

Dissertation

*Enriching the early phases of the succession process:
an explanation of the role of social mechanisms in business families.*

Significance of this study

Raison d'être

On a late afternoon, I was drinking a glass of wine with my husband in the garden while reflecting on the event of selling the family business. He suddenly said to me “I think I have never explicitly decided to take over the family business”. This stroke me as odd, because his parents have never pressured him into pursuing this career, as far as I know. This made me think of the reasons why my husband could have said this. The question “is there any escaping your ‘destiny’ when you are born as the oldest son with a talent for and interest in technology, in a family with a business in construction?” came up in my mind. For a long time, his father had worked from an office at home and my husband saw him every day performing his role as an entrepreneurial building constructor. In addition, his father involved him in the business by taking him to building sites and discussing new projects with him. Customers and suppliers called at their home and often referred to him as ‘the successor’. Indeed, the employees in their construction business considered the business as a family business and automatically assumed that my husband would be the next in line. His sister, however, did not have these experiences and never felt that she was a potential successor at all. This set off my interest in the influence of the family, and parents specifically, on the career related behavior of their children.

When I did my master thesis, I learned about the ideas of Foucault (1977), Parker (2008) and Giddens (1984). Beforehand, I was quite convinced that I was the agent of my life and my social context had no influence on my decisions (I was still young then...). From this perspective, I assumed that my husband had made his own study and career decisions. However, these great thinkers opened my eyes and made me realize that the impact of the social context limits, enhances or defines our individual behavior. Transferring this idea to the topic of career related behavior, I learned that parents are the most important influencers of the career intentions of their children (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Dietrich & Kracke, 2009; Hoffmann, Junge, & Malchow-Møller, 2015). In the family context, parents and children talk and discuss different career options. In addition, parents serve as career role models for their children. Therefore, the family seems to be a powerful context in which career intentions are shaped at a young age. This realization was the trigger to start my scientific quest in the field of entrepreneurship and family business where children grow up in business families, with entrepreneurial parents who have one or more businesses and who have the intention to pass the business(es) on within their family.

Setting the scene

The transfer of the business from one generation to another is called succession, a topic which lies in the heart of family business research (Daspit, Holt, Chrisman, & Long, 2016). It is a critical process for business families who aim to secure its financial and nonfinancial goals, which they derive from firm ownership (Gomez-Mejia, Cruz, Berrone, & De Castro, 2011). Up until now, little scholarly attention has been given to the functioning of business families in the early phases of the succession process (Daspit et al., 2016; Le Breton-Miller & Miller, 2018). In these phases, business families want to find a balance between (1) stimulating their children to find their talents and career interests and (2) nurturing a positive feeling, for example affective commitment, towards the family business among their next generation in order to attain their objective of sustaining committed family ownership positions crossing generations (Garcia, Sharma, De Massis, Wright, & Scholes, 2018; Habbershon & Pistrui, 2002). However, we know little about the underlying mechanisms that business families use to guide the career related behavior of their offspring, which gives the impression that business families ignore succession in the early phases of the process (Daspit et al., 2016; Hedström & Swedberg, 1996; Merton & Merton, 1968). Hence, in this dissertation, by unravelling the role of social mechanisms that guide behavior in business families, that is, between entrepreneurial parents and their children, in the early phases of the succession process, I aim to address this gap in the literature. A better understanding of how business families—as core drivers of economic growth and entrepreneurial activity—function to attain their goals of transgenerational intent and family wealth, is imperative for the field of family business research in which the business family is rarely the focal unit of analysis (Habbershon & Pistrui, 2002; Le Breton-Miller & Miller, 2018).

Purpose of this study

In this doctoral thesis, I therefore set out to advance knowledge on the early phases of the succession process and to provide insight into the social mechanisms that lie underneath these phases. We suggest that an improved insight into social mechanisms will better guide families in the attainment of their goals. More explicitly, the purpose of this dissertation is: **“to enrich the knowledge on the early phases of the succession process by explaining the role of social mechanisms in business families”**.

To be more explicit, I define the major themes in this dissertation as follows:

Succession process

Succession in family businesses is widely seen as the process that transfers ownership and leadership from an incumbent to a next-generation successor (Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 2003b; Steier & Miller, 2010). Basically, the succession process comprises “actions and events that lead to the transition of leadership from one family member to another in family firms” (Sharma, Chrisman, Pablo, & Chua, 2001, p. 21). In this process, knowledge and control are transferred as well as roles are transitioned

(Cabrera-Suarez, 2005). Le Breton-Miller, Miller, & Steier (2004) define the succession process as a planning process of four stages, that is setting ground rules, the nurture and development of the successor, the selection of the successor and the hand-off of the incumbent. Building on Handler (1994), Blau (1964) and Coleman (1986), Daspit et al. (2016) and Long and Chrisman (2014) point towards the multiphase and multi-stakeholder nature of the succession process. They emphasize the role of social structures which are built through repeated social interactions and impact behavior. Building on these definitions, in this study we define **the family business succession process as a multiphase and multi-stakeholder process of actions and events that leads to the transfer of leadership and/or ownership from one family business generation to another.**

Business families

In this study, I define the family context in two ways. In the Chapter 4 and 5, we consider the family as a business family, using the definition of Le Breton-Miller & Miller (2018, p. 528): **“families that have founded and continue to control at least one established and successful family business, plan to continue to have family members involved in business venturing, and regard the management of long-term family wealth rather than of any one business as the focal objective”**. In the quantitative study in Chapter 3, I use a broader version of this definition and define the family context as “entrepreneurial parents as self-employed and owning one or more businesses” for purposes of theory-method-phenomenon fit.

Social mechanisms

In this study, I define **social mechanisms as processes between important others and individuals that influence the individual to think and act in a certain way** (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996; Merton & Merton, 1968). This definition is inspired by Merton and Merton (1968, p. 43-44) who define social mechanisms “as social processes having designated consequences for designated parts of the social structure”. In addition, Hedström and Swedberg (1996, p. 12) suggest that social mechanisms are used in an everyday sense—in interaction and action—, are mostly unobservable constructs and are often the intended and unintended consequences of individuals’ actions.

In this study, we focus on informal social mechanisms as social processes between family members, in families, interactions are rarely organized through formal mechanisms, such as contracts or arrangements. In this dissertation, I aim to go beyond describing the behavioral outcomes and try to unveil how social mechanisms are used in business families to influence the behavior of their next generation. More specific, we focus on how business families use the social mechanisms of learning experiences and informal family governance mechanisms in order to attain their goals .

Overview: theoretical perspectives and methodological background

This dissertation consists of three empirical papers which contribute to the purpose of this study, that is “to enrich the knowledge on the early phases of the succession process by explaining the role of social mechanisms in business families”. In the first and second article, I dive deep into the concept of social mechanisms and study complex social realities and concrete situations in the early phases of the succession process in the context of business families with entrepreneurial parents. In the third article, I show that intuitive logics and activities are an integral part of the succession process and our results challenge the widely held assumption that the succession process is a predictive, strategic one. It is not evident to develop a simplified analytical model of this reality. However, as models in social science are what metaphors are to poetry (Hernes, 1976), I propose the following overview of studies in this dissertation.

	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5
Purpose	Investigating the influence of “vicarious learning”, “social persuasion” and “gender” on the career intentions of young adults with entrepreneurial parents	Investigating how business families use informal family governance mechanisms to instill and nurture affective commitment to the family business(es) within offspring in the pre-entry stage of succession	Examining how and when effectual and causal logics are used in the (early stages of the) succession process and how contingencies may cause a switch in logics
Theoretical lens	Social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)	Symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969)	Effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001)
Data	Survey data of 305 bachelor students	559 Verbatim transcribed pages of text from 24 individual and group interviews from 21 members of two generations in a business family	96 Pages of verbatim transcribed data from one extended focus group meeting with seven family business advisors, one pre-group questionnaire and two post-group questionnaires
Perspective	Young adults with entrepreneurial parents	Business family with family members involved as owners, partners and offspring	Family business advisors
Method	A binary logistic regression analysis and a causal mediation analysis	An abductive, qualitative approach using an exploratory, single-case study	An interpretative, qualitative approach using a focus group research design
Manuscript Submission status	Published in International Small Business Journal	Accepted in Journal of Family Business Strategy	Being prepared for submission

Table 1: Overview of Studies

As this research basically focuses on the influence of the family context on the actions of individuals (business families with parents and children), I have selected theories that take this effect into account and that have helped to answer the research questions. This pragmatic approach led to the choice of three different theories, that is, social cognitive career theory, symbolic interactionism and effectuation theory, each one linking to one of the papers in this doctoral thesis. These theories are based on their relevance in generating and explaining the early phases of the succession process and the role of social mechanisms in it. The following part briefly outlines the review of the theories that have been used in the three different articles that compose the present thesis.

Social cognitive career theory

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) is based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, which "assumes that behavior results from the interaction of person and environment" (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, p. 81). SCCT stipulates that career intentions are the result of this interaction and proposes that learning experiences may help to explain complex social processes, such as the development of entrepreneurial intent in the family context (Brown, 2002). Studies drawing on SCCT often focus on the cognitive-person constructs of "self-efficacy, outcome expectations and choice goals" (Lanero, Vázquez, & Aza, 2016). However, SCCT also offers a second theoretical layer for a more comprehensive understanding of phenomena. This layer consists of experiential, contextual and individual factors that can influence an individual's behavior (Lent et al., 1994). SCCT posits that career interests are the outcomes of cognitive processes and are influenced by learning experiences that have been derived from person and contextual variables (Brown, 2002). In general, parental careers influence the home environment and therefore, children's career interests are deeply rooted in the family context.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism builds on the ideas of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969), among others, and was introduced to the family business literature by James, Jennings, & Breitreuz (2012) and Jennings et al. (2014). Symbolic interactionism "seeks to understand the behaviors of individuals through the creation of meaning that comes through interactions with others" (James et al., 2012; Jennings, Breitreuz, & James, 2014, p. 38). Central to this theory are the concepts of symbols and interactions. Symbols are the result of shared meanings concerning objects, situations and events, and interactions that take place between individuals who are engaged in social, verbal exchanges. The core idea is that people act towards things based on the meaning those things have for them. These meanings emanate from interpersonal interaction and are modified through interpretation (Blumer, 1969). These processes of "giving meaning" to symbols and interactions largely depend on the individual's context, life experiences and values. Group life, such as families, enables the process of giving meaning between members. Blumer (1969, p. 82) Hence, symbolic interactionism acknowledges the influence of important others on individuals and allows to understand and explain the interpersonal dynamics between family members (Carr & Sequeira, 2007).

Effectuation

Effectuation theory distinguishes between two modes of entrepreneurial behavior, that is, causation and effectuation. Causation is a collective term for strategic theories that “take a particular effect as given and focuses on selecting between means to create that effect” (Sarasvathy, 2001, p. 245). It consists of the activities such as goal-orientation, rational analysis, and formal planning (e.g., Brinckmann et al., 2010). Effectuation is a theory for understanding the entrepreneurial process of decision making in uncertain circumstances (Matalamäki, 2017; Perry, Chandler, & Markova, 2012; Sarasvathy, 2001). Effectuation “takes a set of means as a given and focuses on selecting between possible effects that can be created by that set of means” (Sarasvathy, 2001, p. 245). It provides a framework describing how entrepreneurs can reach their goal by starting with what they have—experience, means, networks—to create commitment among stakeholders, dealing with contingencies along the way (Sarasvathy, Kumar, York, & Bhagavatula, 2014). Hence, the effectuation theory is a relevant theory for explaining phenomena that are influenced by the context and studying the role of human action while dealing with contextual uncertainty and unpredictability (Sarasvathy, 2001).

As for the methodological background, the research purpose and the research questions generally guide the research and determine the research design and consequently the methods to be used to answer the research questions (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2003). Being specific about and reflective of one’s outlook on the world, the way knowledge of this reality is gathered and the methods that are used, is an important part of being an academic researcher. In different stages of the research, I make decisions that impact the research process and its results. Most researchers make their position explicit by attributing themselves to a certain paradigm. Paradigms are ‘a general perspective or way of thinking that reflects fundamental beliefs and assumptions about the nature of organizations’ (Kuhn, 1970). The rationale for this is that a choice for a specific paradigm guides the researcher’s epistemological and methodological choices (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). However, Morgan & Smircich (1980) argue that nowadays researchers cannot confine themselves to a single perspective but should be guided by the question under study. Indeed, realities can be and need to be studied from different perspectives. Searle (1995) criticizes the idea that everything around us is socially constructed and acknowledges that there are also objective, natural and real institutions. Without positioning myself in a certain paradigm, I realize that there are objective and subjective sides to a phenomenon. Following Morgan & Smircich, (1980), I take a pragmatic and reflexive attitude to guide me in this dissertation. For me, the research questions are leading, and I tried to avoid the use of concepts such as ‘truths’ and ‘realities’ and focus on ‘what works’ for the intellectual task at hand (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Consequently, I use multiple methods to gather knowledge. The use of multiple methods leads to a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by using both broad, numeric quantitative and detailed, qualitative data (Creswell, 2003).

In this doctoral thesis, I start with the study of social mechanisms (paper 1). I began in a deductive way by building a bridge between existing literature and the research question. For this purpose, I drew on

social cognitive career theory to develop the hypotheses with regards to the influence of learning experiences and gender on the entrepreneurial intent of young adults with entrepreneurial parents. I identified dependent variables from theory hypothesizing. Data were collected through a large-scale survey among young adults at a Dutch university. Using a binary logistic regression analysis on our survey data, I investigated learning experiences and gender as antecedents of entrepreneurial intent, and I performed a causal mediation analysis on the gender–learning experiences–entrepreneurial intent relationship. Although quantitative research statistically ‘freezes’ the social world (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), its values lie in this snapshot of the social world as it has allowed me to direct my second study on social mechanisms.

For an in-depth understanding of the use of social mechanisms, I turned to qualitative research in paper 2. I performed an exploratory, single-case study of a business family. The individual and group interviews with the family members helped me to develop a better understanding of the research question. I expected to be able to study social mechanisms—framed as informal family governance mechanisms—in the context of nurturing affective commitment to the family business among next-generation family members. The advantage of using a qualitative approach is that it is an appropriate way to address delicate and complex issues of the micro-level of analysis, that is, the interaction and relationships between parents and their children in the family context. Generating empirical material by doing qualitative research is necessary to answer the ‘how’ questions in its full potential. Data were collected through web queries, timelines, individual and group interviews and reflections (Polkinghorne, 2005). I used the social interaction theory abductively to find emerging patterns (Creswell, 2003).

The final empirical study of this dissertation is a qualitative study that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within its context, that is in this study, the phenomenon of intuitive forms of planning within the family business succession process (paper 3). The research questions have led me to adopt an interpretative, qualitative approach using a focus group research design (Morgan, 1996). I invited family business advisors with experience and knowledge on the topic to our focus group. This allowed me to explore the research questions in more depth, as well as to produce narratives that address professional or personal experiences over time (Duncan & Morgan, 1994). In addition to an extensive focus group meeting, I used one pre- and two post-group questionnaires to allow for a reflexive attitude towards the data. To analyze the data, I used an abductive approach to find emerging interpretations, meanings and understandings. After an inductive start, I used the theoretical lenses of effectuation and causation to move back and forth between the data and theory. Inspired by Nag, Corley, and Gioia (2007), Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013) and Murphy and Lambrechts (2015), we looked for first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregated. This systematic approach enabled us to assign new meaning and direct attention to the use of intuitive or effectual, and formal or causal forms of planning in a succession process.

Concluding, this dissertation is based on a sequential exploratory research design which enabled me to direct my study and to achieve the purpose of this study. Both methods are equal in priority and add up to provide a complete understanding of the problem.



Figure 1. Sequential exploratory research design (adapted from Creswell, 2003)

The papers in this dissertation

I will break down the purpose of the present PhD dissertation into multiple research questions within three empirical papers as detailed below.

Summary paper 1

This study focuses on the influence of the family context on the development of entrepreneurial intention (EI) among young adults with entrepreneurial parents. In this study, entrepreneurial parents are self-employed and own one or more businesses. In addition, an entrepreneurial career includes the intent to start a new business (Krueger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; Lanero, Vásquez, & Aza, 2016), and the intent to engage in entrepreneurial activity within existing companies (Fayolle & Liñán, 2014). Although prior research has informed us that entrepreneurial parents serve as important career role models (Hoffmann et al., 2015; Sørensen, 2007), expose their children to their business (McCann & McCann, 2017; Zapkau et al., 2015) and transfer intangible knowledge and values while nurturing their children in the family context (Laspita, Breugst, Heblich, & Patzelt, 2012; Lindquist, Sol, & Van Praag, 2015), we still have little understanding of which social mechanisms lie beneath EI (Daspit et al., 2016). An improved understanding of the family context as an arena in which career intentions are developed, will advance the scholarly debate on how social processes between parents and their children have consequences for the career intentions of their children. In our study, we demonstrate how what parents do or say influences the entrepreneurial intent of their sons and daughters. By focusing on the learning experiences ‘vicarious learning’ and ‘social persuasion’ and studying their mediating influence on the relation between gender and EI, our study helps to improve the understanding of how the family context influences the EI of young adults with entrepreneurial parents. The following research question guides this study:

RQ 1: What is the influence of vicarious learning, social persuasion and gender on the career intentions of young adults with entrepreneurial parents?

Drawing on social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994) and using a binary logistic regression analysis on survey data of 305 Dutch university students, we investigate learning experiences and gender as antecedents of EI and perform a causal mediation analysis on the gender –learning experiences–EI

relationship. This study empirically reveals that parents use social persuasion to stimulate their children's interest in an entrepreneurial career, and that parental preference—an antecedent of social persuasion—explains the relationship between gender and entrepreneurial intent. Furthermore, the study shows the influence of the family context on entrepreneurial intent and confirms the persistence of the image of entrepreneurship as a male-gendered career (Wilson, Kickul, & Marlino, 2007). Theoretically, this study contributes to the entrepreneurial intent literature by using social cognitive career theory as a different theoretical lens through which it provides insight into the social processes between parents and their children (Lent et al., 1994). More importantly, this study acknowledges the family context as an important arena in which career intentions are developed. We suggest that parents use verbal messages to stimulate their children's interest in an entrepreneurial career (Dabney, Chakraverti, & Tai, 2013; Eccles et al., 1993; Juang & Vondracek, 2001; O'Keefe, 2012). In particular, the effect is strengthened as these verbal messages are voiced by entrepreneurial parents, whom their children view as trusted career role models (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994; Schmitt-Rodermund & Arnaud, 2011). Practically, this study may heighten the awareness of entrepreneurial parents about the impact of the verbal messages they may send when discussing careers in the family context and the gender-stereotypical information that these messages may contain. For example, entrepreneurs are still most often referred to as "he", implying that entrepreneurship is a male career. Another example on which entrepreneurial parents may reflect is that they might offer less or different learning experiences to their daughters, which can influence their daughter's perception of entrepreneurship as a feasible and desirable career. For example, in the family business context, fathers are hesitant to involve their daughters in the business and, as such, provide their daughters with little opportunity to talk about their careers.

Although this study shows interesting results, some of our hypotheses are not supported by our data. In particular, the direct and mediating effect of vicarious learning had no significant impact on the entrepreneurial intent of the young adults. Although this paper provides some possible explanations, the recent paper by Myers (2018) may offer a better explanation of the nonsignificance of our findings concerning the impact of vicarious learning on entrepreneurial intent. Myers (2018) theorizes that vicarious learning is often regarded as a one-way, independent observation and imitation of the model by the learner (e.g., Marsick, 2009; Aoki & Feldman, 2014), overlooking the increasingly interpersonal nature of learning. Although set in an organizational context, Myers (2018) suggests that learning occurs in interaction and in a relational context between individuals which is affected by the quality of their relationship, the affective tone of their relationship, and their familiarity and history of interaction with one another. In this study, I defined vicarious learning as learning by observing how others succeed or fail in a certain activity (Lent et al., 1994). From Myer's (2018) perspective, this definition would be too unidimensional for a study in a family context in which, in functioning families, family members have long, affective and qualitative relationships. Taking this idea further, it would be very interesting to study this interactive form of vicarious learning, that is, to study the underlying microprocesses of the

interactions, their contextual antecedents and developmental consequences in the context of business families. For example, scholars could study communication patterns between parents and their sons and daughters and examine the effect on the children's career intent. Furthermore, the impact of early learning in the family context on future learning in the family business is an interesting avenue to explore. Grounded and longitudinal studies could improve our understanding of family learning, as a comprehensive form of transferring knowledge over generations, that helps business families to attain their transgenerational intent and family wealth objectives.

In this paper, additional lines of research are presented. To mention one, social cognitive career theory has proven to be a valuable alternative to the theory of planned behavior (Lent et al., 1994), as studies using social cognitive career theory showed inconclusive results when studying subjective norms (Kreuger, Reilly, & Carsrud, 2000; Kolvereid, 1996; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Souitaris, Zerbini, & Al-Laham, 2007). Building on the evidence of our study, that is, parental social persuasion positively influences the entrepreneurial intent of their children, additional research could be conducted towards other learning experiences in the family context that may impact intent.

Summary paper 2

This study investigates how business families use informal family governance mechanisms to instill and nurture affective commitment to the family business(es) within offspring in the pre-entry stage of succession. To attain their objective of sustaining committed family ownership positions crossing generations, business families necessitate family governance (Suess, 2014; Suess-Reyes, 2017) to organize themselves. Family governance comprises mechanisms of stewarding the business family in the long run, with the primary aim of enhancing and/or safeguarding a well-functioning business family, and sound relationships between the business family and the business(es) it owns (e.g., Suess, 2014). While previous research has mainly focused on more *formal* mechanisms of family governance, such as family meetings, councils, and constitutions (e.g., Artega & Menéndez-Requejo, 2017), the topic of *informal* family governance mechanisms is widely understudied. This is surprising as commitment of family members towards their family enterprise, we argue, is rarely organized through formal contracts or arrangements, but is, in functioning business families, rather instilled and nurtured through social mechanisms, i.e., social processes between important others and individuals that influence the individual to think and act in a certain way (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996; Merton & Merton, 1968). Given that business-owning families that pay insufficient attention to family governance are known to risk to lose the family's commitment to the business (Gersick & Feliu, 2014; Suess-Reyes, 2017), it is important to address this gap. Hence, in this study, by unravelling the informal mechanisms of family governance that govern behavior, we aim to address this gap in the literature and study the phenomenon in the context of affective commitment development. Prior research on affective commitment mainly points to the positive influence of identity and career alignment on the engagement and commitment of next-

generation members towards their family enterprise. However, it has remained unclear how this alignment develops. The following research question leads this study:

RQ 2: How do informal family governance mechanisms enable business families with an intergenerational intent to nurture affective commitment to the family business among offspring?

We perform an exploratory study in a north-western European business family founded in 1826 with two branches and a portfolio of businesses to better understand the phenomenon under study. Data from twenty-four interviews with twenty-one family members involved as owners, partners and offspring, individually and in groups, is used to shed light on our research question. Building on symbolic interactionism, this study empirically points to informal family governance and ownership alignment—a previously neglected phenomenon—to bind the identity and career alignment, thereby nurturing the affective commitment of offspring towards the family business. Furthermore, the study provides an overview of informal mechanisms and empirically reveals how informal mechanisms can be used to develop affective commitment. Moreover, a three-step framework is provided to visualize the process of affective commitment development. Theoretically, this study contributes by heightening our understanding of informal governance literature in general (Chrisman, Chua, Le Breton-Miller, & Steier, 2018), and family governance in particular (e.g., Suess-Reyes, 2017; Suess, 2014). In addition, this study contributes by emphasizing the value of symbolic interactionism as an important theoretical lens for the field of family business research because it helped to identify the use of informal family governance mechanisms—visible symbols and daily interactions with school going offspring—by a business family to embed the pride for their legacy and a desire to contribute towards its growth in the future (e.g., Jennings et al., 2014; Mead, 1934). Furthermore, this study contributes by showing how affective commitment is developed and adds an important dimension to its current understanding as our study shows that *ownership alignment* helps to bind interest and career alignment of next-generation family members, thereby expanding Dawson, Sharma, Irving, Marcus, & Chirico (2015)'s and Sharma and Irving (2005)'s insights on affectively committed successors. Hence, this study also adds to the affective commitment literature by revealing the underlying mechanisms that activate affective commitment development (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Importantly, by focusing on the *business family* as our unit of analysis, a core engine of economic and social welfare, this study responds to a need for a better understanding of the unique way business families attain their goals of transgenerational intent and family wealth (Habbershon & Pistrui, 2002; Le Breton-Miller & Miller, 2018). Practically, this study may enlarge the family governance toolbox of business families and their advisors. The overview of the informal governance mechanisms within the different stages of the affective commitment development process may help business families and their advisors to identify mechanisms that are appropriate for a certain stage in the process. Furthermore, the findings of the additional stage of ownership alignment

may inspire family business owners and their advisers to look differently at the development of affective commitment in the succession process.

This dissertation has responded to several calls for more research on business families and has added to the scientific debate on this topic. However, it is clear that more knowledge is needed on the functioning of business families to move the debate forward. Therefore, I suggest several interesting lines of research. One of the outcomes of this study is that the business family uses a next-generation program to create a shared ownership group membership among two branches of next-generation owners. The next-generation program may point to a very interesting link with the literature on corporate strategy and multi-business organizations, i.e., organizations with multiple business units (Greve, 2003). In multi-business organizations, alignment between business units is driven by competence, governance and flexibility and requires sound coordination between the corporate level and the business unit level (Foss & Christensen, 1996; Reynolds & Yetton, 2015). The literature on corporate coherence (Teece, Rumelt, Dosi, & Winter, 1994) shows that coordination and learning as well as the generation and exploitation of diversity create coherent organizations. To heighten our understanding of both worlds, future research may find it particularly interesting to examine whether business families with multiple family branches align their branches in similar or different ways as compared to how multi-business organizations align their business units. In addition, the next-generation program functions as an area for learning. It would be interesting to understand how learning in ownership programs or other educational family institutions takes place and how it affects the succession process and the performance of the business(es). For example, scholars could investigate how business families strengthen the entrepreneurial orientation within the next-generation ownership groups and how they develop the entrepreneurial mindset and skills of the next generation (Zellweger, Nason, & Nordqvist, 2011). Second, Frank, Suess-Reyes, Fuetsch, & Kessler (2019) suggest that family, business and business families all have their own systems, in which the business family system functions as an intermediate system between the family and the business. From this perspective, it would be interesting to investigate how the next-generation program can help the business family to move the next generation from the family system to the business family system in order to increase the next generation's self-conception as owners (Frank et al., 2019).

Summary paper 3

This study investigates how and when intuitive forms of planning can be used in a family firms' succession process and how contingencies can trigger a switch in planning logic. We argue that a formal, causal logic is not always evident in the succession process, a more intuitive, effectual logic might be needed in uncertain stages and circumstances. Indeed, prior evidence has shown that the succession process is a strategic, long-term and systematic process that needs to be carefully and timely planned in order to be effective and successful (Daspit, Chrisman, Sharma, Pearson, & Long, 2017; Dyck, Mauws,

Starke, & Miske, 2002; Eddleston, Kellermans, Floyd, Crittenden, & Crittenden, 2013). However, few business families have a succession plan in place (Westhead, 2003), and tend to start when a trusted advisor is available (Sharma et al., 2001). In addition, prior research shows that business families are particularly reluctant to plan in the early phases of the succession process and seem to prefer “intuitive” forms of planning over formal planning procedures (Daspit et al., 2016; McMullen & Warnick, 2015; Kirby & Lee, 1996). Given that succession processes are of great importance to business families in order to attain their goal of transgenerational intent and family wealth (Habbershon & Pistrui, 2002), it is important to address this gap and heighten our understanding of the value of intuitive forms of planning. Therefore, we add effectuation theory to the succession debate, a decision-making theory that explains behavior under uncertain circumstances (Saravathy, 2001) to address the following research questions.

RQ 3: How and when are effectual and causal logics used in a succession process that evolves over time?

RQ 4: How can contingencies trigger a switch in logic during the succession process?

We use a focus group of experienced family business advisors to gain a holistic understanding of the succession process and its underlying logics. Building on effectuation theory, this study empirically reveals that intuitive forms of planning are an integral part of the succession process containing causal and effectual logics and activities. Both logics are situationally and flexibly used to face the uniqueness and unpredictable nature of the succession process and to manage the relational dynamics in the family, when facing tasks, dilemmas and contingencies. Contingencies can trigger a switch in logic during the succession process. In addition, an illustration of a process structure of a succession process and a table with intuitive activities is provided. Theoretically, this study contributes to family business, advising and strategy literatures. First, this study contributes to the family business succession literature by showing that intuitive forms of planning are an integral part of the succession process in family firms. Intuitive forms of planning can complement or substitute formal ones. Hence, we advance the scientific debate on the value of intuitive forms of planning in these types of families and businesses (Daspit et al., 2016; Kirby & Lee, 1996) Second, this research adds to the (family business) advising literature by showing that succession processes in family firms are unique, and outcomes are unpredictable. By highlighting the use of intuitive logics and the occurrence of contingencies and dilemmas in the succession process, the findings challenge the widely held assumption that the succession process is a predictive, strategic one (e.g., Daspit et al., 2017; Dyck et al., 2002; Eddleston et al., 2013). The strategy literature can benefit from our research findings because, as our respondents acknowledge, we show the importance of an effectual logic within a succession process; a phenomenon which has so far remained largely unexplored (e.g., Brinckmann et al., 2010; Saravathy, 2001). Practically, this study shows that business families do not solely have to rely on formal plans and activities, but they can also use intuitive

forms of planning and activities during the process. The illustration of the process structure, created by the advisors, can give way to another narrative that can be told to families, owners, managers, supervisors, advisors, scholars, professors and students, and as such, provide an alternative to the prevalently used stories of rational and formal planning of succession processes. Furthermore, our study shows the importance for business families to build strong families with good communication and decision-making skills in order to avoid conflict, maintain family harmony and prevent loss of business continuity.

In this paper, several interesting lines of research are presented that may advance the scientific debate on the value of intuitive logics, the unsettling nature of sensitive topics in the family and the occurrence of contingencies in the succession process (Daspit et al., 2016; Kirby & Lee, 1996). It is important to advance the debate on succession processes because successful successions are critical for the attainment of the goals of transgenerational intent and family wealth of business families (Habbershon & Pistrui, 2002). Looking at the big debates in the field of family business literature, the effectuation concept of affordable loss may fit in the discussions about the loss/preservation of social emotional wealth in family firms (e.g., Gomez-Mejia, Haynes, Nuñez-Nickel, Jacobson, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007; Berrone, Cruz, & Gomez-Mejia, 2012; Sarasvathy, 2001). Social emotional wealth suggests that family firms are typically motivated by, and committed to, the preservation of their social emotional wealth, that is the influence and control of family members in the family firm, the identification of family members with the firm, binding social ties, emotional attachment and the renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007). It is surprising that most research on social emotional wealth is done in the family business context, using primarily quantitative methods. It could be argued that it would be more interesting to study social emotional wealth in the context of *business families* by means of *qualitative methods* to better understand how this construct works in real life. Moreover, our study points towards the role of intuitive logics to manage relational dynamics in the family in the succession process. This outcome can be related to the concepts of binding social ties and emotional attachment in the social emotional wealth model. Scholars could study the role of intuitive logics in binding family relationships in the succession process and, hence, better understand how the quality of family relationships may influence the way a business family plans for succession (Umans, Lybaert, Steijvers, & Voordeckers, 2019).

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation is to enrich the knowledge on the early phases of the succession process by explaining the role of social mechanisms in business families. By means of three separate studies, this dissertation provides more insight into the early phases of the succession process, the business family context and social mechanisms. I was able to unveil the previously obscure process long-lived business families use during the pre-entry stages of their offspring's life (before career decisions have

been made). I found extensive evidence of the use of social mechanisms, that is parental social persuasion to enhance offspring's entrepreneurial intent and informal family governance mechanisms to attract and engage the next-generation family members in business. Furthermore, this dissertation adds an important dimension to the development of affective commitment –an important aspect in the early phases of the succession process– as we find that ownership alignment helps to bind identity and career alignment of next-generation family members. We found that these three forms of alignment do not develop by chance but rather through enabling informal family governance mechanisms. From a planning perspective, this dissertation points towards the use of informal, intuitive forms of planning and challenges the widely held assumption that the succession process is a predictive, strategic one. As such, my dissertation has reached its aim to enrich the early phases of the succession process en has improved our understanding of the role of social mechanisms in business families. In addition, this dissertation has helped to further the current 'big debates' on entrepreneurial intent, family governance and affective commitment. Importantly, this dissertation also provides ample tools to business families and their advisers to successfully navigate through the fuzzy front end of the succession process.

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