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ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Scapegoating in the Organization: Which Regulation Modes?

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Abstract

Several studies have focused on scapegoating in the organizational context. However, most have tended to enclose the protagonists in predefined roles: scapegoats are relatively passive, their colleagues persecute them, and management quickly join the persecutors. According to this scenario, the outcome ends irrevocably with the scapegoat's isolation. The literatures in related fields have nevertheless suggested other modes of regulation, and we might question whether our representation of the organizational scapegoating process, from passive actors to automatic outcome, offers a full account of this complex phenomenon as it unfolds and is lived. We in fact do not know how organizational actors regulate the scapegoating process, interfering with and influencing its trajectory and outcome. In this article, we conceptualize this complex process by examining the active and regulating roles of its protagonists and how they hinder or even avert the violence of scapegoating. In an exploratory and qualitative study of seven cases of scapegoating in a large French company, we describe the actions of the scapegoats (combating the persecution, struggling against stigma, avoidance, and departure) and management (support for persecutors, support for the scapegoat, and ambivalent support). The articulation of the protagonists' actions ultimately leads to four types of resolution for the scapegoat: isolation, expulsion, cohabitation, and assimilation. Two modes of regulation emerge: the first mode strengthens and catalyzes the scapegoating process, whereas the second mode prevents and channels it. By detailing the actors' actions and their capacities to co-regulate the scapegoating process, this study moves beyond a deterministic vision of scapegoating and underlines the role of its protagonists. A research agenda is discussed.

Keywords: *Scapegoat; Collective persecution; Ostracism; Regulation; Stigma; Violence at work*

While on his way to meet his fiancée, Joe Wilson was arrested by the police and accused of kidnapping a little girl. The local citizens, quickly whipped into a state of hysteria by a few rabble rousers, stormed the jail in which he was being held and, in a surge of primitive justice, set it on fire. The crowd's violence was ignored by the authorities and ended up contaminating the pre-designated victim, who became overwhelmed by a desire for revenge. Inspired by an authentic news item, this story is recounted in the film *Furie* (1936), directed by Fritz Lang and starring Spencer Tracy. Disturbing because of the mirror it holds up and resonating still through the much later laws addressing the contagion of violence (Tarde, 1993 [1890]), this event is a sober reminder of the propensity of human groups to sacrifice scapegoats when inflamed by fear and anger.

A common term today, 'scapegoat' is the figurative designation of ''a person to whom we attribute all wrongs'' (Littré, p. 1342). The expression has its origins in the Judeo-Christian tradition of *Yom Kippur* transcribed in the Old Testament (Leviticus 16). This expiatory ritual consisted in loading a goat down with the sins of the people before driving it into the desert burdened with the community's sin. Thus, embodying evil, the scapegoat also denotes a process of stigmatization, incrimination, violence, and ultimately exclusion (Girard, 1982). In this article, we use both the terms 'scapegoat' and 'scapegoating' to distinguish those who have become scapegoats and the process exerted on them.

As the founder of the Observatory on Scapegoating and Institutional Violence affirmed (Casanova, 2014a), all eras and places, all functions and statutes, are *a priori* affected by

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scapegoating. Scapegoats are found in most social groups (Gemmill, 1989), and organizations are no exception. When scapegoats are outside the group (e.g., Europe, the competition), they help strengthen the group to face a common enemy (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Yet scapegoats within the group threaten its entropy and therefore deserve numerous types of violence, with negative consequences for both the target (e.g., loss of motivation and self-confidence, depression, anger, anxiety, psychological disorder, alcoholism, work accidents, and suicide) and the organization itself (e.g., deteriorations in interpersonal relationships, the working climate, productivity, and production quality) (Chappell & Di Martino, 2000). To meet their obligation to protect employees (article L. 4121-1 from 1 to 5 and seq. of the Labor Code), employers have to be able to assess and prevent the emergence of psychosocial risk factors in the workplace (Bodier & Wolff, 2018; Gollac & Bodier, 2011). One of these factors is the violence affecting the scapegoat. Furthermore, according to a report from the National Research and Security Institute (2018/2015)[1], maintaining good interpersonal relationships within the organization and preserving employee health goes far in avoiding the many economic costs that their degradation entails.

Although scapegoating obviously occurs in organizations (Bonazzi, 1980), analyses in this context remain rare. A few dedicated studies (Boecker, 1992; Bonazzi, 1983; Danniau & Meynckens-Fourez, 2015; Daudigeos, Pasquier, & Valiorgue, 2014; Eagle & Newton, 1981; Uhalde, 2005) have nevertheless specified the characteristics, uses, stages, and protagonists of scapegoating in organizations. The reactions are described as typical and predetermined by the protagonists' roles. According to these studies, the scapegoats, even when they defend themselves, fail to shake off their victim status and even at times unwittingly strengthen it (Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989). Meanwhile, the persecuting collective engages in a frenzy of violence that will not stop until the scapegoat has been sacrificed, and the witnesses, including management, systematically join the persecutors (Bonazzi, 1980; Casanova, 2014b; Girard, 1982). Research on similar phenomena, which has addressed certain aspects of scapegoating (such as stigmatization, collective persecution, and ostracism), nevertheless suggests that the protagonists can actually carry out a number of adjustment actions. We know little about how these actions are arranged over the process of scapegoating and how they modify the outcome. In order to shed light on this gray area, we conducted an exploratory study to address the following question: how do the

protagonists in the scapegoating process contribute to regulating the phenomenon?

To answer this question, we examined seven cases of scapegoating. All were collected in an organization called FERR, which was undergoing profound changes (managerialization of the company, feminization of job positions, rejuvenation of collectives, etc.) that had precipitated a collective experience of crisis (Uhalde, 2016), thus offering fertile ground for the emergence of scapegoats (Bonazzi, 1983; Daudigeos et al., 2014; Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989; Girard, 1982; Uhalde, 2005). This multi-case and processual study (Langley, 1999) reveals four outcomes of scapegoating and two opposite modes of regulation. The first outcome catalyzes and strengthens the phenomenon (the isolation or expulsion of the scapegoat), whereas the second outcome channels and hinders it (cohabitation or reintegration of the scapegoat). The regulations leading to these outcomes are identified from the articulation of the protagonists' actions.

This research enriches the literature on organizational scapegoating in three principal ways. First, it reveals how scapegoating is regulated in the organization and its diverse outcomes, thereby challenging the current theoretical assumptions (Girard, 1982). Second, it offers a more situated reading of how scapegoating targets emerge, which should prompt continued investigation into the personage of the scapegoat and the context in which the status emerges. Finally, the study details the actions of the protagonists and how they co-regulate the scapegoating process, thereby opening the way to a less deterministic understanding of the process.

In the first section, we present the literature on scapegoating in an organizational context and the reactions of the protagonists (scapegoat, persecuting group, and witnesses). Next, the methodological approach and the results are presented. Then, we discuss the main contributions and limitations of the study and, finally, conclude with an agenda for future research.

Scapegoats and the organization: State of knowledge

We first introduce the scapegoat archetype in the social sciences, mainly developed in anthropology and psychology. We then describe its features in the organizational context.

The scapegoat archetype in the social sciences

Seminal thinkers in anthropology (Frazer, 1981; Girard, 1982) and social psychology (Berkowitz, 1962; Dollar, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Douglas, 1995; Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989) have investigated scapegoating. The former

[1] *Risques Psycho-Sociaux (RPS)* published by *l'Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité* (INRS) in 2015 and updated up until 2018, available online: http://www.inrs.fr/risques/psychosociaux/consequences-salaries.html.

considered it an archaic mechanism of ritualized sacrifice to contain human violence and thus preserve social order. The latter focused more on the psychosocial dynamics that drive small threatened groups to displace and distance one of their members and the anxiety aroused by interpersonal and intrapsychic conflict. From both perspectives, scapegoating is seen as a cathartic mechanism of displacing evil onto a single victim (an individual or a group) or a set of victims (a group or a society) that is often denied. The term thus designates "the innocence of the victims, the collective polarization against them and the collective purpose of this polarization" (Girard, 1982, p. 60). Scapegoating is a process, which Casanova (2010, p. 107) defined as "more or less ritualized, of exclusion and substitution, often of expulsion and expiation." He added that "its embodiment […] provides the group momentary reconciliation by drawing sufficiently strong and unanimous violence to it" Casanova (ibid, p. 107). These studies have shed light on the methods of selecting scapegoating victims and the stages that define the process.

First, scapegoats are sacrificial victims: this status removes responsibility from the group by attributing the dysfunction of an entire system to the inadequacy of an individual (Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989). Although the victims may have nothing to do with the turbulence threatening the collective, they are considered responsible for it. Their sacrifice unleashes the internal and endemic violence (expiation) of the group onto a single target, leaving the group more peaceful and cohesive at the cost of a 'lesser harm' (Girard, 1982). In this case, scapegoats are partially or completely innocent of the evils they are accused of (Girard, 1982). Nevertheless, they are chosen as they bear distinctive signs that actually become victimizing over the course of the process. These signs equate the victims with the threats weighing on the collective and thus are at the root of their stigmatization. According to Goffman (1975 [1963]), the stigmas of scapegoats can be defined as those social and/or physical attributes that others consider deeply discrediting. Empirical studies have thus observed that scapegoats tend to be isolated because they are considered as non-conforming or deviant within the social body (Girard, 1982) or group (Eagle & Newton, 1981). Finally, scapegoats tend to stir up and attract the persecution of their collective before finally being excluded.

These studies have also helped to specify the stages of scapegoating. Although the number of stages differs with the level of detail adopted by the authors, the trajectory of scapegoating remains more or less the same. The sequence is generally the following: a crisis emerges and disrupts the situation, a scapegoat is chosen, the scapegoat is sacrificed, and a new social order then emerges. The crisis is *undifferentiating,* according to Girard (1972, p. 24), because it "effaces or telescopes the hierarchical and functional differences," and this carries the risk that the violence will become "all against all," which would lead the collective to self-destruction (Girard, 1982), even if this remains only fantasized. If the cause for the crisis cannot be accessed or there are multiple causes, the scapegoat is selected to serve as an "accessible cause" (ibid., p. 28) for a group convinced that "a small number of individuals, or even one, can be extremely harmful to society as a whole, despite their relative weakness" (ibid., p. 27). Little by little, the crisis seems to take on a shape that reflects the potential victim's signs: someone who may have been invisible but who seems to be emerging as a 'consensual' victim, distant enough to be sacrificed without disturbing the social ties in place and close enough to provoke a catharsis. Emergence thus proceeds from the stigmatizing of someone's characteristics as so many signs of guilt. Instinctively, the choice is directed toward those individuals who are part of the social fabric though somewhat marginal, usually a member of a minority or any group that is poorly integrated or simply different (Girard, 1982). Blaming the victim satisfies the social need for responsibility and signals that the cause of the problems has been found. This selection step is followed by a stage of violence unleashed on the now designated scapegoat, who is partially excluded and isolated by the collective (Girard, 1982). During this stage, scapegoats systematically act as if they were actually guilty of the alleged wrongdoing (Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989). For example, they use the first person singular to defend themselves against accusations rather than placing the problem in its broader context, which tends to justify the sacrifice in progress (Gemmill, 1989). At the same time, the collective, while saying it disapproves of the scapegoat's behavior, encourages it through its own behavior (Eagle & Newton, 1981) and engages unanimously and unequivocally in persecuting this victim. Similarly, witnesses systematically join the persecuting collective for fear of being the next target (Girard, 1982). Finally, distancing evil and fear by circumscribing them in the person of the scapegoat signifies the new prohibitions to the group so that it can recover a sense of harmony. Sacrificing the scapegoat thus puts an end to the initial crisis until the advent of a new crisis (Girard, 1982).

Scapegoats in the organizational context

The archetype presented in previous section helps us to specify the functions, contours, and stages of scapegoating within the framework of a society or a small group. Yet, one might still ask how this archetype can be transposed to the organizational field. Organizations are a special case in that they predefine the contours of work collectives and assign productive powers, functions, and objectives to its members. This suggests that the scapegoating process is expressed and unfolds differently. Drawing on the seminal works cited above, several studies have analyzed the phenomenon in the organizational context: public administrations (Bonazzi, 1980, 1983),

management committees (Boecker, 1992), educational (Casanova, 2014b) and medical (Danniau & Meynckens-Fourez, 2015) settings, multinational companies (Daudigeos et al., 2014), and situations of managerial modernization (Uhalde, 2005). The characteristics of the scapegoating victim in organizations have thus been described.

Sacrificial victims in organizations can be functionally responsible without being factually guilty. Studies have frequently observed that organization members will unjustly accuse a member of being officially responsible for an incident, even though they are aware that this individual could not have foreseen the incident unfolding as it did or did not have sufficient powers of action to prevent it. However, the individual is at the very least accepted as a symbolically cathartic sacrifice (Bonazzi, 1980). In brief, although the persecuting group is aware of the victim's limited guilt, in their eyes he or she is sufficiently involved in the organizational crisis to be found credibly guilty (Daudigeos et al., 2014). Naturally, in an organizational context, this is a symbolic sacrifice, although it may result in a social death for the vilified and isolated victim.

The next stage of stigmatizing scapegoats concerns certain types of people typically seen in organizations. The literature has notably identified executives (Boecker, 1992; Bonazzi, 1983; Daudigeos et al., 2014), managers outside the classic career path, women working in male-dominated professions, those individuals who tend to take a critical stance regarding the realities of the job or who are physically or ideologically distant from the other organizations' members (Leymann, 1996; Lhuilier, 2002; Sigaut, 1990), and those with certain types of professional activities (e.g., managers, operators, and union representatives) and age groups (e.g., 'young' and 'old') (Uhalde, 2005). Conversely, scapegoats may represent an organization in need of reform whose members seek to distinguish themselves from the one who resists change (Boecker, 1992; Bonazzi, 1983).

Last, persecution in the workplace has unique features. While anthropologists and psychologists usually see persecutors as an emerging and autonomous whole, the boundaries of the organizational work collective are partially imposed in terms of the activity (shared work activity) and space-time (shared workspace and times). Moreover, the expression of organizational persecution can be specified. Although studies of workplace violence – addressing harassment, mobbing, and bullying (for a literature review, see Branch, Ramsey, & Barker, 2013) – generally take little account of its collective dimension (Pinto, 2014), Leymann's (1996) study is an exception. According to this author, 'mobbing' refers to the hostile words and actions (e.g., spreading rumors, taunting, sidelining, ignoring, discriminating, harassing, etc.) expressed or manifested over a long period of time by a group of people (Leymann, 1996). It is precisely the repetition that constitutes the violence, especially since, in an organizational setting, victim and persecutors see each other regularly because of the work. In addition, the victim's exclusion has been described by studies on workplace ostracism (social exclusion and sidelining), wherein the victim remains in the collective while being physically and/or socially excluded (Lhuilier, 2002), an example being the refusal to recognize the person when it would be appropriate to do so (e.g., not greeting him or her) (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013). However, these studies did not consider the scapegoat's function as a sacrificial surrogate.

The general and organization-specific characteristics of scapegoats are summarized in Table 1.

In an organizational context, the stages of scapegoating can also be specified. Studies have generally noted that the crisis triggering the process is "a qualitatively different moment compared to the normal operating conditions of a system" (Bonazzi, 1980, p. 303). It has been successively described as a crisis in the legitimacy of power (Bonazzi, 1983) or as an economic (Boecker, 1992), identity (Uhalde, 2005), or media (Daudigeos et al., 2014) crisis. In this context of organizational anomie (Uhalde, 2005), the actors are subject to external

Table 1. Archetypal characteristics of scapegoats in the organization

Characteristics	Associated notions and definitions
Sacrificial	**Innocently guilty:** The scapegoat is partially or completely innocent in the eyes of those affected by the crisis (Girard, 1982) but plays a sufficiently significant role for his or her guilt to be credible, according to the persecutors (Bonazzi, 1983; Daudigeos et al., 2014). **Sacrifice:** "The entire community turns against the sacrificial victim. The sacrifice dispels the seeds of dissension within the community by keeping the focus on the victim" (Girard, 1977, p. 18).
Stigmatized	**Stigma:** "An attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1975 [1963], p. 3). An element of 'personal identity' (what we are visibly, what emerges from us as signs) that upsets the 'virtual social identity' (the role that we were supposed to play in the public eye), disqualifying a person by revealing a 'real social identity' (which one then really becomes in the public eye) that is depreciated (Goffman, 1975 [1963]).
Persecuted and excluded	**Workplace mobbing:** "A chain of hostile words and actions repeated over a fairly long period and expressed or manifested by one or more people toward a third person" (Leymann, 1996, p. 27). **Workplace ostracism:** when "an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so" (Robinson et al., 2013, p. 206).

injunctions to constrain their actions at the expense of the rules organizing the social body (Reynaud, 1997[1989]). We therefore examined scapegoating as a way for organizational actors to recover power as they cope with the indeterminacy imposed by a crisis. According to this reading, the selection and persecution of the scapegoat can be read, respectively, as personifying and confronting the crisis at the moment when actors are looking for room for maneuver in the organization.

Furthermore, the scapegoat and persecutors in an organization are supervised by managers, who may well witness the persecution (when the scapegoat is part of management, the witnesses are the higher-ups). According to the literature, these managers systematically incriminate the scapegoat as well for fear of becoming the next target (Bonazzi, 1980; Casanova, 2014b; Leymann, 1996), thus adding to the violence. Bonazzi (1980) also notes that scapegoats are inevitably sanctioned by management. In this way, management tacitly approves the collective retribution and thus eliminates any possibility of the victim being rescued.

Table 2 illustrates the different stages of scapegoating in an organizational context based on the literature, particularly drawing on the seminal work of Girard (1982).

Yet several points require greater exploration when scapegoating occurs in an organization.

Although the seminal works have described the reactions of the scapegoating protagonists as predefined and invariable, leading inexorably to the persecution and exclusion of the victim, the state of knowledge about related phenomena of workplace violence and exclusion (stigma, collective violence, ostracism, and sidelining) suggests that many actions can be implemented by protagonists, in line with the cognitive-emotional approach of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Cusin and Maymo (2016) thus observed that the protagonists had a certain latitude in decisions about stigmatization. The targets of collective violence and ostracism, for example, can put into place strategies for fight or flight (Grima & Muller, 2006; Zapf & Gross, 2001) and avoidance or denial (Dehue, Bolman, Völlink, & Pouwelse, 2012), which are partly dependent on their social support systems and opportunities for escape (Grima & Muller, 2006; Lhuilier, 2002). Notably, some manage to return to their initial status within the collective (Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2012).

Studies on how the victims of violence and exclusion react have also raised questions about the inevitability of scapegoating, also noting a variety of actions on the part of all the protagonists. However, we have little understanding of how these actions interfere during the scapegoating process and shape its course. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the process in the organizational context to determine the underlying modes of regulation. Regulation, understood in the social sense ('management of the phenomenon by the organizational actors'), refers to the way actors behave and interact to negotiate the social order in order to manage conflict (Reynaud, 1997[1989]). The combination of protagonists' actions should therefore lead to different forms of regulation, which we sought to identify and characterize.

Methodology

This research was intended to be comprehensive, qualitative, and interpretative (Sandberg, 2005). It was based on the processual analysis of seven cases of scapegoating in a state-owned enterprise called FERR. The research design is presented in the following sections.

The field of study

In the mid-1990s, FERR, a state-owned rail freight enterprise, shifted to New Public Management (NPM) (Pichault & Schoenaers, 2012), as have most public organizations (Kuipers et al., 2014). However, NMP has made it more likely that workplace violence will emerge (Abord de Chatillon & Desmarais, 2012). Within the company, this change precipitated profound organizational, strategic, structural, technological, and cultural transformations. At the strategic level, the 'customer orientation' initiated in the late 1990s marked the transition from integrated management to 'management by product'. Structurally, production was reorganized by activity, resulting in the merger of previously separate establishments. Technological changes resulted in the reconfiguration of workspaces and the transfer of agents to computerized referral stations. Finally, a technical culture was gradually replaced by a more commercial culture. These changes, prescribed, impersonal (Miossec, 2011), and directed (Autissier, Vandangeon, & Vas, 2010), gave rise to new operating rules and

Table 2. The stages of the scapegoating process in an organizational context

Initial situation	Crisis emerges	Scapegoat chosen	Scapegoat sacrificed	New social order
The crisis is invisible, and distinctive signs are not stigmatized. The collective lives in harmony.	The crisis threatens the established order and sets members of the collective against each other. Victimizing signs begin to emerge.	The collective spots a consensual victim. The victim is **stigmatized** and found guilty.	The collective **persecutes** the victim, who cannot defend himself/herself and is held in a socially 'in-between' space. Management rallies around the persecutors.	The threat has been personified and is held at a distance. The collective lives in temporary harmony due to the scapegoat's **sacrifice**.

profoundly modified the organization's cultural framework (Sainsaulieu, Francfort, Osty, & Uhalde, 1995). In addition, NPM has led to a weakening of social regulations and produced an uncertain and worrisome climate for many employees who were often deeply invested in their work and the organization (Rondeau, 2008). Indeed, this climate has even been described as reflecting a collective experience of crisis (Uhalde, 2016) in the sense described by Girard (1982). FERR had initially been chosen to study workplace socialization and inclusion/exclusion, with two separate surveys of a targeted sample (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of about 50 employees exposed to these organizational changes. Yet it also proved to be a breeding ground for another phenomenon: scapegoating.

A multiple-case study

Our 'amplified' analysis (Chabaud & Germain, 2006), which combined our initial data set (related to workplace socialization and inclusion/exclusion) and a supra-analysis (Heaton, 2004) based on this new theoretical reading, enabled us to identify several cases of scapegoating. We therefore chose to perform a multiple-case study (Yin, 2009) in order to superimpose the findings and gain new insights into this little explored phenomenon. By doing so, we were able to limit the risk of equifinality that all qualitative research entails (Dumez, 2013) and circumvent some of the difficulties of accessing the phenomena of scapegoating (Desmond & Kavanagh, 2003; Gemmill, 1989; Girard, 1982), which is often denied and thus is difficult to question directly.

Despite the difficulties of our undertaking (Langley, 1999), seven distinct cases of scapegoating (referred to from A to G) were distinguished within five separate work collectives. Each case was distinct (Moriceau, 2003) but showed typical features (Ayerbe & Missonier, 2007) of scapegoating as identified in the literature: a victim who was sacrificed because he or she was found guilty of a change she was not responsible for despite having little power of action over it (e.g., a new woman driver symbolizing, against her will, the decline of the masculine culture of the driving profession and its feminization); stigmatized by the collective, which indicates that some of the victim's attributes were emblematic of the change taking place (e.g., stigmatizing the 'private language' of an executive from a prestigious school, symbolizing the company's privatization); and persecuted because he or she was systematically abused and excluded by this collective (e.g., shunning, collective, and systematized verbal violence).

Collected data

As part of the initial studies on workplace socialization and inclusion/exclusion, data were collected from several sources (e.g., interviews, observations, and secondary data), but the main method of collection was the semistructured interview. Individuals were asked about changes in their work and within their collective, as well as their daily problems with adjusting to the changes.

Among the 13 collectives we studied, five harbored cases of scapegoating clearly identifiable from the retrospective accounts provided by the collective members. In all, seven cases of scapegoating were identified, two collectives (1 and 5) having experienced the phenomenon twice. These collectives varied in size, ranging from 10 to several dozens of people, depending on the local organizational context and the working hours (day/night).

The cases concerned 17 of the people encountered for the initial data set. Most were interviewed twice (6–13 months apart) between 2012 and 2015, using a diachronic approach. This sample was made up of local workers and managers performing in a variety of job positions (e.g., schedulers, signal system technicians, brake operators, and train drivers).

The characteristics of the sample and the seven cases are detailed in Table 3.

Legend: (1) Names: D, director of unit; M, Frontline manager; O, operator. Those whose names appear with an * were mentioned by the interviewees but were not interviewed. (2) Protagonists: S, scapegoat; P, persecutor; W, witness.

During the interviews, the dynamics of the scapegoating were recounted either retrospectively (in full at a single collection point) or as the process progressed (in the form of key steps at each of the two collection points). The intersection of lived experiences and the researchers' viewpoints helped us to intersubjectively distinguish (Suddaby, 2006) each scapegoat's experience from that of the persecutors and witnesses. Three of the cases were reported by the three protagonists (A, C, and D) and the other four by two of them (E, F, G, and B) due to the space–time restrictions of the study (e.g., the victim obtained a transfer). However, their nature was confirmed during informal discussions with several collective members. The interviews lasted for 90 min on average and were fully recorded and transcribed. The many informal and fortuitous discussions before and after the interviews often consisted of 'frank' talk about these situations, which was included in the data analysis.

These data were supplemented by observations by one of the researchers at the time of the initial investigation. Within the framework of an action research project, she had joined a working group of human resources employees and union representatives and was responsible for helping the members to get a handle on the changes in job descriptions and issues of inclusion/exclusion within the various work collectives. On this occasion, the interactions were documented, and the key informants were interviewed (e.g., senior executives, station managers, a human resources manager, local managers, and train drivers). The interviewees provided

Table 3. Characteristics of the sample and cases

Case	Team and context	Name	Protagonist	Job	Date, type, and volume of collected data
A	**Collective 1** Collective of signalers for switching train tracks.	M1	B	Firstline manager	09/2012–04/2013 Interviews (M1, O1a,b)
		O1a	P	Signaler	Interview with the manager of rail traffic (key
		O1b	T	Signaler	informant)
B	Computerized switching junction in South-East France. Working alone, collective break room.	D1*	B	Manager	Internal documentation on job developments
		O1a	P	Signaler	(10,000 words)
		O1b	T	Signaler	
C	**Collective 2** Collective of agents who organize train departures from the platform. Stable teamwork in the Paris region.	M2	B	Firstline manager	10/2012–04/2013 Interviews (M2, O2a,b)
		O2b	P	Railroad operator	Observations
					Excerpts of internal communication campaigns on job developments
		O2a	T	Railroad operator	(6,000 words)
D	**Collective 3** Collective of agents who carry out movements of rails under repair. Highly unionized. Working in rotating teams (2 × 8) in the Paris region.	M3a	B	Firstline manager	06/2012–03/2013 Interviews (M3a,b,c, O3a,b,c)
		M3c	P	Firstline manager	Interviews with the head of the establishment (key
		O3a	P	Railroad operator	informant)
		O3b	P	Railroad operator	Interview with a human resources manager
		M3b	T	Firstline manager	(key informant)
		O3c	T	Railroad operator	Observations (2 days of learning about jobs) (18,000 words)
E	**Collective 4** Collective of highly unionized train drivers. Solitary and mobile work. National scope.	O4a	B	Driver	05/2015 Interviews (O4a,b)
		M4*	T	Firstline manager	Interviews with other drivers and firstline managers (key informants)
		O4b	T	Driver	Excerpts of external communication campaigns and meeting minutes (10,000 words)
F	**Collective 5** Collective of agents who organize train departures from the platform. Highly unionized. Stable teamwork. Lyon region	O5b*	B	Signaler	10/2012–04/2013 Interviews (M5, O5a,c)
		O5c	P	Signaler	Internal documentation on job developments
		M5	T	Frontline manager	(7,000 words)
		O5a	T	Signaler	
G		O5a	B	Signaler	
		O5d*	P	Signaler	
		M5	T	Frontline manager	

valuable information on the contexts of crisis, and all interviews were also recorded and transcribed in full. Finally, this active presence in the field made it possible to collect secondary data that were later reused (excerpts from meeting minutes and communication campaigns on railway careers, and internal documents on the future of professions) and strengthened the researcher's legitimacy in the stations and with local teams.

Data analysis

Data analysis consisted of specifying how the scapegoating process unfolded over time according to two of Langley's (1999) processual perspectives. These proved to be particularly relevant for understanding the logic that structured the temporal phenomena (Van de Ven, 1992) and drawing out the richness, dynamism, and complexity of the data (Langley, 1999). Of the 600 pages of transcription, only the data shedding light on scapegoating were coded, which amounted to one-third of the material originally collected, that is, 200 pages of transcribed interviews and secondary data.

Two steps of analysis were necessary. In the first step, we looked for breaks in the linearity of the conventionally described scapegoating process. Known as temporal bracketing, this strategy of processual data analysis (Langley, 1999) identified the stages in the process and their content. Five time-ordered stages emerged for each scapegoat case. The breaks in linearity appeared in the fourth stage and resulted from the interactions of the scapegoats' and management actions in response to the collective persecution. Double

coding provided a systematic reformulation of the divergent interpretations until consensus was reached on the identification of each stage. Table A in the Appendix illustrates the contents of the stages.

In the second step, we constructed a detailed chronological account of each case. This 'narrative strategy' (Langley, 1999) made it possible to format the raw material (primary and secondary data) by reordering it in the form of vignettes. The vignettes, essentially narratives written by the researchers, were certainly subjective and retrospective versions of the scapegoating situations, but they were similar enough to the actual sequence of events to be considered representative and emblematic (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Although the facts as reported by the interviewees converged, the interpretations of the protagonists (scapegoat, persecutor, and witness) often diverged. For example, the persecutors justified excluding the victim by claiming that he or she was responsible for the perceived job-related and cultural crisis, and they tended to minimize the acts of violence. When this violence was corroborated by several interviewees, we considered it plausible and to be explored.

The data interpretation and all the coding steps were carried out by the two authors. The data analysis was modified (identification of the stages in chronological order, underlying mechanisms, and various outcomes) as the authors gained an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. An extract from the data coding is presented in Table A of the Appendix.

Results

The results are presented in two parts: the first describes the stages of the scapegoating process, and the second part highlights the protagonists' actions and the four typical outcomes.

The five stages of scapegoating

The comparison of scapegoating situations showed similarities in the first three stages of the process and differences in the fourth and fifth stages.

Stages 1, 2, and 3: Emergence of the crisis, selection, and sacrifice of the scapegoat

All the situations began with a change that the collective perceived as threatening. This change had profoundly transformed the collective's job description and culture, causing a wave of uncertainties and worries. The uncertainties concerned the quality of work, the commitment to the company and the collective, attitudes, behaviors, and language, all of which were perceived as being legitimate or illegitimate.

Those who came to be considered the symbols of change were indeed the personification of threat and its causes, even though all this remained obscure or inaccessible to the collective. The scapegoats' attributes resonated with the collective fears. Certain individuals became scapegoats because of an intrinsic stigma: this was the case for women drivers who joined a team of mostly men highly resistant to the feminization of their profession (case E). Other scapegoats were chosen for an extrinsic stigma. These included the new generation of local managers who had graduated from business schools and behaved in ways that reflected a managerial culture closer to that of the private sector, in clear contrast with the vision that the employees had of their management and company (cases A, B, C, and D). Young newcomers to teams of 'old-timers' were also stigmatized because of their 'zealous' attitude about the prescribed work rules and management (cases F and G).

Once scapegoats were selected, the collectives proceeded to violently attack them. They taunted them, hindered them in their work, disqualified, provoked or ignored them, verbally assaulted them, spread rumors, and socially and physically excluded them. At this stage, the scapegoats were designated, persecuted, and held apart by their respective collectives in each of the situations.

Stage 4: Reactions to the sacrifice – The actions of the scapegoat and management

At this stage, the actions of the scapegoat and management differentiated the outcomes.

The scapegoats displayed two defensive actions as they faced adversity. Some chose to flee, while others fought back. Flight often manifested as avoiding the collective on a daily basis. The scapegoat thus self-excluded from the group while remaining part of it (cases E and F). At its most extreme, flight could cause the scapegoat to leave the collective, thus ending the persecution (cases A and B). Fighting back was an attempt to address the situation. It could be directed against the persecution or the stigma. When it was directed against the persecution, the scapegoat denounced what was happening and tried to gain the support of management (case G). When it was against the stigma, the scapegoat worked to conform to the codes and informal rules of the persecuting group (cases C and D).

Management ($N + 1$ of the scapegoat and persecuting collective or higher levels) generally took one of three types of action. It could support the scapegoat against the persecuting collective by clearly expressing dissatisfaction and seeking sanctions against the collective members (case G). It could also support the persecuting group against the scapegoat in three ways: by explicitly incriminating the scapegoat (cases B and E), ignoring the scapegoat (case A), or

attributing to him/her at least some of responsibility for the situation (case F). Finally, management could take intermediate action by partially supporting the scapegoat psychologically yet without explicitly opposing the persecuting group (cases C and D).

Stage 5: New social order – The reconfiguration of the collective

Following the actions of the scapegoat and management in response to the scapegoating, the collectives reacted in three ways. They could commit as a whole and for the long term to continuing the persecution (cases A, B, E, and F), but some (case G) or most of the collective members (cases C and D) could also choose to end the persecution.

It thus appeared that the persecuting collectives reacted to the actions of the scapegoat and management, who acted as either obstacles or invitations to continue the persecution. It should be noted that when the scapegoat was submissive about being persecuted (flight) and management gave approval (support of the collective's action), the collective tended to pursue its course (cases A, B, E, and F). The scapegoating process was strengthened, and the outcome was the victim's isolation (cases E and F) or expulsion (cases A and B). In cases of isolation, all the protagonists participated deliberately or by default in persecuting the scapegoat, including the scapegoat who self-excluded. The situation was similar in cases of expulsion, except when the scapegoat seized (or was forced to seize) an opportunity to escape by transferring out. The collective was then deprived of an accessible victim. As the threats and worries were ever present, it then became possible that another ideal victim would emerge.

Conversely, when the scapegoat fought back (fight) and management opposed the sacrifice even partially (full support/ambivalent support for the scapegoat), the collective's persecution was at least somewhat weakened (cases C, D, and G), which had one of two remarkable results: the collective split into two coexisting camps (case G) or the scapegoat was brought back into the fold by most of the members (cases C and D). In the case of cohabitation, the scapegoat was first supported by management and then by newcomers carrying the same stigma, and these proved to be precious allies. The collective then split into two opposing camps. The original group of former persecutors continued to resist change, and the new group of scapegoats was certainly rejected by the first group but they were nevertheless integrated and could accept and apply the changes in their work. In the case of assimilation, the scapegoat's fight against the stigma and the partial support of management ultimately led to the scapegoat being accepted back into the collective. The scapegoat thus managed to stop the

persecution, and the persecutors felt that they had symbolically fended off the threatened change by removing indirectly the stigma.

These two opposite modes of resolution stood out in the scapegoating process: the first catalyzed and strengthened the phenomenon (isolation and expulsion), whereas the second channeled and hindered it (cohabitation and assimilation). The following section details these dynamics by illustrating them through the stories of Marianne, Sacha, Michael, and Lucie, each having experienced a different outcome.

Four scapegoats and their actions

We present four vignettes that provide condensed descriptions of the four typical outcomes of scapegoating that emerged from our data. Cases B, D, E, and G were selected because they illustrate the diversity of the changes and types of scapegoats. In vignette 1, Marianne's outcome was isolation. Vignette 2 presents the story of Sacha, who was ultimately expelled from the collective. Michael was finally reintegrated into the collective, as recounted in vignette 3, and vignette 4 presents the story of Lucie, whose outcome resulted in the cohabitation of two collectives.

Vignette 1: Marianne's isolation (case E)

Eighty percent of the employees of FERR are men, and no 'agent' of any type has been a woman. The culture of professional drivers was always strong, with masculine norms that have been profoundly challenged by the recent feminization of its workforce. The profession itself is being transformed, as physical strength is no longer a perquisite, and work can now be interrupted for parental obligations and family life (e.g., part-time work and parental leave). "The arrival of women has upset this cultural norm" (excerpt from a meeting, background and diversity). At driving school, Marianne's instructor did not fail to tell her that "we don't take women at this school, only normal people. Definition of normal people: men without children." (O4a). However, like the drivers who would welcome her in rooms filled with posters of naked women (key informant), she was not prepared for the difficulties of this encounter. She had to endure sexist humor and provocations from these men, who seemed to have found in her an ideal victim. When she was refused a monitor of her work for fear that she would "wow him," she had to "strongly insist" that her superiors and peers give her the same training that her male colleagues had been given. She was dismissed as a professional by rumors that she had done well on her exams by giving sexual favors. "Being a better driver than a man is not normal, so I had to suck it all up in order to get the grade," she said. Marianne was constantly reminded of the stigma of being a woman: "I can't talk to them about

work because we always come back to the fact that I'm a woman." This persecution was not, however, part of the traditional rite of passage, as she explained "in this job, they call the newcomers 'asshole students' and they have to prove themselves with the worst trains and crazy working hours for about two years before they're accepted. But fifteen years later, I still have to prove myself, I'm always proving that I can do the job." Her male and female colleagues, like the union representatives, were rather insensitive to the issue of feminization, having chosen their side and now preferring to close their eyes. Management, particularly her last manager, whom she describes as "clearly misogynistic," added to the incessant fault-finding with degrading remarks. "He [the frontline manager] said to me: a woman shouldn't drive trains, she can't raise her children properly if she's a driver, and my wife is at home to raise my kids; you're one of the most worthless drivers in France." She became increasingly rejected, but it was difficult to leave this position for another. She would have liked to be an instructor, but her part-time job closed many possibilities for a transfer. She isolated herself in her cabin, which modestly protected her from her colleagues' remarks, because she can no longer stand the driving agents […]. "Being alone in the cabin limits the impact of their remarks." She no longer frequents the break rooms and when mandatory training days put her in contact with her colleagues, she stoically "takes [their remarks] on the chin." Ultimately, she complies with her role as scapegoat by participating in her isolation. The change was thus circumscribed and held at a distance, and life in the collective was able to resume its normal course.

Table 4 provides a summary of cases E and F, which illustrate the isolation of a scapegoat. This isolation consisted in avoiding the collective and thus becoming isolated. Case F, not described here, concerns a newcomer, bringing a new way of conceiving the job and dealing with management and union commitment, to a group of old-timers attached to the 'traditional' operating modes.

Vignette 2: Sacha's expulsion (case B)

The creation of computerized switching stations (CSS) caused considerable reluctance among the switching agents. They were forced to leave their stations to go to the CSS and feared being professionally downgraded: "they no longer hesitate about putting someone on the sidelines and letting them sink. I saw it when the CSS was being put into place. There was the best agent in the station, a genius. I'm not going to say that he was left to die but not far from it. He almost ended up a psychiatric case. He was 52 years old. He didn't want to work from the screens, and he needed to really see for himself. So instead of trying to change his mind, they put him… When there's work on the tracks, there's a guy with a horn who lets us know a train is coming. They're often disabled or drunks. He was put there to make sure he understood." (O1a). This was the context when Sacha arrived. He was appointed head of one of the first CSSs in the territory, made up of a collective of old-timers sent from the stations they had been forced to leave. A graduate of a very good engineering school but without railway experience, he quickly came to embody FERR's NPM in the eyes of the others. To his agents, Sacha was a strategist, an opportunist, interested neither in the switching profession nor in the team he managed. "That engineering school, they all leave with that kind of blind ambition. They know how to sell themselves. They know how to position themselves. But they don't give a damn about the human factor. […] He doesn't know anything [about the jobs in the sector]," (O1a) claims one of his agents. In line with the stigma he carried, his behavior called into question issues of autonomy, room for maneuver, social rituals, and the local arrangements of signalers in favor of control and the individualization of work: "[e]verything's controlled, recorded, the slightest click, the slightest touch on the keyboard. No more freedom! […] Now everyone sits in front of the twelve screens" (O1a). The collective as a whole began to engage in openly hostile behavior toward the person now described as 'Big Brother.' "It was building up for one day, two days and on the third, it all fell apart [the manager was insulted and

Table 4. The isolation of the scapegoat (cases E and F)

	Crisis emerges	Scapegoat chosen	Scapegoat sacrificed	Actions of protagonists	New social order
Case E	Feminization of driving jobs: questioning a masculine culture, the need for physical strength in the job, the legitimacy of sexist humor	A very feminine driver who does not conform to the masculine culture	Derogatory remarks, provocation, professional disqualification, social isolation	Continued persecution by the collective Management gives support to the collective Scapegoat avoids the collective	Isolation of the scapegoat
Case F	Rejuvenation of the work collective: questioning the rites and practices of the 'old-timers', such as local arrangements, union commitment, defiance of management and criteria for *work well done* according to new standards of safety and productivity	A young newcomer who doesn't fit with the rites and practices of the old-timers	Taunts, social isolation, professional disqualification		

threatened]. His face was all red with tears running down it" (O1a). A union representative brought this situation to the attention of senior management, who, fearing a work stop by this highly unionized collective with considerable power to disrupt the workflow, took the side of the persecutors. One of them contacted Sacha directly and asked him to change his behavior to avoid an explosion. "He [the senior manager of FERR] called him [D1]. He told him he had to change immediately because it was going to be a disaster" (O1a). When the management rallied to the side of the persecuting collective, Sacha experienced it as the blow of a 'sledgehammer'. He took the opportunity to leave as soon as a possibility for transfer came up. The social climate was again peaceful, Sacha's management superiors were protected, and the collective was able, at least for a while longer, to put off the professional and cultural changes that Sacha had represented, now 'neutralized'.

Table 5 summarizes cases A and B, which illustrate the expulsion of a scapegoat. Case A, not presented here, describes a manager, a 'former agent', who, having risen to a 'managerial' position, adopted the codes of managerialization, thus calling into question the collective's 'traditional' modes of operation. Seeing in him a 'traitor', the collective began to persecute him.

Vignette 3: Michael's assimilation (case D)

NPM and the spread of a managerial culture at FERR were partly supported by the arrival of managers from the private sector. The recruitment of managers with no railway experience completely opposed the traditional career path and was strongly criticized: "[…] These young graduates have really upended the management that was in place" (human resources manager; key informant). Michael indeed presented a clear contrast with the usual figure of someone starting at the bottom and working their way up, step by step. Young, with no field experience and recruited directly from a private company, he was placed in charge of a highly unionized team of experienced agents. These 'old pros' took a dim view of Michael's arrival. As he tried to transform the profession – by instituting

more stringent safety rules and more control systems, all the while reducing the workforce – and challenged the local collectivist culture – by individualizing the work and limiting solidarity and collective time – he quickly came to be perceived as a threat. "There's not the same friendly feeling as before. That's because of how we're being managed […] They took it all apart. So that we'd no longer be united, with less in common, for strikes, etc." "After a while, the manager became a judge and 'cop' […] It's becoming like the private sector" (O3a), said an agent regretfully. Michael was stigmatized for his managerial language, which did not fit well with railway jargon. His language reflected his ignorance of the profession and therefore his lack of legitimacy for his position. In retrospect, Michael said: "[t]hey had a bad idea about me. Also, I came from the private sector. I had a way of speaking that didn't fit at all [with the job]" (M3a). Disliked, he was successively denigrated, reviled, and ignored. Insulted as a 'jerk' and a 'good for nothing', his agents deliberately broke the safety rules in front of him, signaling both their disrespect for him and their disagreement with the transformations. When Michael asked one of his persecutors why he had defaced the paper that he had just asked him to sign, his answer reflected the image that Michael despite himself gave the team: "[i]t's no big deal. It's physical. I just don't like you." Despite the opportunities for transfer available to him as a manager and the discreet support of management, which refused to sanction the persecutors for fear of causing a collective work stoppage – "The director of the operational unit is there, but it's blocked from above, by the unions" (M3a) – Michael refused to accept the situation. With the support of his peers, he tried to understand his persecutors' viewpoint and began to work on himself. He fought against his stigma by learning the ways of the railway profession and thus gradually conformed to the codes and rules of the persecuting group. His efforts were not in vain as he managed to halt the scapegoating process and earned the respect of most of his agents, who finally accepted him. "I think that's why they respect me more than before. […] They see that I am not a puppet, that when I speak about safety, I really know what I'm talking about. Even though I don't have the experience they have, they know

Table 5. The expulsion of the scapegoat (cases A and B)

	Crisis emerges	Scapegoat chosen	Scapegoat sacrificed	Actions of protagonists	New social order
Case A	Managerialization: questioning the social rites of the old-timers, individualized work, increased control and traceability.	A manager who had adopted the codes of managerialization	Taunts, short-circuiting, professional disqualification	Collective continues the persecution Management gives support to the collective Scapegoat leaves	Expulsion of the scapegoat
Case B		A young manager from an excellent school with no railway experience ends up in PAI with little knowledge of the railway culture	Derogatory remarks, insults, threats		

very well that I know the regulations." "[Before] the guys were making safety mistakes in front of me. Today when I show up, even though I know very well that behind my back they might get hurt, they make the effort to do things the right way in front of me." By shaking off part of the change he embodied, Michael was able to ultimately negotiate his way into the collective, and the collective was able to hold off the arrival of a managerial culture that it did not want to see established.

Table 6 provides a summary of cases C and D, which both illustrating the assimilation of a scapegoat. Case C, not explained here, concerns a manager, a former agent, who would have liked to adopt the codes of managerialization to supervise a group of old-timers. Like case D, he ended up fighting against his stigma to be accepted by the collective.

Vignette 4: The cohabitation of Lucie and her persecutors (case G)

Lucie is part of 'the younger generation'. After working in the private sector, she was trained in the company's new work procedures and sensitized to issues of productivity and efficiency, which were the central arguments for the transformation in the official discourse. She embodied management's vision for the company but was rejected by the group of older agents she had joined as a departure agent. Upon arriving, Lucie criticized the deviance of certain entrenched social rites, like using outdated procedures, crossing the tracks and drinking alcohol when managers were not around. "On Wednesday, there were two who could barely stand. The newcomers thought this wasn't normal and they were right. They were shocked. When they came back down, you could smell it. The guy was still leaning against a post" (M5). In addition, she refused to join a union or go out on strike and generally took the side of her manager, unlike her colleagues. Very quickly, she embodied for this crew a challenge to long-established ways of working, the disintegration of collective solidarity around social struggles, and a willingness to reexamine the systematic opposition to management. "It's like *everything from management is bad*. The slightest gesture, the smallest gift certificate, is an

insult. It's a bit excessive and I blame the unions for that. They threaten first, they argue, they strike, before any discussion" (O5a). As one informant pointed out, the agents were threatened by the arrival of this generation because "what they've learned all their lives has become obsolete. Young people see opportunities" (Local manager; key informant). Yet management appreciated Lucie's behavior. "They [young people] have a different way of looking at work. They really come here to work. When they have to work hard, they do. They apply the regulations. They don't argue" (M5). Lucie's stigma became readily apparent because "the new people, as soon as they arrive and have their grade, they're labeled" (O5a). She did not understand what she was being blamed for and suffered from the hostilities of her colleagues, who laughed at her, disparaged her, and humiliated her in public. "I was literally told off in public. […] I tried to figure out what I had done wrong to be yelled at like that if the mistake wasn't mine" (O5a). Deeply affected, Lucie could not afford to leave her post and continued to suffer. She then sought help from her manager by writing a letter to inform him of her persecution. He said: "When I found out, I called her. She was crying" (M5). Sensitive to Lucie's psychosocial distress, he tried to protect her. "[I tell them] that if they are having a hard time, they shouldn't hesitate to talk to me about it, that no one should impose anything on them" (M5). Lucie was motivated by this support. Some time later, new agents with the same stigma joined her crew and her cause: "three people arrived after me, and I get along with them very well […] They sort of have the same motivation. We want to represent our company, do things well, be above reproach" (O5a). Two sub-crews were thus formed: one being Lucie's persecutors, whom she remained wary of, and the other being the young people, whom she was now part of. Change was therefore partly integrated into this collective, with persecutors and scapegoats having equal strength and no other choice but to live together.

Table 7 summarizes case G, which illustrates the coexistence of the scapegoat.

In conclusion, the vignettes presented indicate that the outcomes of scapegoating depend on the articulation of the

Table 6. The assimilation of the scapegoat (cases C and D)

	Crisis emerges	Scapegoat chosen	Scapegoat sacrificed	Actions of protagonists	New social order
Case C	Managerialization: questioning the social rites of the old-timers, individualized work, increased control and traceability.	A manager who had adopted the codes of managerialization	Derogatory remarks, provocation, professional disqualification, social isolation	Collective persecutes, then most members assimilate the scapegoat	Assimilation of the scapegoat
Case D		A young manager from the private sector with no railway experience and little knowledge of the railway culture		Management gives ambivalent support to the collective. Scapegoat fights the stigma	

Table 7. Cohabitation of the scapegoat (case G)

	Crisis emerges	Scapegoat chosen	Scapegoat sacrificed	Actions of protagonists	New social order
Case G	Rejuvenation of the job collective: questioning the rites and practices of the old-timers, such as local arrangements, union commitment, defiance of management, and criteria of work well done according to new standards for safety and productivity.	A young newcomer who does not conform to the rites and practices of the old-timers	Insults, social isolation, taunts	Collective persecutes and then reintegrates the scapegoat Management gives support to the scapegoat Scapegoat fights the persecution	Cohabitation of two collectives

Table 8. The four outcomes of scapegoating, their modes of regulation, and the underlying actions

	Mode of regulation	Catalyzes the scapegoating		Channels the scapegoating	
	Outcome of the process	Isolation of the scapegoat	Expulsion of the scapegoat	Cohabitation of two collectives	Assimilation of the scapegoat
Actions of the protagonists	Actions of the scapegoat	Avoidance	Departure	Fight against persecution	Fight against stigma
	Actions of management	Support of collective	Support of collective	Support of scapegoat	Ambivalent support
	Actions of the collective	Sustained persecution	Sustained persecution	Persecution then assimilation by a part of the collective	Persecution then assimilation by most of the collective
Cases/Scapegoat (Table 3)		*Case F/O5b** *Case E/O4A*	*Case A/M1* *Case B/D1**	*Case G/O5a*	*Case C/M2* *Case D/M3a*

protagonists' actions. Two modes of regulation were identified: the first mode catalyzed the persecution and led to the isolation or expulsion of the scapegoat, whereas the second mode channeled it and led to cohabitation or assimilation.

The mode of regulation that catalyzed the scapegoating resulted in the collective's ongoing persecution, management's support of the collective, and the scapegoat's avoidance or departure. Depending on the case, the protagonists' actions appeared in different orders. In case F, for example, management's support of the collective inevitably led to the scapegoat's intention to leave because his persecution was strengthened. Conversely, in case E, it was difficult to distinguish the succession of actions over time. The ongoing persecution of the scapegoat seemed to result from both management's support of the collective and the scapegoat's withdrawal.

The mode of regulation that channeled the scapegoating systematically appeared at the scapegoat's initiative, with fighting back either against the stigma or against the persecution. In case G, informing management of the persecution generated support. Management, wanting to change the collective's practices, decided to renew the workforce by bringing in

non-persecuting individuals. In case D, the scapegoat's fight against his stigma helped put an end to the persecution, despite management's discreet and ambivalent support.

Table 8 presents these outcomes, the underlying actions, and the two modes of regulation that emerged.

Discussion and research agenda

In this section, we discuss the contributions of this research and the new perspectives that this exploratory study opens to better understand scapegoating and how it is regulated.

Emerging contexts and types of scapegoat

Our results suggest the interest of a more situated reading of scapegoating in organizations as opposed to earlier works, which have generally worked within a framework of categories to describe the various characteristics without exploring the contexts in which they emerge. We thus offer three lines of research to explore in detail both the contexts of emergence and the types of scapegoat.

Organizational contexts that produce scapegoats

First, our results support the idea that periods of crisis tend to generate scapegoats (Boecker, 1992; Bonazzi, 1983; Casanova, 2014b; Daudigeos et al., 2014; Girard, 1982). This study explored the research avenue suggested by Desmond and Kavanagh (2003) and focused on contexts of organizational change. Our findings agree with those of other researchers and show that change, when it upends the rules of a profession, the culture of a collective (Uhalde, 2005), and the collectively shared organizational myths (Danniau & Meynckens-Fourez, 2015), can lead to the exclusion of those who are perceived as no longer adhering to 'the way things have always been' or as willing to embrace change – and thus whose place is not firmly fixed. It therefore seems that in times of change, scapegoating is a way of resolving a conflict that management has not addressed (Daudigeos et al., 2014). However, our scapegoating situations not only revealed the general process of scapegoating but also showed that the situations were embedded in specific interpersonal, professional, organizational, and transformational contexts.

Change obviously can provide a fertile ground for scapegoating, but little is known about the actual conditions for its emergence. Although the literature indicates that situations of uncertainty and worry produce it (Girard, 1982; Uhalde, 2005), it seems surprising that of the 13 collectives in our data set undergoing organizational change, only five produced scapegoats, and two of them doing so twice. We therefore extended our initial analysis and performed a more in-depth study of some of the contexts that seem to trigger scapegoating (e.g., corporate restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, technological change, modification of power relations, etc.) to determine which conditions favor it and which do not.

We did not exclude the possibility that other contexts that generate uncertainty and concern may also favor its emergence and we therefore intend to focus on this question more fully in the future.

Scapegoats who reflect the organizational contexts of their emergence

Second, in this study, we were able to associate specific contexts of change with specific types of scapegoat. Those that we identified fit into categories described in the literature (Boecker, 1992; Bonazzi, 1983; Gemmill, 1989; Lhuilier, 2002; Uhalde, 2005). But more importantly, it appeared that stigmatization was a social product of the interactions between the target and the collective in a given context (Goffman, 1975 [1963]). Thus, the results suggest that the scapegoats only become so because their features associated them with perceived threats. Those we

identified were newcomers, still poorly integrated and carrying stigmas that were intrinsic (linked to the scapegoat's features) or extrinsic (linked to the scapegoat's behavior). Specifically, all were women arriving in collectives with a very masculine culture, young recruits joining 'old-timer' work crews, or NPM-oriented managers who found themselves in collectives deeply attached to the traditional notion of public service.

It should be noted that these individuals embodied issues that are well known to organizations, that have indeed prompted their own fields of research, and that would undoubtedly benefit from an analysis of how they develop over time. For example, the feminization of predominantly male professions is now more frequently seen (e.g., engineering, firefighting, and policework) (Malochet, 2007) and, as Pruvost (2008) noted, the nondifferentiation of gender in a virile culture emerges from earlier stages of the defeminization and virilization of women. When physical and mental strength are elevated to the rank of professional skills, more fragile women are disqualified, especially when they refuse the virilization imposed on them. Likewise, organizational change and the introduction of NPM norms may prompt intergenerational conflict in the workplace (Huyez-Levrat, 2007). Certain studies have associated transformations of the NPM type with the phenomena of harassment (Abord de Chatillon & Desmarais, 2012), which can be read somewhat differently in our framework. Our results do not contribute to the categorical approach to workplace conflict, harassment, and discrimination, but instead provide a lens for gaining original insights and encouraging new organizational actions. These situations can thus be examined from the angle of the crisis they reflect and the roles played by the protagonists – collective, victim, and management.

Moreover, the investigation of situations of change in which the scapegoats are those who refuse the change, as opposed to the rest of the collective, might be worth examining.

Indirect access for the study of scapegoats in the organization

Third, the difficulty of studying scapegoating, which is at least partly denied by most protagonists (Girard, 1982), undoubtedly explains the relative paucity of research, notably in the organizational sciences (Desmond & Kavanagh, 2003). Adequate methodologies are thus needed. In our case, it seems that our indirect approach to the phenomenon facilitated its study. In addition, although our results could not be systematically evaluated by all the protagonists, this limitation was partly circumvented by the interpretations of the various protagonists that were then reinforced in informal conversations. However, this exploratory study remained limited by its methods.

The suitable methods will have to take into account the tendency to deny that scapegoating is happening and it is highly sensitive, collective, dynamic and processual in nature. The methodological designs might differ, depending on whether the aim is to study the contexts for the emergence of scapegoating or its modes of regulation. In the contexts identified in this research (e.g., feminization of traditionally masculine jobs, etc.), support might be given to companies in their efforts of preventive management, which in turn might deepen our understanding of the determinant factors. Action research to help organizations manage crisis situations would be an opportunity for researchers to collect rich data while occupying a legitimate (not clandestine) position. Different modes of scapegoating regulation would thus be experienced at close range, with the possibility of post-intervention monitoring to assess the evolution of the process in the medium term and its outcome.

Actions and interactions of the scapegoating protagonists

This study brings nuance to the generally deterministic reading of the reactions of scapegoating protagonists (e.g., Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989) through a fine-grained analysis of the actions and interactions of scapegoats and their entourage. To build a typology of the determinants of scapegoating and protagonists' actions, we propose two avenues of research.

Multiple actions on the part of the protagonists

First, according to our results, scapegoats are not always passive about their fate. Just like victims of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), violence (Zapf & Gross, 2001), ostracism (Grima & Muller, 2006), or discontent (Hirschman, 2011[1970]), their actions show a complex articulation of fight and flight tendencies. Although some scapegoats may confirm their exclusion by avoiding their persecutors, as the literature predicts (Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989), others fight back (leaving, fighting the stigma, and fighting the persecution). As is the case for victims of violence in general, it is the least intimidated scapegoats who try to confront their attackers, request management intervention, and consider fleeing behaviors only once all other options have failed (Dehue et al., 2012; Hogh & Dofradottir, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

These same findings also bring greater nuance to the assumption that management generally takes the side of the persecutors (Bonazzi, 1980; Casanova, 2014b; Girard, 1982; Leymann, 1996) and remains passive in the face of the violence in progress (Di Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003; Leymann, 1996). In accordance with the observations of Boecker (1992)

and Bonazzi (1983), management may effectively incriminate scapegoats who are perceived to serve as 'safety valves', even among firstline managers. In this case, in line with Girard (1982) and like Casanova (2014b), we noted that defending the accused meant running the risk of also becoming a scapegoat. Nevertheless, our results also showed that some managers were willing to offer their support to the scapegoats. This specific situation recalls Karpman's (1968) 'infernal triangle' and the relationship involving a victim, a persecutor, and a rescuer – the last being management in our case. This exploratory study certainly did not cover all the actions deployed by scapegoats and management in such contexts, and one of the study limitations is undoubtedly our assumption that the protagonists' reactions were uniform, when it is likely that nuances and evolutions might have been observed.

Given these observations and the limitations of this study, broader and more in-depth studies of the actions of scapegoating protagonists are needed. The literature on coping with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) might provide a solid reading frame for identifying and categorizing the actions of scapegoats according to whether they are oriented toward managing the situation (actions centered on the problem) or toward the emotions it produces (actions centered on the emotions). It might also be important to focus of how management addresses scapegoating, particularly by drawing on the studies on social support (Greenglass, 1993). Doing so would not only reveal the range of managerial support behaviors but would also distinguish their modes according to professional support typologies; this point is important as our study focused only on the support perceived by its targets. Managerial support could thus be broken down according to its emotional (listening, attention, friendship, etc.) or instrumental (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994) modality, the latter being tangible (direct actions) or informational (advice and information) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The diversity of attitudes of scapegoating protagonists – here assumed to form a homogeneous whole – would thereby be highlighted. The actions of sets of actors need to be more fully described, particularly regarding each actor's weight in the collective and the dynamics specific to each collective. For example, light could be shed on the roles of informal leaders, official referents (particularly union representatives) and all those with legitimacy, and an audience in the regulation of scapegoating.

Furthermore, the dynamics of the interactions among the scapegoating protagonists may be a promising line of research. The actions of one protagonist are responses to those of the others in an ongoing chain, and we identified two modes of regulation: dynamics that catalyze and those that channel. These interactions could be more systematically investigated, with a focus on detailing the combinations of actions and their order of succession that ultimately lead to one of the multiple outcomes.

The determinants of the scapegoating protagonists' actions

In agreement with the research on coping and exclusion, the actions of the scapegoats in our study were built according to the context (Lazarus, 1992) and the available social resources (Grima & Muller, 2006; Lhuilier, 2002). The data thus indicate that scapegoats' recourse to actions of fighting back and the effectiveness of this choice are in part due to their social resources, whereas opportunities to leave apparently potentiate departure. Similarly, it might be assumed that management supports the persecuting group when the risk of blocking change is high or contagion of the stigma is present (Daudigeos et al., 2014), whereas it supports the scapegoat when a psychosocial risk to his or her health is suspected.

Future work might shed more light on these determinants, especially the managerial choices, which have an essential weight in the favorable or unfavorable outcome of scapegoating. In the field of managerial ethics, the consequences that managerial actions can have raise the issue of managerial courage (Sekerka, Bagozzi, & Charnigo, 2009). In abnormal and potentially damaging situations, managerial courage is the exact opposite of managerial denial, which, as Leymann (1996) observed, acts as tacit permission to persecute. Managers are therefore called upon to formulate morally acceptable responses to risky situations that oppose organizational (e.g., the implementation of change) and individual (e.g., the health of the scapegoat) interests (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014). It is thus important to understand the origins of managerial courage, as the motivations can be personal, contextual, and/or cultural (Harbuor & Kisfalvi, 2014; Sekerka et al., 2009). More broadly, the ability to managerially regulate situations of scapegoating by channeling them could be assessed in terms of the capacities and possibilities of managers to detect and understand their employees' distress, show compassion, and respond with appropriate solutions (Pezé, 2014).

More broadly, the capacity to question the bases for persecution seems to be contingent on the context, with the effectiveness of regulating actions largely determined by the power relationships in play. For example, Hearn (1994) noted that the ideology of male domination that permeates the organizational representations of violence tends to normalize the violence. This ideological configuration is likely to favor and conceal scapegoating phenomena in the same way that a more critical ideological configuration about violence is more likely to contain and facilitate its denunciation. Taking better account of these contexts would improve our understanding of the sources for effective actions to regulate scapegoating.

Regulation of scapegoating outcomes

This study showed the diverse outcomes of scapegoating (isolation, expulsion, cohabitation, and assimilation) and how they are regulated: catalyzing and channeling. It also brought nuance to the generally accepted notions of an unambiguous scapegoating process and the passive scapegoat irrevocably sacrificed by his or her persecutors (Girard, 1982). Future work should therefore focus on building typologies of the actions and management of the scapegoating outcomes.

Typical outcomes of scapegoating

In line with the literature, our results show that scapegoating can lead to the victim's expulsion (e.g., Eagle & Newton, 1981; Gemmill, 1989; Girard, 1982). Yet they also show that scapegoats are able to leave the victim configuration. Depending on how the protagonists' actions are articulated, persecution can be continued, weakened, or interrupted. The process is not uniform, and we identified four outcomes. It was strengthened by isolation and expulsion, whereas assimilation and cohabitation hindered the process. These regulated outcomes of scapegoating echo the works of Wu et al. (2012), who noted that some of the excluded manage to be accepted into an alternative collective or even their initial collective, and Charreire-Petit and Cusin (2013), who described the journey of a resilient whistleblower.

We observed that the collective can indeed engage almost unanimously and persistently in the persecution and exclusion of a scapegoat, but also that the behavior of this victim and management are equally capable of stemming the violence and bringing about the victim's partial or complete reintegration. When the persecution is denounced by the scapegoat and/or disapproved by management, the justification for the violence might begin to be questioned. This indicates that the persecutors are able to reexamine their stigmatization (Cusin & Maymo, 2016) and that the effects of domination, which naturalize symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970), can be delegitimized by its actors. Although we agree with Lutgen-Sandvik (2006) that collective actions to combat violence are the most effective, our results point to the determining role of management and its support of the victim in weakening the process.

Last, while the phenomena of harassment are often read as interindividual dynamics between the harassers and the harassed (Hirigoyen, 1998; Poilpot-Rocaboy, 2000), our analysis frame takes into account the collective dynamics noted by Leymann (1996) and Sirota (2017) and the organizational determinants emphasized by Bouville and Campoy (2012). Our results reflect the process at the level

of work teams, whereas most of the previous studies have focused on a larger scale (e.g., the organization or several scapegoating organizations) (Bonazzi, 1982; Daudigeos et al., 2014).

Future studies should also seek to identify the full range of possible outcomes in order to arrive at a more complete typology. By doing so, more types of positive outcome might be discerned, and their mechanisms could be studied. This is vital to develop more effective ways of combating the actions that tend to strengthen the scapegoating process.

Developing paths for prevention and management

The destructive consequences of organizational scapegoating demand effective strategies for prevention and management, and this is especially so in our postmodern societies, where the rising uncertainty in the workplace (Castel, 2009) is matched by the massive denunciation of the violence it provokes (Mucchielli, 2008). Although it may be illusory to believe that this endemic violence can be stamped out, regulating its occurrence seems a realistic and desirable objective (Favaro, 2014). The European framework directive of 12 June 1989 made it mandatory for employers to ensure the safety and health of their employees, and since then the demand for policies to protect employees' mental health and stem workplace violence has only grown, becoming pervasive in France. Our investigation in this sense points the way toward several preventive paths: primary (limiting the risk of emergence), secondary (stemming the process in progress), and tertiary (acting retrospectively). Action research initiatives, for example, would be invaluable in confirming or disproving the effectiveness of these policies in real-life contexts. Future research might also assess the mechanisms already in place to manage collective conflicts on the job. The following paragraphs detail the managerial recommendations drawn from this research.

Our results demonstrate the interest of acting on the context for emergence. Scapegoating often emerges when the organization has no or little response to concerns and latent conflicts (Daudigeos et al., 2014); management therefore has a vital role in triggering it. Managers must resolutely work to prevent and manage crises and to avoid a recourse to scapegoating. Three levers seem potentially effective to avoid this personification of organizational problems. First, management must address the worries aroused by change (Bareil, Savoie, & Meunier, 2007) by providing adequate support. Second, it must ensure and facilitate professional mediation around work expectations, quality, and how the job is being transformed (Detchessahar, Gentil, Grevin, & Stimec, 2015). Finally, management can have an impact on the workplace culture by demonstrating the value the company places on diversity and by affirming its commitment against violence at work.

Once the process has begun, neither the isolation nor the expulsion of the scapegoat is enough to stop the process, which may well continue via a substitute, according to our findings. Management support of the victim is crucial to curb it, as are the scapegoat's social resources. It can nevertheless be difficult for managers to take a step back in this situation and choose the best course of action, and the scapegoat may be without allies. It therefore seems essential to have internal procedures in place to combat violence and to offer access to workplace consultants or psychologists and/or external care when these procedures are insufficient. This implies defining procedures for sounding the alert in the event of violent acts, collecting witness reports, mediating between the protagonists, and determining the organizational origins. Danniau and Meynckens-Fourez (2015) suggested particularly helping the protagonists to ease out of their roles by encouraging them to take time for reflection, avoiding symmetrical escalation, determining the relationships and coalitions within the collective, and giving voice to others.

Once the scapegoating has ended, it is again up to management to address the consequences. This means justly sanctioning the persecutors and repairing as best as possible the damage done to the victims. Finally, to ensure that something good can come out of this regrettable incident, it is essential to retrospectively analyze the causes, formulate the underlying problem in organizational terms, and respond in such a way that it never occurs again.

Conclusion

To conclude, this exploratory study aimed to understand how the protagonists of scapegoating participate in its regulation. We found four outcomes: the scapegoat's isolation, expulsion, assimilation, or cohabitation. The process could be strengthened or hindered by various actions of the protagonists, and the outcomes depend on how these actions are articulated. This research enriches the literatures in anthropology, psychosociology, and organizational science by showing that, far from being linear, scapegoating is regulated by its protagonists. Not least, this study raises the issue of organizational actors who knowingly ignore and even tacitly approve the violence and injustice in progress. It engages us in a hermeneutic effort to understand the intolerable (Linstead, 2013) in a situation where researchers and practitioners, like the first spectators of Fritz Lang's film (mentioned in the beginning of this article), are sometimes tempted to close their eyes. To stop scapegoating in the organization, we encourage future researche to help us to open our eyes to the phenomenon.

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Appendices