

# **Entrepreneuring as emancipation in family business succession: a story of agony and ecstasy**

Following Alistair Anderson's legacy of entrepreneuring as a process of becoming, this paper engages with entrepreneuring as emancipation in a family business context. Over a period of seven years, we witnessed from close proximity the journey of a family business successor engaged in a challenging process of power transfer, ultimately leading him to leave the succession process to engage with entrepreneuring outside the family business, due to power struggles. We theoretically elaborate on this real-time, multi-informant, multi-generational and longitudinal single-case study to offer a novel understanding of entrepreneuring as emancipation *from* and *through* power by revealing the intimate connections of entrepreneuring with power, liberation, and liberty encompassing as much agony as ecstasy.

Keywords: entrepreneuring as emancipation; power; liberation; liberty; family business

## **Introduction**

Following Alistair Anderson's legacy of entrepreneuring as a process of 'becoming always co-produced' (Anderson, Dodd and Jack, 2012, 962), this paper engages with entrepreneuring as emancipation in the family business context. Typical to family business, the strong overlap between the business and the family spheres creates an exceptional space for exploring entrepreneuring as an embedded social activity and process (Anderson, 1995), connecting people, processes and places (see Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007; Jack and Anderson, 1999;; Gaddefors and Anderson, 2019). Family business members benefit from privileged access to affective and professional resources (Anderson, Jack, and Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005), and family embeddedness generating opportunities for entrepreneuring (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Xiong, Ukanwa,

and Anderson, 2020). Whilst we share the general view of embeddedness (a concept first proposed by Polanyi, 1957) as a facilitator of entrepreneuring, we argue that the family business is an interesting context in which to explore this, given the potential risk of over embeddedness, which, instead of facilitating, may actually constrain entrepreneurial agency (Uzzi 1996).

The high level of family embeddedness and power concentration (Anderson, Jack, and Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005) typical to family businesses creates moral obligations and economic constraints affecting business family members' decisions and behaviors as an effect of power relations<sup>1</sup> (Wong, Chang, and Chen, 2010). Indeed, family business owner-managers have been acknowledged as endowed with both overt power reflected as formal authority (French & Raven, 1959) and covert power, resulting from their influence and importance within the family (Veliyath and Ramaswamy, 2000). The entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship suggests that entrepreneuring necessarily encompasses some form or level of emancipation from power (Goss, Jones, Betta, and Latham, 2011; Laine and Kibler, 2020) in order to remove perceived constraints to entrepreneurial agency (Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen, 2009, 479). Yet, entrepreneurship literature still lacks an explicit theoretical engagement with power, which makes it difficult to identify the underlying micro-mechanisms of emancipation occurring as an effect of power relations. Moreover, entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship recently criticized the over-optimistic view of emancipation, suggesting some of its potential relational costs and risks (Jennings, Jennings, and Sharifian, 2014; Verduijn, Dey, Tedmanson, and Essers, 2014). And as such, this underscores the need for investigations into the dark side of emancipation from a power perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> Power is here defined as 'relations of control over things, relations of action upon others, and relations with oneself' (Foucault, 1997, 317).

This paper aims to address these unexplored issues by specifically asking the following research question: how does entrepreneuring happen in family business succession? Drawing on a real-time, multi-informant, multi-generational and longitudinal seven-year single-case of a fourth-generation French family firm in the construction industry, we inductively expose the interplay of power, resistance and liberty in the subjectification of a successor into an entrepreneur and provide a nuanced account of how entrepreneuring happens in family business succession as an effect of power relations. Our study unveils how the progressive intensification of incumbent-successor power struggles not only produces an escalation of conflicts but also a desire to resist and confront the incumbent power by engaging with entrepreneuring outside the family firm. In so doing, we show that entrepreneuring is accomplished *together with* as well as *against* others, which encompasses subsequent processes of embedding, disembedding and re-embedding enacted as micro-mechanisms of emancipation *from* and *through* power.

Theoretically, our study builds upon Alistair Anderson's social perspective of entrepreneuring to bring three main contributions to the field of entrepreneuring as emancipation. First, whilst entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship documents 'how wishes for autonomy, expression of personal values, and making a difference in the world can be accomplished' (Rindova, Barry and Ketchen, 2009, 478), we extend Alistair Anderson's prior works on emancipation (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020) by revealing that these 'wishes' cannot be achieved without engaging with power, in the family business context. In so doing, we offer emancipation as a new theoretical explanation of why people might engage with entrepreneuring as an effect of power relations; that is, as a means to escape the power of another and in order to exert power over oneself and one's own life. Second, whilst entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship might be tempted

by the celebration of ‘the entrepreneurial hero’ (Anderson and Warren, 2011) successfully overcoming obstacles and constraints to accomplish their calling, we reveal the ‘prosaic’ (Steyaert, 2004) of entrepreneuring as emancipation engaging the whole individual. We do so by displaying the successor’s suffering, anger and resilience efforts as well as pettiness and low blows; thus, uncovering the mechanisms of *disembedding* from the family business and illustrating its centrality for entrepreneuring as emancipation. In so doing, we extend Alistair Anderson’s prior works on everyday entrepreneurs engaging with entrepreneurial practice (Anderson and Ronteau, 2017) by challenging the idea of embeddedness as necessarily implicated by entrepreneuring by showing why *disembedding*, followed by subsequent *re-embedding* might instead enable entrepreneuring as emancipation in a family business context. Third, whilst entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship theorizes emancipation as resistance to perceived constraints, we extend current theorizing of emancipation as liberation *from* the power of another (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) eroding the institutional ‘bastions’ of entrepreneurial agency (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020, 1-2; see also Randerson, Bettinelli, Fayolle, and Anderson, 2015) to include a new understanding of emancipation as liberty enabling entrepreneurs to emancipate *through* power exerted over oneself and one’s life, outside the family business. In so doing, we challenge the restrictive view of power understood as a repressive mechanism undermining the liberty of the individual to offer a broader understanding of power, which also includes power as authoring, allowing entrepreneurs to achieve their potential by the practice of their own liberty in the process of entrepreneuring.

The paper is structured as follows: we commence by outlining our theoretical framing of entrepreneuring as emancipation in family business. We then present our methodological rationale and research design process, followed by our empirical

evidence. We conclude by theorizing entrepreneuring as emancipation as an effect of power relations in family business succession.

### **Entrepreneuring as emancipation and the importance of power**

Do you remember how Alistair Anderson used to spoke about *entrepreneuring*? Do you remember how he uniquely insisted on the gerund with his profound and expressive voice, looking at the audience as if he was performing a poetic understanding of entrepreneurship as process? Do you remember his knowing smile? Attached as he was to defending a processual perspective of entrepreneurship ever since his PhD dissertation in 1995, Alistair Anderson is one considered of the fathers of the construct of entrepreneuring. First coined by Steyaert (2007, 453) the notion of entrepreneuring emerged as a new ‘conceptual attractor to accommodate the increasing interest in process theories within a creative process view’. As a creative and social form of organizing (Johannisson, 2011), entrepreneuring is an open-ended process (Helin, 2011; Helin, Hernes, Hjorth, and Holt, 2014) anchored in an ontology of becoming (Chia, 1995; Chia and Holt, 2006) and encompassing both organization-creation (Gartner, 1993) and entrepreneurial becoming (Hjorth, 2014).

Entrepreneuring is a relational, material, and embodied process (Champenois, Lefebvre, and Ronteau, 2019), ‘a lived experience’ (Morris, Kuratko, Schindehutte, and Spivack, 2012, 11), and an ‘existential venturing’ (Johannisson, 2011, 139) aimed at creating a new way of life. This ‘active doing’ (Marlow and McAdam, 2015) does not occur in isolation. People do not engage in entrepreneuring alone but together with others, who play either a facilitating or a hindrance role in the process. Entrepreneuring clearly points at interconnectedness, with doing and becoming ‘always co-produced’ (Anderson, Drakopoulou Dodd, and Jack, 2012, 962).

As entrepreneuring springs from individuals' desire to enact their agency and challenge existing orders, entrepreneuring inherently involves some forms or levels of emancipation (Tempest and Starkey, 2004). We thus position our study within the entrepreneuring as emancipation movement (Laine and Kibler, 2020; McAdam, Crowley, and Harrison, 2019; Rindova, Barry and Ketchen, 2009), conceiving the emancipatory potential of entrepreneuring as enabling individuals to overcome or remove 'intellectual, psychological, economic, social, institutional, or cultural' constraints (Rindova, Barry and Ketchen, 2009, 479). Recent scholarship has documented how entrepreneuring supports women entrepreneurs' emancipation in patriarchal societies (Barragan, Erogul, and Essers, 2018) or in masculine industries (Martinez Dy, Martin, and Marlow, 2018; McAdam and Marlow, 2013), as well as the emancipation of ethnic entrepreneurs (Verduijn and Essers, 2013) or migrant entrepreneurs (Verduyn and Essers, 2017) in a culture different from their country of origin. Analytically, these studies demonstrate that emancipation can take many forms, in different contexts, and at different moments in time throughout the entrepreneurial process. For instance, criticism, saying 'no', and sabotage are certainly forms of emancipation, but so are struggles for self-determination, resistance, self-making and even self-reflection because self-consciousness (Barratt, 2008) and self-knowledge can 'become self-liberation' (Caldwell, 2007, 11). Moreover, entrepreneuring as emancipation can mark various degrees of 'enacted departure from the status quo' (Jennings, Jennings, and Sharifian, 2014, 83), ranging from simply questioning perceived constraints to enacting one's 'own way in the world' and 'brave new worlds' altogether (Jennings, Jennings, and Sharifian, 2009, 483; see also Alvesson and Willmott, 1992).

Common to entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship is a focus on the lived experience of entrepreneurs, approached as people living in the 'half-way house of

becoming' (Anderson, 2005, 597) and engaging with the creative 'performance of the process of becoming' (Anderson, 2005, 592). Within this perspective, entrepreneurial becoming is understood as 'the process of desire' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 272), emerging from the (frustrated) confrontation with existing orders and revealing imagination as the key towards the creation of a different future (Gartner, Bird, and Starr, 1992). The desire triggering the emergence of entrepreneuring is connected not only to emotions but also to relations and identities, because desire is enacted as 'power', that of imagining and transforming reality and self (Colebrook, 2002, 94), which may require intense struggling and identity work as suggested by Randerson, Bettinelli, Fayolle, and Anderson (2015) within the family business context.

Without explicitly acknowledging the importance of power, entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship does recognize the role of questioning, resisting and challenging the limits of self-becoming imposed by the environment in which people are embedded (Verduijn, Dey, Tedmanson, and Essers, 2014). Producing oneself in one's singularity inherently involves tensions, crises, and ruptures in relation with others (Jennings, Jennings, and Sharifian, 2014). This is where the connection to power may become more visible when exploring the mechanisms of entrepreneuring as emancipation. Indeed, studies conducted in other disciplines (Clegg, Phillips, and Courpasson, 2014; Huault, Perret, and Spicer, 2014) highlight the role of power in relation to emancipation, emphasizing power as domination or repression undermining individual liberty and calling to a liberation move in an attempt to resist the domination of another (Marcuse, 2013). Evidence also exists that, in certain historical and socio-economic contexts, power circulation may be 'frozen' in the hands of certain individuals or groups, which might trigger an opposite movement of resistance and liberation (Foucault, 1997, 282).

Within this paper, our aim is to extend current understandings of entrepreneuring as emancipation by explicitly engaging with exploring and theorizing the role of power, resistance, and liberty in the entrepreneuring journey by taking family business as a privileged viewpoint. The family business setting provides exceptional opportunities to study entrepreneuring in a social environment typically characterized by power concentration and a high level of family embeddedness (Anderson, Jack, and Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005). The unfolding of entrepreneuring within family business succession is a unique occasion for observing what happens at the breaking points when people face the unexpected (Drakopoulou Dodd, Anderson, and Jack, 2013) and when events do not follow the order in which they were planned to occur.

### **Family business as a unique context for entrepreneuring as emancipation**

Because of the overlap of the family and the business spheres (Whetten, Foreman, and Dyer, 2014), family firms are characterized by long-lasting relations ‘bound as much by emotion as by bloodlines’ (Holt and Popp, 2013, 892). Within this emotion-laden environment (Hjorth and Dawson, 2016), family members face double sets of constraints, embrace conflicting social roles (Lam, 2011), and are confronted by ambivalent emotions (Brundin and Härtel, 2014; Radu-Lefebvre and Randerson, 2020), leading to conflicts and crises (Collin and Ahlberg, 2012; Qiu and Freel, 2020).

The family business is ‘a vessel which transports treasured assets safely and securely from the past, to the future’ (Drakopoulou Dodd, Anderson, Jack, 2013, 36). Past legacies therefore inherently affect family members’ lives in the present and their projected futures (Lefebvre, Radu-Lefebvre, Gartner, and Clarke, 2021; Radu-Lefebvre, Lefebvre, Clarke, and Gartner, 2020). Yet, family embeddedness and temporal contextualization not only endow family members with identity, resources and

opportunities but also with moral obligations and constraints (Radu-Lefebvre, 2021). Even though opportunities and constraints may vary across generations (Monticelli, Bernardon, and Trez, 2018), the high level of embeddedness and temporal contextualization of family members (Anderson, Jack and Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005) continually dictates what constitutes ‘appropriate and acceptable behaviour’, particularly during family business succession (Murithi, Vershinina, and Rodgers 2019, 160).

In family firms, incumbents exert a significant control over things and upon others, their power position endowing them with greater resources than those of successors, such as prestige, authority and money (Kelly, Athanassiou, and Crittenden, 2000). Entrenched in multiple embedded incumbent-successor power relationships (Wong, Chang, and Chen, 2010), successors find themselves in a subordinate position whereby their right to lead is granted by the incumbent (Fox and Wade-Benzoni, 2017). ‘Tied to themselves and others through a self-disciplined subjectivity’ (Knights, 2002, 582), successors are expected to act in accordance with filial reciprocity norms (Discua Cruz, Hamilton, and Jack, 2012; Janjuha-Jivraj and Spence, 2009). Their right to exert the power previously exerted by the incumbent is only possible at the extent to which the incumbent facilitates effective power transfer. Yet, incumbents protect their power (Shen and Cannella, 2002; Sonfield and Lussier, 2004) privileging continuity over change (Drakopoulou Dodd, Anderson, and Jack, 2013), monitor the successor’s conduct and exert normative pressures to ensure successor conformity and obedience (Dalpiaz, Tracey, and Phillips, 2014; Hytti, Alsos, Heinonen, and Ljunggren, 2017), whereas successors struggle to engage in activities granting them liberty (Radu Lefebvre and Lefebvre, 2016).

Failing between ‘the crack of events’ (Anderson, 2005, 591), these power struggles may trigger instances of crisis and radical change, and produce ‘severe shock’, ‘trauma’ (Rose, 1993, 128) and ‘agonizing experiences’ (Kotlar and Chrisman, 2019, 31).

Within family business, micro-manifestations of successor emancipation may difficultly arise, localized in ‘everyday struggles and practices of freedom’ (Verduijn, Dey, Tedmanson, and Essers, 2014, 101). Incomplete successor emancipation could be therefore one of the reasons of why successors may decide to leave the family business to become an entrepreneur outside the family firm. However, despite the acknowledged existence of various forms of entrepreneurship in family firms (Ramírez-Pasillas, Lundberg, and Nordqvist, 2020), entrepreneuring as emancipation has seldom been explored in family business. Accordingly, limited knowledge exists regarding successors’ engagement with entrepreneuring *as part of* the succession process (Au, Chiang, Birtch, and Ding, 2013; Erikson, Sørheim, and Reitan, 2003), and successors’ engagement with entrepreneuring *outside* the family firm, as an alternative to family business succession (Richards, Kammerlander, and Zellweger, 2019).

We position our investigation of entrepreneuring in a family business succession context because we believe that this may be a privileged ‘viewing point’ (Anderson, 2005, 591), a unique moment in time and space for better understanding the prosaics of entrepreneuring as a ‘trajectory shift’ (Henfridsson and Yoo, 2014) triggered by incumbent-successor power struggles and affecting successor’s relations, identities and revenues. We are cognizant that this requires particular attention to ‘what is the truth of this singular fact, what happened in reality’ (Veyne, 2010, 52). In other words, examining what a successor concretely does, feels and thinks in relation with the incumbent and others over the studied period (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010). This approach is coherent with Alistair Anderson’s legacy of investigating daily entrepreneurs’ lived experience (Drakopoulou, Anderson, and Jack, 2013) as well as with the Foucault’s defence (1970) of the ‘singularity’ of empirical phenomena (Veyne, 2010, 13-14), which has methodological consequences for our study.

## **Data and Method**

### ***Research design***

In this paper, we adopt a processual experience-informed perspective (Hjorth, 2014), based on a real-time, multi-informant, multi-generational and longitudinal single-case study (Anderson and Warren, 2011; Toledano and Anderson, 2020) constructed through a life-story narrative account (Marlow and McAdam, 2012). Embracing a processual experience-informed perspective means exploring entrepreneuring as lived experience (Drakopoulou, Anderson, and Jack, 2013) within the social context ‘in which subjectification into “entrepreneur” happens’ (Hjorth, 2014, 205). We investigate entrepreneuring as an ongoing relational process enacted by ‘interactive agents embedded in sociomaterial practices, whose actions are mediated by institutional, linguistic and objectual artifacts’ (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010, 7), thus investigating entrepreneuring at the intersection of ‘processes and practices’ in an already-organized world (Hjorth and Reay, 2018). We do this by combining a *process-relational mode of inquiry* (Chia and Tsoukas, 2003), longitudinally revealing how entrepreneuring unfolds over time (Anderson, Jack & Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005) within emotionally infused social situations and interactions in family business succession with a *practice-based understanding of entrepreneuring* revealing what a successor concretely does, feels and thinks in relation with the incumbent and others.

The choice of a single-case study is motivated by the potential for generating rich data and contextual insights, whereas the choice of a narrative inquiry is acknowledged in entrepreneurship studies (Anderson and Warren, 2011; Toledano and Anderson, 2020) as a unique means for capturing the temporal and processual dimension of entrepreneuring as a lived experience (Gaddefors and Anderson, 2017). We selected the

case based on its revelatory potential (Gaddefors and Anderson, 2008) regarding the under-studied phenomenon of entrepreneuring in family business succession. Such a research design secures ‘methodological fit’ (Edmondson and Mcmanus, 2007) and enables inductive theory-building (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007) in an area where a gap in understanding exists.

### ***Research Setting and Context***

The case study site is a fourth-generation family business in the construction industry founded in 1923, a regional leader located in the West of France (12 million euros incomes; 99 full-time employees). The family business mainly operates in the B2B (business-to-business) market, 85% of the clients being local administrative institutions, local authorities, real estate companies, and financial institutions, with the remaining clients being private customers. Richard, the third-generation owner-manager, designated his youngest child, Philippe (31 years old), as his successor in 2014. The same year, access to the family business was granted to the research team by the incumbent and the successor, who contacted the first author and invited her to visit their company because, as Richard proudly stated, they thought that others could ‘*learn*’ about how to implement family business succession by looking at ‘*how they did it*’. Their succession plan scheduled management transfer to Philippe for 2018 and stressed that a 100% transfer of shares would occur in 2022. In 2015, Philippe bought 25% of the family business shares. Richard’s first-born son lived abroad in Singapore for several years after having informed his father that he was not interested in taking the direction of the company, whilst his second child, a ‘*married woman and a mother*’, was also not interested, according to Richard, in taking on a leadership role in the company. A pedagogical case study was conducted at this occasion, drawing on company and construction sites visits, interviews

and informal conversations with employees and family members, such as Philippe’s mother, Anne, and wife, Elisabeth.

The trustful relationship that developed with the family business enabled us to follow the succession process over subsequent years, through engaging in informal conversations with Richard and Philippe, as well as with employees, during social events, private visits, telephone calls and email conversations. This allowed us to notice a progressive shift in the successor-incumbent relationship and their increased mutual frustration with the succession process. Between 2015 and 2017, conflicts, tensions and ruptures occurred between father and son, leading Philippe to initiate a trajectory shift, engaging with entrepreneuring starting in 2017. At the beginning of 2018, Philippe contacted the research team to speak about his intention to ‘*escape*’ succession and ‘*find his own path*’ outside the family business. This is when we decided to intensify fieldwork in order to observe from a close distance the unexpected unfolding of entrepreneuring within family business succession. In December 2018, Richard bought back Philippe’s 25% shares of the family business, which officialised Philippe’s decision to abandon planned succession. On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2019, with the approval of Richard, Philippe left the family business together with 50 employees and launched an independent renovation spin-off, located in another part of the city. Figure 1 presents a timeline of succession and entrepreneuring; with the data collection period shaded.

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***Data collection***

Our longitudinal perspective comprised multiple data collection points spanning seven years from 2014 to 2020. We engaged in collecting primary and secondary data at

approximately 2-3 months intervals from 12<sup>th</sup> January 2014 through to 31 December 2020. Capturing entrepreneuring as a social-relational process embedded in the family business context required the integration of multiple perspectives in our analysis, which we did by collecting data from several sources ranging from interviews, informal conversations and observations to archival family and business records (see Table 1).

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Exploring entrepreneuring requires ‘sticking with things and the experience of things’ (Helin, Hernes, Hjorth, and Holt, 2014, 17), with participant observation and narratives being acknowledged as particularly relevant for process research (Anderson and Ronteau, 2017; Hjorth, Holt, and Steyaert, 2015; Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004). We had the opportunity to conduct participant observation in various professional settings, such as conferences, round table discussions, networking meetings, training sessions, and in private settings, such as family lunches and dinners. Participant observation required paying attention to respecting the temporal rhythms of family and business lives, which had consequences on *when*, *where* and *to what extent* we were granted access to the field.

We collected 12 narrative interviews with family and non-family members, where we invited participants to tell the story of the events they had been personally involved in. The interviews, which were conducted in French and ranged from 45-150 minutes in duration were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English for in-depth analysis. To avoid social desirability bias (King and Bruner, 2000), two to three members of the research team conducted each interview. Given that the processes under investigation involved Philippe’s agency over time, we placed particular emphasis on collecting his account of the experienced events at numerous occasions over the research period,

progressively constructing a life-story narrative. Whereas the privileged relationship developed with Philippe generated a rich and detailed material, this may also engender subjective bias (Chowdhury, 2015). To minimize this risk, the research team engaged collectively in discussing and analysing the collected material. To limit subjectivity and retrospective biases, we also engaged in about 50 informal conversations with family and non-family members, which allowed us to broaden the perspectives gleaned and to crosscheck the description of the narrated events.

### *Data analysis*

After familiarizing ourselves with the interviews, informal conversations, field notes and archival data, we developed a case study Excel database to organize and manage the vast amount of collected information (Yin, 2018). To ensure construct validity and corroborate emerging constructs (Denzin, 1970; Miles and Huberman, 1994), we triangulated data from multiple sources, which enabled a rich understanding of the process of entrepreneuring. We also shared our findings with the incumbent and successor in May 2021, which enabled us to check for consistency and accuracy.

Drawing on grounded-theory methodology (Corley and Gioia, 2004; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013), we engaged in a ‘recursive, process-oriented, analytic procedure’ (Locke, 1996, 240) aimed at theory development (Anderson, Drakopoulou Dodd, and Jack, 2010; Jack, Moulton, Anderson, and Dodd, 2010); with grounded-theory appropriate for analysing case study data constructed through a life-story narrative account (Marlow and McAdam, 2012). Narrative inquiry and grounded theory are ‘theoretically commensurable and methodologically complementary’ (Lal, Suto, and Ungar, 2012, 14), thus providing breadth and depth when integrated and applied in the same study. We analysed our data using Nvivo 12 software; first assigning line-by-line

open codes to the empirical material, then clustering the emergent themes in axial codes mapped out against extant theorizing, and, finally, organizing these themes under higher-level constructs. We first extensively identified and thematically coded information relative to ‘sayings, doings and feelings’ (Goss, Jones, Betta, and Latham, 2011), which resulted in the generation of our initial categories emerging from the data (open coding). We then moved between the data and emerging categories (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2017) to seek out how these emerging categories related to each other (axial coding), which resulted in identifying the recurrent activities and interaction patterns enacted within the incumbent-successor power struggles. Mapping these emerging categories against extant literature, we noticed that they organized around three main couples of opposites: self-conforming vs. self-differentiating, complying vs. refusing, obeying vs. resisting power. This enabled us to establish a second set of interwoven, interrelated themes relative to family business succession, emancipation as liberation and emancipation as liberty to make sense of how activities and patterns of interaction shaped the successor’s trajectory shift from succession to entrepreneuring. Lastly, we reflected on inferring what these categories were expressing on a higher order, thus elaborating a set of aggregated dimensions enabling us to uncover power as domination at the origin of entrepreneuring as emancipation *from* and *through* power in family business succession.

Table 2 summarizes our final data structure on which the presentation of our findings is based.

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### **A story of agony and ecstasy**

We now summarize the wealth of information generated during data collection within a multi-voiced narrative. Our multi-informant approach enables us to present this story of entrepreneuring as emancipation in family business succession from two different perspectives, namely that of the successor (Philippe) and that of the incumbent (Richard); that we complement with input provided by family and non-family participants.

### ***Power as domination in family business succession***

During the initial period of succession, Philippe signals his intention to fit into current power arrangements in the family business by self-conforming to extant norms and rules, complying with the incumbent's expectations and requirements, and obeying Richard in his double quality of family business leader and father. He recurrently engages with claiming similarity and ~~continuity, and~~continuity and demonstrating expertise. Philippe states his intention to inscribe his actions within '*a tradition*', acknowledging family embeddedness as a source of pride and identity as a successor: '*I draw from the heritage of my ancestors' values such as work, thoroughness and the exemplarity of the leader.*'

Philippe depicts his childhood as '*happy*' and '*surrounded by family and friends*'. Ever since childhood, he was '*impressed*' by the stories his grandfather used to tell him about the family business's history. With much emotion, during our second meeting in his office, Philippe read us a letter that his grandfather wrote to him when he was sixteen years old. This letter highlights the family and business's triumphs and challenges since the foundation of the family business in 1923. The letter also highlights why the family invested so much time and effort in the company: '*in life, there is no secret, to be successful in business, you have to love your profession, what you do, get to know it well, spare no effort, be serious*'. Philippe confesses that this letter inspired his entrepreneurial vocation, positively depicting family embeddedness as a source of entrepreneurial legacy.

Following his ancestors' example, Philippe looked for appropriate academic and professional training in construction and house painting. He also declares that his father selected him as the successor because of his entrepreneurial aspirations and his commitment, having worked in the family business for ten years, unlike his older brother and sister. Richard tells a similar version of the same story when we first met him in 2014, at the family business headquarters: *'in this family, the entrepreneurial spirit is transmitted through generations.'* He also emphasizes with much conviction that he and Philippe *'have the same values'* and that they are *'the keepers of the family business legacy'*.

Richard's designation of Philippe as his successor takes place during a family dinner, in March 2014, as Anne, Philippe's mother, who runs the HR department recalls: *'we were all together, my children, their spouses when Richard made the announcement; he looked so confident...'*. The official succession announcement is done the same week during a company meeting with all the employees, whereby Richard unveils a succession plan including management and ownership transfer. Employees are reassured to see Philippe succeeding his father; they comment in the company's corridors after the announcement: *'we will keep our jobs; they won't relocate as others do these days'*.

In order to reassure the incumbent and others of his ability to ensure continuity, Philippe demonstrates expertise to overcome suspicions of nepotism: *'There is a dynastic dimension, but it is not because we are the son of whom we are, that we are good'*. He also emphasizes the importance of *'being present'* and *'connecting with staff'* to gain employees' confidence, he makes efforts to building support within the company as he aims to motivate employees to stay in the family business after Richard's planned departure: *'most people have been hired by my father and my grandfather, to them I must*

*prove myself*. Family embeddedness and family business embeddedness seem both acknowledged and leveraged as sources of successor identity and legitimacy.

A shift in the successor-incumbent relationship occurs once Philippe observes that, despite the buying of 25% of the shares in 2015, there is no associate's pact indicating conditions of further ownership transfer and settlement of potential disagreements, thus setting an agenda for power transfer. Moreover, he estimates that his capacity to enact power through initiating change is restricted, with Richard '*showing no intention*' to consent to his suggestions related to innovation, recruitment, and marketing. Philippe articulates in September 2016 that the company should be more innovative: '*We should rely more on our house painters as sources of innovation, and we also should discuss more with our suppliers and between peers at the national level to find out new ideas and new solutions*'. Philippe informs us that he recently engaged in competitive intelligence activity as he estimates that '*the evolution of the legislative framework regarding our market is not a constraint, but a driver for improving the quality of our work*'. Additionally, Philippe envisions changes in the recruitment and marketing strategy to '*increase the attractiveness of the professions*' as he observes that '*less and less young people are interested in working as house painters*'. Richard refuses these changes, which results in management meetings turning into father-and-son household disputes, which is a source of disappointment for Philippe, who imagined himself as '*an entrepreneur of the family business*' and now discovers that there is little room for expressing his own initiative, which for the first time makes visible the constraining effects of family embeddedness.

The same story, told by Richard, highlights different aspects. In 2015, then increasingly in 2016, the incumbent depicts Philippe as quite different from himself: '*he is secret*', '*more political than I am*', '*he has more ~~diplomas~~ diplomas, but he has less*

*knowledge of how we used to do things*'. Richard insists on how important tradition - *'rules and habits'* are for the life of the company. He is disappointed that Philippe *'wants to introduce too many changes'*: *'this cannot be done like this: we have our own ways'*. Philippe's *'impatience'* also surprises Anne, Philippe's mother. She thinks that Philippe wants to introduce these changes because he saw them in other companies or because he imagines that they can work well, *'but we are here for decades, how can he know better?'*.

### **Entrepreneuring as emancipation from power: Emancipation as liberation**

In 2017, the family business's income increases by 6%, while the relationship between Richard and Philippe becomes increasingly tense. Conflicts reach a paroxysm in 2018, when Philippe starts liberating himself from the incumbent's power by recurrently voicing criticism, refusing to obey, and resisting power.

Voicing criticism, Philippe decides to *'tell the truth'* to his father, whatever the consequences. He tells Richard the truth about the employees' unethical behaviour: *'you know very well that there are files that ~~disappear~~ disappear, and documents mysteriously appear in the eyes of those who are concerned'*; he's honest about his negative emotions: *'I'm suffering, it's not going exactly as we thought it would'*. During a meeting with longtime customers, Philippe tells the story of how Richard *'tried to stop [him] asking questions or proposing solutions'*, and insistently presented himself as *'the one who takes decisions in the company'*. In the car, while going back home, Richard explicitly denied Philippe's right to enact power by telling him: *'you are not made to be the chief', 'you are not made for this business'*. Shocked by these statements, Philippe was not able to react while in the car; he thought that Richard's declarations were completely unfair given the profits the company had generated due to his work and initiatives. A couple of days after this incident, Richard told him: *'I want you to change'*, which Philippe perceived as a form of alienation: *'I cannot let him use the family business to submit me'*. He reacted

violently to his father's demand by telling him that he will never change and that he is not a child anymore: *'I want to preserve my identity and if I became a clone I would not be able to make the family business evolve and I want to also be able to evolve myself in the future'*; claiming that: *'he would like us to be clones'*; *'it's a fantasy! This is not real life!'*. He resists Richard's power in both the family and the business spheres, estimating that Richard tries to make him *'become like him'*. The conflict affects the firm's climate and functioning: *'the company stopped living during that time, the fight of the chiefs.'*

Richard tells a different story of the same events. He explains that he asked Philippe to come into his office *'to make him understand once and for all that his behavior was not appropriate'*. That *'he needed to be more severe with employees'* and *'to move his piano from the headquarters buildings'*. Philippe used to play piano in the evening while employees were still present, and Richard considers that *'a boss must show authority and not play the piano'*. Philippe estimates that the demands his father considers as natural are instead a symptom of *'his growing domination'*: *'I was humiliated, publicly humiliated by my father. (...) I wasn't able to ~~speakspeak~~ speak to him for about a week'*.

Following Richard's attempts to exert his power over Philippe's behavior and his son's refusal to obey, Philippe sends a *'30-page letter'* to Richard in November 2018. Within this long letter, Philippe tells his father how he projected himself into the company as a fourth-generation successor, reminds him about his hopes and dreams *'to become an entrepreneur one day'*, and his disenchantment with how their relationship has evolved over the years. He also accuses Richard of being *'rigid'*, *'authoritarian'*, and even *'cruel'*. When Philippe writes his father the 30-page *'letter from the heart'*, meant to *'burst the abscess'*, we understand this as the production of a liberation artefact embedded in the practice of self-writing, aimed at initiating a move of disembedding from both family and business ties with the incumbent. Philippe writes this letter as a statement of autonomy

and departure from the incumbent's power: *'A way of saying: I exist, I am as I am'; 'I took a week to write it; (...) I was not sure I wanted to give it to him. But then I went to the ~~end~~, and I gave it to him.'* Richard's reaction is of total rejection: *'he wanted to repudiate me'*, declares Philippe.

Richard's story is rather different. He tells how shocked he was to *'receive such a letter'* from his son: *'I believed he had problems with me at work but now I've understood that my son detested me.* Richard feels *'betrayed'* and *'hugely disappointed'*; he asks Philippe not to circulate the letter in the family and to *'keep it secret from his mother'*, which Philippe refuses to do. This is why, explains Richard, *'I wanted to exclude Philippe from the family'*. Faced with his son's attempts to initiate disembedding, Richard reacts by trying to make others think that he was the one who actually initiated such a move for what seems to be moral reasons.

At this stage of overt power struggles, convinced that he has the required knowledge and skills to *'bring the company into the future'*, Philippe increasingly challenges current power arrangements by instigating business changes through self-differentiating by enacting authority, initiating and implementing change, and claiming difference. He enacts authority by introducing organizational changes: *'I started to clean up things: with my values, my ethics'*, then by hiring new employees and managers with the aim to *'switch the power on my side'* and to *'get out of the big nebula where there is the all-powerful monarch.'* He recruits four new managers, implements an internal quality process, recruits a trainee to change logistics practices, creates a new business unit dedicated to interior renovation and sets up a management committee, thus ending the exclusive father-and-son management meetings. Moreover, he also detects opportunities regarding the increasing importance of sustainable development: *'we should raise customer*

*awareness on sustainable development. The company should be an example in this regard and be more involved in waste treatment, for instance’.*

Compared to a father who is known and celebrated for having transformed the family business into a market leader in its region by introducing product and service diversification and by managing the group with a *‘strong hand’*, Philippe has always been seen as an artist, *‘the one who plays the piano’*. Philippe is now publicly claiming this difference, and in so doing denies family embeddedness: *‘I do not fit the mould. It’s generational’*; *‘It always baffles him because for him everything is always super basic, hyper simple, hyper primary.’*

During this period of family and family business disembedding, Philippe searches for help outside the family business, through re-embedding in other supportive relationships such as business networks and training programs with successors and young entrepreneurs, together with entering a coaching relationship. His wife Elisabeth tells us during a business event that *‘going outside the company does Philippe the greatest good’*, *‘he is much more serene and optimistic’*. She also describes their latest family gathering with her husband’s family as *‘terrible’* and *‘tense’*, with family disembedding increasingly becoming a source of fights and suffering for all those involved. Philippe symbolically takes full possession of his father's former office, while Richard installs his office at the other side of the building. Their relationship becomes more contentious, with Philippe deciding to lock his office due to fear of *‘espionage’* or *‘sabotage’* by his father’s loyal employees.

Richard tells a different story of the same events. He acknowledges that since Philippe’s nomination as successor the *‘company’s income has increased’* but he also speaks about his frustration with Philippe’s behavior. According to him, Philippe is *‘out of his mind’*, *‘he takes decisions alone and he thinks I’m not informed by my own*

*managers*'. Richard deplors that employees become '*hostages*' of the family conflict and are forced to take sides and enroll in one of the '*camps*'. He recognizes that he is '*forced*' to ask employees to keep him '*informed about what Philippe tells them to do*', justifying his need to control his son's behavior by Philippe's apparent '*irrationality*'.

### ***Entrepreneuring as emancipation through power: Emancipation as liberty***

In April 2018, Richard calls Philippe into his office and offers him a '*solution*', namely that of taking charge of the real estate activities of the family business, which is for Philippe a strategy to '*get rid of him*'. Philippe comments on saying '*no*' to this proposal and to his father who keeps calling him by his childhood nickname when at work. In parallel, Philippe confesses that he relies more than he did before on introspection and that he started '*speaking his mind openly*' to his father, mother, brother and employees. He claims that he undertakes these actions to '*save*' succession. But, in reality, Philippe now recurrently engages with self-reflecting, building support inside and outside the family business, and authoring, which we interpret as mechanisms of re-embedding outside family ties.

Philippe confesses his enacting of self-writing aimed at forging self-discipline and helping him manage negative emotions through introspection. At our first meetings in 2014, he told us that he '*keeps a journal*' because it helps him '*re-live and process life events in a calm atmosphere, at home*'. Introspection is painful, leading Philippe to think that family business succession had a '*programmed logic*', underlying his father's attempts to transform him into '*a pseudopod*' or '*a clone*'. Self-reflection is encouraged and inspired by dialogue with trusted others, with whom he starts building support outside the family. When the relationship with Richard reached a critical stage, Philippe started building a confidential support network with non-family members in the family business:

*'So we were doing pre-meetings, pre-top management meetings, the three of us... This is how we set a battle plan.'* Moreover, between 2017 and 2019, Philippe also meets a coach once every two weeks. He gives her the letters he addresses to his father, which he also gives to his mother and his wife.

At the same time, Philippe engages in various kinds of authoring directed towards shaping his proximal environment, as well as his own body and life. The very first thing he does when the incumbent lets him in to his former office is to renovate it according to his own decoration preferences, insisting on *'the territorial aspect. It's very animalistic.'* Later on, he vigorously tries to *'be at the heart of real subjects'* because he aims at making things happen *'as I imagine them'*: launching a new business unit of interior renovation and employing a highly skilled team. This reinforces his willingness to introduce change by symbolic actions. To him, authoring relates not only to creativity but also to self-discipline: *'leading the family business requires self-control over one's body and mind.'* Philippe's aim is to *'be an exemplary entrepreneur'*, one that takes less vacations than his employees do, practices frugality, and knows *'how to prioritize things and to organize'* himself.

In June 2018, Philippe presents Richard with a family buy-out plan, but Richard refuses to sell on the terms of his son's evaluation. He offers Philippe four options: 1) *'accept the situation and get behind'* Richard, according to his conditions; 2) the immediate purchase of the family business on Richard's terms; 3) leaving the company and setting up a venture unrelated to the family business; 4) leaving the company with the interior renovation business unit created by Philippe.

After asking for advice from *'the coalition of trusted people'* that he had recruited and mobilized progressively alongside the interior renovation activity, Philippe decides to engage with entrepreneuring outside the family business. His *'allies'* tell Philippe they

trust him, and that they are ready to work for him in a new venture. Philippe acknowledges their support, saying that without their help, he *‘wouldn’t have had the strength to leave and start-up his own business’*. He informs Richard during a meeting with the company’s directors that he will handle his departure at *‘his own rhythm’* and *‘according to his conditions’*, thus actively piloting his disembedding and re-embedding processes. In the autumn of 2018, together with the Quality Director and the Unit Director, Philippe prepares for the launch of his interior design company aimed at addressing both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) clients with custom-made solutions. Philippe tells us that he found out during his work in the family business that *‘many clients needed a custom-made service not only for their walls but also in terms of decoration’*. This gave him the idea of developing products and services inspired by his *‘artistic background’*. Philippe locates the new venture at a respectful distance away from the family business (i.e.i.e., 15km separate his new offices and the historic site of the family firm). Philippe is aware that the *‘big issue’* for him is now about *‘how to make yourself a first name’*, how to *‘exist as a person.’* He symbolically decides to add his first name on his company’s logo, such as his father and grandfather did by the past: *‘I now put my first name on my company’s logo. I put it in small letters on the logo while in the official denomination you have both my first and my last name’*.

Entrepreneuring is a deliverance: *‘It’s a liberation.’* He negotiates with Richard to manage his departure as *‘a real divorce.’* Philippe’s biggest satisfaction is that his team of interior renovation agrees to follow him: *‘I go with people who believe in me, who believe in my project, we will build something together. So, we are back in a pioneering entrepreneurial adventure.’* The legal separation of the two companies occurs in December 2018: the incumbent buys back his son’s shares and Philippe leaves with 50 employees and full exploitation of the interior renovation unit. At this moment, Philippe

sends Richard a *'political letter'*, aimed at bringing consensus and preserving family harmony. Philippe read us the letter where he tells his father that *'Today is the time for me to prove myself and put all of your kind advice into practice, everything you have shared with me, in short everything you have learned in your entrepreneurial life.'* He thanks him for his education and ~~inspiration, and~~ inspiration and reassures him regarding their relationship: *'I never wanted to kill you. It is not my conception of father and son relationships. I just wanted some autonomy.'* The intention of Philippe was never that of *'killing'* his father: *'I just wanted to kill the incumbent'*, which suggests that entrepreneuring is leveraged as a disembedding mechanism from family business and not from family ties.

The final scene shows Philippe and Richard in Philippe's office, with the son claiming his intention to demonstrate his father that he is an entrepreneur after all: *'you told me the company was not made for me (...) today's business is not for me, but the business of tomorrow will be made for me!'* Richard evokes his son's departure as *'the failure of the succession process.'* Two months after Philippe's departure, he contacts his older son, living in Singapore for several years, and asks him to come back home and enter the family business. His older son accepts the invitation and starts working in the family business by mid-2019. No new succession plan has been yet implemented over 2020, whilst Philippe optimistically engaged in his entrepreneurial adventure.

## **Discussion**

Following Alistair Anderson's legacy of entrepreneuring as a social activity and process of *'becoming always co-produced'* (Anderson, Dodd and Jack, 2012, 962), we inductively leverage on a family business story to engage with entrepreneuring as emancipation from a power perspective. By taking family business as a privileged

‘viewing point’ (Anderson, 2005, 591), we reveal the intimate connections of entrepreneuring with power, liberation, and liberty, showing how entrepreneuring happens in family business succession as an effect of power relations leading to emancipation *from* and *through* power.

Building upon Alistair Anderson’s social perspective of entrepreneuring, our study brings three main contributions to our understanding and theorizing of entrepreneuring as emancipation. First, we offer emancipation as a new theoretical explanation of why people might engage with entrepreneuring as an effect of power relations; that is, as a means to escape the power of another and in order to exert power over oneself and one’s own life. Given that succession requires effective power transfer, we show that when incumbent-successor power relations ‘remain blocked, frozen’ (Foucault, 1997, 283), the successor cannot achieve emancipation from the incumbent power, which makes it impossible to embrace the leadership role in family business. However, because the exercise of power produces its own resistance (Foucault, 1980), we also document the successor’s resistance to power, leading to emancipation through entrepreneuring, outside the family business. Indeed, Philippe’s decision to engage with entrepreneuring is related to his desire to resist, then reject, the incumbent’s power in order to recover a capacity of doing things and being himself, which echoes Thomas’s (1999) distinction of overcoming ‘barriers to doing’ and ‘barriers to being’. In family business, those in power positions, such as incumbent parents, structure the field of freedom and possible actions of business family members, and this typical situation for family business life seems rather convenient for many individuals, because it confers – despite its perceived constraints – a certain sense of order, comfort and security. For some others, however, accepting these barriers to doing and being may not be a long-term option, which our story shows by exposing Philippe’s engagement with entrepreneuring

as an effect of power relations. In so doing, we extend Alistair Anderson's prior works on emancipation (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020) ~~by~~ by revealing that emancipation requires a double liberation move, encompassing both – as previously stated in entrepreneurship as emancipation scholarship (Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen, 2009) - a recovery of one's entrepreneurial agency ('doing') and, as evidenced in our story, of entrepreneurial becoming ('being').

Second, our study reveals the 'prosaic' (Steyaert, 2004) of entrepreneuring as emancipation engaging the whole individual, emphasized as a socialized actor embedded in family and family business relations. The story we expose shows the suffering, anger and resilience efforts of the successor as well as his pettiness and low blows in relation to the incumbent. Indeed, Philippe is far from being an 'entrepreneurial hero'; he is just a human being with his emotions, limits, and aspirations. His organization-creation is also far from being an example of 'entrepreneurial performance': it is a spin-off set up based on family business resources – employees, expertise, and reputation. Our story highlights the importance of embedding for entrepreneuring as Philippe mobilized varying resources from the family business to set-up his own venture. In so doing, our study confirms the family embeddedness perspective emphasizing the importance of family (Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Anderson, Jack, and Drakopoulou Dodd, 2005; Drakopoulou Dodd, Anderson, and Jack, 2013; Uhlaner, Kellermanns, Eddleston, and Hoy, 2012) and family business (Kraus, Craig, Dibrell, and Märk, 2012; Naldi, Nordqvist, Sjöberg, and Wiklund, 2007) in entrepreneuring. However, we also reveal the facilitating role of the mechanism of *disembedding* for entrepreneuring as emancipation by showing that the progressive movement of liberation from the incumbent power is enacted through concrete and symbolic actions of detachment from family and family business relations. Indeed, we expose how, after initial attempts to reinforce family business embeddedness, the

successor progressively disembedded himself from both family and the business because of power struggles, while looking for alternative re-embedding outside the family firm. The launching of his spin-off was made possible by a combination of different types and levels of embeddedness from and outside the family business, which the successor astutely matched to achieve emancipation through entrepreneuring. It is probable that at some point in the process, Philippe imagined it possible to combine subsequent disembedding from the family business and re-embedding outside the family firm to enable both organization-creation and entrepreneurial becoming. The most interesting example of strategic disembedding is the ‘political letter’ sent to Richard with the explicit intention to signal the latter that Philippe wanted to detach himself from the family business but not from the family. In so doing, we extend Alistair Anderson’s prior works on everyday entrepreneurs engaging with entrepreneurial practice (Anderson and Ronteau, 2017) by challenging the idea of embeddedness as solely implicated by entrepreneuring, documenting why disembedding might instead enable entrepreneuring as emancipation in a family business context. Given that disembedding enables liberation or, in Giddens’s (1990, 156) words, ‘freedom from’ and re-embeddedness enables liberty or, in Giddens’s (1990, 156) words, ‘freedom to’, a combination of and disembedding and (re-)embedding is probably what an entrepreneur does, skillfully managing the acquisition of new relations but also learning to ‘drop ties’ (Elfring, Klyver, and van Burg, 2021) when needed. Additionally, our story of the subjectification of a successor into an ~~entrepreneur highlight~~entrepreneur highlight how difficult – if not impossible – it is to disembed from the family business while preserving family embeddedness; in reality, in our case study, family business disembedding also tore the family apart, thus consequently affecting the successor’s family embeddedness. This adds a critical nuance to any temptation to idealize emancipation through entrepreneuring, with

our story showing that entrepreneuring as emancipation is not always a source of personal and professional benefits but also encompasses relational costs, as previously suggested by Jennings, Jennings, and Sharifian, (2014) and Verduijn, Dey, Tedmanson and Essers (2014). In so doing, we extend current theorizing of entrepreneuring as emancipation by revealing the underlying micro-mechanisms of embedding, disembedding and re-embedding along with their relational costs as consubstantial to entrepreneuring as emancipation in family business.

Third, our study extends current theorizing of emancipation as liberation *from* the power of another (Goss, Jones, Betta, and Latham, 2011) to include a new understanding of emancipation as liberty enabling to engage with entrepreneuring by emancipating *through* power exerted over oneself and one's life. Indeed, entrepreneuring as emancipation scholarship depicts emancipation as primarily a liberation move understood as a clear-cut decision and behavior of 'breaking free' from authority and 'breaking up' perceived constraints (Rindova, Barry, and Ketchen, 2009, 479). Our story exposes a more nuanced process of emancipation as liberation, thus extending Alistair Anderson's theorizing of entrepreneurial agency as 'institutionally contained' (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020, 1-2) to highlight its varying moments of self-conforming, complying and obeying incumbent power as well as of instances of self-differentiating, refusing, and resisting incumbent power. In so doing, we reveal that emancipation as liberation is not a linear endeavour but a rather iterative process, encompassing varying doings and sayings, such as voicing criticism, refusing to obey, and resisting power, along with enacting authority, initiating and implementing change, and claiming difference. Additionally, our story reveals what happens *beyond* and *in parallel* with emancipation as liberation, when Philippe recurrently enacts other forms of emancipation, such as self-reflecting, building support inside and outside the family business, and authoring. These

latter forms of emancipation are novel in that they illuminate how Philippe ‘practice [his] liberty’ (Bardon and Josserand, 2011, 512), which we label emancipation as liberty. In so doing, we challenge the narrow view of power understood as a repressive mechanism undermining the liberty of the individual to offer a broader understanding of power, which also includes power as authoring, allowing entrepreneurs to express who they are and achieve their potential by the practice of their own liberty in the process of entrepreneuring. Indeed, becoming an entrepreneur has been previously theorized as an authoring process (Gherardi, 2015) involving identity work and discursive enactment. We go further by suggesting authoring as a mechanism of power enactment enabling emancipation *through* power in the entrepreneurial process. By authoring himself as an entrepreneur, Philippe progressively elaborates an alternative path to the family business succession story, thus creating his own way out from an ascribed successor identity to an embraced entrepreneurial identity. We believe this is more than just ‘resisting’ incumbent power as emancipation as liberation scholarship may suggest, it is also instrumentally using entrepreneuring to achieve self-becoming by enacting power over oneself and one’s life. Authoring is the most distinctive form of emancipation as liberty, as Alistair Anderson would have probably ~~agree~~agreed with; he considered entrepreneuring a ‘transformative stage’ involving social and economic changes as much as personal transformation (Anderson, 2005). Indeed, Philippe confessed on several occasions that the choice of entrepreneuring was certainly motivated by the desire to liberate himself from the incumbent power but also by his desire to act as an artist, out of liberty. In so doing, we connect entrepreneuring as emancipation to the notion of ‘practices of the self’ and the ‘esthetics of existence’ articulated by Foucault (1985), aimed at enabling people to ‘change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre’ (Foucault, 1985, 10).

## **Conclusion**

‘Does entrepreneurship offer emancipation?’ asked Ojediran and Anderson (2020, 87) in one of the Alistair Anderson’s last publications. The position of Alistair was that, because entrepreneuring is an embedded social process, emancipation must be always investigated in relation to its context. Moreover, Alistair emphasized that emancipation does not ‘happen’ but it’s rather a ‘long, slow game’ co-produced by people in interaction and in constant negotiation with the shared norms and beliefs specific to a particular place and moment in time (Ojediran and Anderson, 2020, 87). In this paper, we expose the unique journey towards emancipation of a family business successor, showing that emancipation is a process comprising two main moves of liberation and liberty, from and through power. The engagement with a longitudinal seven-year fieldwork enabled us to explore and theorize these ‘moves’ at the intersection of power, liberation and liberty, adding to the conversation which we would have loved to have with Alistair a new question: is entrepreneuring as emancipation a desire, an achievement, a loss or a struggle? Maybe all of them together: a story of agony and ecstasy.

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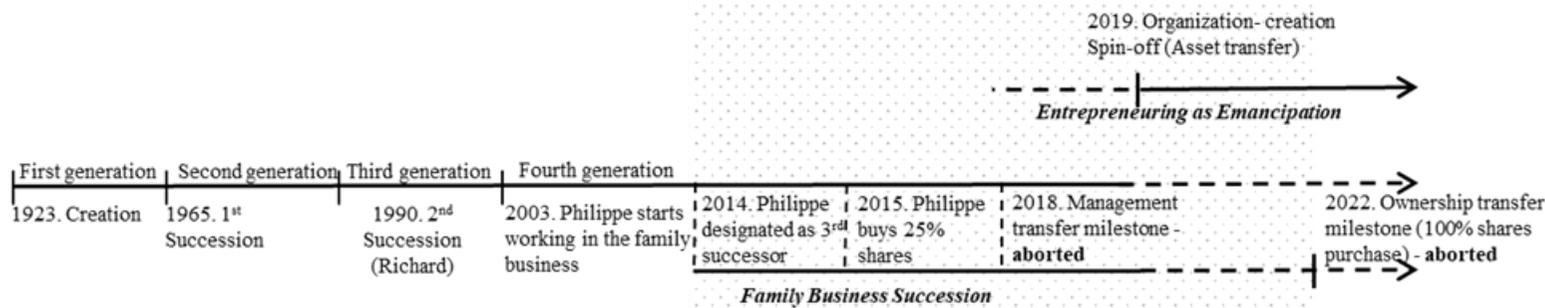
**Table 1 Data collection**

Data	Number	Type/Source	Date	
<b>PRIMARY DATA</b>	Interviews	Philippe, successor and son, 4th generation	January 2014 - 120min	
			February 2014 – 120min	
			December 2018 - 150min	
			March 2019 - 60min	
			November 2019 - 50min	
			March 2020 - 55min	
Participant observation	21 public and private events 30 pages of field notes	Richard, incumbent and father, 3rd generation	January 2014 - 55min	
			February 2014 – 70min	
			January 2014 - 45min	
			February 2019 - 110min	
			February 2014 - 50min	
			May 2019 - 45min	
Private correspondence	~50 pages of private correspondence	Anne, HR Director and mother, 3rd generation	January 2014 - 45min	
		Elisabeth, successor's wife	February 2019 - 110min	
Private correspondence	~50 pages of private correspondence	Pierre, the oldest family business employee	February 2014 - 50min	
		Yann, employee of Philippe's new renovation company	May 2019 - 45min	
Private correspondence	~50 pages of private correspondence	12 social events, 4 company visits, 3 training sessions, 2 family visits		
		Informal conversations with Philippe, Richard, Anne (mother and HR director) and Elisabeth (wife, since 2010)	2014-2020	
Private correspondence	~50 pages of private correspondence	Emails, telephone calls between Philippe, successor and son, 4th generation and research team	2014-2020	
<b>SECONDARY DATA</b>	Press articles	8	Interview of Richard, incumbent and father, 3rd generation	18 April 2003
			Interview of Richard, incumbent and father, 3rd generation	20 February 2007
			Interview of Philippe, successor and son, 4th generation	21 October 2016
			Interview of Anne, HR Director and mother, 3rd generation	February 2018
			Awards and sponsoring information (4 articles)	February 2007 to February 2018
	Family archives	3 letters (34 pages)	From 2nd generation to grandson	2010
			From 4th generation to 3rd generation (Philippe to Richard): ' <i>Letter from the heart</i> '	2018
			From 4 <sup>th</sup> generation to 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation (Philippe to Richard): ' <i>Political letter</i> '	2018
	Business archives	1 pedagogical case study	Family business documents:	
			- history of the company - website content - HR politics and organization - Customer segments and market - External Communication ; 1 film of successor integration	April 2014

**Table 2. Data structure**

<p align="center"><b>1st order coding - Open coding (free nodes)</b> <b>SAYINGS, DOINGS, FEELINGS</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>2nd order coding - Axial coding (tree nodes)</b> <b>POWER STRUGGLES</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>3rd order coding - Aggregate theorizing</b> <b>ENTREPRENEURING AS EMANCIPATION</b></p>
<p>Distribution of business responsibilities between incumbent and successor                      Successor's preferences and decisions regarding recruitment, commercial strategy, and day-to-day management                      Successor and incumbent's emotions (e.g., pride, gratitude, anxiety, disappointment...)                      Mother and spouse's perception/evaluation of incumbent and successor                      Employees' perception/evaluation of successor and incumbent                      Incumbent's expectations and motivations                      Successor's expectations and motivations                      Successor's perception/evaluation of incumbent                      Incumbent's perception/evaluation of successor                      Incumbent's encouragement, knowledge sharing, network sharing                      Incumbent's withdrawal, criticism, ineffective help, sabotage                      Incumbent's constraint, humiliation, shaming                      Successor's behavior - showing expertise                      Successor's behavior - showing similarity in behaviour and preferences with incumbent                      Successor's decisions and behavior - preserving family business strategy, organization</p>	<p><b>Family business succession</b></p> <p>Blocked power circulation                      Complying and obeying power                      Self-conforming                      Claiming similarity and continuity</p>	<p align="center"><b>POWER AS DOMINATION</b></p>
<p>Successor's decisions and behavior - changing family business strategy, organization, recruitment, commercial strategy                      Successor's decisions and behavior - showing leadership/expressing authority                      Successor's decisions and behavior - showing difference in behaviour and preferences with incumbent                      Successor - criticizing the incumbent's personality, decisions and/or behavior                      Successor - expressing defiance regarding the incumbent's intentions and/or behavior                      Successor - expressing disapproval regarding the incumbent's intentions and/or behavior                      Successor - expressing disobedience (refusing to comply with the incumbent's demands and/or expectations)                      Successor - claiming the right to take autonomous decisions in the company                      Successor - confronting the incumbent with difficult truth relative to family and/or business lives                      Successor - accusing the incumbent of acting as a dominant father and leader                      Successor's decisions and behavior - quitting the family business                      Employees' decisions to follow successor in the new venture</p>	<p><b>Emancipation as liberation</b></p> <p>Refusing and resisting power, voicing criticism                      Enacting authority, initiating and implementing change and claiming difference</p>	<p align="center"><b>ENTREPRENEURING AS EMANCIPATION FROM POWER</b></p>
<p>Successor- introspection                      Successor- writing about personal thoughts and emotions (diary, letters)                      Successor - engaging in a coaching relationship                      Successor - setting and applying one own's rules regarding personal health and time management                      Successor - imagining a new organization                      Successor - imagining a life as an entrepreneur                      Successor - sharing publicly the decision to quit the family business</p>	<p><b>Emancipation as liberty</b></p> <p>Self-reflection, building support and authoring</p>	<p align="center"><b>ENTREPRENEURING AS EMANCIPATION THROUGH POWER</b></p>

**Figure 1. Timeline of family business succession and entrepreneuring**



\**Data* collection period shaded