various market and  
12 nonmarket forces that can prompt the phenomena of product category emergence,  
13 stabilization, and change.  
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### 20 21 22 23 *Product categories as strategic action fields*

24 Borrowing from practice (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984), as well as institutional  
25 (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) and social movement theory (e.g.,  
26 Morris & Mueller, 1992; Swaminathan & Wade, 2001), SAF theory focuses on how  
27 social actors engage in individual and collective practices to create, stabilize, or change  
28 various meso-level social arenas called strategic action fields (SAFs) (Fligstein &  
29 McAdam, 2012; Laamanen & Skålén, 2015). Fields are ‘strategic’ because field actors  
30 take actions while being mindful of what others are doing in the same field (Fligstein,  
31 2013) to produce or to impede change. Every social space occupied by actors whose  
32 actions are oriented toward each other can be regarded as an SAF and approached  
33 through the lens of SAF theory (Laamanen & Skålén, 2014). Thus, since product  
34 categories provide the relevant social boundaries to identify markets and the relations  
35 among market actors (Porac et al., 1995; Zuckerman, 1999; Lounsbury & Rao, 2004;  
36 Durand & Paoletta, 2013) and are meso-level structures in between producers and  
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9 consumers (Rosa et al., 1999), they can also be approached through the lens of SAF  
10 theory.  
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13 Most importantly (and in line with the tenets of SAF theory), there are three main  
14 reasons why product categories can be approached as SAFs: first, because category  
15 membership is based more on subjective standing than on objective criteria (Rosa et al.,  
16 1999); second, because categorical boundaries are assumed not to be fixed but to shift  
17 depending on the issues at stake (Porac et al., 1995); third, because product categories  
18 are fashioned over time by members of the field (Khaire & Wadhvani, 2010).  
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21 It is worth noting, however, that the theoretical and empirical challenge of SAF theory  
22 is to provide not just a precise ontological understanding of what an SAF is but also  
23 explanations for how and why fields change. As Wadhvani (2018) contends, SAF  
24 theory differs from other theories that are just as concerned with meso-level social  
25 orders, especially in reference to the central role that change assumes in the whole  
26 theorizing effort. In SAF theory, change is frequent and intentional, largely the outcome  
27 of constant jockeying between field actors, and mostly dependent on actors' power and  
28 position within the field. In every field, stability is precarious, and even when it is  
29 achieved, it hides the constant work of actors to change the social order in which they  
30 act (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Forces of change are constantly at play to endanger  
31 stability, and forces of stability are always at play to counteract threats of change. This  
32 particular way of framing change, which is gaining traction in research focusing on  
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9 organizational and market dynamics (e.g., Özen & Özen, 2011; Taylor, 2016; Helfen,  
10 2015; Corbo, Corrado, & Ferriani, 2016; Kauppinen, Cantwell, & Slaughter, 2017;  
11 Kjelldgaard et al., 2017; Litrico & David, 2017; Modell & Yang, 2018; Wadhvani,  
12 2018), is also well suited to explain the process through which product categories  
13 develop.  
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20 While other meso-level theories have been used to theorize about categorical changes at  
21 the product level (Vergne & Wry, 2014), SAF theory adds theoretical precision to the  
22 analysis of their underlying dynamics. It places greater emphasis on collective action to  
23 counterbalance the subjective view of agency that characterizes Bourdieu's (1977)  
24 approach. It has a broader scope than social movement theory because it sees social  
25 movement as one (but not the only) driver of change. It also expands the view of  
26 institutional fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) because it sees fields as only rarely  
27 organized around a truly consensual reality but always subject to contestation  
28 (Wadhvani, 2018). While the institutional entrepreneur is often considered the driver of  
29 change in institutional fields (Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009), it hardly constitutes  
30 a systematic theory of field change as it conflates action with structure and leaves little  
31 room for transformative forces from outside the field (Leca & Naccache, 2006). SAF  
32 theory, by contrast, combines the institutional focus on the level of the organizational  
33 fields as loci of exchanges with a central interest in understanding the sources of change  
34 that stem from the various social networks in which these organizational fields are  
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9 nested (Wadhvani, 2018). In SAF theory, interaction with other SAFs (Fligstein &  
10 McAdam, 2011, 2012; Fligstein, 2013) or, more generally, exogenous shocks, is the  
11 most frequent source of field-level changes.  
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16 The theorization of change offered by SAF theory is also broader than that implied in  
17 other sociological approaches in category studies, such as resource partitioning theory  
18 and socio-cognitive dynamics: The former (e.g., Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Dobrev,  
19 2000; Swaminathan, 2001) overemphasizes the agency of one or more firms to gain  
20 dominance over an untapped stock of resources left free by incumbents. The latter (e.g.,  
21 Rosa et al., 1999) admits categorical changes only if producers and consumers reach a  
22 consensual agreement over the meanings of the goods being exchanged.  
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27 Besides propounding a finer-grained articulation of field change, SAF theory also offers  
28 a systematic and rational categorization of three central sets of actors: *incumbents*,  
29 *challengers*, and *governance units* (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). *Incumbents* are those  
30 actors whose interests and views tend to be heavily reflected in the dominant  
31 organization of the SAF. They generally take advantage of greater availability and  
32 control over those resources that ensure the field's stability. *Challengers*, by contrast,  
33 have little influence over the mechanisms regulating the very functioning of the SAF  
34 but can change the rules of the game by exploiting their ability to seek collaborative  
35 agreements with others. Lastly, *governance units* are collective actors that oversee  
36 compliance with field rules, facilitate the system's overall functioning and reproduction,  
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9 and seek to maintain the established social order. SAFs cannot exist in isolation: They  
10 are embedded in and connected to others defined by their *proximity* (those fields whose  
11 actions routinely affect the field in question) and *interdependence* (those that are subject  
12 to the influence of another or exercise mutual influence over each other). Finally, fields  
13 can be *state* or *nonstate*, with the former being those actors that have formal authority to  
14 intervene in, set rules for, and generally make pronouncements on the legitimacy and  
15 viability of the latter.  
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25 The articulation of actors forming a focal SAF, as well as the identification of other  
26 fields that may have a connection with it, is not new to the stream of studies dealing  
27 with product categories. However, as these studies are mostly rooted in epistemic  
28 approaches that focus less analytically on external actors and/or are more concerned  
29 with stability than with change, they offer a partial understanding of how product  
30 categories emerge and develop (Durand & Thornton, 2018; Hsu, Koçak, & Kovács,  
31 2018). Conversely, SAF theory puts change rather than stability at the center and takes  
32 both internal and external forces that may revolve around stability and change into equal  
33 consideration. Thus, it is well suited to make sense of how the process of socially  
34 constructing product categories takes place.  
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## Data and methods

In order to reconstruct the history of gin from its origins, we employed history books, papers, pamphlets, laws, and other printed documents as the main sources of data. We collected a large number of historical data sources to limit biases stemming from a reliance on single data sources (Golder, 2000; Tosh, 2006). Cultural artifacts such as paintings, engravings, and other cultural representations of gin were also used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social construction of product meanings at different points in time (Karababa & Ger, 2011).

Recent industry data is used to provide a compelling picture of the current gin industry and is complemented by up-to-date information from reliable online sources. In addition, we interviewed producers, distributors, bartenders, and opinion leaders and participated in several gin-centered events between 2014 and 2018 (the list of primary and secondary data is available from the first author on request).

To ensure the reliability and robustness of the socio-historically grounded explanations of the categorical evolution provided in this research, we relied on Kipping, Wadhvani and Bucheli's (2014) methodology, which requires that the validity of each historical text be critically assessed and that these historical sources be triangulated with other primary and secondary data. Doing so would reduce bias and increase confidence in empirical results (Wadhvani, Suddaby, Mordhorst, & Popp, 2018). This step was followed by a meticulous analysis of historical facts that were first chronologically



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9 ordered, then interrelated to unveil sequential chains (i.e., a series of events that produce  
10 patterns of change), and finally arranged in a historical narrative (Langley, 1999;  
11 Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013; Mordhorst & Schwarzkopf, 2017).  
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16 The historical reconstruction that follows is divided into three periods identified by  
17 taking into consideration the changing political, legal, economic, social, technological,  
18 and business conditions in which the gin category was nested over time. The first,  
19 which historians call the ‘gin craze,’ stretches from the end of the 17th century to the  
20 end of the 18th century. The second period – from the beginning of the 19th to the end  
21 of the 20th century – is characterized by the establishment of modern gin production.  
22  
23 And the third period – from 1999 to the present – starts with the launch of Hendrick’s  
24 gin and the rapid subsequent increase in the variety and availability of premium  
25 products, a period that is now widely known as the ‘ginaissance.’  
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#### 40 **Category emergence: The gin craze (end of 17th to end of 18th century)**

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42 The origins of gin can be traced back to the 11th century, when Italian Benedictine monks  
43 flavored distilled spirits with juniper berries to heal the sick. Juniper-flavored potions  
44 were especially popular in the Low Countries, where the first written records of a juniper-  
45 based distillate called *jenever* have been found (van Maerlant, ca. 1260).  
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51 English troops discovered jenever in Holland during the Eighty Years’ War (1568–  
52 1648) and largely employed it to support soldiers’ morale; for this reason, it was  
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9 nicknamed 'Dutch courage.' The English brought jenever to England and anglicized the  
10 name to "gin." At the time, many Protestants were fleeing the Low Countries because of  
11 religious persecution and set up small distilleries in England. When William III (an  
12 Englishman of Dutch descent) took the English throne in 1689, he ratified a series of  
13 laws aimed at relaxing licensing restrictions on the distillation and sale of gin while  
14 banning imports of foreign alcoholic beverages (Solmonson, 2012). These measures had  
15 political and cultural significance as their goal was to affirm gin as a material signifier  
16 of breaking with the old symbolic politics of beer in favor of the nascent, triumphant  
17 Protestantism (Nicholls, 2008). The number of distilleries grew to more than 1,000,  
18 while there were some 6,000 gin taverns in London alone by 1725.

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32 Because it was cheaper than other drinks, gin rapidly became the favorite drink of the  
33 poor (Warner, 2011; Williams, 2014). Thus began a period that would pass into the  
34 annals of history as the *gin craze*. Statistical records document that the annual per capita  
35 gin consumption rose from 1 pint in 1700 to about 8 pints in 1750 (Mitchell & Deane,  
36 1962).

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Gin evolved from being a sovereign's opportunity to establish a beverage imbued with  
new meanings of Englishness to becoming a social problem that had to be tackled.

Claimed as a moral crusade against poisoning vices, the opposition to gin had thick  
economic overtones. The upper classes were scared that as long as the poor were left  
free to drink gin, the nation would run the risk of not having enough healthy workers to

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9 sustain England's economic growth. In addition, since the lower classes found in gin a  
10 substitute for beer, beer producers, who were traditionally rich upper-class landowners,  
11 did their best to spark off a social and political debate against gin and to advocate for  
12 beer as a drink that could ideologically signify 'Britishness' (Nicholls, 2008).  
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18 Many British intellectuals of the time – handsomely compensated by beer producers  
19 (Dillon, 2004; Williams, 2014) – committed themselves to condemning gin and the  
20 habit of gin drinking. Novelist Daniel Defoe (1728), for example, identified the  
21 salvation of "lower class of people from utter ruin (...) by preventing the immoderate  
22 use of Geneva" (p. 1) as an urgent priority.  
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30 A new field often emerges because of changes in the wider social context in which a  
31 focal SAF is embedded (Fligstein, 2013). These changes gradually feed into episodes of  
32 contention, where incumbents and challengers vie more openly for influence over field  
33 rules.  
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39 Similarly, when a product category emerges, the lack of a shared set of rules governing  
40 individual and collective actions generates competing cultural meanings that a given set  
41 of actors tries to impose on others, depending on the power they hold, the structural  
42 position they occupy, and the support they are able to rally in their broader social  
43 environment.  
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50 In the case of gin, these meanings were associated with its ability to be recognized as a  
51 symbol of 'Englishness' to the detriment of beer, which had traditionally fulfilled this  
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9 role. It was because of this symbolic opposition that a new SAF was created. Despite  
10 beer and gin being two distinct product categories, their symbolic rivalry led beer and  
11 gin producers to take each other into account in the structuring of their actions.  
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13 This rivalry resulted in gin shifting from being associated with the newly established  
14 national identity to being considered the spirit of the outcasts, which produced the  
15 conditions for its stigmatization (Vergne, 2012). Even though the stigmatization of  
16 product categories is often the result of their contentious morality (Anteby, 2010; Voss,  
17 2015), it can also occur because the category is associated with someone or something  
18 that carries a devalued social identity (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998). Throughout the  
19 18th century, the stigma of gin resulted from the association between gin and its typical  
20 consumers, the lower class. This phenomenon, known as stigma transfer (Hudson &  
21 Okhuysen, 2009), culminated in collective actions involving three sets of actors: the  
22 moral powers, who questioned the morality of gin and of gin drinking; the beer  
23 producers, who exploited their power resources and better position within the broader  
24 social field (including direct participation in Parliament) to consolidate beer as the  
25 national drink; and the state field, which, encouraged by the moral powers and beer  
26 producers to do so, deployed its formal authority to limit the spread of gin.  
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28 Organizational theorists have often underscored the role that the state field, i.e.,  
29 government or legislative institutions, plays in supporting or neglecting the  
30 legitimization of emerging practices or emerging organizational forms (Aldrich & Fiol,  
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9 1994; Sine, Haveman, & Tolbert, 2005). In the case of gin, the state field deployed its  
10 power to prevent gin trade and consumption through a series of legislative acts  
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12 emblematically known as the “Gin Acts.”

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16 The first act (1729) made a retail license of £20 per year (approximately the annual  
17 revenue of a small retailer) compulsory, introduced a tax of 2 shillings per gallon of gin  
18 sold, and set a fine of £10 for smuggling gin (White, 2003). However, this act was a  
19 failure, and widespread evasion of the law led Parliament to repeal it in 1733  
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25 (Solmonson, 2012).

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27 The second act (1736) was issued following an incident that pushed Parliament to  
28 intensify political measures against gin abuse: the case of Judith Defour. Judith was a  
29 woman sentenced to be executed after she had strangled her 2-year-old daughter and  
30 sold her clothes to buy a ration of gin (Stove, 2008). This episode attracted so much  
31 attention that gin came to be nicknamed *mother’s ruin* (Waterson, 2000). The 1736 Act  
32 sought to reduce gin consumption by prohibiting the sale of gin in quantities less than  
33 2 gallons (which was implicitly a measure to impede individual consumption) and by  
34 imposing a distribution license fee of £50 per year (Clark, 1988). It gained extensive  
35 support from the moral powers, including the Society for Promoting Christian  
36 Knowledge (White, 2003; Dillon, 2004), which successfully lobbied legislators to take  
37 an active role in preventing the lower classes from drinking gin (White, 2003; Nicholls,  
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2008). The beer makers’ lobby stood side by side with the moral powers to increase the

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9 social fear of gin in 1736. This is well represented in an engraving entitled “The  
10 lamentable fall of Madam Geneva,” by Elizabeth Foster, in which “Madam Geneva”  
11 (i.e., gin) lies supine on a platform with her dress pulled down to reveal both her breasts  
12 and a public house with a sign reading “No more Gin by retail Parsons Entire Butt” (a  
13 reference to the beer brewed by Humphrey Parsons, a member of Parliament at the time  
14 and a fierce opponent of gin) in the background.

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23 The act initially halted consumption as gin suddenly became unavailable, but it sparked  
24 riots in the poorest London neighborhoods (Warner & Ivis, 1999), thereby reinforcing  
25 gin’s role as a material identifier of the poor. The more Parliament tried to ban gin, the  
26 more popular it became and the more entrenched it was in the political and cultural  
27 makeup of its drinkers.

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34 As a side effect, the 1736 Act had increased gin smuggling (Clark, 1988): Gin  
35 reappeared, and the protests subsided.

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39 In 1743, Parliament passed another act that cut taxes on gin retail and reduced the  
40 license fee to only £1, which had the effect of reducing the price for legal gin and  
41 making the bootlegged variety less attractive than before.

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49 Gin consumption peaked in 1750 with more than 11 million gallons of gin sold in  
London alone (Warner, Her, Gmel, & Rehm, 2001).

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The 1751 Act prohibited retailers from selling not only gin but any kind of spirit;  
however, gin was once again the primary target in the social debate. This targeting is

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9 evident in two well-known satirical engravings known as ‘Beer Street’ and ‘Gin Lane’  
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11 (Hogarth, 1751), in which the inhabitants of Beer Street are portrayed as happy and  
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13 healthy, while those living on Gin Lane are depicted as being destroyed by their  
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15 addiction to gin.  
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18 The effects of the 1751 Act were significant, as the annual gin consumption dropped to  
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20 1.2 gallons per capita from 2.2 gallons in 1743 (Warner et al., 2001).  
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23 It has to be noted that the aim of all the aforementioned acts was to penalize gin  
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25 distribution and consumption while avoiding any additional tax, restriction, or penalty  
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27 on production. Ever since gin made its debut in England, distilling companies had  
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29 strengthened their social position and relative influence. Gin rapidly became a  
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31 flourishing economic sector absorbing a significant number of workers and responsible  
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33 for about a quarter of the financial resources collected by the state through taxation  
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35 (Warner, 2011; White, 2003).  
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38 Finally, in 1757, Parliament took the extreme decision to prohibit the production of any  
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40 distilled spirit, which put a definitive end to the craze (Warner et al., 2001).  
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43 Despite legal attempts to ban gin, the stigmatization process did not result in the  
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45 category disappearing. Instead, it created the conditions to tie gin to a prevailing taste  
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47 regime according to which product meanings were largely determined by their ability to  
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49 perpetuate a clear-cut distinction between social classes (Arsel & Thompson, 2011;  
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51 McQuarrie et al., 2012). This taste regime institutionalized the symbolic connection  
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9 between gin and its typical consumers, inhibited gin from spreading among upper-class  
10 consumers, and confined it to the bottom of the hierarchy in terms of status. Historians  
11 agree that the gin craze petered out from 1757 onward in particular because of the  
12 decrease in the number of people living in poverty. Those who started to enjoy better  
13 living conditions shifted from gin to other beverages as a means of signifying their  
14 social emancipation (Warner & Ivis, 1999; Warner et al., 2001). After 1757, as we will  
15 show, following a brief and apparently stable period, internal and external dynamics  
16 started to produce relevant changes in the category.  
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### 31 **Category settlement: The advent of modern gin (1800–1999)**

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33 If during the 18th century the gin category had been the theater of social and political  
34 struggles, it subsequently entered a relatively settled stage that lasted until the end of the  
35 20th century.  
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40 Two main laws contributed to a relative stabilization of the product category. First, the  
41 1823 Excise Act fixed a minimum limit on the productive capacity at 400 gallons to  
42 distill. The reasoning behind the act was that smaller stills would be too easy to conceal  
43 and, therefore, would facilitate illegal distilling (Buxton & Huges, 2014). Because of  
44 this law, all the small-scale gin distillers operating in the UK became illegal overnight.  
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9 of the new act, many gin shops were forced to close down. Those that survived became  
10 too expensive for the less wealthy and started targeting more affluent consumers  
11 (Williams, 2014). They ultimately transformed their modest taverns into *gin palaces*:  
12 fantastically ornamented drinking places (Dickens, 1836) designed to be aesthetically  
13 pleasing in order to draw upper-class drinkers away from beerhouses (Du Bois &  
14 Boons, 2014). The arrival of factories made consumption more affordable for a higher  
15 number of Londoners and fostered the emergence of a new cluster of urban consumers,  
16 i.e., the middle classes, which became a big target for gin. As Solmonson (2012) notes,  
17 the gin palaces played a key role in elevating gin's image by establishing the idea that  
18 'drinking was a social sport, not just a means to oblivion' (p. 68).  
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32 In addition to these laws and the newly established retail format, another event  
33 contributed to bringing stability to the gin category: the invention of the column still in  
34 1832. This technological innovation enabled the production of gin on a larger scale and  
35 made it possible to obtain a better-quality distillate with well-balanced aromatic  
36 qualities: the London Dry style. Gin finally became a spirit similar to the product we  
37 know today with its own English style and started to be more appealing to upper-class  
38 consumers.  
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48 Gin profited from the emergence of a novel taste regime that favored a further category  
49 shift. The new taste regime orchestrated practices of consumption on the basis of their  
50 degree of 'modernity.' Consuming modern (i.e., mass-produced) products was  
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9 considered an act of emancipating oneself from the past and a way for people to express  
10 their belonging to a clearly identified social status (Glennie & Thrift, 1992).

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13 Gin started to be considered part of the English cultural repertoire when it was deprived  
14 of its popular meanings and embraced more modern ones. This is a process of vertical  
15 status recategorization similar to that described by Delmestri and Greenwood (2016)  
16 with respect to grappa. Unlike with grappa, however, the change in gin's status resulted  
17 from the transition from artisanal to industrial production. Industrial, mass-produced gin  
18 became respectable, while traditional, small-batch gin continued to have negative  
19 connotations (Williams, 2014).

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30 Category studies have often focused on the process of reconfiguring categories, in  
31 which concentration is challenged by actors that question the legitimacy of mass-  
32 producers, which prompts category partitioning (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000;  
33 McKendrick & Hannan, 2014). However, these studies have little to say about why and  
34 how this concentration occurs. Concentration is often taken for granted and motivated  
35 by the existence of scale advantages at the production, distribution, or marketing level  
36 (Carroll, 1985). In the case of gin, concentration was only partly attributable to scale  
37 advantages: It was a complex and intricate network of collective internal and external  
38 actors that made it possible to attain a relatively long, albeit temporary, settlement.  
39 Incumbents (i.e., large-scale gin producers) were able to keep the structure of the  
40 category close to settled for more than a century because they took advantage of the  
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9 existing norms that reduced the likelihood of new entries, and because they exploited a  
10 taste regime that promoted mass-produced products as better and more respectable  
11 alternatives than their non-industrialized counterparts. As a matter of fact, unlike what  
12 was found in previous studies (e.g., Negro, Hannan & Rao, 2011), the advent of  
13 'modernism' in the gin category did not generate any resistance or identity tension. In  
14 the 'industrialized' gin category, there were no challengers, which are generally  
15 assumed to emerge in order to satisfy a demand for non-massively produced products  
16 (Carroll & Swaminathan, 2000; Swaminathan, 2001; McKendrick & Hannan, 2014),  
17 simply because such a demand did not exist.

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29 To say that a field is settled, however, does not imply there is no change. Settlement is a  
30 sort of ephemeral state as internal and external challengers are always ready to change  
31 the field in their favor, albeit sometimes unsuccessfully or too incrementally (see  
32 Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984 for similar arguments).

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39 The first drastic change to the settled field dates to 1869, when the Wine and Beerhouse  
40 Act imposed a license to sell all alcoholic beverages, including beer and wine. As  
41 Harrison (1967) documents, by the 1860s the temperance movement in England had  
42 started playing an important role in social debate and political decisions around the  
43 regulation of alcohol production, trade, and consumption. After the reform took effect,  
44 gin consumption dropped significantly. While gin was solidifying its presence among  
45 the growing middle class, the laws passed by the British Parliament posed significant  
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9 obstacles to the consolidation of gin makers on the national scene, which, at the time,  
10 was already populated by some players that are still around today: Gordon's, Beefeater,  
11 and Tanqueray, among others. English producers responded to these laws by exploiting  
12 nondomestic markets to consolidate their competitive position and were aided in this  
13 pursuit by the British Empire's colonial expeditions (Manning, 2012).  
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20 Thanks to the emergence of the mixing practice, gin in England started gaining ground  
21 again by the first two decades of the 20th century, but this growth was severely stalled  
22 in the 1920s because of the negative effects of the Volstead Act in the US, which  
23 banned the sale and consumption of alcohol.  
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29 Between the repeal of the Volstead Act (1933) and the end of the 1960s, vodka  
30 expanded both in Europe and in the US and eroded gin's share of the market. As  
31 Williams (2014) outlines, in the 1960s vodka was a blank cultural canvas on which to  
32 write differently from gin's historical dark legacy. As a result, throughout the 1970s and  
33 1980s, the gin category continued to be concentrated in the hands of a few players  
34 producing standard products and did not attract any challengers.  
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43 The first attempt to revitalize the category came in 1987 when the multinational  
44 company Bacardi Martini launched the world's first premium gin: Bombay Sapphire.  
45 By lowering the juniper and raising the citrus levels to offer a lighter taste, Bombay  
46 Sapphire introduced novel category codes (see Hannan, Pólos, & Carroll, 2007) that  
47 would be largely employed years later. These novel category codes are (Manning,  
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9 2012): 1) *botanical composition*: Bombay Sapphire was the first gin ever to report the  
10 botanical composition on the bottle and to make the botanicals an element of the  
11 marketing strategy; 2) *packaging*: it was the first gin to propose a bright blue and  
12 unusually squared-shaped bottle that stood out from traditional gin; and 3) *cues of*  
13 *authenticity*: it was the first to market the product by making explicit reference to the  
14 method of production and to the place of origin. However, for more than 10 years,  
15 Bombay Sapphire represented the only attempt to sell a premium gin. New challengers  
16 took time to emerge both in England and elsewhere, and it was only at the end of the  
17 20th and the beginning of the 21st century that gin underwent a rebirth.  
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### 33 **Category resettlement: Ginaissance (1999 to the present)**

34 Many consider 1999 to be the year in which the *ginaissance* began (Knoll, 2015). This  
35 was when Hendrick's gin, a brand owned by the Scottish corporation William Grant &  
36 Sons, was launched. It would soon be enthusiastically emulated by thousands of other  
37 producers.  
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44 Hendrick's was conceived as an unconventional premium gin, obtained by distilling 12  
45 classic botanicals, along with unconventional cucumber and Bulgarian roses. Despite an  
46 on-trade price of about \$40 per unit, Hendrick's rapidly became a market hit with sales  
47 climbing from 7,000 9-liter cases in 2003 to 925,200 in 2016.  
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9 Hendrick's changed the category in many ways. First, it pushed incumbents to launch  
10 premium products to defend their market shares. Examples include Tanqueray 10  
11 (launched in 2000), Beefeater 24 (in 2009), and even a cucumber-flavored version of  
12 the global leader, Gordon's (in 2013).  
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18 Second, it led to the resurrection of small-scale distilleries in the UK after about a 200-  
19 year absence. In 2009, the London-based Sipsmith distillery (later acquired by Beam  
20 Suntory) lobbied successfully to have the 400-gallon limit from 1823 abolished (Buxton  
21 & Hughes, 2014) and attracted the attention of many small distilleries that would go on  
22 to base their activities in the UK.  
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29 Third, it encouraged the operation of thousands of small craft distilleries around the  
30 globe (Knoll, 2015).  
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34 As Knoll (2017) wrote, what William Grant & Sons did was change the taste profile of  
35 gin at a time when the category was largely dominated by value (priced below \$10) and  
36 standard products (priced between \$10 and \$15) (Barnett, 2011), with very low  
37 differentiation in terms of taste. It is worth noting that, like both Grappa di Picolit  
38 (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016) and Bombay Sapphire, Hendrick's is a product  
39 innovation by an established company and not a newcomer representing an emerging  
40 countercultural or an antagonistic movement. Thus, even the resurgence of the gin  
41 industry stands in contrast with the thesis of resource partitioning theory (Carroll,  
42 1985).  
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9 Despite a brand like Hendrick's undeniably having some factual connection with a  
10 contemporary culture of consumption driving the demand toward non-mainstream  
11 products (Bean, Khorramian, & O'Donnell, 2018), its introduction and later success  
12 should not be interpreted merely as a response to a generalized consumer quest for  
13 unusual products (Firat & Venkatesh 1995). Rather, the company sought to fill a gap in  
14 its product range and to confer on Hendrick's an image that is by no means linked to  
15 traditional standards of the gin category. The goal that William Grant & Sons strived for  
16 was not to raise product quality *per se*, as Bombay Sapphire had previously done, but to  
17 detach gin from a devalued image (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016) by making  
18 something only loosely coupled with the cultural orthodoxy of the gin category (Holt &  
19 Cameron, 2010; Rindova, Dalpiaz, & Ravasi, 2011).

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34 The transformation of the gin category since 1999 aligns with the fundamental  
35 contention of SAF theory that SAFs are more frequently destabilized by outsiders  
36 invading the SAF than by internal members (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). While most  
37 of these invasions do not produce dramatic changes, others have the potential to  
38 destabilize the field and to drive it toward a new settlement. According to SAF theory,  
39 when a settled field is drastically challenged, this event does not necessarily lead to  
40 disruption but can produce resettlement. Resettlement indicates that the transforming  
41 field, while radically modified, is still linked to and bears a significant imprint of the  
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9 field it comes from, as incumbents do not disappear but take an active role in the field's  
10 configuration.

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13 Hendrick's gin is an example of a powerful outsider that successfully led an established  
14 field toward resettlement.

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18 The likelihood for outsiders to cause a field to transition toward resettlement largely  
19 depends on incumbents' ability to obstruct or impede outsiders' access to the field,  
20 defections of incumbents to the side of the challenger, and the existence of governance  
21 units that may preserve the settlement and delegitimize the challenger (Fligstein &  
22 McAdam, 2012).

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29 When Hendrick's arrived on the scene, all these aspects were working in its favor.  
30 Incumbents, like Diageo and Pernod Ricard, followed Hendrick's by developing  
31 premium versions of their century-old products, thereby validating the competing  
32 interpretation as a legitimate claim to the label (see Negro et al., 2011, for similar  
33 arguments). Governance units, which are generally collectively created by incumbents  
34 to stabilize the field and preserve the status quo of their members, were non-existent.

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43 The Gin Guild (the UK industrial association of gin makers) was only established in  
44 2012, which means no collective body had previously existed to prevent challengers  
45 from resettling the field.

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50 Although they are different, the new gins have many similarities. First, they all compete  
51 in the premium product range, which is the only one in the gin category experiencing a  
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9 real boom. Data on the spirit industry (IWSR, 2016) shows that sales of gin by volume  
10 grew by 12.3% between 1996 and 2015. However, if analyzed by price range, the trend  
11 shows the incidence of premium gin shifted from 18.2% to 43.8% during the same  
12 period (see Table 1).  
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20 **–TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE –**  
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25 Second, new products are positioned as being unique rather than different. The lack of  
26 production restrictions limiting the type and quality of botanicals that can be distilled  
27 with juniper berries, as well as the absence of norms regulating provenance, allowed  
28 producers to emerge in a variety of countries. It also offered gin makers the opportunity  
29 to challenge each other's recipes by simply taking advantage of their fortunate territorial  
30 belonging. Examples are the Black Forest-based Monkey 47, Canada's Ungava, which  
31 is produced by using only rare local botanicals from the eponymous peninsula in  
32 Quebec, and Rivo gin, which uses foraged herbs and handpicked spices from the area  
33 around Lake Como in Italy. The list is almost endless, and there are now gins featuring  
34 the most peculiar botanicals, as well as capers, salt, seaweed, tomatoes, saffron, and tea.  
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Many commentators on the gin industry refer to this new class of gin as the  
'contemporary style,' where 'contemporary' does not deal with provenance, production

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9 method, botanical composition, or price but indicates that the predominant juniper  
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11 flavor leaves the stage to other ingredients.

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13 We compiled a list of the 475 gins that have received an award at least once at any one  
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15 of the three leading spirits competitions worldwide (Chicago, San Francisco, and  
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17 London) between 2000 and 2015. The list features spirits from 31 countries on all five  
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19 continents. Most of the 475 awarded gins (292 entries) do not fit within the traditional  
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21 London Dry style and were launched (345 of the 475) after Hendrick's had entered the  
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23 market.  
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27 With the producers' rush to use botanicals that had never been used before in gin  
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29 making, the SAF moved dramatically toward resettlement. In the previous configuration  
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31 of the product category, the incumbents' stickiness to a prototypical product form  
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33 (Zuckerman, 1999) had trivialized the category favoring concentration. But in the  
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35 resettled field, the search for differentiation and the ease through which differentiation  
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37 can be made allowed new players to enter and moved competition from the mass market  
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39 to market niches, from the UK to the rest of the world – that is, to partition the category.  
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41 However, this partitioning did not stem from an oppositional identity rooted in notions  
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43 of authenticity (Carroll & Swaminathan 2000; Hannan et al., 2007; McKendrick &  
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45 Hannan, 2014). As argued before, the identitarian connections between gin and England  
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47 were severed in the 18th century when gin was stigmatized. Partitioning was set in  
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9 motion once producers understood they could make a signature local gin by using  
10 locally available botanicals.

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13 This peculiar partitioning benefited from the presence of a contemporary taste regime  
14 that orchestrates consumption choices on the basis of the product's uniqueness and  
15 identitarian value and no longer on the basis of social classes and class distinction (Firat  
16 & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 1998). This taste regime emerged as a product of the  
17 transition from modernity to postmodernity and with the establishment of a  
18 contemporary market paradigm where mass market production is supplanted by  
19 segmented production, and consumption is no longer a way to satisfy needs but rather a  
20 way to satisfy desires (Van Raaij, 1993).

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23 This postmodern taste regime places products at the high end of the status hierarchy  
24 largely on the basis of their degree of novelty, differentiation, and unusualness,  
25 regardless of their intrinsic quality, and confines mass-marketed and well-known  
26 products to the lower end.

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29 At present, despite the myriad unique interpretations of gin, the category still seems to  
30 remain united under the gin label. Most often, when this happens, a product category is  
31 split into two (or more) variants (Kennedy et al., 2010) as audiences come to view  
32 certain market offerings as too loosely associated with the category's prototypical  
33 identity. In the absence of governance units and of cogent legislation to define  
34 production standards, it seems the common ingredient juniper was by itself able to hold  
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9 this very diverse product category united and to grant producers the chance to keep  
10 claiming their membership in the category, regardless of whether their gin is low-brow  
11 or premium, traditional or contemporary.  
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15 The proliferation of contemporary styled gins is now raising concerns and setting off a  
16 debate between traditionalists and modernists, similar to the one that Negro et al. (2011)  
17 recount about traditional wine makers, that could lead to a subdivision of the category  
18 as the structure further evolves. What is contested, however, is neither the brand's  
19 ownership, nor the product's provenance or the production techniques used, but the  
20 prevalence of other ingredients over juniper. As James Hayman, master distiller and  
21 owner of Hayman Distillers, declared: "I feel uncomfortable with a product called gin  
22 that isn't juniper-led (...) It is a shame and quite damaging for the category. I think  
23 legislation has become a necessity right now" (Kiely, 2015). Desmond Payne, master  
24 distiller at Beefeater since the beginning of the 1960s, echoes the same opinion in an  
25 interview he gave us during a gin convention: "some of these recently launched gins are  
26 so lightly flavored with juniper that it must be questioned if they should still be called  
27 gin."  
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### 49 **General discussion and conclusions**

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51 The aim of this paper was to provide a historically grounded explanation of category  
52 emergence and change by taking the gin category as an example and to answer the  
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9 following research question: How have political, social, economic, and technological  
10 forces – and the interaction between them – affected successive configurations of the  
11 gin category from its origins to the present?  
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15 We adopted a cognizant *history in theory* approach (Kipping & Üsdiken, 2014) by using  
16 history as the main driver to explain the successive configurations of categorical  
17 dynamics. We extended our analysis over a significant timeframe and provided a  
18 separate analysis of three main historical periods corresponding to an equal number of  
19 configurations of the gin category. Table 2 summarizes the findings for each of the three  
20 periods analyzed.  
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32 **- TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE -**  
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37 As shown in the empirically grounded process model represented in Figure 1, each  
38 categorical configuration corresponds to a particular market structure. Each market  
39 structure is tied to a specific taste regime that, in turn, provides the necessary conditions  
40 to regulate the hierarchical ordering of the product category. Therefore, the taste regime  
41 is analytically framed as a meso-level construct between market structure and category  
42 status to account for the variety of audiences and social forces that create and perpetuate  
43 a system of meanings underpinning product categories.  
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**- FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE -**

We showed that, in stage one, the lack of a shared understanding of the category and its meanings led to a fragmented supply and the creation of fierce market conflicts with beer makers vying for the same demand, thereby devaluing gin's social identity. The result was the inclusion of gin in a taste regime whose products were used to reiterate and reinforce social and class distinctions. Gin was firmly entrenched in the poor's consumption preferences and imbued with symbolic meanings of social rebellion of the lowest class of people against the establishment. The production, consumption, and retailing of gin were considered representative of questionable morality, and the product was placed at the lowest level of status.

Coercive intervention from the state, along with technological developments and changes in the wider social structure, favored concentration from the 19th century onward. In stage two, concentration promoted gin's inclusion in a newly established taste regime where mass-produced products came to be associated with an image of sophistication and were more appealing than non-mass-produced ones. The affirmation of this taste regime contributed to stabilizing the field and positioning gin as a mid-level product in the hierarchical status ordering.

The structure of the category remained almost stable despite a challenger, Bombay Sapphire, making efforts to change it. However, because of its adherence to the

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9 prevailing prototypical product form, it did not significantly alter the category or its  
10 status. The field's structure allowed an outsider (William Grant & Sons) to launch an  
11 unconventional product that set the stage for gin's transition into a contemporary taste  
12 regime where marketplace actors emphasize distinction and produce the conditions for a  
13 vertical rise in gin's status toward the high end of the spirits market.  
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20 **This study contributes to current research and theory regarding product categories in**  
21 **several ways.** SAF theory gives the historical reconstruction we provide in this research  
22 the necessary theoretical abstraction needed to explain how history affects current  
23 categorical configurations. Using history in theory requires "a theorized understanding  
24 of the historical particularities and contingencies of the series and relationships under  
25 analysis" (Kipping and Üsdiken, 2014, p. 562). As Wadhvani (2018) contends, SAF  
26 theory is particularly suited to historical analysis as it makes it possible to overcome the  
27 theoretical *impasse* that presumes fields are relatively stable and characterized by rule-  
28 like patterns by viewing fields as historically contingent, time-bounded, and inherently  
29 inclined to change. It also allows focusing not just on the effects of change but also (and  
30 above all) on the patterns behind the change. The application of SAF theory to the case  
31 we illustrate in this paper helps account for these patterns of categorical change as a  
32 series of complex and intertwined negotiations among actors situated in different social  
33 contexts.  
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9 This study also offers three other important contributions to the stream of category  
10 studies with particular reference to resource partitioning theory, status recategorization,  
11 and categorical stigma.  
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16 As for partitioning, the gin story shows that the process leading to concentration and the  
17 subsequent proliferation of players may be far more complex than the theory postulates.  
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19 Concentration was the ‘unexpected’ outcome of a socio-cultural and political project to  
20 hinder gin’s ascent in English society and inhibit the creation of market spaces that are  
21 supposed to be occupied by small specialist firms. Partitioning, in turn, has had a  
22 dynamic that is different from the kind shown in similar product categories (Carroll &  
23 Swaminathan, 2000; McKendrick & Hannan, 2014) because of the remaining cultural  
24 legacy from the time when gin was known as *mother’s ruin*. Besides preventing the  
25 emergence of an oppositional identity between large generalists and small specialists  
26 and/or between traditionalists and modernists (Rao et al., 2003; Negro et al., 2011), this  
27 legacy has made issues of authenticity (Beverland, 2006) irrelevant and favored the  
28 global diffusion of gin production. This does not mean that a similar proliferation of  
29 players at a geographically unlimited scale is unique to gin. Rather, such a global  
30 proliferation would not have been possible if, at its inception, gin had been considered a  
31 legitimate symbol of national identity.  
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50 Our study also offers an incremental contribution to the stream of research on status  
51 recategorization. Unlike with Delmestri and Greenwood (2016), we not only analyzed  
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9 how gin moved from a low to a high status but also shed light on the historically  
10 situated, place-bounded, and class-dependent mechanisms and processes that led to  
11 gin's positioning at the lower end of the market hierarchy at the beginning and  
12 gradually permitted the more recent climb in status. The introduction of period effects  
13 allowed for drawing a trajectory of status recategorization that only partly aligns with  
14 the kind theorized by Delmestri and Greenwood (2016) in regard to grappa. Gin's rise  
15 in status from stage one to stage two runs counter to the argument that an institutional  
16 entrepreneur is required for status recategorization. As historical records confirm, a  
17 combination of unfavorable legislation, technological innovations, new retail formats,  
18 and the growth of the middle class created favorable conditions for gin to become a  
19 respectable product. The second rise in status – from stage two to stage three – was  
20 largely due to the actions of a single actor (i.e., Hendrick's), similarly to what Nonino  
21 had done for grappa. However, unlike with grappa, we explain such a rise in status by  
22 linking it more tightly to the historical dynamics that the category underwent and that  
23 has made the gin category particularly receptive to status changes.

24  
25 Finally, this study contributes to the stream of studies dealing with categorical stigma  
26 (Piazza & Perretti, 2015). Gin was stigmatized not because of its implicit amorality but  
27 because of the association with its typical consumers – a phenomenon of stigmatization  
28 that has previously received scant attention. The story of the gin stigma is the story of a  
29 product whose devalued social identity is tightly intertwined with a class-based  
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9 distinction rooted in individuals' consumption choices. To understand the evolutionary  
10 dynamics of these class-based product categories, one cannot overlook the  
11 understanding of the social structure and of the class divisions that created the  
12 conditions to stigmatize them and conferred legitimacy on them in later periods.  
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18 Previous studies focus on how organizations cope with categorical stigma (Hudson &  
19 Okhuysen, 2009; Vergne, 2012, Piazza & Perretti, 2015) but offer limited information  
20 on how such a stigma affects subsequent categorical configurations. We provide an  
21 empirical explanation of how categorical stigma was created and how it was gradually  
22 dismantled to the point where the category was even promoted at the high end of the  
23 status hierarchy. It is a dynamic of de-stigmatization that is only marginally explained  
24 by organizational stigma management and primarily motivated by the gradual transition  
25 of the product category from one social class to another.  
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36 This research also contributes to SAF theory. As some of its critics affirm (see  
37 Goldstein & Useem, 2012), SAF theory has a general tendency to emphasize the  
38 willingness of incumbents to stabilize the field in order to create shared meanings and  
39 produce cooperation among social actors through the creation of governance units. In  
40 our study, however, we found that settlement was reached despite a lack of governance  
41 units, and the incumbents did not seek to prevent a possible invasion by challengers.  
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50 Thus, these results do not align with the assumption of SAF theory that stability requires  
51 incumbents to play hard to maintain the status quo. In specific product categories,  
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9 incumbents can be in a position to take advantage of the settled field they are in simply  
10 because the field is so mature and static that it discourages outsiders from challenging it.  
11 However, this study's results and theoretical contributions must be viewed in light of its  
12 limitations. The first deals with the historical sources used and how we interpret them.  
13 To the best of our knowledge, we collected all available historical reconstructions of the  
14 gin category, evaluated the existence of controversial interpretations of the same events  
15 to limit biases, used other secondary data, and collected primary data. However, since  
16 we covered an extended period of time and tried to cover all the 'macro' events that  
17 affected the emergence, development, and change of the gin category from its inception  
18 to the present, there might be other interpretations that we overlooked, particularly if all  
19 the micro-processes and negotiations that occurred during the product category's  
20 development were considered.  
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36 While we based our research on a deep and detailed analysis of a single product  
37 category and its unique historical development, the second limitation concerns the fact  
38 that the theoretical elaboration cannot disregard the scope conditions (Walker & Cohen,  
39 1985) imposed by the time-place bounded mechanisms of category emergence,  
40 settlement, and resettlement we give account in this research. For example, because the  
41 gin category included some degrees of conflict at its inception, future studies are needed  
42 to evaluate whether, similarly to what happened to gin, these conflicts systematically  
43 feed phenomena of category stigmatization that later turn into a vertical process of  
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9 status recategorization. A product category like blue jeans can be a suitable research  
10 setting to assess the degree of generalizability of the theoretical explanation of category  
11 emergence and change we lay out in this research, as it took the garment – previously  
12 identified exclusively with the working class – more than a century before it came to be  
13 associated with many of the symbolic attributes of consumption it has today (Davis,  
14 1989). A further scope condition that deserves attention for future studies involves the  
15 unique historical path that gin took to assume cultural relevance. As the case of the gin  
16 category shows, the process through which products assume cultural importance is  
17 complex, historically intertwined, and not necessarily uncontested. Additional research  
18 is needed to assess whether the amount of dynamism inherent in gin can also be  
19 observed in other product categories that, at the time gin was stigmatized, were included  
20 in a taste regime where product meanings were determined by their ability to perpetuate  
21 a clear-cut distinction between social classes.  
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**Table 1.** Sales of gin 1996–2015 worldwide (in thousands of 9-liter cases)

	Value		Standard		Premium		Total
<b>1996</b>	7,031.50	37.9%	8,121.05	43.8%	3,377.90	18.2%	18,530.45
<b>1997</b>	6,937.95	37.7%	7,823.00	42.5%	3,633.60	19.8%	18,394.55
<b>1998</b>	6,726.85	36.9%	7,624.85	41.8%	3,895.20	21.3%	18,246.90
<b>1999</b>	6,679.25	36.5%	7,389.15	40.4%	4,211.50	23.0%	18,279.90
<b>2000</b>	6,610.50	35.7%	7,302.65	39.4%	4,618.50	24.9%	18,531.65
<b>2001</b>	6,663.35	35.9%	7,158.40	38.5%	4,763.40	25.6%	18,585.15
<b>2002</b>	6,629.20	35.3%	7,141.50	38.1%	4,997.25	26.6%	18,767.95
<b>2003</b>	6,336.95	33.6%	7,162.00	38.0%	5,359.60	28.4%	18,858.55
<b>2004</b>	6,255.05	32.8%	7,230.30	37.9%	5,570.50	29.2%	19,055.85
<b>2005</b>	6,185.00	32.5%	7,106.60	37.3%	5,743.75	30.2%	19,035.35
<b>2006</b>	5,941.50	31.5%	7,009.70	37.1%	5,924.90	31.4%	18,876.10
<b>2007</b>	5,819.60	30.0%	7,261.50	37.5%	6,302.95	32.5%	19,384.05
<b>2008</b>	5,789.40	30.1%	7,370.70	38.3%	6,094.80	31.7%	19,254.90
<b>2009</b>	5,983.45	31.5%	7,297.80	38.5%	5,689.30	30.0%	18,970.55
<b>2010</b>	5,834.75	31.4%	7,009.95	37.7%	5,726.73	30.8%	18,571.43
<b>2011</b>	5,549.95	29.9%	6,834.00	36.9%	6,157.95	33.2%	18,541.90
<b>2012</b>	5,405.95	28.4%	6,937.35	36.5%	6,688.80	35.1%	19,032.10
<b>2013</b>	5,121.05	26.6%	6,787.45	35.2%	7,348.25	38.2%	19,256.75
<b>2014</b>	4,974.35	25.2%	6,720.10	34.1%	8,029.15	40.7%	19,723.60
<b>2015</b>	4,915.60	23.6%	6,780.85	32.6%	9,116.60	43.8%	20,813.05

**Source.** Own compilation of IWSR (2016) data

**Table 2.** A summary of the findings

	<b>Emergence</b>	<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Resettlement</b>
<b>Incumbents</b>	Myriad unorganized/unstructured legal producers. Great fragmentation of the supply structure.	Large-scale gin producers. Few producers producing in large quantities.	Large-scale gin producers of traditional (London Dry) gin. Few producers producing in large quantities.
<b>Challengers</b>	Myriad independent gin bootleggers.	Bombay Sapphire (the first premium product after more than 150 years).	Contemporary style gin makers established all over the world.
<b>Product characteristics</b>	Low-quality spirit consumed neat.	Standard quality. Creation and consolidation of the London Dry style. Consumed neat and in mixed drinks.	Value and standard products vs. premium and super-premium gins. New, less juniper-dominated gins emerge. Botanicals sourced from all over the world offer iconic and indexical connections of gin to specific locales.
<b>Production technology</b>	Discontinuous distillation (artisanal).	Continuous distillation (industrial).	Continuous, discontinuous, new, and traditional methods (artisanal and industrial).
<b>Places of consumption</b>	Gin taverns.	Gin palaces (beginning of 19th century) and cocktail bars (from end of the 19th century onwards).	Cocktail bars.
<b>Countries of production</b>	England.	England, the English colonies and few players outside of England.	Everywhere.
<b>State field</b>	From 1689 to 1729, supportive of the gin establishment. From 1729 to 1757, an antagonistic role vis-à-vis gin (Gin Acts). The state field was hostile to gin retail and gin consumption but did not impose serious constraints on production.	Opposition to gin and institutional support for beer.	Lack of norms regulating gin production.
<b>Proximate fields</b>	Beer and malt spirits producers. Members of competing fields are especially concerned with maintaining their market share and the meanings of Englishness associated with their product.	Beer and malt spirits producers still concerned with maintaining their meanings. Vodka emerges as a new SAF that affects and produces changes in the gin category.	Many vodka and gin makers start approaching premium gin production allured by the market growth.

<b>Governance units</b>	Non-existent.	Non-existent.	Non-existent until 2012 but do not play a role aimed at granting the status quo of incumbents.
<b>Wider social structure</b>	Pre-modern societal structure characterized by thick divisions between low and high classes. Lack of a middle class.	Modern societal structure characterized by the emergence of a middle class.	Post-modern societal structure characterized by loose boundaries among social classes.
<b>Taste regime</b>	Consumption is a way to perpetuate a clear-cut distinction between social classes.	Consumption is a way to express 'modernity'. Consuming modern (i.e. mass-produced) products is a way to signify social emancipation.	Consumption is a way to express consumers' identity but no longer structure social-classes and class distinction.
<b>Status</b>	Low-quality product, largely smuggled, associated with people occupying the bottom of the social pyramid. Gin considered to be of dubious morality, the product of the outcasts, a symbol of the social rebellion of the poor against the establishment.	A spirit characterized by a new style (the London Dry) targeting middle- and upper-class consumers, distilled through modern techniques, and consumed in charming gin palaces	Contemporary style gins are unique and targeted at international consumers who consider gin drinking a playful search for the unusual. Consumption choices are guided by artisanship, localness, and variety setting the stage for connoisseurship.
<b>Market structure</b>	Fragmentation	Concentration	Partitioning

**Figure 1** The empirically grounded process model of category emergence, settlement and resettlement

