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Abstract

Business owning parents face the decision of whether to involve their own children in the family business. Employing family members for little or no wages is widely documented in the hospitality and tourism industries, though children's role in such businesses is often missing from the literature. This paper seeks to address this gap by exploring parental motives for involving children in the family business and the impact of such decisions on parent-child relationships in later life. The paper adopts a multi-generational approach, comparing both parent's and children's accounts of adolescent work performed at the family business. The research findings are based on semi-structured interviews with 19 individuals across five restaurant owning families. The paper concludes that parental motives for adolescent work are a composition of convenience, economic gain, and an attempt to educate the next generation. We further argue that adolescent work serves as an 'imprinting' mechanism and demonstrate that children perceive their family business involvement to be a purely economic endeavour when their parents neglect to practice imprinting. The research findings indicate that when this happens, offspring recall their adolescent work experience negatively and it is detrimental to parent-child relationships. The originality of the paper stems from the research findings which are based on interviews among adults who recalled their past experiences of adolescent work, thus allowing the longer lasting impact of adolescent work on parent-child relationships to be explored, whereas previous work adopting a similar focus has been conducted among adolescents.

Key words: child labour; adolescent work; family business; imprinting; parent-child relationships, multi-generational approach

Introduction

Family businesses account for 60-98% of all firms in different regions of the world (Miller and Le-Breton Miller, 2005). The decision to involve one's offspring in work is one faced by almost half of parents globally, as research suggests that 45% of adolescents report working in their family business by the time they reach age 15 (Statistics Canada, 2012). The precise motives of parents who do so, however, have yet to be established. The ethnic minority business literature attributes such decisions to cost cutting practices (Lampugnani and Holton, 1991; Tastsaglou, 2009; Strickland, 2011) borne out of economic necessity. A preference for involving children in work (for free) has also been noted in the hospitality and tourism industries (e.g. Bakas, 2018), though children's role within the tourism industry is often

missing from the literature (Poria and Timothy, 2014) including their own interpretation of the work they perform (Canosa and Schanzel, 2021; Liebel and Invernizzi, 2019).

Adolescent work in a family business context involves both generations working together, which for hospitality business owners may require working in close proximity to one's children. Therefore, an important question emerges about the motives of such parents as well as whether the work serves to strengthen parent-child relationships or weaken them. Previous research has demonstrated that adolescents who work in their own family businesses report better parent-child relationships than their non-family working counterparts (Houshmand *et al.*, 2017). However, research has yet to examine these relationships when children reach adulthood to explore if such parent-child relationships continue to flourish, and this is precisely the aim of this paper.

A qualitative and multi-generational approach was adopted. This explored both parental motives for involving their offspring, and the lived experiences of children who had performed adolescent work. The research findings are based on semi-structured interviews with 19 individuals across five Italian families. Each of the families operated a family-run restaurant business in the UK. In this paper we demonstrate that parental motives for adolescent work are a composition of convenience, economic gain, and an attempt to educate the next generation. In addition, we draw on the theoretical lens of 'imprinting', a concept widely applied in family business research (Marques *et al.*, 2022), to explain the longer lasting effects of adolescent work on parent-child relationships. Imprinting refers to a process whereby a focal entity develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment during a period of brief susceptibility (Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013) and, in this paper, we interpret parental attempts to instil values, intentions and knowledge in their offspring during adolescent work experiences as examples of imprinting. We argue that adolescent work serves as an 'imprinting' mechanism and demonstrate that parents who neglect to practice this process risk their offspring perceiving family business involvement to be a purely economic endeavour. When imprinting is not practiced, the research findings suggest that offspring recall their adolescent work experience negatively and family discord prevails.

The paper draws parallels with Murphy and Lambrecht's (2015) in the family business literature. Both adopt a qualitative approach and focus on the role of helping, but the main difference is that this study focuses on the influence of family business involvement on parent-child relationships whereas Murphy and Lambrecht's (2015) study focused on how this influenced successor intentions. There are further parallels between this paper and a number of others in the hospitality and tourism literature which adopt a 'whole family' approach. Seymour's (2015) study on 'displaying families' is perhaps the most similar in that it was among the first to focus on business owning families' relationships with each other, rather than the physical space of the commercial home (see Lynch, 2005). Whereas Seymour's (2015) sample consisted mainly of parents who were commercial homeowners (and four children), this paper includes a more balanced sample of parents and their offspring and focuses on what happens in a non-domestic setting.

The remainder of the paper develops through four sections beginning with a review of the extant literature on adolescent work within a hospitality and family business context. The paper then presents the study's methodology, with particular attention paid to the multi-generational approach adopted. The findings precede the discussion of our research, and conclusions and recommendations for future research complete the paper.

Adolescent work

Undertaking a job is as an important first step towards independence and adulthood taken by millions of teenagers around the globe (Mortimer, 2005; Staff *et al.*, 2009). Adolescent work “builds character and teaches youngsters what ‘real life’ is all about” (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986: 36). However, there has been considerable debate within the family studies literature as to whether adolescent work has a positive or negative impact on adolescent development and relationships with parents (Houshmand *et al.*, 2017). Those who advocate the greater sense of independence to arise from performing adolescent work (e.g. Mortimer and Shanahan, 1994) face criticism from those who highlight the stress levels that accompany it along with the jeopardy it poses to adolescents' family commitment (Steinberg *et al.*, 1982). The debate has more recently moved on to consider career trajectories of adolescents and their transition into the workforce (Vuolo *et al.*, 2014; Mortimer *et al.*, 2016) given the heterogeneity of outcomes among adolescents engaged in work.

Among the negative outcomes associated with adolescent work is the reduction in the time spent with one's family (Ashbourne and Daly, 2010). Yet, in the context of family businesses spending time at work and with families is not mutually exclusive. Thus, the negative impacts of adolescent work may be mitigated within family businesses, and this has proven fertile ground for research. Recently, longitudinal research has demonstrated that adolescents who work in their family firms on a year-round basis report better parent-child relationships and better psychological well-being than their non-family working counterparts (Houshmand *et al.*, 2017). As such, research on adolescent work has finally begun to acknowledge the nature of the employer, which within the context of family businesses is also one's parents.

Family businesses operate in a broad range of industries (Cheng, 2014), are the most prevalent business form in South East Asia (Carney and Gedajlovic, 2002), and account for 44% of large organisations in Western Europe (Faccio and Lang, 2002) and up to 89% of tax returns in the United States (Astrachan and Shanker, 2003). Casual work at the family business is considered part of the pre-entry stage for family business succession (Stavrou and Swiercz, 1998) and adolescence is a pinnacle time for career development (Savickas, 2002) during which children will explore different occupations and develop their careers aspirations (Hartung *et al.*, 2005; Tracey, 2002). Adolescents with a family business background must tread carefully when exploring their career aspirations, balancing their own personal career interests against the employment offered at the family business (Schroder *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, parents face a similar dilemma in balancing the desire to see their life's work continued through their children on one hand, against allowing children to forge their own

career interests on the other (von Schlippe and Groth, 2006). Parents are therefore ‘active agents’ (see Young and Friesen, 1992) and the most important advisors in the career decision-making process (Dietrich and Kracke, 2009). Since business owning parents are the ones who engage offspring in adolescent work, this might be an attempt to nudge them towards a particular career path at the family business – the alternatives being full time employment beyond the family business and founding one’s own venture (Schroder *et al.*, 2011; Zellweger *et al.*, 2011).

Children’s role within the family unit

There is a clear economic rationale to involve children in the family business. Labour is often the largest cost associated with running a restaurant (Lashley, 2000) and ethnic restaurant owners frequently employ family and relatives for little or no remuneration in wages (Johns *et al.*, 1989). This type of cost cutting is widely accepted in ethnic small businesses (Lampugnani and Holton, 1991), particularly in the restaurant sector (Tastsaglou, 2009), though is less prevalent among Anglo-Saxon restaurants (Lashley, 2000) and small businesses in general (Hakim, 2003). Ethnic restaurants particularly are under constant financial pressure and initially unable to employ people beyond the family structure (Strickland, 2011). Consequently, this phenomenon of collective family labour for profit is culturally acceptable in many ethnic communities and instilled in children from an early age (De Lepervanche, 1988). More recently, Bakas (2018) found similar results based on participant observations of tourism microentrepreneurs in Crete, Greece, finding that parents prefer their offspring to help (for free) rather than employ someone as this would reduce profits. This phenomenon of children working from a young age within a family business is an indication of capitalism ‘sucking’ (Harman, 2010: p11) people into labour to increase the efficiency of the family’s economic output. Without children’s involvement, family business survival rates would be much lower (Bakas, 2018) highlighting the family’s role as an economic unit and not merely a social grouping (Basu, 2004).

The suggestion that family business owners are galvanised by economic motives presents something of a paradox within the context of the small hospitality sector. In a survey of 200 family businesses in Australia, Getz and Carlsen (2000) found that the main reason for starting a small, hospitality business was a desire for lifestyle enhancement. Similar research in Canada and Denmark has demonstrated that lifestyle and autonomy goals predominate small hospitality businesses with a profit or growth orientation existing in a minority of such firms (Getz and Petersen, 2005). In the UK, classical economic goals (to profit maximise) exist in just one in eight businesses in the small accommodation sector (Lashley and Rowson, 2007) with those operating such businesses lacking hotel management experience and few reporting working in the hospitality industry previously (Lashley and Rowson, 2010). The absence of economic goals among small hospitality business owners therefore casts doubt on whether parents who involve their children in the family hospitality business do so owing to an economic incentive, since their start up motives lack the same basis.

Children and families in hospitality

Children's role within the tourism industry is often missing from the literature (Poria and Timothy, 2014) despite their involvement in family businesses which proliferate within the tourism industry (Schanzel *et al.*, 2012). In a review of the existing literature within hospitality and tourism family entrepreneurship, Canosa and Schanzel (2021) found limited research that focused specifically on the role of children within such businesses. Instead, children are often referred to, in passing, as helpers (Basu, 2004; Bosworth, Wilson-Youlden, 2019; Strickland, 2011; Wilson, 2007; Zagkotsi, 2014; Zhao, 2009), as beneficiaries of inheritance (Wilson, 2007), and as recipients of intergenerational knowledge (Bakas, 2018) and entrepreneurial skills (Kawharu *et al.*, 2017). The invisibility of child workers within the literature has been partly attributed to certain 'protectionist' views of child labour and the negative stigma surrounding it (e.g. Estrada, 2019; Invernizzi, 2005) since internationally policy generally condemns child labour and seeks to eradicate it in all forms (Canosa and Schanzel, 2021). Childhood represents a carefree time spent in pursuit of education and recreation (Ansell, 2005). Child labour often carries with it the negative connotations of child exploitation, where the work is hazardous or exploitative and interferes with a child's education, development, or long-term prospects (Bakas, 2018; Bromley and Mackie, 2009). However, Bromley and Mackie (2009) found that work can be a positive experience for children since they often gain enjoyment and economic empowerment from it. The authors argue that such universal condemnation of child labour requires a more flexible approach and have been joined by others in calling for more research on children's own interpretation of the work they perform (Canosa and Schanzel, 2021; Liebel and Invernizzi, 2019).

While children's voices are notably absent from the literature, several hospitality studies have adopted a 'whole family' approach. Lugosi *et al.* (2016) examined what happens when family life is brought into the public eye, for instance, when guests with children are treated in different ways by hosts and other guests. Lugosi *et al.*'s (2016) study exemplifies research on families as consumers of hospitality experiences, though families as producers of hospitality experiences has also proven fertile ground for research, particularly with regards to the 'commercial home' (Lynch, 2005). Commercial homes are accommodation types where guests pay to stay in a private home where interaction takes place with a host and/or family usually living upon the premises with whom a degree of the public space is shared (Lynch, 2005). The private home therefore becomes a 'stage' (Di Domenico and Lynch, 2007) for the hospitality transaction but one on which the hosting family's life is observable to paying guests. Later studies adopted the lens of the 'performance' to understand the hosting family's home-making performance (Lynch *et al.*, 2009) with Benmore (2009) adding the concept of emotional labour to illustrate that 'bad' emotions were often hidden by family actors when interacting with guests.

Much of the research in this area has focused on the host's relationship with their commercial home, namely, the physical space and how this influences their hosting (McIntosh *et al.*, 2011) with fewer studies focusing on how this affects the relationships between the family members which share it. Seymour (2015) was among the first to address this gap, adopting Finch's (2007) notion of 'display' to show that hosting families must "be hypervisible while

also, on certain occasions, exhibiting ‘displayed reticence’ (Seymour, 2015: p423) so as not to appear privileged over guests. Based on findings from 19 participants across hotels, pubs and boarding houses, Seymour (2015) illustrates that this ‘displayed reticence’ can manifest itself through serving family members last, offering them the less choicest cuts of meat, and the necessity to remind children not to interrupt hosting parents when conversing with guests, despite this not applying vice versa. Several questions arise from the above work, notably, whether children can separate emotional family life with working in the family business as easily as adults, and what long-term influences this work has on parent-child relationships in adulthood. These questions are addressed throughout this paper, the main difference being that whereas previous research has focused on commercial homes this research explores what happens in non-domestic settings.

Method

Murphy and Lambrecht (2015) note that much of the literature on adolescent work within a family business context has adopted a quantitative approach. Since the focus of this paper was to give voice to children’s experiences of adolescent work and to explore generational accounts, a qualitative and interpretative approach was adopted. Qualitative research is appropriate when only partial theories exist or when the extent theory does not capture the complexity of the phenomenon under consideration (Cresswell, 2007). Moreover, qualitative approaches are used to explore soft issues and search for the meaning that lies beyond actions focusing on understanding rather than measuring (Nordqvist *et al.*, 2009; Silverman, 2010). Despite the multi-generational approach taken, no children (under 18) were included in the study and therefore some of the methodological and ethical issues when researching children in hospitality and tourism (Canosa *et al.*, 2016; Khoo-Latimore, 2015) were circumvented. This raises an important question about recall since adolescent work, in some cases, was something undertaken years (even decades) ago. However, adolescent work itself was not the focus of the study, of interest was how these experiences had shaped parent-child relationships in later life and therefore interviewing offspring in adulthood was entirely appropriate.

Exploring the role that adolescent work plays in parent-child relationships presented a methodological challenge nonetheless. There was potential for family business involvement to vary considerably among participants due to differences such as family size and structure, cultural interpretations of parenting, and the relative importance of education to name but a few. The research was therefore conducted among Italian families in the UK, due to the assumption that they would have a common understanding of the concepts of ‘work’ and ‘family’, thus allowing parent-child relationships to be explored without the interference of cultural variations. Both parent and child generations were included (where possible) in the sample and this was essential to shed light on the contrasting themes that each generation placed priority on. For example, some children spoke of their parents as ‘hard teachers’ who ‘shouted a lot’, something which was omitted when parents constructed their own accounts.

Family relationships are difficult to detect if a single source is relied upon (Ram *et al.*, 2001), therefore families were only included in the study if more than one member had participated.

Because the phenomenon of interest is experiences of adolescent work within a family business context, the sample was purposefully chosen based on participants' family business background. We drew on the lead researcher's personal network of family-owned restaurants to approach participants. The researcher knew many of these restaurants proclaimed multi-generational family involvement and so he expected to find some interesting stories about adolescent work among the generation presently at the helm, based on their experiences as children in their parents' businesses. The researcher's personal network produced two Italian families working in the restaurant sector, from which four participants were included in the sample. Snowballing from these initial families identified three more Italian families also operating in the restaurant sector. The sample now included eight participants across five families. However, two of these families were represented by a single participant and so further participants were sourced from the five existing families to reach a total of 19 participants. The number of 19 participants was not predetermined in any way but evolved with the need to collect more data from families with single representation.

All participants are anonymous and referred to by a code which denotes their family grouping (i.e. A – E) and the order in which they were interviewed (i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc). Table 1 profiles the generational characteristics of each family and illustrates that multi-generational accounts were obtained in all families except for family D. The table also illustrates that families A and C included interviews with founding owners and in both cases these were Italian-born males who had migrated from Italy in decades previous. Despite universally identifying as Italians, by their own admission, these families had become somewhat 'Anglicised' even in the case of first-generation Italian migrants.

Table 1 - Generational characteristics of participants

| Family | A | B | C | D | E |
|--------------|--------|----|--------|--------|----------------|
| Founding | A1; A2 | | C1; C2 | | |
| Generation 2 | A3; A4 | B1 | C3; C4 | D1; D2 | |
| Generation 3 | | B2 | | | |
| Generation 4 | | | | | E1; E2 |
| Generation 5 | | | | | E3; E4; E5; E6 |
| Total | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 7 |

A thematic analysis of the interview data was undertaken, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step approach. Interviews were transcribed and analysed by a single author. The most basic unit of analysis was a quote, defined as a statement made by a family member who expressed an opinion, experience or attitude about their experiences of adolescent work. These first order quotes were then compared and contrasted with accounts from other family members within the same family and across families and then, using the software package

NVivo, assigned to one or more existing codes or a new code created. This coded data was then organised into second order themes which emerged from the focus of the study (i.e. to understand the impact of adolescent work on parent-child relationships). As such, some of the second order themes were derived from both the raw information itself as well as from the existing theoretical ideas and literature. The results of the study reveal contrasting experiences of adolescent work at the family business, which will be discussed in the following section.

Findings

The findings will be presented in three parts, explaining parental motives for involving children in the family business (the why), the resulting experiences of adolescent work (the what) and the impact on parent-child relationships (the so what).

Parental motives (the why)

The findings reveal a heterogeneity of motives for involving children in the family business. The account of C1 illustrates the need for collective family labour (De Lepervance, 1988), particularly in the case of fledgling businesses which have yet to establish a consistent pattern of income, and some parents' preference for their offspring to help (for free) rather than employing a non-family member which would reduce profits (Bakas, 2018). While some participants were clearly conscious of the economic benefit that involving their children in the business resulted in, others (including co-parents within the same family) gave primacy to educational outcomes. For C2, adolescent work was an opportunity through which to develop the general business acumen within the next generation in the event that they would pursue their own self-employment endeavours as adults. For others (E1), it represented the continuation of a family tradition – something that developed one's work ethic and therefore was never questioned.

"When we started here, [my eldest daughter] was only 13/14 and [the restaurant] was doing nothing. So, on some days we opened the restaurant with just me, [my wife] and the girls" – **C1, Father of three**

"I have passed down not to take things for granted and that although you might be doing well now there may come a time when you are not doing so well so don't get complacent. You have to keep changing, don't stand still" – **C2, Mother of three**

"I think it gave me certain values and it told me that I wouldn't get anything for nothing. It was just ingrained in us, it was just what we did and it was accepted and you never questioned it...And it has been great because I think what I have done with [my daughter] has been exactly the same" – **E1, Father to E2**

Other accounts revealed a reluctance to look beyond the family unit for help with childcare, involving children at the restaurant therefore emerged as a convenient alternative when relatives were too geographically remote to care for younger members of the family on occasions that the restaurant was open for business. In sum, parental motives for involving children at the family business are multi-faceted and it is possible for parents to foster multiple motives without these being mutually exclusive. The final quote (A1) reminds us that adolescent work is not purely the domain of children of business owing parents, indeed other younger family members can be ‘sucked’ into labour (Harman, 2010) to drive efficiencies. Interestingly, A1 opines that it is indeed she who is ‘helping’ the family (through financial remuneration) rather than her fellow kin helping the business (through their labour).

“With the family business, I have helped [the incomes of] my own family, my nieces. I’ve had them all, honestly. They would do anything for me and [my husband]. They would come when I needed them, at short notice just like that” – **A2, Mother to A3 and A4**

Children’s experiences of adolescent work (the what)

Working at the family business was an omnipresent feature among the younger generations interviewed. However, where family business ownership spanned multiple generations this experience also extended to parent generations who had been involved as children. As adults, children reflected on their work at the family business positively, except for the two children in family D. Participants frequently recalled the hard work and sense of enjoyment involved and, in doing so, corroborate the findings of other studies who highlight that adolescent work can be positive despite the stigma associated with it (Estrada, 2019; Invernizzi, 2005). Two individuals from different families recalled that the sense of responsibility (A4) and customer interaction (C3) involved helped them to ‘grow up’.

“So I had to run the shop, which I always recollect helped me to grow up in many ways because being in charge of a shop at 13/14... was a big responsibility” - **A4, Son of A1 and A2**

“I remember that I was so scared. But that was a good experience as well, I grew up quite fast working in Front of House and talking to customers, that was really good” – **C3, Daughter of C1 and C2**

"I remember enjoying it and wanting to come, mainly because you got a bit of pocket money as well. My friend used to come with me....so we would be downstairs messing about" - **C4, Daughter of C1 and C2**

"It was fun, working hard and surrounded by your family" **E2, Daughter of E1**

The previous section illustrated that adolescent work provides a vehicle through which parents can instil certain values (e.g. work ethic), business advice and general life lessons

within their children. The following quotes demonstrate that the educative function of adolescent work is not lost on such family members.

"Obviously it has taught me that you have to work hard to live in a big house and to provide for your family and stuff. And to do something that you enjoy because there is no point doing something that you would not enjoy because you won't get anything out of it." - **B2, Daughter of B1**

"As kids we were all expected to do some work in those businesses...from the age of 12 and 13. We would be making pork pies, we would be doing all sorts of menial tasks and it was part of our education." – **E1, Father to E2**

It was in family D that experiences of adolescent work were recalled much more negatively. The accounts of the two siblings below suggest that adolescent work was a forced endeavour for younger family members, which is a departure from the voluntarism evident in the accounts of the families above.

"You can imagine that at 12 - 14 years old, I wasn't the normal school child that had friends and went out and played and whatever. I used to come home and have to work at night rather than going out with my friends...He had [his children] there that he didn't have to pay. He didn't have to put job adverts out there to get people in. He knew he had his family and he knew he could rule us with an iron fist" – **D1, Brother to D2**

"We all worked. [My eldest brother] was on the floor, waiting on. And [my other brother] was in the kitchen. So my dad never employed anybody as soon as we got the restaurants because there are different ages between us [and we could fill all the roles]... But my dad was all about the business. It was not about the family, which was sad...Dad loved his children, but he could never show his love because he was so busy in his business that his children became his business. We weren't children anymore." – **D2, Sister to D1**

Child labour is often conflated with child exploitation, the latter involving hazardous or exploitative work that interferes with a child's education, development or long-term prospects (Bakas, 2018; Bromley and Mackie, 2009). This was undoubtedly the case for D1 who rarely attended school, something which was detrimental to his career options in later life:

"I had always been steered away from [school] when I was younger. I had never sat any exams because I never hardly went to school. From the age of 12 I was never hardly at school. I was working in the restaurant for him...School wasn't important, education for my father wasn't important...But I'm not sure it was a good thing because I never had a choice to be anything else that I wanted be, you know" – **D1, Brother to D2**

The accounts of family D illustrate that adolescent work within a family business context is not universally a positive experience, despite research suggesting that children who work in their own family business report better parent-child relationships than their non-family

counterparts (Houshmand *et al.*, 2018). This begs the question as to what impact does negative experiences of adolescent work have on parent-child relationships.

Parent-child relationships (the so what)

The relationships between generations were generally harmonious across the participants interviewed. Some “clashes” between father and daughter were reported within family C, as the younger generation reached early adulthood, and this led two members (C3 and C4) to strike away from the family business and establish restaurants of their own, owing to a desire to “*have a change from my dad*”. However, this served to “*mellow*” the patriarchal figure and the family resumed being an intimate one soon afterwards. Inevitably, it was in family D where family discord was still prevalent.

“There is [tension] now and there always has been, but this is because he has his views and I have mine. We weren’t allowed to express them growing up, and having not being able to express views with someone you go like that [HANDS PARTING GESTURE] as you get older. And then it is a lot harder to come back... But there is no way that my boys are gonna be, well, not that I have a business anymore but even if I had I wouldn’t be pushing them down that line anyway. Only if they wanted to do it.” – D1, Brother to D2

“[My relationship] is not going to be very positive for my dad because my dad was very money minded. He was the boss of us all. And my mum was the skivvy” – D2, Sister to D1

Children with negative early experiences at the family business appear to frame their present-day relationship with their parents through reference to their past adolescent work experiences, suggesting that it has long lasting effects. Furthermore, as D1 illustrates children who have experienced adolescent work negatively themselves are mindful of this when making their own parental decisions. Siblings D1 and D2 were both self-employed periodically though neglected to involve their own offspring in these businesses. This contrasts with participants who recalled their experiences of adolescent work more positively, whose children were involved in the family restaurant business.

“You know I can have the kids there and that is my choice. It is probably not the ideal choice but sometimes it is better than having childcare, isn’t it, if you can look after them yourself instead of somebody else....I said to my eldest that you have to do what you are happy with. But she is so eager, even now at six she sets tables and clears glasses” – C3, Daughter of C1 and C2 and mother of two

Another theme stemming from the negative experiences of family D was that of ‘reciprocity’, something which emerged when D1 had an opportunity to purchase a restaurant from his father during adulthood.

“I went down and looked around it and thought yeah, let’s go for it, I can make this work...So I came to an agreement with my father. And sometimes, in a way, that is where they come in handy now and again your parents, fathers. I said to him “look, after all of those years that I put in for you when I was growing up, helping to make your place a success, now it is my turn...give me something back”. So we came to an agreement where I paid him so much a week until I’d paid him what he felt it was worth at that time. So no interest, no loan, no risk” – D1, Brother to D2

This informal arrangement between D1 and his father removed the need to secure funds from a commercial lender, and D1 clearly views this financial relief as a form of recompense for his adolescent work at the family business during which he was *“working for nothing, I wasn’t getting paid”*. While other children praised the assistance (financial or otherwise) they received from parents when launching their own restaurant businesses, D1’s account is unique in two ways. First, there is an expectation of reciprocity that is clearly conveyed from the younger generation to the parent generation. Second, this expectation is formed from the adolescent work undertaken years earlier.

Discussion

Seymour’s (2015) research on hotel and pub operators addressed a gap in the literature by focusing on hosting family’s relationships with each other (rather than the physical space), adopting the theoretical lens of ‘display’ (Finch, 2007) to focus on what families do rather than be concerned with their composition (Morgan, 1996). While this is a promising step in the right direction and can be applied adequately to the research findings to explain *why* parents bestow adolescent work obligations on their offspring and *what* experiences this yields for the next generation, it does not explain the residual effects that endure into adulthood and shape parent-child relationships some years later (the *so what*). The research findings of this paper confirm earlier work which has argued that child labour can be a positive experience (Bromley and Mackie, 2009), but has also uncovered work more akin to exploitation, characterised by work which is to the detriment of a child’s education, development and long term prospects (Bakas, 2018; Bromley and Mackie, 2009). The research findings suggest that the work performed as adolescents has a longer lasting impact on parent-child relationships, something which is beyond the explanatory power of ‘display’ (Finch, 2007) and was only surfaced through interviewing the next generations in adulthood. The paper borrows the theoretical lens of ‘imprinting’ to explain how these residual effects come to manifest. Imprinting was first coined by Oskar Heinroth in 1911 and developed later by Konrad Lorenz (1935). It has been widely applied in family business research (e.g., Ahn, 2018; Braun & Sharma, 2007; Erdogan et al., 2020; Jaskiewicz et al., 2015; Kidwell et al., 2018; Pieper et al., 2015) for a variety of purposes including most recently as a mechanism for developing successor intentions (Marques *et al.*, 2022), as well as more widely in management (Boeker, 1989), psychology (Hoffman, 2014; Sluckin, 2017) and organisation theory (Burton & Beckman, 2007; Marquis, 2003). Marquis and Tilcsik (2013) define imprinting as “a process whereby, during a brief period of susceptibility, a focal entity

develops characteristics that reflect prominent features of the environment, and these characteristics continue to persist despite significant environmental changes in subsequent periods” (p. 8). The main elements to describe an imprinting situation are the focal entity (entity bearing the imprint), the sources of imprints (imprinting entities), the sensitive periods, the imprinting mechanisms, and the resulting imprinting content (Marquis and Tilcsik, 2013). In the context of the research findings, childhood and/or adolescence is considered the sensitive period, upon which there is some consensus (Dawson et al., 2015; Lambrecht, 2005). The focal and imprinting entities are children and their parents respectively. Adolescent work, where younger and older generations work together, therefore constitutes the mechanism, with the imprinting content determined by the parents who bestowed it.

Younger family members who had recalled their experiences of adolescent work fondly (families A, B, C and E) were characterised by the idea that adolescent work was instrumental in teaching them something, hence adolescent work serves as an imprinting mechanism. Equally, parent generations within the same families were characterised by a desire to teach, engrain, or pass on certain values (imprinting content) which often related to work ethic, the value of money, or the idea that running a restaurant was a good line of business or lifestyle. In contrast, such imprinting situations were absent from the accounts of siblings in family D who likened their work at the family business to a form of cost cutting, which is acceptable in many ethnic communities and instilled in children at a young age (De Lepervanche, 1989). Basu (2004) reminds us that families serve both an economic and social function. This collective family labour for profit is clearly indicative of the economic function, imprinting then may accommodate this social requirement. Since families with imprinting parents coincide with offspring who recall their adolescent work experiences positively (and vice versa), imprinting becomes instrumental to offspring not viewing their work at the family business as a purely economic endeavour. When imprinting is not practiced by business owning parents, the findings of this paper suggest that adolescent work is recalled negatively and this is to the detriment of parent-child relationships in adulthood.

Conclusion

These findings add to a growing body of literature on adolescent work in three ways. First, the findings challenge literature suggesting that adolescents who work in their family businesses on a year-round basis report better parent-child relationships (Houshmand *et al.*, 2018). Adolescent work in a family business context is not a universally positive experience as the research findings demonstrate. While in a family business context generations are able to work together, thus resolving one criticism of adolescent work more generally (Ashbourne and Daly, 2010), this does not always result in favourable parent-child relationship outcomes. By focusing on next generation family members in later adulthood, rather than during adolescence, the paper demonstrates that year-round involvement can be to the detriment of familial relationships and offspring often reference their past adolescent work experiences at the family business when assessing the quality of their present-day relationships with parents. Second, the paper demonstrates that parental motives for adolescent work are a composition of convenience, economic gain, and an attempt to educate the next generation. Furthermore,

these three motives are not mutually exclusive meaning that it is possible to be driven partly by all three when bestowing adolescent work obligations on next generation family members. Third, through the theoretical lens of ‘imprinting’ the paper has demonstrated that business owning parents who neglect to practice this process risk their offspring perceiving family business involvement to be a purely economic endeavour. When imprinting is not practiced, the research findings suggest that offspring recall their adolescent work experience negatively and family discord prevails.

According to Erikson (1963), a key task for middle-aged adults is to transmit knowledge and values to the next generation. This is part of the ‘generativity’ stage of psychosocial development, one which is characterised by a desire to guide and nurture the younger generation both in family and workplace settings. Imprinting then, along with other social practices such as story telling (see Collier, 2006), are important mechanisms through which family business owners can transfer knowledge and values across generations (McAdam and Alrubaishi, 2021), thus reinforcing the family legacy. However, conflict often occurs when the legacy ambitions that parent generations wish to transfer do not align with the achievement needs of the next generation (Barbera, Stamm and DeWitt, 2018; Jaskiewicz, Combs and Rau, 2015). Parent generations would therefore do well to ensure greater alignment between legacy and achievement when exposing younger generations to the business, welcoming the next generation as active inquirers who observe and question what they do, rather than viewing legacy as something to ‘give’ them (Crosina and Gartner, 2021).

The avenues for future research stem from the limitations of the study. First, the research was carried out among a single cultural group. Future research should therefore focus on different cultural groups paying close attention to their propensity to involve children within the family business and their motives for doing so to discover how these might deviate from the levels and motives reported in this study. Additionally, focusing on parent-child relationships at the expense of other familial relationships (e.g. sibling, grandparents) presents a second limitation of the research. For instance, the extent to which shared experiences of adolescent work serves to strengthen sibling relationships or dilute them is an example of a research question which guides further enquiries in this field. Future research might therefore focus on the impact of adolescent work on relationships beyond parent-child ones.

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Appendix 1 – A profile of the five families

Family A: consists of a husband (A1) and wife (A2) who founded a restaurant in the early 1980s. A1 had operated a series of small businesses, including an exchange shop, before settling in the catering sector. The business, one that employed no more than 12 workers, became the couple's life and they drew heavily on family labour to operate it. This included the couple's two sons, A3 and A4, who recall working at their father's businesses from the age of 19 and 13 respectively. A3 is the eldest brother and forged a career as an IT professional at a major UK bank preferring to serve larger communities than that offered at the family restaurant business. A4 succeeded the family's exchange shop when his parents decided to focus on the restaurant business. A4 ran this for 14 years before purchasing his parents' restaurant in 2005, allowing his father (A1) to retire, which he has operated since. His mother (A2) is still employed full-time in the kitchen.

Family B: is a business-owning family. B1's father owned a string of restaurants before moving into real estate and managing a property portfolio. B1 worked at these restaurants from an early age when staff did not attend for their shift and when he did not achieve academically at school, he had no option but to become employed at one of his father's restaurants. B1 spent much of his twenties working as a chef until he had a brief career change selling wholesale flowers. In 2005, B1 re-entered the catering sector when he became the business partner to A4 and purchased a 50% share of the restaurant owned by family A. B2 is the daughter of B1 and has been dancing since she was 8 years old. B2 has worked at the restaurant part owned by her father occasionally though this has never been on a regular basis. B2 is currently 18 and is considering a career as a professional dancer, having been actively encouraged to do something she enjoys by her parents.

Family C: features Italian migrant C1 who worked his way through Europe as a chef before settling in the UK where he met his wife (C2) and began a family. C1 was a wealthy young man through the string of restaurants he owned but his family was left bankrupt when he gambled away their fortunes. The family were only able to rebuild through the involvement of C2 who brought a degree of financial astuteness to proceedings at the restaurant business they founded together in 1997 and have operated since. The restaurant employed no more than 9 workers and included all three of the couple's daughters who helped from being 12 years old, starting out in the kitchen with their father (C1) before progressing on to front of house roles alongside their mother (C2). The eldest two daughters (C3 and C4) now operate restaurant businesses of their own, citing a desire to have a change from their father - who was a hard teacher - as their motive. The youngest daughter (C5) has no immediate desire to follow in her sisters' footsteps and found her own restaurant, but is aware that she might inherit her parents' business upon their retirement.

Family D: consists of 6 siblings. D1 is the eldest and recalls working at his father's restaurant from aged 12. The restaurant never employed any non-family staff as the children were all different ages and therefore covered the roles the family business required. D1 left the UK for Italy aged 14 fearing that his destiny was to work for his father though he returned four years later. Over the next 30 years, he owned and operated restaurants with his father, brother and uncle before studying a degree in social work and entering this line of work in 1992. D1 returned to his catering background in 1996 having been unable to affect change in the way he intended in social work. D2 is the younger sister of D1 and recalls helping out at the family business from aged 8. Like her brother, D2 left the country briefly aged 20 and spent her early life as a housewife and only began working in 1996 when she separated from her first husband. Since 2012 she splits her time between being a self-employed cleaner and caring for her grandchildren.

Family E: migrated to the UK from Italy in the late 1800s. Three generations later the family had built a large ice cream business, the production arm of which was sold in 1954. The fourth generation, consisting of E1 and E2, worked with their father to steer the remaining retail business away from ice cream and towards coffee shops and retail catering and spent much of their lives as directors of food development (E1) and operations (E2), growing the family catering business to one that employs 1,200 staff across 130 outlets. The fifth generation includes 12 grandchildren, three of which have attended university and assumed managerial roles in the family business (E3, E4 and E5), having begun their involvement in the business between the ages of 12 to 15. E6 is representative of those who aspire to a career beyond the family firm and whilst he shares much in common with his generation (e.g. helping at the coffee shops, attending university), E6 currently aspires to a career as a self-employed foreign exchange trader