Anointed or Appointed? Father-Daughter Succession within the Family Business.

Abstract

With the focus on events and outcomes shaping most of the existing family business research on intra-family succession, the subtleties of the incumbent-successor relationship and the dynamic nature of succession as a process of becoming is somewhat neglected. In particular, we have limited understanding of how successor identities are constructed as legitimate between incumbent and successor during father-daughter succession. This article addresses this gap in understanding by exploring how the daughter successor engages in identity work with the father incumbent during the process of succession and the role of father-daughter gendered relations in shaping her successor identity. Using a two-stage research design strategy, we draw upon empirical evidence derived from 14 individual and joint semi-structured interviews to present a narrative analysis of five father-daughter dyads. In so doing, we unveil how the daughter's successor identity was co-constructed as legitimate and how father-daughter gendered relations influenced this process. Although daughters rely on certain father-daughter relations (preparation, endorsement and osmotic credibility) for legitimacy, they also need to develop independently from their father in order to heighten their own visibility and establish credibility.

Introduction

Although family business leadership succession is an "interactive, dynamic social process" (Lam, 2011: 508), research has focused primarily on events and outcomes (Salvato and Corbetta, 2013). However, this can overlook the subtleties of the incumbent - successor relationship (Salvato and Corbetta, 2013) and the significance of leadership succession as "a process of becoming" (Hytti, Alsos, Heinonen and Ljunggren, 2017: 681). This complex process of identity negotiation involves the successor constructing an identity – that set of 'meanings' that individuals use to answer the 'who am I?' question (Albert and Whetton, 1985; Wielsma and Brunninge, 2019) – that others view as legitimate (Byrne, Radu-Lefebvre, Fattoum and Balachandra, 2019; Dalpiaz, Tracey and Phillips, 2014; Hytti et al., 2017). Establishing legitimacy can be particularly challenging for daughter successors as the role is constructed as stereotypically masculine (Byrne, Fattoum and Thébaud, 2018) with daughters constructing their identities "in relation to their male partners and other family members" (Hytti et al., 2017: 679) in order to appear legitimate.

Despite significant changes in the roles played by women in family firms, and their increasing representation in top management teams in particular (Overbeke, Bilimoria and Perelli, 2013), the topic of women in successor teams in family businesses remains under-studied (Cater and Young, 2019). Moreover, researchers continue to call for studies that explore gender in intra-family succession (Mussolino, Cicellin, Iacono, Consiglio and Martinez, 2019; Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017). Sons remain the preference for succession in family firms (Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode, 2015; Calabrò, Minichilli, Amore and Brogi, 2018), whilst daughters continue to face barriers (Vera and Dean, 2005) as a result of gendered norms and blindness to the possibility of daughter succession (Overbeke et al., 2013). Thus, daughters may have to engage in greater efforts than sons to overcome perceptions of gender inequality (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2016) and construct a legitimate successor identity (Hytti et al., 2017).

Within the family business context, it is commonplace for the incumbent to choose the successor(s) and the positions they hold in the succession process (Cater, Kidwell and Camp, 2016). Of particular interest, therefore, in the case of father-daughter succession is the role of the father incumbent in shaping and legitimising the daughter's successor identity, especially where there are both male and female successor candidates. Despite the recognition that identity construction is a key process undertaken by individuals during career role transitions

(Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010), there is a dearth of research into how identities are formed and shaped during leadership transfer in the family business context (Dalpiaz et al., 2014; Harrison and Leitch, 2016; Lefebvre and Lefebvre, 2016). Moreover, there has been less focus on how the incumbent influences the formation of a successor identity in general (Salvato and Corbetta, 2013) and daughters in particular (Mussolino et al., 2019). In addressing these gaps in understanding, we propose the following research question: How is the daughter's successor identity constructed as legitimate and how do father-daughter gendered relations influence this process?

To explore and demonstrate the theoretical linkages between family business succession, gender and identity, we draw on identity work as our analytical lens. Identity work refers to the broad range of ways, be they discursive, dramaturgical, symbolic, socio-cognitive and/or psychodynamic in nature, which are undertaken by individuals to "fashion both immediately situated and longer term understandings of their selves" (Brown, 2017: 297). Within this article, we focus on the discursive or narrative nature of identity work as individuals *"strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self- identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives"* (Watson, 2008: 129).

The social identities associated with family business succession have deeply heroic male connotations (Hamilton, 2013; Howorth, Rose, Hamilton and Westhead, 2010); thus, daughter successors must engage in particular forms of identity work if they are to overcome the general invisibility of women in family businesses (Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014; Dumas, 1989, 1990, 1992) and be recognised as legitimate organisational leaders (Hytti et al., 2017; Marlow and McAdam, 2015). As an analytical frame, identity work features increasingly within the entrepreneurship and gender research spaces (Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Swail and Marlow, 2018). Yet, very few studies have discussed the process of identity work within the family business context (Aygören and Nordqvist, 2015; Harrison and Leitch, 2019; Hytti et al., 2017; Knapp, Smith, Kreiner, Sundaramurthy and Barton, 2013; Watson, 2009 for notable exceptions), although we argue that this lens is especially apt for firms that are bound by their cultural and historical contexts (Hamilton, Cruz and Jack, 2017).

In this article, we make the following theoretical contributions: First, we provide rich insights to extend the current succession literature by moving attention beyond the daughter successor's pursuit of legitimacy to the co-constructed nature of a legitimate successor identity between father incumbent and daughter successor (Salvato and Corbetta, 2013). Although

daughters rely on certain father-daughter relations (preparation, endorsement and osmotic credibility) for legitimacy, they also need to develop independently from their father in order to heighten their own visibility and establish credibility. We answer calls for a greater understanding of the formation of individual level identity during leadership transfer in the family business (Dalpiaz et al., 2014; Leitch and Harrison, 2016; Randerson, Bettinelli, Fayolle and Anderson, 2015) by demonstrating how daughters craft a legitimate identity which is co-constructed with their fathers. Furthermore, we advance the gendered succession literature (Byrne et al., 2019; Hytti et al., 2017; Mussolino et al., 2019) by uncovering the significant influence of father-daughter gendered relations on the co-construction of a legitimate successor identity. Specifically, we recognise the agency exercised by the daughters in mitigating the effect of gendered norms and biases and father-daughter relations that may hinder their legitimacy as successors.

The article is structured as follows: we commence by outlining the rationale for our theoretical framework followed by a discrete analysis of the key constructs – gendered succession and identity work within the family business context. The following section presents our methodological rationale and research design process; this is followed by a presentation of our five father-daughter dyadic narratives. Finally, we discuss our contributions to theory that coalesce at the intersection of identity work, gender, legitimacy and family business succession.

Theoretical Framework

Identity Work and Legitimacy

Understandings of identity vary greatly depending on one's ontological and epistemological position (Brown, 2017). Social psychologists have traditionally viewed an individual's self-concept as "relatively stable, coherent and unproblematic" (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016:112). However, scholars with a critical and post-structuralist orientation argue that there is no single unified self and identities only appear to be stable and coherent as a result of power operations (Ramarajan, 2014). In keeping with the latter view, this study recognises that identities are in continuous flux and are "the *ongoing achievements* of human interactions" (Watson, 2001: 223, original emphasis). This view of identity as the temporal result of a dynamic process (Schulz and Hernes, 2013), which is informed by memories of the past and affected by present

and future identity claims (Gioia, Schulz and Corley, 2000; Hatch and Schulz, 2002), is widespread in the individual and organisational literatures. However, most of the research on identity and identity work in the family firm setting has not considered this dynamic nature and how it relates to the development of identity in the next generation of family members (Wielsma and Brunninge, 2019: 40).

In adopting a dynamic perspective on identity and identity work, another key debate relates to whether identities are chosen by or ascribed to individuals (Brown, 2017; DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Within this study, we acknowledge that individuals have a certain degree of agency in terms of how they identify, whilst also recognising that "identities exist and are acquired, claimed and allocated within power relations" (Jenkins, 2008: 45). Individuals have a self-identity, defined as the "*the individual's own notion of who and what they are*", which is shaped and influenced by their array of social-identities, defined as the "*cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be*" (Watson, 2008: 131). Accordingly, identity work is a dynamic interplay between "internal self-reflection and external engagement-—through talk and action-—" (Watson, 2008: 130) with other individuals and with the cultural and institutional forces that prescribe certain subjectivities (Foucault, 1980). This is particularly so in the case of the family business as a hybrid identity organisation (Wielsma and Brunninge, 2019), where there is both an interplay between family and business identities and a dynamic inter-temporal identity shaping through intergenerational storytelling (Thompson, Kellas, Soliz, Thompson, Epp and Schrodt, 2009).

Central to this notion of identity work is narrative; individuals maintain their self-identity or personal narrative by relating to the social identities within "public narratives" (Somers, 1994: 619) that are encountered at home, in work and throughout society (Watson, 2009). Importantly, identity work is relational and dialogic as individuals shape their identities in contestation with actual people or "in our minds with the arguments of human others" (Watson, 2001: 23). Not only do reflexive individuals undertake identity work to enhance their comfortability with certain identities (Lewis, 2015), but also to legitimise their identities which "requires contextualised recognition and approval for the self as a credible subject within a particular setting or across a cultural and symbolic milieu" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015: 794). For example, women entrepreneurs engage in a particular form of identity work in order to navigate strongly masculinised norms and claim entrepreneurial legitimacy (Lewis, 2015; Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Swail and Marlow, 2018).

Identity work is also pertinent to daughter successors in a family business setting since gendered norms strongly pervade this context (Byrne et al., 2018; Byrne et al., 2019; Hytti et al., 2017). Varying discursive representations of daughter successors may conflict (e.g., woman and leader) and undo the normative gendered order, causing gender trouble (Deutsch, 2007; Kelan, 2010). The male norm in business is taken for granted; thus, women are positioned as "the Other" or lack (Ahl and Marlow, 2012; Oseen, 1997). Daughters, therefore, need to engage in identity work in order to establish a credible subject position as a legitimate successor (Swail and Marlow, 2018). Hytti et al. (2017) found that daughter successors facilitate their own sense of belonging within the family business through identity switching and moving in and out of visibility i.e., concealing their leader identity and enacting a strong ownership identity. Daughters can temper the disruption (Stead, 2017) resulting from their appointment by enacting feminine leadership and operating through a male partner (Hytti et al., 2017).

Succession, Legitimacy and Gendered Relations

Scholars have postulated about the various factors that bolster and diminish the legitimacy of potential family business successors (Chrisman, Chua and Sharma, 1998; De Massis, Chua and Chrisman, 2008; Le Breton-Miller, Miller and Steier, 2004). Traditionally, there was a greater emphasis on successors' attributes (Chrisman et al., 1998; Sharma and Rao, 2000) and on the acquisition of competencies and business experience for gaining legitimacy (Sardeshmukh and Corbett, 2011). Whilst these determinants of legitimacy are still highly relevant, scholars have increasingly noted the importance of successors' identity construction and enactment in the pursuit of legitimacy (Byrne et al., 2019; Dalpiaz et al., 2014; Hytti et al., 2017; Salvato and Corbetta, 2013). Identity construction is a highly social process as successors attempt to construct an identity that they and other multiple stakeholders can accept as legitimate (Lam, 2011; Hytti et al., 2017; Thompson et al., 2009). The successor's identity is explicitly recognised through their endorsement by the incumbent, non-family employees and the wider organisation (Byrne et al., 2019; Salvato and Corbetta, 2013; Sharma and Rao, 2000).

Since the incumbent is generally the gatekeeper to the succession process (Cater et al., 2016), incumbent-successor relations have particular significance for how successors construct a legitimate successor identity (Mussolino et al., 2019). The incumbent is recognised as a key player from the point of selecting a successor, to the nurturing and development of him/her for succession, to the point of departure when the incumbent relinquishes leadership (Daspit, Holt

Chrisman and Long, 2016; Le Breton-Miller et al., 2004). A good quality incumbent-successor relationship, relying on mutual trust, understanding and open communication, is key to succession satisfaction (Handler, 1994; Venter, Boshoff and Maas, 2005). Understandably then, succession can be hindered by the incumbent's lack of trust in the successor and his/her capabilities (De Massis et al., 2008), the incumbent and successor's lack of shared vision and understanding (Ward, 1997; Lam, 2011; Miller, 2014), and the incumbent's excessive involvement in the business post-succession —known as the "generational shadow" (Davis and Harveston, 1999).

In terms of potential successors, daughters are often not socialised for family business leadership and are usually overlooked during the grooming process (Byrne and Fattoum, 2014; Overbeke, Bilimoria and Somers, 2015). There can be a greater inclination to protect daughters from the "cut and thrust" of business life (Overbeke et al., 2013; Vera and Dean, 2005). Moreover, daughter succession is generally an inadvertent event that is triggered by a crisis or when there is no viable male successor (Dumas, 1992, 1998; Haberman and Danes, 2007; Wang, 2010). Preferences for leadership are often based on a hierarchy of preferred masculinities, resulting in the devaluation of femininities and alternative masculinities and the rejection of daughters and certain sons for succession (Byrne et al., 2018; Byrne et al., 2019).

For the daughters who are considered a candidate for succession, the family business is ideal for leadership preparation as early research suggests that daughters tend to collaborate with the father/founder during the succession process (Dumas, 1992). In contrast, studies on father-to-son succession largely focus on conflict between the parties as the son struggles for power and control (Davis and Tagiuri, 1989; Sharma, Chrisman and Chua, 2003). Research has found that daughters who experienced a planned succession enjoyed positive relations with staff, experienced a smoother integration, were not concerned with gender issues and were close with the founder (Constantinidis and Nelson, 2009; Curimbaba, 2002). Smythe and Sardeshmukh (2013) found that early socialisation in the family business, effective communication between father and daughter and the daughter's greater compassion for the father's generational shadow enable daughters to navigate succession.

However, the father's instatement of the daughter as successor does not necessarily mean that she is accepted as such, with daughters needing to position themselves in ways (e.g., engage in masculinised behaviour, distance from or align themselves to the incumbent father's leadership style) that are accepted within the prevailing masculinised norms of their family

businesses (Mussolino et al., 2019). Recently, Byrne et al. (2019) showed that both male and female successor CEOs enact various gendered identities in their attempts to be seen as legitimate. Both successors enact masculinities (entrepreneurial, authoritarian and paternalistic) and relational femininity, whilst female successors also enact individualised and maternal femininities. Interestingly, the authors showed that "successor CEOs mirror incumbents' masculine identities as they seek to be considered as legitimate successors" (Byrne et al., 2019: 21). For instance, a daughter successor may align herself to entrepreneurial masculinity if the incumbent father is highly entrepreneurial, thus emphasising her likeness to the incumbent and her suitability to succeed him (Byrne et al., 2019). Whilst this research provides rich insights into how successors pursue legitimacy, there is still a limited understanding of how the successor identity is co-constructed with the incumbent (Salvato and Corbetta, 2013) and how father-daughter gendered relations shape this process.

Methodology

By deliberately seeking to give "voice" to women's lived experiences (Hill, Leitch and Harrison, 2006), our qualitative interpretive research design aligns with calls for more feminist sensitive research methodologies (Sprague, 2016) and for greater methodological variance in exploring family business phenomenon (Fletcher, De Massis and Nordqvist, 2016).

Setting and Sampling

The geographical context of this study is the Republic of Ireland, an island of 4.8 million people on the periphery of Western Europe. Within the region, the female employment rate is at 59.5%, just below the EU average of 61.4% and women aged between 25 and 34 years hold more third level qualifications than their male peers (CSO Ireland, 2016). Despite this, women are underrepresented at the top leadership level, with women comprising only 33.8% of managers, directors and senior officials (CSO Ireland, 2016).

In keeping with our underpinning research question, we purposefully selected father-daughter dyads where the daughter "entered the family business for the purpose of pursuing a long-term career path leading to an executive position with decision making responsibilities" (Overbeke et al., 2013: 204). By examining father-daughter perspectives at different phases of

succession, we supplement the plethora of quantitative studies that are ex-post succession and rely solely on the incumbent's perspective (Schlepphorst and Moog, 2014). In addition, the father had to be alive and available for interview and the organisation had to meet the definition of a family business[1]. Furthermore, each daughter had to have a brother who featured in the business presently or in the past. This additional criterion was factored in to reduce the chance that the participants' progression within the company was predicated on there being no male successor (Curimbaba, 2002; García-Álvarez, López-Sintas and Saldaña Gonzalvo, 2002; Wang, 2010). Given the specificity of this criteria, the population from which to sample was relatively limited and homogenous, thus a final sample of five dyads was deemed appropriate (Kuzel, 1992; Pratt, 2009). Descriptive data on each dyad is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

Form of Inquiry and Data Collection

In both the collection of data from our dyads, in the form of prosaic long-answer interview data (Polkinghorne, 1995), and in its analysis, we adopt a form of narrative inquiry, an "interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them" (Chase, 2005: 651). A narrative, which may be heard or elicited in an interview (among many other situations) may be a short topical account of a particular event or an extended account about a significant aspect of one's life, as well as a life history (Bertaux, 1981). In line with other contemporary usages (Garud and Giuliana, 2013; Garud, Schildt and Lant, 2014; Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004; Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001), this perspective on narrative is closely associated with the role of narrative in the establishment of legitimacy, and as such aligns with an identity work perspective on the practices people engage in as they construct selves within "specific institutional, organisational, discursive and local cultural contexts" (Chase, 2005: 658).

Our two-phased data collection approach involved two rounds of individual and joint semi-structured interviews. During the first stage of the data collection process, individual semi-structured interviews were undertaken with both the father and daughter in order to

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[1] A "firm where one family group controls the company through a clear majority of the ordinary voting shares, the family is represented on the management team and the leading representative of the family perceives the business to be a family firm" (Westhead and Cowling, 1998 as cited in Naldi, Nordqvist, Sjöberg and Wiklund, 2007: 33).

reveal, analyse and illuminate how the daughter's successor identity is constructed as legitimate and how father-daughter gendered relations influence this process (Morris, 2001). By gathering perceptions from both the father and the daughter, this research sought to overcome the potential methodological weaknesses of the single-respondent approach (Uhlaner, Kellermanns, Eddleston and Hoy, 2012) which still dominates in family business research (Nordqvist and Melin, 2010). Our interview guide contained questions pertaining to leadership succession, gender issues, identity work and the father-daughter relationship. Participants were invited to review the interview transcripts and in so doing provided clarifications and further comments.

The second stage of data collection involved joint father-daughter interviews which occurred approximately eighteen months from the initial interviews[2]. These joint interviews served to clarify our findings and provide us with a window into the "dialogical performances, social meaning-making acts and co-facilitated knowledge exchanges" (Koro-Ljungberg, 2008: 430) that comprise identity work (Watson, 2009). Additionally, we collected 35 items of secondary data including media articles (N=16), video/radio recordings (N=3), company websites (N=5), online career profiles (N=6) and official filings (N=5) that were all publicly available. The secondary data were utilised to enhance our understanding of the dyads through rich contextualisation. See Table 2 for further details of our secondary and primary data collection.

Table 2 about here

Data analysis

Our data analysis procedure aligns with narrative analysis (Chase, 2017; Hytti et al., 2017; Mussolino et al., 2019). To begin, the research team engaged in iterative readings of the interview transcriptions and the secondary data, which were imported as internal sources to NVivo. Through these iterative readings, the researchers sought to identify personal narratives, which were defined as:

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[2] Unfortunately, one of the dyads (Case 4) could not participate in the joint interview; however, their initial interviews were supplemented with substantial secondary data, including a media interview with the daughter from 2018. In Case 5, the daughter who was originally interviewed was not available for the joint interview. However, her younger sister, also in management, took her place for the joint interview.

"A distinct form of communication: It is meaning making through the shaping of experience; a way of understanding one's own or others' actions; of organising events, objects, feelings, or thoughts in relation to each other; of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions, events, feelings, or thoughts over time (in the past, present, and/or future)" (Chase, 2017: 951).

Thus, each data source was analysed for individual and joint meaning-making regarding gendered roles and expectations, succession and family business leadership. Special attention was paid to how the fathers and daughters constructed not only their past but "present, future and hypothetical experiences" of succession (Chase, 2017: 947). Case summaries were produced (see Appendix 1) from combining and triangulating the individual and joint interviews with secondary data (Hytti et al., 2017).

Next, narratives for each father-daughter dyad were developed. In keeping with narrative analysis, particular attention was paid to causality and plot (Czarniawska, 1998). The narratives were then compared across dyads to determine patterns. The final stage involved locating the emergent theory in relation to existing knowledge, specifically family business succession and gender and identity literature. Our findings are interspersed with quotations from the individual interviews (II) and joint interviews (JI), with the abbreviation appearing after each quote.

Findings

In this section, we present five narratives from each father-daughter dyad. Each narrative details how daughter successors engage in identity work to construct a legitimate successor identity and the role of the father in this process.

Dyad 1 – Dianne and Patrick

Dianne was the chosen successor of her father's packaging business. Dianne, together with her younger and older brothers, worked in the business growing up. "I always noticed that I was put into the accounts part, or the admin, and the boys were put into the warehouse. So, even though we worked together all summer, we never saw each other and there was very separate groups that we would have known" (Dianne, II). Growing up, Dianne never saw herself as a potential successor of the business: "People always thought that it would be the

males that would take over. I was the least likely to come in" (Dianne, II). However, after a number of years of external work experience, Dianne joined the business formally whilst her brothers worked elsewhere. Patrick was very pleased with Dianne's integration into the family business. "I do not believe—because [sons are] not interested in the business—[they] would be able to come in here and fit in so easily [as daughter]" (Patrick, II).

Patrick viewed Dianne as "well prepared" for the business and perceived that staff, for the most part, responded positively to her arrival. However, Dianne recounted a negative experience of staff relations: "I knew when I closed the door that there were people talking about me" (Dianne, II). These difficult encounters with staff were compounded by Dianne's own self-perceived illegitimacy resulting from her lack of product knowledge. "When you're in and saying you've loads of experience in a company but you don't know what the product is, it sounds a bit suspicious that you should be here at all" (Dianne, II). This doubt fed Dianne's belief that her brothers' would be better successors since they knew the products "like the back of their hand".

Patrick was aware of some tensions between Dianne and the non-family senior manager, thus prompting him to endorse Dianne as his successor. "I can see the relationship between the next most senior person here, between them, and that's why just from a symbolic point of view, I want her to have her own office, so she can have privacy and whenever she wants to put the badge on the door" (Patrick, II). In the later interview, Dianne described how she learnt to deal with employees' mistrust: "For the first couple of years you are kind of just biding your time until people respect you or realise what you're made of" (Dianne, J1). She also referred to overcoming her insecurities, particularly in regard to her limited product knowledge. "You know at the beginning I thought I had to have all the answers…but now I've realised, it's fine to say: 'I'll get back to you'" (Dianne, JI).

Moreover, Dianne faced difficulties in setting work boundaries with Patrick. "Sometimes when he's talking about a family thing and I'm trying to do a cash flow and I'm saying stop it, there can be a bit of sulking [….] then you feel guilty" (Dianne, II). Dianne also referred to her father's conflicting messages about taking care of the business and giving him grandchildren (Cole, 1997). "There is a little bit of talk sometimes about when I'd make room for a family and I'm saying I have to do this because you're the one who brought me in" (Dianne, II). Dianne claimed that she "was slowly getting used to setting them [boundaries]" (II). She recognised that boundaries were difficult for her father and that she was better equipped to manage them due to her years spent in a corporate environment. "I've ten years' experience of boundaries so it's easier for me to try and establish those" (JI).

Dyad 2 – Claire and Michael

Claire was the successor to her family's manufacturing business. Following college, she joined the business as a trainee accountant in order to gain experience and finish her exams. "I was very committed to my role, however initially I did not view it as long term" (Claire, II). Nonetheless, Claire continued working in the business for many years before becoming its Financial Director. Her father, Michael, discussed succession individually with her and her brothers (both younger and older) who worked in the business. According to Claire: "I wouldn't have been the obvious choice to take over at the time."

In terms of succession, Michael saw Claire as "the right person for the job" (II) but also noted that the appointment may have appeared odd to some. "It was a big step up. People probably found it strange that she was taking over the role and maybe strange that I stepped back when I did" (Michael, JI). Claire's younger brother supported the decision, as he was content to remain in the operational side of the business, whilst she sensed her older brother "wasn't happy with it" (II).

Claire experienced difficulties establishing herself as a legitimate successor with the management team that was previously led by her father. "Getting people to come to me instead of Michael has been a challenge" (Claire, II). Michael referred to the tense work relations Claire experienced with a non-family male manager "who significantly undermined her position" (Michael, JI). Moreover, Michael believed that this manager's attempt to challenge Claire was gender motivated. "I think not only did he undermine the situation in his own dealings but that may have rubbed off on others as well" (Michael, JI).

In taking over the business, Claire suffered a lack of confidence due to her limited technical knowledge which she saw as her "biggest area of weakness" (II). She also referred to how her youth and gender marked her out as different: "It's a male dominated industry which may have made me question why I was there" (Claire, II). This lack of confidence led in part to the six month delayed announcement of Claire's appointment, which allowed her to work side-by-side with Michael before the official hand-over.

Claire uncovered a number of strategies that she used to build her legitimacy, beginning with restructuring the management team so that "people with weaknesses moved on or stepped up for improvement" (Claire, II). Michael noted the importance of these changes in terms of the growing respect and acceptance for Claire as his successor within the organisation. "I think the whole atmosphere about the place is different" (Michael, JI). Overcoming the challenges with her previous management team, as well as growing the business, enabled Claire to build confidence. "It was a difficult time. It does help with the confidence side to say 'I got through

this, so I'll get through anything'" (Claire, JI). She has also learned how to manage her lack of technical knowledge by surrounding herself "with people who have the expertise" (Claire, II).

Michael has also maintained involvement and interest in the business, although he is no longer part of the day-to-day operations. "I'm involved in lots of aspects of the business. I come in everyday and I'm always busy" (Michael, JI). Although they share a close personal relationship, at times, Claire and Michael can clash professionally, particularly with regard to Claire's style of management. "Her style is good. But there are times when I think she needs to be more assertive" (Michael, JI). Claire claims that she is content with Michael's continued support on the production side, although his questioning of her leadership can be difficult. "You're driving on and making decisions and someone comes and tells you they don't like your decisions. I suppose that's no harm either as it's good to be challenged" (Claire, JI).

Dyad 3 – Helen and Tom

Helen was the successor of a storage and refrigeration company. Helen, as the eldest child, was groomed for succession from adolescence: "It was great to have that understanding that I was working towards something" (Helen, II). Helen continued to work weekends and evenings in the business whilst studying business at university. Tom always intended to pass the business to Helen and so exposed her to its key operations early on. "We would have gone to some stuff [meetings] and she would have been quite young at the time" (Tom, II). According to Tom, this dynamic was occasionally perceived as suspicious by others. "Some of our equipment manufacturers would find the relationship a bit odd. It wouldn't be often that a father and daughter would be over" (Tom, II).

Helen felt that her youth and gender were viewed unfavourably by certain stakeholders. "I was probably so young going out to meet a customer, I don't think I was taken seriously." (Helen, JI). Tom saw Helen's confidence as her key strength in overcoming any challenges she encountered as a young woman in a male dominated industry. "Helen could command that respect and I found that again and again. When she'd be at meetings and all these guys would come from a culture where they would be wondering 'what's she at?' But she could command it" (Tom, II).

For Helen, forming a strong business partnership with her father was pivotal to building business credibility during this early phase. "We often went to meetings together, I'd have all the figures done and he could 'talk the talk'...He did that with me then until I got a bit older, more confident and could take a meeting by myself" (Helen, II). Another strategy that allowed

Helen to build legitimacy was confronting her own insecurities about becoming a successful business woman. Following her completion of a women's business development programme, she learned that: "It was OK, to knock on the big doors, to be paid more, to want to grow, to want to make money… It was OK to be me, be a girl and to do well." (Helen, II).

As Helen gained more confidence and experience, she sought to enhance her visibility and undertake a more dominant leadership role. When no replacement was found during Helen's maternity leave, it was decided that Helen would undertake full-time leadership and that Tom would step back from the daily operations. "That was a big turning point in terms of he's going to take on the role of caretaker of my kids and I'm going to go at this full-time" (Helen, II). In the later interview, Tom said he struggled to let go: "That was tough, to leave the job and step out of it" (Tom, JI).

Since succession was finalised by the transfer of shareholding, Tom has maintained a keen interest in the business. As revealed in the later interview, Tom's interest veered towards interference when he offered to return his buy-out during a business crisis. "I'd hate to think that something happened and I was walking away. I couldn't have that on my conscience" (Tom, JI). Whilst Helen appreciated the offer, she was adamant that she could lead the business through the crisis unaided, and so refused. "I suppose the knight again galloping in to save the day…. I'm never going to take that money (Helen, JI)".

Whilst Helen was glad to shed her responsibility to her father as shareholder, she missed his "unwavering faith" (JI) in her ability and his guidance and expertise. Accordingly, she appointed a male non-executive director who could offer her "fatherly advice" on how to manage business relations with suppliers. "So he (non-executive director) was able to step into those positions where you might feel 'I just want someone on my side here'… [he] mentored me on how to do the poker face. Literally it was as much as saying 'do not smile' and I'm a smiley person" (Helen, JI).

Dyad 4 – Kelly and Jack

Throughout her childhood, Kelly earned pocket money by working weekends in the manufacturing business founded by her father, Jack. "So growing up, I was observing this entrepreneurial type trait that my father had and you know it's very inspirational" (Kelly, II). Even from a young age, Kelly saw herself working in the family business— "From day one there was nothing else I wanted to do" (Kelly)—despite no coaxing from her father: "I never encouraged them (children) to join the business. I wanted them to make their own way in life" (Jack). Nonetheless, Kelly completed a business degree in college and then approached her

father about joining the business. "She wanted to come back and I said 'no, you should go off and get experience' and she did that and she worked for two years and then she came back" (Jack). Of all her siblings, Kelly was the only one to join the business permanently.

Kelly was very cognisant of others seeing her as "the boss' daughter"; thus, she kept a low profile and forgo any title. Indeed, a major challenge for Kelly was managing the perceptions of her father and other members of the family business: "They were unsure of my ability when I started, they were supportive but unsure." Kelly's perceptions were corroborated by Jack. "Somebody that young wouldn't have a whole lot of experience […] So I would be mentoring her, guiding her, going to meetings with her" (Jack).

This mentoring experience was vital for Kelly who struggled to secure meetings with customers abroad. Her father's lessons in perseverance prompted Kelly to travel to these potential clients and wait at reception for hours until she could secure an appointment. As she began to win customers and bring the business to new markets, she sensed her father's uncertainty in her ability dissipate. "I think he realised that I had a good work ethos, I was serious about this" (Kelly).

Kelly also sensed that others within the family business were beginning to see her differently. "People started to sit up and think 'well okay Kelly's maybe a chip off the old block...She's doing quite well here'." She also began to develop her own leadership style which Jack noticed and admired. "Kelly has brilliant people skills and that's one of her main strengths – the quality of leadership she brings to her staff in the company" (Jack). In particular, Kelly distanced herself from her father's authoritarian style of leadership (Mussolino et al., 2019): "Dad would say it to me sometimes like 'you're more of a leader and I'm probably more of a boss'" (Kelly).

Kelly believed her style of motivating and inspiring staff balanced out her father's commanding approach and vice versa. "Sometimes if I'm not maybe aggressive enough …then you might need his kind of influence whereas sometimes if there were delicate issues happening that need a bit more sensitivity then I would drive that" (Kelly). Thus, an important aspect of identity work for Kelly was developing a leadership style that was distinct yet complementary to her father's approach.

Dyad 5 – Sarah and Sean

Sarah was the Sales and Marketing Director of her family's fifth generation wholesale and retail business. As the eldest child, Sarah was the first of her siblings to join despite having "no

interest in the business whatsoever growing up" (Sarah, II). According to her father, Sean, Sarah joined at a time of transition for the business. "The company was going through massive change. Its traditional factory type manufacturing culture was changing and that had been dominated by very rigid structures, mainly male management" (Sean, II). Sean, welcomed her request to become involved although he quickly realised she was not suited to her initial sales role. "With hindsight, if she was going to be put into a sales position in [family business], she should have had been in a sales position somewhere else first" (Sean, II).

Moreover, Sarah struggled with certain retail customers: "The initial big thing for me was the fact that I was a woman coming into a [male dominated] business… I had desperate problems with some of our retailers…who just actually, some of them refused to deal with me so I then took action" (Sarah, II). Sarah expanded on this to say that she threatened to close these customers' accounts. However, Sean explained that it was Sarah's approach that needed to change. "At times, she was blunt and retail customers who are usually male don't like a blunt female talking to them. We've learnt from that and I think she's learnt from that too. I think she would approach it now, 10 years on, with a little more tact" (Sean, II).

In addition, Sarah experienced difficult relations with certain employees of the family business. "It was a little bit tricky at times [with employees saying] 'Sarah is coming in, okay she's family but she doesn't really know anything about this'" (Sarah, II). As such, Sarah struggled initially in dealing with negative customer and staff relations as well as with finding her fit within the business. "I was a little bit lost in the first year or so but yeah I would have definitely tried to…I suppose carve my own role in many respects" (Sarah, II).

During this time, Sean played a key role in providing Sarah space to find her niche within the business. "We took her in and she has proven to have a very good commercial eye for style" (Sean, II). Sarah's proposed plans for developing the retail side of the business were not always well received by her father. "There are times, I think, when I say something and he goes well you're absolutely mad, but then we work through it" (Sarah, II). In particular, Sarah sought to expand the product range and open a new store, which she worked closely with Sean on delivering. "We would work very well on that type of thing together and he's very encouraging" (Sarah, II). This, in turn, bolstered Sarah's legitimacy as a leader of the family business. "I think there's a little bit of respect there, that…things are going quite okay so people are realising actually maybe I'm not such a bad thing!" (Sarah, II).

Discussion

The narratives show that a legitimate successor identity is crafted by the daughter successor and co-constructed between her and the father incumbent. Further, certain father-daughter relations enable and constrain the co-construction of a legitimate successor identity between the incumbent and successor. Relations that enabled this co-construction included the fathers' support in preparing and developing the daughter to undertake future leadership (Le-Breton Miller et al., 2004). Whilst adequate preparation is important for all successors, regardless of gender, this study argues that the preparation process is particularly vital for the father and daughter in co-constructing a legitimate successor identity. This was most evident with Helen (Dyad 3) who was socialised into the family business from a young age. Despite operating in a male dominated industry, where she often felt underestimated, Helen was able to derive confidence from her years of business exposure which her father facilitated. Moreover, Tom could see Helen's confidence grow during this preparation phase and also her ability to withstand pressure in a highly competitive male dominated space. This, in turn, allowed Tom to develop trust in Helen and recognise her legitimacy as a potential successor (De Massis et al., 2008).

Furthermore, those daughters who lacked adequate preparation or socialisation (Byrne and Fattoum, 2014; Overbeke et al., 2015) struggled with their fathers in co-constructing a legitimate successor identity. This was evidenced among Dianne (Dyad 1), Claire (Dyad 2) and Sarah (Dyad 5) whose lack of technical/product knowledge or experience in the business triggered their personal insecurities and negative appraisals from non-family staff and customers. Dianne was not socialised for future leadership like her brothers were (García-Álvarez et al., 2002); she, thus, encountered difficulties in claiming a legitimate successor identity (Hytti et al., 2017). Similarly, Claire and Sarah struggled to convince non-family stakeholders of their legitimacy due, in part, to their limited technical and sales experience. Non-family endorsements are often a key indicator of successors' qualities (Dalpiaz et al., 2014), and may be viewed by incumbents as a marker of legitimacy (Sharma and Rao, 2000). Michael (Dyad 2), who was concerned that Claire was undermined by staff, and Sean (Dyad 5), who advocated that Sarah improve her relations with customers, were struggling to recognise their daughters' legitimacy as potential successors.

Co-constructing a legitimate successor identity was enabled by the father and daughter's formation of a strong partnership which allowed daughters to experience "osmotic credibility" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015: 804). The fathers' status as visible leader of the

business and the daughters' position in the background ensured the normative gendered order was maintained (Hytti et al., 2017; McAdam and Marlow, 2013). This was most salient in Dyad 3 with Helen relying on Tom, as the older experienced male, to secure credibility for the business. Moreover, by emulating her father's risk taking propensity and proactiveness (i.e., entrepreneurial masculinity), Kelly (Dyad 4) convinced organisational members that she was "a chip off the old block" and thus warranted recognition as a legitimate successor (Byrne et al., 2019). As such, daughters' strong partnership with their fathers was their way of gaining credibility by association.

Relations that constrained co-construction included the lack of shared understanding between successor and incumbent (Lam, 2011). Whilst the lack of a shared vision and understanding is a well-recognised roadblock for intergenerational succession (Lam, 2011; Miller, 2014; Ward, 1997), this study extends this further by arguing that a lack of shared understanding between successor and incumbent can be gendered. This is highlighted in Dyad 2 with Claire and Michael's clash over management styles. Michael's belief that Claire is not assertive enough aligns with stereotypical assumptions that women lack the agentic attributes traditionally associated with leadership (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Similarly, in Dyad 5, Sarah believes her approach with male retail customers is fair; however, she risks acquiring a negative social identity (e.g., difficult woman) from her father, Sean, who considers her to be too blunt and aggressive. These gendered expectations and norms place the daughters' status as credible subjects for family business leadership and succession in doubt (Marlow and McAdam, 2015).

Another important father-daughter relation that enabled this co-construction was the incumbent father's endorsement of his successor. Endorsements are an important sign of legitimacy for the successor (Byrne et al., 2019; Salvato and Corbetta, 2013), and we argue that this is particularly pertinent for enabling daughters to construct a legitimate successor identity. As exemplified in Dyad 1, Dianne struggled to gain respect from the staff and the senior manager, due, in part, to her inadequate preparation for business leadership. Her father, Patrick, compensated for this marker of illegitimacy by providing Dianne with her own office, which represented a symbolic endorsement (DeRue and Ashford, 2010). Similarly, in Dyad 3, Helen's engagement in full-time leadership and Tom's departure from the firm represented a major "turning point" in Helen's development of a legitimate successor identity. Not only did Tom endorse Helen as his successor by vacating his leadership role, he also engaged in a context of transposed gendered roles (McAdam and Marlow, 2013) i.e. becoming the caretaker of Helen's children as she undertook leadership.

Finally, it was found that the co-construction of the daughters' legitimate successor identity was hindered by the father's generational shadow (Davis and Harveston, 1999). We argue that the father's inability to relinquish control can be compounded by gendered norms and biases. As evidenced in Dyad 2, Michael believed that Claire was undermined by management and that this was gender motivated. His continued oversight of Claire's decisions was fostered, in part, by Claire's identity as a daughter successor in a male dominated industry or as an illegitimate member of the dominant referent group (Marlow and McAdam, 2015). In a similar way, Tom's attempt to return his shareholding buy-out to help save the business (Dyad 3) was guided by his paternalistic need to offer protection and guidance to employees (Mussolino and Calabró, 2014) and in particular to protect his daughter from business failure (Overbeke et al., 2013; Vera and Dean, 2005). Thus, Tom's offer of assistance was guided, in part, by Helen's identity as a daughter in need rather than that of a competent and trusted successor.

As evidenced above, the co-construction of a legitimate successor identity was influenced by father-daughter relations and the varying gendered social identities attached to the daughter. However, we also recognise that daughters can exercise some agency in shaping their identity as a successor (Byrne and Fattoum, 2014; Hytti et al., 2017). As shown by the findings, daughter successors depended on their father incumbents for preparation, endorsement and osmotic credibility. However, daughters also needed to develop independently from their fathers and "become highly visible" (Hytti et al., 2017: 680) in order to be recognised as a legitimate successor. This is exemplified by Claire (Dyad 2), who enacted authoritarian masculinity (Byrne et al., 2019) when she restructured her father's management team. Similarly, Helen (Dyad 3) asserted herself when she undertook full-time leadership of the business, and Kelly (Dyad 4) diverged from her father's top-down leadership approach (Mussolino et al., 2019). Dianne (Dyad 1) set work-home boundaries with her father, whilst Sarah (Dyad 5) pushed to make her mark on the business with bold new ideas.

Daughters also tempered their efforts to heighten their visibility so as not to cause disruption (Hytti et al., 2017; Stead, 2017). For instance, Claire delayed taking over the firm and was understanding of her father's continued involvement (Smythe and Sardeshmukh, 2013). In Helen's case, she tempered her sudden movement into full-time leadership by appointing an older male non-executive director, who tutored her "in specific identity work to address the deficit of femininity" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015: 808) i.e. how not to be too feminine. For Kelly, she tempered her effort at heightening her visibility by adopting a feminised style of leadership (Hytti et al., 2017); thus, rather than undermining her father's

approach, she complemented it. Dianne showed compassion for her father's difficulties with boundary management, and Sarah worked closely with her father on delivering her vision for the business.

Moreover, daughters had to find their own strategies to overcome personal insecurities and negative appraisals from organisational members. For Dianne and Kelly, this involved keeping a low profile or concealing their leadership identity (Hytti et al., 2017) until they had gained employees' trust. For Claire and Dianne, they accepted their limitations and surrounded themselves with experts in order to overcome their limited technical knowledge. For Helen, it was realising her potential as a business woman through a women's business development programme and for Sarah it was learning to carve her own role within the family business. A visual representation of the main findings of this study are presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 about here

The present study extends current research by unveiling how the father incumbent and daughter successor co-construct a legitimate successor identity and the gendered relations that enable and hinder this process. Specifically, this study shows that whilst daughters rely on certain father-daughter relations (preparation, endorsement and osmotic credibility) for legitimacy, they also need to develop independently from their father and heighten their own visibility and establish credibility. In keeping with Hytti et al. (2017), we recognise that this process requires tempered disruption as daughters attempt to mitigate the effect of gendered norms and biases and father-daughter relations (lack of preparation, lack of shared understanding and generational shadow) that hinder their legitimacy as successors.

Conclusion

While succession is the most frequently researched topic in family business (Daspit et al., 2016), current research tends to understate the complexities of the incumbent-successor relationship by treating succession as a predictable set of events rather than a dynamic, social "process of becoming" (Hytti et al., 2017: 681). By adopting the latter view, we unveiled how daughter successors construct a legitimate successor identity and the role of the incumbent father in this construction. In so doing, we reveal how certain father-daughter relations enable

and constrain the co-construction of a legitimate successor identity between the incumbent and successor. Although daughters rely on certain father-daughter relations (preparation, endorsement and osmotic credibility) for legitimacy, they also need to develop independently from their father in order to heighten their own visibility and establish credibility.

Second, we advance the family business domain by not only answering calls for a greater understanding of the formation of individual level identity during leadership transfer in the family business (Dalpiaz et al., 2014; Leitch and Harrison, 2016; Randerson et al., 2015) but also by generating knowledge of how successors co-construct a legitimate identity with incumbents (Dalpiaz et al., 2014; Leitch and Harrison, 2016; Randerson et al., 2015; Salvato and Corbetta, 2013).

Finally, we advance the gendered succession literature (Byrne et al., 2019; Hytti et al., 2017; Mussolino et al., 2019; Cater and Young, 2019) by uncovering how the co-construction of a legitimate successor identity was influenced by father-daughter relations and the varying gendered social identities attached to the daughter. Importantly, we recognise the agency that daughters exercise in shaping their identity as a successor (Byrne and Fattoum, 2014; Hytti et al., 2017), in an attempt to mitigate the effect of gendered norms and biases and father-daughter relations (lack of preparation, lack of shared understanding and generational shadow) that may hinder their legitimacy as successors.

Our study is not without limitations which offer interesting avenues for future research. First, although our dyads provide novel insights into the identity work during the father-daughter succession process within a family business, such interviews were cross-sectional in nature. A longitudinal focus with multiple data collection waves (Miles, 1979) would enable a real-time perspective of daughter successors' identity work and the succession process. While acknowledging the small sample size of this exploratory study, it was deemed "much more important to be intensive, and thus persuasive at the conceptual level, rather than aim to be extensive with intent to be convincing, at least in part, through enumeration" (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: 494).

Second, although our focus on father-daughter succession within a single country minimises cultural variation, we also acknowledge this as a limitation. Future research could explore the father-daughter succession process within family businesses across various cultural contexts where primogeniture still prevails in order to test the applicability of our findings.

Finally, although our findings strongly indicated that the father also undergoes identity formation during the process of succession, an exploration of the father's identity work did not fall within the ambit of this study and would be a fruitful avenue for future research.

Furthermore, our observation that siblings played a considerable role in the daughters' identity work is indicative of the need to extend this analysis to examine other family relationships (e.g., sister-brother; sister-sister). Notwithstanding these limitations, this article advances the body of knowledge on gendered succession and identity work in family business.

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